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Goldblatt, Eli. *Because We Live Here: Sponsoring Literacy Beyond the College Curriculum*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2007. ISBN: 1-57273-769-7.

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A book about literacy sponsorship and relation building, *Because We Live Here* includes a version of Goldblatt's splendid *College English* essay "Alinsky's Reveille" that won the Ohmann award in 2005. In this essay, Goldblatt asks the central questions of the book: "What if we use our research, teaching, administrative, and writing abilities for the sake of the people our students tutor, not only for the sake of the college programs we run? What if the through-put model did not dominate our program designs, but instead we followed a model of long-term investment in the neighborhoods where we work and centers with which we partner?" And he answers, "This thinking leads to a model of community-based learning and research in which students and their teachers are not so much providing services as participating in a collective effort defined by academics and local citizens alike" (130). It also leads to a lot of time-consuming and often frustrating work, work for which academics are rarely well prepared.

Goldblatt demonstrates and analyzes the kind of work required as he details projects he organized with his colleagues (especially Stephen Parks) at Temple University from 1999 to 2006, projects that linked teachers and students at Temple with those at local high schools and community colleges and staff and clients at community organizations in and around Philadelphia. As a "metropolitan university," Temple is an especially appropriate venue in which to investigate how institutions of higher education might work most productively with other institutions. Goldblatt quotes a definition of a metropolitan university as being "best recognized by an interactive philosophy by which these institutions establish symbiotic relationships with their metropolitan areas" (5) and adds that establishing such relationships requires academics "to pay attention to the problems of the people among who we live," something which "most academics...are neither educated nor rewarded for" (6). Crucially, he says, "In order to be metropolitan, a university or college must not presume it can set the direction of research and service with its neighbors without their active participation" (6).

Goldblatt positions his work with reference to progressive educators including Dewey, Freire, and the New London Group but particularly emphasizes literacy sponsorship and relation building as essential to the model of community-based learning and research he argues for. The concept of literacy sponsorship, developed by Goldblatt in his earlier book *'Round My Way: Authority and Double-Consciousness in Three Urban High School Writers*

(U of Pittsburgh P, 1995) and by Deborah Brandt in her book *Literacy in American Lives* (Cambridge UP, 2001), draws attention to the way economics and cultural institutions determine the types of literacy that are valued and therefore taught. The differing cultural and economic missions of high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and research universities, adult education centers, and other community centers lead to distinct differences in the types of literacy they sponsor, which require often difficult adjustments for students trying to find a path through these varying institutions. For example, working-class high schools and community colleges, which function mainly to prepare students to “get in synch with the economy and the educational system as it currently functions” (116), value and teach an autonomous style of literacy focused on mastery of particular skills; middle-class suburban high schools sponsor a type of literacy focused on the traditional literature canon that is “all of a piece with a knowable and consoling history” that imparts to students the clear message, “We deserve what we have and it should stay this way forever” (119); and universities such as Temple, focused on the demands of research and scholarship, sponsor a type of literacy that requires sophisticated understanding and application of theories to texts.

Engaging teachers from these different institutions—as well as educators working in community centers—in discussions of the differences among the types of literacy they sponsor in their curricula, Goldblatt argues, may lead to an expanded understanding of the types of literacy people need in our current society. At the conclusion of a day-long conference at Temple on community arts and literacy attended by artists, activists, funders, teachers, and students, Deborah Brandt drew attention to the difference between the currently dominant definition of literacy as productivity, responsive to the economy’s increasing need for people whose jobs entail manipulating symbols, and the type of literacy assumed by many of those attending the conference: “literacy as a breakthrough of the divine, as a method for healing, as a way for political expression to occur when other avenues are not available....a definition of literacy that has brought great things to the society at various times, and [that is] getting pushed away” (qtd. in Goldblatt, 187).

Even more important to the model Goldblatt argues for is the emphasis on relation building, an emphasis that distinguishes the work at Temple from other exemplar community literacy programs such as Linda Flower’s Community Literacy Center in Pittsburgh. Goldblatt argues that “literacy education depends on a network of relationships that must be carefully nurtured and maintained...In fact, I would suggest that the most important job of WPAs is to build and extend the sustaining relationships that make their programs possible” (146). He cites the community organizer Saul Alinsky as his source for this argument, and he explains that building a network of lasting relationships within a community requires not only a lot of time but also a different approach than the committee-meeting-based processes of the academy; it requires individual relationships more than institutional connections (12), and it requires meeting with others not as experts with something to offer but as “interested people with lives of our own” (134).

Describing preparatory work with Steve Parks on a grant proposal to fund school- and community-based projects as well as writing program projects at Temple, Goldblatt explains how they tried to meet these requirements: “The answer, as always, was lunch. Rather than simply sit in our module on the 10th floor of Temple’s Anderson Hall, drafting version after version of a proposal, Steve and I devoted many hours of meetings over lunch and coffee—in faculty clubs and college meeting rooms, in corner diners, in downtown delis and cafes—to developing relationships on campuses and in city neighborhoods with people we thought could help us use the money wisely” (166). He describes his approach in these meetings: “I listen for the self-interest of the neighborhood within multiple issues, I express my own self-interest in the project, and I try to see THIS neighborhood specifically as opposed to others in the city or an abstract concept of poor communities” (134). He argues that the explicit identification of self-interest on the part of all participants (another principle drawn from Alinsky’s work) is crucial to the success of a project, for successful projects are ones that address the needs of the participants and their constituencies equally.

As Goldblatt makes clear in this book, projects like those he and others engaged in community literacy undertake can help bring about a profound shift to a collective view of education and knowledge, a shift that sees learning and the active production and use of knowledge as something everyone does in a broad array of venues in a community. This makes *Because We Live Here* essential reading for all college writing program administrators, not just those interested in community literacy. WPAs who accept Goldblatt’s model of community-based learning and research can move beyond the degrading models of through-put education and missionary service learning to envisioning their writing program as one approach to literacy among many. Goldblatt observes, “When we think of ourselves as members of more than an academic community, our neighborhood connections should be constituted in a way that students encounter partners engaging in substantial work rather than clients receiving aid” (142). In a society where now, as Goldblatt observes, “the gap between rich and poor students is nearly unbridgeable” (146), this is a worthy goal not only for writing programs at metropolitan universities like Temple but for all institutions of higher education.

