FROM THE EDITOR

In presenting the inaugural issue of *Advances in Social Work*, the Indiana University School of Social Work proudly joins the rich cadre of peer-reviewed scholarly journals in social work. We unveil the first issue at a time when social work education and human services are undergoing profound changes in both structure and orientation. These revolutionary trends have been precipitated by the convergence of information technology, a changing demography, market oriented universities with its emphasis on customer comfort and satisfaction, greater emphasis on technological proficiency, globalization, a call for increased educational exchange of domestic and foreign students (Hardi, 2000), welfare reform, managed care, privatization of social services, and changes in financing of health and human services guided by capitalist principles of competition and free-enterprise. These trends are further reinforced by greater demand for evidence based practice outcomes and cost-effectiveness in all fields of practice, and new discoveries in biogenetic engineering.

While science and technology are desirable tools to advance the knowledge base, they are not adequate in explaining value-based issues and non-rational elements of human actions such as emotionalism, intuition, beliefs and experiences. Constructivist educators further argue that empirical science is incapable of providing the necessary framework for problem-solving in contemporary context (Papell, 1978; Papell & Skolnik, 1992; Schon, 1982, 1987; Tyson,1992). Suzanne Fields (2000), a noted philosopher and anthropologist, writing in the Los Angeles Times, asserted that classical empirical science has a limited focus, and lacks the free imagination that helps students to think critically and to develop skills in the process of ethical reflection. Recognizing that logical positivism tends to exclude alternative, metaphysical ways of knowing made Joseph Vigilante speculate as early as 1974: "Can science provide a tangible proof about 'truth' or 'reality' when truths in a profession are deeply rooted in values and beliefs?"

As human services increasingly rely on hyper-technology, embrace capitalist ideology, and engage in entrepreneurial model of practice, and as the demand for measurable results escalates, social workers will face new and more complex ethical issues and challenges to preserve humanistic and social dimensions of life in the new millennium. The current Curriculum Policy Statement mandates that social work programs prepare graduates for a commitment to people's well-being and social and economic justice and equality. (CSWE, 1994) However, socio-political and economic forces have produced tensions between the individualistic value orientation and social and familial responsibility which present a complex

dilemma for social work practitioners to resolve. The lead article in this issue by Elaine Congress very appropriately reflects this concern and offers a decision-making model for practitioners when confronted with ethical dilemmas. Congress discusses the use of ethical theory to help practitioners resolve moral dilemmas that arise within the context of contemporary practice.

Because social workers engage in a variety of social service roles, ethical concerns extend beyond the realm of direct practice and include organizational ethics and even ethics in the use of cyberspace. Among the myriad uses of online technology is included the emergence of consortia of state-wide virtual universities that offer courses and even degrees through online instructions (Young, 2000). The Internet is also used for providing therapy to clients, known as WebCounseling. (Morrisey, 1997) While cyberspace offers seemingly unlimited opportunities to gain easy and fast access to information, there is a great potential for misuse of the Internet. A substantial literature shows that cybercheating is endemic on college campuses including social work programs. (Benning, 1998; Cobb, 1994; Guernsey, 1998; Lauer, 1992; Marson, 1998). Cybercheating can take many forms such as plagiarism and "buy-up" term papers. (Gibelman et al. 1999) Realizing the great potential for such abuse, Marson and Bracken in their article lament the fact that there is an "ethical vacuum in cyberspace." They further note that currently there are no legal or ethical norms that govern and regulate the use of online information, nor does the current NASW Code of Ethics provide guidance for legitimate online interactions. The authors emphasize the need for ethical and legal standards that have the support of most computer professionals.

Related to the content on social work ethics in curriculum, is the issue of religion and spirituality that has received sustained attention in both social work practice and education. A growing and substantial literature exists that suggests that spirituality and religiosity play an important role in the treatment of psychological problems that face people and urge social workers to take seriously the religious dimension in the lives of their clients. A growing number of social work students are expressing a desire for content on religious issues and skills to be included in their professional training. (Sheridan & Hemert, 1999) However, the non-sectarian schools of social work, by and large, are still ambivalent toward the idea of incorporating religious content in their programs because some faculty lack comfort in addressing such issues, perceive introduction of spiritual content as a conflict with the NASW Code of Ethics, or their own beliefs, or because they perceive a possible breach in the barrier between church-and-state (Dudley and Helfgott, 1990). This year, presidential politics in which religion has emerged as a salient issue in debates among candidates (The Wall Street Journal, March 9, 2000: A9) is likely to cause a resurgence of interest in religion and spirituality in social work education and practice. In their paper, *"Social Workers' Religiosity and*

Its Impact on Religious Practice Behavior", Mattison, Jayaratne and Croxton join the on-going debate on the subject. In a survey of 1,278 students, the authors found that regardless of race, age, gender or auspices, the social worker's own religious and spiritual beliefs impact their practice with clients. One of the interesting findings is that a significant number of workers had prayed with a client, even when they considered it inappropriate conduct. One of the practice behaviors workers found more appropriate than praying with clients was 'laying on of hands' as a healing technique.

The logo of the Journal underscores its mission that social work practice, research , and social work education are intertwined as each component informs and enriches the other. The integration of the three functions represents the essence of social work as a profession and undergirds its mission for amelioration of poverty and social and economic injustice. We further believe that the concern for effectiveness, accountability and quality of social work practice can be best addressed by the structure of a curriculum designed to integrate three components. Each reinforces the other in this conceptual trinity in ways that connect courses both vertically and horizontally. The application of this tripartite model to curriculum is derived from the framework presented by Meenaghan, Powers and Feld (1978) on curriculum options in pursuit of integrative learning. The variable nature of the problems faced by social workers requires knowledge that emphasizes experiential, theoretical and empirical learning. In order for social work education to contribute to improving practice, it needs to reflect the complexity and demands of the service area.

Appropriate to the Journal mission Sherraden and Sherraden report outcomes of their innovative programs that helped ameliorate poverty among low-income families, especially among women. The authors employed several strategies such as action research, legislative advocacy, education, and program planning to rally state and federal agencies for implementing programs that enabled low-income households to build assets which go beyond mere income maintenance. While income is necessary to sustain daily living of poor people, accumulating assets that involve home ownership, investment in education for children, and the ownership of small businesses moves these families beyond the threshold of poverty. At the Center for Social Development, the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, the authors involved mothers on AFDC and introduced them to two programs: individual development accounts (IDAs) and microenterprise. Using a community development approach, the authors involved multiple sources of matching funds from government and private sectors.

One of the fields of practice that has required the development of new skills on the part of most social workers are services to children and their families. A

growing concern for the failure of the child welfare system to provide adequate safety, permanency, and child and family well-being has provided impetus for the enactment of The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in November 1997 (P.L. 105-89) This Act marks the first broad-based child welfare reform legislation since Public Law 96-272 was enacted in 1980. To promote adoption of children from foster homes, ASFA shortens the time limits for reunification work, limits the requirement for an agency to make reasonable efforts, and establishes a time frame for the termination of parental rights. The Act requires states to revise their child welfare laws within the framework of these federal standards and guidelines. Cathleen Graham describes the very laborious and lengthy process experienced in Indiana as it struggled to implement ASFA. She reports that changes to the Indiana child welfare system have resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of children in long-term substitute care. The article raises question whether the changes really serve the best interest of the children who have exited the system. Obviously, a follow-up study of these children is needed to answer this question. Like Graham, there are other experts who argue that this Act might be an ill-considered approach to reforming the foster care delivery system. (See, for example, Holody, 1999).

Working with the elderly is a growing, but neglected area of practice. Because of improved healthcare and the aging of the baby boom generation the proportion of older Americans has been increasing rapidly over the years. By the year 2016 the number of seniors is expected to comprise nearly 16 percent of the population. Thus, they represent one of the most needy populations within the social work practice arena. There is a growing need for skills and services designed specifically for older citizens afflicted with chronic conditions such as mental illness alzheimers, poverty etc. Cummings and Kropf maintain in their paper that there is a serious omission in preparing social work graduates to provide care and services to such vulnerable populations. The authors propose an infusion model whereby content about aging, awareness of mental illness and service needs can find a good fit with the theories of human behavior, and the socio-cultural context taught in HBSE, and the models of assessment, intervention and interviewing taught in the practice sequence.

Poverty and its related problems has always been of primary concern to social workers. Despite affluence and record levels of unemployment, one out of seven Americans is poor. Poverty has a pervasive psychological impact beyond just the lack of income. In the final paper in this issue Pandey and Zhan present data gathered from inner-city Chicago residents including high, medium and low poverty neighborhoods. Among their most salient discoveries was the finding that parents' expectations of their children's educational achievement, and age at which offspring may begin working or marry did not vary by type of neighborhood when parents' demographic characteristics were controlled. While their study refutes the

culture of poverty theory, it does indicate that a parents' educational level is a good predictor of their children's achievement. Accordingly, educated parents expected their children to attain higher levels of education, begin their first job at a later age, delay marriage, and have kids at a later age. The study underscores the importance of investment in education for low-income parents, especially low-income mothers.

I was very pleased and honored to have been asked by the then Dean Roberta Greene to initiate and shepard the development of this new Journal. I was fortunate to have so many talented colleagues to help me in this endeavor. Without their thoughtful and critical input this idea would not have advanced. They deserve my heartfelt appreciation. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the distinguished scholars who not only agreed to serve as consulting editors but fulfilled their commitment with promptness and without tears. My special thanks are owed to Dr. Erwin Boschmann, Associate Dean of the Faculties, who not only provided start-up funds for the journal, but also shared his wisdom in shaping the interdisciplinary and national focus of the Journal. I hope we have lived up to his confidence.

It is hoped that this Journal will serve as a forum for exploring a variety of topics that bear on the present and future of the profession as well as on emerging trends that will stimulate debate in our continuing search for knowledge. This introductory issue is a testimony to that commitment.

I undertook the challenge of creating this new Journal two years ago. I have enjoyed the excitement of conceptualizing and developing a foundation for what I hope will prove to be a rewarding new chapter in the school's continuing pursuit of excellence. With the appearance of the first issue, I believe I have completed my obligation. I immensely enjoyed the journey, and to borrow an African proverb I would say:*"We go quickly where we are sent, when we take interest in the journey."* As I move to another university for another assignment, I would say: *Sayonara,* my friends! And Good Luck!

I wish all the best for my successor. I am sure the Journal will scale new heights of excellence under the leadership of the new editor.

June 5, 2000   Paul Sachdev, Editor

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