

Editor's Introduction

Positionality and Collaboration in Community-Engaged Research

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Articles in the Spring 2024 issue of Reflections engage with the concepts of positionality and collaboration. The authors in this issue recognize their own positionalities as researchers, and they also interrogate the interactions between their own positionalities and those of their respective institutions and communities. As community-engaged researchers, we should consistently recognize how our identities, and our positionality (how we embody and interact with the world), influence how we will be able to conduct research in community. I hope these articles help teachers, researchers, and practitioners to ask important questions about how power structures shape how academics collaborate, or should collaborate, with community partners across contexts.

The issue opens with "Beyond Learning Loss: Testimonios of a Pandemic Education/

Más Allá de la Pérdida: Testimonios de Una Educación Pandémica," a collaborative piece by Hugo Moreno, Marina Layme Huarca, Marí Linares, Ronel Almeyda, Izchel Jimenez de la Cruz, Carolina Yauyo Zanabria, Leandra Hernández, and Calley Marotta. This multimodal multilingual piece highlights the digital testimonios of six multilingual students who share their stories of struggle and triumph as they navigated the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital testimonios in this article reflect the multiple different identities embedded in the label, "Latinx," and showcase how our educational institutions contribute to the learning communities of our students. Working alongside their mentors, students in this article help us grapple with large and important questions that are relevant to all of us navigating the pandemic and learning simultaneously: "how do we deal with loss? What do we value? How do we want to live as opposed to survive?"

Next, in "Engaging *Métis* as a Site of Disability Activist and Leadership Possibilities," Stephanie K. Wheeler describes her collaboration with the Latino Leadership Institute (LLI) in Orlando, Florida. Through this illustration, Wheeler demonstrates that "the embodied, material experiences of disabled people are central to sustainable, effective, and ethical civic engagement practices for all." Threading together conversations in Latinx and disability rhetorics, Wheeler "emphasizes the importance of *métis*—adaptable and responsive rhetorical action—in achieving responsible, sustainable, and access-based community action for social justice." This project highlights the importance of positionality in community-engaged praxis and provides models for how University researchers and mentors can effectively collaborate with student-led groups that advocate for social justice.

Continuing the theme of collaboration, Catherine Forsa Capineri emphasizes the importance of collaboration in community writing

through her article, “The Group Project’s Potential: Emphasizing Collaborative Writing with Community Engagement.” In her pedagogy-focused research, Capineri argues that collaborative writing can help students gain important skills that are critical to community-engagement praxis, including “rhetorical knowledge, confidence, understanding of transfer, and appreciation for diverse perspectives.”

As collaboration remains a key theme of this issue, Bethany Monea, Meagan Call-Cummings, Sara Berhe-Abraha, Anahat Goraya, Oaklen Kalinichenko, Widad Khalid, Liz Rotherham, Amy L. Best, Khaseem Davis, Natale Gray, Jeffery Keller, Sara Martah highlight their collaborative work in their article, “What Brought Us Here, What Keeps Us Here: Multiple Perspectives on Building and Sustaining a Community-Engaged Youth Research Partnership.” In this article, the authors introduce the Youth Research Council (YRC), “a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project in which high school students, undergraduate and graduate students, and university-affiliated professors and administrators collaborate on consequential, justice-oriented research projects in their community.” Through their discussion of YRC and their own individual involvement with the group, the authors showcase what drives many community-engaged researchers to continue working with communities to foster justice-driven change.

While many of the contributors to this issue highlight important collaborative projects that emphasize researcher and student positionalities, the issue also includes contributions from authors who interrogate institutional positionality. In “Past and Present Contradictions in Land-Grant and Hispanic Serving Institutions: A Historical Case Study of the University of Arizona,” Charles McMartin conducts an important study that interrogates how his institution, the University of Arizona, was designated a land grant

and Hispanic Serving Institution. Recognizing his positionality as “a white settler teacher,” McMartin uses his study to share “an example of the sort of local historical research that encourages educators to unearth the colonial and racist infrastructure of FYW born from nineteenth-century educational policies and engage with the collective responses of BIPOC student activists from the civil rights movement.” In this way, McMartin combines institutional and historical research with effective strategies for centralizing students and community knowledge in writing pedagogy.

Moving from an institution to an entire state, in “Our Beloved Alamo’: Racism and Texas Exceptionalism in Public Memory Systems,” Brianna Hernandez and April L. O’Brien employ content and discourse analysis to “evaluate the rhetorical strategies The Alamo uses as it communicates Texas history to visitors.” Through this work, Hernandez and O’Brien illustrate that “Narratives of Indigenous, Black, and Tejano people are virtually nonexistent in spite of the vibrant community organizations like the Tāp Pīlam Coahuiltecan Nation who are fighting for an accurate and thorough rendering of the site.” Hernandez and O’Brien provide a useful model for leveraging institutional and individual positionality to highlight disparities in how histories are constructed and shared.

Together, the articles in this issue provide a thorough illustration of how community-engaged researchers collaborate with students, community members, government agencies, and nonprofits to both research and (re)design methods of collaboration. I’m grateful to the authors for engaging in this important work while recognizing the power and the difficulties of community-based methodologies.

About the Editor

Laura Gonzales is an Associate Professor of Digital Writing and Cultural Rhetorics at the University of Florida. She is the Vice President of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing and the editor of *Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric*.

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