

Reflections from the Editors

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Abstract: This serves as the reflections from the editors to Volume 22, Number 2.

Keywords: race, translinguistic, assessments, gender, totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism, nativism, xenophobia, international social work, social development

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Reflections has a long tradition of publishing international authors, articles about international social work, and special issues focused on various regions of the world. I cut my *Reflections* teeth on the Special Issue on Social Work and War in the Balkans (2000, Volume 6, Number 2), which was co-edited by myself, Charles Garvin, Sara Amy Goodkind, Marilyn Moch and Michael Reisch.

Reflections has also published special issues on Africa (2011, Volume 17, Number 1), Israel (2011, Volume 17, Number 4); Ghana (2011, Volume 17, Number 3), Southeast Asian Diaspora (2006, Volume 12, Number 3), and Social Work in a Global Setting (2007, Volume 13, Number 4). You can easily find them by scrolling through the Archives, where these special issues are all now clearly titled.

Volume 1, Number 2 of *Reflections* had already included the first internationally oriented article, "SEEING CAMBODIA: A new view of the research process," (Roze & Boemel, 1995). If you go to www.moph.org and search in all categories for international or global and press the Search button (return doesn't do the trick), you will see that a dozen other articles have this in the title or abstract. There are many others. They can be searched both in our somewhat clunky search engine and in EBSCO SocIndex, which has published all current and previous issues.

The present issue publishes a very Special Section on Southern African Reflections on Social Work and Social Justice. Under arrangement with the editor, Otrude Moyo of University of Michigan - Flint, the section is published as one composite PDF file to facilitate distribution. However the articles and the authors are listed in the table of contents found in the full-text PDF of this entire issue.

The special section contributors include Lauren Rose

Caldie, Otrude N. Moyo, Zandile P. Nkabinde, Vuyelwa Langelihle Sibindi, Martin Moyo, Nenekazi Melody Gxashe, and Thandi S. Tshabangu-Soko.

Is Our Thinking Circumscribed?

As I read these articles, I realized how much my own thinking about the world has been constrained by the standpoint of the U.S. approach to social work and social welfare. This special section deserves to be read as part of our efforts to un-circumscribe our thinking.

What do I mean by that? Our thinking may be *circumscribed* when we limit our outlook on social work to that which has its intellectual origins in the West in general and the United States of America. This is something which Otrude suggested in a recent conversation. She pointed out to me that she finds her own thinking can be "circumscribed" by such outlooks. This made me think about how my own thinking is circumscribed.

For instance, take our conceptualizations of social justice. In their excellent recent book, *Social work and social justice: Concepts, challenges, and strategies*, Reisch and Garvin (2016) show how conceptualizations of social justice have arisen historically and cross-culturally in unique ways. This affects the nature of social struggles for social justice.

At the same time as we recognize cross-national differences in conceptualizations of social justice, we should also recognize cross-national and cross-cultural similarities. This is facilitated by drawing on the growing theoretical and intellectual recognition of the nature of universal human needs and the culturally specific manner in which they are addressed (Balyejjusa, 2015; Gough, 2015, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

As *Reflections* continues to develop as a journal, we clearly need to strive to become even more international in focus and more interdisciplinary as

well. The present special section deserves emulation as part of ongoing efforts to ensure *Reflections* remains an international interdisciplinary double-blind peer-reviewed journal for the helping professions.

In this Reflection from the Editors, I will consider how future narratives in this journal might help us “uncircumscribe” our thinking. As globalization continues – with all of its pitfalls and promises – our world views and cognitive and affective outlooks will be transformed, but how will they be transformed? Will we overcome the extent to which our thinking is circumscribed or will we remain entrenched in our thinking?

Today, nativism and xenophobia are growing forces in a number of the world’s capitalist democracies. Helping professionals are not immune from the effects of such ways of thinking. Such views have had a profound impact on recent elections in the U.S., Britain and France, and this is likely just the start. It behooves us to consider the implications of this for narratives which can reflect upon these matters. Below I will be issuing a call for narratives related to this. But I would like to explain what I consider to be the reflective foundation for this call for narratives.

I for one found this to be the most difficult academic year in recent memory, and I’ve had to consider why this seems to have been the case. I began to discuss this in the Reflections from the Editors in Volume 22, Number 1 earlier this year, when I called for narratives specifically about our personal, professional and political response to the election of Donald Trump. Such narratives remain welcome.

However, as the academic year continued, although I felt as if I and many others were now doing what we could in a changing political environment, something was missing. I felt the need to compare notes with others. Accordingly, in conversations and correspondence with academic and clinical colleagues around the U.S. and abroad, I’ve come to the conclusion that this has been the most difficult academic year in years for those of us who are in academia. That includes faculty, staff and students. But based on anecdotal data, it also includes the clients of our colleagues working as helping professionals. I suspect that social research will soon

demonstrate the strong emotional and health impact of recent historical developments, including the election of Donald Trump, the British Brexit, and the growing fear in France that should the Macron government fail, Le Pen could win the next French presidential election.

A Personal and Professional Retrospective

The more I thought about it, the more I concluded that these recent historical developments can’t be understood without reference to the events of the academic year which began just before September 11, 2001. The impact of that event was so strong for me that I went back into therapy. I consulted Dr. Frank Ochberg, a pioneer of the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress syndrome. I realized that I and many other anti-war activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s had experienced major disruptions in our lives, as we seemingly turned against our country (or at least strenuously rejected the war conducted by Presidents Johnson and Nixon.)

We came to see how the war was related to repression against the black liberation movement and to violations of civil liberties. We were radicalized in ways that broke our hearts and mad us so angry that we lost touch with much of our love of country. In therapy, I came to realize that my reaction to 9/11 was linked to my earlier reaction to the war in Vietnam and to the April 1968 assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

Something loosened up for me after 9/11, once I realized this. Amongst other things, I finished my dissertation within two years. I graduated from the University of Michigan’s Doctoral Program in Social Work and Social Science thirty-six years after having dropped out of Michigan’s undergraduate program to join the Peace Torch Marathon on its walk to Washington DC for the October 1967 Pentagon protest. My dissertation included a chapter written about Toledo, the very place I had been arrested in May 1967, while taking notes as a reporter, as protesters disrupted a mock Armed Forces Day demonstration by the Ohio National Guard of how to “liberate” a Vietnamese hamlet. After 9/11, with the help of a therapist, I was able to draw connections between my reactions to two significant historical periods. Looking back helped me to move forward.

Looking Back In Order to Move Forward

The attack on the World Trade Center and its aftermath were the subject of a special issue of Reflections (see the archives for the September 11 Memorial Issues, published as in 2002 as Volume 8, Number 3). The attack on the World Trade Center required us to begin to re-think our view of the world. *Reflections* narratives were one way we made sense of what happened.

Perhaps there are important and unapparent connections between the election of Donald Trump and the attack on the World Trade Center, just as there were connections – for me at least – between 9/11 and the months from May 1967 to April 1968. Now, almost 16 years later, the United States and many other nations are still coming to grips with the impact of the attack on the World Trade Center and the seemingly endless wars and terrorism which continue today.

A continued lack of clarity about 9/11 may have driven the Islamophobia and the anti-immigrant prejudice which profoundly affected the 2016 Presidential election and elections in Britain, France and elsewhere. Since 9/11/2001, many have debated how to refer to the ideology which was behind 9/11, behind subsequent acts of terror, and behind ongoing organized efforts to use terror to control space in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, Nigeria and elsewhere.

One of the major issues in the 2016 presidential election in the United States concerned debates between those who insisted on blaming this on “Islamism” or “radical Islamic terrorism” and those such as President Obama and Senator Clinton who followed the advice of national security advisors not to refer to it in this manner. However, the way they did refer to it failed to characterize it convincingly.

Totalitarian Theocratic Patriarchal Terrorism

In my opinion, the ideology should be called *totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism of the pseudo-religious variety*. I call the ideology *totalitarian* because the attack was part of an effort to justify imposing on territory under its control the world view and behavioral prescriptions of what have been called international terrorist gangs

(Morales, Sheafor & Scott, 2007), which aspire to control territory and ultimately gain state power. They use force and terror to exercise totalitarian powers to the extent they can do so. One writer has contended that such organizations operate in ways similar to cults, using media persuasion to attract recruits (Perloff, 2017).

There are many forms of totalitarian ideology. One of the first extended efforts to understand totalitarianism at first did not link totalitarianism to the use of terror (Arendt, 1951). But by 1953, Hannah Arendt had begun to do so (Weisman, 2014). The second edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* replaced her previous concluding remarks with a chapter, “Ideology and Terror” (Arendt, 1968[1958], cited by Weisman, 2014). Arendt concluded that with totalitarianism, law and power were replaced by ideology and terror.

I refer to totalitarian *theocratic* patriarchal terrorism because the specific form of totalitarian control aspired to is pseudo-religious in character. The goal is to establish a theocracy in which pseudo-religious authority is supreme or – short of an established theocratic territory – to oppress and exclude those of other religions. There are many historical and contemporary examples of totalitarian theocratic terrorism of the pseudo-religious variety.

One notable example is totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism of the pseudo-Buddhist variety. In Myanmar, on many occasions in recent years, a small percentage of all Buddhist monks have instigated violence against Muslims and attacks on mosques. I provide this example to emphasize that even a religion such as Buddhism – whose central precepts embrace pacifism – can be twisted to justify hatred, violence, discrimination, and terrorism, including ethnic cleansing directed at Rohingya people, a Muslim Indo-Aryan culture (UN News Center, 2017).

I refer to totalitarian theocratic *patriarchal* terrorism because in nearly every instance of which I am aware, the ethnic and/or religious groups against whom terror was used had in the years preceding the onset of terror increasingly intermingled and intermarried with the very group from which totalitarian theocratic patriarchal pseudo-religious elites arose. These male misogynist elites seek to prohibit such romantic contact, even to the point of breaking up previous

marriages and punishing new relationships severely.

For instance, there was growing intermarriage between Buddhists and Rohingya people in Myanmar, between Shia and Sunni in Iraq under the Baathist regime, between Christians and Muslims and between Croats and Serbs in the former Yugoslavia, and so forth. This is not the place to try to document this. However, this journal is a place and this is a time when we may need to un-circumscribe our thinking about the historical events which have lead up to recent political developments.

The ideology which was behind the attack on the World Trade Center was totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism of the pseudo-Islamic variety. Posing it this way provides an historically accurate alternative to approaches which come dangerously close to contending there is something inherent in Islam that produces terrorism. This is no more the case than the contention that there is something inherent in Christianity which has produced totalitarian theocratic terrorism of the pseudo-Christian variety.

Right here in Cleveland, one practitioner of that form of terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan, would hold parades down Detroit Avenue in the 1920s. My grandmother and other members of her Pentacostal congregation felt this was un-Christian. Their denomination had both black and white bishops and held occasional integrated tent revivals. She explained this to me when I took her during the 1970s to visit our relatives in Memphis. Like she, they had grown up as sharecroppers in the cotton belt, from which hundreds of thousands of black and white families headed north in the great migration.

As much as Klan members might claim they were Christian, they hated Catholics as well as Jews, and they especially hated African-Americans, despite their predominant Christianity. They sought the totalitarian power to impose on society their own twisted system of belief. In particular, these totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorists sought to prohibit romantic relationships between members of “their” imagined community – both men and women – and those outside it.

Without further belaboring the point, many other historical and contemporary examples can be found

of totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism that is falsely justified by mis-applied precepts from nearly every major world religion.

Also Understanding Nativism and Xenophobia

In addition to our needing to come to grips with the nature of totalitarian theocratic patriarchal terrorism of a pseudo-religious variety, we also need to understand the rise of xenophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice in the advanced industrial countries. Blaming the latest wave of immigrants for economic woes as well as for terrorism and extremism is nothing new. Nor is it new to see actual incidents of terrorism and extremism arise from within recent immigrant populations in the United States and elsewhere. Similar patterns were seen among small segments of first and second generation Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants, and later among migrants from Puerto Rico and the Black Belt to northern cities.

Nearly every wave of immigration and migration has produced rare instances of terrorism and some degree of political extremism. There is a need for historical sociological examination of the relationship between discrimination, prejudice and violence expressed *towards* immigrant groups and the extremism and terrorism which has arisen *from* a very small segment of such groups.

The rare incidents of terrorism and the rare expressions of support for extremism found, for instance, among a small proportion of Muslim-Americans are, in this sense, as American as apple pie. These too will pass, as was the case with previous immigrant groups. But this will require a more concerted effort on the part of those of us who recognize the need to be more welcoming of recent immigrants. Perhaps we should remind ourselves of the well-known expression from the Pogo comic strip: “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

In many ways, our failure in the United States and in Europe to place immigration and terrorism in historical perspective has poisoned our political discourse. Levels of distrust and misunderstanding are by all accounts at historically unprecedented levels. The atmosphere in our communities and our universities remains at this date very tense.

A Call for Narratives

At the same time, I see hope for reconciliation. It seems to me that as we strive to journal and to write about what we are and have been going through, we can and should strive for a new kind of open-mindedness. We need to link open-mindedness to critical thinking, as I have recently asked my students to do (Dover et al, 2017). We also need to link open-mindedness to our efforts to embrace cultural diversity.

We need to carefully explore how we have reacted to the emotionally powerful historical event represented by the election of President Donald Trump and how it may be related to the seemingly endless war and terrorism which began on September 11, 2001. We need to seek to carefully understand how our feelings and our actions have been affected by both of those emotionally powerful events. There is no better way to do so than to write narratives for a journal like *Reflections*.

As editor, I am issuing a call for narratives about our personal, political and professional reactions to the election of Donald Trump and how these can be placed in the longer historical trajectory of our lives, going back to September 11, 2001. As part of this, as was done before with the Special Issue on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice (2015, Volume 21, Number 3), we might reflect on our reaction to the events of April 1968.

How has our practice been impacted by these historical events? How have the lives of our clients and the people in our communities been affected? How have we responded politically, as part of our professional obligations to engage in social and political action? How has our practice, our research, and our teaching taken questions of immigration and of terrorism seriously? And, finally, how has all of this affected our personal and professional relationships? As editor, I would welcome such narratives. Feel free to contact me with initial ideas by writing me at reflections@csuohio.edu.

Thanks and Plans for Reflections

As this issue goes to press, I would like to take the chance to once again thank the staff of *Reflections* here at Cleveland State University. Kailie Johnson,

our Editorial Associate, has completed three years as a work-study student assigned to the journal. She has been invaluable in her dedication to the journal. She graduates this May with a B.S.W. degree. Elisabeth Weems was here only one year as Copy Editor, but during these last eight months has raised our consciousness about the principle of no issue before its time. Our copy editing and proof reading have been significantly improved during her tenure, we hope, although this has forced us to delay a number of issues, including this one, as we learn how to do this better. Elisabeth graduates with a B.A. and has been admitted to the top-notch School of Journalism at Ohio University. Both Kailie and Elisabeth will be missed. But perhaps one day we will see a narrative from them appear among our new submissions!

Maureen O'Connor, M.A., has been our graduate assistant now for two years. Already trained in humanistic psychology, she graduates this month with her M.S.W. degree. She has been immensely helpful the entire time. She understands the spirit of the journal and I regularly called on her to advise me on editorial decisions about manuscripts. She has regularly provided summaries of articles for editorial introductions, including in this issue. We hope to find a way to continue to include her as a part of the ongoing editing and publishing of the journal. We hope she can be of continued assistance for the remainder of my term as editor. My term as editor was to end in May 2015, and was extended until May 2017. I have now been asked by our Director, Dr. Cathleen Lewandowski, to remain as editor until we complete a process of editorial succession.

During May 2017, three long-awaited issues will be published, including this one. The journal will publish Volume 22, Number 3, a Special Issue on Learning and Teaching, edited by the editors of our permanent special section, Carol Langer and Arlene Reilly-Sandoval. And we will also publish Volume 22, Number 4, completing the 2016 volume.

Two issues of Volume 23 (2017) will also be published this coming Summer. These include a Special Issue on Librarians as Helping Professionals, edited by Laura Habat, and the Special Issue on the Interconnections on Micro and Macro Practices, edited by Darlyne Bailey and Melissa Emmerson. This will bring the journal up to date and ready for the Summer and Fall 2017 issues, to be published in September and

December.

Other Narratives in this Issue

In this issue, in addition to the Special Section on Southern African Reflections on Social Work and Social Justice, Carol Leung, in *Translinguistic Practice with Chinese Immigrants*, discusses the challenges in providing therapy in a second language. Leung worked as a masters level social worker in New York City, where she conducted psychosocial assessments and psychotherapy with Chinese immigrants whose first language was often Mandarin or Cantonese. Leung, who grew up speaking Cantonese and English, finds that she still encountered both linguistic and cultural challenges in providing psychotherapy to her clients. Through her clinical interviews, observations and reflective supervision, she uncovers four main elements consistent in her work with her Chinese patients. She observes the language barrier she faced with her patients; at times she had difficulty communicating to the patient, and the patient had difficulty understanding her. Secondly, she notes that it was important in her psychotherapy sessions to educate the patient on what mental health means. This was a way to encourage the patient to express emotions and to understand the purpose of mental health. Often, other cultures may associate shame and embarrassment with mental health issues. Leung notes that some of her patients were reluctant to talk about their past, and how she had to be respectful of their privacy. Also, Leung found that normalizing the client's difficulty and inhibition with speaking in a language other than their own was important in establishing safety and rapport with the client.

Jenny A. Piazza and Pamela A. Richmond write about their journey to academia and the challenges they encountered along the way. Written in the form of a letter, this narrative describes the process of becoming a tenured professor, and the challenges of navigating the hierarchies and power structure in the academic world. Drawing upon research of bullying in academia as well as their own experiences, Piazza and Richmond find similar themes. These themes related to bullying in higher education are: "positionality, differences, jealousy, clandestine decision-making, accountability/leadership and blame the victim." Piazza and Richmond use these themes as a framework for their narrative and

describe how they are manifested. Piazza and Richmond's letter is written to raise awareness of the power hierarchies and oppression that exist in the academic world, such as how gender and race affect the way one is treated by peers and superiors. It presents as a realistic portrayal of both the highlights and challenges of entering an academic career.

Mental health social workers may become accustomed to focusing on an individual's problem symptoms and diagnosis. Jane McPherson, a social worker with a mental health background, describes how she reframed the problems of her clients through a human rights lens, instead of a mental health one. McPherson shares how discovering Article 25 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) helped to shift her perspective. The declaration states that access to food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, education and other resources are a human right. Its emphasis on special care for mothers and children was especially relevant to McPherson's work with at risk mothers and children. Often, their mental health issues seemed secondary to their more urgent needs of housing, baby supplies, food and jobs. Within the current mental health system, we may overlook that an individual's presentation is more likely due to, or greatly impacted by, insufficient resources than organic mental illness. McPherson points out that according to Article 25 of the declaration, not having access to these important resources is a violation of basic human rights. McPherson cautions that solely relying on a mental health framework to understand our clients' problems is not adequate, as it places the blame on the client. This perspective is relevant to the field of social work, as much of our education includes how systemic injustices set individuals up for a lifetime of poverty and mental health struggles.

Amie Thurber's narrative addresses an issue that affects many regions of the country, especially those with a higher rate of poverty and homelessness. As the director of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) in Missoula, Montana, she describes how she and her team helped to address a major disagreement over a proposal to relocate and expand a homeless shelter from a downtown location to one closer to a residential community. Thurber describes how her team utilized a deliberative democratic framework to carry out a four-step process of conflict resolution with shelter staff and residents, city officials, local business leaders, and concerned neighbors invested in the

relocation of the shelter. Thurber's case study demonstrates how it is possible to help a community reach a democratic decision normally made by a few stakeholders. Thurber and the NCBI worked to create a space in which community members could voice their concerns as well as learn about the issue of homelessness in their community and why there was a need for improved housing for the homeless. Principles of Restorative Justice and Just Practice helped to guide the four phases of the deliberation process. Thurber notes that while this case study was not without some disappointments (there were some power differentials that affected the community dynamics), but overall it enabled the community to arrive at a democratic decision that ultimately improve services and housing for the homeless.

Published in the Historical Reflections Section, John Tropman pays homage to Wilbur J. Cohen and Cohen's significant contributions to the creation of Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare during the Great Society Era. An influential figure during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Cohen was known for his advocacy for social programs that benefitted the poor and disadvantaged. Tropman describes Cohen's 'incrementalist' approach in working towards change. He believed that small, yet steady efforts towards social justice would eventually yield substantial results. Tropman outlines Cohen's accomplishments and shares accolades given to him by his contemporaries. Both an academic and activist/politician, Cohen was known for the passage of major policies (Social Security and Medicare). As the title of this piece suggests, Cohen's original proposal for the Medicare Act of 1965 was to include a second health coverage plan, "Pediicare," for children under age 5. He envisioned these children being able to carry their coverage to the next year of life. He also envisioned, for each year the Medicare Act was in effect, the age of eligible seniors lowering by one year. Eventually, Pediicare and Medicare coverage would meet and the end result would be a national health care plan. Tropman's piece is timely as we face possible changes to the current Medicaid and Affordable Health Care Act policies.

Race, as we know, impacts all areas of one's life. As social workers, we study how race and privilege impact an individual's interaction with the environment, as well as their access to career

opportunities, education, healthcare and other resources. In the Research Reflections Section, Stefan Battle writes of how profoundly he experienced racism from a young age as an elementary student, and throughout his career as a school social worker. He candidly shares how the reactions and expectations of his teachers shaped his own self perception about his academic capabilities. In one instance, Battle explains how very few African American students were expected to perform well in school, and on at least one occasion, a teacher accused him of plagiarizing his work. Using autoethnography as a tool to write about these early memories, Battle finds that it is an important tool for processing painful emotions. Battle's narrative is an excellent example of how racism can shape one's self perception, self-esteem and sense of competency. Battle notes that while writing these narratives bring up painful memories, he finds it is healing in helping him to revisit and process old hurts, anger and sadness. Autoethnography is a tool he shares with his students as a means for processing their pain, whether from racism or any other trauma.

Published in the Teaching and Learning Section, Itzhak Lander and Stefan Köngeter collaborate as transnational professors – one from Israel, one from Germany – to teach a course on youth migration to students in three different countries. Their narrative highlights their transformative journey of co-teaching and interacting transnationally. The program, TEMPUS, is established to build interaction and collaboration between particular areas within the EU, such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean area. Their project through TEMPUS, TACHYwe (Transnational Academic Careers in Child and Youth Welfare), ran from 2012-2016. This story tells the growth they experienced as professors, how they were influenced by one another's culture, and how this joint project impacted their students. Border crossing is a relevant issue for European youth, and likely an issue these social work students will encounter throughout their careers. Learning how to work transnationally and fostering self awareness as how it relates to one's interactions with other cultures is certainly an important social work skill.

As you read this issue, please consider asking yourself, as did one colleague who has just read it, does this issue speak to you? One dear colleague just told me

that it spoke to her. I hope it speaks to you.

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