

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Jillian Jimenez, PhD.

Reflections is proud to begin this issue by reprinting Ann Weick's seminal article "Issues in Overturning a Medical Model of Social Work Practice," first published in *Social Work* in 1983. The author adds a current retrospective on the article, which reaffirms how influential her thinking has been in reforming the paradigm of social work practice and challenging the reliance on the medical model and its implied loss of agency as the only basis for social work. Out of her work came the strength perspective, which has become a deeply held value about the way we approach our clients, ourselves, and our challenging world.

Professor Weick's insight into other ways of thinking about commonly accepted realities is paralleled by a similar breakthrough by the founder of *Reflections*, Sonia Leib Abels, who was able to see another way of understanding social work practice and communicating that understanding through the time honored art of the narrative. Arguing for the primacy of the oldest and most widespread form of human communication, Professor Abels conceived of the idea of *Reflections* from her unique vision of what was missing in social work practice. Social workers and other academics from across the country have joined her in the effort to create something based on the new concept of professional communication and growth through narratives. Today, the journal thrives under her original vision

Both of these women were conceptual leaders, able to see beyond what did exist to what could be created. Both created new paradigms for social work. Other social workers come to mind when thinking of visionaries: David Gil has been able to pierce the sense of inevitability about many of our oppressive social arrangements—including the market economy—and has inspired

generations of students and faculty to examine their own inherited assumptions about equality and the social arrangements that promote and undermine social justice.

Many hoped that Barack Obama would be a paradigm breaker as a political leader, using government to promote social and economic justice to promote health policy reform. It is too soon to tell whether Obama can sidestep the naysayers, as Weick and Abels did, and go on to achieve his view of social justice in health care, in spite of the countervailing pull of the players in the for-profit health care system, and the political divisions that have sunk all previous efforts toward health care reform.

Paradigm shifting may not be permanent. The new search for "evidence based practice" signals a return to the reliance on logical positivism that Weick and other social work scholars sought to unbundle decades ago. Most social work journals rely on this method to present their findings, questioning the usefulness of any conclusion that does not include numerical results. And Barack Obama's health care plan is teetering on the major precipice kept in place by special interests so familiar in U.S. politics. We will have to wait and hope that deep health care reform will be the one new paradigm that does not slip away.



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