

Spring 2024 Editorial: Social Work Education, Advocacy, and Our Response to the Epidemic of Gun Violence

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In the Spring 2024 issue of *Advances in Social Work*, we have embedded a special section for a concentrated look at social work and gun violence in the United States guest edited by Peter Simonsson, Patricia Logan-Greene, and Karen Slovak. The other 10 papers address a variety of topics in three formats – empirical, conceptual, or advocacy. Social work education is in the forefront, with six articles set in BSW, MSW, or PhD programs. One of these is a conceptual piece, the other five are based on empirical research.

Social Work Education

Authors *Lozornio, Sanchez, Vidal de Haymes, Sanhueza, Cardozo, and Arreola* present a mixed-methods study of an online Spanish-English bilingual Master of Social Work (MSW) program. With a curriculum designed to address issues faced by Latinx and immigrant students, along with multiple assessment measures, the faculty were encouraged by the results.

With the increased focus on teaching anti-oppressive theory and practice, social work education benefits from assessing students' perceptions of this learning. *Fisher, Allen, and Washington* use thematic analysis of student writings and focus group interviews to describe the difficulties, hopes, and applications of knowledge for MSW students.

Political practice and policy practice are generally seen as challenging for undergraduate social work students. Using a pre- and post-test methodology, *Berkowitz* recommends experiential learning techniques to engage students in policy practice in class and in the future.

Colvin, Bullock, and Jackson write a conceptual piece about how social work students' abilities to deal with societal challenges might be better developed using the metaverse. Potential benefits and implications for practice provide insights into this promising technology.

The importance of supportive doctoral education cannot be overstated for the growing social work academy. In a nationwide survey, *Mirick and Wladkowski* find that a major lack of support is reported by doctoral students who are pregnant during their education. Survey results provide knowledge social work doctoral programs can use to better support their students.

Grand Challenges

Pulling back the educational lens a bit, *Apgar and Zerrusen* studied MSW students' views on the Grand Challenges for Social Work and Society. In addition to finding that

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many schools do not teach about the Grand Challenges, and many students have not heard of them, Apgar and Zerrusen dive into the nuances of students' views of these issues.

A specific Grand Challenge is ensuring healthy development for youth. A mixed-methods study using survey and focus group data examines how Latina adolescents see their strengths, assets, and societal contexts. *Weiss, Enrile, Smith-Maddox, Cohen, and Davis* provide suggestions for preventive social work and positive youth development.

Social Work Advocacy

Our international lens is focused on migrant women in the Middle East in an article by *Baltimore and Kim*. In their efforts to improve access to mental health support for this group of individuals who face many barriers, the authors advocate for the promotion of mental health literacy in research and practice.

Another group of people who face many personal and societal barriers are people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and are living in rural communities. *Timbers, Ward, and Ballard* provide three examples of the grassroots work provided by organizations which serve LGBTQIA+ people, which can help inspire other communities to build their movements.

Evidence Synthesis Reviews in Social Work

With the increasing interest in systematic reviews and scoping reviews, which comprise the category of evidence synthesis reviews, *Marsalis* presents practical advice for authors. The explanations, steps, and resources provided can aid researchers as well as journal reviewers and editors in improving the literature base.

Appreciation of Reviewers

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many individuals who review manuscripts for *Advances in Social Work*. Journal publishing is one of the many places in social work where we rely on the work of others to move forward, and we deeply appreciate the time that our reviewers give us. If you would like to join their ranks, please let us know.