

**Editorial**  
**Spring 2021: Emerging Arenas in Social Work Education and Practice**

**Margaret E. Adamek**

Given our commitment to highlighting current issues, challenges, and responses within social work practice and education globally, the Spring 2021 issue of *Advances in Social Work* is pleased to present 11 full-length papers written by 40 authors from across the U.S. and Canada. We begin with four papers calling for greater involvement of social work educators and practitioners in arenas including information literacy, dyslexia, digital equity, and independent living. These papers are followed by reports on seven empirical studies in areas of practice as diverse as kinship care, legal representation, collaboration in a dental clinic, and dance and mindfulness. We hope you find these selections on emerging areas of social work practice and education to be informative and inspiring. Each contribution to this issue is introduced below.

Based on their findings from interviews with social work librarians across the country, *Johnson, Bausman, & Laleman Ward* call for social work faculty to partner with librarians in developing the information literacy skills of social work students. To prepare practitioners who remain informed about best practices, Johnson and colleagues call for genuine partnerships between social work instructors and librarians. We must go beyond one-time information sessions about library resources and work collaboratively to incorporate information literacy throughout the social work curriculum.

Citing a study from Texas, *Garner* reports that nearly half of incarcerated people may have dyslexia. Imagine a world where dyslexia, rather than being viewed as a limitation, was widely recognized as a form of neurodiversity that included unique strengths and abilities. Drawing on cutting-edge research in disciplines such as neurobiology, education, and psychology, Garner exposes pervasive negative myths about dyslexia and calls for social workers to become informed advocates who promote positive outcomes with and for individuals with dyslexia.

An unexpected positive outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic was the opportunity to reach more clients using telehealth. However, as *Funk* elucidates, many individuals are not able to access telehealth due to broadband disparities, especially in rural areas. Funk calls for social workers on all levels to collaborate with community members, government agencies, and local programs to promote broadband access so that all community members can benefit from mental health interventions delivered via telehealth.

*Janich, Mendoza, Mackey, Hernandez, Henderson, Reily, & Lundwall* describe an innovative service learning program involving students from multiple disciplines at Arizona State University. Based on a range of assessments, interdisciplinary teams developed creative ways to meet the needs of older and disabled adults in an independent living community adjacent to campus. The authors share lessons learned in the process of developing and implementing this unique university-community partnership and offer key

---

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

Copyright © 2021 Author, Vol. 21 No. 1 (Spring 2021), i-iii, DOI: 10.18060/25450



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

insights and recommendations for other Schools of Social Work interested in creating similar interprofessional learning opportunities.

A primary goal of the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* was to promote kinship care for children entering foster care. Recognizing that not all states have leveraged this federal funding for kinship navigator programs, **Koh, Ware, & Lee** surveyed state representatives to learn about their state's response to the federal legislation. The results indicate that more support and oversight from the national level are needed to promote sharing of knowledge about successful kinship navigator programs between states. To promote the well-being of children and their kin caregivers, social workers are called upon to advocate for innovative approaches to kinship care in all 50 states.

Another way to enhance the well-being of children involved in the child welfare system is by pairing social workers with public defenders to better represent the needs of families within the judicial system. **Jaggers, Wilford, Anderson & Bettmann** evaluated a parent representation pilot program in Utah by interviewing family court attorneys and judges. Study participants reported that having social workers partner with public defenders helped to bring about more positive outcomes for families facing removal of their children.

In another study involving social workers partnering with another profession—in this case, dentists at a university dental clinic—**Lyons, Schrader, Galyean, Romito, Everidge, Smith & Mandapati** surveyed dental faculty, students, staff, and patients to document the barriers and challenges faced by low-income patients. Based on their findings, Lyon and her colleagues recommend involving licensed social workers in interprofessional collaborative practice in university-based dental clinics to better identify and address barriers to care experienced by low-income patients.

To enhance the empowerment of adults experiencing serious mental illness, **Clarkson-Hendrix & Peters** piloted a weekly workshop that combined dance movements and mindfulness meditation. A social worker facilitated the mindfulness aspects of the workshop in conjunction with a dance instructor leading participants through basic dance movements designed to help participants connect with their physical bodies. Comparisons of pre- and post-test data revealed that participants experienced increased optimism and feelings of empowerment.

Much of the current attention on race relations in the United States focuses on interactions with people outside of one's own family and community. **Saviet & Greif** conducted a study that examined racial differences within families and in particular, the impact of those differences on in-law relationships. Parents whose son or daughter married a person of another race share the transitions they went through from initial hesitation to eventual acceptance and embracing of their racially different son- or daughter-in-law. The journey to acceptance across racial lines within families brings hope for greater acceptance across racial lines between families.

In their work with low-income mothers of color receiving care at a federally qualified health center in New York, **Keefe, Rouland, Lane, Howard, Brownstein-Evans, Wen & Parks** were curious to learn from the mothers themselves about how they persevered through not only postpartum depression, but also challenging circumstances and living

environments. Their findings call for social workers to take the time needed to build trusting relationships that recognize and honor the mothers' inner strengths.

The involvement of men in violence issues is primarily as perpetrators; however, there is an increasing realization that men need to be a part of the solution. Using semi-structured interviews with a sample of Canadian practitioners working mostly in domestic violence shelters, *Hansen, Wells & Claussen* explored challenges faced in engaging men in violence prevention efforts. Their findings point to the need for focused capacity-building around emerging research, strategies, and tools in engaging men in violence prevention.

Just a heads up that our next special issue, *Dismantling White Supremacy in Social Work Education*, will be released in late summer 2021. With over 100 abstracts submitted, this special issue has garnered incredible interest. We are looking forward to bringing you 35+ original papers (our largest issue to date!) addressing ways that social work education can move forward positively and intentionally in ways that acknowledge the damage wrought by white privilege, promote racial justice and anti-racist practice, and embrace new ways of knowing, teaching, and learning.

The Indiana University School of Social Work, through publishing *Advances in Social Work* as an open access scholarly journal, is grateful to play a role in knowledge production and dissemination in social work. We are continually amazed at the dedication and hard work of our social work colleagues globally who work tirelessly to advance social and economic justice. Marshall on, colleagues!

### **Tribute to Retiring Board Members**

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to three outgoing AISW Board members who recently retired from the Indiana University School of Social Work: Dr. Karen Allen, Dr. Larry Bennett, and Dr. Bob Vernon. Your contributions to not only *Advances in Social Work* but to the IU School of Social Work and to the social work profession at large are very much appreciated. Special accolades to Dr. Vernon who has served on the AISW Editorial Board since its inception in 1999. Best wishes to each of you in your next adventures!