

Reflections from the Guest Editorial Team: The Impact of COVID-19 on Preparing Future Helping Professionals and on Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups and Communities (Issue 2)

Katherine Selber and Lynn Levy

Abstract: In this Guest Editorial, we introduce the second of two special issues of *Reflections* focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on professional education and practice. In this issue, authors in the professions of social work, nursing, gerontology, public health, and education offer endless insights into the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and field practice experience as well as on their personal and professional lives. Reflecting on their lived experiences, authors share the strategies they used to adapt to an ever-changing world during the COVID-19 pandemic. The important topics of shared or collective trauma and resiliency are explored from a variety of perspectives.

Keywords: adaptation, collective trauma, resiliency, online engagement

We are so pleased to be able to offer the second of two Special Issues on The Impact of COVID-19 on Preparing Future Helping Professionals and on Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups and Communities. In this issue, the authors primarily focus on the professional and personal impact of COVID-19 on students, their professors, and field practice experiences. Providing meaningful field practice experiences as the primary form of pedagogy for students in the helping professions as students move toward professional practice was a hurdle that could have been insurmountable had it not been for the extraordinary professionalism of our colleagues. The abrupt interruption in service to clients forced us all into a new realm of educating and training our students for the “real” world of practice. We all engaged in the process of rethinking and re-imagining how providers, field supervisors, educators, and students could regroup under these stressful conditions without eliminating necessary and critical services to clients. This offered unique opportunities for creativity and thinking outside the box, but as you will read, the experiences were at times intense and the timing gave little room for thoughtful reflection; it was all about action. Fortunately, these issues have given us the rare gift of seeing the pandemic through the lens of our authors, students, educators, and field instructors, who were both encouraged and, at times, discouraged, but they pressed forward nonetheless.

As social work educators, we are excited to highlight authors in the professions of social work, nursing, gerontology, public health, and education who offer endless insights into the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and field practice experience as well as on their personal and professional lives. They share multiple perspectives with us about coping skills, resiliency, and the adaptability of people, in general and of our profession.

Highlights in this Issue

In this issue, the important topic of shared trauma between faculty, students, field instructors, and clients is explored from a variety of perspectives. In the first article written by four educators from four different universities, Galan-Cisneros, Hildebrandt, Vasquez, and Gomez relate how trauma-informed teaching during the pandemic encouraged their own introspective insights and the implications for their personal experiences and the collective, cultural, and shared trauma that permeated their educational environment. Mitchell Dove provides a personal view of how shared trauma throughout the pandemic shifted our engagement with colleagues and students, how we teach and promote authentic engagement. Our shared trauma challenges us to examine outdated practices and think outside the box.

Welleford's personal narrative explores confronting unwanted change with her partner that the two were unprepared for as a prelude to COVID-19. The author confirms the meaning of resilience, the ability to adapt to and transcend unimaginable events with grace and a bit of self-love and compassion. The following article by Sloane, Goins, Rowe, Meuser, Banks, Lux, and Black continues to build on the theme of resiliency as they intersperse their narrative with a compelling collection of prose and poetry pieces written by Fearless Writers, a group developed to disrupt neighborhood segregation with inner-city public high school students. Going online and spreading to additional schools during the pandemic, this project created a unique opportunity for youth voices to be heard during a time of health and racial crises.

There are two articles that focus specifically on the field experience. One by Henton, Collins, Wickman, Huang, and Idris Alemi provides a series of personal reflections from a survey of Canadian students' experiences in field education. The results offer us best practice recommendations for the future based on lessons learned. The other by an interdisciplinary team of social work and public health faculty (Weber, Barkdull, Walch, Karikari, and Evenson) and students (Kuntz, Gabel, Possis, Scallon, Wavra, Leben, Boushee, and Comeau) in the US explores a public health initiative to promote the widespread use of masks. They highlight how they built interdisciplinary partnerships that improved students' applied learning experiences by directly addressing community needs that influenced and effected community change.

The field experience would not be fully explored without the perspective of field educators and supervisors, who were working diligently to ensure students received the field education and connections that would support their professional development. Morgan explores how a professor of education reimagined the preparation of student teachers as they transitioned from in-person teaching to a virtual classroom. What was reinforced for all of us was the need to be flexible with our students and to meet them with authenticity. LaBarre, a field instructor, presents a lovely metaphor of a Baltimore oriole building a nest in a maple tree outside the window and weathering the changes in climate to represent how students learned coping strategies as they moved from in person to virtual field placements in the early days of the pandemic.

Rossmassler's article reveals how the author moved from working as a clinical nurse practitioner to teaching nurse practitioners just as the pandemic struck. Teaching students how to

conduct a physical examination virtually resulted in the creation of video-based assignments in which students could demonstrate their developing skills. Similarly, Dozier and Fletcher describe adaptive strategies used to develop therapeutic relationships when using telehealth to meet with clients. They reveal the importance of establishing routines for addressing the inevitability of technical issues.

In almost all the articles in this issue, the overarching themes were resilience, adaptability, and the emergence of new skills and strengths while confronting a global pandemic that affected the authors, their families, their students, their colleagues, and their clients. As you read these articles, you will likely see yourselves, your colleagues, and your students. We appreciate all the authors who shared their lived experiences by contributing to these two Special Issues on The Impact of COVID-19 on Preparing Future Helping Professionals and on Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, and Communities. We hope this issue reminds us of what we already knew: We are all better collectively than individually.

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