

Fall 2022 Editorial: Questioning the Status Quo

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In the Fall 2022 issue of *Advances in Social Work*, we are pleased to present 17 full-length papers (11 empirical, 6 conceptual) written by 52 authors representing all different regions of the country and one paper hailing from Ethiopia. The papers in this issue are organized into five areas of contribution: challenges to national social work organizations, technological innovations in social work, curriculum innovations, COVID-related impacts, and diverse client populations. Each paper is introduced briefly, followed by our annual recognition of AISW reviewers.

Challenges to National Social Work Organizations

In another critique of national social work guidelines, *Apgar and Parada* decry the 2021 revision to the NASW Code of Ethics that makes self-care “largely a personal responsibility,” thus blaming the victim, in this case overworked, underpaid, inadequately supervised, and under-recognized social workers. Apgar and Parada assert that the expectation for social workers to take responsibility for their own self-care overlooks the reality that much of the stress, burnout, and even trauma experienced by practicing social workers stems from macro or environmental stressors. By reframing social work burnout as a social justice issue, Apgar and Parada call for mobilization, advocacy, and political engagement to improve the working conditions of social workers.

Looking through the lens of the CSWE EPAS, *Harrell, Suslovic, Johnson, Boys, Anderson-Nathe, and Botts* call into question the apparently common practice of Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) being taught to social work students placed in correctional settings. Though touted on the MRT website as a cost-effective and evidence-based intervention, Harrell and colleagues point out ethical concerns with training social work students to implement an approach that targets perceived moral failing. The authors assert that MRT is unsuitable for use in social work field placements and call for it to be discontinued as a part of accredited social work education.

Technological Innovations in Social Work

With the goal of establishing best practices for use of information communication technology (ICT) in social work practice, *Randolph, Latham, Gross, and Constantino* outline four challenges and five benefits of ICT in relation to the worker-client relationship. Randolph and colleagues argue that by applying basic principles of communication theory, social workers can make better-informed choices and use of technology tools to enhance the worker-client relationship.

Synthesizing the research literature on the impact of two common forms of media (television viewing and smartphone use) on child development and family functioning,

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Bates and John highlight the importance of social workers acknowledging the impact of technology use by children and families. Based on their analysis of the literature, Bates and John offer several recommendations for social work educators to prepare students for new areas of practice with families in a technology-driven future.

Despite major challenges and significant loss of human life as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major advance from this crisis was the widespread emergence of telehealth. The research team of **Dehart, Iachini, King, LeCleir, Reitmeier, and Browne** interviewed 14 health care providers and 17 patients after the onset of the pandemic in a predominantly rural southern state to examine perceptions of telehealth. While telehealth improved access to care and is convenient for rural residents, several challenges persist. Dehart and colleagues call for social workers to play a key role in ensuring that rural residents can benefit from telehealth to the same extent as urban residents.

Curriculum Innovations

As the healthcare field shifts from a disease model of health to a more holistic approach, integrated behavioral healthcare has emerged as a best practice model. **Benton, Allen, Anderson, and Nason** describe a training program to prepare MSW students to provide trauma-informed, culturally relevant, evidence-based behavioral health prevention and intervention services in integrated healthcare settings. Using pre- and post-surveys, Benton and colleagues found a significant increase in knowledge, skills, and attitudes among training participants compared to a control group. Further study might gauge to what extent MSW graduates transfer their enhanced knowledge to the workplace.

While we know that suicide is a major public health issue in the United States and that social workers are the primary providers of mental health services, what we don't know is how many social work programs have courses specializing in suicide prevention and interventions. To address this gap, **Mirick** collected data from 151 program directors from schools of social work around the country to establish baseline knowledge of suicide-focused course offerings. She reports on suicide content in social work curricula at three levels: BSW, MSW, and continuing education. With only 6% of programs offering a required course on suicide, Mirick calls for more courses specializing in suicide, especially within MSW programs, so that future practitioners are well-prepared to intervene with suicidal clients using best practices.

To enhance student engagement in macro social work practice, **Twis, Greenwood, and Files** developed the Macro Practice Assignment (MPA) which offers students a real-world learning exercise with embedded micro, mezzo, and macro social work applications. Partnering with a community agency serving survivors of human trafficking, Twis and colleagues found that multidimensional MPA improved students' appreciation of and interest in macro practice.

COVID-related Impacts

Using a mixed methods approach, **Keesler, Wilkerson, White, and Dickinson** examined the experiences of social work students (n = 884) during the pandemic and their

associated level of burnout, considering resilience as a moderating variable. Regression analyses explained up to 45.5% of variance across three domains of burnout (i.e., exhaustion, cynicism, and professional/academic efficacy), with COVID-related experiences accounting for most of the variance. Coupled with the narrative results, Keesler and colleagues recommend humanistic education as a possible approach to circumvent burnout, bolster student resilience, and encourage academic success.

Using an online survey of the general population, *Chonody, Teater, Hannan, and Hal* explored the factors that contribute to COVID-related stress reactions among individuals across the age spectrum. Among other findings, Chonody and colleagues found a significant increase in stress from before the pandemic to during the pandemic across all three age groups. The results underscore the importance of understanding and responding to fear as well as other sources of stress during public health crises.

Diverse Client Populations

Hellman, Pharris, and Muñoz call on social workers working with clients impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to consider the positive psychology construct of hope. They propose a hope-centered and trauma-informed framework for responding to the negative consequences of ACEs. Social work researchers, educators, and practitioners are challenged to learn more about the relationship between ACEs and hope in order to better assist ACE survivors.

In contrast to stereotypes of Asian American students as the “model minority,” *Chock-Goldman* points out that high-achieving Asian American adolescents are an under-researched population at-risk of suicide. After documenting the increase in suicidal ideation and suicide attempts within this at-risk group, Chock-Goldman explores ecologically valid social work interventions, including culturally appropriate suicide assessments and family therapy. An actual case study is used to illustrate key issues and relevant interventions.

Terzin and Beasley synthesized the empirical literature focused on the adjustment experiences of international student athletes (ISA) at Division I universities in the U.S. Using qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis, they identified three overarching themes: acculturative stress, adjustment to the college experience, and adjustment to U.S. athletics. Based on their finding that ISAs experience stress related to their identities as students, as athletes, and in relation to acculturation experiences, the authors propose that social workers employed at Division I institutions and especially within athletic departments understand and advocate for the unique needs of this population.

Tefera explored the challenges of social workers in addressing Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Ethiopian refugee settings. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight social workers who had at least five years of experience working with refugees experiencing GBV. The primary challenges experienced by social workers were structural barriers emanating from the unbalanced power relationship and political interest between and within institutions, strategic/policy gaps, and organizational resource limitations. Social workers in refugee settings must be trained to function in a politically-sensitive practice

setting. Anti-oppressive and integrated developmental approaches are recommended to resolve the complex socio-economic and political forces behind the widespread GBV in Ethiopian refugee settings.

Using a community-based participatory approach and a two-phase mixed methods research design, *Carrillo, Pichardo, O'Grady, Rak, and Berumen* conducted a comprehensive assessment of the mental health needs of primarily Mexican heritage residents of ten marginalized communities in Chicago. The survey revealed that depression, anxiety, and trauma-related symptoms were prevalent and stemmed largely from oppressive national and local level structural contexts. Structural and programmatic barriers were the greatest challenges to accessing mental health services. Social work advocacy is needed to bring about organizational and policy changes to address these structural barriers.

Cross highlights the role of NICU social workers advocating for policies that support breastfeeding and thus mother-infant attachment. Cross explains that breastfeeding can serve as a prevention strategy for child maltreatment by improving bonding between mother and infant. Through education, promotion, and support of breastfeeding policies, NICU social workers serve a pivotal role in preventing child maltreatment.

Due to the lack of available validated instruments, *Deck, Eisensmith, and Cafaro* developed such a measure to assess conflict in parenting couples in the process of divorce. The 8-item Parents Divorcing Conflict Scale (PDCS) is a promising measure to help identify families at risk for a high-conflict divorce process. Such a tool can inform early intervention strategies that will serve to support healthy communication among divorcing couples and minimize harm to children.

Reviewer Appreciation

With this issue we would also like to thank the many reviewers worldwide who completed reviews for *Advances in Social Work* this past year. In 2022, 172 individuals from 6 countries and 40 states and territories representing 124 colleges/universities and agencies served as AISW reviewers. We greatly 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 authors and reviewers and of our legacy as an open access journal since 2008.

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We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals who reviewed manuscripts for *Advances in Social Work* in 2022. Without their time, commitment, and expertise, *Advances in Social Work* would not be possible.

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