

# Reflections from the Editorial Leadership Team: Seizing the Opportunity to Reflect

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

**Abstract:** In Volume 30(3) we welcome a new Publishing Partner representative from Monmouth University and a new Co-Editor from the University of Minnesota to our Practice Section, along with grateful appreciation for the dedicated people who contribute their time and expertise to making *Reflections* possible. We introduce the idea of *Reflections* as a “way station” for authors and readers on an increasingly rapid journey of professional helping where making the space to reflect is absolutely critical, and yet, actually grasping the time and savoring the moment is challenging. We are excited to highlight eight articles that offer insights about self-care and strategies for facilitating opportunities for change in practice and educational arenas as well as remind us of the importance of balancing the multiple and many demand in our lives.

**Keywords:** balance, change fatigue, self-care, trauma-informed care

## Welcome and Appreciation

It is hard to believe that a year has already gone by since *Reflections* transitioned to our new home at Salem State University!! We are indebted to our Publisher, Beth Massaro (Associate Dean at [Salem State School of Social Work](#)), and Justin Snow (Salem State’s Digital Initiatives Librarian at the [Frederick E. Berry Library](#)) for their hospitality in welcoming us in person in April to begin talking about our vision for the future of *Reflections* going forward.

At our last meeting, we welcomed the appointment of Jeanne Koller as Monmouth University’s representative to the Executive Committee of the *Reflections* institutional Publishing Partners, which also includes Philip Hong (University of Georgia), Sandra Crewe (Howard University), and Nancy Meyers-Adams (California State University Long Beach). An Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at Monmouth, Jeanne coordinates the LGBT+ Older Adult Project and is an Affiliated Faculty member with the Program for Gender and Intersectionality. Welcome, Jeanne!

We are also very excited to welcome Joan Blakey who has joined Pat Gray as Practice Section Co-Editor. Joan is the School of Social Work Director and Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota. Her areas of expertise include child advocacy, protection, and welfare; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); justice and corrections; substance use and substance use treatment; and trauma and trauma-informed care. Joan also focuses on anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice within the social work profession. What a strong collaboration it is for *Reflections* to have Pat and Joan as Co-Editors!

We continue to be indebted to Section Editors Arlene Reilly-Sandoval (Teaching and Learning), Beth Lewis (Practicum Education), and Crystal Coles Quander (Research) for their incredible contributions as they work behind the scenes with reviewers and authors throughout the submission and review process. We are grateful to reviewers who give of their time and

expertise, providing constructive and formative feedback in the best tradition of peer review. And once manuscripts are accepted, we are in awe of the skill and attention to detail that our Lead Copyeditor Jack Pincelli brings to the copyediting and production process. Jack's work with each author is imbued with sensitivity and quality.

### **The Importance of Reflecting**

Helping professionals from around the world are concerned about how to mitigate the effects of trauma, fatigue, and stress (e.g., Jiang & Jiang, 2024). The journey of professional helping is riddled with a plethora of terms that have become milestones along the way, terms that speak to the rapidity in which these professionals practice, teach and learn, engage in practicum experiences, and conduct research. These terms were already in the lexicon of professional helping when COVID changed our lives, but the criticality of their meaning accelerated as the pandemic changed the very nature of helping.

In organizational practice literature and business research there is an increased emphasis on mitigating the impact of the type of changes that can occur within organizations and communities and lead to compassion fatigue and burnout (e.g., Kartsonaki et al., 2023). Similarly, trauma-informed care research which has been more clinically oriented has emerged out of healthcare/human service literature (e.g., Bloom & Farragher, 2013; Welleford, 2021). Together these multi-professional avenues converge with overlapping terms such as compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, empathic distress, self-care, trauma-informed care, and vicarious or secondary trauma describing clinical or direct practice situations, and are reinforced by terms such as burnout, change fatigue, donor fatigue, and social media fatigue describing organizational and environmental stressors. One could say that interventions to address compassion fatigue or vicarious traumatization heavily focus on reinforcing self- and collective-care skills, with the idea of protecting against fatigue that comes from change and emphasizing broader strategies such as having leadership skills in building resilient behaviors, as well as resources and capabilities within the organization and within their communities (e.g., Kaba, 2021; Stotzer et al., 2022).

We believe that writing for *Reflections* can be a form of self-care leading to other forms of care as one steps back from the onslaught of traumas of any kind and stops to process what one has experienced. But it goes much farther than that. As authors disseminate what they have learned, readers are given opportunities to share in the insights and to realize they are not alone in dealing with tough challenges and difficult choices. Authors also share how they have worked with the challenges they've faced and highlight the ups and downs along the way, being authentic and honest about what did not go well or why an alternative strategy was needed. Most of all, *Reflections* encourages sharing how one feels or felt about a situation rather than wringing emotionality out of a manuscript.

If you look for definitions of a *way station*, you'll find that it is a stopover between points along the journey, a place in which one can rest along the way or seek supplies for the trip ahead (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Oftentimes this can be a place to assess one's progress and/or to applaud one's resilience in making it this far. As we read the articles in this Issue and in

previous issues, this metaphor keeps coming to mind because *Reflections* can be a way station for authors and readers on an increasingly rapid journey of professional helping in which finding the time to reflect is absolutely critical, but actually grasping the time or savoring the moment is challenging. We encourage you, dear reader, to stopover into this new Issue and relish the moment, enjoying being present, and engaging with the authors who share their stories from the heart and offer their insights. We hope you'll find supplies for the trip ahead as you journey through the ever-changing nature of helping.

We often talk among ourselves about how quickly time is passing and how hard it is to keep up with all we have committed to. We marvel at how dedicated our reviewers are when they carve time out of busy schedules to provide valuable feedback on manuscripts. We know that professional service is not always rewarded by their employers. Because their efforts are anonymous, reviewers work behind the scenes without authors knowing who helped them along the way. And we are ever cognizant of how difficult it is for authors to find the time to reflect and write about their interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences in the context of a narrative story that helps readers discover new ways of thinking.

### **Highlights of This Issue**

The first three articles in this issue beautifully express emotional revelations about the authors' multi-cultural identities that make them who they are and force them to change. Smith propels the reader into the life of an adoptee from Ukraine who comes face-to-face with the trauma of the Russian invasion and its impact on the author's homeland and family. Smith's narrative offers culturally sensitive advice for those helping professionals who work with current and future adoptees. Rios acknowledges how overidentification with an undocumented Latina client crescendos into a joint epiphany as they discover the challenges associated with how traditional therapeutic interventions may be culturally insensitive. Acknowledging the countertransference that occurs in the process, Rios offers insight for helping professionals who overidentify with their clients' trauma. Similarly, Lee as a bicultural and bilingual Asian social worker was concerned and raised questions about utility of the "model minority" mythology held by coworkers and others about the author and clients served. Lee's narrative educates readers about how even seemingly positive stereotypes do harm and traumatize personally as well as professionally. Together these narratives provide the reader with very personal accounts of how these helping professionals are committed to share what they have learned so that others can benefit from their experiences.

The next two articles are written from the perspective of professionals who reflect on their experiences within educational settings designed to prepare them to practice and to engage in research. Somers writes about a journey of navigating dual careers as a counselor educator and a clinical professional counselor. Continually re-evaluating the tension between advocating for social justice and creating space for personal spiritual growth, this author offers tremendous insight into how important it is to find time for both. Tanis and Kattari's in-depth reflection about their doctoral research practicum coursework reveals how disconcerting it was to experience a functionalist approach to research at the expense of infusing humanizing and community-based research methods into their skill set. They provide insight into how

professional values demand engaging, empowering, and elevating marginalized communities through authentic partnership throughout the entire research process. Both articles raise our consciousness as these authors share their commitment to advocating for social justice in their practice and research interventions as well as facing the need for creative change.

The next three articles are written from the perspective of social work students who reflect on their experiences within changing educational systems. Griffiths and 21 undergraduate co-authors collectively raise their voices, documenting their lived experiences during the first year of COVID-19. These authors raise our consciousness about how they learned to be ready for the unexpected while staying present with their clients, and they offer excellent advice for future generations of helping professionals. Livingston and four first-semester MSW students collaborate on their narrative about navigating their educational journeys during the Fall 2021 semester at an HBCU during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their experiences reveal the importance of self-care as students traverse the educational experience and attempt to find ways to maintain a work-life balance; they offer solid recommendations for how to support students as they traverse the educational process. Carr, too, writes about how the MSW educational experience introduced a new helping professional to a plethora of traumatic challenges that clients face. Carr writes about coming to terms with one's own vulnerability and how working through one's fear is critical to building relationships with others and engaging in hopes for future practice. These three narratives reinforce how important self-care is for students in the educational process and how self-awareness and critical thinking go hand-in-hand in professional practice.

The articles in this issue refer to many of the terms in the professional literature of our time. Our authors are personally and professionally familiar with concepts such as change or compassion fatigue. They know what it means to mitigate change and to search for ways to engage in self-care. They have paused to reflect in a way station along their journeys to share what they have learned, and they offer us their insight. We are most grateful to them for seizing the opportunity to reflect.

We trust 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. Once again, we look forward to hearing from you!!

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We appreciate your commitment to *Reflections* and its authors!!

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employee!!), and students who help with copyediting and production. It costs about \$515 to copyedit one manuscript. Publishing one *Reflections* Issue with 7–9 articles (which includes copyediting, communications with authors and reviewers, as well as our OJS platform expenses) costs approximately \$7,250. We strive to bring to you 3–4 Issues a year.

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