

Letter from the Editors

Arlene Reilly-Sandoval

Abstract: This serves as the introduction to Volume 24, Number 2 (Summer 2018). This issue includes general submissions as well as submissions for the Teaching and Learning section.

Keywords: Louisiana disaster, thousand-year flood, gerontology, aging, men's studies, miscarriage, teaching, disclosure, intersectionality, social class

What a treat we have for the reader in this issue of *Reflections*! Each of the articles in this issue provides new insight in the field of social work or discusses a topic that is not commonly broached in the profession. We start with Dr. Allen and Ms. Wright's excellent description of the thousand-year flood in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 2016. This devastating flood dropped more than two feet of rain in a little over two days in some areas, and it swamped levees in the area. At least 11 people died, and more than 30,000 people were evacuated (Dickey, 2016). Loyal readers may remember Allen and Scott's (2017) excellent article in a previous issue of *Reflections*, discussing the thousand-year flood and the 2016 presidential election. Dr. Allen and Ms. Wright continue this tradition in the article, "Remembering the Forgotten Flood," which includes the experiences of two survivors. The authors remind us that regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other diverse characteristics, disasters do not discriminate in their devastation. Human suffering also reminds us that we are one community. Climate change and urbanization contribute to increasing the likelihood that significant populations will experience disasters in the future, and social workers should consider how to respond, as well as how to respond while also recovering from a disaster themselves (Lee, Choi, & Jun, 2017). Indeed, this issue of *Reflections* encourages the reader to consider social workers as active participants in the human environment.

Dr. Netting and Dr. Thibault's article, "Reflections on Aging from Both Sides Now," and Mr. Brown's intense article, "Men and Miscarriage: An Insider's Story from the Outside," both ask the reader to consider the experience of social workers as they, too, experience life's circumstances.

Dr. Netting and Dr. Thibault ask us to consider a topic that most U.S. citizens would rather avoid: aging. In the United States, almost 80% of people over 60 years old have reported age-related discrimination. Yet, in thirty years, older adults are expected to comprise 20% of the population in the U.S. (Drury, Hutchison, & Abrams, 2016). Utilizing a variety of theories about aging, the authors reflect on their professional experiences as social workers and their use of theories to assess and help clients, and they apply them to themselves as retired social workers. The result is a critical look at the usefulness of aging theories and a compelling case for remembering the importance of human relationships and the dignity and worth of the person. This narrative also reminds social workers that we, too, are human and experience challenges, developmental changes, and environmental stressors in common with our clients.

Mr. Brown describes his own experience when he and his wife had several miscarriages. As he sought resources for himself, Mr. Brown was inundated with information about how men can support their partners through miscarriage, but nothing was available about how he should deal with his own feelings or even if what he was experiencing was normal. The topic of support for men who have experienced the emotions of losing a child pre-term is not well researched and is a topic rarely broached in the United States. As a result, Mr. Brown writes that he was unsure if his experience was common among men in his situation. The result was a qualitative research study that helped the author understand his own experience and informed the social work literature on men and miscarriage. Mr. Brown describes his own struggle throughout the study with being an “insider” as he conducted his interviews with men who also experienced miscarriage with their partners.

Dr. Lesser reflects on her own storied career in the profession. In her article, “Reflections: My Career in Clinical Social Work,” her description of micro and macro intervention with clients and her own journey of discovery of intersectionality of identities is a remarkable narrative. She succinctly describes her therapeutic use of intersectionality with clients and provides us with a lesson in working with clients from a variety of backgrounds. Dr. Lesser describes the use of self in social work and how a clear understanding of ourselves can help clients gain a better understanding of their own selves and their social interactions.

Dr. Campbell wraps up these reflections on social work with her thoughts about disclosure. Self-disclosure in social work is a topic debated among professionals in the profession. How much self-disclosure is enough, and when should self-disclosure be used? In her article, “Disclosure in Teaching: Using Personal Mental Health Experiences to Facilitate Teaching and Learning in Clinical Social Work Practice,” Dr. Campbell reminds us that self-disclosure can be a crucial factor in the therapeutic relationship. Self-disclosure has been shown to increase trust, increase the use of self-disclosure by others, and even decrease power imbalances (Rasmussen & Mishna, 2008). Is disclosure in the classroom different from disclosure in a therapeutic relationship with a client or during supervision in the field? How does self-disclosure affect the instructor-student relationship? The author describes her own experience with self-disclosure, reviews the literature on the topic, and shares her criteria for disclosure in the classroom.

This brings us full-circle to Dr. Allen and Ms. Wright’s article and the consideration of social workers as active participants in our environment. As social workers, we are constantly reminded that the therapeutic relationship is key in helping our clients develop a sense of hope and recovery. We do this through a judicious “use of self” in our relationship with clients. This issue of *Reflections* invites the reader on a journey of self-reflection, introspection, and consideration of how social workers are affected by the human condition and how we can, in turn, affect the human condition.

References

Allen, P. D., & Scott, J. L. (2017). Disaster after disaster: Unexpected thousand-year floods and

presidential elections. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 23(2), 53-59.

Dickey, J. (2016, August 29). Lightbox. *Time*, 188(8), 16-17.

Drury, L., Hutchison, P., & Abrams, D. (2016). Direct and extended intergenerational contact and young people's attitudes towards older adults. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 55(3), 522-543. doi: 10.1111/bjso.12146

Lee, G., Choi, J., & Jun, K. S. (2017). MCDM approach for identifying urban flood vulnerability under social environment and climate change. *Journal of Coastal Research*, 79, 209-213. doi: 10.2112/SI79-043.1

Rasmussen, B. M., & Mishna, F. (2008). A fine balance: Instructor self-disclosure in the classroom. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 28(1/2), 191-207. doi: 10.1080/08841230802179274

About the Author: Arlene Reilly-Sandoval, DSW, LCSW is 2017-2018 Co-Editor, *Reflections* and Associate Professor/Department Chair, Department of Social Work, Colorado State University-Pueblo (719-549-2691, a.reillysandoval@csupueblo.edu).