

Editorial: Pivoting the Profession as We Approach the Quasiquicentennial

Goutham M. Menon
Jacqueline Mondros
Nancy J. Smyth
Martell Teasley
Carol Hostetter

The year 2023 marks professional social work's quasiquicentennial: the 125th anniversary of our profession since the first social work classes were offered in the summer of 1898 at Columbia University. The profession has grown in its reach across many human service sectors over all these years creating opportunities for those who want to serve their communities in myriad and impactful ways.

As we observe disruptions in the higher education sector, with profound implications to the mission of the social work profession, we are also witnessing many cross-sector opportunities for the future of the social work profession. Given our changing environment, the time is right for us to re-envision social work education and practice in ways that center our professions' commitment to social justice and the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

In our efforts to meet the needs of the people and communities we serve, we have seen several innovative and impactful expansions into areas that have augmented our original "scope of practice." Some have occurred to meet the needs of the time; others have morphed due to market conditions for jobs that have been encroached on by other professions/disciplines. And as we see more complex and vexing societal issues in our current environment, it is time for us to collectively discern our purpose, adjust our mindset, and be prepared to meet future challenges and opportunities.

This special issue on "re-envisioning social work" provides a space for thought leaders to showcase meaningful and purpose-filled advances for the profession. This is consistent with the voices of others calling for constant vigil to ensure our profession's focus matches our profession's values. Our roles can too often become entrenched in larger societal systems. As Gibelman (1999) observed, "external economic, social, and political forces have been **more influential** in shaping the nature of practice than intraprofessional choices" (p. 298). Lein et al. (2017) build on this in their editorial in *Social Work Research*:

Social work research and education operate in an extremely dynamic environment...However, the profession of social work **does not have a regular and systematic approach** for scanning our environment, looking toward the future, and envisioning possibilities for the profession. (p. 68)

While we pivot from one new shiny object to another every few years, and a rush to capitalize on grants and publications from initiatives that were popular but did not have the

Goutham M. Menon, PhD, MA, MBA., Professor, School of Social Work, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL. Jacqueline Mondros, DSW, Dean & Professor Emeritus, School of Social Welfare, SUNY Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY. Nancy J. Smyth, PhD, LCSW, Professor & Interim Associate Dean for Faculty Development, School of Social Work, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY. Martell Teasley, PhD, MSW, Dean & Professor, College of Social Work, Interim Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. Carol Hostetter, PhD, MSW, Professor, IU School of Social Work, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

Copyright © 2022 Authors, Vol. 22 No. 2 (Summer 2022), i-viii, DOI: 10.18060/26630



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sustainability to endure and move the profession forward holistically (e.g., Person-in-environment; Strength's perspective; international; interprofessional and several more), we will continue to miss the opportunity to have a collective purpose leading to meaningful impacts in our communities. This is compounded with multiple national organizations working cross purposes with each other on very narrow and specialized missions and agendas. Sheafor (2008) highlighted the promise of the 2007 Wingspread conference and the resolution signed by representatives of several organizations to “**create a unified profession with one social work organization by 2012**” (para. 6). Such an effort would have helped all of our voices, from big and small social work programs and their faculty, staff, and students **and** the practice and policy communities to work together, constantly looking ahead to what is coming as challenges or opportunities for the profession.

The editors agree that the profession of social work needs much more open debate and sharing of ideas that can shape the future. Since those avenues for critical discussions are often closed to several scholars, researchers, and practitioners due to opportunity costs associated with being in the academy, we strongly urge that disciplinary conferences and publication outlets put together calls every five years or so to get the best ideas out into the marketplace. Towards that end (and beginning), for the Summer 2022 special issue of *Advances in Social Work*, we are pleased to present 30 papers written by 106 authors from 48 universities and organizations.

The articles encompass three major themes: social work education; racial justice issues; and building a strong social work workforce.

Social Work Education

The 14 articles in this section include 6 articles on education and technology, 4 articles on social justice and education, and 4 others addressing various educational issues.

Technology and Education

Hooker Jones, Carter, and Goshorn examined MSW students' readiness for remote social work practice (RSWP) at the height of the COVID pandemic. In the pilot study, 13 students indicated that embedding RSWP broadly across the core curriculum is important and they would have felt more prepared to engage in RSWP if they had increased exposure in a variety of courses—not just practice-oriented course.

Young and Brady reimagine digital and new media literacies to overcome misinformation and promote civil discourse in social work education. They propose a framework for addressing misinformation and explicit marginalization of racial, gender, ethnic, and cultural minorities for classrooms and practice contexts within a critical theory driven epistemological framework.

Wolfe-Taylor, Khaja, Wilkerson, and Deck explore advances in technology, an increase in non-traditional students, a new generation of e-learners, COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education and practice, and the emergence of greater practitioner and client adoption of telebehavioral health present opportunities and challenges for curricular

innovation in schools of social work. They provide a guide for educators and administrators on developing, implementing, and assessing online simulations (e-simulations) in social work education.

Keeney, Lee, Jayyousi, Young, Guarino, and Turner examined students' perception of their direct practice skills using virtual simulations and scripted role-plays in field education. Using repeated measures of the Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales (CASES), the authors found that significant differences were found in pre/post scores among MSW students who participated in simulated client experiences within their field seminar.

Campbell, Lucio, Louis-Caines, and Wiest investigate building engagement in social work courses using grounded residencies as universities pivoted to online education during the height of the pandemic. Grounded-residency is a hybrid of online and in-person education. Using data from 131 MSW students from a Southeastern university, the authors explore bridging the gap between online and on-ground learning. They found a residency allowed students to foster behavioral, cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical, and social connections.

Social Justice and Education

Bohrman, Neff, Radis, Mohr, Ocean, Lopes, and Bailly-Mompoint look at criminal records as civil disability and advocate for reducing social work education's reliance on using those records for gatekeeping purposes. The article provides an overview of how records are used in higher education admissions, licensing, and employment, highlighting the limitations of criminal records as indicators of future harm. They argue that the broad use of criminal record checks harms marginalized individuals with records and is a disservice to clients who would benefit from the unique strengths derived from their lived experience.

Kang explores building and living a social justice-focused clinical social work curriculum. Using a social justice lens, Kang describes four central facets of social justice that the Seattle University Department of Social Work used in creating their new 2015 MSW program: 1) an Equity Lens, 2) Anti-Oppressive Analysis and Practice, 3) Critical Pedagogy, and 4) Decolonizing Framework. The author offers seven lessons learned including that a social justice commitment should be consistently present in both explicit and implicit curricula and in departmental policy and processes.

Todic and Christensen consider the intersections of coronavirus, racism, and economic pandemics that created long overdue antiracism initiatives in social work organizations. The authors argue that critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies contain frameworks and practices that align with CSWE directives to include antiracism in social work curriculum. They share 10 lessons on incorporating social justice in Social Work education including interrupting carcerality, advocating for abolishing prisons, embracing critical theory, and others.

Gatenio Gabel, Mapp, Androff, and McPherson examine social workers as human rights professionals tasked with delivering justice. They argue that over time, social work

has evolved into a conservative profession and call for us to return to our human rights roots through curricula that emphasizes participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability.

Ferrera and Crabtree-Nelson consider collaborations between community partners and social work educators to promote social justice work and structural change. Using examples from the Neighborhood Legal Assistance Project (NLAP), Pathways and The Coalition for Immigrant Mental Health, Midwest Human Rights Consortium, and a Healing Justice Dialogue Initiative, the authors discuss the learning experiences that allow students to internalize the value of critical empowerment work and human rights social work.

Other Educational Issues

Averitt, Macke, Ozaki, Lindsey, and Anderson look at the intersection of sense of belonging and financial hardship among university students. Using data from over 900 students from a Midwestern university, the authors found that over half reported experiencing financial hardships. Those students facing financial hardship reported a significantly lower sense of belonging at the university. Social work educators are ideally suited to design, implement, and evaluate necessary support services which promote financial wellbeing, and consequently sense of belonging and academic success.

Godwin, Allen-Milton, Lassiter, and Crocker-Billingsley examine social entrepreneurship as social action that the profession of social work can use as a working model to propel the profession forward economically, professionally, and socially. They examine the history of social entrepreneurship in social work and advocate for entrepreneurship to help mitigate complex social and environmental issues, while creating larger social impacts and transformational shifts to social justice, through the social enterprise.

Werkmeister Rozas, Marrero-Johnson, and Davis describe a collaboration between a university BSW program and a state child welfare department to prepare Spanish/English bilingual students in order to increase justice for both clients and workers. They recommend curriculum that includes Spanish professional terminology, supervision in Spanish, and the opportunities to integrate theory and practice.

Lewis, McClain-Meeder, Lynch, and Quartley look at how to incorporate trauma-informed field education for MSW students using qualitative surveys of 103 students. They found that a trauma-informed approach to field education entails creating safe environments where expectations and boundaries are clear, supporting students by processing and validating emotional responses, and using relational, collaborative approaches to supervision. The authors recommend adopting trauma-informed field education so that students can translate these experiences into practice.

Race

The 11 articles on race include 3 articles on confronting racism, 2 on improving service delivery, 4 on supporting doctoral education, and 2 on supporting faculty.

Confronting Racism

Using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, *Hsu, Givens, Bailey, Wilson, Rattliff, and Ramseyer Winter* explore understanding individual and social environmental correlates of awareness of racism among 98 social work students. The authors found that liberal political views and alignment of Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement with social work core values were associated with greater awareness of racism across all domains. Aligning All Lives Matter with social work core values was associated with unawareness of overall racism, institutional racism, and blatant racism.

Todic, Simmons-Horton, Cruz, Manning-Thompson, Christensen, and Nevarez highlight strengths and limitations of antiracism collectives (ARC) as a pathway to confront racism in social work educational institutions using a participatory evaluative case study at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Southern U.S. They found that the ARC catalyzed change as evidenced by an increased sense of critical consciousness, struggle, integrity, and community. They also found that changes were primarily individual, with small but potentially significant departmental change and significant structural impact.

Using a vignette about a Black mother engaging with Child Protective Services, *Cogburn, Allen, Frey, Filippone, Brown, and Witte* explored the responses to real-world examples of racism and anti-Blackness of 139 white mostly liberal identified first year MSW students. Students varied significantly on the level of analysis they provided in response to the vignette. The analysis examines patterns of racial projects (the tools used to construct meaning and value related to race) across 3 main response categories: 1) descriptive, 2) analytical, and 3) action. Descriptive responses were sympathetic and empathetic focused while action responses included investigation and advocacy.

Improving Service Delivery

Gutiérrez and Lechuga-Pena examine Latina/o/x Critical Race Theory (Latcrit) in social work. They call for broadening the racial discourse to include Latinas/os/x and suggest adaptations to current social work pedagogy to better prepare students to enter the field and respond to this growing population. Examples are provided for incorporating LatCrit into social work education and practice. The authors call on leading organizations, i.e., NASW and CSWE, to condemn the attacks on CRT and Latcrit in its commitment to the Grand Challenge to eliminate racism.

Building on the theoretical foundations of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Anti-Colonialism, *Elkassam and Murray-Lichtman* provide a conceptual framework for practice and service delivery with BIPOC clients through social work praxis. The framework has three overarching directives that include integrated critical race and anti-

colonial theoretical concepts for social work practice and service delivery. The authors also discuss the implications for applying the framework in practice and service delivery.

Supporting Doctoral Education

Mackey, Hernandez, Lechuga-Pena, and Mitchell use *testimonios* to reveal the experiences of women of color in social work doctoral education. From the insights of four BIPOC women's experiences, the authors contend that social work doctoral education continues to uphold white supremacy by promoting Western epistemologies and theories above other equally valid forms of knowledge, including non-Western schools of thought created by and for BIPOC scholars. They offer seven additional theories to incorporate in social work doctoral education to disrupt white supremacy.

Fussell-Ware, Mangum, Ballentine, Ashcraft, Flores, MacKenzie, Omowale, Ballard, and Thyberg map their experiences onto the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) using narrative data and documents produced by the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work. The school formed the Anti-Racist Doctoral Program Student Committee (ARDPSC). The authors describe building the committee and efforts to move the school and profession towards anti-racism and reflect on how to continue the work to dismantle white supremacy and rebuild institutions.

Gandarilla Ocampo and Asher BlackDeer discuss how to transform the social work academy to allow BIPOC doctoral students to thrive rather than bearing the burdens of being oppressed, fighting racism, and trying to survive in a society that does not value their inherent dignity and worth. Drawing upon their experience with creating a BIPOC-centered support group at a predominantly white institution, they provide insight on how colleagues and administrators can take action to better support BIPOC doctoral students and create an anti-racist academic culture free from all forms of oppression.

Asher BlackDeer and Gandarilla Ocampo highlight the harm done by continuing and upholding white supremacy and teaching white saviorism that extends to all spheres touched by social work education, directly or indirectly. The authors argue that although the NASW Code of Ethics would lead us to think of social work as a noble profession, the reality is that we continually fall short of that reputation. The authors call for social work to reckon with the dissonance between our preaching and our practice.

Supporting Faculty

Crutchfield, Killen Fisher, and Plummer explore best practices for antiracist education in virtual settings. They encourage instructors and departments to combat racism in the online environment through instructor self-reflection and anti-racist course development and delivery practices. Instructor self-reflection includes asking what biases we hold about race. Course development practice involves asking if a course elevates non-white scholars. Course delivery involves asking if the instructor considers and combats how white supremacy enters the virtual classroom.

Smith, Aguilar, Koza, D'Angelo, Keenan, and Monroe Tomczak describe a voluntary, ad hoc group of faculty, composed of a diverse group members, who provide space for ongoing mutual aid, consciousness-raising, appropriate discomfort, and accountability in order to promote social justice, integrity, and the importance of human relationships as they strive for an anti-oppressive future. They believe it is important to harness and process discomfort as they critically examine the power dynamics within the profession and their own department.

Supporting the Workforce

The 5 articles on re-envisioning the social work workforce cover a range of topics including a call for social workers to seek political office, the potential for social workers to reform drug policy, mandatory reporting as an ethical dilemma, licensure and supervision, and coaching.

Rosenwald and Naranjo call on social workers to seek political office. Included in this challenge is the need for social workers to assume legitimated macro power by holding elected and appointed positions in government – a sub-branch of “political social work.” The authors offer five components of political social work practice that both social work education and social work professional associations should consider: 1) the roles and skills of elected and appointed officials, 2) making the decision to seek office, 3) campaigning and networking, 4) serving in office, and 5) enlisting social workers to assist others who seek public office.

Benjamin, Ivy, Santo, Vakharia, and Malinowska-Sempruch examine social work’s role as agents for drug policy reform. Instead of agents of social control in the War on Drugs that contribute to the mass criminalization of people who use drugs, the authors call for social workers to focus on upstream advocacy for policies to reduce the scope of the criminal legal system. They suggest we recreate social work’s role in bringing about less punitive and carceral responses.

Harrell and Wahab explore mandatory reporting of child abuse as a potential ethical dilemma for social workers since it can criminalize racialized and marginalized communities. Using content analysis of social work textbooks the authors found that no textbook offered guidance for how to navigate competing social work commitments or treated mandatory reporting as an ethical dilemma. The authors argue that social work education should equip future practitioners to: a) have a nuanced understanding of mandatory reporting laws; b) contextualize mandatory reporting within broader discourses of criminalization, professionalization, and neoliberalism; and c) ground future practices in macro social work ethics.

Cooper Bolinsky investigates the relationship between the number of hours of supervised experience and licensure violations. The purpose of the study was to explore if there is a measure of “enough” supervised experience without compromising protection of the public. The results question the practice of requiring higher amounts of supervised experience as a regulatory standard.

Rondero Hernandez and Douglas examine coaching as a strategy for developing leadership and the workforce. The evolution of coaching from the corporate world into service delivery settings is reviewed. Coaching has the potential to support the transfer of learning, improve practice implementation efforts, increase leadership development, and enhance organizational processes.

We hope that these contributions add to the multi-faceted profession we are a part of and promote much needed dialogue amongst academic programs, practitioners, and organizations that exist to support the profession and its workforce.

We thank all of the contributors to this special issue for their thoughtful work presented here and extend a deep sense of gratitude to several manuscript reviewers who ensured the quality of the papers and helped us to focus on a breathe of articles selected from over 130 submissions. A special word of thanks and appreciation to Dr. Carol Hostetter, Indiana University, for her talent and time to help edit several manuscripts in this issue. Also, our deep respect and recognition for Valerie Decker, Assistant Editor, *Advances in Social Work*, for their shepherding of all of us with patience, grace, and intellectual rigor and acumen.

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Author note: Address correspondence to Goutham M. Menon, Professor, School of Social Work, Loyola University Chicago. Email: gmenon@luc.edu