

# Letter from the Editors

Michael A. Dover, Editor (2012-2017)

**Abstract:** The editor announces discontinuation of subscriptions and plans to publish the journal as an open access journal beginning with Volume 21, Number 1 in January 2016. An appeal is made for support of the journal to help make this possible. New editors are welcomed to the journal's editorial team. A call is made for contributions to the Many Way of Narrative series in the journal.

**Keywords:** Open access; subscriptions; narratives; epistemology; human needs

## Be Sure to See the Last Issue!

Before you read this issue, I must ask: did you see the last issue? Volume 20, Number 3, the Special Issue on Relative Caregiving, edited by Priscilla A. Gibson and Sandra Edmonds Crewe, was a short but powerful issue. It was only listed as the Current issue on our website for about two weeks, prior to the publication of this issue. Of course, it can still be found in Archives.

I would encourage you to read it. The current issue also includes a narrative about caregiving, in a sense. After all, relative caregiving and professional caregiving have in common relationships with people who are facing death more imminently than earlier in their lives. In "Writing to Cope: Meaning Making for Professionals Caring for the Cancer Patient," Nicole Saint-Louis discusses the value of narratives for engaging in social work practice with people with cancer. She discusses the role of narratives in meaning making, the nature of narrative theory, its link with narrative therapy, and the burgeoning field of narrative medicine. She doesn't just tell about this, she shows examples of how narratives help illuminate the nature of the suffering and loss experienced by the professional helpers who are helping individuals and families cope with dying and death.

## Developments at Reflections

Before discussing some of the other narratives in this issue, this letter needs to inform readers of some important developments at the journal. This issue completes Volume 20, which was originally scheduled to be published in 2014.

Over the first three months of 2016, the journal will publish four issues in Volume 21, originally scheduled for publication in 2015. We've been following standard journal practice of back-dating issues until we catch up from delays associated with the transition to Cleveland State University and to the

online status of the journal. The website specifies when each issue is actually published, as does the inside cover page. Soon, however, *Reflections* will be fully up to date. Volume 21 (2015) will be completed early in 2016, including Special Issues on Honoring Our Indigenous Elders; Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice; Families of Origin and one issue with general submissions and special section articles.

This will put the journal back on track to publish four issues of Volume 22 in 2016 on schedule. These will include the Special Issue on Librarians as Helping Professionals, the Special Issue on Social Work with Children and Youth, and two general issues including one with the long awaited Special Section on Southern African Reflections on Social Justice. We are also expecting two proposals for themed Special Section and will be issuing Open Calls for Narratives in those areas in the coming months.

*Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* is an important journal in social work and the helping professions. One need only read the articles in this issue and in the Relative Caregiving Issue to see how compelling, moving, and intellectually valuable our narratives are. They are useful in teaching, in informing practice, and in thinking through difficult conceptual issues in light of the realities of practice.

In this Letter, I am asking *Reflections* readers, schools of social work and social agencies for the financial support necessary to ensure the survival and development of this beloved journal. A Friends of Reflections account has been established at the Cleveland State University Foundation to provide for the publication of this important journal.

Subscriptions have been discontinued and the journal very much needs support from Friends of Reflections. We will soon formally announce our plans to publish this journal as an open access journal. Please consider becoming a Friend of Reflections, through the link on our website.

## Art Comes First

One article in this issue, by Heather Pizzanello, discusses the role of the humanities in social work education. One of the unique qualities of this journal is our cover illustrations. For each issue, we publish not only the articles but a full issue PDF, including the cover page, inside cover page, and table of contents. Once again in this issue, as had been the case for a number of years prior to the journal coming to Cleveland State University, Robin Richesson, our Art Director, has captured the essence of what needed to be conveyed. In this case, she drew a wonderful portrait of the late Dennis Saleebey. Further below I discuss the interview with Dennis done by Jon Christopher Hall.

Here at Cleveland State University, we are very grateful for the support provided by California State University Long Beach School of Social Work for the transition of publishing and copyright privileges to our university. The last editor there, Eileen Mayers Pasztor, was very helpful as we began our publication with Volume 18, Number Two. The former and current directors, Christian Molidor and Nancy-Meyer Adams, were both instrumental in this transition. Robin has continued to graciously provide important cover illustrations to this journal. We look forward to her continued contributions to one thing that makes this journal unique: it's cover illustrations. To quickly see the cover art in recent issues, visit the new link on our web page to Cover Art, Tables of Contents, and Introductions. This links to a PDF file with that material for all issues since Volume 18, Number One. It permits the reader to scroll through and see not only the wonderful art, but also the tables of contents and descriptions of articles. This is a great way to choose narratives for reading. The articles themselves are then available on the links from Current and Archives.

## Growing Editorial Team

Reflections continues to build a solid editorial team. The current editorial team can always be found under About, Editorial Team, on our website. However, I wanted to utilize this Letter to provide that list, as it shows, I think, the potential for further growth and leadership of this journal.

First, there is Cathleen A. Lewandowski, Ph.D., Director and Professor (Cleveland State University School of Social Work, Publisher). Cathleen came to our School in Summer 2014, after having already

completed the editorship of one of the Special Issue on Therapeutic Relationships with Service Members, Veterans and their Families, published in Fall 2014. She has been very supportive of the journal and will be leading our efforts to publish the journal as an open access journal with growing support from our readers and institutional friends and partners.

I have already mentioned Robin Richesson, M.F.A., Art Director (Professor of Art, California State University Long Beach). To be frank, *Reflections* would not be *Reflections* without the art.

Denice Goodrich-Liley, Ph.D., Associate Editor, Field Education (Boise State University School of Social Work) has served since publication of the Special Issue on Field Education (Volume 18, Number Two), as we continue to build a network to help us edit this important permanent section of the journal.

Johanna Slivinske, M.S.W., Associate Editor, Review Quality (Youngstown State University Department of Social Work), previously served first as Assistant and then Associate Editor for Issue Quality. In that capacity, she proofread each issue, copy edited and provided feedback on the Letters from the Editors, and in general helped us enhance our quality. Johanna is a published *Reflections* author and reviewer, an active clinical social worker, a part-time social work educator, and author or co-author of two books. Johanna will be working with me as we strive to enhance the quality of current double-blind, two peer review process.

Arlene Reilly-Sandoval, D.S.W., Associate Editor, Issue Quality (Southeast Missouri State University), also serves as co-editor with Carol Langer of the Teaching and Learning Section. Arlene has been an active reviewer and published her first narrative in Volume 17, Number 2, prior to her article in the Relative Caregiving issue, Volume 20, Number 3. She offered to not only proof read her own article but also to copy edit and proofread this entire issue. She has now agreed to serve as Associate Editor for Issue Quality, in the capacity vacated by Johanna. I am very grateful for her undertaking this role.

In addition, the journal has three Associate Editors without portfolio, who have already made important contributions to the journal. Jennifer Bellamy, Ph.D., Associate Editor (University of Denver School of Social Work), previously edited the Special Issue on Mentoring in the Helping Professions (Volume 18, Number 3).

Priscilla Gibson, Ph.D., Associate Editor (Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work), has co-edited the Special Issue on Relative Caregiving (with Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Dean of the Howard University School of Social Work). Along with Sadye Logan, Professor Emeritus at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work, she also co-edits the soon-to-appear Special Issue on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice.

Laura Béres, Ph.D., Associate Editor (Kings University College, University of Western Ontario) has been an active reviewer and is a well known scholar and practitioner in the field of narrative therapy. Narratives in this journal aren't necessarily informed by such an approach to professional helping or by its underlying epistemological and theoretical perspective. But the importance of narrativity generically is an important underlying foundation for this journal.

We now are very lucky to have a full complement of editors for our permanent special sections. These are not themed special sections of the kind that will replace special issues in the future. For the Call for Special Themed Sections, please see on our website. Our permanent special sections publish important narratives in areas the journal wants to emphasize, including Research Reflections, Teaching and Learning Reflections, Field Education, and Historical Reflections. See our Call for Narratives for more information.

Julie Cooper Altman, Ph.D., Research Reflections Section Editor (California State University, Monterrey Bay) had published a narrative, *How I Lost (And Gained) My Faith in the Potential of Social Work Practice Through Research*, in Volume 11, Number Four, as well as one other narrative.

Carol A. Langer, Ph.D. (Colorado State University Pueblo) and Arlene F. Reilly-Sandoval, D.S.W. (Southeast Missouri State University), Teaching and Learning Section Co-Editors, have undertaken leadership of one of our most active sections, as can be seen by the contents of this issue.

J. Christopher Hall, Ph.D., School of Social Work, U. of North Carolina at Wilmington, Historical Reflections Editor, has agreed to edit the Historical Reflections section. Well known for his linking of social constructionism to social work, Chris took the initiative to suggest the publication of his interview with Dennis Saleebey in this issue. Out of work around that article it became apparent that he can help

us take historical reflections seriously in this journal. The fact he adds a social constructivist orientation to the journal's editorial term is what in New Orleans we called *langiappe*, a little bit extra.

Kailie M. Johnson, B.S.W. Candidate, Editorial Associate, joined us in September 2014 and has been invaluable. Innumerable authors have worked with her and she is actively collaborating with the special editors for the Family of Origin special issue and the Children and Youth special issue. Kai has mastered the Open Journal Systems software that publishes the journal. Over the holidays, she is doing copy editing and proof reading.

Maureen O'Connor, M.A., M.S.W. Candidate, is our 2015-2016 Graduate Assistant. Readers will note that she co-authored the last two Letters from the Editors. Maureen has been staffing the special issues on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice, Honoring Our Indigenous Elders, and Relative Caregiving.

### The Present Issue

This issue publishes a number of valuable narratives. First I would like to mention the article keyed to our cover illustration. This journal has a long tradition of publishing interviews with key figures, and this interview continues that tradition. The editors are open to other suggestions for interviews. To see who has been interviewed in the past, just visit our website at [www.rnoph.org](http://www.rnoph.org) and use the search engine by typing in interviews under all categories. Press Search and see that those interviewed have included Frances Fox Piven, Mimi Abramovitz, Ann Hartman, Katherine Kendall, Chauncey Alexander, Richard Cloward, Alex Gitterman and David Gil.

Dennis Saleebey's work is well-known and central to social work and other helping professions. In the interview in this issue, Dennis asked a provocative question: "To what extent do the constructions that we have – for example, like multiculturalism – to what extent does that reflect a set of values that are important to the profession?" Later, he pointed out the many different ways people socially construct the nature of the world around them: "They're not totally different, there are similarities and themes that run across what different people would say, but there are differences." Finally, Dennis talked about his approach to postmodernism, and how he would often rail against empirical, empiricist, quantitative research: "Used to drive me nuts." He felt that some research based upon such approaches "bastardized the complexity of human behavior to me."

## A Digression of Sorts

Here is where ye olde editor admits that during the last 25 years that positivism and postmodernism have contended with each other in social work education, he has been an aficionado of critical realism, an epistemological third way that has recently gained more attention from social work scholars (Longhofer & Floersch, 2012). I have applied this approach as I have worked with theories of human need, which tend to stress between group human similarities, and theories of oppression, which recognize between-group domination and difference. I have linked these theories while theorizing the nature of social injustice, which I see as produced by the roles of oppression, dehumanization, and exploitation in creating systematically unequal opportunities for people and communities to address our common human needs in our culturally preferred manners. Along the way I have probably “railed” a bit myself about both positivism and postmodernism, since theory of human need has been criticized for focusing on human deficits rather than on human strengths. But I’ve been lucky to have corresponded with those who encouraged my normative obsession with human needs. One of those persons was Dennis Saleebey.

After Barbara Hunter Randall Joseph and I wrote the entry on Human Needs: Overview in the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (Dover and Joseph, 2008), I sent Dennis a copy, with great trepidation. I drew his attention to our contention (2008):

The strengths-based model of practice stressed that social workers focus on the assets of clients. This model reflected concern that needs talk can reinforce stigmatizing clients as needy, which could in turn lead to the disempowerment of clients (Saleebey, 2006). Arguably, however, the strengths perspective's focus on human capabilities is fully consistent with the use of the capabilities concept in human needs theory...

Shortly thereafter, I received this communication from Dennis by email in early 2008:

Hi, Mike, I read your piece with interest and I have no problem with the way you employ the idea of needs especially within the larger framework of social justice, and collective and individual rights. The primary difficulty that Charlie Rapp and I see is that needs are often defined narrowly and directly associated with deficits as opposed to being understood as ‘common human needs’ to be met if a society is to

be just and equitable in its distribution of those social resources necessary for the development of personal and familial resources.

What Dennis said then is consistent with what he said in the interview about a “set of values” important to social work. After all, if we are serious about an ethical commitment to addressing human needs, do we not need to clarify the nature of our valuation of human need? Does this not require recognizing that human needs are not weaknesses but rather, along with our dreams and aspirations, part of what make us uniquely human? Are not needs at one and the same time (a) biological, (b) developmental, (c) socially constructed, (d) socially structured, and (e) socially theorized?

These are not questions we should consider settled. Questions about needs and struggles over needs should, however, complement efforts to develop an unsettled social work situated in social justice (Rossiter, 2011). If we were to conceptualize a Venn diagram of how the helping professions have theory and knowledge about (a) to (e) above, to what degree would there be an overlap?

In more recent discussion of needs and strengths, I have contended (Dover, 2016): “For social work, perhaps the most common source of conceptual confusion concerns the relationship of needs and strengths.” I cite research that draws on both the strength perspective and needs theory, including self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987) and a theory of human need (Gough, 2015). I hope the dear reader will forgive this brief detour into personal narrative about an important event in my life – correspondence with Dennis Saleebey – and my reflections upon it. In my defense, letters from previous editors have often addressed issues considered important to the helping professions and to society at large, and it is hoped that future editors will also do so after my term ends in May 2017.

Another reason I also wanted to discuss this question of epistemology was to say that in my view narrative is not the captive of any one particular ontology, epistemology or method. Contributions to this journal, including those of the authors, reviewers and editors, can come from those who are positivists, realists, phenomenologists, social constructionists or any number of other ists. They can come as well from those who have adopted any number of isms.

When I learned how to write process recordings back in the day, they were as verbatim as possible in their

presentation of what was said and done. A practice decision is something said or not said or done or not done in work with a client system. Such a decision can take place in a split second. Split seconds and key moments are not easy to portray in a vignette and have to be put in the context of the relationship and the setting and the events that lead to those moments. After all, in addition to what is said or not said, done or not done, there are also things that are felt (or not felt) and perceived or not perceived, both at the time and when thought about retrospectively. A good process recording would provide an honest account of all that, and more.

I'm not sure how variation among different ontologies or and epistemologies figures into that process. For instance, recently I participated in the process of jury selection. Where I sat in the jury box, I had a bird's eye view of the court reporter, as she took down as best she could everything that was said by everyone. Arguably, a good narrative might include such an approach to doing one's best to portray the actual nature of the verbal interaction. But I'm not sure what best practices are in court reporting. Is laughter noted? Tears? Pauses? How are interruptions handled? Arguably, given our limited capacity for processing what goes on around us, there may be trade offs between getting all of the words down and perceiving what else is happening in the room: the reactions of the gallery, the defendant, and the inner life of the observer.

For an approach to narrative that departs significantly from anything resembling a stenographic approach, please see the approach taken by Sara Morton (2014) in her *Reflections* narrative, "Cold: A Meditation on Loss." In yet another approach to narrative, we soon hope to publish at least one article that includes narrative poetry. Narratives in this journal use a mix of approaches from a variety of voices, including accounts provided by helping professional and the person(s) helped.

As this journal grows and develops, there will be many kinds of narratives published. But it helps for authors and reviewers and editors to have available to us essays and examples of the narrative form. I would like to repeat an earlier call for submissions of essays to our Many Ways of Narrative series. The idea for this series came from a reading of Benjamin Shepard's "Reflections on *Reflections*: Narrative turn in social work" (2000). The first contribution was Josh Canary's "Show and tell: Narrative and exposition in *Reflections*" (2002).

If you would like to write about the process of writing narratives for this journal, please consider writing a contribution to the Many Ways of Narrative series in this journal. A narrative about the writing of a narrative of practice would also be valuable. And a narrative about the research on narrative therapy would also be welcome, especially for the Research Reflections section edited by Julie Altman.

### Other Narratives in this Issue

In the next article, "What I've Learned About Activism, Privilege, and Negotiating Boundaries as an Early Career Academic," Shane Brady displays the personal and professional courage that exemplify narratives published in this journal. He gives an account of campus activism in which he personally participated. Shane says, "I am and always will consider myself a community organizer and activist who became a social worker." One of the works he cites, David Wagner's *Quest for a Radical Profession*, created a typology of radical social workers, including those highly critical of social work and those highly identified with social workers, as well as those who were more organizationally embedded in terms of how they saw their march through the institutions. This is a typology relevant to the issues raised by Shane.

Clearly, as was once suggested by Dr. Marti Bombyk, there are activists who come into social work, and there are social workers who come into activism. Shane is saying he was an activist before he came into social work, and he still sees that as a primary commitment. Shane talked of his efforts to involve social work students in anti-racist and other activism. These would be social workers coming into activism. Very few of them were likely activists before becoming social workers. Narratives of coming into social work and coming into activism are important for this journal, which prioritizes narratives of practice, narratives of activism by helping professionals, narratives of research, narratives of teaching and learning, narratives of field education, and historical narratives, of which Shane's is a more contemporary example.

Other narratives in this issue also touch upon the question of involving social work students. Two of them concern the role of faculty and students overseas. Samantha Wyman and Regina T. Praetorius discuss their efforts to bring social work students to India in order to work with local women and church leaders around intimate partner violence. As important as the work in India was, however, the narrative stressed the importance of the social justice values of social work

in reinforcing efforts to improve the human experience, including ongoing work here in the US.

In “When Things Fall Apart in Guatemala: Contemplative Service Advising,” Kielty Turner portrays service learning in Guatemala, and the special role of contemplative practices such as journaling. Her narrative is a reflection on the application of Buddhist concepts while serving as an advisor on a service learning trip to Guatemala. The writer explores mindfulness, acceptance, and compassion while journaling on the trip. Insight is provided regarding how to deepen the connection of the advisor's and the students' experiences. The author praises the role of journaling in general. In this case, it enables her subsequent narrative. In other cases, she feels, journals can help students explore feelings about field experiences and classroom material. As this narrative shows, journals and process recordings are perhaps the best basis for solid narratives for this journal.

In his article on his journey as a social work professor, Victor Manalo discussed the evolution of his ability to commit himself to the full integration of his spiritual self into his professional life in his social work practice and teaching. This and a number of other articles are published in our new Teaching and Learning Reflections section, edited by Carol Langer and Arlene Reilly-Sandoval. These are narratives of what Alex Gitterman told his students might be called “teaching practice,” by which he meant the practice of teaching.

In their narrative, “Reflections on an Experiential Poverty Simulation Filtered through the Mind's Eye of Three Faculty Members,” Stephen Monroe Tomczak, Heather C. Pizzanello, and Dana A. Schneider display another characteristic of good *Reflections* narratives: they question their own teaching practice. After describing how they developed and implemented a poverty simulation program, they asked whether along the way they may have “failed to do what we teach all our social work students” to do, namely starting where the client is. They wondered if they had started where the students were! They also came to realize how much the experience had an impact on their own views of poverty and their own approaches to social work education.

In “Reflections on the Process of Evolving from a Student of Literature to a Social Work Instructor of Humanism,” Heather Catherine Pizzanello makes an important connection between social work and the

humanities. Her narrative **shows** how she infuses literature and other material from the humanities onto the teaching of clinical social work. The narrative **tells** the story of how she came to use this approach. And the narrative **reflects** upon the process. Showing, telling, and reflecting are the three core elements of the narratives in this journal. Heather's narrative and her role as co-author of a second narrative in this issue were both undertaken when her title was ABD (the dreaded status of being all-but-dissertation). Dr. Pizzanello's work is a great example of how doctoral students can and should consider writing narratives for this journal.

In fact, Julie Altman, editor of our Research Reflections section, has written the members of GADE (Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work) with just such a suggestion. There is one narrative from that section in this issue: “New Paradigm in Social Work Research: It's Here, It's Queer, Get Used to It!”

In that article, Dirk de Jong relates the nature of his qualitative research on how school social workers engage (or don't quite engage) gender-variant students. He discusses the value of using Queer theory in such research. Queer theory was actually used. In a sense, de Jong was theorizing Queer theory, not just using Queer theory. He was “queering” the discourse about his subject. For de Jong, Queer theory was a “critical lens through which to view issues of identity.” He was theorizing identity using queer theory. This kind of approach is consistent with emerging trends in social theory (Swedberg, 2014), which emphasize the process of theorizing. This article is a good example of how narratives in this journal can help contribute to theorizing and to theory, although it is important to note that narratives in this journal do not need to do so.

In fact, some of the best narratives don't have a single reference. That's *Reflections* for you. I hope you enjoy this issue!

## References

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1987). The support of autonomy and the control of behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(6), 1024-1037.
- Dover, M. A. & Joseph, B. H. R. (2008). Human Needs: Overview. In T. Mizrahi & L. Davis (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Social Work* (20<sup>th</sup> Edition, pp. 398-406). New York: Oxford University Press and National Association of Social Workers.

Dover, M. A. (2016, forthcoming). Human Needs: Overview. In C. Franklin (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Social Work* (Electronic Edition). New York: Oxford University Press and National Association of Social Workers.

Gough, I. (2015). Climate change and sustainable welfare: An argument for the centrality of human needs. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 39(5), 1191-1214.

Kanary, J. (2012). Many Ways of Narrative Series: Show and Tell (Narrative and Exposition in Reflections). *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 18(4), 4-5.

Longhofer, J. & Floersch, J. (2012). The coming crisis in social work: Some thoughts on social work and social science. *Research in Social Work Practice*, 22(5), 499-519.

Rossiter, A. (2011). Unsettled social work: The challenge of Levinas's ethics. *British Journal of*

*Social Work*, 41(5), 980-985.

Saleebey, D. (2006). *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Shepard, B. (2012). Reflections on *Reflections*: Narrative turn in social work. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 18(1), 83-85.

Swedberg, R. (2014). *The art of social theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Wagner, D. (1990). *The quest for a radical profession: Social service careers and political ideology*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

**About the Author(s):** Michael A. Dover, M.A., MSSW, Ph.D., is Editor (2012-2017). He is College Associate Lecturer, Cleveland State University School of Social Work ([reflections@csuohio.edu](mailto:reflections@csuohio.edu)).