

Letter From the Editors

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Abstract: This letter serves to introduce Volume 20, Number 1. This issue includes a number of general submissions, our inaugural Historical Reflections article, and two articles continuing our Teaching and Learning Reflections article.

Keywords: special issues, special themed sections, disabilities, microaggressions, impact factors

This is the first issue in the third volume of *Reflections* to be published at Cleveland State University School of Social Work. Our website fully documents the publication date of each issue, despite the fact that each issue will be backdated, as is standard journal practice, until our publication schedule is up to date in 2016.

We have not wanted to rush issues into print until we felt they were quality issues. It has been a great deal of work for us to learn how to take care of the publishing side as well as the editorial side of publishing a quality, double-blind peer reviewed journal. But from a publishing standpoint, we are now up and running. We anticipate publishing Volume 20, Number 2 in November 2015 as well. It will contain additional general submissions and additional articles from the permanent special sections (field education; learning and teaching; historical reflections; research reflections).

As the inside cover shows, we now have editors for each of these special sections, except Historical Reflections. The section editors assign the reviewers and make the editorial decisions. The editors reserve the right to assign an article to the section most closely resembling the content.

Volume 20#2 will clear up our backlog of general submissions that were accepted for publication and were in copy editing status. We very much appreciate the patience of our authors with delays in publishing these articles. We also anticipate publishing the several Special Issues whose submission deadlines have expired, including Family of Origin: Reflections on Practice; Relative Caregiving; Honoring Our Indigenous Elders; Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice, and Social Work with Children and Youth. The articles for these issues are in the process of peer review and/or copy editing. Given our new capacity for issue assembly, we look forward very much to collaborating with the special issue editors to

expedite publication of these issues when the content is ready. We also anticipate publishing a general issue that includes Special Themed Section on Southern African Reflections on Social Work and Social Justice. Together, these issues would complete Volume 21, 2015. We are confident all will be published as soon as possible during the present academic year.

Our current Special Issue Call, on Librarians as Helping Professionals, will serve as Volume 22#1, 2016. We are hoping very much that social work librarians and other university librarians will appreciate *Reflections* will complete Volume 22 by the end of the calendar year. However, as always, the journal depends on the submission of quality narratives.

A Call for Special Themed Sections

The Special Issue Call, Librarians as Helping Professionals, will be the final special issue published by the journal. As announced in May 2012, the journal plans to replace special issues with special themed sections. This helps ensure we can publish general submissions in every issue, while still providing an opportunity for special editors to edit special themed sections. Such sections can be as long as the special issues of the past. They would also have editorial introductions by the guest editors, and could have themed art work on the cover. Recently, we posted on our website an updated version of the Call for Proposals for Special Themed Sections. We would like to encourage proposals for such special sections.

For instance, this issue suggestions a number of such possible topics. The narrative of Jonghyun Lee suggests the value of a special themed section on working with immigrants, as well as one on the experience of microaggressions. The narrative of Carol Gilson suggests a special themed section on working with people with disabilities. The narrative of Marilyn Paul and Roni Berger suggests the value of a special themed section that gives voice to the cries

for peace and justice of those on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our journal's search engine permits searching the titles and abstracts of all of our back issues; this is a great way to see if there is a topic that is dear to you, and to identify authors who have an interest in that topic. Please contact us with any initial ideas by writing the editors at reflections@csuohio.edu.

A Double-Blind Peer-Reviewed Journal

In this Letter from the Editors, it is important to comment on one important issue for the journal. The journal has had to respond to several requests from authors and from deans and directors for statements certifying that the journal is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal or seeking confirmation that this was the case for a particular author/article. It is mission-critical that the journal be able to respond affirmatively. This is one aspect of journal editorial policy that is not the prerogative of the editor. It is required by our publisher, the Cleveland State University School of Social Work. It has been the policy of our Directors and Interim Directors since we began publishing the journal, including our current Director Cathleen Lewandowski. As the Guest Editor of the Special Issue on Therapeutic Relationships with Service Members, Veterans and their Families, Cathleen re-affirmed her support for this policy when she arrived at CSU in July 2014. This policy applies not only to our general submissions but also to our special themed issue and special themed section editors, and to the section editors of our permanent sections. Carrying out this policy has only been possible due to the dedicated work of the 109 colleagues who have completed peer reviewed since May 2012. The work of these reviewers is very much appreciated. The most active and highest quality reviewers are included each year in the present volume's Narrative Review Board, whose names are found on the inside cover of each issue.

Because of the hard work of our reviewers, and the discernment of the growing number of editors on our Editorial Team (see the website, About, Editorial Team or the inside cover of each issue), it is rare for an article to be accepted without revisions. We cannot easily provide statistics about this, however. At *Reflections*, we focus not on producing statistics such as acceptance rates, impact factors, and so

forth, but on producing compelling narratives that contribute empirically by producing a record of practice. Our narratives also reflect thoughtfully on that practice, and can often produce valuable theoretical insights.

Our Narrative Review Board is updated annually to reflect our most active and highest quality reviewers. During Volume 20 the editors will be assisted in this process by Associate Editor for Review Quality Johanna Slivinske, a clinical practitioner who also on the faculty at Youngstown State University. Johanna had already played a major role as an author, a reviewer, and as Associate Editor for Issue Quality. In that capacity she read every word of every issue, including those penned here in the Letter from the Editors. She helped copy edit and proof read each of our issues beginning with Volume 18#4. She has also been an invaluable second opinion on many difficult editorial decisions.

Art and Articles

The article, "Cold: A Meditation on Loss," by Sarah Morton, of University College Dublin, inspired the cover art for this issue, by Robin Richesson, the *Reflections* Art Director. Robin is Professor of Art at California State University Long Beach. Her illustrations have long graced the journals cover. Robin produced two illustrations inspired by Sarah's narrative. The present one is inspired by a photograph from Newcastle, Ireland, a place mentioned in Sarah's narrative. The other one of which will be used for the Volume 21 Winter issue.

Imagine Ireland in Winter. It is cold in Ireland in Winter. We who are helping professionals are often ensconced in our warm offices or living in homes where heat is taken for granted, even if those heating bills keep rising faster than our salaries. Rosie's house was cold, Sarah tells us, and it brought back her own memories of coldness. Her narrative suggests that often there is coldness we are not seeing or hearing or feeling. Coldness that is being felt by those we work with. Often it is only the tip of the iceberg we take in. A good narrative gives the reader a feel for what was being experienced. In reading Sarah Morton's narrative, we too are shivering, and perhaps remembering.

In “Disability Finds a Voice,” Carol Gilson highlights the need for social work programs to address issues of disability, both in the curriculum and in student accommodations. She shares her own struggle with rheumatoid arthritis and her decision to pursue a MSW degree in order to help others with a disability as well. During her undergraduate program, she was surprised to learn of the lack of awareness of disability at her university. She became more involved with disability issues at her university, and on a greater political level as well. Ms. Gilson turns her personal struggle with disability into an effort to raise awareness of disability in schools and in the greater community. This is an inspiring story of one person’s efforts to transform a personal struggle into a greater effort to reduce stigmatization and improve accessibility for services for students with disabilities.

In “Self-Reflections of a Gay Immigrant Social Worker,” Jonghyun Lee discusses how it is important for social workers to understand their own background and how it affords them privilege, or lack of it. Lee shares his experience of racism and homophobia as an Asian, gay male in the U.S. He discusses personal stories of microaggressions. He also helps us to see what it is like to live with the constant fear of deportation.

The narrative, “Understanding Student Evaluations: A Black Faculty Perspective,” by Armon R. Perry, Sherri L. Wallace, Sharon E. Moore, and Gwendolyn D. Perry-Burney, explores more than the literature showing that racial bias influences student evaluations. It raises our consciousness about what it is like to live with the reality that racism and other forms of group-based oppression operate in ways that are not always fully appreciated. Those of us with the power to grade also are vulnerable to student evaluations. This narrative is valuable to keep in mind when we use course evaluations as part of evaluating faculty teaching effectiveness.

Had it been submitted a bit later, the narrative by Augustina Naami, “25 years Post ADA: A Social Worker’s Experience and Reflections about Environmental Barriers,” might have been an additional first entry in the new Historical Reflections section of this journal, which is inaugurated in this issue by the narrative of James Gerald McCullagh. Augustina recounts her own

journey from her childhood in Ghana, where her disabilities found very little accommodation, to the United States in 2002. She found that a dozen years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the United States still had and has much work to do in order to ensure basic accommodations for persons with mobility-related and other disabilities.

In “Reclamation: How I am Surviving Depression and Using the Illness to Elevate Others,” Andrew Calderaro shares his own story of depression and his personal struggle to overcome it. His narrative describes the difficult path he took in managing his own depression and in learning how to help others with it. His self disclosure articulates the barriers that mental illness and substance abuse can pose in achieving professional and personal goals. He finds ways to cope with his pain through therapy and by joining grassroots groups which raise awareness of depression, alleviate shame and help others move past it.

Some of the best narratives in this journal involve recollecting our relationships with clients and co-workers from long ago. This is the case with James Petrovich’s narrative, “Getting Back to Basics: Developing a Therapeutic Relationship with a Formerly Homeless Veteran Client.” For one thing, it is easier to disguise the nature of practice that took place long ago, thus enabling the writer of the narrative to exercise the well-established right of doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other helping professions to write case notes and accounts of our service with clients and our work with communities. In doing so we often draw on our personal process recordings and journals of our practice, written not as part of the official records of our agencies but as part of our own efforts at professional development, cultural competence, and self-reflections. As long as care is taken to keep these notes entirely devoid of identifying information including the specific setting, and are well disguised in their rendition, the fact that a former client or co-workers might conceivably recognize themselves in our account does not outweigh our right and even our obligation to write compelling narratives about our practice. Without such narratives, which are well established in the field of narrative medicine and in other helping professions, important opportunities for empirical examination of practice are lost, as well as the ability to draw theoretical and policy-relevant

conclusions from our accounts of our practice. Of course professional discretion must be used in what is shared. We are fully obligated to write in a way that is consistent with the ethical standards and legal regulation of our respective professions, and the policies of our disciplines and professions and employing organizations, such as human subject protections. Please read James's narrative, and ask yourself if you can recollect work with a client that still influences you many years later. Think back to one key moment from that work and then reconstruct a vignette around that moment. Start writing a story that places one or more of such vignettes in fuller context. Soon, you may have a narrative which can be submitted to this journal.

The narrative, "A Road Not Taken: Discovering a World I Never Knew," is the third contribution to this journal by James Gerald McCullagh. After writing a narrative of his practice in the field of juvenile justice, James was co-author of a piece with Howard Walkingstick (2000). In that earlier piece, based upon interview with Howard Walkingstick, who died in 2002, an important story was told about early efforts of this Native American social worker - a former resident of Hull House - to break down the barriers faced by his people, both those living in the big cities and in the nine Western states where he worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These narratives give voice to the work of Howard Walkingstick. Also consistent with the purpose of this historical reflections section, the narrative also provides a venue in which James himself can reflect on his relationship with Howard in light of his efforts to help document the Native American experience.

In "The Art of Happiness," Natalie Grant tells a story of using art as a therapeutic tool for self reflection, self empowerment and healing. The author is a professor of social work who uses creativity in her teaching. She describes an assignment where she encourages her students to

create a piece of artwork to express their idea of happiness. The narrative details a poem created by one of Grant's students, in which she expresses happiness in relationship to a past traumatic event. Grant describes the students transformation using poetry as a vehicle for greater expression and empowerment.

Like the article by Natalie Grant, the narrative by Marilyn S. Paul and Roni Berger, "Eleven Days in Israel," is published in the Special Section on Teaching and Learning, edited by Carol A. Langer and Arlene F. Reilly-Sandoval. The content of this article reminds me of another classic of social work education, a paper delivered by Charlotte Towle (1948, available upon request), "The Emotional Element in Learning in Professional Education for Social Work." Towle discussed something that today's Council on Social Work Education standards call the cognitive and affective dimension of learning and teaching in social work. Just as Towle discussed the professional self, Marilyn and Roni focus on what was most meaningful in the experiences they and their students had in visiting Israel.

The narrative "When Mentors Pass" by W. Patrick Sullivan is the fifth time mentoring has been the subject of a Reflections narrative. In this case, the narrative is published as another contribution to the Teaching and Learning Section of the journal. The author discusses the impact of the loss of a mentor, an experience many of have had, but few of us have had the opportunity to write about. That is one of the beauties of this journal. It is a place where sadness and loss can often take on new life.

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