

Editorial Fall 2021: Struggles Bring Opportunity

Margaret E. Adamek

In the Fall 2021 issue of *Advances in Social Work*, we are pleased to present 15 full-length papers written by 29 authors from different regions of the U.S. including Puerto Rico as well as from Ghana. An underlying theme of many of these contributions is the opportunity brought about through various struggles: patriarchal systems leading to innovative women entrepreneurs, social distancing measures spawning new ways of learning virtually and new ways of practicing social work, and mental health challenges exposed among elite athletes leading to new frontiers of practice. The variety of social work contributions to wellness, advocacy, and social justice seem to be ever-expanding.

Interestingly, despite the trend toward multiple-authored papers over time, 7 of the papers in this issue are solo-authored--perhaps an artifact of the pandemic. Each paper is introduced briefly below, followed by our annual recognition of reviewers for *Advances in Social Work*.

International Perspectives

In this issue's lead article, *Popescu and Alonzo* propose an organizing framework for community-engaged international social work and social development. Cleverly named the *Strengths and Participation to Accomplish Capacity and Empowerment (SPACE)* conceptual framework, this model is founded on human rights principles and informed by the strengths perspective, empowerment and participation of local communities, and the capabilities approach. The utility of the SPACE conceptual framework is illustrated using two community-based change projects in Guatemala.

A growing number of women entrepreneurs in Ghana are taking advantage of the emerging economy. Based on interviews with 15 women entrepreneurs in the capital city of Accra, *Boateng* identified three trends that have fostered the women's success in business: social media, innovative business practices, and weakening patriarchy. To enhance opportunities for women, Boateng calls for social workers to work with and train additional women entrepreneurs and to advocate for government policies that support women's economic empowerment.

Uncertainty greatly increased among refugees in the U.S. in response to the anti-immigrant rhetoric promoted by former President Donald Trump. To elevate refugee voices in this uncertain climate, *Funk and Shaw* interviewed 88 refugees who resettled in the U.S. Based on their findings, Funk and Shaw emphasize the continuing need for social workers to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and decrease stigma towards refugees and other immigrants.

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Latino Issues

To engage low-income Latinx families in community change projects, *Lechuga-Peña, Mitchell, Poola, Gutiérrez, and Rivera* incorporated a photovoice approach within an established community-based intervention, *Your Family, Your Neighborhood*. Using photovoice, parents and their children worked together to uncover and document the strengths and challenges in their community from their perspectives. The project illustrated that knowledge production rooted in community members' lived experience can help reshape the narrative of Latinx families living in low-income communities and enable social workers to better respond to specific needs.

As the Latinx population in the United States grows, the need for bilingual professionals will continue to expand. In light of this growing demand, *Logan and Negroni* conducted a study to examine whether bilingual professionals view their language skills as an asset or liability. Using focus groups, data were collected from 15 bilingual professionals who speak English and Spanish and work in a court system in the eastern region of the United States. While bilingualism is typically considered an asset, in a court system setting, the bilingual professionals' sometimes perceived their language skills as a liability. Discrimination and unfair practices affecting Limited English Proficiency (LEP) clients may lead bilingual professionals to become protectors and gatekeepers to prevent adverse outcomes and provide access to services in the court and across social service systems. Logan and Negroni argue that social work administrators must evaluate structural supports and provide training specific to the cultural aspect of language for all employees.

Considering that by 2060, 40% of the children in the United States will be Latino and that many of these children will be raised by single mothers, *Bishop* conducted a study to uncover the perceptions of Latino youth about influential adults in their lives. In contrast to the persistent negative images of Latinx individuals portrayed in U.S. media, Bishop uncovered the very positive perceptions Latino youth have of their single mothers. Social workers who work with Latino families are urged to consider the strengths and family-oriented cultural values of Latino Americans.

Social Work Education

We learned a lot about ourselves during the pandemic. We learned that distancing measures could exacerbate the struggles of those with mental health conditions and thus the demands on caring professionals. In an effort to support the wellness of social work field students, faculty at one school of social work worked with students to develop wellness plans during their field seminars. *Reay* describes the process of developing and implementing student wellness plans to safeguard students as they endeavored to meet their field learning objectives in the midst of the pandemic. Pandemic or no pandemic, student wellness plans help students to internalize the importance of self-care, hopefully beyond their student phase and into their future careers as professional helpers.

While the value of mentoring for social work faculty is widely recognized, a best practice model is yet to be widely adopted. *Holcomb* proposes an integrated conceptual

framework to undergird formal mentoring programs for all categories of social work faculty, particularly historically marginalized groups including women, underrepresented minorities, as well as part-time, intermittent, adjunct, or non-tenure track faculty. Holcomb advocates for an amendment to the EPAS to include formal faculty mentorship within accredited programs.

Emerging Areas of Policy and Practice

One emerging area of social work practice is work with athletes in various sports settings. By interviewing licensed social workers working in Division I athletic departments, *Beasley, Newman, and Hardin* aimed to understand how these practitioners applied social work values in collegiate sports settings. The application of social work values was evident in how the social workers recognized student-athletes as a vulnerable population, worked on social justice issues, placed an emphasis on the diversity of student-athletes, built relationships with both student-athletes and sport staff, and advocated for social work values in athletics. Beasley and colleagues call for social work programs to increase efforts to prepare students for careers in sport through elective courses and by providing sport-specific practicum opportunities.

While various community-based residential options have opened up for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities over time, *Presnell and Keesler* point out that living in a community is not the same as having meaningful opportunities to be a full member of that community. Many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are isolated and lack social networks within their communities. Presnell and Keesler present a call-to-action for social work to engage in strategies and solutions to resolve macro barriers to community inclusion, to dismantle the injustices that people with IDD continue to experience, and to move the promise of community inclusion from rhetoric to reality.

In a bold call for legislative action on racial injustice, *McElderry and Jones* challenge social workers to mobilize in support of reparations for African Americans as proposed in HR 40. Providing an interesting historical context of reparations for other categories of Americans, McElderry and Jones raise awareness about the potential for HR 40 to improve the lives of African Americans through strategies such as establishing a commission to consider various remedies for slavery and institutionalized discrimination. McElderry and Jones argue that the social work profession can play a pivotal role in capacity-building in order to dispel the myths and fears associated with reparations and move H.R. 40 forward.

Trauma Practice

As our understanding of the long-term and serious impact of childhood trauma has grown, so has the need for sensitive and accurate screening tools. *Evans, King, and Holmes* identify several recommended features of an evidence-informed framework for a pictorial child trauma screening tool. The features of a recommended tool include that it is: child-centered, brief, useable by a broad range of practitioners, culturally sensitive,

includes the child's relational context, and measures not only the trauma itself, but also the child's responses to trauma.

Legislative protections put into place to ensure the safety of certain population groups may not actually ensure safety equitably among sub-groups. Title IX refers to the federal mandated reporting procedures for sexual assault on university campuses. Based on a national sample of LGBTQ survivors (n=409) of college sexual assault, *Nightingale* found that only 10% of respondents made a formal report to campus officials. Those who did submit a report tended to have negative experiences with the reporting process and struggled with the leniency of sanctions for perpetrators. *Nightingale* calls for social workers who interface with the Title IX process to advocate for greater inclusivity of the needs and perspectives of LGBTQ students.

Accountability/Ethical Issues and IPE Sustainability

Examining the responses of a state licensing board to ethics violations by social work practitioners, *Barsky and Spadola* call into question the punitive and often shame-based approaches still being used. To explore the impact of sanctions on social workers and their clients, Barsky and Spadola interviewed 13 practitioners who were sanctioned by the state board in Ohio. Among other findings, respondents questioned the practice of permanently posting their names on the state board website. Instead, Barsky and Spadola recommend that social work as a profession consider implementing the restorative approaches used by other disciplines in response to ethics violations. In a profession focused on empowering clients and second chances, should we not do the same with our own?

Finally, *Kennedy* provides an overview of the development of the research-based Kennedy Model of Sustainability and its subsequent application to interprofessional practice and education (IPE) initiatives. Presenting the model in the context of implementation science and the know-do gap, Kennedy illustrate how the model has provided additional strategies to foster sustainability of IPE initiatives and heighten the likelihood of attaining the Quintuple Aim of improving care, reducing costs, improving consumers' experiences, enhancing providers' experiences, and achieving health equity.

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 2021, 430 reviews were completed by 322 individuals from 17 countries and 45 states and territories representing 208 universities and organizations. That is a lot of working parts! We truly appreciate the voluntary efforts of our reviewers in enhancing the scholarly contributions of *Advances in Social Work*. We are grateful for the contributions of authors and the generosity of reviewers and of our legacy as an open access journal since 2008.

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