Editorial: Together We Are Strong

Margaret E. Adamek

We are pleased to bring you this issue of *Advances in Social Work* presenting innovations in emerging areas of policy advocacy, community organization, research, teaching, and clinical practice. This collection of papers includes the results of eleven empirical studies and five diverse conceptual pieces that offer new insights and strategies to assist social work students, educators, practitioners, and policy advocates. We offer these contributions to the field with the hope that the advances shared here will ultimately benefit and empower those we serve.

In light of the perpetually negative reports of worker turnover in public child welfare, *Willis, Chavkin and Leung* recommend a new approach to calculating turnover that considers different types of staff turnover and the possibility of a desirable level of turnover. By critically questioning how turnover is socially constructed, measured, and addressed, and integrating seminal management principles, Willis and colleagues propose an alternative metric that may result in more accurate perceptions of the public child welfare workforce. The proposed changes to conceptualizing and calculating staff turnover ultimately have the potential to reduce the impact of dysfunctional turnover within public child welfare systems.

Four articles spotlight increasing social work involvement in various aspects of interprofessional education and practice. In a survey of 157 graduate students in four health care disciplines, including social work, *West, Miller, and Leitch* examine the impact of professional socialization within one's discipline on attitudes toward interprofessional collaboration. Their results point to a potentially problematic connection between professional socialization during graduate study and students' views of interprofessional collaboration. Unless managed strategically, professional socialization may diminish positive perceptions and attitudes towards interprofessional collaboration. West and colleagues caution social work educators to pay careful attention to the role of professional socialization and how it is manifest in both the explicit and implicit curriculum.

In a second study addressing interprofessional education, *Rishel, Hartnett, and Davis* present data from a federally funded Integrated Mental and Behavioral Health Training Program (IMBTP) within an MSW program emphasizing rural practice. The shift to integrated models of service delivery that emphasize preventative services prompts the need for providers who understand the interrelationship among physical and behavioral health and who are prepared to practice using a team-based approach. Results suggest that an intentional focus on fostering relationships may enhance the knowledge-building and skill development that are inherently emphasized in most training programs. Rishel and colleagues recommend offering multiple opportunities for relationship-building among trainees and program faculty, clinical supervisors, and interprofessional colleagues in order to improve learning outcomes in behavioral health training programs.

_____

Margaret E. Adamek, PhD, Professor and Editor, *Advances in Social Work*, Indiana University School of Social Work, Indianapolis, IN 46202, madamek@iupui.edu

The third paper addressing interprofessional practice highlights the crucial need for school-based professionals to work with a specific high-needs population: culturally and linguistically diverse foster youth with disabilities. *Green and Mathiesen* enumerate a set of interprofessional competencies for school professionals developed based on the lessons learned in the first three years of a federally funded grant. Recommendations to improve practice with diverse foster youth with disabilities include increasing the number of Culturally Affirming and Responsive Education Specialists (CARES) who are trained to respond to and advocate for the educational and mental health needs of diverse foster youth. To address the multiple and sometimes complex needs of this student population, CARES work in collaborative interdisciplinary teams. Green and Mathiesen advocate for school professionals to receive early training in culturally competent interdisciplinary practice.

In a fourth paper involving interprofessional practice, *Desrosiers, Mallinger, and Bragg-Underwood* highlight patient navigation as an emerging area of health care practice aimed at reducing health disparities and improving patient health outcomes. Based on an integrative review of literature, Desrosiers and colleagues offer a clear definition of patient navigation and delineate social work competencies with patient navigator requirements. They further argue that social workers are well-equipped to carry out a variety of patient navigator responsibilities buttressed by their social justice advocacy skills. Through involvement in patient navigation, social workers can promote the development of socially just healthcare systems that respect the dignity and worth of all patients.

Six empirical studies explore emerging and diverse practice arenas including teen dating violence (TDV), the use of social media in child welfare, school-community partnerships, screening for post-partum depression, dispersed social work, and foreclosure. In recognition of the prevalence of teen dating violence (TDV), *Rueda, Hawley, Black, and Ombayo* examined graduating MSW students' preparedness to work with adolescents affected by TDV. MSW students responded to two vignettes reflecting various types of violence among a same-sex and heterosexual couple. The two most commonly proposed interventions were education and counseling. Students' recommendations for education and counseling rather than safety planning or multi-level interventions indicate that social work programs need to provide specific content in MSW curricula on evidence-based interventions for TDV.

In a national survey of public child welfare training administrators, *Stott, MacEachron, and Gustavsson* examined issues related to the use of social media in child welfare practice. Despite the ubiquity of social media, few state agencies who responded to the survey had comprehensive policies on the use of social media for case management or for connecting with youth in out-of-home care. Stott and colleagues suggest that agencies would reduce their liability risks and benefit their staff and clients by developing policies aimed at protecting agency and staff privacy and safety, as well as client privacy and safety. Agencies may promote the well-being of youth in out-of-home care by providing guidelines to staff and caregivers regarding the safe use of social media.

Baldwin-White and Elias-Lambert designed a study to examine social work students' acceptance of various rape myths based on four vignettes that portrayed different patterns of alcohol consumption of the victim and perpetrator. Their descriptive analysis showed

that social work students were willing to accept certain rape-supportive beliefs, but not others. Based on their results, Baldwin-White and Elias-Lambert call for social work students to be educated about how endorsements of rape myths can affect their interaction with survivors and perpetrators.

Blitz, Yull, Solá, and Jones describe a faculty-led experiential learning project aimed at teaching macro practice skills along with research methods. As part of a grant-funded school-university partnership, MSW field students participated in collective family engagement in diverse, low-income communities, using community organizing skills and community-based participatory research methods. Blitz and colleagues discuss MSW students' learning in the context of CSWE's 2015 EPAS competencies. This project illustrates the potential of school-university partnerships involving MSW field students to help bridge the gaps between schools and families, particularly in diverse and low-income communities.

Spurred by reports that up to 1 in 4 new mothers face post-partum depression (PPD), *Rouland Polmanteer, Keefe, and Brownstein-Evans* conducted a national online survey to examine perinatal social workers' screening practices with new mothers. Despite the ready availability of PPD screening instruments, only one-quarter of respondents indicated they used formal screening instruments. Based on their survey results, Rouland Polmanteer and colleagues recommend that social workers integrate relevant findings from evidence-based research about PPD into their practice, and that BSW and MSW curricula also incorporate research and practice information addressing PPD.

In light of the growing practice of social workers working outside of the traditional workplace, *Allen Milton, Sinclair, and Vakalahi* interviewed dispersed social workers to understand how interactions via new communication technology impacts organizational identification. Their findings revealed that although dispersed social workers perceive themselves as having more autonomy and flexibility, they can sometimes feel socially isolated and disconnected from their peers and supervisors. Allen Milton and colleagues note that despite the enhanced efficiency that technology can bring, human service organizations should carefully consider the unintended consequences of a dispersed workforce.

In the under-explored area of housing foreclosure, *Murphy-Nugen and Hensley Beck* examined the lived experiences of former homeowners who faced foreclosure. Themes from in-depth interviews revealed the intersection of the hopes and dreams of homeownership with the grief and loss of foreclosure. This polarizing experience points to the need for innovative policy and practice interventions. Murphy-Nugen and Hensley Beck recommend strengthening the bridge of micro- and macro-level interventions to more effectively address former homeowners' grief and loss along with their hopes and dreams.

In recognition of the emerging need to develop and implement succession plans for leadership in human service organizations, *Gilliam, Chandler, Al-Hajjaj, Mooney, and Vakalahi* call for schools of social work to prepare and encourage their graduates to seek such leadership roles. To fill the expected gaps left by retiring administrators, leaders must be cultivated through intentional recruitment and continuous training of social workers in human service leadership and administration. Adopting the type of succession planning

that is common in the corporate world would help to ensure the continuous availability of competent and visionary leaders for human service organizations.

Due to growing concerns about student incivility, **Wahler and Badger** surveyed a national sample of social work instructors about their experiences with social work student incivility in both undergraduate and graduate classrooms. Some behaviors often deemed disrespectful or inattentive were reported, more so in undergraduate than graduate classrooms. Openly hostile behaviors were rarely reported. Wahler and Badger offer several recommendations for addressing incivility, conceptualizing such instances in the classroom as opportunities to prepare social work students for professional practice.

Given that most adults spend some or nearly all of their lives in a romantic couple relationship and that such relationships are critical to well-being, **Chonody, Killian, Gabb, and Dunk-West** sought to develop a valid and reliable measurement tool that can be used to assess the maintenance of healthy adult relationships. With data gathered online from participants from 60 countries, Chonody and colleagues assessed the measurement properties of the *Relationship Maintenance Scale* (RMS). This brief measure of relationship maintenance (8 items) has great promise for enhancing practice with couples and families.

Acknowledging the centrality of empathy to effective social work practice, **VanCleave** articulates the connection between empathy and neuroscience, offering an epistemology of empathy and a synthesis of literature from diverse fields that extends empathic practice theory. After explaining the neurobiological foundation of empathy, VanCleave offers several recommendations for empathy training of social work students.

In the process of preparing this overview of the 16 articles published in this issue of *Advances in Social Work,* I could not help but notice that 15 are collaborative projects, involving a total of 47 scholars. It is interesting to note the growing extent of collaborative work in the field---a welcome trend indeed. Together, we are strong.

Finally, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of our reviewers from near and far who make the work of publishing scholarship possible. I believe it takes a scholarly village to produce such a varied and cutting edge body of work. Starting in January 2017, each year we will publish a list of all of our reviewers for the preceding year. Our initial list for 2015 and 2016 includes 283 individuals from 17 countries and 45 states in the U.S., representing 180 institutions. We are pleased that our "scholarly village" is both global and diverse. More evidence in my book that together, we are strong.