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Perspectives on Social Work

Co-Editors in Chief
Manuel F. Zamora
Leslie Raneri

Managing Editor
Peter A. Kindle

Faculty Sponsor
Maxine Epstein

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Perspectives on Social Work
Graduate School of Social Work
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204-4492

Or

Journal@sw.uh.edu

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From the Editors
Manuel F. Zamora, MA

Welcome to a new semester! We hope your break was refreshing and relaxing.

This issue of *Perspectives on Social Work* is probably our most robust to date. Several members of our cohort have taken the initiative to contribute their views on issues involving evidence-based practice, activism, child welfare, social work education, and qualitative methods. We hope you find these submissions inspiring, interesting, or thought-provoking. We invite you to express your views via email or through an article suitable for publication. *Perspectives* offers you the opportunity to be heard and begin contributing to our knowledge base through scholarly debate.

On a more serious note, the commitment we have to champion social, political, and economic justice for minorities and the oppressed should focus earnestly on the ongoing presidential campaign and the effect of the war in Iraq. Whether we believe candidate John Kerry that the costs of the Iraq war and continued occupation by U. S. troops is \$200 billion, or President George Bush that the war on terrorism is the highest priority, one thing is certain, - less funding is available for health, education, and welfare programs.

Please visit any of the following websites to learn more about our national debt, the war costs, and what is left for other significant programs: <http://www.usa.com/printedition/news/20040908> (\$422 billion deficit reported by the Congressional Budget Office); <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04915.pdf>, p. 5 (Global War on Terrorism, includes Operation Noble Eagle (to defend United States here); Operation Enduring Freedom (overseas operations, mainly Afghanistan); and Operation Iraqi Freedom (to change the government in Iraq); <http://www.usgovinfo.about.com> (\$6 – 9 billion monthly cost of the Iraq war, including an initial troop deployment cost of \$13 billion reported by the Congressional Budget Office); and <http://thomas.loc.gov> (Public Law 108-11 \$79 billion appropriated for war (4-16-03); Public Law 108-106, \$87 billion appropriated for war (11-5-03).

For those wishing to track the human cost of our involvement in Iraq, you may want to visit <http://icasualties.org/oif/>.

With the publication of this issue of *Perspectives*, we bid a fond adieu to Leslie Raneri as Co-Editor in Chief. She has accepted a position with the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs in the Office of Population Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services in Rockville, Maryland. Please join the editorial staff in thanking Ms. Raneri for her hard work, and expressing our best wishes for success in her new position.

Social Work Education and Critical Thinking Through the Looking Glass of Elder Abuse

Cynthia Parker Robertson, MSW

I am a lover of things old and well used. My bathroom mirror and the vanity top are from a house my parents remodeled in 1984. My bedside reading resides in an old shoeshine box made by my father when he was a child during World War II. The desk I write on is an old wooden lab table that he used as a researcher, developing new chemical processes. I would rather have a life full of well-used items, rich and warm with memories, than all the newness in the world. My interest and love of things old and well used is at odds with prevailing cultural values. In this millennium, newer is better and newest is best.

The prejudice in favor of the new, the improved, the technologically advanced, evidences itself socially through ageism. We have creams to remove wrinkles, multitudes of exercise equipment, diet regimes, hair growth products, hair tints and dyes, herbal supplements and, publications of all sorts, geared toward making the aging population look, act and feel new and improved. The academic world reflects the ageism evidenced in the general population. University life is competitive, and the best and brightest students enroll in the more respected and better paying professions. GRE scores for seniors and nonenrolled college graduates in the field of gerontology tied for the lowest score in professional disciplines, with a combined mean score of 1379. Social work has the next lowest score, with a combined mean score of 1380 (Karger, 2003). While acknowledging the debate regarding the efficacy of GRE scores in predicting success in graduate education, one must nonetheless find the low scores disturbing, an indication that the many of the best and brightest minds find no value in the study of or working with an aging population.

As Amador points out, working with aged clients in a social work setting is now and will continue to be, ubiquitous (Amador, 2004). As our population ages, the shape of families will change (Hooyman, 2002). Demographic predictions show the present family pyramid, with one grandparent at the top, usually a woman, several of her progeny and their many respective children, changing to a more linear shape, with a grandparent, still usually a woman, and her sole child, or perhaps two children and their spouses, each with their one or two children (Peterson, 2000). The changing structure of the family will have a dramatic impact on social workers whose area of expertise is children and families, with not only the immediate group dynamics impacted by the changing size of the family, but also the historical dynamics limited by smaller, more linear family forms. Medical social workers already work with a large population of aged and ailing clients. Mental health social workers, as well as those focusing on addiction and substance abuse, will find their caseloads including more and more elderly clients as the now middle-aged abusers and addicts age, or senior clients inappropriately turn to alcohol and prescription drugs to cope with a less than optimal aging process – and the list continues.

In response to the changing demographics of our clients and the increasing elder population, the way we conduct the business of social work will need to change radically. For this to happen there must be a change in the way students are prepared to participate professionally as social workers. An examination of the field of elder abuse will illuminate this need for a change in the way social workers are prepared to ‘do’ social work.

In the 2000 National Center on Elder Abuse State of Adult Protective Services report, spouses or intimate partners perpetrated 30.3 % of the reported elder abuse cases in the United States. This finding supports the prevailing perception of a significant relationship between domestic violence and elder abuse (Teaster, 2003). Given such a finding and confronted with a case of an elderly husband physically abusing his wife, a social worker might reasonably turn to the domestic violence model of power and control to frame an intervention approach. The customary intervention for spousal abuse is encouraging the abused spouse, usually a woman, to seek help and protection from the abuser. The women are encouraged to move to a safe place where the abuser cannot find them, either with friends, family or a battered women’s shelter (Wallace, 2002). As the power and control model has been applied to the situation of elderly women in an abusive relationship, two key points have been highlighted: breaking the isolation necessary for the abuser to continue to have power over the victim; and use of the empowerment model to restore decision-making and control, to the extent possible, to the victim (Brandl, 2000). Prosecution of the batterer is encouraged, as research has shown that arrest of batterers leads to a lower percentage of recidivism (Wallace, 2002).

Criminalization of elder abuse sends a clear message to abusers that their actions are unacceptable to society in general and as such provides an excellent deterrent. The criminal justice system, initially slow to respond to elder abuse, is beginning to build a body of case law, vital to prosecutorial efforts (Stiegel, 2000). However, elderly clients who have experienced abuse at the hands of a family member or trusted friend, or clients who have experienced abuse from a spouse well into dementia, may be unwilling to prosecute, presenting a potential ethical conflict for social workers operating under a code of self-determination. In addition, many states have mandated

reporting statutes and social workers in those states face additional challenges respecting a client's right to confidentiality (*Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*, 1999). Ethical dilemmas are an expected part of social work practice, however, and do not present a social worker faced with elder abuse the need to change the conventional way of doing business.

What does necessitate a change are cases that not only are not adequately met through the usual methods of intervention but also are not properly assessed using the existing theoretical frameworks. With overcrowding of jails a reality in many areas, particularly rural areas where elders are more at risk for isolation, abusers are often sentenced to counseling in the form of batterer's treatment programs. Unfortunately, while batterer treatment programs are numerous, little evidence exists to support their efficacy (Jackson, 2003). Elders whose batterers complete a batterer intervention program may think themselves secure and the batterer rehabilitated, when the reality of the situation is quite different.

In addition to the ineffectiveness of batterer intervention programs, an analysis of data collected during a National Family Violence Resurvey concluded that elders 60 and above involved in spousal abuse had chosen to remain married and cohabitating in spite of the presence of violence in the relationship and do not want to separate (Harris, 1996). Not only would the conventional intervention, which includes encouraging the elderly woman to leave the relationship, be inappropriate in these cases, the conventional assessment framework is also inappropriate. Not all cases of elder abuse involving spouses follow the traditional feminist theory approach of societal sexism and patriarchal power and control (Nerenberg, 2000). An assessment geared toward uncovering a power and control relationship may miss important aspects of the relationship that could reveal the actuality of the elders relationship. The potential inappropriateness of the model is also of importance when the client has a diagnosis of dementia. In those instances, use of the empowerment model common to both social work and the domestic violence field, which recommends restoring decision-making and control to the victim, may not only be inappropriate, but may be downright dangerous, encouraging a client with a reduced executive decision making capacity to take back decision-making and control.

In addition, the existing definitions of elder abuse are fraught with controversy. Present definitions of elder abuse include both abuses initiated at the hands of another and self-neglect. The present definitions were developed legislatively, using child abuse definitions as a model. As such, they generally are forensically oriented, stressing responsibility and facilitating punishment. An examination of elder abuse as a psycho-social process would perhaps lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon and lead to more appropriate interventions, particularly in cases where self-neglect or refusal of assistance play a part in the dynamics of the abusive situation (*Elder Mistreatment: Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation in an Aging America*, 2002). While one can hope that elder abuse will be a topic of increasing future concern to researchers, and that new research will more adequately address the underpinnings of elder abuse, social work practitioners faced with elder abuse now and in the near future must address the existent problem in the field using the scanty knowledge we now have.

The process of addressing elder abuse is fraught with difficulties, difficulties with definition and with practice application. To properly equip social workers to address those problems, and other problems an aging population will bring, a radical change in the way we prepare social workers must come about.

Heading the list of foundation program objectives in the Council on Social Work Education's educational policy is the mandate for graduates of accredited social work programs to demonstrate the ability to apply critical thinking skills. Given the prominent positioning of the critical thinking goal, one would expect most, if not all, of the curriculum content guidelines to reflect that objective. Examination of the guidelines for the eight content areas reveals only half contain a reference to utilizing the analytical process. Specifically those areas include the content areas of values and ethics, policy, practice and research. Missing is a mention of analysis in the content areas of diversity, populations-at-risk and social and economic justice, human behavior and the social environment and field education (*Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards*, 2001). A cursory examination of social work programs underscores the emphasis on content and a lack of emphasis on critical thinking skills.

Returning to the examination of the field of elder abuse to highlight the changes needed in the way we prepare students to 'do' the business of social work, the need for an expanded role of critical thinking skills in the area of values and ethics becomes apparent. A social worker faced with the dilemma of an elder who is self-neglecting needs not only the ability to analyze the way the ethic of self-determination affects their practice with elders, but also the ability to think critically regarding the ethic of self-determination itself. Social workers need the ability to look critically at the theories and knowledge base of human behavior and the social environment that form the basis of their practice. For example, in the case of elder abuse among spouses and significant others, the ability to look critically at the domestic violence theoretical model as a framework for elder abuse assessment is necessary. As highlighted earlier, the 'industry standard' is frequently inappropriate when applied to an elderly client. We do not need to supply the social work student with a newer, improved theoretical framework. We need to emphasize

critical thinking skills on both the baccalaureate and graduate level of social work education, empowering students to develop those frameworks for themselves. The need for an increased emphasis on critical thinking has been acknowledged in other areas of specialization as well (Jones, 1998) and this change in social work education is an imperative in our preparation for the fast-approaching graying of our population.

A change in how we prepare social workers to do the business of social work that includes an emphasis on critical thinking will not only change the emphasis of our program and curriculum content, it also will change the emphasis of our admissions policies. Emphasis on higher GPA's in undergraduate programs and substantial GRE score requirements will improve our standards and facilitate a student population capable of developing the skill of critical thinking. Whatever changes our curriculum takes, perhaps requiring an undergraduate degree from a CSWE accredited school of social work, or extending social work graduate programs to three years (Cody, 1998), the students must also change. Only then will social workers of the 21st century be adequately prepared for the many roles they will need to assume in order to meet the changes brought about by the graying of our population. Only then will social workers be prepared to serve the needs of our elders, well worn, rich and warm with memories and deserving of our best efforts.

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AFSA: Saving or Slaving Families Peter Nguyen, LCSW

This paper examines the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and its permanency process. Particular attention is given to Children's Protective Services, who is charged with meeting permanency within one year. This goal adversely tears at the family fabric of society.

According to the Child Maltreatment 2000 (2002) report published by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), each week CPS agencies receive more than 50,000 referrals alleging children abuse or neglect. An estimated 879,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 2000. This rate is 12.2 per 1,000 - an increase when compared to 1999 data in which the victimization rate was 11.8 per 1,000. Children in the age group from birth to 3 years had the highest rate - 15.7 victims per 1,000 children. Moreover, nationwide an estimated 1,200 children died of abuse and/or neglect, a rate of approximately 1.71 deaths per 100,000 children in the population (DHHS, 2002). Children who were removed from their parents are moved into the foster care system

joining those who are waiting to return home, be adopted or stay in the foster care system until they are emancipated at age 18. The latest available data show that there were 568,000 children in foster care in September 30, 1999. In 1997, Congress authorized the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) which comprehensively addressed critical permanency issues in child welfare and the law. This legislation represents an important landmark in federal child welfare law. First, it establishes unequivocally that our national goal for child safety is the paramount concern in all child welfare decision-making, to shorten its timeframes for making permanency planning decisions, and it promotes the adoption of children who cannot return to their own home (DHHS, 1999). On the surface, speedy permanency appears to be the ideal solution for the families and children; however, in reality it places additional burdens and pressure on a child welfare system that is very stressed and close to a systemic breakdown. Service providers, court officials, and CPS caseworkers now must move the children through the system at a faster pace than ever before. This policy raises several dilemmas: Is speed and expedience more important than the extra effort required to preserve the basic building block of society, the family? In enforcing this new “quick-fix” approach, has the state set up the necessary infrastructure required to support both the CPS system and the families in order facilitate the change needed to meet the fast approaching one year deadline for permanency? No literature exists to explain why one year was chosen except for the rationale that children are staying in foster care too long and costing the government money. This act cosmetically appears to ensure justice for the children but underneath is it doing injustice to children and their parents since it does not provide the resources or agency time to keep the family together? Saving children is noble, but preserving families requires fairness and equity. This paper focuses on the time line set by ASFA and its consequences to families. An in-depth look at the CPS system will illustrate the unintended consequences of the ASFA. Harris County, Texas will be used as a case study.

Harris County, Houston, TX

Harris County is a microcosm of other large metropolitan counties in the United States. Harris County is the largest county in Texas and blankets several cities around Houston. It is the third largest county in the U. S. with an estimated population of 3.5 million. Harris County is demographically diverse and made up of 42.1 percent Whites; 18.5 percent Blacks, 32.9 percent Hispanics; 5.2 percent Asians/Pacific Islanders, and 1.3 percent others (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The child population of Harris County in 2001 was almost 1 million (TDPRS, n.d.).

2001 CPS activities in Harris County

From September 1, 2000 through August 31, 2001 (Harris County’s fiscal year), CPS caseworkers investigated more than 15,000 families accused of child abuse; 29 percent of those investigations substantiated. A total of 1,767 children were removed from their homes, and by the end of FY 2001 there were 3,497 children in CPS protective custody. A disproportionate number of minority children in protective custody: fifty percent of the children in custody were Black followed by 24 percent Hispanic; 21 percent Anglo, and 6 percent others (TDPRS, n.d.).

Barriers to Achieving Permanency

Poverty: Although child abuse is found among all social classes, races, religions, and communities, it is not distributed proportionally across the population. It is over represented in the lower socioeconomic classes, and its effects are disproportionately felt by minority groups (Costin, Karger, & Stoez, 1996). According to Costin (1979) poverty includes a life with inadequate diet, insufficient medical and dental care, poor housing, inadequate public services and problems with quality of life issues (p. 144-145). Close to 60 percent of foster children come from families receiving governmental support. Further, when a family is reported for suspected child abuse and neglect, minority children are more likely than White children to be placed in foster care rather than receiving in-home services – even when the children share the same problems and characteristics. Poverty is often defined in concrete terms such as lack of money or material comforts. However, the emotional and psychological consequence is also a powerful component of the dynamics of child abuse and neglect. Society has not progressed in improving the quality of the lives of the poor and the minorities, but instead continues a pattern of discrimination. America claims to be sensitive to child abuse and neglect, but has done little to ameliorate its causes. How can a health conscious society that requires air bags in automobiles, limits on advertising for cigarettes, and warnings about alcohol consumption during pregnancy be so ineffectual about the neglect, abuse, and murder of its children (Costin et al., (1996))?

Drugs and Alcohol: Substance abuse has a major impact on the individual, the family, and the community. The impact includes loss of productivity and unemployability; physical and mental health; impairment and reduced

quality of life; increased crimes and violence; the abuse and neglect of children; the dependence on non-familial support systems for survival; and the expense for treatment (DHHS, 1999). Throughout the child welfare system, but especially with respect to children in foster care, alcohol and drug abuse is recognized as a major contributing factor to child neglect and abuse and one of the key barriers to family reunification. Parental substance abuse is among the factors that fuel the rising number of abuse and neglect reports and has contribute to the rising number of children in foster care (DHHS, 1999). Data from the 1996 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (Huang, Cerbone, & Gfroerer, 1998) reveal that an estimated 8.3 million children - 11 percent of all children in the United States live in households in which at least one parent is either alcoholic or in need of substance abuse treatment. Both alcohol and drug related cases were more likely to result in foster care placement than other cases (nearly a third of cases involving substance abuse resulted in foster care, compared to less than 20 percent in other cases). Children in these families spent longer periods of time in foster care than other children (11 months compared to 5 months in foster care) and were less likely to have left foster care within a year than other children (55 percent versus 70 percent) (DHHS, 1999). The ASFA emphasizes timely decision making, requiring that State agencies to seek termination of the parent-child relationship when a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. According to Sampson & Tindall's Texas Family Code (1998):

Beginning January 1, 1998, Texas children can no longer remain in temporary foster care indefinitely. Automatic dismissal of a suit occurs on the first Monday after the first anniversary of the temporary managing conservator, unless the court extends the deadline or renders a final order. Even a court-ordered extension buys no more than 180 additional days before the automatic dismissal occurs (p. 847).

As a result of this act, the parents who have children in custody are informed that they have one year and a one time six-month extension to regain custody of their children before parental rights are terminated. This new time line makes it essential that agencies promptly provide services for parents, including substance abuse treatment (DHHS, 1999). For substance abuse treatment to be successful, the types, settings, and duration of treatment must be tailored to the individual client based on the severity of the addiction and other existing disorders. Even in the best situation, substance abuse treatment takes time and relapses are part of the recovery process (DHHS, 1999). Clearly, a 12-month time line and a six month extension is not enough for a parent who has an addiction to rectify his/her life in order to meet the time mandated by ASFA. Department of Health and Human Services (1999) states that while substance abuse treatment is often effective, high quality treatment designed for parents, especially for women with young children, is not readily available in many communities. Most providers are not prepared or equipped to address the complex physical, mental, social, and economic issues facing these women and their children. Moreover, they lack the resources to provide the level of comprehensive, gender-specific care that is required. Even where such programs exist, child welfare agencies too often have not established effective links with treatment providers that facilitate referral and follow-up. With pressure placed on the parent and the rush to meet the one-year deadline, this will inevitably increase distress levels in any one of the problem areas – physical, psychological or social – and can lead to physical or emotional collapse, resulting in relapse (DHHS, 1999). Given the addictive nature of drugs and alcohol and the obstacles to receiving treatment, is the AFSA time frame fair and appropriate for a parent who may have the best of intentions and desperately wants to regain custody of their children?

CPS System: The incidence of physical abuse has increased by 58 percent and sexual abuse has more than tripled since the beginning of the decade. In 1987, 53 percent of the child abuse and neglect reports were substantiated, indicating that a far greater proportion of reported cases now require intervention and services beyond investigation. Harris County is also reflecting this national trend although at a lower rate. In 1999, there were 13,171 families investigated for child abuse compared to 18,666 families investigated for abuse in 2001. In 1999, there were 1,213 children taken into CPS custody compared to 1,767 more children in 2001. In addition to the alarming rise in caseloads, CPS workers are faced with complex family problems than ever before. Homelessness, drugs, poverty, divorce and single parenthood, AIDS, and physical and sexual abuse are all problems affecting families who are served by CPS (Miller & Dore, 1991). Assessing and treating these social problems require skilled and educated caseworkers. However, over the past decade the number of trained social workers in child welfare services has fallen while the need for trained, highly specialized staff members has risen. Only 28 percent of child welfare staff members had undergraduate or graduate social work degrees in 1987 (Lieberman, Hornby, & Russell, 1988). Another major factor that has crippled child welfare agencies is the high turnover rates of employees. Costin et al., (1996) report in the first four months of 1986, New York City CPS workers had an annualized turnover rate of 65 percent including an agency attrition rate of 32 percent. When the City of Dallas, Texas recently suffered a shortage of caseworkers, Harris County “loaned” some of its employees to assist. Costin et al., (1996) report that high turnover rates are attributed to large caseloads, standby duty requirements, high stress levels, insufficient salary and

promotional opportunities, lack of agency and public support, inadequate training, changes in the nature of job responsibilities, inadequate working conditions, poor supervision, and restrictive agency regulations and practices.

The engine driving the chaos is economics. Miller and Dore (1991) report that federal, state, and local funds have failed to match the growing demand for CPS training and employee salary. Title XX, one of the major sources of CPS funding for many states, is roughly half of what it was in 1978. The problem will likely worsen in the coming years since almost every State has a budget shortfall which will likely result in hiring freeze or in lay-offs of support staff. For example, Texas has a 10 billion dollar budget deficit and its governor demanded that each State agency cut 7% of its budget. Most CPS caseworkers enter the workforce out of altruism rather than fiscal motivation. However, they soon find that the stress far outweighs their initial enthusiasm; hence, the exit and high turnover rates.

Declassification: In order to accommodate high caseloads, welfare agencies engage in declassification. This trend includes lowering educational requirements for entry-level public welfare jobs, the assumption of interchangeability of bachelor's degrees, the reorganization of jobs to reduce educational requirements, the substitution of experience for education, and the non-recognition of the exclusivity of bachelor's degree (BSW) and master's degree (MSW) in social work (Costin et al., 1996). A study by the National Child Welfare Resources Center at the University of Southern Maine found that 44 percent of the states do not require a college degree for CPS work (Miller & Dore, 1991).

In the final analysis, the families and children suffer from these internal agency problems. The high rate of turnover and caseworkers with little education or lack of experience disrupt the continuity of cases and slow down the process towards permanency. In order to meet the demands of the high caseloads left by vacant positions and a high number of incoming cases, CPS must speed up its assembly line to produce more caseworkers. These new, ill trained, and inexperienced caseworkers are thrown into the battlefield, immediately facing the task of assessing and making significant decisions on their cases. Often the allegation turns out false, and there are incidents where the nature of referral does not merit the consequence the family must endure. Since CPS is constantly undergoing public scrutiny, it is safer for the caseworker and supervisor to err on the side of caution in order to protect its already fragile public image. The inexperienced caseworker is prone to misdiagnoses and misinterpretation of the situation, creating a series of hoops that the accused family must jump through. For custody cases, it is ultimately the court that assesses the case at the emergency hearing the next day. However, at this point, the parents are experiencing shock, anger, and confusion. In addition, they must learn to navigate the maze of the CPS legal system, and often neglect to ask about their rights. Rarely is a case dismissed at the emergency hearing as the parents have no voice and the scripture of CPS is golden. Unless caseworkers can appropriately identify the risk to the children, accurately assess client needs, refer clients to appropriate services in their communities, and evaluate clients' progress, intervention and treatment plans are likely to be based on inadequate, erroneous, or useless information (DHHS, 1999).

Services: Compounding high turnover rates and inexperienced of caseworkers is the ineffectiveness of the CPS service delivery system. Caseworkers become frustrated because services for families are in critically short supply and many are not within their authority to provide. The result is that too often families receive whatever services are available rather than those that may be most appropriate for their needs (DHHS, 1999). These frustrations are exacerbated for clients who have drug and alcohol problem since CPS does not have the authority to access or pay for substance abuse treatment services, despite their prevalence in today's society and their rising rates of referrals. Only 10 percent of child welfare agencies report that they can find substance abuse treatment programs for the clients who need it within 30 days. Many agencies report being unaware of whether treatment is available in their communities (CWLA, 1998). Since half of a child welfare agency's referred clients cannot locate treatment or are placed on long waiting lists which fail to result in services, the child welfare agency may very well consider those clients as treatment failures (DHHS, 1999). These shortfalls are detrimental to a client who has a substance abuse problem since the resolve of an addict is short lived; hence, his/her chance for successful treatment is lessened. For those who are fortunate to receive treatment, its effectiveness is in question. An Ohio study found that substance abuse treatment was judged "not very effective" by 53 percent of child welfare caseworkers" (DHHS, 1999). There is also a decline in the delivery of a variety of services provided in conjunction with substance abuse treatment. For instance, only 8.3 percent of patients in outpatient treatment had received any family services such as parenting classes or family therapy during the first three months of treatment. Similar declines were reported in the provision of medical, psychological, legal, educational, vocational, and financial services. Declines were marked in all modalities but were especially severe in outpatient programs, where fewer than 10 percent received any ancillary services other than medical treatment, and over 60 percent received no services beyond basic substance abuse counseling (Etheridge, Craddock, Dunteman, & Hubbard, 1995). Despite increased federal substance abuse treatment funding over the last decade, funds to develop additional treatment capacities have not caught up with the

need (DHHS, 1999). The service sector is impacted by the weak economy where government cutbacks and fewer funds from private donors are the rule. In addition CPS's failure to connect and deliver the services to parents with substance abuse problems, prescribed ancillary services (i.e., counseling, therapy) often do not start until the after the 30 to 40 days after the protective custody due to high turnover rates, high caseloads, shortage of contracts, and miscommunication. To meet the new time line mandated by ASFA, most of the interventions with families are designed to be short term. These short-term goals short-change the families and their children.

Another liability of the CPS service delivery system is the problem of transportation. Families involved with CPS must make numerous treks to a plethora of mandated appointments (i.e., visitation, court, evaluation, treatment and counseling, parenting classes, etc.). Since most families involved with CPS are low income, transportation is a problem. Cities or counties that have no mass transit system at all contribute to the ultimate injustice for the families. For example, Harris County consists of many outlying cities that are nestled within 20 to 40 miles radius of Houston, which serve as headquarters of CPS and its court system. These outlying cities do not have a mass transit system connecting their population to Houston. Moreover, there are no bus lines connecting the cities. The situation is exacerbated for low-income families since there are very few or no service providers available in their hometown. The lack of transportation often causes the parents to miss appointments that in turn are documented in the case file as "lack of motivation or caring" and "failure to comply."

Conclusion

Despite harsh criticism, CPS agencies and caseworkers around the country have saved many children and families. It is unfortunate that only the sad stories become the focus of the evening news. In many ways the caseworkers' hands are "tied" by working with limited resources and yet they are still expected to produce ultimate results. The war against child abuse will never end as long as it is fought artificially and without conviction. The current CPS system saves lives and protects children but it also helps to tear families and children apart regardless of the circumstances. The child welfare system needs to be rebuilt and redesigned, but it can only be done when there is a change in the mindset and priority of policy makers. "Family values" and "Leave no child behind" have become buzzwords. But they will exist as mere rhetoric unless true reform occurs.

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Igniting the Activist: A Critical Assessment of Social Work

Gary L. Norman, LCSW

The profession of social work often espouses the tenets of how it “helps people help themselves,” but if questioned about why people need help at all, the analysis often falls flat. For example, we can work to try to scrape together limited social services to help a fraction of the poor and homeless, but we will not allow ourselves to ask, “what are the root causes of people being poor and homeless? (Craig 2002).” If we begin asking those types of questions, we move beyond our comfort level and expose the benefits of *not* asking those questions. From one perspective, the profession of social work has been trying to become more positivistic. Similarly, if we “cure” social problems, social workers will be less necessary than we already are. What is the role of the profession of social work in addressing social justice issues? Is there a tenuous intersection of social work with activism and social justice?

Although the profession of social work has progressive points throughout its one hundred-year history, it has become in many realms an agent of social control and a mechanism of perpetuating the status quo in our society rather than working for fundamental social change (McLaughlin, 2002). This is not to say that social workers are not valuable and a needed part of our society and growing social justice activists. Many social workers work with client populations that no one else wants to work with. Many social workers would like to see an end to the social problems we are living with daily. However, why are so few social workers making critical connections between the work we are doing daily in social work jobs and how that contributes to either a more socially and economically just environment, or conversely, a downward spiral of masking the core sources of social problems and moving away from solutions? The profession of social work also has a vested interest (financial and job security) in keeping itself relevant by what often feels like putting band aids on deep wounds and maintaining the pain and plight of people and communities. The profession now serves to keep our profession afloat by adopting new trends (systems and ecological theories; narrowly-defined evidence based practice) or mirroring historically “heavy” disciplines (psychology, sociology). In many cases, this leaves social work as a professional degree that serves the public robotically rather than questioning and challenging the underlying causes faced by individuals and communities. Social workers are plagued with mountains of paperwork and justifications for every minute of our day. Few social workers have time to think “outside the box,” or even read articles about the best evidence-based practice.

Early History of Social Work Activism

If we look at the early history of the profession of social work in the US, we often point to the settlement houses and the work they were attempting to do with multiple formations of clients and groups (Colton, 2002). As much as the settlement houses were, inside the larger context of the time, progressive and looking toward eventual social change, they were also more subtle forms of social control with the “white, middle-class” values often being taught and modeled to the clients. However, if we examine the process of providing the services, even today the settlement house-style delivery of the services would be seen as “extreme,” or “radical,” by many social workers. This may require using creativity and looking beyond the mainstream comfort level of defining what “proper” social work is. Have we allowed, for example, our definition of “boundaries” moved us away further from being with our clients in their struggles? Then, social workers would be, literally and figuratively, with the clients through their pain and suffering. That process is overshadowed today with the dispensing of medications and cognitive-

behavioral treatments focusing on deadening the pain with drugs or the concept that “if you change your behavior and way of thinking, things will get better.” Too often, these are provided as the solutions to all of life’s problems.

The profession of social work has rarely embraced the concept of communal living or an intentionally conceived political practice. In hindsight, the early Settlement Houses that were a bastion of communal living and politicized existence seem to be an anomaly rather than a pattern setting precedence for social work for decades to come (Karger, 1987). These activists made the crucial connection that in order to understand the plight of a group, one must be willing to stand by them day by day as they experience the harshness of the world around them. The early pioneers in social work often were not actually social workers but the profession “adopted” them into the field of social work to create a history where none truly existed before. These pioneers were concerned with changing the fundamental system of the status quo and raise awareness of class, race and gender issues; issues intimately connected with the world of social workers. These issues centered on power and control and issues of who had economic influence and the concept of a powerful “ruling class.”

Early social workers would openly align themselves with the poor and working classes. Although these early social workers (or activists who identified as social workers) were often espousing the perceived “benefits” of the white, middle class, they were at least *with* their clients in their struggle. One might imagine the level of qualitative understanding of the suffering and troubles the clients were going through was much richer and deeper.

Is Social Work Activism Dead?

We may not believe we are consciously choosing to neglect the core social problems, but even our own profession of social work has been conditioned to be the cog in the business and corporate machine. This cog is evident whether the social worker is in a hospital setting (a business), a non-profit (some executive directors now being called CEOs) or higher education (moving even more toward a corporate model). We do our work, take home our paycheck, have bills to pay, etc. We are not immune to following the pattern of working to make ends meet instead of working to ask why we, ourselves, are paid so little for the work we do. As social workers, we are caught, along with everyone else, in being distracted from focusing on the deeper, core sources of problems that plague our society.

A critical analysis of social work will sometimes lead to the assertion that social workers can be agents of control rather than supporting change, either on an individual, group, community or policy level. This is critically connected to a view of social work in that if one supports a status quo approach to social work, i.e., encouraging traditional approaches, ways of thinking about problems and mainstream solutions, one is therefore also supporting and encouraging the current, often disempowering approach to delivering services. The philosophy of thinking that social problems should and must stay the same (or nearly the same) drives the practice and that affects the science, both in operationalization and theory development (Gil, 1992). Social work practice survives through maintaining social problems. For example, if homelessness or poverty were eradicated, tens of thousands of social work jobs, from direct line social workers to public assistance workers, would become unnecessary.

Has social work, as a profession, veered far off from its original goals and attempted to “over-professionalize” itself and has it, in the end, lost itself in the process as well as become more business-like not interested in true social change? Social work seems to be heading in a direction where it is becoming less interested in activism and more with becoming like a hard science, even though we have no true history rooted in the hard sciences and have little capability as a profession to create an image for ourselves that could reflect a true understanding of the hard sciences. If, as a profession, we are going to break the pattern of acting like a science without an integration of activism, we must continue to attempt to label our work differently. Some views of how social work and activism can exist together is to:

1. Encourage and support more qualitative research and social justice oriented quantitative research from social work students, practitioners and faculty. We are trained as listeners and we ask poignant and essential questions. We understand narratives and the power they provide to our clients’ lives as well as how to frame research questions to address social and economic injustices.
2. Explore if we can “professionalize” activism to address core social and economic justice issues, write more articles about social activism, create more activist professional journals, etc. The caution is to not “corporatize” activism and lose its core strength of being primarily democratic in nature and critical of the traditional hierarchy that is embedded in the corporate cultures.
3. Be brave and attempt an integrative profession openly including literature, film, poetry, music and popular culture in our research resources to assist our clients. These are the modes of relaying information that will reach more people than traditional journal articles.

4. Accept that there are a large variety of social workers and not all will want to take the struggle to the street, but all social workers can contextualize their work in the larger political structure and make connections to what is happening in front of them with a client to the larger social problems.

Social work may be disingenuous if it aligns itself so closely with social justice if it's not going to promote the operationalization of systemic social justice work. As a profession, we say we are interested in working toward social justice and ending oppression. The Council of Social Work Education's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (2003), mentions "social justice" nine times. Many social workers are not focused on this. Instead, we stay in our comfortable offices, clinics, schools, universities, hospitals, etc. and unwilling to ask questions that truly raise awareness of systemic problems, like "why are people poor?" In addition, most social workers are not active and organized around these issues.

Does it promote our stated core social justice goals when we hang onto social problems by our fingertips, hoping we can acquire another grant to serve a few more "at risk" children after school or dreaming of the day we can open a home for battered women who are running from their abusive partners. As much as these endeavors are necessary, we are not constructing new paradigms to fundamentally shatter the core of why these problems exist in the first place.

Conclusion

We will need to feel strong enough in our profession to be critical of it. Social work does not appear to be a strong profession because people are not willing to look critically at the history, goals, pitfalls, etc. of the profession. As a profession that is wavering between being psychotherapists, case managers and nursing assistants, we seem to be only losing ourselves when we are not setting a tone for our own. The profession of social work does not need to align itself with science in order to justify itself. The pursuit of trying to make connections that are absent is causing the profession to flounder more and more. Social work can have a niche of its own in carving out a place to promote social and economic justice, but trying to look and act like prestigious psychologists will not get us there; instead, we look like second rate psychologists.

The profession of social work is a part of the social sciences, but it can have a unique corner on the human services market of reaching thousands of people in the profession to promote our social justice and activist agenda. If we can construct a profession that does not allow itself to be defined entirely by other professions, we can nurture our own approach and say proudly that we stand with the oppressed in their struggle because their struggle, is our struggle as well. We can speak out in public forums about policies that affect the profession of social work or our clients; we can make connections between the concrete problems facing our clients and the larger policy driving the problems; we can contextualize all of our work with clients and see individual problems as symptoms of larger, structural problems. Our past attempts at solving social problems have not worked; we need to try something else, something creative, something brave.

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Social Work Research and Effective Practice

Leslie Raneri, MSSW

When I began thinking about going back to school for a PhD, I considered applying for a PhD in Behavioral Sciences. However, in a discussion with a faculty member, it became clear that a Masters in Social Work was not considered a masters' level degree in behavioral sciences. Thus I would have to complete a masters' degree in a behavioral or social science prior to applying for the program. At the same time, I recalled classmates in my social work masters' program who seemed to have chosen social work degree not due to their commitment to holistic, person-in-environment consideration of human service, but because the program seemed to be a less rigorous path to doing clinical work with clients compared with disciplines such as psychology.

In recent years, social work has faced a barrage of books and journal articles related to evidence-based practice. Although the discussion has at times become heated and focused on the specifics of how to sift and apply evidence, the debate is also a reemergence of more historical debate over the evidentiary and scientific bases of social work. In a discussion of increasing the use of scientific methods in evaluation of social work practice, Bloom (1997) wrote, "Social work evaluation is not an isolated entity but takes place within a sociopolitical context that the profession needs to recognize if it is to continue to exist." By examining the sociopolitical context in which social work currently finds itself and the state of social work practice and research, one can readily see the increasing needs for social work to rely upon sound scholarly and scientific research findings if it is to maintain itself within the broader behavioral sciences and within the larger community of those authorizing, funding, researching, and providing care and prevention services.

Notwithstanding the sociopolitical and historical context, social work as a profession has been reluctant to embrace scientific research methods. Reasons vary, ranging from a general preference for advocacy and the therapeutic relationship (Epstein, L., 1996) and a parallel dislike of research studies that take away time from other social work responsibilities (Epstein, L., 1996), suspicion of authority (Witkin, 1998), a desire to base social work on clinical experience and the therapeutic relationship (Epstein, L., 1996), or lack of understanding of research and statistics (Johnson, 1997). Published social work research tends to be lacking in scientific research methods, while social work faculty tend to publish less research articles than faculty in other disciplines and social work practitioners rarely use research literature when making clinical decisions once they are out in the field (Fraser, 1994). The kind of research social workers in the field do is often related to client satisfaction evaluation and standardized assessment tools which are used more to assess the client's situation at intake rather than administered at multiple intervals as research tools (Marino, Green, & Young, 1998).

More recently, practitioners and researchers have noted that social work must demonstrate its effectiveness and efficiency in an environment of managed care and competition between various types of psychosocial care providers (Bloom, 1997). These concerns are substantial, as are previous concerns about the effectiveness and the ethics of providing inadequate treatment. Fischer (1973) reviewed studies of social casework effectiveness and found that clients treated by professional social workers could fail to respond and even deteriorate after intervention by social workers. Proctor (2001) also notes the need for social work to develop practices that promote systematic review of literature and reliance upon tested and proven methods. Similarly, public health researchers have recognized the need to promote methods that are effective on a population level, and that effectiveness must be considered prior to considering issues of efficiency and equity (Aday, Begley, Lairson, & Slater, 1998). If treatment is not effective, it is less important to consider its cost-effectiveness or equitable distribution. Due to this, organizations such as the Cochrane Collaboration and the Campbell Collaboration have developed systematic reviews of literature for given medical and psychosocial conditions, from smoking cessation to genetic disorders (<http://www.cochrane.org>, <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/>). Even the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have become involved through the creation of the Task Force for Community Preventive Services and the development of guidelines for preventive services in areas as diverse as seat belt laws, water fluoridation, school-based physical education, rent voucher programs, center-based early intervention programs, early childhood home visitation programs, and therapeutic foster care to prevent violence (<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/>). Through the use of systemic reviews and meta-analysis, multiple studies can be synthesized in order to determine the most effective treatments. As can be seen by the amount of work conducted and planned by the aforementioned groups, the systematic reviews that constitute evidence-based practice are a reality, not a fad, and are only going to increase in how they affect what is considered best (and even in some cases fundable) practice. Social work researchers cannot afford to sit on the sidelines while others conduct both the primary outcome research studies that constitute these reviews and their syntheses.

Social workers should also be concerned because of the multidisciplinary nature of much of their work. Social workers practitioners frequently work in interdisciplinary settings, and the insufficient research basis for social work interventions is made more glaring when placed alongside other disciplines with a stronger basis of intervention research (Schilling, 1997). As it is, many non-social workers have difficulty understanding what social workers do. To compound this by having limited understanding and ability to clearly explain the theoretical and empirical basis for a given intervention creates additional uncertainty about the validity of social work practice.

The state of social work research and its effects upon practice in the past and even present is well documented. Fraser, Taylor, Jackson, & O'Jack (1991) traced the early roots of social work in the 19th century, demonstrating the desire to attain a professional identity by adopting scientific methods of social casework which used both structured approaches as well as ethnographic approaches. The sociopolitical context of the time dictated that social work adjust to the criticisms that it was not a profession because it did not generate a body of knowledge supported by a critical, analytical approach. In response, Fraser says, social work leaders such as Mary Richmond used scientific and medical frameworks such as social diagnosis to amplify the standing of the profession.

Kilty and Meenaghan (1995) further illustrated the interaction between sociopolitical factors in social work research philosophy in their analysis of how social work responded to the political and cultural changes of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. According to their analysis, social went through a period of needing to question authorities in the 1960s, similar to the larger culture, and thus focused more on social structures of power and oppression, community organization, and group work. In the 1970s, the focus on race, gender, and class led to an increased suspicion of science and of bureaucracies. In the 1980s, the rapid increase in participation in the welfare system resulted in fiscal and social concerns regarding dependency and social service provisions. Research and evaluation methodologies that could identify and reduce factors related to welfare dependency and other social problems were socially favored. Kilty and Meenaghan note that "accountability" in this new era reflected concerns from funding agencies that social services document the cost-effectiveness of services they were providing. Effectiveness and efficiency were primary concerns related to social welfare practices.

In another important respect, Bloom's comment (1997) about the placement of social work evaluation within the larger sociopolitical context implies another philosophical and political issue, that is, how the social and cultural contexts affect the methods, measurement, and interpretation of socially defined phenomena. Karger (1983) discusses the function of quantitative research of hiding the contextually based nature of the object of study and how this may tend to support a particular ideological philosophy or agenda. While many human situations are similar across times, new issues are continually emerging. Current issues in genetics and in computer-based relationships are only two examples of technological advances that have affected human relationships. Increased amounts of research in tobacco control and HIV/AIDS are in part a response to larger social changes, funding, and shifts in social norms and attitudes.

The present sociopolitical context presents new challenges to social work. Increasingly computer technology can provide easy access to information about treatments and can even be used for computer-based and internet-based interventions. Consumers are readily able to discover various options and to research for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of those options. For social work to neglect to do the same due to personal preference does not serve the social worker's responsibility to the profession, to society, or to the clients (Thyer, 1999). Thyer (1997) aptly points out

To some extent our legacy as a scientific discipline has been stolen by those who advocate "many ways of knowing" while failing to acknowledge the crucial importance of the most fundamental thing to know—fact from fiction, truth from fantasy.... We are ill served by those who argue that social work problems are somehow intrinsically incapable of empirical assessment; that the essential elements of effective treatment cannot be isolated, taught, and applied; or that attempting to gather data credible to others (not just ourselves) documenting that our clients have improved is an impossible task (p. 200).

Many propositions have been made for improving the development and use of empirically based knowledge and practice in social work. Bloom (1997) is well known for his advocacy of single-subject design using repeated measures to assess change. Wakefield and Kirk (1996, 1997), in contrast, advocate increased use of larger trials of behavioral interventions in order to achieve more of an overall assessment of the effectiveness of interventions. Epstein (1993) also advocates the use of randomized controlled trials in human services in order to avoid the pitfalls associated in trying to generalize findings beyond the original sample population. Wakefield and Kirk also urge caution with interpreting rapid assessment instruments, often used in single-subject design, which are normed based on a group but may fail to reliably discriminate problems on an individual basis. Allen-Mears and Lane (1990) promote the use of both quantitative measures such as scales, questionnaires, self-monitoring reports,

and checklists and of qualitative measures such as interviews and observations to achieve a thorough perspective on what exactly is occurring with the client and how they interpret it. Methods such as computer database searches, meta-analysis, and systematic review are used in evidence based practice to find the best practices for particular issues and clients.

Whatever the methodology and whether it is practioners or researchers who undertake it, social work will benefit from an increased focus upon well-researched methods and practices to improve the quality of life of clients and systems with which we intervene. Conveying that clearly and understandably to professionals and the lay public will assist social work in more clearly defining itself and in its desire to promote ethical, effective, and just practice.

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The Contributions of Qualitative Research Methods to Social Work: Perspectival, Evidentiary, and Relational Peter A. Kindle, MA, MDiv

The spectator's judgment is sure to miss the root of the matter, and to possess no truth. The subject judged knows a part of the world of reality which the judging spectator fails to see, knows more while the spectator knows less; and, wherever there is conflict of opinion and difference of vision, we are bound to believe that the truer side is the side that feels the more, and not the side that feels the less (James, 1899).

With these few words, James makes clear the case for qualitative research methodology as well as the primary advantage it shares over quantitative approaches. Despite the presumptive claims of quantitative research methods to be superior to qualitative in measurability, objectivity, validity, replicability, and standardization (for

example see Grinnell, 2001), quantitative research methods fail to close the gap between judging spectator and the subject. It is at this precise point that qualitative research methods are clearly superior.

From the initial, nineteenth century, arm-chair theorizing of British academics musing over written narratives by others, to the contemporary reflexive perspective, social scientists have been concerned with the increasingly accurate understanding of social realities (see Emerson, 2001 for a historical review). In contrast with the natural sciences, the essence of social reality lies in the dynamic process of social interaction. At the most basic level the reality of any social event involves the interplay of two individuals in a specific relational context. It is the interplay of this social structure with the processes of social interaction which result in the complexities of all social realities (Glaser & Strauss, 1964).

It is this complexity that precludes easy quantification and requires the exercise of prudent qualitative research methods to reveal the meaning of the actor's behavior. While aware of the irony inherent in his conclusion, Becker (2001) affirms that qualitative research methods (specifically ethnography) are more "rigorous and complete" than quantitative methods because of "the insistence on investigating the viewpoint of those studied" (p. 322). The presumption of detached objectivity in quantitative research is actually a barrier to understanding the actor's perspective (Emerson, 2001). Instead, Emerson advocates resocialization of the researcher into the subject's social reality so that the background of shared meanings inherent in social actions can be revealed. Without becoming an empathetic participant with the subject, the researcher may never be able to understand and appreciate the perspective of the person and social network being studied.

Padgett (1998), while taking issue with the contention that qualitative methods are naturally suited for social work, does find a strong correspondence between the qualitative emphasis on the subject's perspective and social work practice, "social workers 'start where the client is,' view clients as part of a wider social context, and favor individualized assessment and maximum detail in chronicling the lives of clients" (p. 374). In fact, the ideal social work intervention is a collaborative partnership between social worker and client that builds on the client's strengths in order to empower her for future self-determined action (Witkin & Harrison, 2001). In this sense, qualitative reflexivity (Emerson, 2001) is a harmonious expression of the client-centered approach in social work

But is the evidence garnered from such an approach as valid as that produced through quantitative techniques? Upshur (2001) meets this challenge by providing a synthesis of the products of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, setting the historical and social *meanings* associated with qualitative methods against the mathematical *measurements* preferred in quantitative methods. Both types of evidence are meaningless "unless placed in propositional form related to some context of application" (p. 16). Echoes of this perspective are also seen in Alford's (1998) lament of the gap he perceived between theory and method. He suggests that method "is a series of strategies for finding a way to associate the abstractions of theory with the actual social relations being mapped" (p. 14).

Essentially, the contention is that data apart from a context is useless while theory apart from application is mere speculation. A recursive, triangular dynamic between theory, methodology, and application is the appropriate context by which to evaluate the evidentiary contribution of any information. "Odds ratios, *p* values, and confidence intervals alone have no meaning. Evidence has meaning only insofar as it is used in some context with regard to some claim" (Upshur, 2001, pp. 16-17). Evidentiary validity is more than statistical analysis; the validity of evidence cannot be ascertained apart from the context in which it is being applied or argued.

Since social work practice is conducted in a collaborative context, Witkin and Harrison (2001) question the applicability of evidence generated through quantitative research methods. This type of evidence presumes a professional-subordinate relationship in which the best intervention is determined by probability estimates of outcomes. In the real-world application of collaborative interventions, "decision making is always contingent upon heuristics and the inter-subjective relations existing between social actors" (Webb, 2001, p. 65). Only qualitative research methods focusing on the personal, historical, and social meanings of the subject (Upshur, 2001) provide the evidence required by the social work practitioner. Becker (2001) concludes that qualitative research methods are preferred over quantitative because *in situ* data is more true to this real-world context. Qualitative methods capture real actions in real social contexts with real social consequences, not merely the self-reported speculations collected in confidential surveys.

By way of analogy with clinical medical practice, Madjar and Walton (2001) illustrate the absurdity of valuing quantitative evidence over qualitative,

The authority of individual clinical expertise [qualitative evidence] is recognized as important in the diagnostic process (history taking, physical examination, and ability to make a diagnosis), in applying the results of research to individual patients, in understanding patients' emotional needs,

and in demonstrating caring and compassion but not in determining the choice of therapy [restricted to quantitative evidence] (p. 33).

It is not difficult to imagine that many patients would prefer medical professionals skilled in the qualitative, rather than the quantitative. Social work clients are likely to feel the same.

To this point qualitative research methods have been shown to be superior to quantitative in social work because these approaches facilitate understanding of the client's perspective and provide the evidentiary framework for collaborative interventions. Implicit within these two arguments lays the third, that qualitative research methods contribute more to the relational aspect of practitioner-client interaction than quantitative methods. Bein and Allen (1999) are emphatic

An effective qualitative researcher creates an environment that is warm and trusting, and he or she enters the interviewee's world in a manner in which the interviewee is most likely to 'give voice' to his or her experiences. Conditions that seem to facilitate this process are a high level of interviewer respect, a willingness to drop the expert role and be taught by the interviewee, empathic listening skills that acknowledge interviewee strengths and successes and reflect the interviewer's genuine interest in the interviewee's story, and an intense interviewer desire to understand what the world and certain circumstances mean to the interviewee (p. 275).

Shamai (2003) goes further, analyzing the therapeutic advantages that accompany qualitative interviews, that is, the "empathic listening, curiosity in the client experience, and acknowledgement of the client's experience of self-worth and self-determination" (p. 457). These descriptions of the relational connection between qualitative researcher and research subject explain the relational advantages of qualitative methodologies – they parallel the practitioner-client relational dynamic that is sought in the social work profession.

In conclusion it may be worthwhile to emphasize that there are many who do not view qualitative and quantitative research methodologies as conflictual, but rather as recursive associates. Sogunro (2002), who utilized aspects of both methodologies in his doctoral dissertation, concluded

Therefore, the use of numbers and description, which anchor both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms [respectively], are mutually complementary, and the strengths of both can produce a research synergy whose collective benefits are greater than that obtainable from either approach taken alone (pp. 7-8).

This author agrees, as would almost every source cited in this paper.

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Bookworm's Corner
Manuel F. Zamora, MA

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks. (2004). *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. New York: Norton.

On November 27, 2002, President George W. Bush created the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (Public Law 107-306) to “investigate facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001” (p. xv). The findings of this Commission are presented in this 567 page report which is an excellent representation of the information gleaned during the inquiry. It is a well-constructed, well-written, historical perspective of the numerous management errors of federal executives to assume risk and comprehend danger, delegate and hold their subordinates accountable, share information and process data, communicate with each other, create a vision, and plan accordingly despite a plethora of real-time intelligence information clearly suggesting American targets would be attacked. As the 9/11 attacks unfolded, numerous federal agencies and local agencies as well, failed to adequately assess furtive terrorist actions on our homeland. The Commission’s report makes numerous recommendations to ensure federal agencies are better organized, more responsible for sharing intelligence information, and more aggressive in the pursuit of terrorists here and abroad.

The Commission reported that despite years of intelligence building (1993-2001) and a crescendo of telephone calls made by informants (in the summer of 2001), federal agency representatives were unwilling to advise the President to attack Usama Bin Laden or his al Qaeda network. Excuses for delaying any risk of attacking the “jungle gyms and mud huts” ranged from collateral damage (injury/death to civilians) to violation of the ban on assassinations in Executive Order 12333 (p. 212-213). Other issues involved “who would pay for what, who would authorize strikes, and who would pull the trigger” (p. 212). In fact, there was so much frustration and fragmentation in discussions related to attacking Bin Laden, that Richard Clark, the Counterterrorism Coordinator of the National Security Council told Candoleeza Rice, the National Security Advisor, “Either al Qida (sic) is a threat worth acting against or it is not. CIA leadership has to decide which it is and cease these bi-polar mood swings” (p. 212).

Fearing a repeat of the failed attempts in Somalia in 1993, in which two Black Hawk helicopters were downed and the charred bodies of military personnel paraded in public streets, military generals (Hugh Shelton (Chief of Staff) and Anthony Zinni) were reluctant to support any action without diplomacy and “actionable intelligence.” Predator drones were used for surveillance of al Qaeda desert camps in Afghanistan, but military and intelligence agency leaders feared their destruction when MIG aircraft were scrambled by the Taliban. Technology improvements, focused on arming the Predator in order to attack Bin Laden were thwarted when arguments arose as to which federal agency would pay if the three million dollar Predator was destroyed. The report provides arguments for action within the context of international diplomacy involving Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and other countries who harbor, sponsor, or sympathize with the Al Qaeda network.

The report presents intimate details on how federal agents fumbled many opportunities to capture the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The report cites the ease by which terrorists were able to travel across the globe, undetected, with forged or fabricated visas, for meetings, training, or pleasure. During the infancy of President Bush’s administration, numerous meetings were held between the principals to develop a plan to stop al Qaeda’s attacks here and abroad. The principals included George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, General Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Candoleeza Rice, National Security Advisor, Colin Powell, Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Cofer Black, head of Counterterrorist Center, and Richard Clarke, Counterterrorism Coordinator of the National Security Council. It was known that al Qaeda cells existed in 40 countries, including the United States. Despite the documentation of imminent threats, the best recommendation to exterminate al Qaeda involved a three-year plan to improve diplomatic relations with the Taliban in Afghanistan aimed at expelling al Qaeda leaders and developing an international coalition to undermine the regime. After 9/11, the United States received overwhelming international sympathy, and support for a four phase initiative to attack Al Qaeda. America would move forces into the region, conduct air strikes against al Qaeda and Taliban targets, move more directly through ground troops, and conduct security and stability operations (p. 338).

The report is a history lesson on how a global network of Islamic extremists, funded not through Bin Laden’s personal fortune, but through fundraising and charitable efforts, can effectively organize as a highly “sophisticated, efficient, patient, disciplined, and lethal” organization (xvi). The report effectively establishes the foundation of the fatwa (“interpretation of Islamic law by a respected Islamic authority,” p. 47) and establishes why war has been declared on America. Muslims believe America’s foreign policies are an attack on Islam and are

responsible for all conflicts involving Muslims. Al Qaeda leaders have been effective in publicizing this view and recruiting individuals who “desire death (for their cause) more than you desire life” (p. 52).

The report details how confusion, disorganization, and wrong priorities of the government, law enforcement, and the military contributed to al Qaeda’s actions on 9/11. For example, the focus of President Bush’s administration was to address gun crimes, narcotics trafficking, and civil rights” (p. 209). Also, significant intelligence information acquired during President Bill Clinton’s tenure did not lead to decisive action because military generals and federal agency heads believed they lacked sufficient evidence to attack. The lack of decisive action for many of the following terrorist acts set the stage for continuing attacks against Americans: Somalia, 1992; “Black Hawk Down,” 1993; World Trade Center bombing, 1993; Riyadh attack, 1995; Khobar Towers explosion, 1996; Nairobi/Dar es Salaam bombings, 1998; USS *Cole* bombing, 2000. Although indictments were issued in one incident and terrorists were executed by the host country for other bombings, leaders failed to comprehend al Qaeda’s threat.

The Commission’s publication ends with a definition of a recommended “global strategy.” It summarizes a need to clearly define terrorism and to collaborate with numerous sources to remove terrorist sanctuaries and engage countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Saudi Arabia. It highlights a need to develop meaningful relationships involving political and economic reform, while developing a comprehensive coalition strategy against Islamist terrorism (p. 379). The recommendations are both broad and specific. They include attacking terrorist financing, developing a biometric entry-exit screening system for travelers, protecting transportation assets, improving intelligence gathering and information sharing, and restructuring government to improve joint action. Additional recommendations include an appropriations act to increase funding and clarify how funds are assigned, improve oversight, and clarify responsibilities of the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security.

In conclusion, the 9/11 Commission report is a comprehensive analysis on al Qaeda’s efforts against America as it relates to 9/11 and our defense system’s response. It includes a brief history of al Qaeda’s operatives as can best be reconstructed with available information, and clearly supports why we must expect more from our government, law enforcement, and military if our homeland is to be protected and Americans are to be safe abroad.

Surfer’s Report Manuel F. Zamora, MA

Becoming a social work scholar requires maintaining a heightened awareness of current policy issues that affect social, political, and economic life. Because policy influences, yet is affected by practice and research, it is necessary for social workers to actively pursue and advocate social change that best benefits our constituents.

Recently, the presidential campaign has raised public awareness on issues such as federal budget expenditures, threats to homeland security, social security, Medicare and Medicaid, children’s health insurance, TANF reauthorization, tax cuts, and food assistance, for example.

The editors of *Perspectives in Social Work* believe this short list is a starting point for policy research and analysis on how these issues affect society. The following websites are featured in this publication as a resource to assist you in identifying positions taken by scholars from both liberal and conservative think-tanks. The views espoused by each author strive to shape public conscience by articulating why specific policies are beneficial or detrimental to our society. Among this short list are five websites considered “most visited” by researchers at www.alexa.com. Mission statements are taken from each Institute’s website address:

www.aei.org **The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.** Preserving and strengthening the foundations of freedom--limited government, private enterprise, vital cultural and political institutions, and a strong foreign policy and national defense--through scholarly research, open debate, and publications.

www.brook.edu **The Brookings Institution.** One of Washington's oldest think tanks. An independent, nonpartisan organization devoted to research, analysis, and public education with an emphasis on economics, foreign policy, governance, and metropolitan policy.

www.cato.org **The Cato Institute.** A non-profit public policy research foundation headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Institute is named for [Cato's Letters](#), a series of libertarian pamphlets that helped lay the philosophical foundation for the American Revolution.

www.cbpp.org **Center on Budget Policy Priorities.** A nonpartisan policy institute that conducts research and analysis on a range of government policies and programs, with an emphasis on those affecting low- and middle-income people.

www.csis.org **Center for Strategic and International Studies. D (CSIS)** Dedicated to providing world leaders with strategic insights on — and policy solutions to — current and emerging global issues; led by John J. Hamre, former deputy secretary of defense.

www.heritage.org **Heritage Foundation.** A conservative policy think tank; publishes *Policy Review* magazine. A research and educational institute whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

www.ppionline.org **Democratic Leadership Council & Progressive Policy Institute.** Works to fashion a public policy for the 21st century by adapting America's progressive tradition of individual liberty, equal opportunity, and civic obligation to the challenges of the Information Age.

www.rand.org **The RAND Corporation.** A nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. Initially, RAND (derived from a contraction of *research and development*) focused on issues of national security. RAND expanded its intellectual reserves to offer insight into areas, such as business, education health, law, and science.

www.urban.org **Urban Institute** - nonprofit policy research organization investigating social and economic problems.

www.jcpr.org **Joint Center for Policy Research.** A national and interdisciplinary academic research center that seeks to advance our understanding of what it means to be poor in America.

For a list of 145 policy institutes, visit www.alexandersonline.com/browse/categories?catid=80049, or www.dir.yahoo.com/social_science/political_sciences/public_policy/institutes (spaces shown between social and science, political and sciences, and public and policy are underscores).

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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 for book reviews may be 2-4 double-spaced pages. Submissions must be double-spaced.
- Submissions must meet APA guidelines (5th Edition) for text, tables, and references.

Feedback Guidelines

The editorial staff encourage thoughtful responses from readers focusing on scholarly debate and dialogue. Please send feedback to Journal@sw.uh.edu