

Introduction: Illness, Crisis and Loss

This collection of papers highlights some of the key cultural and social interpretations of illness, crisis, and loss across different personal and institutional spaces—the ways that values, beliefs, behavior, emotions, and institutional arrangements concerning chronic illness, bereavement, and professional practice are structured by social environments and contexts.

Although illness and death are universal human experiences, societal responses vary according to cultural attitudes, as well as contextual factors including the primary causes of illness and death, and normative age at which illness and death occurs. In this issue of the journal, researchers, social scientists, policy makers, practitioners, and students will be learning about topics of direct relevance to understanding the world in which we live.

These include autoethnography and bereavement, the sociology and subjectivity of grief, the objectification of institutional death, and grief and cancer. These topics have a startling continuity of highlighting how people and professions/institutions manage issues associated with illness, crisis, loss, and death.

In order to explore these social issues, the four articles in this issue map out the importance of support and any absence that reveals potential

injustices where individuals' needs are not met whether it be in institutions, disciplines of study, interpersonal contexts, and different experiential and research contexts.

Paper 1 "An Autoethnographic Inquiry Into the Experience of Grief After Traumatic Loss" is by Eilidh Anna McKenzie. This article brings us an important piece on autoethnography and the experience of losing a loved one to murder. In particular,

McKenzie explores and documents the complex social and emotional processes of recovery following the murder of her Father grounded in an original methodological framework. The paper makes clear links between theory and research and implications for understanding loss in contemporary society.

Paper 2 "The Self and Significant Others: Towards a Sociology of Loss" is by Nina Jacoby. This innovative paper explores the sociological excursion of the relationship of the self to diverse social theories of grief. It is an important paper in that it explores the epistemological dimensions of loss grounded in a unique evaluation of the conceptual array of social science understandings of norms of loss.

If the above paper focuses on the subjectification of grief and death, the next article focuses on the objectification of death but in a different and

novel context. Indeed, Paper 3 is a postmodern genre and a “push the boat” out type of thesis in understanding death in an institutional context. The paper entitled “Understanding Bankruptcy: How Members of a Bankrupted Bank Construe Organizational Death” is by Anna Gerstrom and Lynn Isabella.

This paper explores matters for the few theorists researching the understudied but relevant issue of organizational death, and for many practitioners, avenues for further research are outlined.

Paper 4 entitled “Parental Grief Expression in Online Cancer Support Groups” is written by Jessica Elder and Laurie A. Burke. This paper provides original research in exploring experiences of parents who lost a child to brain or spinal cord cancer who participated in an online grief-support group.

Elder and Burke explored 18 bereaved parents and two professional facilitators participated in 20 monthly online groups, with chat-room discussions analyzed for thematic issues. Parents completed a 10-item survey evaluating reasons for participation and the group’s effectiveness regarding coping following loss.

The paper disseminates key findings for understanding loss in this context. In the Voices section, Irene Renzenbrink brings us her final Voices

editorial. Having worked closely with Irene, she has been a brilliant Voices Editor. She has been extremely supportive and brought so many rich narratives of people's experiences of bereavement, grief, and loss in her tenure. The journal wishes her well and thanks her for her valuable, original, and inspiring contributions.

For her final issue of Voices, Renzenbrink brings us a powerful narrative by Helen Eng. Eng, with great honest and imagery, intimates her doubts and fears inherent in the experience of living with a life-threatening illness as well as those that continue into the bereavement period.

She provides a number of lessons for practitioners from her personal journey. In the book review section, Dick Gilbert brings us an array of essential and significant new books in the field of illness, crisis, and loss. This issue will be the first with Sage since it replaced Baywood.

We look back with tremendous pride with the support we had. We equally look forward with Sage to the future and the exciting opportunities for the Journal of Illness, Crisis and Loss.

We hope you find this issue of the journal to be stimulating and thought provoking. I would like to dedicate this issue of the journal to Irene Renzenbrink and Bobbi Olszewski.

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