(School) Social Work: Now More Than Ever

There's something I heard a pastor say a few years ago that seems to be attributed to lots of people, but it generally goes something like this: "If you ever wondered what you would be doing at a significant crisis point in history (e.g. U.S. during slavery times, 1930s Germany, the Civil Rights Era) you are doing it right now." These are deeply serious and consequential times, and while nobody knows where things are going, many of us sense that there are huge shifts happening in our social contexts, both locally, nationally, and globally. We're entering a new time, and (school) social work is here for it.

While this can be frightening and even paralyzing to sit with, to me, there has never been a more exciting time to be a school social worker, as our skills, our smarts, and our passion for justice is just what this time needs. And while we need to give ourselves shout-outs and recognition on this month (Social Work Month, here in the United States, also World Social Work Day on March 17th), we can't do it alone either; our skills working with groups and communities are vital if we're going to respond to the harms being done to so many of our clients right now. School social workers have always known this and done this important work of linking home, community and school, and we need this work more than ever.

Finally, we can't afford to delude ourselves that as a profession, we alone are going to be the answer or savior to the many distressed communities that are under siege right now. From my specific spots on the social work map (working with school social workers and looking at the intersection of faith and spirituality for helping clients heal), there is a huge need for the work we're doing and for us to continue to challenge ourselves to do it from an anti-racist, trauma-informed and evidence-informed vantage point. Together with our social work colleagues, clients, and communities, we can do this.

And one of the ways that we're bringing social work practice, research, and policy forward is through this journal, which with this volume, enters its fifth year of continuous publication. I want to take this moment to recognize and thank the two editors who got the journal started and led the first two volumes in 2016 and 2017 by themselves, Dr. Brenda Coble Lindsey, (University of Illinois) and Dr. Leticia Villarreal Sosa, (Dominican University). Their passion for the journal and tenacity in helping get it off the ground was crucial to helping things progress to where we are now. IJSSW is an open-access journal with (now) 5 volumes that has articles from some of the world's leading school social work researchers, and has had 10,000 downloads of our journal's articles from practitioners and researchers all around the world. Dr. Villarreal Sosa was co-editor-in-chief with me the past few volumes when I joined the team, and is now moving to an Associate Editor position as she has assumed the Editor-in-Chief role at the journal *Children & Schools*. I thank her for her leadership and continued involvement in our journal, and am also proud to see her continue to help build school social work research in her new leadership role at *Children & Schools.*

This volume's articles are a diverse lot, focusing on a variety of intervention strategies and research methodologies to enhance school social work practice and research. I'm featuring the abstracts for each article to give you a sense of the diversity of the papers in terms of their methods, their subjects, and their findings. Please consider submitting your own research to IJSSW soon—we are committed to developing the best open-access journal for school mental health we can, and we are always looking for high-quality submissions as we continue to build the journal.

Facilitating Racial Equity: Evaluating a Leadership Workshop Series for School Social Workers

Authors: Summer G. Woodside (*The University of North Carolina at Pembroke*), Veronica Hardy (*The University of North Carolina at Pembroke*)

This article provides an overview of a leadership training workshop series designed to provide professional development to Pre-K through 12th grade school social workers about racial equity and leadership. The series' objectives included promoting social workers' understanding of and obligation to facilitating racial equity in schools, analyzing educational data through a racial equity lens, conceptualizing school social workers as influencers in addressing racial inequities in schools, and collaborating with school professionals of various disciplines to practice and implement evidence-based approaches for facilitating racial equity in schools. The authors conducted five workshops that were developed based on state school social work practice standards, school systems data, scholarly literature, and social work values and ethics, and used a pretest/ posttest, workshop surveys, and a follow-up survey one year later to measure change in participants' knowledge, self-readiness in assessing, facilitating, and leading change in school settings, and self-perceptions as leaders versus support staff. Survey findings are discussed in relation to participants' perceived identity in the school environment, knowledge of racial equity, perceived readiness in assessing and facilitating racial equity in school cultures, perceived identity in the school environment, and possible barriers to promoting a racially equitable school culture.

Tailoring Supports to Youth in Schools: One Approach to Identifying Needs and Targeting Intervention

Authors: Tasha Henderson (*University of South Carolina*), Samantha Bates (*Texas Christian University*), Dawn Anderson-Butcher (*Ohio State University - Main Campus*), Anthony Amorose (*Illinois State University*), Erica Magier (*Ohio State University*), Tarkington Newman (*University of New Hampshire*)

Youth experiences intersect along their race, gender, language and socioeconomic status, schools must consider the intersectionality in order to improve outcomes. The current study sought to understand if, and to what extent, different clusters of

youth in one large urban high school perceive their psychosocial behaviors as well as social and interpersonal skills. Cross-sectional survey data from 1,164 high school youth were collected using four valid scales: Internalizing Behaviors, Externalizing Behaviors, Peer Relationships, and Social Skills. The analytic strategy was twofold. Cluster analysis was used to form homogeneous clusters of the 1,147 complete responses based on a combination of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and gender. Next, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANCOVA) was used to compare cluster profiles on the aforementioned measures. The cluster analysis revealed a 5-factor solution. Findings of the MANCOVA showed that the clusters differed significantly on the set of psychosocial behaviors, social skills, and peer relationships variables ($p<0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.08$), with significant univariate differences ($p < 0.05$) emerging on all four variables. Results point to cluster analysis as an emerging way to identify needs and tailor supports to youth in schools. Youth with identified needs could receive more specialized Tier II and III interventions aligned with their intersecting cultural and personal experiences, in addition to universal interventions to meet school wide priorities.

The Use of Data in Decision Making for School-based Social Work

Authors: Robert Lucio (*Saint Leo University*), Michael Campbell (*Saint Leo University*), Michael S. Kelly (*Loyola University Chicago*)

Industries are increasingly taking advantage of the access provided in the digital age to use data to inform business and practice-based decision making. The profession of social work has recently called for social workers to become more data-driven, through its Grand Challenge to leverage technology such as data-driven decision making for social good. School-Based Social Workers, who often work in educational contexts that demand they collect and use data are being asked to figure out ways to engage data to help promote evidence-informed practices and process level changes. Using a scoping review, this article looks at the state of the current literature on how this process is evolving. This information can help set the stage for a framework for the systematic application of data in social work settings.

Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Implementing Social Work Survey Research in Schools: A Perspective from the Suburban United States

Authors: Chrisann Newransky (*Adelphi University School of Social Work*), Stavroula Kyriakakis (*Adelphi University School of Social Work*), Karishma D. Samaroo (*Adelphi University School of Social Work*), Delores D. Owens (*Adelphi University School of Social Work*), Azahah Abu Hassan Shaari (*Adelphi University School of Social Work*)

Many researchers view schools as the ideal setting to study social and behavioral interventions with youth. As trusted community-based organizations, schools are natural partners for social work researchers who focus on bridging the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Awareness and consideration of critical issues related to conducting research within the school system enables social work researchers to plan and conduct rigorous studies while developing sustainable partnerships with schools. This article outlines key ethical and methodological challenges of conducting school-based survey research, and shares lessons learned and recommendations from the evaluation of a dating violence prevention curriculum implemented in U.S. suburban high schools.

Teen Depression, Stories of Hope and Health: A Promising Universal School Climate Intervention for Middle School Youth

Authors: Michael S. Kelly (*Loyola University Chicago*), Peggy Kubert (*Erika's Lighthouse*), Heather Freed (*Erika's Lighthouse*)

This study describes the delivery of the Teen Depression: Stories of Health and Healing (TDSHH), a brief school-based depression awareness delivered for middle school students. The main objectives of the proposed evaluation were to examine the effects of TDSHH on middle school health students in the areas of knowledge about depression, willingness to seek help from adults and belief that adults can help. Two Chicago suburban middle schools agreed to be part of the TDSHH intervention study. In both schools, a pre/post-test wait-list control quasi-experimental design was used. Each student in the study (total N=223) completed a questionnaire that incorporated a depression knowledge scale created by the EL team and two additional standardized scales, the Help-Seeking Acceptability at School Scale (Wyman et al., 2008) and the Adult Help for Suicidal Youth Scale (Schmeelk-Cone et al., 2012). Data from the pilot indicates that TDSHH students showed statistically significant gains on understanding depression symptoms; identifying strategies students could use to improve their mental health; and increasing positive attitudes toward help seeking with adults at school.

Note: portions of the introductory editorial are adapted from another published piece I did for New Social Worker Magazine this year, https://www.socialworker.com/extras/social-work-month-2020/social-work-now-more-than-ever/ Thanks to the editorial team of New Social Worker for permission to use it here.