REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS
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Reflections from the Editors

Michael A. Dover, Editor

Abstract: This reflection from the editors discusses the plans to bring the journal up to date in publishing schedule by January 2018; the upcoming Special issue on Interconnections Between Micro and Macro Practice; the appointment of Darlyne Bailey as Editor-in-Chief beginning September 2018; the role of theory in *Reflections* and in articles in this issue; the promise and pitfalls of relationships within social work education; the occupational hazards of the narrative process, and of editing this journal.

Keywords: theory, narratives, relationships, mentoring, langiappe, Jane Addams, Charlotte Towle, Bertha Reynolds, imposter syndrome, suicide, sociocultural membership identity, identity negotiation theory

Published December 7, 2017

Later in this introduction to Volume 22#4 (Fall 2016), I will acknowledge and thank the entire editorial team for their work over the five years of my editorship. If there is no room in this issue, I will do so in the final issue of my editorship, Volume 23#2 (Spring 2017), to be published later this month or in early January.

We have enough material on hand to publish two more issues (Summer and Fall 2017), and these will be published in December 2017 and January 2018, bringing the journal up to date, after delays associated with the transition to our being the publisher and for reasons of human frailty which will also be discussed in this letter.

Volume 23#1 (Winter 2017), the next issue, however, will be a special treat. It will comprise the Special Issue on Interconnections of Micro and Macro Practice: Sharing Experiences of the Real World, edited by Darlyne Bailey and Melissa Emmerson of Bryn Mawr. This is a very large issue with over twice the number of pages as this issue. This issue will also be the first issue whose copyediting and proofreading was done by our 2017-2018 graduate assistant, Tara Peters, MA, MSW-Candidate.

As part of the process of Cleveland State University (CSU) become the publisher of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* in May 2012, we pledged to continue the journal's strong narrative focus. We continued the journal's traditions and priorities. That said, although much of the legacy language was retained for the permanent Call for Narratives of *Reflections*, it was revised in a few minor ways when I became editor.

The Call for Narratives may well be revised again by the 2017-2018 co-editors or by Darlyne Bailey, Ph.D., Professor and Dean Emeritus at Bryn Mawr Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, who will become Editor-in-Chief in September 2018. Between Volume 22#3 and Volume 23#3 next Fall, the 2017-2018 Co-Editors are Julie Cooper Altman (California State University Monterrey); Michael A. Dover (Cleveland State University); Priscilla Gibson

(University of Minnesota); Arlene F. Reilly-Sandoval (Colorado State University Pueblo), and Johanna Slivinske (Youngstown State University). Please see the inside cover of the journal and the "About" (Editorial Team) section of the journal's website for our full editorial team.

Theory in Reflections?

As part of the transition, the goal was to maintain the narrative focus of the journal, but also to add a few additional elements to the nature of the manuscripts published in this journal. One key change surprised even this theory wonk: It suddenly occurred to me that *Reflections* narratives can truly make theoretical contributions! This would be what in New Orleans is called *Langiappe*: a little bit extra. And so the Call for Narratives, which can be found as an announcement on our website, has stated since 2012:

> Reflections narratives convey interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences. Rooted in the rich portrayal of key moments, this narrative content is conveyed via vignettes. This narrative content is placed within the context of a well-told story (exposition) that helps readers discover new ways of thinking about the personal, the professional, and the political in our lives. Authors then often reflect on that story and share conclusions. Often, however, the narrative stands alone, which in a way is powerful.
>
> General submissions to *Reflections* use this narrative method to present narratives of professional helping, broadly construed to include work with clients and communities and activism by helping professionals engaged in social justice work. Such articles are valuable for education for practice. They also contribute to empirical knowledge about the nature of practice in the helping professions. Finally, they often make important conceptual contributions via reflections that address unresolved theoretical problems.

The process of solving empirical problems and conceptual problems is closely linked (Laudan, 1977). The accounts of practice, teaching, history and research conveyed in this journal are inherently empirical in nature. Although often disguised to protect confidentiality, they provide an historical record of the nature of practice. These accounts may not be the result of a random sample, but they are hardly just anecdotal. At their core, they portray key moments of human interaction. A narrative vignette is wrapped around each moment, thus showing what happened and placing it in context. Those vignettes together provide tell a story. In this way narrative (showing what happened) is balanced with exposition (telling a story).

Most narratives also have a reflective element. The reflective element may be interspersed throughout, or it may be part of the introduction, discussion or conclusion. The reflective element can also involve commentary on theory and even original theoretical contributions. Some might be skeptical about this, so please allow me first to discuss the origin of my own realization of the theoretical potential of this journal, and then discuss the many articles in this issue which make theoretical contributions.

When I offered to bring *Reflections* to CSU, I had already written two narratives in this journal, as well as having co-edited or edited two special issues (one on Social Work and War in the Balkans, published as Volume 6#2 in 2000; one on Work and the Workplace, published as Volume 16#3 in 2010). The first narrative was "Rapport, Empathy, and Oppression: Cross-Cultural Vignettes" (Dover, 2009). Based on process recordings of my practice in several settings, I introduced a typology of oppression, dehumanization and exploitation. This typology arose from my teaching, and is now the basis for my current theoretical work on human injustice. In that article, I also re-thought two sets of theoretical and methodological assumptions: the relationship of rapport and empathy and the requirements of effective cross-cultural social work. I concluded with respect to both of these that an understanding of oppression dehumanization and exploitation, as well as recognition of both human similarities and differences, permitted the exercise of empathy even without an easily-established rapport. Previous research assumed rapport was essential to establishing empathy.

Next was my article (Dover, 2010), "Social Working for Social Justice," for the Special Issue on Social Justice , edited by Paul Abels and Sonia Leib Abels. First I used Barry Checkoway's typology of forms of community practice, and then I produced a typology of activism, based upon an examination of my own social justice work. One lesson, here, is that the application of key concepts to new arenas, and the invention of new typologies, can be a valuable way in which *Reflections* articles can include theoretical material. But that is just a hypothesis. What do the articles in this issue contribute in this way? Not that they have to, as the Call for Narratives makes clear. In fact, I prefer a moving and meaningful narrative – sans theory – any day, over one which seems theory-driven rather than narrative-driven.

Michael Babcock's article, "That Which Cannot Be Remedied Must be Endured," is a particularly well-written manuscript about the heartbreaking experience of a health-care team from Utah working with children in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. If you ever wondered why narratives of professional helping make a valuable contribution to the professional literature, read this manuscript and you will see why. This article reinforces the sad point at which we often realize we cannot be of help. Babcock's narrative of horror and hope, and the practice wisdom found even in its title, says something universal about professional helping: Sometimes we have to say, "I'm sorry...Lo siento."

When we reach that point, it is often because we fear doing harm if we tried to help. After all, as Bertha Reynolds has said, it should not hurt to be helped (Reynolds, 1951). Perhaps, however, doing no harm often means taking on ourselves the some of the pain and suffering our clients and communities experience. We can call it, if we want, vicarious trauma. But take it on we do.

Reading *Reflections* narratives also can involve experiencing – from a somewhat safe distance – the pain and suffering portrayed. Reading these narratives is a kind of emotional labor, in many respects. Perhaps that is why I put off reading them thoroughly and writing this until the first free weekend after the bulk of my grading was done this term.

It is exactly because they can be thought- and feeling-provoking that reading *Reflections* is certainly a good thing for students to do regularly. I've found that integrating *Reflections* narratives into the classroom helps students connect theory to portrayed experience. I am grateful for the article by Jonghyun Lee and Kate Willow Robinson, "Self-Reflections of a Gay Immigrant Social Worker," which my BSW students (in a macro human behavior in the social environment course) have been reading, alongside an article on intersectionality by Patricia Hill Collins, for four semesters now (Collins, 2015; Lee & Robinson, 2015).

The students re-defined intersectionality for themselves (Dover, 2017) and have applied Collins's theory to Jonghyun Lee's account. I would encourage readers who are instructors to assign *Reflections* narratives. Also, when you read a *Reflections* article, please write the author(s) and let them know you read the article!

Authors appreciate that. For example, when Patricia Hill Collins received a copy of our student's composite definition of intersectionality, she wrote me saying (email communication, August 18, 2017) , "Thank you for sending your students' work....Sometimes when I publish something, it is challenging for me. I wonder if anyone ever read it. Now I know that the intrepid students at Cleveland State did!" **Write your favorite Reflections author today!**

Maya Williams' article, "Foundation Field Internship and Identity Formation," was published in the Field Education Section, edited by Beth Lewis. Williams situated her narrative within a typology of identity formation, intersectionality, and cultural humility, manifested in accounts of self-realization, along with realizations about the world surrounding her and her clients. Defining intersectionality, both conceptually and experientially, is inherently a process of theorizing. Seen in this way, theory isn't something that merely is, it is something we do: We theorize about the world around us (Swedberg, 2014).

When theorizing is seen this way, we can write narrative accounts that include instances of how we and the people and the communities with whom we work actively theorize about how things work, and don't work, in our daily lives. We theorize about why, perhaps, things are the way they seem to be. We theorize about whether, perhaps, things aren't the way they seem to be, and we wonder if another world is truly possible.

In her account, Williams theorized that work with her clients at first challenged and then strengthened her process of identity formation. Interpersonal communication led to a re-negotiation of her sociocultural membership identity, a concept which is now in the keywords of her (and this) article. This in turn connected with her use of the concept of intersectionality. Once again, this proved valuable in her work with clients. Her realization of the significance of cultural humility was the third aspect in her typology of key concepts: identify formation, intersectionality, and cultural humility.

Often, theorizing involves juxtaposing several concepts and forming a formal or informal typology, which in turn guides interpretation of key experiences. This is a good theorizing tool

for *Reflections* narratives. In this way, Williams identified concepts which are valuable to understanding the process of learning and teaching. The time span from her undergraduate and MSW work at University of Texas Austin to her doctoral work at The Brown School at Washington University at St. Louis has clearly been a rich one, both experientially and theoretically. Educators in the helping professions should encourage students to find their own way to combine theorizing and narrative writing.

In the Research Reflections section, "Shrouded in Privilege: Reflexively Exploring a Troubling Experience in Team Research," by Samantha Clarke, links poetry and theory in order to show how she deconstructed a system of power, one which arose from the epistemological invisibility she experienced in carrying out what might, on the surface, seem to be a rather standard piece of survey research.

Clarke illustrated how the research process is laden with power and positionalities, across the spectrums of intersectionality. Clarke comprehended these complexities through poetry that communicated a reflexive inner dialogue. She drew on a rich theoretical vocabulary, in order to draw a conceptual map of what she was seeing and feeling, if the editor may be permitted to so characterize her work.

It shouldn't be considered unusual for poetry to creep into the narrative process. Unless we are repressing our inner poetic selves, wouldn't it be natural for us to lapse into poetry? One line of Clarke's poetry bears particular mention, and I think it can be shared in isolation without ruining the later impact of the poem: "I teach the rhetoric of social work. Will that truly suffice?" In this article and in this poem, she raises important questions about knowledge and power, and about teaching and research. Ultimately, they are theoretical points.

If ever we questioned the wisdom of having a Research Reflections section in this journal, Clarke's conclusion makes it clear as to why this is a good fit for this journal:

> Writing "Shrouded in Privilege" became critical to the examination of my role in the research project, offering the opportunity to process my own reflexive learning and providing a voice that would otherwise have remained silent and troubled. In the process of writing this article, I have become more aware that articulating my feelings sometimes relies on the very constructions that I am trying to resist—silos of experience based on a single identity, polarities of right and wrong, commodification of knowledge and silenced voices, self and Other.

For reasons that will become apparent, I will for now pass over the next article, "Death of a Student: Dealing with Competing Interests," by Jodi Constantine Brown, and "Overcoming imposter syndrome: How my students trained me to teach them," by Randall Nedegaard, both in the Teaching and Learning Reflections Section co-edited (during the time these articles were accepted) by Carol Langer and Arlene Reilly-Sandoval. They bear upon issues of student-faculty relationships which deserve a focused consideration by this editor and by the readers of this

issue.

Theory, Art, and Narrative

As pointed out recently (Brooks, 2017), Jane Addams didn't just try to change the world, she theorized about its nature. She used art and music in her social work. She was caring but also analytic. Must it take David Brooks to remind us about the centrality of theory for social work? The lack of receptivity to theory within social work academe is one theme within the article by Natarajan and Sloane, "Growing Out of the Academic Box: Social Justice through Art and Collaboration."

In this article, the relationship between theory and the humanities became apparent. The authors began by reviewing the relationship of art therapy and talk therapy, within the broader context of the notion of social work as both art and science. Both from the standpoint of practice and that of research, they argued: "By looking at social problems from a variety of vantage points and considering what is learned from intuition, practice wisdom, creativity, rationality, and scientific observation, social work broadens the possibility of finding solutions."

They then dialogued—in the voices of each author—about their experience with the 11th Annual Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference, founded by Celia Williamson and hosted by the University of Toledo. In the process, the authors drew on critical theory, feminist theory and cultural studies in order to discuss collaborative creativity, in the context of the processes of both quantitative and qualitative research.

Natarajan and Sloane point out that if you pay attention, the presence of art is more pervasive than we may realize. The same is the case for theory. Art and theory–the making of art and the process of theorizing–are more part of our daily lives than we realize. We can and should incorporate this realization into our narrative accounts of our daily lives. Theorizing arises from our daily experiences of striving to understand the world around us. Clearly, *Reflections* narratives can play a role in defining and applying theoretical concepts, critiquing and refining existing theories, presenting creative and original theoretical sentences, creating new theoretical typologies, making progress towards solving empirical and conceptual problems, and pointing the way toward theoretical process in social work and the helping professions. Thank you, dear reader, for the opportunity and privilege to try to pull together these observations about the narratives in this wonderful journal.

Occupational Hazards of Narrative Processes

Occupational hazards are par for the course in any position. That has certainly been true of being an editor of this journal. Each step of the way there are hazards involved. Serving as an editor or reviewer of *Reflections* involves a great deal of emotional labor. You never know when you will walk into the quicksand of a wrenching account. You never know whether you will get through unscathed.

Of course, it is our authors who are the ones who are really doing the emotional labor, in their professional helping, in their teaching, in their research, in their activism, in their lives. It is in their professional work as practitioners, teachers, activists and researchers and in their personal and political lives that the serious emotional labor is being done. There *Reflections* authors vicariously experience the emotions of the people with whom they work on a daily basis.

After five yeas of my own post-MSW practice in New Orleans, I encountered Florence Vigilante at a conference. I asked her what the knowledge base of social work was really about. She answered with one word: feelings. That sort of threw me for a loop. It produced a bit of cognitive dissonance.

It helped at the time to remember that when I went into social work in the mid-1970s, I had convinced myself I couldn't become obsolete for one good reason: human needs were what they were and were not likely to change, regardless of technological change. If I could learn to understand what human needs were really all about, and how they were related to my predilection for social justice, I would be in good shape.

I wondered how those needs and those feelings related to oppression. Soon, teaching part-time at Fordham University in 1990, my students and I devised a way of linking feelings to oppression. Starting with lists of words and affective phrases from Hepworth and Larsen (1990), we realized they didn't overlap very much with the dozens (soon hundreds) of words we identified that expressed the feelings that arose at the moment of the experience of an act of oppression. Later, we theorized (right in class) that such moments of injustice were not all related to oppression. Some of the same emotions arose at moments associated with exploitation and dehumanization. This was theorizing right in the classroom. I called it class theory. I recently published an article which presented that typology, and a summary of that list of words and affective phrases (Dover, 2016), as applied to the question of microaggressions.

In some ways, that conversation with Florence changed the focus of my social work life. I wanted to understand what happens at the moment of a practice decision. I wanted to understand more about how practice decisions take place in a split second. After all, practice decisions are things we say or don't say, do or don't do at a particular moment. I wanted to understand what, exactly, takes place at the intersection of the individual and the social environment where social workers stand alongside people. It is there that we work together to overcome barriers and take advantage of opportunities to address our human needs.

I began to explore these issues in my own writing of narratives for *Reflections* and in my own theoretical work about human needs and social injustice. I became convinced that *Reflections* was a perfect place for these issues to be explored. Thus, I was devastated to learn in January 2012 that *Reflections* might not longer be published. But I would not have had the gall to come forward with a proposal for CSU to publish the journal, and would certainly never have agreed to serve as editor, were it not for the support of two mentors: Charles Garvin (Michigan) and Alex Gitterman (Columbia, now Connecticut).

Somehow I also passed muster with Sonia and Paul Abels, whom we soon invited to a reception here in Cleveland, and later to a session of the Cuyahoga County Conference on Social Welfare. Finally, there was Murali Nair, our director, who told me, "The sky's the limit." Our current director, Cathleen Lewandowski, arrived in July 2014 (two years later), having nearly completed the process of editing the Special Issue on Therapeutic Relationships with Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families. Somehow, so far, the journal has managed to survive and flourish. We have had the participation of a dozen editors, dozens of peer reviewers, dozens of Friends of *Reflections*, and a solid group of Institutional Friends of Reflections. Please see our website announcement about Friends of Reflections for a full list.

But in the end, the survival of this journal is all about relationships. It is relationships which form the core of the narratives in our articles. And it is relationships which make the work of the journal possible. We will continue to thrive if we can keep our narratives close to those powerful moments from which feelings arise and around which vignettes can be written. One moment. Many feelings, which we strive to capture in words. One vignette showing what happened. That is the start of an article in this journal, as I see it. But there are many ways of narrative. We will hopefully have more contributions to the Many Ways of Narrative series. And the new Co-Editors and next Editor-in-Chief will pioneer yet new ways of encouraging narratives for this wonderful journal.

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

In this Letter, so far, I've tried to make the case that our narratives can often involve complex ideas and theories. But as the Call for Narratives also says, sometimes the narrative alone, devoid of any fancy intellectualizing, is what is needed. As another well-known social worker, Michael Austin, told me—and I'm afraid this is not something I've taken enough to heart—"Everything is relationship."

This issue contains three important narratives about the relationships of faculty members and students, and their myriad aspects: Stephanie Hamm's "Mentoring the Thesis"; Jodi Constantine Brown's narrative, "Death of a Student: Dealing with Competing Interests;" and "Overcoming Imposter Syndrome: How My Students Trained Me to Teach Them," by Randall Nedegaard.

Just as with Williams' narrative, pairing professional and intellectual growth was also a theme in Stephanie Hamm's "Mentoring the Thesis," which was published in our Research Reflections Section, edited by Julie Altman. This narrative focused less on her own research and more on how she, as a social work educator, self-consciously distinguished between research supervision and professional mentoring, two distinct, if, reinforcing roles.

Hamm's article, like the three articles from the Teaching and Learning Section, may seem from their topic to have little potential for adding to theory. But the distinction between teaching and mentoring is not well-understood. Not only is it important for such practical matters of faculty workload calculations, the later article, "Death of a Student: Dealing with Competing Interests,"

by Jodi Constantine Brown, shows this can even bear on matters of life and death.

Brown began by discussing her own professional background and by revealing she wasn't called to doing therapy in the same way many of her students were. She pointed out that the work of an academic doesn't involve being a therapist, but "there were moments talking to students when I felt it would have been extremely helpful to have greater confidence in my therapeutic skills."

She then told the story of Amanda (a pseudonym), a student who was anxious about her capstone project, whom Brown was supervising. She gave an account of the relationships Amanda had with the other students in her in-person cohort, but then noted that Amanda needed to withdraw from that cohort and join the online cohort due to the need to provide care to her father. She was also married and the mother of two young children. Apparently, the difficult balance between work, family, and school was often the source of the conversations among the students in the in-person cohort. She attributed the heightened anxiety about her capstone project both to her perfectionism and to her shift to being in the online cohort.

Although she had only six classes left (including the capstone project) and had completed her field placements, Amanda was worried she would never finish. She quickly adapted and became active in the online cohort, a program coordinated by the author. However, soon she asked for weekly in-person sessions to discuss her capstone project, and Brown agreed.

I hesitate to try to summarize the rest of the story; this narrative deserves to be read by any social work educator involved in teaching online students or capstone projects. Suffice it to say that the death of Amanda would lead to the need for serious discussion and ethical reflection about our responsibilities as social work educators to ensuring the safety and emotional health of our students taking online courses.

Randall Nedegaard's article, "Overcoming Imposter Syndrome: How My Students Trained Me to Teach Them," likewise provided an account of how we as social work educators often feel unprepared for the tasks of serving as a faculty member. In Nedegaard's case, he had a longstanding background in clinical practice. Brown was confident in her teaching but apprehensive about not having a background in counseling. Nedegaard was confident about his clinical skills, but less so about his teaching skills.

Nedegaard discussed a concept, imposter syndrome, which is very much underutilized. He defined it this way: "It describes feeling that others perceive you as being more competent and expert than you actually feel and it correlates with perfectionism." Although his focus was on faculty feeling this way, the narrative about Amanda suggests that perhaps students feel this way as well.

The narratives of Maya Williams as a student and Stephanie Hamm as a professor could also be read with the concept of imposter syndrome in mind. I'm not saying this is the case in the accounts they present. I'm suggesting we think in general about "reading into" our experiences

with students the hypothesis that imposter syndrome (which, of course, is a continuum, not some kind of diagnosis) is more prevalent than we realize. This may be the case for our students and for ourselves.

Nedegaard's manuscript deserves to be read by social work educators. The core of the article is based upon the feedback he received from students. Seven themes emerged from this feedback, including teaching methods and style; clear communication; instructor personality; real world application; organization and structure; acceptability and responsiveness; and, yes, relationship.

Regarding relationship, he cited work on the value of shared vulnerability in the classroom. Among the factors he noted were flexibility and consideration that took into account student needs; approachability; respect for students; responsiveness to student personal problems; being patient, accommodating, and supportive; believing the instructor wanted the student to succeed; willingness to go the distance to ensure student success; commitment to the success of every student; and a supportive, non-judgmental atmosphere, including one that allows for great discussion amongst the students (vulnerability). He suggested that students like it when there is a "personal touch" to the class, via the sharing of personal/professional experiences.

He pointed out that students want to be treated as adults, and recognized as having busy lives outside of the classroom. That certainly rings a bell. When I taught research, I used to do an anonymous survey among the students as to how many hours they spent on commuting, working, family care, reading for their academic work, writing for their academic work, library and information acquisition work, time on Blackboard and other learning environments, entertainment time, and, for what was sort of a joke at the time but certainly isn't now, social media time and email maintenance.

Clearly, however, central to this was the very nature of the faculty/student relationship and the faculty/classroom environment. This kind of discussion is of general importance for social work education. Charlotte Towle (1948) was prescient in her insistence that in designing social work programs, we must take exactly these kinds of situations into account. We need, she argued, to understand the emotional element of social work education. And we need to understand our students as adult learners.

Nedegaard, Towle (1948) and Reynolds (1942) all recognized that social work education involves both learning and teaching in the classroom. But no matter how well we may seek to realize such overriding aspects of social work education, in the end it comes down to relationships and to the feelings which arise from teaching and from learning and from practice.

Another Occupational Hazard

Among the other occupational hazards of being an editor or reviewer of *Reflections* is the way in which narratives bring home things that are very personal to us, or professional to us, or political to us, as the case may be. For instance, the narrative of Jodi Constantine Brown brought to mind

the deaths by suicide of two students with whom I have worked in the past. In each case, the university was constrained, as in the case of Brown's narrative, from revealing the cause of death, even though it was a public record. In each case, the social work program mourned, faculty and students included. A posthumous degree was given. Once, I attended a wake. Condolences were sent.

After one of the suicides, research was just coming out at the time about a shocking increase in the death rate generally and the suicide rate of men in their middle ages. This was also very sobering. One of the suicides happened about the time that subsidized loans for professional education stopped becoming available. Perhaps then, as now, graduation means worrying about student loans and worrying about unemployment. Graduation is a very stressful time.

For one of the students, I was aware the student was receiving regular counseling, but I had never pried, and perhaps hadn't really gotten to know the student as well as I should. Just as Nedegaard discussed imposter syndrome, I remember feeling like an imposter as a social worker. I felt like I should have seen it coming. It didn't help that at the time someone implied I should have known that the student was very depressed and near suicide. That certainly hurt. In terms of what we do know about suicide, it is often the case that the people closest to the person who took their lives are often those least aware of how imminent such an act might be.

However, it was certainly valuable to ask, how could I have been more helpful in some way? I'll probably be wondering that of and on for the rest of my life. Certainly, it is helpful, as a suicide prevention strategy, for us to educate the living about the pain and suffering that comes in the wake of the act of suicide.

Issues Coming Up

Volume 23#2, the issue after the next, will contain be my final Reflections from the Editors. After that, the 2017-2018 co-editors will take over! In my last reflection, I want to say more about the work of *Reflections* over the last five years. It will have to be then that I profusely thank those who have working alongside me on this journal during that time, and those who have supported the journal both from afar (Friends of Reflections) and hereabouts (two directors, a Dean, and our graduate assistants and work-study students).

For now, however, I have to admit, one other occupational hazard of being an editor of *Reflections* is that you begin to find yourself lapsing into the narrative style! Emails that are narratives! Postings to listserves that narratives! Reflections from the Editors that turn into narratives! Even my most recent dossier took the risk of using the narrative method to discuss my service to this journal! I haven't gotten into narrative stand-up comedy yet, but I hope you can see from this paragraph that humor has been one way we've all made it through over the last five years here on the good ship *Reflections*.

However, without waiting for my last letter, I want to say that it has been a real privilege to have

had the opportunity to serve as the editor of this journal. I have worked with so many wonderful editors, authors, and reviewers, and have very much appreciated the financial support given by dozens of Friends of Reflections and our growing number of Publishing Partners (about which, more in the final letter). If, for any reason, Volume 23#2 of the journal isn't issued before the end of the year, I certainly wish our readers a joyous holiday season!

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That Which Cannot be Remedied Must be Endured

Michael Babcock

Abstract: Thousands of children from the Mexican state of Chihuahua live with debilitating neuromusculoskeletal conditions. Most do not have access to affordable, quality specialty care. To meet this need, a medical team from the United States conducted outreach clinics in Ciudad Juárez. The team screened hundreds of children and identified those who could benefit from surgery and other charity care. From the perspective of one medical social worker, this narrative describes the history of the clinic, the challenges of providing international medical care where need constantly outpaces resources, and the reality of denying aid to the children who need it most.

Keywords: health, international social work, medical social work

The young couple hesitantly approached me. Like many others standing shoulder to shoulder in the crowded hallway, they had been waiting more than a day in the smoldering, cramped fire station. After scraping together a few *pesos*, they had packed a little food, bade farewell to their family and headed north on a bumpy, eight-hour bus ride to the congested border city of Ciudad Juárez, not knowing what the future held for their little two-year-old.

She was their first child, and like many children in the remote *rancho*, she had been born at home. It was a complicated delivery. The young couple didn't understand why she didn't walk. She didn't talk. She would scream out and shake uncontrollably. She required constant care. A visiting *promotora* told them it was severe cerebral palsy, and that there was no cure. While their minds accepted that fact, their hearts ached for their little angel. Surely something more could be done? So when the radio station announced a free medical clinic sponsored by an American hospital, they decided to tempt fate and make the journey north.

The hospital's first medical outreach clinic in Juárez was held more than twenty years before. Two surgeons recognized an unmet need for specialty pediatric care in the region where thousands of Mexican children lived with wide-ranging neuromusculoskeletal problems, a result of poor maternal prenatal care, insufficient infant nutrition, and inadequate early intervention. Almost all went without medical treatment because their parents couldn't access the national system of social security clinics, and they certainly could not afford to see a specialist.

The two doctors saw a unique opportunity to provide charity medical care while offering real-world education to medical students and residents, so four times a year they led teams of physicians, students, nurses, social workers, interpreters and medical assistants across the muddy band of the *Rio Bravo* to a prominent red and white fire station at the base of the Santa Fe Bridge, just a stone's throw from El Paso, Texas. The *bomberos* graciously cleared out their sleeping quarters and exercise room to accommodate the waiting families, and they dutifully helped children up and down the stairs, carrying their wheelchairs, walkers and crutches. Local volunteers circulated through the crowd dispensing drinks, snacks, balloons and smiles. A

television played grainy cartoons in the background.

I joined the clinic team in my first year working for the hospital. We held other outreach clinics in the U.S., but the Juárez clinic was unlike any other. In the days before electronic medical records, protected health information and overweight baggage fees, we would bring literally every medical record for every child who they had ever seen in Mexico in the past two decades. We tried our best to schedule appointments, but telephone communication was spotty and we didn't always know which patients were going to show up, and what they would need. Before each trip we packed hundreds of paper charts into two bulky metal suitcases dubbed the "silver bullets" along with office supplies, cast saws and assorted prosthetic and orthotic devices. We never knew what we might need, so we brought it all.

Locals were fond of saying that Juárez and El Paso were one city, two countries. While there were similarities, Mexico had its distinct rhythms and rituals. Years before drug cartel violence dominated news headlines and crossing the border became a life-or-death decision, on the eve of each clinic we would explore local landmarks and barter for souvenirs in the bustling open-air markets lining *Avenida 16 de Septiembre*. We enjoyed a folk dancing dinner show at a former *hacienda*, the last complete meal we'd eat for almost 24 hours. It was a time to bask in the culture and to build camaraderie and commitment to our medical mission.

Morning always came too soon. Our emeritus chief-of-staff, a world-renowned pediatric orthopaedic surgeon in his 70s, was waiting in the lobby of the hotel to personally drive the advance group across the border to set up the clinic. After two decades he knew the route like the back of his own weathered hand—a hand that had grasped precision instruments, sutured tiny incisions and gently caressed the heads of thousands of little patients over the course of his storied career. He was nearing the end of his service in Juárez, but his advancing age and declining stamina didn't slow him. There were still children to treat. There were still residents to teach. There was still work to do.

Stern authorities with automatic weapons waved our rental car through the border checkpoint and we took an immediate right into the Chazimal zone, once the site of a fierce irrigation dispute between the United States and Mexico, now a mostly vacant federal public park. We followed the winding frontage road past an expansive soccer stadium, government buildings and half-finished apartment complexes with ragged rebar jutting from grey cinderblock walls like antennae. Before long we turned into the fire station parking lot where hundreds of people milled about the grounds and kept watch from the windows. As we unloaded the suitcases and made our way towards the clinic, the firemen greeted us with shouts of *"hola!"* and hearty hugs and handshakes. So esteemed were the doctors and clinic team that the firemen had painted a large mural on the station wall depicting us in action. Instantly, hundreds of hopeful eyes were upon us. Word spread quickly that the doctors had finally arrived, and like a sea parting for a prophet, the crowd made way as we ascended the broken red tile stairs to the third floor.

The clinic was chaos. Families crowded together on one side of the narrow hallway waiting for

follow-up appointments, while another line formed for new patients. No one dared move, lest they lose their place in line and miss their chance to consult with the doctors. The crowd was a microcosm of modern Mexico: urban *mestizos* with latte-colored skin and clear green eyes, rural residents in traditional dress, and blonde, blue-eyed Mennonites in straw hats and overalls whispering in Old German. Time was precious, so the medical teams immediately jumped into action. One group performed exams and determined which children might be good candidates for surgery, while the grey-haired chief, dressed in his ubiquitous matching coat, presided over the follow-up cases in another room, dictating notes and reviewing x-rays through the cracked, sun-lit windows.

Cases ranged from routine to complicated. We saw a fair number of flat feet, bowed legs, limb length inequalities and supernumerary digits. But we also saw toddlers with uncorrected club feet, teens with recurring hereditary bone cysts, and young adults with severe, progressive kyphosis that bent their tender spines like pretzels. The doctors' triage skills were tested repeatedly as a limited number of new patients could be accepted. Even with the generous support of donors in the U.S. there was never enough funding to help every child.

The sage surgeon had seen almost every orthopaedic condition imaginable and he knew when a child was beyond help. "We can make them different but we can't make them better," he advised the attentive medical students and residents. In other words, surgery might change their physical appearance, but their mobility and quality of life might never improve. Since the first Juárez clinic, the hospital had helped thousands of children, but many more had to be turned away. The job of giving families the bad news fell to me.

The young parents entered the screening area and presented their little girl like a holy offering. The doctor gently unwrapped her blanket and placed the child on the barren cot that served as an exam table. Medical students and residents gathered around as the veteran physician conducted a quick but thorough physical exam, noting the severely contracted limbs and neurological impairments indicative of cerebral palsy. Flies circled lazily overhead in the thick midday air. The doctor's words echoed in the room: "Tell them I'm sorry."

The parents looked at me with questioning, anxious eyes, hoping the pronouncement meant good news. Surely these doctors could do something for their daughter. Surely the trip had not been made in vain. Surely there was a cure for the mysterious monster that ravaged her spastic body. Sadly, certainly, there was not.

"*Lo siento*," I told them as I fought back my own tears. "I'm sorry. We cannot help her." The desperate parents held my gaze, silently praying the verdict might change if they lingered. I shook my head. With resignation they picked up their daughter, wrapped her in the ragged blanket, thanked us for our time and shuffled back through the crowd and out into the street. As a warm breeze washed through the upper floor window I watched the little family board a bus on the crowded street below, the residents of Juárez oblivious to their anguish. They would bear their lonely cross once more.

The rest of the day was a blur, and before I knew it I was in the back seat of the rental car engulfed in a cacophony of internal combustion and street vendors as we inched over the bridge towards home. Everywhere I looked I saw children, walking the bridge in navy blue school uniforms, kicking a soccer ball in a dusty field, brandishing bags of nuts or plates of gum for sale—characters in a scene that would play out forever in Mexico.

The children we scheduled for surgery that day had their lives altered forever, and with our help the majority went on to live happier, healthier lives. I traveled to Juárez four times a year with the clinic team, some of the most exhausting and exhilarating work I've experienced in my career as a social worker. Over the years I watched many of the children grow up, finish school and enter young adulthood full of confidence and promise. Yet I will always be haunted by the memories of those we turned away, the sad, dark eyes of the pleading parents, an embodiment of the Mexican proverb: That which cannot be remedied must be endured.

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Foundation Field Internship and Identity Formation

Maya A. Williams

Abstract: Foundation field internships present social work students with the opportunity to understand the intersection of their identities, to better serve vulnerable populations. We develop the professional use of self through several processes which aid in this understanding: identity formation, recognizing intersectionality, and cultural humility. At the University of Texas at Austin, students are able to reflect on their internship experiences with their cohort during their Social Work Practice course. I was able to hone my social work skills and strengthen my concept of identity as I worked at the Refugee Services of Texas (RST) for my foundation field internship. During this experience, I learned the best way to serve clients from various cultural backgrounds who interacted with me in certain ways due to my racial identity. Since I was one of two African American women working at RST at the time, I was challenged to address racial biases. Unfamiliar with these types of interactions, I began learning, accepting, and embracing my identities while being authentic to myself and clients. The acceptance of my unique identities and improved client interactions, ultimately increased my learning and growth as a working professional.

Keywords: foundation field internship, internship, refugee services, refugees, asylees, displaced people, social work, identity formation, intersectionality, cultural humility, sociocultural membership identity, identity negotiation theory

Identity formation, understanding intersectionality, and cultural humility are descriptors that encapsulate my foundation field internship at the Refugee Services of Texas (RST). As a MSW student at The University of Texas at Austin, RST exposed me to diverse cultures and powerful one-on-one client interactions. Dallas was the first established RST office in Texas; later services expanded to neighboring cities including Amarillo, Austin, Fort Worth, and Houston. RST strives to serve refugees, asylees, and displaced people as they integrate into their new community. This agency provides an array of services to clients such as Employment, Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), Counseling and Wellness, Resettlement, Survivor of Trafficking Empowerment Program (STEP), Immigration Services, Medical Case Management, and Social Adjustment Services (SAS).

During my internship, I worked in SAS providing case management services to six clients. After receiving a client referral, I would explain the agency's services, my role as an intern, and conduct a needs assessment. My main responsibilities were to assist clients when they needed to apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid, and set appointments for the client and their family members at the Refugee Health Screening Clinic (RHSC). Case notes documented in the online Refugee Management System (RMS) maintained information about the services, which each client received; the Refugee Data Center (RDC), an official government website, contained client personnel records. Following each client visit, I documented case notes in the online system. Finally, since I am a proficient Spanish speaker, I shadowed and facilitated the Cuban orientation programs, where clients learned about RST

services and resources in Austin.

While working at RST, my interactions with clients challenged and later strengthened my identity formation. According to Cole & Levine (2014, p. 8), social identities "designate the individual's position(s) in a social structure." Within the social structure, various cultural factors and social roles influence the individual, which may cause one to feel pressure to exhibit certain identity "molds" (Cole & Levine, 2014). I can recall a specific meeting with an African client, where he assumed I shared a similar social identity, language, and belief system because of my racial identity as an African American. During this meeting, an interpreter was present and informed the client that I could not speak his language; the client seemed disappointed that we could not connect in this way. As defined by Ting-Toomey (2015), identity negotiation causes conflicts between personal identity and the negotiation of a sociocultural membership identity during interpersonal communication. I had a direct experience with this conflict as I wanted to share a similar social identity with my client, to establish trust and build rapport, causing me to negotiate my own identity membership.

Speaking with my field instructor, during weekly supervision, helped me to grapple with this conflict. Over the course of the semester, I learned to acknowledge the fact that although others may identify me as African American, I had little knowledge of my ancestor's cultural origins and heritage in Africa. Thus, I learned more about myself. I have realized my African identity is rooted in a history of oppression, discrimination, and forced labor; my American identity is rooted in an era of opportunity, striving for integration, and racial equality. Both identities have informed my actions, attitudes, and personhood; with this perspective in mind, by the end of the year, I proudly told my African clients I was born in the United States with American nationality and African ancestry. Therefore, field instructors can assist social work students by unpacking and helping students to accept their identities in order to best serve racial/ethnic minorities in the communities, which they will work.

In addition to my identity formation at RST, I had to learn to accept my intersecting identities when working with clients who had preconceived notions regarding African Americans. One semester I worked with an Arabic client, who misunderstood our meeting time and arrived at RST an hour early. His anger caused him to use a racial epithet towards the secretary, when describing me. Overhearing his language, hurt so much that I cried at my desk feeling embarrassment and shame. Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality and stated that women of color are often marginalized by both racism and sexism. I felt these forms of oppression as both my race and gender caused the client to view my performance, abilities, and level of competence in a negative way.

The impact of this interaction led me to discuss the instance the next day with my social work cohort. My cohort members cried, hugged me, and offered support after hearing my story. One classmate stated, "I wish clients could see how awesome you are, as I do." Unfortunately, I am aware that being a minority in the workplace can put me at a disadvantage, as clients may assume that I am incapable of helping them simply based on my appearance. As a result, social

work educators can initiate conversations highlighting students' intersecting identities in class. Nash (2008, p. 2) defines intersectionality as "the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality." Moreover, intersectionality emphasizes an individual's experiences of identity and oppression (Nash, 2008). Utilizing an intersectional approach to learning, social work educators can prepare students to have open and honest conversations with clients that may treat them differently based on their identities. These conversations would create skills students could use with clients in future social work settings.

Finally, cultural humility is the ability to focus on the other rather than on the self, while respecting another cultural background and experience (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013). Exhibiting this cultural respect during my foundation field internship allowed me to connect with clients on a deeper level. During my undergraduate career, I majored in Spanish, as I saw the language as an opportunity to respect the culture and values of a historically oppressed group. Speaking Spanish with clients bridged cultural gaps and helped them to feel valued and heard, since they could speak a language that was familiar and comfortable to them. Incorporating cultural humility into my social work practice became an important skill when addressing the needs of different ethnic groups. Reading and researching different cultures is a great way to gain a deeper understanding; however, having interactions in person was even more insightful. Social work students should aim to strengthen their cultural humility skills to create safe spaces for clients to feel respected when seeking social services.

RST was a positive cultural experience for me and a perfect fit for a foundation field internship. I learned about identity formation, intersectionality, and cultural humility. Social work students will have the opportunity to form deeper connections with clients after recognizing their own identities and realizing they may be rooted in power, privilege, and/or oppression. Although forming one's identity is a lifelong process, social work educators and field instructors can promote this growth in class and during supervision. Overall, RST became a new international home for me. Most importantly, it taught me to be proud of my intersecting unique identities. This was the best way to be my authentic and professional self with my clients. Conclusively, social work students, educators, and field instructors can work together to make foundation field internship an experience of immense learning as well as professional and personal growth. This approach will help students when working with vulnerable populations, so that they may adequately assess clients' needs after having a better understanding of their own identities.

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Mentoring the Thesis

Stephanie Hamm

Abstract: Mentoring student research is an important aspect of graduate learning. The literature discusses the importance of intentional mentoring programs for graduate students and undergraduate research students (for example see Dodson, Montgomery, & Brown, 2009; Ghosh, 2014; Murdocka, Stipanovicb, & Lucas, 2013; Noy & Ray, 2012; Vliet, Klingle & Hiseler, 2013). This narrative discusses my journey thus far in mentoring thesis students. After seven years of mentoring student research, I have observations and new insights concerning student success and my own effectiveness in mentoring. In this narrative, I will briefly discuss my background and its relevance to my current stance on mentoring, my observations of the thesis process, and new knowledge that has helped me and the students I mentor. I close with a realization that shapes my task moving forward.

Keywords: graduate students, thesis, mentoring

Introduction

I was an ordinary African American female student in high school. I was expected to earn good grades and to be well-behaved and friendly. I was quiet and afraid of rejection from my peers. Having educated parents, I grew up with the expectation that I would attend college. In my family, the message I received was not *if* but *when* I would go.

In high school I had teachers who were very encouraging to me, afforded me opportunities to learn, and who trusted me to do things like make copies of upcoming exams. But my senior English teacher in particular looked at me, saw my potential, and was determined to help me succeed. She was one of the few teachers who looked directly at me when we spoke. She laughed at my adolescent one-liners and sent me out of class to complete college and scholarship applications. She wrote letters of recommendation. She challenged me in ways I thought unfair at the time. I adored Ms. J.

Observations

Now as a professor (and I am sure Ms. J. had something to do with my career choice), one of my favorite roles is mentoring thesis students. Each of the students in our graduate program must complete a thesis, so all students, regardless of their research and writing ability, must struggle through this process. Each year I walk alongside four to six students on the way to completing their thesis. The following are a few things I have observed.

Even the most successful students have trouble managing their stress. In addition to the thesis, advanced year students must complete coursework and a yearlong internship. It is not an easy year, as they must manage their stress and time. They respond to stress in various ways. Some students are reluctant to move forward and are frozen by what feels overwhelming. Some

students jump in with excitement and then shut down halfway through the year. Some students excel in the thing that scares them the most, at the expense of their coursework.

Secondly, the success of the students whose thesis I chair, often feels like a reflection of my mentorship. The student's work is her work, but admittedly, I sometimes fear that a badly produced thesis is my fault, even though I rarely take credit for a thesis well done. I also occasionally compare my less-than-successful students to my colleagues' very successful students and hope my colleagues are not making the same comparison! It is an act of vulnerability indeed.

I have observed that students need more than just a research supervisor when they are completing a thesis. They need a listener, as noted by Noy & Ray (2012). They need an empower-er who is a non-anxious presence, as well as meetings that lack judgment. They need information. Lots of it. They need me to listen and appreciate their one-liners and trust them. They need, for that year, a person who believes they can do it and that they can do it well. According to Linden, Ohlin & Brodin (2013), and Horowitz & Christopher (2013), this type of relationship more closely characterizes mentorship, in contrast to supervision.

Lastly, I have noticed that in the end, they may or may not still like me. I may continue to get occasional emails from them or I may not hear from them ever again. This dearth of ongoing communication could be because they were only pretending to enjoy our thesis meetings in the first place, or because they do not want to bother me. I suspect the reason is because they wish me, and my thesis mentoring, good riddance. Done is done—all 25% cotton fiber pages of it. They name me in their acknowledgements page, thank me numerous times, possibly give me little thank you gifts, take graduation pictures with me… and then leave me to my thoughts. Forever. I find this student response interesting.

New Insights

These points really address the fact that completing a thesis can be a daunting task for mentee and mentor. In my short seven years of mentoring I have also noticed some things that help the process. This is in no way an exhaustive list as surely I have much more to learn. This is not an empirically based list as I have not collected or analyzed any quantitative or qualitative data. This is merely my observation. My musing and what I have found to be helpful.

First and foremost, I listen to the student. I want to know, not just what they are thinking, but how they are thinking. What about this undertaking do they most fear? What do they expect from this process? What do they think of their own abilities? I want to know what they already know. And I want them to expect me to listen to them. Granted, listening often means our meetings last a few minutes longer than they should, given the immediate task. But listening also means that the student will likely listen to me as well. It means the student and I can hash out the challenges of the thesis-writing process together. It also means, to my delight, that I learn some pretty great things about the topic at hand. Without asking the students, I might guess that this is

the primary reason they thank me.

Humor is our best friend. This is a season in students' lives when they take their lives very seriously. To a great extent, they must. They have much to accomplish in a short amount of time. They are also tentative about their ability to complete such a task, particularly at the beginning. Self-efficacy and anxiety appear to have a high negative association. So, light-hearted mirthful humor about graduate distractibility, all-nighters, professor absent-mindedness, and technology deficits certainly help.

For every student, I lead with a strict timeline. I clearly and often express the importance of following my timeline. It not only provides structure, it gives the student a glimpse of the finish line. Truthfully, in the beginning when I wanted students to self-actualize during the thesis process and set their own timelines, there was much gnashing of teeth in March as we drew closer to thesis defense. And students anecdotally report to me that a lack of time management is a source of stress. This might be largely due to the fact that students do not have a clear concept of the time needed to complete the task. Therefore I highly encourage them to follow the timeline provided.

Finally, I have learned that students' accomplishments hold little implication for my mentoring ability. Yes, there are lessons I learn every year about ways I can improve my mentoring. Yes, sometimes I remember a key ingredient after the student needs it. And yes, sometimes I just do not see problems in the paper because I have read it so many times that I tend to lose some objectivity. In examining the social/psychological aspects of mentoring, Balogun & Okurame (2011) discuss the mutual responsibility that mentor and mentee experience. So my concern is well founded. Additionally, researchers described increased well-being on student success (Hall & Maltby, 2013). But my job is done when that student submits the paper to the graduate school on 25% cotton fiber paper. I have completed another successful mission. Students might occasionally fail, but will usually succeed (albeit possibly later than expected.) Some will finish by the skin of their teeth, while others will graduate with additional national presentations and a publication under their belts. Although I offer structure, support, academic advice, and accountability, I do not bear the total responsibility for their success or their failure. What a relief that is!

I guess what I am saying is that I am grateful for my profession. The transformation of a student from August to May is amazing to witness. The roller-coaster ride of academia is exciting, with the fluctuating emotions, shifting perceptions of intellectual ability, and the constant readjusting of confidence. It is a divine thing to work in a role that brings equal amounts of challenge and joy. We want to make a difference in the lives of students. We want to be a part of their growth and experience opportunities to see them shine and move on.

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Shrouded in Privilege:
Reflexively Exploring a Troubling Experience in Team Research

Samantha Clarke

Abstract: In this article, I discuss my troubling experience as a novice researcher participating in my first qualitative research experience with a team of fellow Ph.D. colleagues. I will interrogate the tensions between the production of knowledge in this particular research project and my subjective and positional identities as a novice scholar. Qualitative research offers ways to minimize power differentials through an interrogation of invisible and unexplored assumptions. It may also further embed that which it seeks to uncover if researchers are not purposeful in its use. Unable to untangle the knot of critical insights produced by the usual reflexive process, I use poetry as a reflexive healing device to explore my learning throughout this research project.

Keywords: reflexivity, qualitative research, narrative, othering, poetry, voice.

As a social worker who has been working in the field for close to three decades and a social work educator for the last eight years, I struggle to use my voice as a junior scholar in a Ph.D. program. During my first participation in a qualitative study with a group of my peers, I became aware of the degree to which my positionality and subjectivity emerged as significant to my role as a researcher and the scholarship I create. Examining power is intrinsic to social work and seems inescapable in academia, and so I seek to deconstruct shifting and contentious issues of power and the epistemological invisibility that I encountered in the group project. I use poetry to assist me in making visible those emotional spaces that I struggled to express in an academic narrative, not as a way of finding answers but as a means to gain insight into my own epistemological orientation as a researcher. In doing so, I am attempting to unravel the "shroud of privilege" I have experienced.

The research project in question was a qualitative study of the perceptions of Masters of Social Work (MSW) students regarding the prospects for finding employment after graduation. Seventy-four students participated in the study, 59 students completed the online survey and 13 students participated in three focus groups. In the survey, we asked students to provide demographic information such as age ranges, gender (female identified, male identified, two spirited, androgynous and questioning), and we provided space for an open ended question on racial/ethnic background. We queried if the student was an international student holding a student visa. We asked about status in the MSW program and field of study in the program, without discussing the relevance and ethics of collecting this information. After deciding on the questions for both the surveys and focus groups, our next step was to collect the data from social work student participants. We asked three questions in the survey and focus groups:

1) What do you think the job prospects are after graduation?
2) What are your thoughts around employment after graduation?
a) What are some of your concerns?

b) What are you looking forward to?
3) How are you preparing for employment after graduation?
a) What are some of the creative strategies you are employing?

Throughout the project, our research group struggled with one another to find a way to capture the participants' perceptions of finding employment post MSW. We tried to construct a survey that collected socio-demographic information and developed questions for focus groups, without having conversations about the context of participants' perceptions. The interrogation of power and positionalities (gender, sexual orientation, ability, culture, class, age, and race) and their intersections remained unexamined in the research project. This lack of examination, I believe, was consequential in the outcome of the project. Using poetry and reflexive inner dialogue, I was able to reveal both my resistance to and complicity in maintaining the power dynamics that emerged in the research project.

Ipsa scientia potestas est
~Knowledge Itself is Power ~ Sir Francis Bacon

It is critical that we do not lose sight of the power that we hold as researchers when co-constructing and analyzing the narratives provided by research participants. Knowledge is a commodity: In research, the accounts from participants can be used as a product with tangible value. At universities, knowledge is leveraged to gain prestige, prizes, status, or income tied to rank (Kauppinen, 2014). For doctoral students, using the knowledge gained from research is usually the first step in becoming published and furthering a career in academia. I do not presume to grapple with the complexity of the use of knowledge as a commodity, but merely wish to point out that the need to compete for academic success while balancing issues of power, ethics, and politics can be a difficult tightrope for many novice researchers and academics to navigate.

According to Ackerly and True (2010), research has the particular power to create knowledge that pays attention to boundaries, marginalization, silences, and intersections. Qualitative research stresses the importance for researchers to pay attention to their relationship with power differentials and their own historical, sociopolitical positions (Ackerly &True, 2010; also see Hopkins, 2007). Researchers must examine what is excluded in the research and how difference is inadvertently constructed. The research process can embed and obscure epistemological orientations if researchers are not "meaningfully attentive to their own subjectivities" (Peskhin, 1988, p. 23). The researchers' values and situatedness can shape the questions, assumptions, terminology, language, method, analysis, and conclusions in qualitative research (Plowman, 1995).

My Positionality and Subjectivity

In my own case, my positionality/situatedness is far from straightforward, as we know is true for many individuals. I come from historical, sociopolitical, and economic positions that are

simultaneously privileged and marginalized. Thus, as I engaged in this research project, my internal battle with my multiple positionalities became an intersecting web of struggles. I attempted to deal with this by putting some distance between my personal and professional selves throughout my participation in the research process. I came to realize that my personal narrative revealed an unanticipated, marginalized, embodied history which was obscured by the mask of my privileged, professional self (Sheridan, 2013). In my work as a practitioner and social work academic, I know that there are times when my 'collusion and collision' with the dominant discourse becomes difficult to articulate. My reflexive commentary comes from the treacherously negotiated territory between the complexities of my identified positionality and subjectivity and the intersection with my privilege, all of which became challenged in the research project.

Locating myself as embodying multiple subject positions will provide context to my struggle. I am a cis-gendered woman of colour, of East Indian and British descent. I identify as a lesbian, immigrant, single mother of an adult child; I recognize my working-class roots. I have had the opportunity to complete an MSW, to be employed as a social work practitioner and educator, and I am currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in social work in Canada. I am aware that the experiences I embody as the 'Other' intersect in fractious ways when my lived experience collides with identities that provide me privileged status as a Canadian citizen, an educated professional, and an educator in several institutions of higher learning. I struggle to embrace my identity as an academic whose politically contentious voice is given currency in academia due to my status as a doctoral student. As a woman who comes from a matriarchal family, I have a strong female voice. I also grew up in a family culture that embraced its colonizer's identity. All of this has allowed me to see the world and my work through multiple lenses and intersecting perceptions.

This range of perspectives compelled me to be aware that my personal experiences both overlap, and influence the development of my identity as a researcher (Bochner, 1997). Throughout the process of this particular research project, my marginalized selves—those multiple dimensions of identity—were insistent on hearing the stories of participants whose life experiences and identities, like mine, sometimes proved to be a barrier to finding employment. However, the entangling of my identities meant that I felt the tug to have a voice as 'Other' and to hear the voices of Others. My marginalized selves also needed to be heard by my colleagues. McCorkle and Myers (2003) have suggested that it is important for researchers to reveal aspects of their identity and history. My academic voice, engaging with the structures of knowledge construction, attempted to silence my marginalized voice and the voice of research participants like me.

As someone who teaches about social justice, I believe that notions of positionality and subjectivity are critical in the research process. I ask these questions: Who am I in the research? What is my epistemological framework? What are my biases, values, barriers, hopes, and experiences, and how can each of these areas influence the process and outcome? What do I want as an outcome of this research? These foundational questions acknowledge the historical,

social, political, economic, and cultural positions that we each embody. They provide opportunities to be purposefully aware of our subjectivity and positionality. An awareness of our individual positionalities and subjectivities is foundational to revealing how we construct the world and our knowledge about our place in it (Fook & Askeland, 2007; Heron, 2007). Consequently, an awareness of these dimensions of ourselves in the social world is influential in the way we construct and conduct research.

A Troubling Reflexive Journey

The aim of my reflexive analysis here is not to discuss what was 'right' or 'wrong' in the research project. Rather, I seek to trouble the notions of power and voice, understanding that I am complicit in maintaining the dominant discourses in social work education. I feel the tensions because of the multiple subjectivities that I embody at the intersection of my identities.

The tensions among my various identities came to the fore as we, the research team, developed an online survey and focus-group questions. I believed that it was important to ask questions, in both the online survey and focus groups, about who these student participants were—such as their gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, employment, age, language, ethnicity and ability—and their thoughts about whether any of these dimensions were meaningful in attaining employment. This information would have given us some understanding of the experiences of participants and would have given participants further opportunity to provide context for the information requested, such as what they thought, felt, and did to assist themselves in gaining employment. I found myself struggling to have conversations with my research colleagues about the need for inclusive research practices for individuals whose voices were silenced. At the beginning of the project, I found I could speak but could not be heard. Subsequently, I found I could no longer speak. I sensed other members of the research team had varying degrees of reaction to my concerns, from overt disagreement to vocal support. However, discussions became stilted. There was more concern with tasks that needed to be performed and issues of timing and deadlines. I felt troubled, disappointed and frustrated about the lack of discussion concerning the potentials for marginalization in the research.

The continued exchange with colleagues became more difficult over a period of weeks. I became more resistant to participating in the research process and less engaged with my colleagues. I grappled with my apathy and distance. Having internalized the identity of Other, I struggled to find my place on the team. I found a collision of my identities and their intersections as I connected with the experience of the immigrant looking for a job with no Canadian experience, with the experience of a lesbian who is careful to not 'come out' in an interview. When interviewed, I have had to explain why my Anglo surname did not fit people's association with the dark colour of my skin. I have wondered if that was the reason that I did not get the job. The impact of my identities had not been as visible to me until they were glossed over in the research team's discussion. I began to have a clearer understanding of the significance of my disengagement from the research and the team. Later, I would come to realize that my reluctance to articulate within myself the significance of my multiple identities and lived experience in

marginalized contexts meant that my struggle with the construction of the research would remain unrecognizable to other members of the research team.

The research team wanted to employ focus groups as a tool to gather the data from the research participants. The intent of focus groups is to encourage participants to discuss their opinions in an environment that is non-judgmental, respectful and comfortable (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The assumption in using focus groups is that individuals are able to express their feelings and thoughts. However, a thorough discussion by the research team was needed about the complexity and application of the focus group method (Webb & Kavern, 2001; Halcomb et al., 2007). As a team of novice researchers, there was in fact, very little discussion about the involvement of the facilitators in the focus group, ways of asking probing questions, and prompting participants to expand on their answers. There was no examination by the research team about the use of focus groups with individuals who come from different social contexts, and how their social contexts might impact their perceptions about finding employment (Harris et al., 2004). Social contexts of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, culture and ethnicity can construct and reproduce differences if not attended to in the research process (Hill-Collins, 2004), and can re-centre mainstream marginalizing discourses. I felt uncomfortable, because not providing opportunities for our participants to talk about their social identities would be asking questions from a place of privilege.

Discourse can create the Other, not only in the ideas that are given legitimacy with what is said (Rossiter, 2005), but what gets left out, which can "both constrain and enable subjectivity" (Kulik, 2005, p. 616). By extension, I had concerns about the lack of discussion regarding the subjectivity and positionality of the participants, and of each of us as researchers, as well as about the potential unintended impact on the research. My participation in this step of the research was disruptive for me. I wondered if we were creating an illusion of inclusivity based on the well-intended but misguided determination to be blind to difference.

Prior to the focus group, my co-facilitator expressed the need to be objective and not interfere in the focus group by asking probing questions or prompting students to expand on their answers, so that we did not influence the conversations and discussion. Freire (1970/2012) stated that "one cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity" (p. 50). I contemplated how I, as a facilitator in this focus group, participated in creating a rigid framework that constrained what could be articulated in the group discussion. The artificial prohibition of prompting participants to provide more depth in their answers resulted in a lack of engagement with each other. The focus group felt more like individual interviews taking place in one room which, according to Kitzinger & Barbour (1999), is different from the purpose of focus groups. The participants completed the task—answering rigid, uncritical questions. In my opinion, conversations were flat and lacked depth. Meanwhile, I suspected the presence of unspoken voices and unrevealed narratives. I doubted whether the questions allowed for voices that were marginalized and whether these questions provided opportunities to make invisible narratives visible (Ackerly & True, 2010). We were unwittingly participating in the "god trick," i.e. assuming an all-encompassing, unlocated perspective (Haraway, 1988, p. 581).

The focus group comprised three individuals of colour and two facilitators who could have been perceived as being members of racialized groups. However, the only discussion of difficulties in attaining and maintaining employment post MSW, was initiated by a racialized female participant about whether she was going to be able to move into management, although she made no explicit connections with her lived experience or multiple identities. I speculated about the relevance of these connections and intersections. I wondered if the focus groups were carried out in a way that made it difficult to delve into the muddy waters of context, positionality, or politics. Did participants get the impression that they were to answer the questions and only the questions in a prescriptive way based on our detached role in the process? Did their silence about the context of their thoughts and feelings have any particular meaning? Or did the participants think the facilitators admitted only certain types of discourses and not others? Ashby (2011) suggests that the information provided in focus groups is dependent on the questions asked. Participants do not provide information and perspectives if not queried by the researcher. I questioned if it was a conversation of "us" with "us." I felt we were looking at the collection of the respondents' thoughts and feelings as though each of them came from the same space—a level playing field—a space in which we imagined that everyone shared our own level of privilege. This would have meant that much of what was not spoken by the participants might be invisible to us as the researchers.

As I read through the transcripts from the three focus groups, I struggled with the missing narratives of those who identified as racialized, those who came from sexually diverse communities, those who experienced mental health issues, and those with disabilities that were left invisible. Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, to not be neutral (Freire, 1970/2012). I felt the unease of knowing I was contributing to maintaining a discourse from the centre by not attending to more complex and subtle issues of dominance-induced blindness in the construction of the focus groups. I needed a way to express my feelings, thoughts, and reactions as I worked to make sense of my lived experience in response to the research, so that it had less influence on my own ability to engage with my colleagues and the research. I chose to move from this place of unease, silence, and disconnection by engaging in a process of active reflexivity.

Although there is a diversity of conceptualizations of the term (D'Cruz et al, 2007), I use the term reflexivity rather than reflection because sometimes, the term 'reflection' is written about as the process of reviewing a series of acts, occurrences or decisions and appraising the associated outcome (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009). Some definitions of the term reflection have its underlying foundation in positivist epistemology, a way of looking in the mirror and having your reflection look back at you without examination. I prefer a conceptualization of reflexivity that is distinctly different; it has underlying foundations in critical epistemology and clearer connection to praxis—a means to unsettling marginalizing world views and the active struggle against its maintenance. Miehls and Moffat (2000) suggest that reflexivity is concerned with how emotions can be enacted in practice [and research] and interrogates commonly accepted assumptions of discourse, knowledge, and their interplay with power (Taylor & White, 2000).

The collaborative congeniality of the research team decreased from relative safety to a continuing feeling of disengagement as issues of power remained implicit and invisible in the research. I felt blocked. I internalized the silences and absences of voices of difference. I became selectively mute; I needed to be reflexive about my own sense of identity (McCorkle & Myers, 2003). My experience of complex, intersecting identities as contradictory and paradoxical pushed me to confront my ambiguous loyalties to the group (Kirk & Ozakawa-Rey, 2004). I realized that as a racialized person trying to make visible the racializing experience, I practised the very opposite of what I was trying to achieve, namely, making visible the voices from the periphery. I recognized that by not speaking up, I was complicit in the silencing.

As we moved to discussions about publishing the study, participants' stories became commodified; they were now data, which had the currency to be used as publishable text (Kauppinen, 2014). For us, as researchers, getting published was a particular way of attaining status in the academic world. The research team began to discuss whose name would come first in an article, and at which conferences findings could be shared. Collecting participants' stories was no longer about a way of bringing their thoughts, feelings, and actions to life through an article; instead the stories became a vehicle for the self-serving objective of becoming published without understanding the impact of the research on marginalized and vulnerable groups (Ackerly &True, 2010).

As the project progressed, I distanced myself from the unspoken narratives of the research participants that I continued to imagine so that I could function as part of the research group. I realized that I was avoiding conversations that were uncomfortable but that occupied my mind throughout the day. I understood that my subjectivity was engaged (Peshkin, 1988), and that I needed to pay attention to my feelings of puzzlement, disconnection, and discontent. I needed to pay attention to the sensations of uneasiness. I drew from a workshop on poetry that was part of this same research course. I began my first foray into writing poetry as a way to express what I had not been able to express in any other way.

Finding My Voice in Poetry

Poetry provides the space for emotional and cognitive domains, and for feelings of ambivalence. It is a way to give voice to lived experiences, a way to have conversations with one's environment, and a way to engage with notions that are difficult to articulate (Raingruber, 2004). Poetry can be a liberating force, through which words become freed from the construction of reality; it tells a much richer story (Norman, 2009). Poets can explore varying degrees of intensity of emotion that are difficult to articulate in any other way. According to Norman (2009), poetry is the language of the mind, body, and soul—the whole-hearted being. Bringing together multiple kinds of texts—including poetry, storytelling and qualitative scholarly writing—can better deconstruct some of the complex, layered questions social workers contemplate in both academia and practice (Transken, 2005). Poetry can be used as a way to be actively reflexive about critical moments in time that can be paralyzing (Lapum, 2008).

I had never before used poetry as a means of self-expression. However, given that I had neither the words nor the safety to share my thoughts and feelings during the process of working with the research team, poetry made it possible for me to convey the more visceral reactions that I encountered, and to express complex emotional experiences brought forth from my participation in the research project. It gave me the freedom to express myself in fragmented and impressionistic ways, whereas the traditional forms of academic writing in English require that thinking and writing be made coherent, explicit, connected, and linear.

Shrouded in Privilege

Do we miss the world of colour shrouded from our view?
Do we miss the world around that our privilege makes seem so untrue?
Can we feel the wind a-whirling as we lie in protected arms?
Does a doctorate degree protect from the menacing phantom of the realms?
Do we hear voices crying as we hide behind a veil?
Does status that obscure shield us from voices crying out in pain?
Do we hear the voiceless crying? Does it matter anymore?
As we scale heights of academy, do the voices come no more?
Am I complicit in the weaving of the mantle that I wear?
Can my voice remain unspoken; can my complicity endure?
The question supposes that the answer is left unexplained
The answer is explicit, and complicit I remain
As I sit in voiceless silence hiding behind my pain
An enraged voice of privilege remains unspoken in the frame
Do I fear menacing glances and the phantoms of the main?
Am I complicit in the shrouding of the mantle of the pain?
I share voices of the Other and one I can supposedly hear
My voice may be strong but it veils so many fears
Does the privilege we possess grope the grave shrouded by despair?
Of voices, we hear not of the endeavour that we share
"I'm not brave enough" my voice says, "I'm too tired to pay the fare"
I teach the rhetoric of social work. Will that really truly suffice?
Many questions remaining much confusion and need, for repair
The mantle of our privilege is the death shroud, not a cloak of comfort and amends
A cold, malevolent presence masks us from the world
Hiding pain, despair, the voiceless, colour, strength, and love
It is a place we must be part of as we move to higher spheres
The grief of moving beyond means not forgetting whom we hear.

Unravelling the Layers of the Shroud

As a novice reflexive researcher, I continue to ask the questions that have been asked by others before me. What is knowledge? Who is served in the creation of knowledge? Who has the power

in the creation of that knowledge? I ask these questions not to find any one truth but to explore the multiple truths that we as researchers bring to our research. I learned that I have an uncomfortable relationship with research. This can be a barrier to engagement, blocking me from working with participants' stories if I have to navigate my own experiences of being part of the Other.

I have learned that I need to be aware of my own history and context and give time and energy to the process of active reflexivity. Writing "Shrouded in Privilege" became critical to the examination of my role in the research project, offering the opportunity to process my own reflexive learning and providing a voice that would otherwise have remained silent and troubled.

In the process of writing this article, I have become more aware that articulating my feelings sometimes relies on the very constructions that I am trying to resist—silos of experience based on a single identity, polarities of right and wrong, commodification of knowledge and silenced voices, self and Other.

I still struggle, yet with a more nuanced understanding of having a double consciousness. As conceptualized by W. E. B. DuBois (1903) in *The Souls of Black Folk*, having more than one social identity challenges the ability to develop a sense of self. I learned that my reflexivity and this research have made uncomfortable bedfellows (Reicherzer, Shavel & Patton, 2013; Villenas, 1996). But attending to this discomfort has been meaningful.

The more I engage with my reflexivity, positionality, and learning, I slowly understand that this is a life-long process of critical engagement, with no comfortable closure (Kumsa et al, 2014). I have a compelling need to situate myself in my research, not as a confessional or a coming out, but to understand the power I hold as an academic and researcher. As challenging and painful as it was attending to my positionality and subjectivity, it has been pivotal to my learning about myself as a scholar. I need to continue to explore how to address ethical research practices and minimize issues of power in relationship to how knowledge is constructed. For me, research and reflexivity is a continuous, critically engaging process that is both messy and profound.

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Death of a Student: Dealing with Competing Interests

Jodi Constantine Brown

Abstract: When I accepted roles of Associate Chair and Director of Online & Offsite Programs in the Social Work Department in August 2013, it meant taking on additional academic administrative responsibilities as well as continuing my teaching, albeit in a reduced capacity. The excitement and nervousness about my new role quickly transformed into a life-changing experience when in my first year a student with whom I had worked closely—and whom I admired for her earnest passion and determination to help others—died by suicide. Amanda was my Capstone student and also part of the offsite program, which meant I was both her teacher and the administrator for her program. Her death led to profound personal and professional challenges for me. As an individual, I had a close connection, so I wanted to share stories about her, grieve with others who were grieving, and try to understand what had happened. As an administrator, I had rules I was expected to follow, obligations to students who were grieving, and the feeling that I couldn't grieve as I wanted to because I needed to project professionalism. Recognizing and navigating this duality posed a great challenge, raised many questions, and ultimately pushed me to evolve my thinking.

Keywords: death, suicide, administration, policy, student

A New Administrator Grapples with a Student's Death by Suicide

My Story

I never pictured myself in an academic administrative role. I earned my BSW, MSW, and Ph.D. in quick succession in the 90s, and left the field to raise my young children before I completed the hours necessary for licensure or won an academic tenure track position. When my youngest was about to finish elementary school, I sent my CV to a Department of Social Work in a Western State with a cover letter saying I would be interested in teaching a program evaluation class as an adjunct faculty member. I was not working as a therapist, but I had been conducting program evaluations for nonprofit organizations as a volunteer, loved teaching, and felt that I had experience to offer future social workers. I received a response asking if I would be interested in a full-time tenure track position. I applied, was offered the position, and spent the next two years teaching research methods, conducting and publishing research projects, laughing with fellow faculty members, and working toward tenure.

I found working with Master of Social Work (MSW) students incredibly fulfilling. I did not feel called to therapy the way many social workers are, but I enjoyed spending time with students and always suggested they "do as I say, not as I do" and spend the time to get their LCSW. Being an academic is not the same as being a therapist, but there were moments talking to students when I felt it would have been extremely helpful to have greater confidence in my therapeutic skills. At the beginning of my third year as a faculty member, I was asked to step into an administrative role in the department. Despite concern about not yet having tenure, I

accepted the position and eagerly began navigating the administrative aspects of academia.

Amanda's Story

The first time I met Amanda she was preparing to conduct her research project for her Capstone class, the final class before graduation in May. She requested a meeting with me the semester before our class officially started, and my first glimpse of her occurred as she walked through my office door in September 2013. A riotous mass of untamed brown curls floated above her petite frame, her brown eyes sparkled, and she had a quick smile. She was so tiny she seemed to float when she walked, and she looked so young that it was difficult at first to imagine her as the mother of two young children.

Amanda was a bright, engaged young woman, and like many MSW students, she entered the field of social work to do therapy. She wasn't interested in conducting research long-term, but she wanted to do well in school and worked hard to make sure her grades remained high. Amanda expressed significant anxiety around the Capstone project, but I had extensive experience working with anxious research students, and I didn't think this was out of the ordinary. I was impressed by Amanda's willingness to work and her desire to conduct a meaningful project. As a student, she wanted to complete work early and wanted it to be 100% perfect. She would regularly turn in clear, cohesive, well-written drafts of her Capstone for my review, and then wonder why I didn't provide harsh critical feedback. My positive feedback and encouraging comments would lead to her visiting my office the next day with a marked-up hard copy of her paper in hand, asking me to comment on the sections for which I had not posted written comments.

I believed that one of the reasons Amanda was so anxious about Capstone was that she was changing cohorts. Amanda started pursuing her MSW as a member of a three-year face-to-face cohort in August 2011. The cohort meets weekly on Wednesdays from 4-10 p. m. in 15-week semesters. Amanda completed two years with her cohort before asking to withdraw from the program to care for her ailing father. She had established close friendships and relied on the support that grew out of working toward a common goal with her peers every week. In addition to working on school projects together, the 28 students in the cohort would complain about the challenges of balancing work, family, and a rigorous academic program, and more than once someone exclaimed, "You guys are the only ones who get it!" in reference to their busy schedules. They had little time for friendships outside of school, which made their relationships with each other all the more important.

Because Amanda had finished her field placement, she had just six academic classes remaining. She decided to continue the program as a student in the online cohort, which would allow her to graduate in May 2014, at the same time as her face-to-face peers. The two-year online program, however, moved much more quickly than the three-year face-to-face program. Amanda expressed concern that she would not have the same peer support she had in her face-to-face cohort, and was disappointed that classes only "met" one time per week for eight weeks via a

90-minute online Collaborate session, which students were not required to attend in person. Despite her misgivings about the speed of the workload and the potential limitations of the online program, Amanda decided that finishing her degree and graduating on time made the challenges worth it. She quickly acclimated and became an integral part of her new online cohort. Amanda regularly posted in discussion forums, spent time on the telephone with students in other states, and never missed a Collaborate session. She was well on her way to successfully earning her MSW.

Death of a Student

The semester before she was officially enrolled in the Capstone class, Amanda asked for weekly in-person meetings with me to discuss her Capstone paper—in part because she was anxious about the workload. We began meeting weekly in October 2013 as instructor and student.

In between talking about her schoolwork and her research project, Amanda would tell me about her young children and talk about the difficulty of balancing school and family. Her entire face lit up when she talked about her children, and it was clear that the love she had for them was that of a doting mom, but she was pulled in many different directions.

"My daughter is 6, my son is 4, and I just don't know how I can get it all done," she said. Her next words were determined: "But I want to finish my degree. I'm so close!"

Before I could get a word in edgewise she would vacillate, saying, "Maybe it's not worth it, though. It's so hard to do well."

We talked about doing "enough" for her Capstone project rather than trying to conduct a perfect study. I made the point at least once, "There is no such thing as a perfect research study!" But it seemed difficult for Amanda to take those words to heart. I shared a personal experience with her in the hope of soothing her anxiety about balancing the demands of school and children.

"Amanda," I offered, "my mom graduated from college when I was a sophomore in high school. We used to do our homework together. Remembering the look of pride on her face at graduation as she marched in to strains of 'Pomp and Circumstance' is probably the main reason I continued my education. If Mom had waited until I went to bed to start her homework, I probably wouldn't be the person I am today. Maybe it's OK for your kids to see you studying."

As time went on, our research meetings began to evolve into something resembling therapy sessions. I asked Amanda in mid-November whether she had someone she could talk to about the issues she was bringing up with me. "I have a counselor and I'm working really hard to keep myself together long enough to finish my degree. Only six months to go!" she said. She canceled our next few weekly sessions and I didn't see her again for about a month. When we met again in mid-December, I was shocked at her appearance. She had lost at least 15 pounds.

Amanda ignored my shocked expression as she bounced into my office, excitedly proclaiming, "Here's a little treat for you, Dr. Brown! My kids and I made chocolate-covered pretzels for the holidays!" I took the gaily-wrapped bag of pretzels, immediately opened them, and offered one to Amanda in an effort to encourage her to eat.

"No, thanks, my stomach is always in knots these days," she said. "I'm so worried about my Capstone project." Amanda was earning an "A" in all of her classes at this point, and my saying "You have nothing to worry about" was clearly not having any impact. I was struck by her rapid shift from high excitement when she was presenting me with a holiday gift to a much lower energy level when she talked about her paper. Something didn't feel right, and I asked Amanda whether she was still seeing her counselor.

"Well, yes, but I don't have an appointment until the beginning of January," she replied.

"That seems like a long time to wait, but I'm glad you have an appointment to speak with a therapist," I responded. She didn't make eye contact with me. I don't know exactly what made me ask my next question, and it is something that I will never fully comprehend. Some bell in my head was ringing, perhaps drawing upon my past experience and early training as a social worker. I hesitantly asked, "Amanda, are you thinking about suicide?" Even as I spoke, I realized that I had asked with a tone of reservation that reflected that I might not be completely open to an honest answer.

She replied, "No, Dr. Brown. I tried when I was younger but I worked through that with my therapist. I'm just anxious about my Capstone and managing my life and still not sure about being able to do everything."

I am certain my face showed a degree of relief at her answer, and I quickly interpreted what I thought was a pragmatic tone in her voice and latched onto it. I replay that moment frequently. How much did she read into my discomfort? Was that the reason that she didn't honestly answer me, despite our previous connections and conversations? The moment shifted when she brought the conversation back to business by telling me that she would send me a rough draft of the final paper in the next couple of weeks. I assured her that she was well ahead of schedule, we said happy holidays, and she headed toward the library to work on her paper.

Amanda emailed me a draft of her paper on Wednesday, January 8, 2014. I reviewed the paper, made comments using the track changes function in Word, and sent her an email on Saturday morning, January 11, saying she was 95% done. I don't know if she received that email. Amanda died by suicide on Sunday, January 12, 2014, just five months shy of graduation.

Dealing with Death

I learned about Amanda's death at midday on Monday, Jan. 13. The Department Chair, Julie, and I were in a meeting, and upon returning to our offices we were met by the grave face of the

department secretary telling us to call Matt, one of Amanda's former face-to-face instructors. "You look so serious! Did someone die?" we asked, laughingly. Her nod changed our entire demeanor from lighthearted to somber, and we went into Julie's office together to return Matt's call and get additional information. Matt had heard about Amanda's death from another student and immediately notified Julie and me. Matt told us what he had heard, specifically about the cause of Amanda's death, and as I sat stunned in Julie's office, she contacted the Office of Student Affairs to notify them and find out what our next steps should be. The Office of Student Affairs said they would take care of organizational matters and paperwork, such as making sure Amanda was dis-enrolled from the program so her family wouldn't receive bills from the university. The office also planned to contact Amanda's family directly to express condolences on behalf of the university and suggested we think about what, if anything, the Department would like to do to acknowledge Amanda.

I was awestruck by how Julie handled the situation. I had an empty pit in my stomach, and the disbelief I felt as I sat in her office listening to Matt froze me. I didn't know what to say. I couldn't think clearly, and I found myself in a momentary place of denial, wishing it would all go away while at the same time hoping that someone had their information wrong and Amanda would breeze through the door in the next few hours and excitedly ask, "Dr. Brown! What do you think of this version?"

While I experienced the chaos in my mind and the utter stillness of my body, Julie calmly said appropriate words, contacted the right people in the university, and started putting plans into place to address the situation. I found myself wondering how she knew what to do and how she seemed to be keeping herself together. I was watching my colleague act as both an excellent administrator and a social worker, and I found myself grappling with feelings of incompetence. I wished I felt as calm as Julie appeared to be, but at the same time I simply did not understand how she could remain so functional. I felt in that moment that I would never be able to adequately perform my own administrative duties when it came to a student with whom I had worked so closely—and one who might have reached out to me if I had pushed her harder to talk about her feelings during our last meeting.

Despite my riotous emotions and difficulty processing the loss of Amanda, I was expected to continue working with Julie to take the required steps, such as notifying the Dean's Office and current faculty. That's when I learned that, as an administrator, I was not allowed to divulge Amanda's cause of death. My dean was clear that divulging cause of death would be a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and Amanda was entitled to health care privacy. Students are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Amanda was entitled to privacy as an enrolled student. As I listened to the dean's instructions I found myself thinking that many people already knew the cause of death, but questioning the dean did not feel appropriate in that moment. I didn't have deep knowledge of these issues. I was new to my role as administrator, untenured, and the dean had been successfully doing her job for years. I recognized that the dean was doing her administrative job by notifying us what we could and could not say. She was doing so to protect the university,

Amanda and me. She wasn't trying to stifle our future conversations about Amanda; she was trying to help us. We could not disclose Amanda's cause of death.

The situation became even more difficult as I found myself facing questions from faculty. "Jodi, what happened?" "How do we tell students?" "This is so sad and unbelievable." "What could we have done to help her?" In the midst of my own shock and grief, I was being looked to as the one in charge. I was the person who should have the answers simply because I had the title program director. But I didn't feel as though I had the answers, and even if I had, I wasn't allowed to divulge personal information about Amanda. I did, however, feel pressure to perform as an administrator and I had a constant vision of Julie's competence in the back of my mind. I found myself wanting to retreat. I wanted everyone to stop bombarding me with questions, comments, thoughts, and grief that so closely mirrored my own. I wanted to cry and grieve with my colleagues, and while I didn't feel that was impossible, I was constantly cognizant of my title, role, and my beliefs about what a "good" administrator should do. Good administrators don't cry in front of their faculty, staff, and students. Good administrators have answers, make people feel better, and don't snap at faculty and staff for asking questions, seeking guidance, and wondering what happened. Good administrators help others and don't think about themselves.

Administration in Action

In her time at the university, Amanda had been a part of both the face-to-face and online cohorts, so we created and sent separate email notifications to the students in each of those cohorts. "We are deeply saddened at the passing of Amanda Smith over the weekend. Amanda was a valued member of our offsite and online cohorts and will be missed." The announcement was personalized only insofar as to state that Administration would be in attendance at the next class meeting (two days hence) for the offsite face-to-face group, and a special Collaborate session would be held for online students interested in "attending" to discuss their feelings. My conflicting emotions continued as I considered that the students now knew Amanda died but would face the same questions I did about how and why. I wasn't allowed to tell them how, and I had not even begun to process the why. I kept thinking that these are students training to be social workers, so we should model appropriate behavior for them, as they are certain to face death, grief, and trauma upon entering the profession in five months.

In an effort to assist students with their shock and grief, Julie and I called on the University Counseling Center and asked its staff to facilitate meetings and discussion with Amanda's cohorts. The University Counseling Center (UCC) agreed to attend the face-to-face cohort meeting, but could not meet with the online cohort due to not being licensed in other states.

The face-to-face meeting facilitated by the University Counseling Center did not go as smoothly as I would have liked. The UCC sent two therapists to the classroom, but in keeping with university policy, the therapists were not allowed to disclose Amanda's cause of death. The students were sitting in their usual classroom, a stadium-style conference room that seats approximately 50 people. The UCC therapists sat at the front of the room in two chairs facing

the five rows of students. Most of the social work faculty and administration were lined up along the walls like wooden soldiers. Matt chose to sit with the students in the front row, and at one point I watched as he began crying and put his head down on the desk. He was grieving as a part of the community, which is something I had not given myself permission to do. I was torn between wanting to be a "good" administrator, which in my mind meant being strong for the students, and breaking down in tears whenever I thought about Amanda. My mixed emotions reached new heights in that room. I struggled to fill my role as the program administrator, which meant that, rightly or wrongly, I did not feel that I could express the rawness of my grief the same way Matt was able to. Yet, as Amanda's Capstone adviser, I was the faculty member who was closest to her. I wanted to share stories about her and grieve with others who were grieving. At the same time, as the program administrator, I had an obligation to the students in the room who were grieving, and I felt that revealing my true grief wouldn't be professional. I thought that revealing grief in the form of a few tears, choked up voice or deep breaths would be acceptable, but sobbing, wailing, or asking the many questions I had would show too much emotion. I didn't know how to negotiate the duality.

At the beginning of the meeting, one student raised her hand and asked, "How did she die? Was she sick?" The UCC counselors stuck to their mandate not to disclose cause of death, which meant students were looking to me to tell them what had actually happened with Amanda. "In order to maintain her privacy, I'm unable to disclose her cause of death," I said, and after I said it, none of the students in the classroom spoke. It felt as though no one knew where to start or what to say. Half of the students in the room knew what had happened because they had spoken to her close friends, so when I said, "I cannot disclose her cause of death," they either nodded sagely or started whispering to their neighbor. The students who were not clearly in the know were able to discern that her death was something other than a long-term illness or sudden accident based largely on what wasn't being said and the reactions of their peers and faculty. These students were 2.5 years into a 3-year social work program. They had spent more than 1,000 hours in their field placements working with clients and had taken classes on death, dying, and trauma. They were watching the social work faculty and UCC counselors for cues about behaving as professionals while grieving for their peer. They faced the same competing interests I was facing.

In retrospect, there are many things about the meeting that I would now do differently. In the face of insurmountable news it is often only the small things that can be changed. I would make sure the students were sitting in a circle and could see each other's faces instead of sitting stadium-style. I intended to use university resources and support, but in retrospect I don't know that I would ask stranger-therapists to facilitate. The UCC counselors did their job as they were trained to do and they did it competently in a difficult situation, but taking into account the training and professionalism of social work students likely would have gone a long way toward opening a discussion. In terms of opening the discussion, I believe it would have been enormously beneficial to acknowledge Amanda's cause of death.

Supporting Online Students

Notifying and providing support for the online cohort presented its own set of challenges. Although Amanda had done an outstanding job of integrating herself into the online cohort of students, she had spent only five months with that group, as opposed to the two years she spent with her face-to-face cohort. Even though the online cohort was a tight-knit group of caring students, there is something about sitting in a room with someone that is more intimate than being online. The online students needed to be notified and an email didn't seem sufficient. But these were geographically scattered students who did not come to campus. I discussed possible options with Julie, and we decided that offering a special supportive Collaborate session would mirror aspects of the program with which the students were familiar and comfortable and would provide support for those interested in attending. We asked the University Counseling Center to facilitate this discussion as well, but they reminded us that they were only licensed to provide therapy in California.

While I appreciated that the UCC needed to follow its licensing policies, this instance brought to light a question I had not yet had a chance to consider: Does our online program offer the support needed for students to successfully matriculate? We had technological assistance for computers, training offered to faculty for best practices in online teaching, and an academic adviser assigned to each student. We created an online "Student Hub" as a virtual hangout location for students to gather and welcome students on campus if they were in the neighborhood. I thought we were supportive and engaged with students, but Amanda's death revealed questions about the operation of a program attached to a university that could not offer counseling support to students because they lived in other states. Licensing requirements are state-by-state, and with only a handful of students in any given state our scarce resources are spent where they can do the most good. Is it sufficient to notify applicants before they matriculate that some services (e.g. counseling) will not be offered to online students? I suspect that from a legal or administrative perspective it is sufficient, but as a social worker faced with a grieving class of students, it somehow didn't feel like enough.

I found myself facing roadblock after roadblock in every effort to help support students in the online cohort. In an effort to support us to the best of their ability, the UCC counselors told us they would be happy to meet with students on campus if those students wanted to schedule an appointment. Because that wasn't feasible for most students who were out of state, I asked one of our part-time faculty members who specializes in aging, death, dying, and grief, if she would be willing to facilitate a gathering with the online students. She declined because she wasn't comfortable in the online forum and wasn't licensed outside of California. Thankfully, another part-time faculty member who is a licensed clinical social worker with some grief training, had experienced the sudden death of a colleague four years earlier, and agreed to facilitate a Collaborate session with the online students. I felt that offering the same opportunity to gather together as a community was important for the online cohort. It is possible that I would never know how much Amanda's death impacted each one of the online students. It is one thing to witness grief intimately, and another thing entirely to experience grief from a distance.

One student, the one who was closest to Amanda, showed up for the online session. I spent countless hours worrying about how best to support our online students, including questioning my feelings about colleagues who, heretofore, were nothing but supportive, to have one student show up for the special Collaborate session.

The online Collaborate session was smoother than the face-to-face session. The student who attended the session made the correct assumption about Amanda's cause of death, opening the door to an honest conversation that began the healing process. While I wasn't allowed to reveal Amanda's cause of death, I was allowed to talk about it if students brought it up in conversation. Comparing the two meetings, I still don't know if the online meeting felt better because it was one student, because everyone knew what had happened, or because there was something about the distance and separation behind the computer screen that allowed us to open up more fully and express our feelings. I believe the online meeting felt better than the face-to-face meeting for me, because I knew the online students as their teacher in addition to being an administrator. I had spent multiple semesters with the online students as their instructor before becoming the administrator for the program, and was currently their instructor for their Capstone class. Also, with another faculty member "in charge" of leading the online meeting, I felt much more free to put aside my administrator hat and the responsibilities that go along with that role, and begin processing my grief with people who knew me as a competent, caring teacher.

Facing Administrative Reality

Life-changing events can shed light on more than just emotional issues. In the months following Amanda's death, two overarching policy questions arose for me. I questioned the ethics of offering an online degree without being able to provide counseling services to those students who might need it, and the need for student privacy contrasted with best practices in reporting death by suicide.

The university provides a limited number of free counseling sessions for students. It is an important service and one that students utilize to such an extent that there is a 6-week waiting period for an intake session on campus. Offsite students have the same access to free counseling services that on-campus students have, but they need to come to campus if they want to see a counselor. Coming to campus will likely be feasible for offsite students who live locally, but is definitely not feasible for online students who live in another state.

Offering counseling to online students in different states would require licensing by a wide variety of external entities, depending on the degree the counselor obtained. Licensing requirements for psychologists differ in every state (Psychologist-License, 2016). Similarly, if the UCC counselors were social workers, they would need an LCSW in every state in which an online student was matriculating. At any given time the UCC employs 4 psychologists or social workers licensed in the state where our physical campus exists. Asking these individuals to become licensed in every state where an online student is matriculating doesn't make sense, given that students complete their degree in two years and would likely have graduated before

counseling services were needed.

While I understand that it is not feasible in terms of time or money, since Amanda's death I remain concerned about the ethics of offering an online program without being able to provide counseling support to students in other states.

I understand the university has policies that must be followed regarding student privacy, but in the case of a death by suicide, the policy makes it difficult to implement best practices in the field. Best practices, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)/Suicide Prevention Resource Center Workgroup (2011), include talking about suicide and the potential underlying mental disorders such as depression or substance abuse: "Schools should provide students with appropriate opportunities to express their emotions and identify strategies for managing them, so that the school can return to its primary focus of education" (AFSP, 2011, p. 7).

As a university, we followed all appropriate guidelines and policies. We acknowledged Amanda's death without identifying the cause. However, in protecting her privacy and following the letter of the law, we missed opportunities to have open, honest discussions about suicide, the underlying causes, warning signs, and prevention. I understood the reason for HIPPA and FERPA policies, and I absolutely understood the need to follow those policies or risk the university's federal funding. However, upholding the policies did not enable me, or any other administrator, to provide meaningful support to grieving students.

General consensus for reporting a death by suicide is to avoid misinformation and sensationalization of the death by acknowledging suicide as a public health issue, and identifying warning signs, causes, and treatments to raise prevention awareness (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 2016; Reporting on Suicide, 2015). In retrospect, I said, "In order to protect Amanda's privacy I can't divulge her cause of death … does anyone have any thoughts they want to share about her?" I wish I had said, "In order to protect Amanda's privacy I can't divulge her cause of death. It's my understanding that there has been talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to Amanda, her family and friends. Since the subject has been raised, I want to remind you that suicide, when it does occur, is a complicated act. Some of the warning signs…" I could have then opened a discussion about suicide prevention. In following the letter of the law—do not disclose cause of death—we missed an opportunity to open discussion.

Conclusion

Amanda's death taught me many lessons about being an administrator, a teacher, and a human experiencing loss. Years have passed, and I find myself thinking about her often. I wonder how her children are faring. I'm confused about why she made the choice she did and I often rewind time in my mind and wonder what I could have done differently and if there was any way to

change the outcome and prevent her death by suicide. I still do not have answers to many of the questions raised by her death.

I find myself treading more carefully with current students, particularly young mothers or students who exhibit severe anxiety. I try very hard to allow each relationship—especially the personal relationship between Capstone student and adviser—to develop naturally, but I am not as reserved or cautious as I was with Amanda. If a student makes a passing comment about being anxious or uncertain, I immediately stop whatever I've been saying or doing, look them in the eye, and begin a conversation about self-care. I am not afraid to comment if they look haggard or sleep-deprived, and I am not shy about pushing deadlines back or providing tissues and a broad shoulder if a student begins crying in my office. I have become more adept at establishing my boundaries, and recognizing that being human, being a good teacher, and being a good administrator go hand-in-hand.

As an administrator, I continue to try to respect my colleagues' varied responses to Amanda's death and understand my efforts to handle the situation. I wonder whether it was my role as "the administrator" that made me feel as though I had to behave in a certain manner, or whether it's part of my nature. If I were not in an administrative role, would I feel as obligated to keep myself emotionally stable in front of students and my faculty colleagues? I am open to the idea that perhaps I would not want to be vulnerable in front of students or my colleagues regardless of my title. I know from experience that others may have perceived my "being strong for everyone" by not showing my emotions as being uncaring or cold. Perhaps my colleagues struggled to understand and respect my response, never realizing that every time they asked me a question about Amanda that I couldn't answer or rejected a request for assistance, I felt even more frozen. I now realize the importance of giving each other the space needed to resolve our feelings.

The passage of time has resulted in our grief being less raw, and as a faculty we are better able to communicate with each other. We hold monthly faculty meetings where we regularly discuss deep, important topics such as diversity and social justice, and I like to think that we could discuss suicide as well. I'm not sure why we didn't have a faculty meeting to discuss and support each other at the time of Amanda's death. Extant literature supports the benefit of talking with colleagues in reducing feelings of isolation and increasing support (Berman, 1995; Hendin, Lipschitz, Maltsberger, Haas, & Wynecoop, 2000), although at the time I felt too raw and uncertain to actively participate in a discussion about our feelings.

One of our faculty members was the primary investigator for a SAMHSA grant focused on suicide prevention. Two weeks after Amanda's death Pat offered to train us in safeTALK, a "half-day alertness training that prepares anyone, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper" (LivingWorks, 2016, para. 1). Almost our entire faculty attended. The workshop followed a prescribed set of modules, but there was no discussion about Amanda or our feelings. I spent the bulk of the training vacillating between feeling like having the training now was akin to closing the barn door after the horse escaped and thinking that I had

done everything right with Amanda and it still didn't make a difference.

The news of Amanda's death by suicide came so quickly and unexpectedly that Julie and I were thrown into crisis management mode. We did not take time for ourselves. We tossed a quick "How are you doing?" at each other on our way to the next crisis needing our attention. The whole of our faculty began focusing on hosting Amanda's family during our graduation ceremony and making sure the collection taken up for her children was operational. As a group we were in full outcome mode as opposed to processing mode, and at the time I was very pleased with how well I was handling the events and activities designed to honor Amanda. I coordinated with her husband, made sure her family had a host and reserved seats at graduation, and was on the stage handing her husband and children her honorary diploma in the middle of the ceremony. I managed all of this without falling apart in tears, but neither was I relying on my colleagues for support or sharing my feelings with them. Despite the difficulty inherent in discussing suicide, in retrospect I wish we had a faculty meeting where we talked about her and our feelings.

In facing a tragedy, I was trying to balance my roles as instructor and administrator, handle my feelings about both roles, grieve the death of one of my students, support my peers in their grief, and manage competing challenges. I realize that in the newness of my administrative role, I was determined to keep my emotions in check the way a "good" administrator would. It is comforting to know that I am not alone in my feelings. Regarding suicide, previous literature details feelings of sadness, grief, shock, and doubt about competence in trained professionals (Anderson, 1999; Hendin et al., 2000; McAdams & Foster, 2000; Menninger, 1991), with some authors suggesting that therapists-in-training (or perhaps a new administrator?) experience similar emotions more deeply than their more experienced colleagues (Kleepsies, Smith & Becker, 1990; Kleepsies, Penk & Forsyth, 1993). With time and experience, I have grown as an administrator in both knowledge and confidence in my ability to lead. I know now that being vulnerable and expressing true emotion does not equal incompetent leadership. I also recognize that administrators have a very lonely job sometimes, and it's the nature of the job rather than something to be taken personally.

I wish that no instructor or administrator had to deal with the death of a student by suicide, but the reality is that it might well occur during one's tenure. Providing students with an opportunity to express their emotions, appreciating that staff and faculty are doing the best they can under difficult circumstances, recognizing that policy doesn't always match best practices, and maintaining faith that you're a competent administrator may allow inexperienced leaders the space they need to take appropriate action as grieving individuals. As part of a process of healing, I helped implement forums for discussion, supported students in the three-year offsite, face-to-face cohort when they wanted to start a scholarship fund, and awarded Amanda's graduate degree posthumously at our hooding ceremony, where her husband and children walked across the stage in her stead. In the years since, I have forged deeper relationships with my colleagues, gained confidence in my abilities, and am hopeful that I am better able to manage crises with the grace and aplomb Julie displayed during an incredibly dark moment for me.

I have come to realize that one of the ongoing challenges of an administrator is finding the balance between policy, practice and people. And I have decided that my own most strongly held belief is that policy is intended to help people, but that people come before policy.

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Editor's Note: The author informed the journal that all names used in this narrative are pseudonyms.

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome: How My Students Trained Me to Teach Them

Randall Nedegaard

Abstract: Starting a new job can be very stressful, and often brings out feelings of insecurity. These insecurities can come in the form of feeling like an imposter, especially in situations, like teaching, when we might feel like a great amount of expertise is required. Much can be learned from listening to our students. In this reflection, student feedback fell into seven themes: 1) teaching methods and style, 2) clear communication, 3) instructor "personality," 4) real world application, 5) relationship, 6) organization and structure, and 7) accessibility and responsiveness. This article concludes by encouraging openness to feedback and vulnerability in order to move beyond our insecurities and feeling like an imposter.

Keywords: imposter syndrome, higher education, teaching, vulnerability, shared vulnerability

On my first official day as a tenured associate professor, I thought it would be valuable to look at what I had learned about teaching in my years in academia and how far I had progressed. After all, this event suggests that I have somehow "arrived" and that I know my craft well. Ironically, I have spent much of my time in academia feeling somewhat like an imposter. I spent my first two decades after my MSW working clinically, often supervising other professionals and field students, but I had never had a class on how to teach. When I started teaching, some insecurities crept in. After all, I thought that I was supposed to be the "sage on the stage," teaching my students how to use critical thinking skills to better understand and intervene in a wide range of complex client situations. I have learned there is an actual "imposter syndrome" and that is not a new phenomenon. It describes feeling that others perceive you as being more competent and expert than you actually feel and it correlates with perfectionism. Dr. Pauline Clance was conducting research about it in the 1970's and eventually wrote an entire book on it (1985). Brems, Baldwin, Davis, & Namyniuk (1994) later applied this concept to teaching and academic advising. As with any set of "symptoms," they are experienced on a continuum, and most everyone experiences these to a greater or lesser degree.

This was not the first time I felt like an imposter in my career. I recall starting my clinical practice immediately after I received my MSW and quickly feeling overwhelmed with the complexity of the problems that my clients faced. I felt a substantial obligation to them; after all, they were coming to me for help, and that alone takes a significant amount of courage. In those early days as a clinician, I purposefully capitalized on establishing a strong therapeutic relationship. This was one skill with which I felt most comfortable, and I knew that building rapport was a necessary (but not sufficient) part of the helping process. Over the years, I've learned that when the situation feels overwhelming, focusing on the relationship tends to be my fallback position. Therefore, it is no surprise that I placed a lot of my focus on building relationships with students when I began to teach. I quickly discovered that building relationships with students is a far different process than building a therapeutic relationship. I was accustomed to seeing individuals clinically, and students are taught in a classroom

environment. Clients are also there for a specific and individualized purpose, whereas students are in our program to learn and to receive a degree so they can begin or enhance their social work careers. While there was a benefit in focusing on the teacher-student relationship, it wasn't very effective at reducing my feelings of being an imposter in the classroom.

As I considered writing this, I began by writing down the lessons that came to mind about what my students have taught me regarding being the most effective teacher. These were the lessons that helped me feel like less of an imposter. I realized that I had access to many of their thoughts on teaching in the student evaluation forms that I had collected over the years. Our university uses a University Student Assessment of Teaching (USAT) survey that is administered at the end of each course. This survey asks a number of questions on a Likert scale about effective curriculum delivery, instructor behaviors (approachability, communication, respectfulness), and overall course satisfaction. There are also three open-ended questions that ask students to 1) describe some aspects of this course that promoted your learning, 2) what specific, practical changes they recommend that might improve learning in the course, and 3) if they would recommend this course from this instructor and why. Once I started reviewing them, I realized this provided me with a wonderful source of information about what my students feel is important, as they would have actually had to make the effort to sit and write about it. I created a list of all of the comments students provided me in the last eight years about what they thought was helpful or what they wished I had done differently. They fall into seven main themes.

The Teaching Methods and Style

There is a great deal of information available about effective teaching styles and methods. There are also some spectacular teachers to learn from. Recently, I was able to ask someone who I believe is a master educator about what they felt made them so consistently effective. Teaching style was identified as one main aspect but not quite in the way I was expecting. This instructor explained that they are not a particularly engaging lecturer, so early on, they recognized that a wide variety of teaching modalities would need to be used in order to keep students engaged. Student surveys seemed to support this idea, as they listed several teaching methods and styles they found to be effective:

- Small group-oriented learning exercises—students feel they learn a lot from their classmates' experiences
- A balance between instructor teaching and assigning students to present topics
- Keep things engaging and interesting
- Desire for learning to be enjoyable
- Encourage class participation
- Give clear, useful examples
- The use of videos, class discussions, and personal experiences that enhance my learning
- Class discussions—hearing others helped my learning
- Using material in a way that encourages students to want to read further to promote learning without making them feel they are forced to

Clear Communication

It's no surprise students prefer clear communication. They eventually need to create products (papers, tests) that satisfy the instructor's desire to assess their learning. One of the main themes to come out of the student surveys was about communication. Everyone communicates in a unique way, so I've found that I have to continually work at this, no matter how thoroughly I may have explained something in a syllabus or in class:

- Expectations are reasonable, clearly delineated and consistently applied
- Promote good communication
- Explain things in a way that is understandable yet makes the student think critically
- Ability to use common language and not rely on psychobabble
- Clearly explain ideas and concepts

I had an interaction with a graduate student who received a "B" in one of my classes and she was devastated by losing her 4.0 overall grade point average. Fortunately, she felt that the class expectations were reasonable and understandable so our conversation could focus on this as a learning opportunity (about the impact of perfectionistic thinking on social work practice) rather than a debate as to whether her grade was deserved. Too often, these conversations focus on the fairness of the grade and the teaching moment is lost.

Instructor "Personality"

Like it or not, popularity is a part of the education process, and students may learn better from instructors they like. This should come as no surprise. After all, our colleagues in the business sector have long realized that people do business with people they like (e.g., Anderson, 2013). My undergraduate social work advisor had a powerful influence on my learning, and his "personality" was a big part of that. Teachers are role models and the use of self can be a powerful tool. For instance, I want my students to "know they don't know" everything. My experience has taught me that unfortunate events are more likely to occur when helping professionals become overconfident and believe they can quickly and easily assess nearly every complex situation. When imposter syndrome kicked in, I felt as though I needed to have a cogent answer for every question asked of me in class. Now, I actually thank my students when they ask questions that stump me and have congratulated them at the end of the class for the number of difficult questions they asked. It gives me an opportunity to model how we try to handle complex situations with clients when there are no quick and easy answers. Student surveys identified some other personality aspects they found to be useful for their learning:

- Enthusiasm for learning
- Respect for the profession
- Incorporating humor
- Approachable and friendly

- A desire to feel like an equal in the learning environment
- Enthusiasm—appearing to take a general liking to the material presented
- Approachable, knowledgeable, and fair
- Kind, understanding, compassionate
- Fun and passionate about what he was teaching

One student interaction really reinforced the importance of being approachable and humble. While I was walking across campus, I came across a group of graduate students who were all sitting together and enjoying the beautiful spring weather. They waved me over to ask me a question. One of the students asked, "why are you so humble, when you have so much education and experience?" This provided me a teachable moment to discuss the trap of overconfidence when it comes to working with complex, unique client situations (and often indicates the presence of reductionist thinking.) In this way, humility provided the double benefit of reducing feelings of imposter syndrome while also allowing me to model behavior that reinforced the value of being approachable to our social work clientele.

Real World Application

Although we are in an academic environment, we are primarily training future professionals to go out and provide a service to clients, communities, institutions, and other stakeholders. It was a difficult transition to move from teaching as a field instructor to teaching in the classroom. The classroom environment automatically creates some artificiality, and students expect a real-world connection to the information being presented in their coursework. Student surveys support this idea in several creative ways:

- Relate what we learn in practical ways
- Focus on what will help us in the field
- Incorporate real-life experience and real-world examples
- Make instruction useful and understandable
- Create useful assignments—apply assignments to real-life situations
- Practical teaching methods
- Think outside the box since most of our clientele don't fit "the box"

It is difficult to find a single student interaction that reinforces this principle, as there have been so many. The literature widely supports the idea that students desire real-world examples (e.g., Laurillard, 2013; Edwards & Mercer, 2013). When I first started in academia, I struggled with the tension that we are a professional program within an academic setting. I found myself designing assignments and activities that focused on professional writing rather than academic writing. I felt a bit like an imposter when I interacted with my academic colleagues, as if I were cheating my students academically. Now, after hearing how much former students value the professional skills and knowledge I taught them in their new jobs, it is much easier to have more confidence in my choice to focus on activities that are more professional than they are academic.

Relationship

As was mentioned earlier, I learned the value of focusing on relationship through my years as a clinician. Fortunately, that seems to translate well to the classroom, too. Deresiewicz (2014) contends that students are looking for emotional mentorship, and good teachers strive to get to know their students as individuals. He believes students are seeking parental figures with whom they can connect, be validated by, and who can serve as role models for how to think about and interact with one's environment. This notion that we seek others to meet many emotional needs that were met by our primary caregivers is becoming more popular in the clinical realm as well (e.g., Johnson, 2012). Below, students identify several relationally oriented factors which impact their learning. Much of this is related to creating a sense of safety that allows students to more easily drop some self-protective behaviors in order to vulnerably grapple with the complex and challenging material presented. The benefits of shared vulnerability in the classroom are many and have been very successfully encouraged by the likes of Brene' Brown (2012). One issue that may make it more difficult to successfully create this environment by being more vulnerable is the concern that we, as educators, might be taken advantage of by students who are seeking to manipulate us for their own gains. Yet, the ability and willingness to assist in a time of need are some of the most powerful tools we possess as helping professionals:

- Flexibility and consideration for our needs
- Approachability
- Respect for students
- Responsiveness when students have personal problems
- Accommodating, supportive, and patient
- "Believing the instructor wants me to achieve" and is willing to go the distance
- Committed to the success of every student
- Supportive, non-judgmental atmosphere that allows for great discussion amongst the students (vulnerability)
- Treats students as adults and recognizes we do have busy lives outside of the classroom
- Add a "personal touch" to class by sharing personal/professional experiences

A student interaction that supports these ideas came in an unexpected form. This student was struggling with her assignments but was avoiding any communication with me about them, despite my requests. I was finally able to have a meeting with him and discuss my concerns about how I felt that he was avoiding this communication as well as some other classroom behaviors that concerned me. It was a difficult conversation, but I was determined to maintain a strengths-based focus despite my frustrations. In the end, we had a productive conversation. Later, he requested that I become his advisor and direct his final independent study project. His rationale for selecting me was that if I cared enough about him to have a difficult conversation and discuss how his behaviors weren't helping him reach his goals, then he thought I would be a good advisor.

Organization and structure

Like clear communication, it is easy to see why students like organized and thoughtfully constructed classes. However, this is not always true, especially if the level of organization for a class feels almost constrictive to students. The comments below would suggest that students value a certain amount of flexibility. This has been particularly true in situations when all of the content for the class has not been covered, and time is running short. I've learned that very little is retained by students once they have reached the saturation point in a class, so more flexible teaching methods or deviating from the structure in certain circumstances is valued. Student comments below seem to validate this idea:

- Well-constructed class
- Organized and prepared
- Allowed us to go off track every once in a while when a student has questions that were somewhat related

Students learn a great deal from one another (e.g., Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2014). What I have learned is that when students ask questions in class, it is important that I be flexible enough to engage in those discussions rather than feeling compelled to adhere to rigidly to my original lesson plan. At first, my imposter syndrome took the form of feeling guilty that I was not covering all of the material that I intended to. However, students made so many comments about how much they appreciate the flexibility to discuss information or issues they have questions about that I frequently do not get through all of the material that I have posted for each class. This has even become somewhat of a joke with my students because I routinely end class by encouraging students to review the material posted for a class in order to cover the information that we didn't have time for.

Accessibility and responsiveness

Clearly, connection is very important, and accessibility is a big part of that. Being available, accessible, and responsive seems to lead to better learning outcomes. Some instructors demonstrate this by making concerted efforts to provide timely, useful feedback on assignments. Our colleagues in business have capitalized on this idea through providing good customer service. Indeed, higher education administration seems to be moving towards adopting a customer service model in order to attract and retain students to help meet budgetary demands. Some educators are concerned that a "customer" orientation on the part of our students might bring about a certain degree of entitlement where students are "paying for this degree" and we are to accommodate them because of it. Whatever the case, it is clear that students value this and feel it has an impact on their learning:

- Quick turnaround on grades
- Good at answering questions outside of class while students are working on assignments
- Quick responses

I interacted with a student about this topic recently and she remarked that she really appreciates when an instructor is available and responds promptly to her questions or concerns. However, she reminded me that these interactions are not just about timeliness. She also stated that when she sets up an appointment with a professor, she expects to have their undivided attention for the duration of that meeting and this provides her with a role model for how she should interact with her clients.

Conclusion

Feeling like an imposter when we start something new appears to be a fairly common experience. My conversations with colleagues throughout the years suggest that when we are thrust into new situations where there appears to be little room for error, our insecurities can really be triggered. The path to overcoming these feelings seems to involve at least two important factors. First, we have to have an openness to feedback we get from those we are working with. In higher education, we seek ways to assess our effectiveness and there are several avenues to receiving this feedback, such as the USATs described above. But evaluations and feedback can create feelings of vulnerability. Therefore, the second important factor is having the confidence and/or courage to embrace vulnerability. Brene' Brown (e.g. 2012) has done an excellent job to illuminate the importance of vulnerability in recent years and has been a wonderful role model for professional helpers. It has also been my experience that being vulnerable with people you trust can be contagious and extremely helpful.

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Growing Out of the Academic Box: Social Justice through Art and Collaboration

Aravindhan Natarajan and Heather Sloane

Abstract: Two social work colleagues reflect on their combined efforts to create an academic work climate supportive of a blend of art and science logics. Both share their frustration about the separation between art and science in social work and share experiences of the possibility of using art in their efforts to increase opportunities for critical teaching and learning in a social work program. The partners have actively engaged artists, scholars from the humanities, and scientists in conversation and collaboration for social justice. Both colleagues discuss the collaboration process and dissect the ways in which experiences with art and science can be helpful to social work understanding and competence. One of the biggest challenges in blending art with science in social work is finding and creating the structure to support this combined work.

Keywords: art, science, collaboration, art collaboration, art therapy, social justice, critical theory, feminist theory, cultural studies, quantitative research, qualitative research

Art is particularly helpful when traditional talk-based interventions don't work or work on a limited basis. As Kate Jackson (2015) claims in her article *Beyond Talk*, "While social workers can draw upon any number of talk therapy techniques to help their clients, there are times when talk isn't helpful or can't be summoned. In such cases, the arts can open a back door to the psyche, drawing from individuals that which they cannot yet put into words, thus catalyzing subsequent therapeutic conversations" (Jackson, 2015). Social workers are using creative arts in therapy by using visual arts, dance, music, drama, poetry and other creative writing with their clients (Jackson, 2015; Skott-Myhre et al., 2012).

Social work is often framed (as is true of other professions) as a blend of art and science. As Bent-Goodley (2015) mentions in her editorial in *Social Work*, the profession prides itself on being both an art and a science. Bent-Goodley defines science as "systematic study" through "observation and experiment" (p. 189). Art on the other hand, is "the expression and application" of creative skills and imagination (p. 189). Even though there is talk about the importance of the art of social work, there is very little explicit curriculum on the topic. Instead of the use of art as a partner to science, art is often framed as the enemy of science. Creativity, self-expression, intuition are often dismissed in favor of rationality and objectivity. For example, in the 2015 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Education Policy and Accreditation Standards, several of the competencies caution against a student's own experience and emotional reactions as dangerous to objectivity and ethical practice. At the same time, these standards encourage conducting research. An entire competency (Competency 4, p. 8) is dedicated to research and the word research is mentioned dozens of times throughout the standards. What is meant by research is not defined, however. Qualitative research is mentioned, but with words like "logic," "scientific," "culturally-informed," and "ethical." The competency does not clearly state what is meant by "evidence" or "findings." These words conjure positivist approaches to

research as opposed to interpretive approaches. Words like wisdom, intuition, creativity and imagination are not mentioned at all. These are subtle hints that the art of social work is not valued at the level of science in social work education.

Much like art is used by individuals to get at early emotions, for example: after a trauma, or to pull injuries from the unconscious like a thorn from a paw, art has also been used to express anger and resistance to oppression when people are silenced through coercion and violence. Art has also been used in social change. As Deeyah Kahn (award-winning director and composer) said in her address to the United Nations in 2014:

> (Art) it has an extraordinary capacity to express resistance and rebellion; protest and hope. It (art) can start conversations; it can bring subjects into the public sphere, expose abuses and point towards new worlds: to touch people in a deeper and more affecting way than academic and political discourse, to move us to tears, to laughter and to action.

Art and social work have been partnered in social action for at least a hundred years. Hull House emphasized the importance of art expression and arts education in impoverished communities and saw art as an exchange of knowledge that often inspired protest and action (Stankiewicz, 1989). Art plays an important role in social work as an aid in therapy and as a way to raise awareness; however, these art interventions are just scratching the surface of the possibility of art contributions and art collaboration to the profession of social work and to social work pedagogy. If, as Bent-Goodley (2015) suggests, art is just as important as science to innovative and creative solutions to difficult social problems, why then is the value of art often dismissed in social work cultures?

The Society for Social Work Research conference, which is seen by social work academics as "the" social work research conference, has an interest in emerging qualitative method, as evidenced by a special interest group and an editors' workshop strictly for researchers interested in publishing qualitative research findings. However, by all measure, qualitative research is still in the minority of research being done in social work. Deborah K. Padgett's (2008) book *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research* includes methods of ethnography, grounded theory, case study analysis, phenomenological analysis, action research and narrative approaches to what she terms the "six primary approaches" of qualitative research (p. 29).

Arts-informed methods are mere mentions within these six approaches in her description of autoethnography and performance ethnography (p. 31). Narrative analysis is discussed but there is no mention of literary/textual and art analysis as a possibility within this category of approach. These two examples emphasize the marginal status of arts-informed and interpretive research in social work.

The Congress of Qualitative Inquiry conference dedicates an entire day to qualitative social work research, including art-informed and interpretive methods. It is not uncommon at this conference to hear frustration on the part of social workers engaged in arts-informed research

that the Congress of Qualitative Inquiry conference is the only place where this research is encouraged and supported. One of the editors of *Qualitative Social Work* could be overheard discussing at this conference in 2016 that the journal often receives work that must be turned away for a lack of understanding of arts-informed method by social work researchers. Arts in qualitative research methods are rarely taught in social work programs. It is inspiring to see that a book dedicated to arts in qualitative method (*Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, 2008) contains a social work chapter, "Social Work and the Arts: Critical Imagination" by Adrienne Chambon. It is hard to argue, even with these rays of hope, that arts-informed and interpretive research is even further marginalized within social work research.

Art is not only important to expression and advocacy; there are also theoretical and methodological contributions from artists and the humanities that could prove helpful to social work. Knowledge developed through art could be invaluable to finding solutions to big problems such as the following twelve grand challenges introduced by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (Uehara, et al., 2015): Ensure healthy development for all youth, close the health gap, stop family violence, advance long and productive lives, eradicate social isolation, end homelessness, create social responses to a changing environment, harness technology for social good, promote smart decarceration, reduce extreme economic inequality, build financial capability for all, and achieve equal opportunity and justice.

By looking at social problems from a variety of vantage points and considering what is learned from intuition, practice wisdom, creativity, rationality, and scientific observation, social work broadens the possibility of finding solutions. Practice wisdom is defined as "a personal and value-driven system of knowledge that emerges out of the transaction between the phenomenological experience of the client situation and the use of scientific information" (Klein, 1994).

As discussed earlier, the science of social work is given center stage in social work curriculum. There is very little explicit discussion of the art of social work, which often makes finding art knowledge—such as methods and theories derived from art analysis—difficult to find in social work circles. The authors share their experience finding art expression as important to coping as social workers, as teachers, as researchers, and as activists. The discovery of art methods and theory derived from art happened for the authors by chance. Gravitating to art as social work educators was not always easy and often discouraged.

The formal cultures of social work education and social work practice rarely nurture and allow social work connection with art even when art is partnered with science. Without art and humanities collaborators, neither author would see the opportunity to learn how an art/science blend is necessary to thoughtful consideration of the grand challenges to social workers. The openness of the organizers of the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference has been crucial to art and social justice exploration. The author's experiences surrounding this conference will be highlighted in this essay.

Prior to Our Partnership

Heather:

When I was about to graduate from Virginia Commonwealth University with my MSW, one of my professors asked me to write down how I planned to dedicate myself to the social work profession over the next five years. I wanted to be a health care social worker working closely with traumatic brain injury, but I also had advocacy and research interests. At that time I was still naïve to the challenges of social work and idealistic that I would be able to do it all. Periodically, I would pull out what I had written to see how I was progressing. At first, I was disappointed that I was not doing enough advocacy work, so I was determined to be more involved with my state NASW and various health-related associations. However, what continued to nag at me when I looked at my ambitious list was how I was not engaged in research. I understood the value of research, but the quantitative methods I had been taught in my MSW program made research nearly impossible for me because I was working in a community hospital in the NICU, and to gather a hundred-person sample would take my lifetime. With the caseload demands of a frontline perinatal social worker stretched with demands in the clinic and several inpatient units, to do research "correctly" felt as if I would have to choose between research and practice, and I wanted to do both.

As luck would have it, my husband was in a Ph.D. program at the University in the town where I worked. Through his program, I was able to meet students studying the culture of health care. I explained my practice/research predicament and they led me to theory and methods that would actually fit the demands of my clinical work. Critical theory and the research methods that resulted from these theories opened my eyes to how power worked in my hospital. I audited a class with Paula Treichler on the culture of science and medicine. My classmates were interested in a variety of topics from global perceptions of menstruation, video games using plagues and virus narratives, and representations of premature babies used in health care advertising. I had not thought to be critical of health care institutions or the ways in which hospitals and medicine support practices of discrimination. I also began to see the influence of art and representation on daily life.

For the first time, my thoughts wandered to what research questions I would like to investigate, instead of guilt feelings and the impossibility of research for me. This questioning and curiosity led me to explore possible reasons for premature delivery for teen mothers in the NICU where I worked. With the help of students, I reviewed charts of babies born to teen mothers over a decade and was shocked to see that the majority had participated in prenatal care. Weeks were spent pouring over the prenatal education provided by our clinic and it turned out the training was not teen friendly and it did not explicitly cover causes and symptoms of premature labor. These friends also sparked an interest in me to return to school and study critical theory and methods, and to find ways to marry social work with cultural studies. I wanted other social workers to find an excitement in research that I feel strongly would only come with having many research method tools in the social work tool box. Without my friends outside of social work, I

would have continued to feel stuck. I would have continued to feel I was not meeting an ethical obligation to my profession.

Aravindhan:

I have always been drawn to art. I remember scrawling on the walls of my house as a small child growing up in India. Despite having no formal training in the arts I continue to indulge in various art forms such as drawing, painting, and photography to name a few. I trained and practiced as a social worker in India. In both my M.A. (Social Work) and my M.Phil. (Psychiatric Social Work) degree programs, the focus of my research training was on quantitative data collection methods. It was not until I got into the Ph.D. program in the United States that I got exposed to qualitative research methods. The artist in me was intrigued by the creative possibilities within a qualitative framework. However, despite the excitement and intrigue, I chose to keep my artistic and academic life separate from each other until after graduation.

Partnership forms

Heather:

Years later, in my Ph.D. program, I reluctantly took an autoethnography class. I wrote about my experiences as a social worker working with individuals who had survived a car accident and how this work gave me insight into the perils of empathy. I remember my knees knocking as I was asked to perform a reading of my work in front of my theater professor and many of my fellow students who were performers. My husband had studied with Norm Denzin, a strong advocate for critical ethnography techniques being used in social science research. I was intrigued by the method but not sure if it would be helpful to me in social work. Writing about my experiences as a social worker helped me reflect on my work over years and moments that tested my ability to witness others' suffering. I had been writing fiction since I was a little girl and my exposure to autoethnography allowed me for the first time to combine the artistic parts of my personality with the social scientist parts. I realized in conversations with Aravindhan and hearing about his gravitation to art, that my move towards art-influenced theory and method had been my first acknowledgment of the importance of art to how I understand the world. Only later would I admit that being an artist myself is important. Research would come alive for me again when I was given permission to write creatively. Examining a topic as an artist was as helpful as approaching a topic as a social scientist. Autoethnography forces the researcher to reflect deeply about their experiences and how privilege and understandings of gender, race, sexuality, and ability influence our decisions and how we think of self. This approach is another way to make careful observations.

While I was in my Ph.D. program I was also fortunate to find a job, teaching field for a local university's social work department. Field pedagogy aligned nicely with what I was learning about critical pedagogy and the importance of knowledge gained from personal experiences. As

a new teacher, I started a teaching forum to begin learning more about the classroom as a political space. I wanted to learn from my social work colleagues about ways to teach in creative and innovative ways. I believe this is where Aravindhan and I learned of our common interest in art. It was through our love of teaching and how we both pulled art into the classroom unconsciously, as our way of thinking through difficult aspects of social work. For example, to have my students better understand the importance of place to their clients and how to consider the strengths of a community, I had them listen to an Iris Dement song and a Common song. The folk song was about the death of a small town and the rap song was about the inner city street corner. Students were urged to listen carefully to the lyrics and the sounds used to represent place. They were also encouraged to consider the similarities and differences between the songwriters. Through this activity, my students reflected on the love people have for where they grew up, and that we need to be careful when we use a word like "the hood" and "white trash" when describing neighborhoods we know very little about. Every neighborhood has strengths, and you have to take the time to learn about them. We often discuss that we were not even really aware we were using art so often in the classroom and that both of us were reluctant to make public our creative side that had been pushed into our private lives. It was Aravindhan and my combined love of teaching and art that helped our partnership fall in place. As a new scholar and teacher, this partnership is vital to my growth as a teacher and as a researcher. It has given me the confidence to embrace the artistic aspects of my personality, so that I have the energy to fight for art collaboration and projects for the community.

Aravindhan:

The room was packed. There were more people trying to get in. Someone passed more chairs to be set up. I moved a bit and made room for chairs to be placed around me. Some people chose to just stand by the door and listen. Just the sign "Using the Arts to work with victims of Human Trafficking" had evinced much interest among the conference attendees. In that talk, I spoke about the power of arts to engage us, and how the medium can be used in working with those who have undergone trauma. The audience's engagement with the topic was very encouraging. The founder of the conference (Celia Williamson) needs to be commended for providing such an effective platform at the Human Trafficking and Social Justice conference. In my teaching, I had always drawn to various art forms to stimulate my students' interest in social justice topics. I also found it helpful to talk about the arts as a way to promote a healthy work-life balance for social workers. One day, I noticed my colleague Heather's office door covered in beautiful sketches. I stopped and asked her what they were. Heather explained to me that these were "Shadow Beast" student projects based on Gloria Anzaldúa's (2010) borderland theory work. I was so thrilled to learn how she was incorporating the arts into her teaching.

Overcoming Barriers to Collaboration

Heather:

Without the openness of Aravindhan and another colleague, Janet Hoy, I would have kept

completely silent about what I was learning as a cultural studies Ph.D. student, and how I felt what I was learning could be helpful to social work. I was learning about cultural competence from a social work perspective, and also learning at the same time that critical race theory, feminist theory, and disability theory had a lot to say about the dangers of over-generalizing about difference.

Talking with Aravindhan and Janet was a drastic contrast to talks I had with the majority of my colleagues. I knew from comments from some of my colleagues that they were skeptical of critical theory and often devalued theory in social work as esoteric and not practical. For example, I put pictures and brief text about cultural studies theorists I felt could contribute to social work knowledge on my office door (Patricia Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa, Frantz Fanon, Stewart Hall, Raymond Williams, Michel Foucault, Marx, &Weber). Several faculty members were stirred to comment, "I have not heard of any of these people except for Marx and Freud. It is controversial to have their pictures so prominently on your door. Aren't you worried you will cause a stir?"

There were also examples of quantitative cultures in our regular staff meetings that focused on the practical nuts and bolts of teaching and preparing practitioners. There were subtle hints regarding the importance of measurement of goals, objectives and competencies. An admiration for quantitative methods was clear, even though the majority of the faculty engaged in limited approaches in qualitative research, mainly grounded theory, analysis of interview and focus groups.

I remember comments from a respected colleague about her insecurities when discussing the Society for Social Work and Research conference and how it was a forum for "real" social work research, implying any research that did not contain a large quantitative project was not worthy. Even more "legitimate" methods of interviewing and focus groups were disparaged within my social work program. Arts-informed methods were not even mentioned. What these conversations communicated to me was that alternative ways of knowing were not welcomed in my program and that this was true for the larger social work academic culture.

My fears grew about the legitimacy of my dissertation research (even with the full confidence of my cultural studies faculty) with regular comments in social work faculty meetings that research articles were of no value if written over two years ago when a large portion of my research was cultural history and looking back into documents from the 1900s. In all fairness, I became acutely observant of positivist statements and I became very sensitive to dismissals of research using personal experience and emotion.

Again my experiences with alternative approaches to qualitative method in social work were limited, but in my small academic circle I was not familiar Boehm and Boehm' work with community theater (2003), and Carol Langer and Rich Furman's work with poetry (Example, Furman, Langer, & Anderson, 2006). The point is not that these rare works exist, but that for most social workers and social work academics, these works are not a part of their formal

education.

I dreaded when I would finish my dissertation and have to defend my research in a job talk with my colleagues. I focused on poverty in my dissertation in hopes that it would be hard for social workers to deny the importance of the cultural study of poverty. I remember endless arguments I would have with myself in the car on my commute home, imagining the scorn I would eventually face as I attempted to bridge social work values with cultural studies values. I imagined that my analysis of history and my analysis of the novel, *House of God,* would be seen as a waste of time. I spoke instead about my interviews with twenty-four physicians, which I knew would be seen as legitimate inquiry. I learned about medical education culture and how doctors understand poverty from every aspect of my research. Without my investigation into the history of medical educators and my analysis of a novel seen as representative of the realities of medical education, my approach to the interviews would have been completely different.

In my cultural studies Ph.D. program, I was taught that collaboration between social science and the humanities was a social justice necessity. Cultural Studies sees the value of multiple perspectives and also values inquiry where observations are taken from multiple vantage points. Cultural Studies is a critique of the academy and tries as a non-discipline to deconstruct oppressive cultures and structures of the academy. Cultural Studies has seen, as its political project, questioning the need for academic disciplines. It has railed on limitations of politically motivated cannons that do not highlight the voices of people of color, women and a variety of oppressed peoples. Cultural Studies has questioned who gets to participate in higher education, what is taught in higher education, the role of the professors politically, and how sharply defined disciplines limit the possibilities of progress. Cultural Studies also borrows from feminist theory the value of personal experience to knowledge creation (During, 1993). I could only bring myself to tell Aravindhan and Janet about my strongly held personal/political obligation to collaborate with the humanities, and the importance for me to grow as an artist-scholar and social worker. Even four ears gave me the strength to continue to pursue these values, even if they differed from the dominant culture of academic social work. I often felt like the dandelion that grows up through the concrete. To continue research in the way that felt right to me was going to take struggle and a fighting spirit that at times I was not convinced I had.

Aravindhan:

Even though qualitative research piqued my interest as a platform to bring together art and social work, I was initially hesitant to explore those options. Like Heather, I did not know if there would be enough support for such collaboration. I found great solace reading Part V of the "Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research" (Knowles & Cole, 2008). The section dealt with various issues and challenges facing arts-based research. It was comforting to know how others overcame barriers to incorporating the arts into their research. The support of Heather, Janet Hoy and Celia Williamson was crucial to my exploring the art-social work intersection in the classroom and the community. Celia's generosity in expanding the conference to include broader social justice and art themes, and Janet's work in the field of qualitative research and support for

our artistic endeavors. Heather's passion for creative writing and the arts were factors that helped me overcome barriers to collaboration.

Experience of Art Collaboration

Heather:

In 2015 we tried very last minute to gather interested artists for the annual Human Trafficking and Social Justice conference, a conference started by our colleague—going on twelve years now. Our vision was to bring art to the conference and raise awareness of how art is an important vehicle for social justice action. Both Aravindham and myself have been speakers at the conference and agree it is an unusual forum of professionals, academics, politicians, and survivors of human trafficking. When we finally met with dancers, visual artists, poets, musicians, and thespians from the local and university community and began to brainstorm about how art could serve a social justice mission, I was in awe of how alive brainstorming can be with artists. Artists don't label this process with scientific words but instead call it inspiration. It was lovely to hear all the ideas branch out into the space and see how each artist was able to build off of one another's ideas. There was the suggestion of a dance performance and monologues from testimonies of those arrested for trafficking.

We brought up the potential trouble with performance space. The performing art center was open to performances being performed there but the center was too far away from the conference rooms. There was a discussion about calls for visual art, music performance, and poetry: "What about a collaboration with the Museum of Art—they have a community exhibit space?" I could barely keep notes—the process was so fast and when I looked at what I jotted down, it looked like an ancient tree and not an outline of any sort. In art, collaboration is often exclusively at the inspiration stage, and then again at the end, at the audience stage. The group kept looking to Aravindhan and myself to help create a vision for the project and I think we were puzzled by this demand. It seems what the group needed was a vision and the parameters, and they were off to create something. Each artist was to be trusted with the vision. From my collaboration with artists in my research, I have also learned that artists are much more willing to take risks and make mistakes, and see risk-taking and mistakes as important places to learn. At this point in my growth as a social worker and artist and educator, I am much more willing to speak out, to collaborate and to learn from mistakes than I was prior to my work with artists.

Aravindhan:

The presence of art at the Human Trafficking and Social Justice conference is continuing to expand beyond what we had originally envisioned. Last year we had a victim of trafficking submit her original installations for display at the conference. This year, in addition to such an installation, we have artwork created at various community mental health agencies. There are also art therapists, poets, musicians and dancers who will take part in the conference.

Conclusion:

An article by Lena Mamykina, Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, "Collaborative Creativity" (2002), studied the successful collaborations between artist and computer scientist. In this study, the investigators stressed the importance of collaboration to innovative thought and creativity. In the study, the most creative projects were never completed alone. Social interaction, mentoring and collaboration are actually crucial to creativity. Successful collaborations "solve a problem through collective efforts" by focusing on commonalities and not differences. In the case of our partnerships, the common focus was on social justice. Mamykina and partners describe successful collaborations as partners benefitting from the collaborative relationship while producing very distinct products. What marked successful collaborations in their investigation was the ability of partners from different disciplines to create a shared language, to develop a shared vision, and to share knowledge resources. Extensive discussions and "what-if sessions" were crucial to the development of the collaboration (Mamykina et. al., 2002). We experienced this process in our social work and artists' collaboration for the conference. What started as a desire to show how art can be a helpful tool in social work and raising awareness about injustice turned into two art exhibits with survivors' art and consumer artists, a dance performance, and at least two presentations with the use of art in social work practice as the topic.

Once your eyes are open to art and social work, it is clear that this work is going on in the community often unnoticed. Once discussions happened between the two authors we were able to identify through student field experience that agencies in the community were using art interventions. In conversations about wellness in the classroom, students share their use of art as a way to imagine a better world, to escape from their stress, or just to reflect on all they are learning from witnessing injustice. The beginning of creating an environment open to art knowledge begins with recognizing the art and artists that are already in social work as well as the long history of art use by social work in social justice action. It is also important to learn from mentors like Norm Denzin, who created a conference space (Congress for Qualitative Inquiry) that embraces the partnership between art and social science. For authors of this article, it has been important to proactively seek out academic relationships outside of social work as well as foster an understanding of the importance of art within social work. On a practical note, it is important to bring art into the classroom, build arts-informed research options into research curriculum and textbooks, and use art as a way to engage the community in social justice action.

After exploring some of the obstacles to art in social work, the investigators have considered what aspects of social work culture come in the way of growth of both branches of social work into one strong tree. As Bent-Goodley (2015) mentions in her editorial, both art and science are vital in social work. There are parallel arguments between the mind and the body, science and art, quantitative and qualitative research, and the role of the academy in social justice intervention. Through critical theory and feminist theory, we have learned that dichotomies and these classic divisions are dangerous to innovative thought. These socially constructed wars distract us from solutions. When practices exist that deter social workers from considering body, art, qualitative method and social justice action as academics, this limits the possibility of the

contribution of social work to the academic community and the community at large.

If social work and other professions are a blend of art and science, and this blend helps to create better problem solvers in our ever-increasingly complex world, then it makes sense to also look to knowledge that is created from analyzing art, as well as methods of art inquiry that could increase the variety of theories and methods available to social workers. Much like we teach our students to consider multiple interventions to help their clients, we must also consider multiple ways of thinking about social problems. Social workers can continue to learn from their long-standing collaboration with social science, but we must also learn from collaboration with the humanities disciplines, which focus in a similar way on social justice issues.

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Call for General Submissions and Call for Narratives on Field Education, Historical Reflections, Teaching Reflections, and Research Reflections

Updated December 2017

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is a double-blind peer reviewed open-access interdisciplinary journal that has been published since 1995. We are also carried online by both Proquest Research Library and EBSCO SocIndex. Our readership is growing quickly since going open access in January 2016, with over 300,000 confirmed PDF downloads of article or full-issues since that time. We are a respected and beloved journal in the helping professions.

This is an open call for narratives as well as for submissions to our sections on Field Education, Teaching Reflections, Historical Reflections, and Research Reflections. Reflections narratives convey interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences. Rooted in the rich portrayal of key moments, this narrative content is conveyed via vignettes. This narrative content is placed within the context of a well-told story (exposition) that helps readers discover new ways of thinking about the personal, the professional, and the political in our lives. Authors then often reflect on that story and share conclusions. Often, however, the narrative stands alone, which in a way is powerful.

General submissions to Reflections use this narrative method to present narratives of professional helping – broadly construed to include work with clients and communities and activism by helping professionals engaged in social justice work. Such articles are valuable for education for practice. They also contribute to empirical knowledge about the nature of practice in the helping professions. Finally, they often make important conceptual contributions via reflections that address unresolved theoretical problems. To inquire about submitting a narrative as a general submission, write reflections@csuohio.edu and put general submission in the subject line. Betweeen December 2017 and August 2018, the manuscript will be assigned to one of the 2017-2018 Co-Editors: Julie Cooper Altman (California State University Monterrey); Michael A. Dover (Cleveland State University); Priscilla Gibson (University of Minnesota); Arlene F. Reilly-Sandoval (Colorado State University Pueblo); Johanna Slivinske (Youngstown State University).

In addition the above general call for narratives, Reflections has established fully peer-reviewed special sections. Articles published in these sections still employ the narrative method, but often do not include content on professional practice with clients and communities per se. When choosing to submit an article, authors should consider whether they should make a general submission or submit to one of the following sections. The journal reserves the right to notify an author that their article has been assigned to one of these sections. Please feel free to consult the section editor prior to submission:

Field Education Section (Dr. Beth Lewis, Editor, blewis1@brynmawr.edu): The process of field advisement and field instruction, as well as the experience of being a student can stimulate valuable narratives.

Historical Reflections Section (Dr. Jon Chrisopher Hall, Editor, halljc@uncw.edu): This section publishes narratives that reflect historically on people and events. Such articles are by or about helping professionals who have been engaged in micro or macro practice or social justice activism. The section will also continue the journal's tradition of publishing narrative interviews.

Research Reflections (Dr. Julie Altman, Editor, jaltman@csumb.edu): Although Reflections does not publish research results or literature reviews, the journal has a long history of publishing narratives of the interpersonal aspects of the research process. This section will be devoted to such narratives.

Teaching Reflections (Dr. Arlene Reilly-Sandoval, Editor, a.reillysandoval@csupueblo.edu): The notion of teaching practice, in other words of teaching as a form of practice, has long roots in social work. Also, the very first book on social work education, by Bertha Reynolds, was titled Teaching and Learning in the Practice of Social Work. This section will collect manuscripts by teachers and students that reflect on the process of teaching and learning, broadly construed. This section continues the journal's practice of publishing narrative accounts of classroom experiences, teaching innovations, civic engagement work, university-community partnerships, etc.

Please write a narrative in a style which makes sense to you, and submit it to Reflections. For feedback, even on an early idea for a narrative, please contact one of the editors. Submissions of any length – from short narratives focused on a single vignette to longer stories with multiple portrayals of interaction and references to the literature – are welcome (within the range of 1200-8000 words). For more information on submitting narratives, please feel free to contact the journal at reflections@csuohio.edu.

To Submit: We are currently having registration difficulties. Please email reflections@csuohoi.edu if the following doesn't work. Typically, many people receive messages saying they can't pass the spam test after doing the I'm Not a Robot step. Visit www.rnoph.org, and choose Register at upper right. Fill in the required fields. Ignore the this is not secure message; it is! Do not check the willing to review submissions box without contacting the editors. You should see a I'm not a robot button at the bottom. If you don't, please use a different browser. Once you have registered, login and choose your roles, specifically author. Then you will be able to see the Submissions link on left and the New Submission table on right.

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING
An Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Online Journal
Published by Cleveland State University School of Social Work

Special Issue Call for Narratives: REFLECTIONS ON DISASTER: 2017 HURRICANES, FLOODS, AND FIRE
Stories of Widespread Destruction and Unparalleled Human Resilience and Response
Submissions due: Date February 1, 2018

Hurricane season struck with a vengeance at the end of the summer of 2017. Harvey devastated the fourth largest US city. Irma destroyed parts of Florida in a path that was anticipated, but then determined its own horrific dance. Hurricane Harvey will be forever remembered as the Category 4 hurricane turned Tropical Storm that devastated Houston, Beaumont, and the Texas Coastal Bend, with wind gust reaching 132 MPH and rainfall in excess of 50 inches. Harvey took more than 70 lives and left mass flooding and destruction of homes, neighborhoods, businesses and personal property estimated to reach in the billions of dollars. With Irma, people heeded warnings to evacuate. Fortunately, there was a lower death count, but Irma left significant statewide destruction, the likes of which hadn't been seen since the hurricane which struck Galveston in 1900, killing 8,000 people, and since Katrina in 2005, killing 1833 people.

Just when we thought the hurricane season might be waning, Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands were gutted by Hurricane Maria. Relief has been slow, painful, and reminiscent of Katrina, but worse in many respects, given the uneven political response in this highest populated US territory. Those most vulnerable were hardest hit, yet hurricanes and flooding can impact all races, classes, and communities. Hurricanes with the force of Harvey, Irma, Maria, and earlier in this century, Katrina and Sandy, produce catastrophes that are increasingly familiar, costly, and deadly. In the last 12 years, many people have been exposed to multiple environmental catastrophes and have experienced trauma as well as triumph. The cohesion and capacity of people can be profound, but complex. This is a call for narratives about the preparation, experience, and aftermath of these catastrophes. Entries are encouraged from people who experienced or responded to these disasters, and who were charged with putting pieces together for themselves and those directly affected. Welcome are both narratives of educational praxis and narratives of practice involving promoting and empowering clients, students, families, and ourselves. Narratives should use the power of storytelling to convey the lessons and the impact arising from the process of helping and healing in the wake of these disasters. As this call was finalized, California experienced unprecedented numbers of wildfires, with far reaching and tragic consequences.

Aim and Scope of Special Issue

The guest editors seek diverse narratives on the 2017 Hurricanes and the California wildfires from individuals or groups who either endured or were instrumental in responding to these disastrous events and which can chronicle a single or sequence of critical events personally experienced, observed or documented. This special issue will document natural disasters of epic proportion bringing to life heartbreaking stories of human despair and fear contrasted by unfathomable acts courage and compassion. Given the unique and broad expressions of disaster, submissions may be of any length, from short narratives focused on a single vignette to longer stories with multiple portrayals of interactions and references to the literature – are welcome (within an overall range of 1200-8000 – maximum words).

The editors are interested in stories from flood, hurricane, and fire survivors and their families and relatives of lost victims, first responders and rescue team members; volunteer neighborhood responders; health and human service direct providers, students and educators, and religious, government, political, and media personnel with direct experience in rescue efforts along with on-going work to restore communities and lives shattered by hurricanes, floods and fire.

Submission Directions and Guest Editors

To inquire, please email hurricanseason2017@reflectionsnarrativesofprofessionalhelping.org in order to reach the guest editors, or contact any one of them directly: Dr. Ruby M. Gourdine (rgourdine@howard.edu); Dr. Sandra Crewe (secrewe@howard.edu); Dr. Steven Applewhite (sapplew@central.uh.edu); Dr. Priscilla Allen (pallen2@lsu.edu); or Dr. Priscilla Gibson (pgibson@umn.edu). To Submit a Manuscript, please write reflections@csuohio.edu with Hurricane in the subject and request assistance in author registration.

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