

Letter from the Outgoing Editors

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Abstract: This is the letter from the editors for Volume 24#3, the final issue edited by the 2017-2018 co-editors. This letter is written by the outgoing 2017-2018 co-editors, and includes article summaries written by Rebecca Krenz, MSW-Candidate and 2018-2019 *Reflections* graduate assistant.

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This is the final Letter from the Editors of the 2017-2018 editors. We call ourselves the ‘outgoing editors’ in order to stress a very significant moment for this journal: the commencement of the editorship of Darlyne Bailey, Professor and Dean Emeritus at the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. As Editor-in-Chief, the next issue of the journal, Volume 24, Number 4, Fall 2018, will fully complete the editorial transition to Darlyne and her editorial team.

This issue contains the final six manuscripts for which the editorial decisions were made under the 2017-2018 Co-Editors. The 2017-2018 editors oversaw the journal for the five issues from Volume 23, Number 3 (Summer 2017) to Volume 24, Number 3 (Summer 2018.) They succeeded the editorship of Michael A. Dover from Volume 18, Number 2 until Volume 23, Number 2. Significantly, the work of the co-editors established the first time that editorial leadership of the journal came from outside the university hosting and publishing the journal.

From Volume 1, Number 1 until Volume 18, Number 1, the journal was published at California State University Long Beach. The journal was founded by Sonia Leib Abels, a former Cleveland State University faculty member. Sonia relocated from Cleveland to the Los Angeles area in 1994 with her husband, Paul Abels, former Associate Dean of the Case Western Reserve University Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. As director of the School of Social Work, Paul sought and obtained the support of the faculty to host such a journal. As someone with a strong background in narrative approaches to social work practice, the vision of the founding editor, Sonia Leib Abel, was to publish an interdisciplinary journal of narratives of professional, beginning with Volume 1, Number 1 in Winter 1995.

Sonia’s vision determined the title of the journal and has set a tradition that has been followed since that time. Paul and Sonia Abels continue to reside in Los Angeles. They saw the transition to Jillian Jimenez as editor beginning Volume 5, Number 1 in 1999. Following the death of Jillian in October 2009, Eileen Mayers Pasztor assumed the editorship as of Volume 16, Number 4. It should be pointed out that at two key times in the history of the journal, long-time Associate Editor Rebecca Lopez stepped forward to ensure the continuity of this journal. The key role of the respective directors and the faculty of the California State University Long Beach School of Social Work will long be remembered by the readers and authors of this journal.

Their support for the journal by that school continues today in two key ways. With the support of Nancy Meyer-Adams, Director, the School is one of the Publishing Partners of the journal, along with University Georgia School of Social Work, Howard University School of Social Work and Monmouth University School of Social Work. Also, California State University Long Beach Professor of Art Robin Richesson has stayed with the journal since its transition to being published beginning May 2012 by Cleveland State University School of Social Work.

Although since that time the journal has been published online, the journal has retained the same look and feel, by and large, and most important has done through though the cover page illustrations done by or overseen by Robin. We are so pleased that this has continued one important part of the journal's tradition.

The art for this issue, created by Robin Richesson, was inspired by author Meagan A. Hoff's article, "A Focus on Becoming: Reflections on Teaching" Meagen briefly describes seeing two girls peering through a window, when going to collect them for a summer camp for refugee girls. According to Robin, "This image struck me as a metaphor for the way we see one another, but due to cultural bias, emotional issues, and language barriers, we can't always communicate or empathize as we hope to. The glass, with its reflections, is that invisible barrier, obscuring the emotional life of the girls from their teacher."

We, the outgoing co-editors, have been honored to have served as co-editors during the important transition to the journals fifth editor, Darlyne Bailey! Amongst those co-editors, we would like to acknowledge the primary role of Arlene Reilly-Sandoval, who personally oversaw the editorial decisions beginning Fall 2018. This freed up one of us, Michael Dover, to focus his attentions on the duties of Publisher and to help facilitate the editorial transition to Darlyne's editorship. The editor makes all editorial decisions, determines issue content, and approves all final issue galley proofs, but the articles are assembled into and issue on publishing end (which involves copy editing, proofreading, issue assembly, website maintenance, and fund-raising.)

The co-editors would also like to thank Carol L. Langer for taking over the Learning and Teaching Section from Arlene during the period of our co-editorship, as this facilitated Arlene's crucial role among we co-editors.

We look forward to the next issue of the journal for more information about the exciting developments planned by Darlyne and her Associate Editors Monica Leisey (Salem State University) and F. Ellen Netting (Virginia Commonwealth University), and by her Assistant Editor Kelly McNally Koney.

Finally, the co-editors would like to thank two persons whose skills have immeasurably helped ensure a quality journal during our time as co-editors. Tara Peters, MSW, MA (English) was the 2017-2018 Graduate Assistant, as appointed by Cathleen Lewandowski, Professor and Director of the School of Social Work. Since she graduated, Tara has been appointed the journal's Copy Editor and will continue in that role as part of the publication of the journal. She has established a strong foundation for the continued improvement of the quality of the narratives as published. Assisting with that process this year is the 2018-2019 Graduate Assistant, Rebecca Krenz, BSW.

Before introducing Rebecca, we would like to thank Dean Gregory Sadlek of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Dean Sadlek has from the start strongly supported the value of the journal. Upon the recommendation of former Director Murali Nair and current Director Cathleen Lewandowski, he has approved allocations which have permitted a Graduate Assistant assigned each year since 2013-2014 to the Journal, as well as an annual course release to Prof. Michael Dover for his work on the journal, first as editor and then as publisher.

Rebecca Krenz, this year's Graduate Assistant, is a student leader in her own right, with CSU's HYPE team, an on-campus certified peer education group, that helps to develop leadership, communication, intervention and referral skills to facilitate healthy decision making and role-modeling. She has already played a key role in helping publish this issue. We would like to acknowledge the role she played, for instance, in writing the below summaries of each of the narratives in this issue. Enough about the journal, let's go to the heart of the matter, the narratives in this issue!

“Brit Think, American Think” by Paul G. Johnson

Do Americans have a flawed system by which we practice social work? Does the United Kingdom have a better strategy to allow social work students to graduate with out drowning in student loan debt? The issues faced by social workers in the United States are not specific to our own country. So why not look internationally for solutions to the shortcomings in our own practice? These are conundrums Paul G. Johnson addresses in “Brit Think, American Think.” Starting practice in United Kingdom, Paul now resides and practices social work in the state of Maine. Paul explains how education and experience in the U.K. allows comparison with how social workers function in the United States in both practice and educational settings. We may find the answers to the issues which plight our personal practice on the micro, mezzo, and macro level, by viewing the solution from a international standpoint.

**“Becoming Competent to Teach Competence: Learning and Teaching Relational Process”
by Lance Taylor Peterson**

In therapeutic settings all helping professionals work to understand the development of the ‘unsaid’ between clients during sessions, specifically in couple and family practice. Lance Taylor Peterson refers to this as noticing and attending to relational process, in the article “Becoming Competent to Teach Competence: Learning and Teaching Relational Process.” Lance explains how we as social workers must learn to see the process as it unfolds, and in turn help our clients objectively see their own process as a teaching moment which can strengthen interpersonal relationships outside of therapy. The dilemma is how does a seasoned clinician teach this skill to a novice social worker in an academic setting? Lance explains the theoretical obstacles encountered when teaching students through experiential activities. Lance would have the students video-record role-play scenarios, and give audio feedback. One day Lance's own relational process became apparent. Lance recounts the discovery, when working with students, that just ‘being’ a social work practitioner continually develops this skill in examination of one's own relational process.

“An Innovative Approach for Learning Self-Awareness and Nonverbal Communication: Horses for Healers” by JoAnn Jarolmen

Non-verbal communication presented in the therapeutic context presents opportunities for comprehension that can contribute to understanding client needs. Academia spends much time fine-tuning social work student verbal communication skills for optimal outcomes during future client interaction. But how often is body language or personal space talked about in the classroom? What is the most effective way to teach non-verbal material for practical application? JoAnn Jarolmen describes how to tackle this important, yet often forgotten, topic. JoAnn does this through her narrative of a Horses for Healers program which helps students become physically self-aware. JoAnn describes watching students have personal breakthroughs with the horses. In the process, the students realize how they can apply this knowledge with clients who may have verbal barriers of communication. By adding this experiential and didactic component to the course material, JoAnn was able to emphasize the need for self-awareness in practice to best help clients.

“A Focus on Becoming: Reflections on Teaching” by Meagan A. Hoff

Our personal narratives and presumptions about others greatly limit our capacity to meet our clients where they are. Many times we have preconceived notions about how our clients should show up and what it means if they do not. Instead these self-constructed narratives about others inhibit our clients from telling their own stories, and we miss the greatest opportunities to provide the services we initially intend to offer. Megan A. Hoff discusses the experience of working at a summer camp for Syrian refugees. Megan reflects back on the experience to explain the personal process of learning to humanize pedagogy by questioning what is said and done with clients. “A Focus on Becoming: Reflections on Teaching” tells a story of a social worker trying to help clients around the always difficult issue of assimilation. After struggling with administrative pressures and personal frustration, Megan has a heart-warming, eye-opening moment. This culmination of a process of honest reflections on teaching practices is of value to educators in the helping professions interested in what Megan calls the journey to critical consciousness.

“To Bracket or Not to Bracket: Reflections of a Novice Qualitative Researcher” by Bibi Baksh

As social workers we cannot forget the importance of research. During our time in school we spend much time studying core components of social work practiced in the community, but we do not study the community which we learn in. Bibi Baksh speaks on personal research findings of a qualitative research project completed with four other PhD students, in the article “To Bracket or Not to Bracket: Reflections of a Novice Qualitative Researcher”. Baksh and colleagues used critical race theory and phenomenology to sift through the appearance of racism in the classroom. Bibi walks us through this experience, which included feelings of dichotomy when pondering both bracketing and reflexivity congruently during the research process. Bibi’s reflection gives an account of the self-insight discovered while conducting a research study. This leaves the reader with more questions to be answered, which is the sign of a solid narrative.

“A Night to Remember: An Autoethnographic Window into Facilitating a Dinner Stories Event for Healthcare Workers” by Susan Breiddal

Just like our clients, we as counselors need to find places to tell our stories for emotional support. This is exactly what Susan Breiddal set out to do one evening. In “A Night to Remember: An Autoethnographic Window into Facilitating a Dinner Stories Event for Healthcare Workers,” Susan narrates an evening where a group of colleagues become the therapeutic group for themselves, sharing the burdens and bright spots of their practice. When facilitating any group of people, one must exemplify the specific skills needed to create a therapeutic alliance by: establishing rapport, creating a safe space for deep emotion, modeling vulnerability, engaging participants, and ensuring physical and emotional comfort through out the session. After some light chatter, Susan starts the night off by telling a story, one which shares relational and emotional vulnerability. The story is about a hospice client who left an lasting impact of Susan’s life. This narrative exemplifies the humble moments we often experience with our clients, moments when our hearts are touched. But afterwards we can often find there is no one to connect with about the emotional burden we helping professionals work. Sometimes the things we do for personal self-care cannot fulfill the emotional support requirements that professional self-care involves. Susan’s narrative of an evening for dinner, comradery, and story telling examines a new approach to fulfilling professional self-care.

About the Editors: The outgoing 2017-2018 editors are: Julie Cooper Altman, PhD (California State University Monterey); Michael A. Dover, PhD (Cleveland State University); Priscilla Gibson, PhD (University of Minnesota); Arlene F. Reilly-Sandoval, Phd (Colorado State University Pueblo); Johanna Slivinske, MSW (Youngstown State University). Rebecca Krenz, MSW-Candidate, is the 2018-2018 Graduate Assistant for Reflections.