

From The Editors
Eusebius Small, MSW

This *Perspectives* issue comes at a time and place when our country is experiencing a momentous period in history. Sixteen men and one woman are fighting for the highest office in the land, and each has promised to provide a new beginning, and to change the course of events if elected. This leaves me to wonder: How engaged are we social workers in the political process? We cannot observe the political dialogue from afar, hanging back on the fringes of the committed while completely uninvolved in elevating the political discourse. Political writers of antiquity and their disciples have wrestled with the question of what is the best form of government. Naturally of course, the immediate question is: Best for whom?

Our profession prides itself on core values that provide a foundation on which social justice and social change rests. Of the seventeen aspirants, whose administration will be the best? Guiding us must be rational and sound choices, based on the very principles that we and our forbearers have held sacrosanct. It must be a regime that respects the basic rights of all; irrespective of color or creed, gender or sexual orientation, class or background, and one that recognizes the value of unity within diversity. That regime must be willing to bring its constituents, the vulnerable, the oppressed and those afflicted with the pain of poverty to the table of political glory. Our social work ethics remind us that it is wrong to have 47 million Americans without insurance, and ignore millions of our youth failing to graduate from high school, and worse still, watch as millions go to bed hungry while living in the richest country in the modern world. As social workers, we cannot afford to sit on a pity pot and observe events passing us by; we must act, silence is not an option, and the time is now.

Volunteering for campaigns, watching debates/reading and at the very least voting and encouraging clients to vote and be informed voters should be a center piece of our work among others.

Finally, to all the doctoral students who submitted papers for this issue, the editorial staff commends you for placing your trust in our ability to choose the best submissions for our journal. We had so many submissions this time that we had to reject more than we could accept, which is a nice problem to have but makes it so hard to choose from a talented group of doctoral students. I hope you enjoy this issue of the journal and that you take some new knowledge with you when you come to the end of it.

**The 3rd Annual University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work
Doctoral Student Symposium
March 22, 2007**

The editors are pleased to present the abstracts of the presentations given at the 3rd annual Doctoral Student Symposium at the University Of Houston Graduate College Of Social Work. The purpose of the annual symposium is to give the doctoral students an opportunity to present their research interests to their peers, their professors, and to the community.

Does a High State Minimum Wage Cause High Unemployment?

Elena Delavega, BS

One of the classic arguments against instituting a state minimum wage that is higher than the federally mandated minimum wage is that it creates unemployment. However, in a state- by- state analysis there does not appear to be a correlation between high unemployment and a high state minimum wage. When high welfare benefits were included for analysis, the correlation increased slightly. This suggests that there may be other factors that influence unemployment, and this study suggests the direction of further research.

Ethical Principles in the World

Darla Beaty, LCSW & P. T. Ada Cheung, MSW

Ethical issues are the essential elements in the social work field. Therapists are following the ethical principles to counsel and work with their clients. Researchers are conducting experiments or studies related to humans with ethical concerns. In this global world, different countries are using different standards of ethical principles. This presentation is going to compare the ethical principles between western and eastern countries and how the ethical concerns will guide us to balance the purpose of researchers and participants' benefits.

Social Justice Issues for Newcomers

P.T., Ada Cheung, MSW & S. F. Venus Tsui, MSW

There are few studies on newcomers facing social injustice in the US. Indeed social justice occurs everyday and in many different aspects. It is particularly hard for newcomers like new residents, international students, new foreign workers to seek help when they come across unjust issues when they first come to the United States, where the socio-economic system is different from their country of origin. In this presentation, the experience of some Asian people facing unjust issues will be shared, and their struggles as well as their values during the process of fighting for justice will be examined

Courtroom Decision Making in a Multicultural Society

Jack Griffin-Garcia, LMSW

What is the process by which a jury or a judge goes through in order to make a decision regarding a person who has committed an offense? Are personal or societal biases factors that influence the sentencing decision? In this presentation, the author outlines a conceptual framework of how personal and societal biases can influence the sentencing process. Also

covered is the role that professions like social work can play by providing education and empirical research that demonstrate the impact of discrimination in contemporary society.

Lesbians Surviving Culture: Relational-Cultural Theory Applied to Lesbian Connection
Amy Russell, LMSW

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) tenets of understanding women and the importance of relationship can explore how lesbians build connection in a sociopolitical culture of disconnection. Disconnection isolates different others and necessitates buffering self or community from detrimental societal actions. An overview and evaluation of RCT is applied to lesbian connection and disconnection. Lesbian strategies of disconnection reveal healing through relational, political, and spiritual strategies. Conclusions show RCT as a useful theoretical framework to understanding lesbian growth and development, but practitioners are cautioned when assuming all disconnection is harmful.

Panel Discussion on Self-care among PhD Students
Darla Beaty, LCSW, P. T. Ada Cheung, MSW, Agnes Dulin, LMSW,
Joy Malbrough, MSW, Amy Russell, LMSW, & S. F. Venus Tsui, MSW

Involvement in the rigors of studying in a PhD program is historically a stressful process. Self-care becomes the most important element in balancing PhD students' mental health and daily functioning. This panel discussion invites PhD students from different cohorts to come and share their secrets to success in caring for themselves while they are experiencing adjustments, not only to class and dissertation requirements, but in other areas of their lives. Discussion will revolve around how to cope with changes in such facets of life such as family relationships and friendships, pregnancy, a new residence, financial hardships, and university expectations.

Predictors of drug use patterns among Hurricane Katrina evacuees living in Houston
Larry Hill, LMSW

Hurricane Katrina evacuees (n = 200) with a history of illicit drug use were identified through intensive community outreach strategies in Northwest and Southwest Houston. A cross-sectional multi-methods approach was implemented within 8 – 14 months after the day of the disaster using a collection of standardized instruments frequently used in disaster research. These assessed mental health, illicit drug use, psychological and personal trauma, health status, and sexual and HIV-related risk behaviors. Preliminary results indicated a higher prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use after the disaster than before as well as a decrease in crack, cocaine, ecstasy, and sedative/tranquilizer/barbiturate type drugs. Analysis of drug use patterns indicated that the majority of crack, cocaine, ecstasy, and sedative/tranquilizer/barbiturate users decreased their consumption compared to before the disaster. As drug-using evacuees resettle into their new communities they may also re-establish old drug use patterns. Therefore, social workers and other mental health professionals may benefit from seeking opportunities to assist these communities in sustaining this overall decreasing pattern of drug use.

Attachment and Resilient Theory to Explain Condom Use
Eusebius Small, MSW

This presentation highlights a fundamental problem of adolescents' engaging in risk sexual behavior with nearly half of all high school students in the United States reporting a history of sexual intercourse. Sexual risk factors are outlined. The paper advances a contextual thinking of

how two theories, attachment and resilient theory can be used as core ideas in explaining whether an adolescent may use or may not use condom during a sexual engagement. The paper therefore discusses the application of both theories to the critical analysis of sexually transmitted illnesses.