

## **Preface**

Dear Readers of the *Perspectives on Social Work (PSW)*,

I am excited to share some great news about the changes we have made to *PSW*. At *PSW*, we love change! We decided to make significant changes because we are trying to emulate as closely as possible the peer review process of top scientific journals. First, we decided to no longer have Calls for Submission every fall, spring, and summer semesters. Therefore, we are now accepting submissions on a rolling basis. This will allow prospective authors to submit their manuscripts at any time. In addition, this will allow the peer review process to be more efficient to provide timely submission updates. Second, we have added a new Editorial Board position. Co-Editors are doctoral students who are invited by the Editors-in-Chief to learn the ins-and-outs of supervising the entire publication process for one- to two- semesters before they transition to becoming the Editor-in-Chief. This will allow for a seamless transition and helps build confidence in the newly appointed Editor-in-Chief. Please welcome Traber Davis Giardina as our new Co-Editor-in-Chief!

Another needed change was to the submission guidelines. We have increased the page limits, enforce a strict APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition guideline, and require documentation of institutional human subjects approval for all empirical studies prior to publication. As we have reached an unprecedented number of submissions over my past few years as Editor-in-Chief, we were constantly in dire need of competent reviewers who were willing and available to meet the needs for an efficient peer review process. Although we have always had doctoral social work students at other universities assist us by being outside reviewers, we decided to increase the number of outside reviewers to meet the needs of the journals. We recently sent out a Call for Reviewers. We received an overwhelming response! Based on their CVs, we will be able to select the most qualified and well-suited reviewers for unsolicited manuscripts. Lastly, we made changes to the format of *PSW* to make it current, appealing and readable.

It is with great pleasure to introduce this special issue of *PSW* for the Fall 2010 issue. The six articles that were chosen for this issue were selected based on a common theme: Social Work Education, Practice & Theory. The lead article in this issue is by Elizabeth Lasky, LCSW and Jennifer Herbert, MPS, who are from Yeshiva University. Their article entitled, "The Relationship between Social cohesion and Electronic Aggression: A Theoretical Approach to a Contemporary Social Problem," provides a conceptual framework that uses adolescent developmental theory and the conceptualization of social cohesion to understand cyber-bullying among adolescents. The next article, "Work Should Be a Valid component of Social Work Intervention," provides recommendations for by incorporating employment/unemployment into social work education to improve employment policy and the economy. This article was written by Elizabeth Van Houtte, Ph.D. who was a doctoral candidate from

Widener University at the time of submission but has since graduated and now affiliated with Lakehead University in Ontario, Canada.

Following, is an article by Jennifer L. Root from the University of Toronto entitled, "Goal Consensus is More than Just Agreement: Improving Therapeutic Relationships with Women who Experience Intimate Partner Violence." In this article, the author identifies therapeutic goal consensus as an important factor for consideration by social workers working with women clients who experience intimate partner violence (IPV). The author suggests that goal consensus may be a means to improve self-worth and agency for women who experience IPV, as well as decrease fear and isolation. Next, two University of Texas at Austin doctoral social work students, Katherine L. Montgomery and Jeremy T. Goldbach, systematically reviewed 167 articles to explore the concept of self-esteem. In the article, "Empirical and Conceptual Application of Self-Esteem: A Review of the Literature," the authors provide a conceptual and empirical analysis of the literature and provide significant practice and research implications.

The last two articles are reflection pieces on evidence-based practice (EBP) and doctoral education, respectively. Lindsay D. Shepard from the University of Utah wrote "Reflections on Evidence Based Practice Criticisms: Updating Today's Social Worker." In this article, the author addresses the EBP criticisms by providing its potential benefits and limitations to the field of social work and social interventions. The final article, "Reflections on Doctoral Education in Chicago," was written by Trevor G. Gates, LCSW, CADC from the University of Illinois at Chicago. This article provides a unique comparison between undertaking the doctoral social work program and the social justice issue of homelessness. The author makes recommendations for students on adapting to social work doctoral programs.

I hope these articles will help you identify how your research interests inform social work practice, policy, education, and future research. Please enjoy this issue of PSW!

~Monique R. Pappadis, M.Ed., CHES, CCRP  
*Editor-in-Chief*

## **From The Editors**

We are pleased to present the Fall 2010 Issue of *Perspectives on Social Work*. Submissions for the issue reached record levels and represented a wide range of topics from a diverse array of doctoral students. We have seen the quality of submissions rise and our job has become more difficult as we have had to select fewer articles to be published from among so many interesting and worthy choices. We appreciate the efforts of all doctoral students who have submitted manuscripts, as well as those who have contributed to our peer review process by reading and commenting on the submissions. This journal would not be possible without the contributions of the writers and reviewers as well as the members of the Editorial Board. We would like to welcome the newest members to the editorial board and congratulate them on their efforts in the review process: Jacquelynn Duron, Larry Hill, Ph.D., Keisha Plowden, and Traber Giardina.

Furthermore, we would like to give a special thanks to those who accepted our invitation to review submissions for this issue. With your numerous personal commitments and deadlines, we appreciate your efforts in reviewing articles during a busy semester. The invited reviewers for this issue include: Roberta Leal, Grace Loudd, Gargi Bhowmick, Saralyn McIver, Hyosu Kim, and Nadia Kalinchuk. Outside reviewers are invaluable members of the review process and must be acknowledged for their support in *Perspectives on Social Work*. The invited outside reviewers for this issue include: Ray Woodcock (Indiana University-Purdue University), and Marva Augustine (Indiana University).

We thank you all for your dedication and hard work in making *Perspectives on Social Work* a success!

Best regards,  
Monique Pappadis, David V. Flores, & Traber Giardina

***Shaping Transitions: A Social Work Perspective in Research***  
**The 6<sup>th</sup> Doctoral Social Work Student Research Symposium**  
**Abstracts**

**A Theoretical Framework of the Relationship between  
Socioeconomic Status, Stress, Coping Style, and  
Health Status for African American Men**

*Tawana Cummings*  
*University of Houston*

*Men in the United States tend to have more health problems and poorer quality of life, contributing to shorter life spans than women. Among men, Black men's health status and health outcome are consistently lower than White and Hispanic men. The disproportionate rate in which Black men are affected by diseases and have poor health outcomes can be attributed to health disparities. Black men have the biggest barriers to improvement of their health such as lack of access to health care services and a broad range of social and environmental factors that affect their health status. Studies have found that Black men may be at an increase risk of diseases and illnesses due to their socioeconomic status. There have also been indications that as the socioeconomic status of Black men increases, their health status does not improve unlike their White counterparts. There is little research in this area to determine potential reasons the health status of Black men does not improve as income rises into the middle-class. A possible explanation of the health status of Black men not improving as socioeconomic status increases can be examined by exploring the stress levels and the coping style of Black men. Existing studies have shown that stress is associated with long-term negative effects on the health of individuals. The manner in which Black men cope with stress may be a factor to help reduce the detrimental health effects of Black men. A framework utilizing the theory of fundamental social causes and theory of stress and coping will be used to discuss the relationship between socioeconomic status, stress, coping style, and health status of Black men. The suggested implication to social work practice is development of effective coping interventions for Black men at different socioeconomic status levels. Future research includes determining evidence based coping interventions that may be effective in reducing stress levels in Black men.*

**Experiences with Infant Mortality as Reported by  
Middle Class Black American Women:  
In Their Own Words**

*Lisa Paisley-Cleveland*  
*City University of New York*

*Consistent strides in healthcare in the United States have resulted in significant benefits to the overall population. However, recent research findings demonstrate that the morbidity and mortality rates for racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are consistently higher than for non-minorities. The disparities are persistent across medical diagnosis. Much of the research*

*suggests that access to health care plays a significant role in such health care disparities. However, more recent research demonstrates that even when equivalent levels of health care are accessed, minorities are still likely to receive inferior health care services and interventions. The issue of Black Infant Mortality (BIM) appears to mirror the findings of disparities in poor health care and poor medical outcomes for minorities in the United States. The BIM rate (13.60) is almost twice for all women (6.8) and more than twice the rate for white women. The BIM disparity holds even when access to care is not an issue, with black- American women still having poor birth outcomes more than twice the rate of white women. This exploratory qualitative study sought to understand - when variables such as income, education, and marital status are similar, why do Black-American Middle-class women still deliver babies who die before age one twice as frequently as white women? This research targets middle-class black American women, eliminating socio-economic and access to care issues. The study sought to surface new answers through the experiences of eight black middle-class women who have been through the experience of infant loss, and with all things being equal, should not be part of a group experiencing BIM at twice the rate of their white counterpart group. The primary findings thus far, are consistent with research, which demonstrates the significant role of stress, from the time of pre-conception and throughout the entire pregnancy experience. Additionally, there are other findings, which may be important markers for women and their doctors in the prevention of poor birth-outcomes. Implications for clinical practice, specifically around patient/doctor communication and stress reduction are also discussed.*

**Runaway and Homeless Youth Voice:  
Effective Programs and Practices**  
*Don Schweitzer*  
*Portland State University*

**NATURE OF RESEARCH:** Runaway and homeless youth (RHY) are among the most disadvantaged and underserved youth in the U.S. with very little research on how programs can best meet their needs. Well-meaning providers, advocates, and policy makers have developed programs and services they feel meet the needs of these youth. Yet the literature is clear on the underutilization of these services, thereby exacerbating an already perilous situation for these youth. Focus groups with RHY were conducted around the state of Oregon asking, what are programs doing right with regards to services? Using participatory action research (PAR) methods, this project is hiring RHY to analyze those transcripts, hypothesizing that by having youth interpret these meanings, a level of insight and understanding will be obtained the researcher would have overlooked and to help insure that interpretations are congruent with RHY experiences. **METHODOLOGY:** This project contains two elements, 1) data analysis by RHY, and 2) investigating the process of conducting PAR with RHY. In the first element, content analysis will be conducted. After organizing the data with descriptive, pre-assigned codes, the youth will individually code the data for symbolic and definitional concepts. Afterward, youth will present their analyses to the other youth and categorize their findings as either consensus (group agreement of the finding was achieved) or emergent (consensus not achieved). For the second element, these youth will participate in a focus group and be asked about the process. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS & IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK:** The significance of this project is twofold. First, understanding what RHY programs are doing well from the perspective of RHY is critical to improving utilization of these services and developing effective

*interventions. The findings from this project begin to create a knowledge base that can inform social workers in direct service and program administration, and as policy makers. Secondly, findings will encourage the inclusion of youth in the development of the programs, policies and research that directly affect their well-being.*

**Examining the Impact of Neighborhood Physical Environmental Features as Ecological Risk Factors in the Production of PTSD Symptoms:  
Africentric Ethnic Identity**

*Angela S. Henderson  
Howard University*

*This cross-sectional research study will examine the impact of neighborhood physical environmental features (aesthetic quality and safety concerns) as ecological risk factors in the production of posttraumatic stress symptoms. The mediating effect of Africentric ethnic identity as a socio-cultural, protective factor on the relationship between aesthetic quality and safety concerns and posttraumatic stress symptoms will be additionally assessed. Randomly selected African-American adolescents (13–17 years) from urban neighborhood environmental settings (located in the northeastern region of the United States) will participate in the study. It is hypothesized that: (1) higher displeasure with aesthetic quality and safety concerns increases the prevalence of posttraumatic stress symptoms; and (2) higher endorsement of Africentric ethnic identity by adolescents decreases displeasure with aesthetic quality and safety concerns, thereby, leading to a reduction in posttraumatic stress symptoms. Therefore, it is assumed that poorly constructed urban, neighborhood environments (ecological systems) may function as risk factors in the production of detrimental psychological conditions like posttraumatic stress. Furthermore, Africentric ethnic identity may operate as a socio-cultural, protective factor embedded within the ecological system that offsets the impact of hazardous neighborhood physical environmental features. As a result, the prevalence of posttraumatic stress symptoms exhibited by adolescents decreases. Based on participants completion of self-administered surveys, descriptive and inferential statistics (Independent t-test, Analysis of Variance, Linear Regression Model, and Structural Regression Model) intend to be generated in determining if any significant linkages existed between the variables. By assessing the impact of physical environmental factors, social workers can gain a deeper understanding of how the presence, structure, quality, and quantity of urban, neighborhood features can be detrimental to adolescents and cause posttraumatic stress. Moreover, social workers can provide leadership in decision-making and public policy to ensure that viable urban, neighborhood environments are created to enhance the psychological functioning of youth and adults around the country.*

## **Examining the Decision Making Process of African Americans as it Relates to Service Use for Depression**

*Rosalyn Denise Campbell  
University of Michigan*

*Research shows that African Americans diagnosed with major depressive disorder (MDD) experience more severe symptoms, have higher rates of chronicity and experience poorer outcomes when compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Despite the severity of the depression experience, African Americans are the least likely to seek and receive services. Much of the research on the under-utilization of services among African Americans focuses primarily on financial and structural barriers to care. Other studies examine impediments related to the availability and appropriateness of services. A paucity of research looks at whether or not African Americans even view the use of mental health services as a viable option for addressing MDD. This paper will examine the decision-making process of African Americans when determining whether or not to seek services for depression. It will review and critique relevant health belief theories and behavior models aimed at understanding how individuals make sense of illness and treatment. By examining the decision-making process of African Americans' as it relates to service use for depression, we can better understand why those who have access to care do not utilize available services. This knowledge can then inform interventions aimed at increasing service use and improve the quality of life of African Americans with depression.*

## **A Review Examining the Potential Impact of Sexual Self Schema on Condom Use among Adult Black Women and Implications for a New Approach to Future Research**

*Grace Loudd  
University of Houston*

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports Black women, 25-45, to be a leading group in contracting HIV at significant rates when compared to women from other ethnic groups. No one can explicitly conclude why Black women are so heavily affected by HIV but epidemiologists cite two primary reasons impacting the growth as high risk heterosexual sex and injection drug use. Reports indicate that the majority of Black women currently infected or those most at-risk for infection fall within the high risk heterosexual sex category. This review proposes examining the impact of Anderson and Cyranowski's cognitive variable, sexual self schema (SSS), on condom use among adult Black women ages 25-45. Self schema is a long standing variable that have been used to better understand how individuals perceive themselves and how it impacts their behavior as well as their surroundings. SSS is a more recent variation of this variable and have been successfully used to predict the likelihood of recovery among women with sexual dysfunction and breast cancer, to name a few. The conceptual framework is based within an understanding that a healthy sexuality goes beyond reproduction and disease prevention to include satisfaction, pleasure and sexual well being. The theoretical models supporting this framework include Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Crenshaw's Intersectionality Theory. This study is significant because all research supports the effectiveness of condoms on significantly reducing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases*

*however the research is not as solidified when it comes to understanding which variables affect Black women's willingness and ability to use condoms and why. Since ethnicity alone does not necessary predispose one to contracting the HIV virus, researchers are attempting to address this gap in knowledge by examining both behavioral and social factors that impact Black women's lives. Implications of this study would allow a better understanding of how Black women perceive their own sexuality and further empower them within their respective sexual environments. Prevention programs could then be tailored to specific audiences based on what they need rather than a one size fits all approach to safe sex.*

**Difficulties and Implications of  
Measuring Abstract Constructs in Social Work Research:  
The Example of Grief**  
*Corrine Walijarvi*  
*University of Houston*

*This presentation will use the example of grief to illustrate issues that arise in social work research involving an abstract construct for which a clear definition and comprehensive model have not yet been developed. The author will also identify the implications for researchers and practitioners of the development of specific types of measurement instruments. The author will synthesize relevant research from the past decade that raises issues of measurement in the field of grief and bereavement. The author will discuss some of the reasons for the lack of a consensus regarding a definition of grief and the lack of agreement among researchers with regard to a comprehensive model of grief. An example that will be discussed is the disagreement among researchers regarding critical psychological processes that are involved in adapting to or recovering from the death of a loved one. The author will also discuss approaches that are currently being used to measure specific aspects of the grief experience. The author will highlight the history of the development of the Inventory of Complicated Grief-Revised, which has been developed to measure the presence of grief symptoms. The implications of this measurement for the bereaved and for social work practitioners will be discussed. Among the implications are the likelihood of the creation of a new diagnostic category in the DSM-V, and the likelihood of the development of specific interventions intended for those with high levels of grief symptoms. The author will identify alternative models of grief, including models that focus on resilience and personal growth. The author will discuss the current status of research regarding adaptation to grief, and identify current approaches to measuring adaptation. Other issues discussed in the presentation will be the ethical concerns related to conducting research with a vulnerable population, difficulties in designing controlled studies in the field of grief, and issues related to selecting relevant time frames for measurement. The discussion is intended to help social work researchers identify ways of addressing the measurement of abstract constructs.*



**The Use of Theory in Examining the Relationship among  
Risk Factors and Condom Use  
in Postmenopausal Women**

*Alexis Rose*

*University of Houston*

*In the past decade the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among older adults has quadrupled, yet no specific intervention exists to educate this population about condom use. Postmenopausal women, who do not perceive a need for protection or possess the skills or power needed to negotiate the use of condoms with their partners, are highly vulnerable. Both males and females over the age of 50 contribute 15% of new cases of HIV/AIDS and one fourth of all HIV/AIDS cases are in people over the age of 50. When including all postmenopausal women, these numbers are higher as some enter menopause prior to 50. Possible factors contributing to the high prevalence rate in postmenopausal women is the lack of condom use, lack of condom use self-efficacy, negative partner attitudes, negative self-attitude towards sexuality, and lack of sexual protection knowledge. The scant literature fails to explore the relationship among these factors in postmenopausal women. This presentation proposes a conceptual framework incorporating elements from modified theory of reasoned action, theory of planned behavior, ecological system theory, and health belief model to examine the relationship these factors have on predicting condom use in postmenopausal women. Such a conceptual framework must exist prior to conducting research to ensure said research is able to make correct interpretations. Social workers are needed when examining these relationships and how these factors may predict condom use in this population, but must be do so within the realm of a theoretical framework. This will give credence to the findings, thus increasing the likelihood of creating a specific, evidence-based intervention for this population. Social work researchers must have a stake in the awareness of condom use in this population, as this population remains susceptible and unaware of their risk due to lack of concern. This framework has future implications in terms of research design in determining the relationship these factors have with condom use in postmenopausal women.*

## **Brief Biographical Sketches from Select Members of the Editorial Board**

### **Monique R. Pappadis, M.Ed., CHES, CCRP Editor-in-Chief**

Monique is a Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate College of Social Work at the University of Houston. Her dissertation examines the impact of cognition, impaired awareness, identity, and coping on psychosocial adjustment to traumatic brain injury. She is currently a graduate teaching assistant and co-teaches Research Methods for Social Workers at the University of Houston. She has been working for nearly nine years in traumatic brain injury research at TIRR Memorial Hermann Hospital. She was recently inducted into the TIRR Research Council as an Investigator for her contributions to the field of rehabilitation. She is a certified health education specialist and a certified clinical research professional. She received her Master's degree in Health Education from the University of Houston. She has co-authored 8 peer-reviewed publications. She has done a total of 18 presentations at several local, national, and international conferences. She has also developed health educational materials for persons with TBI and their families. She has received the University of Hong Kong Student Award for Outstanding Abstract for her abstract titled "Perceived environmental barriers of persons with traumatic brain injury." She co-authored a presentation selected for the David Strauss, Ph.D., Memorial Award for outstanding poster presentation by The American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine Brain Injury Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group (BI-ISIG). Her expertise includes advanced quantitative and qualitative methodology and statistical analysis. Her current research interests include psychosocial adjustment to disability, traumatic brain injury, ethnic minority health disparities, and mental health disparities among women and ethnic minorities with disabilities.

### **David V. Flores, MSW, MPH, CPH Editor-in-Chief**

David is a PhD graduate student with a Master's Degree in Social Work from University of Houston and a Master's Degree in Public Health from University of Texas Health Science Center's School of Public Health. David was recently granted the Doctoral Fellowship Award in Clinical Training from the Council on Social Work Education's Minority Fellowship Program (MFP), provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). David is currently a research assistant at the University of Houston's Center for Drug and Social Policy Research. His career goal is to become a researcher and academician working to elucidate disparities in under-served minority populations, more specifically, Latino communities. To achieve this goal, his doctoral training in Social Work will provide him with the tools for research, grant writing, and intervention development with the aims of providing consistent long-term care and resources for at-risk populations. Through his doctoral program, He will expand his research knowledge, develop clinical skills, and enhance his knowledge of health, mental health, drug abuse problems, and treatments with the goal of helping people and communities in need.

**Traber Davis Giardina, MA, MSW**  
**Co-Editor-in-Chief**

Traber is currently a second year PhD student at the University of Houston. She received her Masters of sociology from the University of New Orleans in 2005 and her Masters of social work from the University of Houston in 2007. She is currently a research coordinator at the Houston Center for Quality of Care and Utilizations Studies at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Medical Center and Baylor College of Medicine. Her research experience includes patient safety, utilizing qualitative methods in health service researchers, and health information technology.

**Josephine Tittsworth, LMSW**

Josephine was recently awarded the Dee McKellar Award by the Houston Transgender Unity Committee on May 1, 2010. She also produced the *Second Annual Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Summit* held at Rice University in Houston, Texas from July 20-23, 2010, which received funding from the Hollyfield Foundation in Houston. She was invited to lecture along with A. Lev on "What social workers need to know about gender identity: Transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming experience" at the NASW Specialty Practice Sections CEU Teleconference on January 13, 2010. She has also taught the English 4341: Queer Theory course during April 19-23, 2010 for Professor Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D. at the University of Houston. She has presented "Creating Transgender-Inclusive College Policies and Practices" (2010, February) at the Creating Change Conference in Dallas, TX with G. J. Beemyn and K. Stewart, sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. She received acceptance for presentation on "Transgendered Nondiscrimination Summit" (2010, September) with K. Stewart at the Southern Comfort Conference in Atlanta, GA.

**Melissa I.M. Torres, MSW**

Melissa is a third year PhD student at the University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work. Her research interests include Latino populations, global AIDS, human trafficking, and conflict/crisis response, all from a feminist perspective. In November of 2010, she received a certificate of congressional recognition presented by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for her participation as a panelist at the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau's 90th Anniversary conference. In February of 2011, Melissa was delegated to the United Nations 55th Commission on the Status of Women by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Melissa is currently a research assistant at the University of Houston's Center for Drug and Social Policy Research.

**Alexis Rose, MSW**

Alexis Rose, MSW, is a teaching fellow and fourth year doctoral student at the University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work. She is currently a research fellow at The Methodist Hospital's Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. Her appointments and studies at these two

institutions have allowed her to explore her research interest of reducing STDs in women, particularly older women and Latinas.

### **Larry Hill, PhD**

Dr. Larry Hill recently received his Ph.D. in social work from the University of Houston's Graduate College of Social Work in July 2011. He recently accepted a Research Professor position with the UH Office of the President, where he will help to establish the university's Center for Community Outreach and Engagement as well as work on initiatives and research related to Sustainability and Green Jobs. Dr. Hill's recent public scholarship has included establishing a framework for managing university-community engagement for U.S. metropolitan universities as well as universities in rural Africa. He also worked as a program evaluator and statistician for the past nine years and founded Prism Data Analytics immediately after completing his Ph.D. This consulting group provides universities, organizations, businesses, professors, as well as doctoral students with the technological and statistical tools to complete their research projects.