

AISW Editorial

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I am delighted to assume the role of Editor of *Advances in Social Work: Linking Research, Education & Practice*—journal of the Indiana University School of Social Work. I am also grateful to the Editorial Board and to Dean Michael Patchner for their invitation and support. Although this issue is only the second of many, we are proud to contribute to the emerging knowledge base of the profession.

The mission of *Advances in Social Work (AISW)* is to provide a forum for the presentation of scholarly work related to innovations within social work research, education, and practice. The impetus for the development and publication of *AISW* is, of course, multifaceted. A driving force, however, is the recognition that social work educators and practitioners must become familiar with advances in knowledge that may contribute to improvements in the quality and effectiveness of our professional service—whether that involves the education of students, the advancement of social justice, the prevention of social problems, or the treatment of clients.

Early in the 21st century, we are well into the “third-wave” information age (Toffler, 1983). As such, knowledge and learning are becoming increasingly valuable—in some circumstances more valuable than material goods. We already recognize the signs of a new form of class system where “haves” may be distinguished from “have-nots” by the facility with which they obtain and apply up-to-date, valid, reliable, and relevant knowledge. According to some estimates, the total amount of knowledge on earth doubles approximately every seven years (Davis & Botkin, 1994). This knowledge-doubling process undoubtedly occurs more rapidly within certain areas than others. Disciplines and professions that actively participate in the discovery and dissemination of relevant new knowledge are likely to become increasingly recognized and valued in the ever-expanding “big bang” of the knowledge explosion.

We hope that social work researchers, educators, and practitioners will become major actors in an information age where teaching, learning, and service become increasingly based upon and guided by the most current, valid, and relevant knowledge. “In a time of drastic change, it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists” (Hoffer, 1973, p. 22). In effect, contemporary social workers must be extraordinarily competent learners both during their professional studies and as practicing researchers, educators, and service providers. During the 21st century lifelong learning is not optional. It is required. Alvin Toffler suggests that the “illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

Unfortunately, many social workers have been more “learned” than “learning” in their approach to service. Relatively few seem to draw upon the wealth of emerging knowledge that could dramatically improve the quality and effective-

ness of their professional activities. As indicated by studies undertaken during the course of the past 40 years, few social workers regularly read scholarly publications or review the results of practice-related research (Holosko & Leslie, 1998). We presume that fewer still actually apply up-to-date knowledge in the conduct of their service to others. This does not apply to practitioners alone. Indeed, we suppose that many social work educators continue to “preach” essentially the same theories and doctrines year after year—as if new knowledge were somehow irrelevant to the contemporary learning needs of their students. Eileen Gambrill (1999) eloquently refers to this process as “indoctrination” rather than “education” and practice informed by it as “authority-based” rather than “evidence-based.”

Through *AISW*, we at the Indiana University School of Social Work seek to contribute to a revolutionary change within the profession. We envision a social work profession that genuinely embraces learning and scholarship; that actively searches for valid, relevant service-related knowledge; that disseminates applicable knowledge in a form that is readily accessible and usable by consumers of all kinds; and that continuously applies emerging knowledge in service to others.

This issue of *AISW* offers much of value to learning social workers across the full range of research, education, and practice. In an article based upon his keynote address to the April 2000 Annual Doctoral Symposium at Indiana University School of Social Work and written especially for *AISW*, Dennis Saleebey of the University of Kansas discusses the fundamental elements of strengths-based social work practice. As affirmative and enthusiastic as ever, Dr. Saleebey calls upon us to seek out assets and resources within and around each and every person. Provocatively, he envisions a new kind of DSM—a *Diagnostic Strengths Manual*—to provide needed counterbalance to the ever-present *Diagnostic Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association.

David Hodge, Paul Cardenas, and Harry Montoya discuss their study of cultural sensitivity among administrators and staff in agencies that provide services for clients who have problems with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) in a predominantly Hispanic area within the United States. This is a fascinating investigation and one of the first to assess cultural sensitivity in agencies that address ATOD misuse within an acculturated Hispanic community.

Angeline Barretta-Herman and Kendra Garrett of the College of St. Catherine/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work identify pertinent issues and provide recommendations concerning the timely topic of faculty-student collaboration. In an interesting qualitative study, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with faculty members throughout the United States. Several respondents had, as students, participated in collaborative efforts with faculty members during their formal studies. Their findings alert today's faculty members to recognize the potential for real or perceived exploitation by students with whom we collaborate.

Barry Cournoyer, Jerry Powers, James Johnson, and Bob Bennett of Indiana University discuss the application of economic modeling to social work education. They demonstrate how modern computer software may be used to analyze

costs associated with various educational processes. Economic modeling may also enable deans and program directors to consider the economic impact of alternate “what if” scenarios. Their innovative application may be useful not only for administrators within social work education but for those in human service agencies as well.

Doris McGartland Rubio, Julie Birkenmaier, and Marla Berg-Weger of St. Louis University discuss the relationship of social welfare policy changes and social work practice. Their survey of nearly 300 community service agencies from a large metropolitan area reflects respondents’ views of the effects of welfare reform on their organizations as well as the responsibilities and activities of agency-based social workers. We anticipate the publication of additional studies that describe the results of investigations of the impact of welfare reform upon individuals, families, organizations, and communities.

Michael Kane, Elwood Hamlin II, and Wesley Hawkins of Florida Atlantic University enhance our understanding of necessary skills for service within managed care and privatized environments through their study of the perceptions of social work field instructors. Their findings may encourage educators, supervisors, and agency administrators to consider carefully the contemporary learning needs of their social work students and practitioners.

The Editorial Board and I are pleased to present this second issue of *AISW* to the social work community. In 2001, the Indiana University School of Social Work will celebrate its 90th birthday. We dedicate this issue and the next two to the thousands of students, faculty, field instructors, agency administrators, and university colleagues who have contributed to the growth and development of the school over these nine decades. We hope that *AISW* readers and all members of the social work community will join us in a hearty happy birthday celebration during 2001.

References

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