

Editorial 2020: The Future is Here

Margaret E. Adamek

At the dawn of a new decade, I cannot help but recall that when I started my academic career in social work in the 1990s, it was common to look ahead to how life would be in the next century. Statistical projections forecast various demographic changes, often using 2020 as the future time frame. Back then, 2020 sounded far away and almost alien. Well folks, the future is here. Now that 2020 has dawned, it seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Certainly, the specific issues that social workers address have changed over the decades, and our approaches have been modified to tackle the new issues, but the struggle to understand and meet emerging needs persists. I used to jokingly hear that the ultimate goal of the social work profession was to put ourselves out of business. Given the intransigence of intolerance for difference and the persistent emergence of needs arising from “advances” of modern living, it seems the social justice stance of our profession will never be fully met. Indeed, our social contract is continually expanding.

In the Fall 2019 issue of *Advances in Social Work* we are pleased to present 14 papers--11 empirical, 3 conceptual--written by 29 authors from 12 states across the U.S., representing different regions of the country and Ghana. Each paper is briefly introduced below.

Research

Given the commitment of the social work field to promote diversity and ensure social justice for all population groups, it is not surprising that many of the studies presented in this issue relate to diversity in some way. With an eye toward enhancing the diversity of the social work student body, *Simmons* interviewed Black male graduates of an accredited BSW program to examine their perspectives of factors that contributed to their persistence. Based on his findings, Simmons offers a number of suggestions to social work programs looking to retain Black male students.

With an overall goal to inform culturally responsive social work practice with Puerto Rican fathers, *Mogro-Wilson, Loomis, Hayes and Rojas* examined Puerto Rican men’s perspectives on fatherhood, including how Puerto Rican fathers incorporate bicultural influences on their parenting roles. Such findings have particular significance due to the growing Latino population in the U.S.

Based on in-depth interviews with educators and social workers in Ghana, *Mills* identified several challenges with implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disability in Ghana. By describing the key roles that social workers can play in promoting inclusive education, Mill’s work has implications not only for Ghana but for other developing nations that have yet to embrace inclusive education.

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Mirick and Wladkowski explored the factors that contribute to female doctoral students and graduates' persistence in their doctoral programs after a pregnancy and/or birth. Based on the findings, several recommendations are offered to social work programs to better support students who have a child during their PhD studies.

Using a narrative analysis of three case studies of adolescents with a mental health diagnosis, *Kranke* concluded that youth empowerment is a critical avenue for reducing mental health stigma while engaging adolescents in treatment and meaningful opportunities as well as increasing their self-esteem.

Sichling and O'Brien surveyed 250 practitioners about their sources of practice knowledge. Their analysis revealed that co-workers and continuing education programs are the most important sources for knowledge and information that influences practice. Sichling and O'Brien call for agencies and researchers to think more purposefully about the infusion of knowledge into practice through opportunities for professional socialization, the use of research briefs, and open-access, peer-reviewed journals.

In light of children's mental health being recognized by the CDC as a public health problem, *Bonnano and Veselak* surveyed parents about their preferred sources of information about mental health services for their children. The analyses revealed that trust was an overarching theme in parents' pursuit and evaluation of mental health information. Given the need for reliable mental health information, Bonnano and Veselak suggest that social workers play a more active role in educating families and service providers about child mental health.

Staudt and Williams-Hayes examined the associations among secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and compassion satisfaction in interdisciplinary team members at a Child Advocacy Center. Based on their findings, Staudt and Williams-Hayes recommend that agency supervisors and administrators regularly assess their staff regarding the impact of trauma work and provide regular opportunities for support and debriefing.

Teaching Innovations

Richards-Schuster, Ruffolo, Hoffman, and Kwesele describe the process they followed in launching multiple MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) offering social work content to enrollees from over 180 countries. Their analyses suggest that MOOCs are a potential avenue for expanding the global reach of social work.

Pittman and Gioia describe a short-term international course with graduate students from social work, public health, and nursing. This study gave traditionally underrepresented students an opportunity to identify the opportunities and barriers they experienced related to international study. Recommendations for improving learning and increasing cultural and interprofessional learning include having guided group discussions on critical incidents, using a critical reflection process focused on cultural assumptions, and focusing on the psychological, convictional, and behavioral dimensions of learning.

While it is not uncommon for instructors to use the track changes function in Word to give students feedback on their writing, *Sanchez, Corbin, and Norka* examined the use of “comment bubbles” to engage students in thinking about and commenting on their writing choices in a social and economic justice course. Their analysis revealed that allowing students to comment on their own writing facilitated self-expression, self-reflection, and critical thinking.

Dual degrees in social work and public health are considered critical to enhancing our understanding of the social determinants of health and eliminating health disparities. *Salm Ward and Reeves* describe the process they pursued in launching an MSW/MPH program and share the lessons learned to assist other schools who are considering this increasingly popular dual degree.

Policy and Practice

Sinha, Shrivastava, and Paradis review a variety of mobile phone-based applications (‘apps’) aimed at preventing violence against women. Based on a brief survey and classification of existing mobile phone apps, this paper explains how the apps work, pointing out both their capabilities and limitations, so that social workers can better guide their clients in using these technology-based services.

Boys and Harris argue that if *Roe v. Wade* were to be overturned, there could be negative consequences for IVF. With concern that the United States Supreme Court could abandon the legal right to early pregnancy terminations, Boys and Harris suggest such a reversal would open the door for states to enforce laws defining life to begin at conception, potentially resulting in multiple unintended consequences on the cost, availability, safety, and success rates of IVF.

In Memoriam

We dedicate this issue to our friend and colleague, Dr. Bill Barton, who served as a founding board member, reviewer, and past Editor (2008 to 2015) for *Advances in Social Work*. Sadly, Dr. Barton passed away from leukemia this past year. Dr. Barton’s many contributions to the journal were significant and cannot be over-emphasized. Under his leadership, *Advances in Social Work* converted from a traditional paper journal to the first open access journal in social work. Dr. Barton’s dry sense of humor and efforts toward enhancing the scholarly standards of the journal are greatly missed.

In Gratitude

With this issue we would also like to thank the many reviewers worldwide who contributed to the scholarship represented here and in other issues of *Advances in Social Work* this past year. In 2019, 189 individuals from 7 countries, 43 states, and 1 territory, and representing 112 colleges/universities and 3 organizations served as AISW reviewers. We truly appreciate the voluntary efforts of our reviewers in enhancing the scholarly contributions of the journal. We are very proud of both the broad participation of reviewers and of our legacy as an open access journal since 2008.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many contributions of our Assistant Editor, Ms. Valerie Decker. Valerie's diligent efforts on behalf of the journal include assigning reviewers, communicating with authors, copyediting accepted manuscripts, assisting guest editors with all phases of the review process, and basically keeping the whole process on track. Her work on the journal is what keeps it flowing. Thanks, Valerie!

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