

# Reflections from the Editorial Team: Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future

Darlyne Bailey, Monica Leisey, F. Ellen Netting, and Kelly McNally Koney

**Abstract:** *Reflections* Volume 24 number 4 serves as the introduction to the new Editorial Leadership Team and Editorial Board. This issue outlines their new structure and process. Most importantly are the articles herein that express the overriding themes of strength and resiliency as experienced in diverse contexts.

**Keywords:** migration, immigration, resiliency, disaster, self-awareness, editorial process

Since its founding by Sonia Leib Abels and Paul Abels, *Reflections* has been an oasis in a sea of journals, few of which are devoted to the beauty and insight of narrative. Over these past 24 years, thousands have enjoyed reading, publishing in, reviewing for, and even guest editing for *Reflections*!

As your new Editorial Leadership Team (ELT), we are fully committed to ensuring this journal's history of providing spaces for multiple voices through the power of narratives is honored and sustained. Narratives are valuable because they reflect the feelings, insights, and "aha" moments in which authors gained wisdom and self-awareness from their work with clients, colleagues, students, and others. Narratives contribute to empirical knowledge about the nature of practice in the helping professions. Finally, narratives often make important conceptual contributions that address unresolved theoretical problems.

## Our New Structure and Process

This issue officially introduces your new ELT and our new structure and process that began last fall. As Editor-in-Chief of *Reflections*, Darlyne invited Monica and Ellen to serve as Associate Editors and Kelly to become the Assistant Editor. We were very excited when our Section Editors—Julie Cooper Altman, Jon Christopher Hall, Carol Langer, and Beth Lewis—agreed to remain with *Reflections*, each working most closely with one member of the ELT. The Section Editors and the ELT together became the Editorial Board. This Editorial Board has already met twice and moving forward will conference every quarter to ensure that the submission and review process is responsive to authors and respectful of the time and efforts of reviewers. In addition to our shared love of this very special journal, we are all committed to formative feedback, transparency, inclusion, and collaboration throughout our processes and relationships. We believe collectively these commitments will ensure the highest quality *Reflections* for you, our readers.

We remain indebted to Michael Dover (2012-2017 *Reflections* Editor and 2017-2018 *Reflections* Co-Editor and Publisher), who has answered more questions than we can count and who is now in the position of Publisher. Mike and his Publishing Team remain housed at Cleveland State University's School of Social Work, with Cathleen Lewandowski as Director of the school. In addition to Mike, the Publishing Team includes Tara Peters (Copyeditor) and Rebecca Krenz (2018-2019 Graduate Assistant). We are thankful that Robin Richesson continues to share her

talents as our Art Director. Our Publishing Partners—California State Long Beach, Howard University, Monmouth University, and the University of Georgia—serve as our oversight Executive Committee.

Open Journal Systems (OJS) is the software platform we use to publish the journal. This system was updated in 2018. Some features and functions have changed, resulting in a steep learning curve, and Kelly has become our guru in facilitating our rapid fire learning process. We know that these changes have impacted authors and reviewers who also interact with OJS, and we have appreciated their patience with us as we have engaged in this co-learning.

In speaking on behalf of all of us, as your Editorial Leadership Team, we remain committed to bring only the best to *Reflections*. As part of our *Reflections* community, we know this is what you truly deserve!

### **Calling for Narratives**

Recently we revised guidelines for authors, based on the questions we are asking reviewers, so that everyone submitting a manuscript is fully aware of how their submission will be evaluated. These guidelines are on our website, but since this is our first opportunity to highlight them, we are listing them below.

- Convey interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences in a narrative format. Be clear about the author's role (e.g., practitioner, recipient of service, teacher, field instructor, student, researcher, other).
- Place your narrative within the context of a well-told story that helps readers discover new ways of thinking about the personal, the professional, and the political in our lives.
- Root your narrative in the rich and detailed portrayal of key moments, examples, and vignettes that fully portray the interaction taking place between and among the people involved.
- Place your narrative within a historical context, focus on the present, and consider the implications of this reflection for the future.
- Use references that might draw connections between the content and the published literature or that might assist the reader in understanding conceptual or theoretical conclusions about the nature of professional practice.
- Draw any conclusions about the need for qualitative or quantitative research related to the issues arising from your narrative.

Previously *Reflections* had a section dedicated to history. However, we all agree that history is so important that, as you can see from the guidelines above, we are asking authors to expand the core elements of their manuscripts to include past, present, and future dimensions. In essence, we are hoping to interweave history throughout published articles. Including a look at the “past” of the subject of a narrative would serve as a contextual grounding for how that narrative came to be (e.g., a bit about the author's past and/or about the history of the issue presented). Including the “present” would speak to the narrative itself as it presents today, while the “future” would hopefully include a vision of where this personal/interpersonal journey and/or phenomena

is anticipated to be going—questions, hopes, and even concerns and fears.

We welcome submissions to our four permanent sections: Practice, Field Education, Teaching & Learning, and Research. You will continue to see calls for special sections. The number of articles published will determine their size and whether they ultimately become special issues. We most recently saw this in *Reflections* V24(1). Regardless of whether they are published as a special section or a special issue, it is our intention that all *Reflections* articles are informative, evocative, and able to be used by our readers.

In addition to sharing the voices of those who largely live inside the world of academia, we want *Reflections* to be a space for our friends and colleagues who spend most of their time in the community, whether as social service providers or recipients. In so doing, we are purposefully reaching out to and soliciting narratives from clinical/micro-direct practitioners and clients of individual, family, and small group services, as well as those engaged with organizations, communities, and policies through macro-direct practice.

The Practice Section (Dr. Jon Christopher Hall, Editor) is based on the process of being a practitioner or a recipient of service. For example, these narratives give voice to practitioners who work and advocate with individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations, and communities; participate in social justice and civic engagement work; or become recipients of service in the very systems in which they have practiced.

The Field Education Section (Dr. Beth Lewis, Editor) focuses on the process of field advisement and field instruction, as well as the experience of being a student in a practicum. For example, authors should consider building narratives around insights gained from process recordings and verbatims, from supervisory relationships, or from other field experiences in which co-learning occurred.

The Teaching & Learning Section (Dr. Carol Langer, Editor) focuses on the process of teaching or being a student and continues the journal's practice of publishing narrative accounts about education and training. For example, classroom experiences, teaching innovations, university-community partnerships, continuing education, and other formal learning opportunities offer valuable insight.

The Research Section (Dr. Julie Cooper Altman, Editor) is focused on process. 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. For example, authors are encouraged to explore the experience of collaboration in the design, development, implementation, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative studies or program evaluations.

We are thrilled to be publishing two special issues on cultural humility in the coming months to house the number of high quality manuscripts we received. These special issues of *Reflections* will include those who use the principles of cultural humility in their work, what it means to be a culturally humble practitioner, the challenges and triumphs of following this framework, training or mentorship in cultural humility, practice applications, and the fundamentals of cultural

humility. Our Guest Editors for these special issues are Beth Russell, PhD, LCSW, Pam Viggiani, PhD, LMSW, and Debra Fromm Faria, MSW, LCSW, from the College at Brockport's Department of Social Work.

On the horizon we are looking forward to publishing a special issue on continuing education—the many virtues and challenges inherent in that component of all professional disciplines. The Lead Guest Editor is Patricia Gray, EdD, LCSW, from Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. The call for this special issue is posted on our website, and we encourage potential authors to read more about it!

We invite and receive submissions from a wide range of authors. While *Reflections* is only published in English to date, we continue to welcome manuscripts from those for whom English is not their first language; authors from around the world; those who have never been published before; and those who have little, if any, experience writing a narrative. Where possible, our practice is to work with these authors so they can develop their stories in a way that fits the journal. This may mean providing feedback and recommendations to authors before their manuscripts are sent out for review.

One of the best ways to get reliable, high quality reviewers is to recruit people our readers know. We hope you will join with us in asking your networks for potential reviewers. Potential reviewers first need to register for the journal. Once they are registered, they can email us at [reflectionseitorialteam@gmail.com](mailto:reflectionseitorialteam@gmail.com) and Kelly can assist them in doing so.

We are particularly indebted to the hard work of the journal's 42 Narrative Review Board (NRB) members who are seasoned reviewers selected for their thorough and timely comments to be shared with submitting authors. NRB members agree to do multiple reviews each year and to participate in surveys and conference calls that solicit feedback on the quality of the review process.

Reviewers are the foundation of any successful journal, for without them manuscripts cannot move forward and authors cannot benefit from their valuable feedback. Please know how much we appreciate the volunteer time that reviewers contribute to *Reflections*. We could not do this without you.

### **Highlights of This Issue**

We have organized the nine articles within this issue around themes that emerged within and across narratives, and we are excited to have contributions that transcend geographical and cultural borders. Overriding themes in all these reflections are the virtues of strength and resiliency, whether the reflection is about facing crises and disasters, embracing growth and continual learning as a helping professional, or overcoming barriers to pursuing one's dreams.

The cover art by Jose M. Loza (<http://www.jmloza.com>) wonderfully conveys these virtues. In the artist's words:

...this work is a response to the seldom discussed migration stories missing from childhood. The painting references retablos, small votive paintings offered by Mexican migrants to commemorate the dangers of crossing the border...The landscape composition is made up of elements referencing the flora, fauna, and topography of the Americas. (J. M. Loza, personal communication, April 8, 2019)

For us, the jaguar portrays courage and strength. In this work, the jaguar serves as a bridge, carrying migrants forward, while the brilliance of the flower is in direct contrast to the complexities of the societal challenges confronting the human spirit.

Through the lens of social justice, the importance of human relationships and the strength of the human spirit in the midst of large scale crises and disasters, both human-made and natural, are beautifully articulated by the authors of the first three articles in this issue. All three call for advocacy at the broadest level, while simultaneously calling for recognizing the potential resiliency of individual human beings.

Across these three articles are themes that reveal the interconnectedness of practice and policy. Given the current contentious debate over immigration, Lusk and Chaparro lift up the voice of humanity amid the clamor of political discourse. De Jesús and his colleagues recognize the need for increased activism by helping professionals who focus on policies that impede aid to Puerto Rico, all the while metaphorically framing their narrative in the lyrics of Puerto Rican playwright, Lin-Manuel Miranda. Loudd, Willis, and Boutté-Queen reveal the intricacies of responding at the individual, organizational, and community levels as well as the contributions of multiple disciplines in recognizing that trauma affects everyone differently.

The next three articles in this issue are about deepened self-awareness and practice wisdom that comes from continual introspection. Corcoran's narrative reveals a seasoned practitioner who has extensive experience in working with sexually abused clients. Despite all the evidence-based research on trauma, Corcoran demonstrates how one's practice experience, judgment, and discretion are critical practice components. Ruiz offers us a compelling narrative about the power of transformation when faced with a physical disability. Applying transformative learning theory to her experience, Ruiz provides insights into teaching practice approaches with "disabled" persons. Reminding us that disabilities are diverse, Talen relates an early life experience in which she was labeled as having a learning disability and told that "life is unfair." Reacting to being labeled, the author demands to know how to "make it fair." In so doing, Talen also addresses why she has entered a profession that espouses social justice as an overriding principle. These articles acknowledge the continual learning process and blossoming of layer upon layer of self-awareness that unfolds throughout one's life as a helping professional.

The final three narratives focus on the passions of highly motivated women who aspired to pursue teaching as a calling. Grounded in relevant literature and coming from diverse backgrounds and unique experiences, each narrative tells a story of how early impressions contributed to the authors' desires to make a difference in the lives of students. All three of these articles reveal the early experiences that influenced these now-adult women to teach. While coming from different cultures and unique pathways, these narratives offer readers a common

window through which to learn the many ways women can create powerful journeys of dedication and commitment to inspire future generations of students. Wilson, Darrell, and Rhodes overcame obstacles related to race, gender, and age. Alharbi speaks to a culture that encouraged women to teach, but within restrictive boundaries for female roles. Russell transcends early experiences, opening doorways to pursue a career in sexual health. All of these authors offer nuggets of wisdom for others who want to overcome institutional barriers by pursuing their dreams.

We trust that you will find this issue as you find all of *Reflections*—full of compelling narratives that offer insights that will be useful to educators, practitioners, students, and others alike. We look forward to hearing from you!

### **Supporting Reflections**

Ways to contribute to the publishing of *Reflections*:

- \$\$ (any amount) - FRIEND OF *REFLECTIONS*
- \$250 or more - FRIEND FOR LIFE
- \$1000 or more - A THOUSAND THANKS

Please consider contributing to *Reflections* now:

<https://www.csuohio.edu/class/reflections/friends-reflections>.

Thank you!

***About the Authors:*** Darlyne Bailey, PhD, LISW is Editor-in-Chief, *Reflections*, Professor and Dean Emeritus; Director, Social Justice Initiative, Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, Bryn Mawr, PA (dbailey01@brynmawr.edu); Monica Leisey, PhD is Associate Editor, *Reflections* and Associate Professor, Salem State University, School of Social Work, Salem, MA (mleisey@salemstate.edu); F. Ellen Netting, PhD is Associate Editor, *Reflections* and Professor Emerita, Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Social Work, Richmond, VA (enetting@vcu.edu); Kelly McNally Koney, MSSA is Assistant Editor, *Reflections* (kmkoney@msn.com).