

Editorial

Two Truths

“On closer scrutiny, contradictions...often turn out to be antinomies—pairs of large truths, which though both may be true, nonetheless contradict each other. Antinomies provide fruitful grounds not only for strife, but also for reflection. For they remind us that truths do not exist independently of the perspectives of those who hold them to be so.”

~ Jerome Bruner, The Culture of Education, 1996 (p. 66)

We know so much, and so little, all at the same time. That is what a year of study, teaching, and editing *Praxis* have impressed upon me.

I taught an introductory research course in the MSW program this spring, and the final assignment required students to submit original proposals for research. While anyone who teaches will tell you that grading is not often a pleasant task, reading students' papers nonetheless inspired in me a sense of wonder. I felt amazed each time I read one of the papers because they were impressively full of potential and creativity. Students are allowed to propose research on anything related to social work that they wish, and the variety expressed in their choices was tremendous. They asked questions that would have never occurred to me but which, if answered, would contribute significantly to the knowledge base of the field. I couldn't help but be aware of how much more there is to know, and how the knowledge to be gained is limited only by researchers' ability to ask questions and seek answers. Our students have this ability, as demonstrated not only by the papers I read but by this very journal.

Reviewing submissions for *Praxis* also engendered awareness, of both how much we know and how much is yet to be known. However, in *Praxis* the articles aren't limited to research proposals. They range from the application of psychoanalytic theory to characters in a critically acclaimed movie to analyses of complicated legislation. By the time I finish reviewing the 40-odd clinical, research, and policy papers that are submitted by students each year, I feel as though I've been educated. What a wealth of knowledge our students have to share with the social work community.

We know so much, and simultaneously so little. Perhaps the most powerful teacher of these dual truths has been my own experience preparing to do dissertation research. I strongly suspect that anyone who has conducted research has been similarly impressed by both the vast amount of knowledge

available in the field *and* how much more knowledge is needed. Research begins with a question-asking process that is limited, as I've said, only by the imagination of the researcher. There is much to know. But it proceeds with a review of relevant literature, which often overwhelms the researcher with existing studies and clinical works. How much we already know! Then comes selecting a methodology, which may be either overwhelming (because there are so many options from which to choose) or frustrating (because the operationalization of concepts requires them to be reduced in a way that limits the researcher's question). Data collection, which often generates a vast amount of information, can similarly make one aware of how much is known and yet how little, as all that data may yield fewer conclusions and generate more questions than are expected.

If these dialectical truths of knowing much and knowing little have not yet been your experience, it is my wish for you that reading this volume of *Praxis* will have that effect. I hope you will find the scholarship of the student authors and the hard work of the editorial board to be knowledge enriching. And I hope that reading these articles will spur you to ask questions of your own, shining light on the areas of the field in which more knowledge is needed.

To that end, allow me to introduce you to this year's *Praxis* journal. Volume 6 begins with Deanna M. D'Amico Guthrie, Rebecca Kaufman and Jennifer Rose's qualitative research article on social workers' views about outcomes in child sexual abuse cases, which is joined later by another qualitative research article, written by Gina E. Gehrke, Quincy D.H. Jenkins, Stephanie A. Miskovetz, and Pauline F. Wray on motivation for mentoring. Both articles illustrate the flexibility and depth made possible by qualitative methodologies, and both bring their subject matter to life in a way that quantitative research often struggles to do.

Next, Erin Ayd, Jennifer R. Lacoff, Joanna Miller, and Lauren Naset offer a summary and analysis of

the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Their summary is accessible and enlightening if you are not already familiar with the Act, and they offer helpful suggestions for social workers implementing the Act's changes, making this well-written article worth reading.

Deanna D'Amico Guthrie and Elena L. Benetar author this volume's clinical pieces: Deanna writes about the use of Dialectical Behavior Therapy with adolescent clients diagnosed with or presenting with symptoms consistent with Borderline Personality Disorder, and Elena provides an engaging reminder of the culturally bound nature of mental illness. Both are thoughtful and informative, and both advocate for practices that best meet client needs in their respective areas.

The final pair of articles in Volume 6 comes to us from doctoral students Carol Jarvis and Kathryn L. Cornell. One writes about the history of divisions in the field between function and cause and argues for the need to achieve a more balanced integration of the two, while the other writes about the need for the person-in-environment perspective to be more fully integrated into social work practice. The similar-yet-different quality of the articles almost gives the reader the sense that she or he is in a classroom in which the same material is being discussed from differing perspectives. The historical summaries in both articles are also thorough and interesting refreshers on the profession's past. Read them, and you will be well-informed about the evolution of the concepts discussed by the authors.

In keeping with the theme of this editorial that there is much yet to be known, I'd like to mention that I am stepping down as Editor-in-Chief in order to pursue my own research. As much as I've enjoyed

editing *Praxis*, I'm afraid serving in this capacity and making progress on a dissertation appear to be incompatible. Though I'm sad to end my time with the journal, I am pleased to welcome doctoral student, long-time Board member, and previously published *Praxis* author Jeffrey Bulanda as the new Editor. I know I'm leaving the journal in good hands.

Also, please join me in saying good-bye to Dr. Susan Grossman, who has been the faculty liaison for *Praxis* for the past three years. Susan is well known in the School for her responsiveness to and encouragement of students. *Praxis* and I have both benefited tremendously from these characteristics in recent years. Susan is responsible for prompting many of the submissions received by *Praxis* and also has coordinated the submission and review process for authors. She's been a tireless sounding board as decisions have been needed about Board meetings, publicity, reviews, and journal content. As her final act, she will be assisting new faculty liaison Dr. Janice Matthews Rasheed as she assumes to her new role. Dr. Rasheed brings extensive research experience to *Praxis*. I am sure she, Jeff, and next year's editorial board will continue the tradition of producing a volume of the best student scholarship from the School of Social Work. I'm looking forward to it.

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Editor-in-Chief

Reference

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.