

Perspectives on Social Work

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Perspectives on Social Work

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Mission

The mission of *Perspectives on Social Work* is to expand the knowledge base of Social Work by facilitating discussion. Through *Perspectives on Social Work*, the editors aspire to challenge each reader to probe into and question prevailing views of the Social Work profession by giving thought to the theoretical, practical, policy, and research implications of new or differing perspectives. The journal features works of authors, whose innovations and expertise positively influence the field, or who, through their ideas, create scholarly debate. By intimate examination and exploration of past, present, and future realities, the editors hope to enrich and enhance understanding of Social Work and its association with other disciplines. *Perspectives on Social Work* is designed to inform the interested student, the developing practitioner, the inquisitive researcher, the contributing scholar, and the dynamic policymaker. The prevailing theme is to enable a view of Social Work, in all its static, mechanics, and dynamics, as a means to improve our quality of life.

FROM THE EDITORS

Susan C. Mapp, LMSW-AP
Co-Editor-in-chief

As students in the electronic age, we have become accustomed to immediate information. We conduct our literature searches from the comfort of our homes and feel aggrieved when full text is not available electronically. We bask in the luxuriousness of being doctoral students in the information era. What ever we wish to know, it is at our fingertips. But what, of all this information, is it that we are to believe?

It is common knowledge that you must take information garnished from the web with a grain of salt. The World Wide Web offers us a world of information with the promise of more to come. Even APA 5th edition format has us add "electronic format" to articles retrieved from on-line journals, for while they are currently the same as the print versions, the day will come when that is not the case. One imagines future articles with links to other information, discussion rooms and tips for advocacy.

And being a doctoral student is a luxury. While studying for comprehensive exams this past fall, I studied and learned about the proposed tax cut and its implications and how that tied in with the future of Social Security. I had the time to examine multiple sources of information, some of them technical, and analyze the information in order to develop a coherent argument as to why the plan that Bush was proposing was among the worst ideas possible. Many times during this process, I reflected on the fact that almost every other American did not have this opportunity. The information I was gathering was not from readily available news sources such as the newspaper or television, and therefore was not accessible without effort. The far-reaching implications of the Bush plan scared me as a member of that generation which doubts it will ever receive Social Security.

This is true for many topics we investigate for our assignments within the doctoral program. I often found myself fascinated by the concepts and ideas that my classmates were exploring, concepts of which I had never thought. Now we have a manner in which to share this wealth, this luxury of knowledge which we have been privileged to gather. As social workers, we must always look at how we can give back to the community. And isn't nice to know that someone besides your professor will read your paper! As citizens in the

social work community, it is our privilege and honor to offer our work and thoughts. We hope you find it useful.

Manuel Zamora, MA
Co-Editor-in-chief

Why this journal?

Perspectives in Social Work is borne of our thirst for knowledge. It is a genesis created by global forces that compel us to strive persistently to fulfill our need, not just to survive, but to reach a lifelong ambition to know as much as we can about our chosen discipline. If we fail to understand the existing debates, weigh the emergence of new theories, or accept the challenges of research, we cannot influence policy or otherwise help the oppressed. *Perspectives in Social Work* is designed to convey knowledge, values, and diversity of views.

The purpose of this journal is to help the researcher, the practitioner, the policy analyst, and the aspiring student to achieve their maximum potential. It is to enable us all to remain informed of issues relevant to our profession, by offering the contributions of active graduate students and faculty. It is a means of expanding our knowledge base by reviewing work of our cohorts and peers. It is an extension of classroom discussion, of thought sharing, and of stirring debate. Another purpose of this journal is to enhance our academic performance. It is a means of simultaneous competition and teamwork, of critique and encouragement, and of theory building and diffusion. I hope that this optimistic message enables you to see the potential we have in succeeding in expanding our knowledge base as well as in bringing a certain level of prestige to our field.

Most importantly, it is a means of survival. If we fail to participate in research, we fail to thrive, and we ensure our demise. According to recently published commentaries on electronic information availability, it is apparent that the academic world is experiencing an explosion of immediately accessible scholarly, peer-reviewed publications. Your research appetite can now be immediately satisfied with “real time” information. (See Buckholtz, (1999) *Electronic Genesis*, at www.arl.org/sparc, (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) for an excellent discussion on electronic evolution and dynamics such

as the profit/perish perception). The ability we have to improve our discipline, unfettered by commercialization of research, should serve as an impetus for us to contribute to this journal.

The availability of instant information potentially yields authority. Consider the research of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), for example, whose web site is an excellent source of statistical information indicative of the explosion of available information as well as student demand for publications. (See www.arl.org/stats/graphs/2001/ for a detailed presentation of available library research, including charts, graphs, and statistics). The emphasis placed on providing student research resources can be easily seen by the expenditures of the University of Houston Library (2.173 million volumes and 20,276 serials within the library for a total expenditure of \$14,334, 410 (www.arl.org/stats/)). Finally, one can see the steep trends in growth of E-journal distributions, the number of peer reviewed electronic titles, journals by discipline, and other comparisons to assist in determining value and effect of electronic journals. (<http://dsej.arl.org/dsej/2000/mogge.html>). *Perspectives in Social Work* adds to this body of literature, but in an impersonal world this E-Journal hopes and promises to enhance dialogue by enabling you to communicate with each author.

Who am I?

I am an educated cop with 22 years of experience at various assignments and levels of authority and responsibility who desires to become more active in Social Work. I have worked to improve relations among police and minority community members and to provide justice to minority officers who often perceive disparate treatment and opportunity. My interests include policy analysis, research on social issues, and means to improve police-citizen-consumer interaction. My personal goal as it relates to this E-Journal is congruent to that stated by Buckholtz (1999), "When prominent members of the field edit it, when up-and-coming faculty members contribute to it, and when members of a discipline accept it, it gains prestige" (p. 67). I hope this communication and educational medium becomes successful in sharing our perspectives of social work; however, to achieve its greatest potential, your input is needed to ensure its success.

Discovering Research in a Restaurant: Hamburgers and a Hypothesis

Nicole G. Willis

As an undergraduate, I worked at a restaurant as a waitress for years to help pay my tuition. The restaurant was “Pickles” (the name has been changed for the purposes of the article), and most of the other foodservers were in their 20s and students- just like me. For most of us that worked at that Pickles store, several exciting “discoveries” helped to keep our spirits high on those sometimes, dreadful shifts. The discoveries considered especially valuable included: the food a customer called in and ordered “to go”, that was never picked up (the “dead food”, that we could split amongst ourselves), and that 20% tip left at the edge of the table (even when the order was messed up). Phew! Waitressing was tough- every shift was full of unpredictability, and those nice, intermittent discoveries that either filled our stomachs or bill holders nicely. For me, Pickles was also a place where I discovered how much fun research can be... yes, research! Who would have guessed that Pickles- the place from which all my “in-the-weeds” dreams came- was also the place where I first discovered how exciting conducting research could be. It was, for me, a true social science laboratory- my first experience testing a hypothesis!

It was my senior year as a psychology major when it all happened... I was taking Research Methods at the University of Southern California, and it was time for our big individual research project! The directions were simply to “use at least 2 independent variables” to “test a hypothesis- *any* hypothesis”.

Hypothesis??? *Where would I find one???* *What kind of variables???*

This, for me, was a daring mission to be weaned-off of the chi-square and t-test, of which we undergrads had become so comfortable with. I was on my own to come up with

original work for the first time, instead of just running an analysis on variables given to us by our T.A. (Teaching Assistant).

I began to fantasize about how cool it would be if I could just discover 2 independent variables, left for me at the end of a table, just like my tips. Couldn't someone just call-in a hypothesis "to-go" and not come pick it up, so I could have it all to myself? For the next few days, I went through my daily routine of going to class and going to work, all the while wondering where I could find a medium-rare hypothesis, with two sides of independent variables. A few days later, I'm standing by the soda machine getting refills, when suddenly- I spotted what I was looking for... a hypothesis (medium-rare), and two sides of independent variables...

This hypothesis had actually been on the lips and in the attitudes of many of my fellow foodservers for the years I had worked there; it appeared conspicuously during our short gatherings, as we congregated in strategic areas, scoping-out the parties that the hostess led to our individual stations. Frequently, when African-American parties were sat in someone's station, the foodservers would say things like, "Look what I just got sat... no tip." Also, if a foodserver got a bad tip (anything less than 15% we considered a "bad tip"), a complaint would frequently be accompanied by, "That Black party left me a dollar", or "Man, Black people just don't like me." After speaking with several of them individually, many of the foodservers confirmed their strong opinions about the relationship between race and tipping. They anticipated "no tip" just at the sight of an African-American party in their station, and most often attributed a bad tip to race. The hypothesis many foodservers had was clear: There is a difference in tipping behavior between African-American parties and White parties.

This stereotype that many believed to be true, seemed like an interesting hypothesis to test. Moreover, I also believed there may be an interaction effect: I hypothesized that there may also be a relationship between race of foodserver and race of the party. Would African-American parties tip me more than White parties? Would White parties tip a White waitress more than me? This marked the birth of my first independently created research project- a two-way ANOVA to test the hypothesis: Is there a relationship between race and tipping behavior? I finally had my hypothesis, and my two independent variables: race of foodserver (African-American, White) and race of party (African-American, White). The dependent variable was tip percentage.

I couldn't wait to start collecting data, so I quickly recruited Julia, who served as the White foodserver for the study (I served as the African-American foodserver). I then did a literature review on theory, stereotypes, in- and out-group preferences, as well as combed the journals to see if there had been any prior research on race and tipping behavior. For the next two months, Julia and I recorded the tip percentages for both "all African-American" and "all White" parties of 7 people or less (with 8 or more, 15% gratuity is already added). My manager and other foodservers were almost as excited as I was about conducting this study- constantly checking to see if I had run the analysis yet! They were anxious for the results- convinced that SPSS would "prove them right", as I was certain that the results would show them how wrong they are for stereotyping... Ha, ha, ha! I just knew I had them! With every shift that passed at Pickles, I was one step closer to the analysis. Alas, soon I would have the empirical evidence that would show those foodservers that the research hypothesis would be rejected!

Finally, the day had come for data input and running the analysis. I could hardly contain myself at the psych computer lab: the data to my left, and the class T.A. to my

right. With a final left-click, the output flooded the screen... the results were not what I expected (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interaction Effect Means of Tipping Percentages

	Race of Foodserver	
Race of Party	<i>African-American</i>	<i>White</i>
<i>African-American</i>	10.39	11.33
<i>White</i>	18.31	16.01

Unfortunately, there was a main effect for race of party, $F(1,79) = 20.872, p=000$. African-American parties tipped significantly less ($M=10.86\%$) than White parties ($M=17.16\%$). Fortunately, there were no significant differences between Julia and myself in terms of tips, $F(1,79) = .246, p=.622$. To my disappointment, there was no significant interaction effect for race of party and race of foodserver, $F(1,79) = 1.379, p=.244$. Results showed that my initial “in-group preference” hypothesis wasn’t supported, while my fellow foodserver’s hypothesis was (Willis, 1997). However, all was not lost... I noticed something interesting happened in the interaction...

I originally predicted that tipping would be mediated by in-group preferences: African-Americans parties would tip me more, while White parties would tip Julia more. In fact, most research has found that people prefer members of their own in-group (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 1994). Further, Juni, Brammon and Roth (1988) observed customers at McDonald’s and Burger King and found that customers preferred cashiers of their same race. However, in my study, the opposite happened: White parties tipped me more, while African-American parties tipped Julia more (see Table 1)! I began to wonder two things: (1) What can explain this out-group preference, and, (2) If I had a darker

complexion (sometimes I am mistaken for Puerto Rican or Hispanic), would the interaction have been significant?

Another literature search lead me to a theory called the “ambivalence-amplification theory” (Katz & Hass, 1988; Hass, Katz, Rizzo, Baily & Elsenstadt, 1991; Linville & Jones, 1980). The theory explains the phenomenon of overcompensation, as a person may have both feelings of aversion and sympathy for the out-group, which ultimately results in ambivalence. Depending on the interaction with a member of the out-group, those feelings and responses will be polarized: either extremely positive or extremely negative. In the end, this theory explains that if Julia and I give all parties equally good service, then our out-groups will rate our service “even better” than a foodserver of their own in-group.

A few days later, I grudgingly headed for Pickles, where my manager and other foodservers anxiously awaited the results. I walked into the kitchen area- output in hand, ready to report my findings. As we all gathered in the kitchen area and explained the results, I got the “I-knew-it-all-along” response. However, I couldn’t leave them with the belief that this study showed that bad tips are attributed to skin color. Galotti, Kossman and Sabini (1990) describe that people who consider multiple explanations, have a better chance of overcoming biases than those who consider just one attribution (which is in this case, race).

So there I was, discussing with my peers the reasons why this main effect may have happened. It could be due to an inequality in social-economic status; it could be that their stereotyping, which leads to anticipation of a bad tip, may affect the quality of service they provide. Thus, I explained that if the reason is self-fulfilling prophecy, we cannot attribute bad tips to skin color, but rather, we can only point the finger at ourselves. “As

foodservers, “ I explained, “we must ask ourselves ‘is it our attitude towards the African-American parties that are affecting the tip’?”

Although the results of the study did not turn out as hoped, I look back on those two months and remember how exciting it felt to design my first study, collect the data and run the analysis. The research at Pickles also gave me a chance to discuss with my fellow foodservers the importance of looking at how our stereotyping affects the way we treat our customers.

It was at Pickles that I discovered how much I enjoyed research, and how exciting it could be. And, of course, anytime I hear someone say, “Research is boring”, I have to tell them the Pickles story. Although I my days at Pickles are long-gone (provided I get through the Ph.D. program!), I can only look forward to testing more hypotheses and conducting more studies and feeling that excitement... just like I did that very first time.

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Homosexuality and Social Justice: Social Work and America's Cultural War

Peter A. Kindle

Many social commentators have alluded to the lack of consensus regarding social values in America. Some use strong language to describe this instability, "We are at the midpoint of the Culture Wars, with the lines of battle clearly delineated for all to see but with the ultimate winners and losers still to be decided" (Jensen, 1995, p. 35). There are few social issues that illustrate the contemporary polarities of debate more clearly than the issue of homosexual rights.

That discrimination exists against the homosexual community cannot be denied. Until 1962, homosexuality was criminalized (Rivera, 1991). As recently as 1972, homosexuality was considered a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association (American Psychological Association, 2000). In 1985 the U. S. Supreme Court upheld a Georgia anti-sodomy statute (Feldblum 2001), and the court has only recently agreed to reconsider in reviewing a similar Texas law (Capozzola, 2003). Crawford, McLeod, Zamboni and Jordan (1999) report that even some members of the American Psychological Association (APA) - one of the professional organizations most supportive of gay and lesbian rights - differentially attribute dysfunction to homosexuals in comparison with heterosexuals and continue to support conversion therapies.

Advocates for full civil liberties for gay and lesbian individuals point to the current expressions of discrimination. Specific same-sex sexual practices are prohibited in 16 states (Jost, 2000). Gay and lesbian adoptions, custody, and foster care eligibility are rarely granted legal sanction and face continuing legislative barriers in many jurisdictions (Crawford, 1999; People for the American Way Foundation, 2000). Same-sex unions have the legal equivalence of marriage only in Vermont (Smith & Whipple, 2002), and 36 other

states have reacted by banning same-sex civil unions (Senate, 2003). Gay rights advocates have been unsuccessful in obtaining federal laws to prohibit discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals in the workplace (Jost).

Despite the revision of curriculum standards to include content on sexual orientation in 1992 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the social work profession is not innocent. Van Voorhis and Wagner's analyses (2001, 2002) of article content in social work journals indicates that homosexuality is rarely addressed. Those articles that do address homosexuality tend to focus on issues related to HIV/AIDS and tend to exclude broader issues of social justice (Van Voorhis & Wagner, 2002). Since there is a socially and culturally dominant assumption of heterosexuality, the relative silence concerning social justice for those with a homosexual orientation is an abrogation of social work values (Van Voorhis & Wagner, 2001) and an implicit endorsement of prevailing institutional heterosexism (Van Voorhis & Wagner, 2002).

Values Clarification in Contemporary America

Self-described gay men are estimated to comprise up to 2.5% of the adult male population, and self-described lesbians are estimated at 1.5% of the adult female population; therefore an adult population of 160 million includes 2 million gay men and 1.2 million lesbian women. One-fourth of gay men and over one-third of lesbians have been or are currently married, and 14% of gay men and 28% of lesbian women have children in their households (all statistics summarized from Black, Gates, Sanders & Taylor, 2000, and do not include attempts to estimate the hidden gay and lesbian population). While gay and lesbian individuals are a minority in America, their numbers are not small, and their desire for full recognition is growing.

There is ample support for the contention that the culture at large is rapidly changing in its acceptance of the gay and lesbian community. The General Social Survey indicates that Americans who report that same-sex intimacy is always wrong dropped from 74.9% in 1988 to 54.6% in 1998 (Butler, 2000). Random University of Berkeley surveys show declining public support for quarantine of those infected with HIV/AIDS (from 34.4% 1991 to only 12% in 1999), declining negative feelings toward people with AIDS (PWA) (34.6% were afraid of PWA in 1991 compared with only 20.2% in 1999), and declining avoidance and stigmatization of PWAs (respondents expressing no stigmatization of PWA increased from 21% in 1991 to 39% in 1999) (Herek, Capitano, & Widaman, 2002). A recent Gallup poll (Wagner, 2001) found that the majority of Americans now consider homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle (52%), support equal rights for homosexuals in job opportunities (85%), and support legalization of same-sex relations (54%). This same poll even found substantial support for gay marriage (44%).

Despite the growing acceptance of the gay and lesbian minority, significant constituencies continue to oppose normalization of homosexuality. Norton's suggestion (1997) that that contemporary rejection of homosexuality is primarily a Christian, religious effect seems substantiated by other research. Fulton, Gorsuch, and Maynard (1999) attribute most religious bigotry toward homosexuals to those who embrace a fundamentalistic theology and identity, while Reimer and Park (2001) consider conservative Protestants the least egalitarian of American religionists. Roman Catholics express a more diverse view as many advocate for gay and lesbian rights while condemning the practice of homosexuality as sin (Genovesi, 1995).

While it may yet be some time before full civil rights are extended to gay and lesbian people, the portrayal of gay men and lesbians on television, the movement from the

political to the literary arena, and growing post-secondary education of the American public suggest that national trends point to the normalization of homosexuality (Hart, 2000; Jensen, 1995; Weeks, 2000). Social work should not be the last profession to embrace full legitimization of homosexuality. This embrace requires an awareness of gay rights issues, recognition of discriminatory practices against gay and lesbian individuals, and sensitivity to the religious context of much of the ongoing debate.

Responsibilities of Social Workers

In keeping with the social justice ideals of the profession, social workers have an obligation to support full inclusion of gay men and lesbians in American society. A commitment to radical social work, that is, social work that goes beyond amelioration of disadvantage to the correction of causal inequities (Gil, 1998), must address the remaining vestiges of social bias against homosexuals. An effective personal strategy for supporting the contemporary trends toward homosexual legitimization is possible, and should be consciously embraced by every practitioner. A preliminary outline, structured around the ethical principles most honored in the profession, follows:

Service. Social workers can promote the legitimization of homosexuality by volunteering to work with local gay-affirming organizations. Collaboration can be sought with local chapters of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE), and Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International (GLPCI).

Additional service opportunities arise, especially for practitioners who are actively involved in religious organizations. As co-religionists, practitioners should seek out and support the gay rights group associated with their specific denominational preference. Public recognition of the existence of discrimination against gay men and lesbians,

especially when that recognition is emphasized in a religious context, will tend to support the eventual legitimization of homosexuality.

Social justice. Social workers can actively support social justice by supporting local gay-friendly initiatives, by seeking out and partnering with gay-supportive organizations, and by lobbying for gay rights as opportunity presents. The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and People for the American Way are just a few of the existing political groups advocating normalization of homosexuality. Social workers can seek partnership with such groups in the promotion of social justice for all individuals.

Dignity and worth of the individual. A fundamental part of promoting the dignity and worth of the individual is accepting each person for who they are and promoting their full development. As social workers, we must view gay men and lesbians as full members of society, worthy of respect and value. As social workers work with individuals, families, and groups, they should advocate for the worth of all individuals and their full participation in society. One example of this is in the debate over adoption and foster parenting by gay men and lesbians. Adoption and foster parenting by gay men and lesbians have become a measure of their standing in society because its prohibition implies that sexual orientation negates the opportunity to be a good parent. Thus obstacles to adoption and foster parenting imply social rejection and denigration of their worth as individuals. Social workers, by virtue of their professional training and occupational roles, have the opportunity to have a positive effect on the adoption and foster parenting rights of gay men and lesbians. All practitioners should challenge themselves to address issues of lingering homophobic tendencies, to promote fair and equal assessment of all applying for

adoption/foster parenting, and to advocate for personal and societal changes in attitudes towards gay men and lesbians.

Importance of human relationships. Social workers must move beyond their social zones of comfort to network with gay men and lesbians so that they have personal experience and emotional empathy with this group. Heterosexist assumptions of normative family structures must be confronted by practitioners as they assess the functionality and appropriateness of same-sex households (see Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytteroy, 2002, for a recent summary). Social workers should support legalization of gay unions and recognition of same-sex partner rights.

Competence. Social workers, and social work educators, are encouraged to increase their awareness of gay and lesbian issues through an intentional program of reading, working, and learning. Professional assistance to gay men and lesbians may require significant cross-cultural training. Internships in local chapters of the AIDS Foundation, ActUP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), The Pride Institute, and counseling centers specifically targeting the gay and lesbian community should be made available to student practitioners. Training programs should be developed that tap into the existing skills and experiences of those providing therapy to the gay and lesbian community. Only through the development of partnerships with gay men and lesbians will the social work profession have access to the training and experience necessary to provide competent, professional service to this minority group.

The rapid and radical shift in cultural acceptance of gay men and lesbians is a challenge to the social work profession. Just as it is impossible to accept a person without accepting their racial, gender, or religious identity, it is impossible to accept them without

also accepting their sexual orientation. Social work values require the support of full legitimization of homosexuality in both law and culture. Practitioners who advocate accordingly uphold the finest traditions in the profession.

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From The Lectern

How Doctoral Students Find Creativity or How To Make Your Brain Interesting

Maxine Weinman Epstein, LMSW-ACP, Dr.Ph, Associate Professor

One of the most common questions I get asked when I tell people I am the Director of the Ph.D. Program at the University of Houston, Graduate School of Social Work is "What do you teach in a Ph.D. program in Social Work". My usual direct answer is "We teach students to become the next generation of scholars". But that does not answer the question as to how a doctoral program actually accomplishes this goal. The most important asset a doctoral program in social work gives students is the capacity to become a creative person. When students ask me how doctoral education seeks to do this, I respond by telling them that we attempt to make your brain interesting. After all, most of the time and for most of your life, you are alone with your thoughts, so you may as well make them interesting so you won't get bored. Doctoral programs provide the tools and resources of knowledge for interesting thoughts. The obligation of faculty is to give you these tools and resources to make you become a creative thinker. It is your obligation to use them. Doctoral studies provide a unique time in life when you are given the very best available. The only expectation is that you will use them to create new ideas.

When you graduate and become a faculty member, you are on your own. There is no handbook or guidepost that tells you how to fill your time in order to become a productive faculty member and scholar. What you do have, however, is yourself. If we as faculty have done a good job of educating you, you will then begin to generate new ideas

and to explore them in your classroom and in your research ideas. What makes you do something with your Ph.D. in Social Work is your confidence in your capacity to work independently, to think in new and creative ways and to seriously critique your work. The difference between excellence and mediocrity is the ability to expect critique and use it to create new solutions to old problems, new ways of exploring knowledge and new ways of teaching knowledge. Then the process begins anew as you mentor the next generation of scholars. A good day for most of us as faculty members is only one letter of rejection (from a journal, a book editor or a grant). But even when rejection is given, a serious critique comes with it. We expect critique because it means we hold high standards for excellence and so do our professional peers. The good part of a day of rejection is that it might turn out to be a great teaching day or perhaps a day when a community agency decides to implement Evidence Based Practice methods to evaluate their programs. What other profession offers you multiple ways of succeeding? What other profession pays you to think?

Once a doctoral student told me he was having a hard time trying to write a very complex description of his conceptual framework for his dissertation. He understood it in his head but was having difficulty using words to describe it. He asked me what textbooks or resources would help him describe complex ideas. I suggested he visit the Museum of Fine Arts and describe in detail how shapes and colors fill space. I asked him to describe the story the artist was trying to convey. I told him to read Charles Dickens and discover the intricate ways *he* describes a room filled with food on a table. I told him to read Karl Popper and think about the energy of scientific debate. Creative descriptions and creative ideas are learned from multiple sources, from the world around us and from the tools and

resources available in school. So fill your brain and enjoy the journey. The end result is an interesting person who happens to hold a Ph.D. in Social Work.

Bookworm's Corner

Susan Mapp

Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability by Mary Elizabeth Hobgood. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000.

Many times in social work, we are given the opportunity to look at other groups who have been oppressed. We are able to learn about their culture and values, and ways to empower their voices. However, it is not common for us to look at ourselves and the unthinking ways in which we further the oppression of dis-empowered people. Aimed at an Anglo audience, it applies as well to people of other races who have attained a higher position through education or income. Hobgood argues that the current system is damaging not only to the subordinate groups, but also to the group in power. This unequal relationship promotes values and choices that are harmful to all, including obsessiveness about work, self-sacrifice for women and entitlement for men, and restrictions on friendships and sexual relations.

People who are in the dominant group are supported by armies of people in the subordinate groups. These subordinates build and clean their homes and offices, make and clean their clothes, care for their children, service their cars, collect their garbage (p. 19). Each person in the dominant group sits atop a pyramid of people in the subordinate groups who maintain their position. Our regressive tax structure, helps maintain their economically superior position. The tax cuts pushed through by the Bush administration will only further this inequality as the majority of its benefits go to the super-rich.

This pyramiding spreads down to those us who sit, not among the super-rich, but in the higher echelons of the working class. Hobgood helps us examine our economic connection to those who help maintain our lifestyles. What is our moral obligation to the workers who are employed in Mexican *maquiladoras* or overseas sweatshops when we purchase their clothes or shoes. When we knowingly purchase goods that were made by workers in substandard conditions with sub-standard pay, we have consciously set aside our

value of social justice. When we pay those people who care for our children or clean our houses poverty-level wages, we are not working to improve living conditions.

Hobgood helps us examine the entirety of our lives. Social workers should not be social workers only at the office or at school. Our values and ideals should shape our actions and choices in all that we do, personal as well as professional.

Surfer's Report

Susan Mapp

As we prepare our papers for class, studying for comps, or write our dissertations, we rely more and more on the Internet for up-to-date information. Whether it be access to full-text articles, policy analyses, or current statistics, we can't imagine working without it. This section of the journal will offer suggested sites for research that have proven helpful. We welcome suggestions for sites for the Surfer's Report along with a description of the site. Please send it to journal@sw.uh.edu. Surf's up!

Policy Analysis

Urban Institute - www.urban.org. This is an excellent site offering ongoing policy analyses of different issues including the tax cut, child welfare, Medicaid and unemployment. Tends to lean to the left.

Brookings Institution - www.brookings.org. Another excellent policy site offering information on a very broad range of topics including economics, social policy, and education.

Center for Law and Social Policy- www.clasp.org - This organization focuses on policy impacting families including TANF, child welfare, and reproductive health.

Statistics sites

Multiple regression with Ren & Stimpy -

www-psych.nmsu.edu/regression/home.html Although Ren and Stimpy are no longer on TV, they have retained a side job teaching multiple regression. This is a good supplemental to more sophisticated texts.

Current Statistics

Census Bureau - www.census.gov. The U.S. Census remains a primary source for current data concerning any particular are.

Other

Poverty Tour - <http://www.nccbuscc.org/cchd/povertyusa/tour2.htm> - Offers a look at trying to budget in poverty.

Submission Guidelines

In order to be considered for publication in *Perspectives on Social Work*, all submissions must meet the following criteria:

- The author must be a currently enrolled student in the doctoral program of the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston
- Only original work will be considered. It is acceptable to submit a piece that has been published elsewhere or is currently under consideration as long as it is that student's original work.
- Only electronic submissions are accepted. Submissions should be e-mailed as a Microsoft Word attachment to the following e-mail address: journal@sw.uh.edu.
- Submission must contain an abstract of not more than 100 words.
- Submissions for the featured articles should be 5 - 7 pages in length with not less than one-inch margins and 12-point font. Submissions must be double-spaced.
- All submissions must meet APA guidelines (5th Ed.) for text, tables, and references.

Feedback Guidelines

The editorial staff encourage thoughtful responses from readers at all times focusing on facilitating scholarly debate.