

Letter from the Editors

Michael A. Dover, Editor

Abstract: In this Letter from the Editors, the Editor stresses the continuity of the journal since Cleveland State University School of Social Work became Publisher in May 2012. The editor welcomes new additions to the *Reflections* team, and introduces the contributions to this latest issue of many to come. The inaugural entry in the Many Ways of Narrative series is published, and further contributions are sought. The appointment of Cathleen Lewandowski as Director of the School will bring a published *Reflections* author to the leadership of the School and the role of Publisher of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*.

Keywords: Exposition; narrative; reflections.

Simultaneously with publishing this issue, we are pleased to announce that all previous issues are now on our website as full-issue PDFs, exactly as published beginning in 1995. Until now, this precious collection of cover art and narratives was available only via interlibrary loan from libraries having the full collection of printed issues. The issues are now available throughout the world on our website. Also, the constituent articles are also available via EBSCO SocIndex. This ensures that this beloved journal can be consulted by prospective authors, read by practitioners in the field, assigned in classrooms, and used in agency-based training and continuing education.

I am thankful for the patience of the authors published in this issue and awaiting publication of their submissions. Cleveland State University published two previously scheduled special issues last Fall, but this is my first as the editor primarily responsible for editorial decisions. We will also be publishing at least two additional issues soon this Summer. As is standard practice when a journal misses a publication date, we publish this issue in May 2014 as Volume 18, Number 4, Fall 2012. Our goal this year is to publish four issues in Volume 19 (2013) and four in Volume 20 (2014) and be up to date by the end of 2014 or shortly after. But that depends on you the reader writing and helping to solicit narratives for this journal.

Our 2013-2014 Graduate Assistant Steven "Leo" Leopold, laid out this issue, our first to successfully incorporate photographs in the body of an article. Now an M.S.W. graduate of our School, Leo will continue to serve as Issue Production Manager. He will oversee the use of our open source Scribus

desktop publishing software, which produces the PDF files we publish using the Public Knowledge Project's Open Journal Systems. The authors of this issue know Leo well as the person who has also overseen the proofreading process.

Rachel Broa, our student Development and Marketing Coordinator, is working this Summer to continue uploading the back issue articles as well as to contact social work librarians about the new electronic availability of the back issues.

However, funding for both positions is dependent upon the support of our subscribing individuals and libraries, as well as support from individual and institutional Friends of Reflections. Beginning with Volume 19 we will begin notifying our 600 readers that beginning with Volume 20 paid subscriptions will be required, in order to remain registered as a reader. New author registration will remain free, although we certainly encourage authors to subscribe. We are not an author fee-based journal, like some online journals. We are a reader supported journal. Library subscriptions and Friends of Reflections support are also essential to establishing a firm fiscal foundation for the journal's long-term survival. Please see Subscriptions and Friends of Reflections on our website.

Beginning with this issue, Johanna Slivinske serves as Assistant Editor for Issue Quality. A published *Reflections* author (Slivinske, 2012), Johanna has also served as a reviewer. Last Fall, Johanna became more active in helping ensure the quality of our issues. An M.S.W. alumna of our School, Johanna is co-author of *Therapeutic Storytelling for Adolescents and Young Adults* (Slivinske &

Slivinske, 2014). She practices at PsyCare, and teaches in the Department of Social Work at Youngstown State University, where she is affiliated faculty for the Department of Women's Studies.

This issue's cover photograph by Jill M. Chonody was selected by Art Director Robin Richesson of California State University. Her continued involvement is one expression of the continuity we seek now that the journal is published at Cleveland State University School of Social Work. For another example, founding editor Sonia Leib Abels and Paul Abels recently joined me in presenting a workshop, Giving Voice to Clients and Communities: Writing Narratives for Reflections, at the 4th Annual Cuyahoga County Conference on Social Welfare.

The conference was held in March and was co-sponsored by C.S.U., the Ohio chapter of N.A.S.W. and the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, where Paul was formerly Associate Dean. We had rich interchanges with a lively group of practitioners who reminded us that this journal is ultimately rooted in the writing of a very interdisciplinary group of helping professionals. They draw on their day to day work and reflect retrospectively on the lessons of their earlier work, in order to write rich narratives that enrich the literature in our fields of practice.

Geoffrey Greif's article reminds me how I learned as a social work student that seasoned practitioners often have what might be called a bag of tricks. By this I mean those techniques of practice, rooted in practice wisdom, that reinforce the practice behaviors and competencies on which education in many helping professions are now based.

One value of this journal is that it portrays such tricks and techniques, as well as honest examples of things we have not yet learned to do. Geoff honestly lets us know up front that he had trepidations about undertaking a fathering group in a federal prison. He shows how to reframe the discussion when necessary, and how to use genograms in the group work context. He provides an example of how to move from the issues raised by a few members to the commonalities faced by many in the group. He shows pushing and probing,

and even asking permission to make a suggestion. These are all valuable techniques of practice, but they are part of something more fundamental. They involve seeing the members of the group for who they are as fathers, rather than what they are in that dehumanizing setting: prisoners. We, the readers, are made privy to the narrative content Geoff embedded in the story he was telling.

Matthew Corrigan's article is retrospective in nature. It draws on his practice as a student placed in a psychiatric center. The reader should be prepared, as this issue contains not one but several versions of what Matthew refers to as sappy social work stories! If one reads them, one discovers exposition which sets the stage for a showing of moments within vignettes of practice. We see the very human helping professional trying to connect with a patient, as Matthew was trying to do, or trying to connect to a group, as Geoff was trying to do. Sometimes the turning point seems to have come in one powerful moment, until you realize that for the client it had begun much earlier. As my former teacher at Columbia University School of Social Work, Professor Irving Miller, once pointed out, "By the time you finally give an interpretation, you don't have to."

Matthew concludes his narrative by suggesting that if in our practice we overcome our fears and "lead with our hearts" we can provide important human companionship as part of relationships that matter. He provides a cautionary note to any reliance merely on techniques, although by stressing the importance of portraying tricks of the trade I am certainly not suggesting that they substitute for professional relationships. Rather, techniques are just some of the more observable aspects of the practice wisdom with which we approach professional relationships.

Nancy Kennedy Brown, whose previous narrative in this journal along with all of the hundreds of precious articles from 1995 to present can now be found in EBSCO SocIndex (Brown, 2003), draws deeply into the well of her personal life to explore the meaning of another concept key to being a helping professional, namely the use of self. Her article should be essential reading for practitioners in the field of hospice care. Yet somehow Nancy manages to offer some comic relief to an issue that

shows that while practice is a form of emotional labor, writing about and even just reading about practice also requires a great deal of emotional energy. Practice never makes perfect, and becoming effective requires the patience to seek to understand the person, group, organization or community you are working with. This is shown by all of the articles in this issue. But in Kennedy's narrative, the need to understand life over its course is stressed via her story of her mother's life. This is the exposition that set the stage for her narrative content. In the end, to the ranks of the many girlfriends who were central to her mother's life was added one social worker.

In Bharati Sethi's account of her own hospitalization, we learn the wisdom of Ernest Hemingway's statement, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." Bharati tells us that for her, writing itself is sacred, and that first person accounts illuminate the lives of the people and institutions portrayed. She shares that she prefers to bleed instead of choosing the safer route of silence. She complements her narrative with rich theoretical reflection and discusses the meaning of madness for policy and practice.

Jill Chinody, Travis Martin and Jill Amitrani Welsh's account of participatory photography combines the voices of several practitioners, each reflecting on a shared experience. Their accounts embody applications of theoretically informed practice, and the article's conclusions reflect further on those theoretical foundations. The narrative shows how a single article can tell a compelling story about practice, show the nature of some of the interactions that took place, and present important reflections applicable to a variety of settings.

As the late Josh Canary (1979-2013) points out in the inaugural essay of the Many Ways of Narrative series in this journal, narratives are of many kinds and can vary greatly in length. His article urges the writer to both show (narrative) and tell (exposition). The telling is the story. The showing is the narrative content. Often, one must first begin with expository content that sets the stage for narrative content that shows what happened. Then it is almost as if the reader were there to hear, see, and feel the nature of the interaction. Josh provides two accounts, one

devoid of narrative and one rich in it. This journal will long be enriched by Josh's contribution as our Graduate Assistant.

Available on a link from our Review Guidelines since early 2013, dozens of authors and reviewers have already drawn on Josh's wisdom. We hope his piece will lead to future contributions to this series. Just as Ann Hartman pointed out there are many ways of knowing (Hartman, 1990), so there are many ways of narrative. Please considering submitting a contribution to the Many Ways of Narrative special section, based on your own experience writing narratives of practice. Such essays need not be narratives themselves, but I would certainly encourage someone to try to write a narrative about the process of writing a narrative!

There is one important development which strongly reinforces our ability to both survive and thrive. On April 8, 2014, we received this communication from Cathleen Lewandowski, who since March 2013 has served as Editor of the Special Issue on Therapeutic Relationships with Service Members, Veterans and their Families, to be published soon: "I am totally committed to the journal's success and very much look forward to joining my new colleagues at Cleveland State on July 1." At that time Dr. Lewandowski, Professor and former Chair at the Department of Social Work at George Mason University will become Director and Professor at the Cleveland State University School of Social Work. In that capacity, she assumes the role of Publisher of this journal. Welcome soon, Cathleen!

- Brown, N. K. (2003). Grounding research in practice: Connecting conversations. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 9(4), 34-37.
- Hartman, A. (1990). Many ways of knowing. *Social Work*, 35(1), 3-4.
- Slivinske, J. (2012). Mentee to mentor: A process of professional growth, development, and hope. *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, 18(3), 8-12.
- Slivinske, J., & Slivinske, L. (2014). *Therapeutic storytelling for adolescents and young adults*. New York: Oxford University Press.