

# Editor's Introduction

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**W**elcome to another issue of *Reflections*. We are particularly pleased to begin the issue interviewing Steve Parks, someone who the editors have worked with for a number of years. Given we have a couple of articles focused on graduate student experiences with community projects and service-learning, we thought asking Steve Parks to reflect on this particular area would add continuity to this issue. For many years, Steve has mentored many graduate students, including Jessica Pauszek, our Assistant Editor. He is also the previous Editor of *Reflections* and someone I've known for years. What we share in common is a passion for social justice within and beyond academia. In many ways, what we do is at odds with the propensity in academia, as Steve points out in the interview, to focus on “textual artifacts” with our students. Sadly, the graduate student experience at most institutions seldom engages students with sustained community partnerships and provides community members with a role in

dissertations, theses, and publications. When I look at the photo on our *Reflections* website of the Freedom riders, many who were college students getting ready to board a bus to Mississippi and willing to die to help Mississippi communities, I have to wonder what they would say to graduate programs with a strong emphasis on “textual artifacts.” One of the college student freedom bus riders stated:

So anyway, my ideas about equality and democracy and all that kind of stuff came with a tinge of Marxism, because I had been in college and discussed Marxism with many of my professors. And all the while I would go to school for six months and go to Mississippi for six months. I did it off and on for several years. And in college I took all the radical professors I could find, and anybody who wanted to talk about shaking this system up. So I came in with that ideology. (Hardy Frye Narrative, April, 2003).

Hardy Frye understood that what he learned at the university from his professors was linked to the communities and civil rights organizations he was a part of in Mississippi. I anticipate his “radical professors” understood that what they taught Frye in and out of the classroom coupled with his experiences with civil rights organizations and communities in Mississippi would shape his ideology. Sometimes, it is necessary, as Steve does in the interview, to call out our own when most of academia are having trouble getting on the bus. Sometimes, we need to ask a graduate student like Jessica Pauszek who is involved in community partnerships to take the lead in asking interview questions about graduate community partnerships to her professor/mentor/colleague, Steve Parks. So, what does it take for a graduate program to commit themselves to community partnerships? One of my favorite quotes is from Maya Angelou: “Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you can’t practice any other virtue consistently.” Hardy Frye had “radical professors” who helped strengthen his courage to leave college to go to Mississippi and return again. It also takes courage to create a graduate program with sustained community partnerships and to involve the communities in our graduate student experiences. It is easier and takes much less courage to create a graduate program based on “textual artifacts,” but then whose virtues are we compromising?

Students? Professors? Administrators? Sadly, we also know who is left out.

In “Designing the Future: Assessing Long-Term Impact of Service-Learning on Graduate Instructors,” Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, Megan Marie Bolinder, Nadya Pittendrigh, and Candice Rai take us through their community-based pedagogies journey as graduate student teachers at University of Illinois, Chicago’s Chicago Civic Leadership Certificate Program CCLCP to their developing best practices to develop “forward-thinking graduate instructor objective and outcomes.” They demonstrate the future positive outcomes when graduate programs focus on community-based pedagogies instead of “textual artifacts.” As they rightly point out, the majority of research that assesses the long-term impact of service-learning programs on students occurs at the undergraduate level. What makes this article particularly significant is when they say, “We know of no study to date that attends to the impacts of service-learning on the subset of instructors who so frequently employ service-learning pedagogies in their classrooms and who represent the future of institutional service-learning efforts in higher education: graduate instructors.” Each author shares her experiences at a variety of institutions to include minority-serving institutions, community colleges, and research institutions. We see how they foster what they learned from CCLCP and beyond through a variety of courses. The impact was also significant in their research in taking risks. Maya Angelou’s courage quote seems to apply here when graduate students take these types of community-based risks in their dissertation as Nadya does. Through this article, these authors prove the long lasting benefits when graduate programs emphasize community-based pedagogies.

The next article, “At-Risk’ of What? Rewriting a Prescribed Relationship in a Community Literacy Nonprofit Organization: *A Dialogue*” by Cherish Smith and Vani Kannen advocates for community literacy nonprofit’s mission statements and fundraising language to focus on the community and individuals they wish to strengthen rather than pandering to donors. In particular, the authors question the words “at risk” with its racial and class connotations in the mission statement of a program focusing on African American and Latino high school girls with mostly white mentors. Most of these students were

at the top of their English classes and excelled in creative writing. Yet, as Smith later disclosed, these students struggled as she did once they entered college. She later thrived once she entered a community college setting with smaller classes. Through their dialogues, experiences, and research, Smith and Kannen developed a workshop for the organization's community-based participants to critique and reflect on the mission statement at a personal level that define who they were in relation to this organization. Together, participants would help create a community-based as well as a personal mission statement. I have to wonder how donors would react if they watched a video of this workshop and listened to these high school girls. How might we build this understanding to create mission statements that better reflect the language created in this workshop and thereby diminish the disconnect between what the funders understand and the reality of these girls' lives?

Probing deeply into the reality of a couple of student lives in Mexico through nomadic thinking and vagabond research helped Anne-Marie Hall discover the importance of ecological literacy, a literacy that values home knowledge. Both students she studies see "the world as an opportunity or necessity for particular action, of affordances perceived and utilized." Both students, Marco and Hugo, who are seen by their teachers as failures with the school system's emphasis on "autonomous literacy," use their "experience and intuition, "la facultad," to better themselves within their society. Those who have an enhanced sense of "la facultad" have experienced "marginalization and hardship." As someone who teaches at a Hispanic Serving Institution in South Texas, I have also seen students with "la facultad" excel despite some telling them they won't succeed or label them as "at risk." I've seen others at my university who understand "la facultad" and know the potential it carries for student success. They take what they've learned through their ecological literacy and "facultad" to assess their academic environment and figure out what they need to do to succeed. When we understand and value, as Hall states, literacy "reconceived outside the boundaries of traditionally framed notions of reading, writing, and arithmetic," and when we value students ability to have this acute awareness how to be and "live in the world," we set up circumstances for students to succeed within and beyond school. Hall calls for another type of literacy, one that is "dynamic, multiple—and yes, sublimely and desperately human as embodied,

express, and experienced—in the stories of Marcos and Hugo.” Much like we see in the previous article of the need to revise the mission statement and language of this community-based organization to better reflect these girls’ lives, so too must we work to revise these colonizing perceptions of literacy to embrace the ecological literacies of students. As someone with a mother from another country, I am always appreciative of scholars like Hall who venture outside these U.S. borders to enrich our global perspectives.

Stephanie Larson’s review of Amy Wan’s *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times* presents interesting connections to Hall’s article. Larson examines Wan’s study of early 20<sup>th</sup> century literacy instruction in “federally funded Americanization programs, union education, and university English classrooms.” The fears during this time of mass immigration were at its height and literacy learning held “curative and corrective power to ameliorate anxieties over citizenship in the face of immigration and imperialism.” We see this focus on this mandated “right” kind of literacy rooted in individualism from an institutionalized program. Contrastively, we see union programs focused on collectivism. Larson then focuses on how Wan examines the anxieties of NCTE in its early years as it focuses on citizenship. In the present day with the DREAM act, we still focus on the individual’s success in education as worthy of citizenship. For her critique, Larson calls for Wan to examine how this history she traces may impact our composition classrooms today. With Marco and Hugo in Hall’s article, we see how they are not accepted by the autonomous literacy system in Mexico. In the U.S., we see how “illiterates” are “unworthy of citizenship.”

Next, we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century and multimodal literacy with Timothy Amidon’s review of Jennifer Roswell’s *Working with Modality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age*. I particularly like the interdisciplinary nature of Roswell’s multimodal literacy study, as Amidon points out, with her focus on “distinct fields of professional and artistic practice—animation, architecture, children’s literature, ballet, as well as costume, clothing, video, and web design.” Amidon pays particular attention to how *Reflections* readers will appreciate Roswell’s emphasis on “the theoretical and pedagogical implications that multimodality has for composing in a variety of contexts.”

Armidon helps us understand through his review of Roswell's book the empowering aspects of multimodality for those who embrace it. Indeed multimodality is an important component of critical literacy today, and we are happy to continue honoring it in our journal.

I'm always looking for connections when writing these introductions and Laura Finley's review of Roxanne Gay's *Bad Feminist*, especially when she discussed the chapter "How to Be Friends with Another Woman," spoke to me as I thought of the healthy relationship between Vani Kannen and Cherish Smith or the wonderful collaborations between Gottchalk Druschke, Bolinder, Pittendrigh, and Rai as they revised their article. I thought of the long walks Anne Hall mentions in her acknowledgement with Adela Licona. I love the line Finley quotes from Gay that says "Don't tear other women down, because even if they're not your friends, they are women, and this is just as important. This is not to say you cannot criticize other women, but understand the difference between criticizing constructively and tearing down cruelly." How important it is to have this perspective for the work we do in community-based organizations, as teachers in service-learning projects, or as a white ally conversing extensively with individuals from the cultures we study. This review fits perfectly with this particular issue and the women in it. From the way Finley describes each of the chapters, I see this book as going beyond a feminist and gender studies course. As women doing public rhetoric, civic writing and service-learning, we need to read such books to help us, as Finley says, to work[ing] together and not against one another. It is a pleasure to see how contributors to this issue have done so. I am proud to be a woman and editor of a journal, where I can celebrate these women who work so well with other women.