

SSWR News

Volume 8, Issue 1

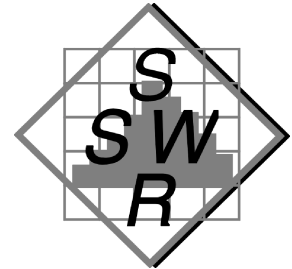
December, 2001

ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

Meet Us In San Diego

Conference has New Features!

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

President's Reflections on September 11th

Nancy R. Hooyman, President of the Society for Social Work and Research

I imagine that many of you, like me, continue to try to make sense of these tragic events of September 11th and to understand the complexities of our country's response – and to decide how to respond individually and collectively. From the personal to the national, it is hard to know how to respond, how to “return to normal lives” amongst the threat of Anthrax and additional terrorist attacks along with the complexities. Many of us comment that the world changed on September 11th and our lives will never be the same, given ongoing threats and insecurities. Yet it's really our knowledge of the world, our sense of the world, not the world itself that changed on that tragic day. Terrorists, the Taliban, and our nation's security vulnerabilities all existed before 9/11. It is our awareness of these and so many other aspects of life that is different. Each of us now faces the responsibility of how we put that new awareness and knowledge to use to change the world in the aftermath of the attacks.

Along with indescribable pain, this crisis has thrust special obligations and expectations upon our academic institutions. Academia, as a leading generator, analyzer, and repository of human knowledge and insight will and must have an impact on whether and how our world actually changes. As social work researchers, we are central to this responsibility. Although there will be increasing research on security, bioterrorism, and information technology, research in the social sciences will be more relevant than ever. Ultimately, we need more understanding about human behavior and how we live in an increasingly diverse and inequitable global community, not more research on how to make us “safe.” As social work researchers, we must do all we can to strengthen the alignment of our research (and our teaching and service) with the global 21st century human challenges closing the divide that separates rich from poor both nationally and internationally. This means converging our research, often across disciplines, on salient human problems, speeding the transfer of knowledge to the larger society, and expanding the areas of impact where we can make a difference in the world. These calls and obligations

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SSWR News is the newsletter of the **Society for Social Work and Research**. It is published twice yearly. Contributions by members are greatly appreciated.

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

REFLECTIONS

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born of the September 11th tragedies, are already familiar to social work researchers. But now they are more sorely needed than ever, to be carried out through in ways appropriate to the crisis of terror and to the demands of the 21st century.

Many of the SSWR conference sessions will focus upon areas of social work research and knowledge development relevant to these new challenges facing our profession and society. These range from research on trauma and effective responses to it, to prevention of violent behavior among our youth, to ways to generate increased understanding and respect for differences among our diverse cultures. There are paper and poster sessions on other relevant topics, such as EDMR and PTSD, women and trauma histories, and mental illness, anxiety and depression among high-risk populations. In addition, a special session on "Social Work's Response to September 11: Lessons for Social Work" will be held. More intensive, focused research is undoubtedly needed on the causes of terrorism and the reaction to it, effective interventions with families and others traumatized by such tragic events, and EDMR and post traumatic stress disorders.

Social work researchers are well poised to be leaders on their own campuses in ensuring that every member of the academic community is treated with respect. This means being proactive in supporting all members of your academic communities, regardless of national origin, race/ethnicity or religious faith. This obligation requires that our own social work programs be a place where all ideas, even unpopular ones, can be heard and listened to. As educators and researchers, we must also strength our commitment to preparing all our students for citizenship in a global society. What does it mean to be educated for responsible global citizenship, and how can we ensure that all our social work students have that kind of education? Our programs must also be resources for the larger communities of which we are a part – a place where students and faculty disseminate their knowledge, research expertise and experience relevant to understanding what happened on that tragic day and how to prepare for what lies ahead in the 21st century.

Despite the national emphasis on security, bioterrorism and technology, social work researchers possess what is even more sorely needed: understanding of human conditions and cultural differences among men and women everywhere. The urgency of our conducting the highest quality research and disseminating it in ways to improve the human condition has, within most of our life times, never been greater. We face both a tremendous responsibility and an opportunity to make sure that our evidence-based research about the human condition is known widely by policy makers, federal officials and the wider public. I hope that you leave the SSWR conference with new research methodologies, knowledge and commitment relevant to this critical challenge – and that you will have safe travels to San Diego.

In Memoriam
Ken Lutterman, MSW

Ken was a tireless advocate for social work research, an initial founder of SSWR, a supportive colleague to many social work researchers, and an articulate spokesperson for the profession's research mission. He died at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan on December 1, 2001.

Highlights of the SSWR San Diego Conference

In addition to the beauty of San Diego, there are several changes in the SSWR conference that attempt to respond to your feedback as well as to enhance its quality. A few of them are briefly summarized here.

- To enhance our responsiveness to graduate students, the Board is organizing a special graduate student panel on Thursday, January 17th at 4 p.m. This will be followed by a reception for graduate students in the President's Suite.
- In an attempt to add a wider range of sessions to the program, registration is available on Thursday January 17th, beginning at noon. Sessions can then begin at 8 AM on Friday January 18th (at prior conferences, sessions did not begin until early afternoon). We encourage you to plan your travels to allow your full participation in the conference, from Friday morning until Sunday noon, following a Presidential Plenary on "Advancing the Research Agenda in Social Work."
- The George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University established an endowed lecture to honor Dr. Aaron Rosen upon the occasion of his retirement. This lecture will be offered annually, thanks to the generosity of GWB. The Board unanimously selected Dr. Rosen for the inaugural lecture as a fitting tribute to his exemplary research leadership. He will speak on "Evidence-based Social Work Practice: Challenges and Promise."
- We have worked to carefully group paper sessions, ensure more space and time for poster sessions, develop clear guidelines for session moderators
- so that timelines are followed, and offer a wider range of interest groups during the lunch hour rather than in the evening. These changes are intended to provide you with more opportunities to interact with and learn from colleagues.
- And we've aimed to make registration more user friendly. This year you can pay your registration and membership fees via VISA or MasterCard.
- Based on your feedback, we combined the first Awards Ceremony with the Presidential Plenary, "A Dialogue on Research and Practice," between Dr. Eileen Gambrill and Dr. Terri Mizrahi. We encourage you to attend and remain after the Plenary to honor your colleagues who are receiving awards. The awards ceremony will be followed by the presidential reception, featuring a Mariachi band, Mexican food and margaritas!
- The Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, our co-sponsor, and the Hartford Foundation are offering pre-conference workshops on new funding opportunities for faculty and doctoral students.
- While we can't guarantee sunshine and warm weather, we can guarantee a carefully planned quality conference for social work researchers, nationally and internationally. I look forward to seeing you at SSWR 2002!

Nancy Hooyman
President, SSWR

Report from the Secretary Treasurer

I am pleased to report that the *Society for Social Work and Research* remains in sound financial shape. For conservative reasons, we have invested the bulk of our funds in three different 3-month certificates of deposit, valued at a bit more than \$40,000 each, with one different CD maturing each month. We also have about \$30,000 in a checking account for routine expenses. We have no debts, no paid permanent staff, and virtually no overhead. We spend modest amounts for independent contractors for work such as conference planning, website maintenance, etc.) but the majority of SSWR activities are undertaken by unpaid volunteer members. Income will increase this fall, with conference registrations and new memberships. Because of our commitment to quality, SSWR is a generous contributor to the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research. We donated \$20,000 to them in 2001, covering assessments from mid-2000 to mid-2002. We also contributed \$8500 to the ANSWER coalition, primarily in support of its efforts to lobby on behalf of a National Center for Social Work Research.

Our research awards program continues to expand. Initially, we provided annual awards for outstanding examples of published research. We added awards for Distinguished Achievements in Research, which are given to individuals, and this year established an award to recognize recent high quality doctoral dissertations in social work. Each award carries with it a modest stipend, as well as public recognition.

With the endorsement of the Executive Committee, SSWR President Nancy Hooyman extended the Sage Publications contract for another three years, whereby each member of SSWR (regular or student, US or foreign) receives a subscription to the bi-monthly journal, *Research on Social Work Practice*. SSWR pays Sage Publications \$30.00, a modest subscription price. A regular

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Report from the Secretary Treasurer *Cont. from p. 3.*

individual journal subscription costs over \$80.00! We believe that this tangible membership benefit is useful for recruiting SSWR members. Thanks to the wonderful and on-going work of Mr. Ralph Louis, an independent contractor hired by SSWR, our Website is attractive and functioning well, and it is now possible to pay ones dues on the web using MasterCard or Visa.

During its June 2001 meeting, the SSWR Executive Committee approved the establishment of a *multiyear* membership dues schedule in order to keep dues as low as possible. Regular (US or International) members now have the option of joining for one year at a time (\$65.00) or for three years at a total cost of \$180.00 (a modest savings). Student members can pay \$30.00 for one year, or \$80.00 for three years. Conference registration fees are also modest; early-bird registration for regular members is set at \$200.00 This can be contrasted with other professional groups where both dues and conference registrations are considerably higher.

Our annual conference is growing and getting better each year. Last year we added an on-site free teachers' and employers' registry, which was immensely popular and facilitated net-working among conference attendees. This will be repeated at the 2002 conference. Apart from the large block of hotel rooms held in reserve for SSWR members at the Town and Country Convention Center in San Diego, we have booked another block of rooms at a comfortable nearby hotel, with a terrific room rate of \$79.00 per night, ideal for graduate students attending our meeting.

SSWR members can rest assured that the Executive Committee is committed to fiscally conservative policies, to keeping member costs low, and to working effectively to promote the society's goals.

Bruce A. Thyer, LCW
Secretary/Treasurer

By-Laws of the Society for Social Work and Research, Inc. Revised

Adopted June 30, 1994, Revised, October 2001

PREAMBLE

The Society for Social Work and Research is a non-profit (Federal ID Number 13-3768131), professional society incorporated in the State of New York in 1993. The Society is devoted to the involvement of social workers, other social work faculty and social work students in research and to the promotion of human welfare through research and research applications.

ARTICLE I – NAME AND PURPOSE

1. The name of the organization shall be the Society for Social Work and

Research, Inc., also referred to herein as SSWR and the Society.

2. The purposes of this organization shall be:

- a) to foster a support and linkage network among social workers and other social work faculty, and social work students in research
- b) to encourage social workers and other social work faculty, and social work students to become engaged in research activities
- c) to provide official recognition of significant contributions by social workers, and other social work faculty and social work students to

research

- d) to advocate for increased research funding and research funding and research training programs
- e) to promote advances in the knowledge base of the social work profession
- f) to encourage the betterment of human welfare through research and research applications.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERSHIP

Membership in SSWR is open to the following: anyone with a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in social

The Conference Site

On Southern California's sun-splashed coast you will discover the city that will steal your heart--San Diego. In the center of it all, San Diego's Mission Valley, is the **Town and Country Resort**. This valley is one of the most dynamic hot spots in America's Finest City. Sandy beaches that stretch for miles along the Pacific are just minutes away, as are Sea World Adventure Park, the San Diego Zoo, and the sparkling Mission Bay Aquatic Park.

The Town and Country Resort recently renovated facilities are world-class, their frontline people are the cream-of-the-crop, and each executive team member--averaging over 15 years with the company—is a proven professional. This team is totally committed to "exceed your expectations" for a successful meeting. **The Town and Country** is the largest and most flexible meeting complex in the west. As a multiple Gold Key and Premium Circle Award winner, the **Town and Country** delivers the highest level of service to all their guests, especially their conference attendees. Among the amenities are a European spa and salon, complimentary weekday newspaper, 5 restaurants and lounges, 4 pools and whirlpool, and data-port telephones with voice mail. In addition, nearby or on-site are first-class tennis facilities, racquet ball, a fitness center, night clubs, 38 movie theaters, abundant premier shopping, and a 27-hole championship golf course. The new trolley puts all of San Diego at your doorstep, with convenient transportation downtown to the historic Gas Lamp Quarter, Seaport Village, and Old Town State Park.

Jeanne Werner, Conference Coordinator

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4.

work or social welfare; students in such programs; and faculty teaching in social work programs.

There will be two classes of membership: full members and student members.

Any member may be suspended for a period or expelled from the organization for cause including but not limited to violation of any of the bylaws or rules of the organization. Any clear evidence of violating ethics normally applied to the conduct of research will be cause for suspension or expulsion from the Society. Such action will require a two-thirds vote of the membership of the Board of Directors of the Society. A statement of the charges shall have been mailed, registered, to the last known address of the member so charged at least fifteen days prior to the action of the Board of Directors. The statement shall also include a notice of the time and place where the Board of Directors shall meet to take action on the charge. The member so charged shall have, at that time and place, an opportunity to present his or her defense.

ARTICLE III – OFFICERS, DUTIES, AND TERMS OF OFFICE

1. The Officers of the Society shall consist of a President, a President-elect, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, as well as 5 Members-at-large; one of the Members-at-large shall be a student member, if one is available. These 10 people shall constitute the Board of Directors of the Society. Each shall perform the usual duties of the respective office and specific duties provided elsewhere in these By-laws or as assigned by the Board of Directors. Elections for officers shall normally be held every two years with an annual election held if necessary. The President shall serve a two year term and one additional year as Past-President, and may not hold any other office within the Society while President. The Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer will each serve a two-year term, and may not hold any other office within the Society during that time. The 5 Members-at-large shall serve four-year terms; if a Member-at-large is a student member of the Society, this Member-at-large shall serve a two-year term. One half of the Members-at-large shall be elected every two years. All members of the Board of Directors shall have voting privileges.

2. Candidates for President, President-

elect, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Members-at-large shall have been Members of the Society for at least one year prior to their nomination for office. Nominations shall be solicited from the general membership of the Society. Members must be nominated by at least three other members in good standing. Officers shall be elected by majority vote on ballots sent to Members.

3. The Vice-President of the Society shall fulfill the duties of the President in case of the President's absence, incapacity, or resignation. In the event of the President's resignation, or lengthy absence or incapacity, the Board of Directors may, by a two-thirds vote, provide for an election of a new President before the normal voting cycle. In such a case, the President-elect shall serve as President. In the event there is no President-elect, the Vice-President shall serve as President until the new President takes office.

ARTICLE IV – COMMITTEES

1. The Committees of the Society shall consist of such Standing Committees as may be provided by these By-laws and such Special Committees as may be established by the Board of Directors.

2. The Board of Directors shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Society, performing the duties and abiding by the limitations specified in these By-laws. Action of the Board of Directors affecting Society policy are subject to approval by a majority vote of the Members. Such vote may be taken at a general meeting of the Society or by special ballots as decided upon by the Board of Directors.

3. The Nomination and Election Committee shall be selected by the Board of Directors, with a chair appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors. The Election Committee shall secure nominations from the members and shall ascertain whether the nominees are qualified and willing to serve if elected. The Election Committee shall be responsible for making a preferential count of the election ballots and reporting the results to the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE V – ACTIVITIES

1. A general meeting of the Society shall be held every year for the transaction of business and scientific presentations. The presence of not less than 5% of members of the Society shall constitute a quorum and shall be necessary to conduct official business. Any decision taken at

such a meeting shall be subject to a ratification by the membership in a referendum.

2. The Society may establish newsletters and other publications.

3. The Board of Directors may provide for the formation and dissolution of divisions, interest groups, regional chapters, and other units within the Society.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

1. These By-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members who reply to a ballot sent to the total membership using the most current address of the members. By-laws amendments may be initiated by the Board of Directors or by petition of 5% of the total membership.

2. At least every six years after the adoption of these By-laws, the Board of Directors shall appoint a Special Committee to review these By-laws and to recommend changes in them.

ARTICLE VIII – DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution or termination of the Society, all of the assets and title to and possession of any property of the Society shall pass to the membership in equal proportions.

San Francisco State University
School of Social Work

The 2001-2002 Editorial Board
announces:

2002 Social Work Perspectives

This work published annually by students in the School of Social Work invites contributions from students nationwide.

It is the only student-written, student-produced Social Work Journal distributed nationally and internationally. Articles address a panorama of social problems and institutions and welcomes the wide variety of social worker roles and issues that affect oppressed populations on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Contact:

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SSWR: Membership Benefits for Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral Students in Social Work/Social Welfare

Chedgzsey Smith-McKeever\
Student Member-at Large, SSWR Board

There are several social work organizations, each with its own focus, to which a student can belong. However there are specific benefits that SSWR offers MSW and Doctoral students. The organization was founded with a focus and emphasis on students. Article I, section 2, of the SSWR by-laws includes student participation in three of six purpose statements (see SSWR By-laws, p. 4). This indicates that SSWR sees students of social work as a primary resource in their efforts to increase research funding and training, advance the knowledge base in the social work profession and better human welfare through research and its application.

Of course, we all know that "actions speak louder than words." Now that I've told you what SSWR says about the importance of student members, let me tell you a little bit about what SSWR does to put those words into action.

At SSWR's annual conference, student members will find that a central focus lies in addressing their needs and interests. SSWR not only offers reduced registration and accommodation fees for students, but also offers several services, workshops and sessions specifically for students. These include Special Interest Group meetings and panels for doctoral students on topics such as funding dissertations and other student research, article publication, and interviewing and finding employment.

Each conference holds a special reception for students, sponsored by the President of the SSWR Board. This gives students the opportunity to meet and interact with the entire SSWR Board. The Board also instituted awards for outstanding doctoral dissertations this year. Starting in

2003, SSWR will further recognize student contributions to the social work knowledge base by sponsoring awards for exemplary student research papers.

SSWR has created two sets of resource books for students to use free of charge: one in which students seeking employment can post vitae; a second in which openings at social work schools are listed (by geographic region) along with information about contacting interviewers at the conference and at the universities. Interviewers use the former for faculty search and students use the latter to locate faculty openings. Many organizations give students an opportunity to compete with seasoned researchers to present workshops and papers, but SSWR places a premium on students' contributions.

Beyond the workshops, employment support, awards and receptions, SSWR demonstrates its commitment to student concerns through a voting student membership on the Board of Directors. The position is a voting one because the SSWR Board wanted the student, not only to be the voice for the student membership, but also to have an equal role in decision making and influence in SSWR's governance.

I've found that membership definitely has privileges! I strongly encourage you to join SSWR. Please feel free to contact me, if you need additional "scoop" on what SSWR has to offer students. If you, as a student, have a suggestion or concern you would like taken to the Board contact me. My e-mail address is

chedgzsey@mail.utexas.edu.

More Than You May Ever Want to Know About Abstract Review for the SSWR Annual Meeting

by Deborah K. Padgett, SSWR Program Chair, SSWR 2001 and 2002

As Chair of the Abstract Review Committee for our annual meetings in Atlanta (2001) and San Diego (2002), I received questions from many of you about the process. In this article, I will, hopefully, answer those questions.

This year, a committee of 29 brave volunteers agreed to serve on our Abstract Review Committee (their names and affiliations are listed each year in the SSWR Annual Meeting Program). Given the dramatic increase in abstracts submitted for SSWR 2002 (65% more than for SSWR 2001), I invited additional members to the committee, while maintaining awareness of diversity, ethnicity, and geographic location (including international representation).

There is one key, non-volunteer player here: Ralph Louis. Ralph runs a conference planning business, Your Third Hand, in Austin, Texas. His expertise has been invaluable to us ever since he was hired to help plan the 1999 SSWR Annual Meeting. Ralph carries out the myriad of necessary tasks, from receiving the abstracts to managing the various databases for abstract review to sending out the "verdict" letters--thus allowing the Committee and me to focus on issues of substance and quality.

Once the abstracts are received and confirmed to fit the word limit, they are assigned an ID number, sorted into the four types (papers, posters, workshops/roundtables, and symposia), logged into an EXCEL file, and photocopied to be sent for

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Abstract Review

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blind review by two members of the Abstract Review Committee. In making reviewer assignments, I try to match reviewers' expertise to the content of the proposal. I also attempt to avoid conflicts of interest, i.e., reviewers were not assigned abstracts from colleagues at their home institutions or for studies on which they were co-authors.

We are members of a relatively small community and removing the authors' names may not confer total anonymity. I urge reviewers to return abstracts that appear to pose a conflict of interest. In their packets, reviewers received instructions and color-coded forms. Review forms are also available on a special link on the SSWR Website. Reviewers are asked to rate the abstracts on criteria of: 1) implications for micro- or macro-social work practice; 2) soundness of methodology (quantitative or qualitative); 3) sufficient information on methods and results to give confidence that a thorough, well-organized presentation of a completed study will be given. Reviewers are asked to consider both the technical merit of the proposal as well as the importance of the findings. These criteria correspond to those put forth in the Call For Papers. On the forms, reviewers are asked to give an aggregate rating score, an overall recommendation (reject or accept at top, medium, or low priority), and additional open-ended comments on abstracts that received low ratings. These constitute the basis for acceptance or rejection.

Reviewers have a few other options for the non-poster abstracts. For example, paper presentations could be rejected as such but recommended for acceptance as posters. Similarly, symposia proposals could be rejected but individual symposium papers accepted (either as papers or posters). For workshops/roundtables, reviewers could recommend more or less time than requested in the proposal.

This year, each committee member was asked to review up to 50 abstracts within 3 weeks and to submit their reviews by the end of July. All reviews were completed by the second week of August. With Ralph's invaluable assistance, I assembled the reviews and developed an algorithm for acceptance/rejection based upon the total possible score of 24 points (12 from each reviewer) as well as the reviewers' recommendation and additional comments. When two reviewers were more than 5 points apart in their total scores, I re-reviewed the abstract blindly and averaged that into the total score. In this manner, the abstracts were slowly but surely sorted into categories indicating high, medium, or low acceptance or rejection.

Workshops and symposia were also examined by content to avoid duplication and to produce a balanced roster that would appeal to SSWR attendees. In addition, we were mindful of the fact that each workshop or symposium accepted meant 3 or 4 paper presentations would have to be omitted from the program. These types of tradeoffs require judgment calls and such decisions are always made in consultation with the SSWR President.

Planning the conference program cannot take place in a vacuum since space and time are limited. There is always tension between wanting to broaden participation and being selective enough to ensure a high-quality program that will engender respect for SSWR as an organization representing the proud tradition of social work research. Decision-making included consideration about multiple submissions and newness of workshops but the necessity for such choices was minimized by the total process.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Your questions prompted regular consultations with SSWR President Nancy Hooyman and, at times, the SSWR Board since I did not feel it appropriate to make policy-setting decisions. In this way, priorities were set within the parameters laid out by the Call for Papers. Below are some commonly asked questions and our answers.

Q: Can I submit an abstract even though my data are not yet collected (or analyzed)?

A: Yes, but priority will be given to completed studies whose results are reported in the abstract. See more about this issue in the next section.

Q: Can I submit a conceptual piece or literature review?

A. Yes, strong conceptual pieces or lit reviews may be accepted. However, the absence on consensual guidelines for determining the quality of these types of non-empirical

proposals makes them more vulnerable to reviewer discretion.

Q. Can I submit more than one abstract?

A. Yes, there are currently no limits on this. However, we seek to balance and broaden participation as much as possible. Applicants are urged to avoid the temptation to submit many abstracts to raise their odds of being accepted—it won't necessarily

RESULTS OF ABSTRACTS REVIEW FOR SSWR 2002

For SSWR 2001 in Atlanta, our rate of acceptance was around 50% for a total of 428 abstracts, very close to the acceptance rates for previous SSWR programs. For SSWR 2002 (San Diego) we reviewed 701 abstracts.

- Of 572 paper abstracts, 249 were accepted, 22 were accepted as posters, and 301 were rejected (an overall acceptance rate of 47%).
- Of 65 poster abstracts, 37 were accepted and 28 were rejected (a 57% acceptance rate).
- Of 42 symposia abstracts, 16 were accepted and 26 were rejected (although several of these had individual papers accepted as papers or posters).
- Of 17 workshop abstracts, 8 were accepted, 1 was accepted as a paper, and 8 were rejected.

happen and it places extra burdens on reviewers.

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Q: Should I include citations and a list of references with my abstract?

A: Yes, but be forewarned that they will be included in the 300-word limit. Try to save references for the completed presentation.

Q: Can I submit Tables or Figures with the abstract?

A: Please don't! This is unfair to those who follow the guidelines and don't submit extra material. Although we have been fairly tolerant in the past, the volume of reviews and the volunteer nature of the process makes observing established limits necessary.

Q: If I have an abstract accepted but can't make the conference

that year, can I present it at the next SSWR annual meeting?

A: Only if it is reviewed and accepted again. All presentations must undergo independent review each year.

Q. Do I have to be a current member of the SSWR in order to submit a proposal?

A. No, but if your proposal is accepted, you will find that it is less expensive to join the Society and pay the members' reduced conference registration fee. We urge you to join!

Q. May I present a paper at the SSWR conference that was presented at another conference,

or is scheduled to be presented at a later different conference?

A. Yes, assuming that the audiences will be different. Conference papers, unlike journal manuscripts, may be submitted to multiple conference venues simultaneously.

Q. May I present a paper at the SSWR conference that is substantially the same as a paper of mine that has already been published?

A. We would prefer that all presentations at SSWR are new but also understand that dissemination can (and should) follow multiple routes to reach multiple audience.

THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM IN ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The most common problem we have encountered lies with abstracts that do not supply enough detail on methods and results to ascertain the quality of the study. As described in the Call for Papers, priority for acceptance was given to abstracts that supplied comprehensive but concise descriptions of the purpose, methods, results, and implications of a completed study. This conforms to the expectations of most professional scientific meetings. This year, potential submitters were asked to consult exemplar abstracts on the SSWR Website if they had any questions about format or content. All too often, an applicant expends far too much of the precious word count on the background of the study or its purpose when the bulk should be devoted to details of the study (e.g., sample size, statistical tests performed, brief report of main statistical and/or qualitative findings). Without sufficient information, even good studies are likely to be rejected.

Although I tried to ensure that qualitative studies were reviewed by persons with the appropriate methodological expertise, the absence of clear-cut standards makes it harder for submitters to know how to structure an abstract describing a qualitative study (although an exemplary qualitative methods abstract was placed on the SSWR Website this year to provide some guidance). It is also more difficult for reviewers to agree on standards for quality. Finally, qualitative studies, with their greater reliance upon words and narrative, are hard to compress into 300 words. This can be done (and should be a goal for all of us) but it certainly takes more effort.

CONCLUSION—WAYS TO IMPROVE ABSTRACT REVIEW

Looking back over it all (and hearing your concerns), I would like to offer a wish list for future abstract reviews and invite you to add your own. First, I would like to see the review committee expanded to enhance existing expertise in policy research and program evaluation (without losing the sources of diversity cited earlier). I have been struck by how many strong abstracts we receive in this area--and also by how few we receive from clinical researchers. Second, I regret not having had more time to address how to fairly evaluate non-empirically-based abstracts such as literature reviews and conceptual pieces. I hope that this issue receives more attention. Finally, there is the problem of 'slippage' among reviewers, i.e., the shifting metric of 'quality' that is only partially controlled by requiring thorough, concise abstracts and by using senior researchers as reviewers. The human fallibility of abstract review is without question and we lack the resources to ask our volunteer reviewers to undergo training and interrater reliability assessments.

This has been the most difficult part of my job—having to abide by reviews that seemed "off" but also not wanting to introduce my own potentially biased judgments into the decision-making. It has been painful for me to oversee (and to hear from) rejected submissions that appeared to be sound. Overall, though, I think the process has had integrity and has worked in "screening in" the best abstracts. I don't think false positives were a problem but I do worry about the false negatives! We invite SSWR member suggestions for ways to improve abstract review—many have already been incorporated over the years--and we hope that you will keep them coming.

Update on the National Center for Social Work Research

The Society for Social Work and Research has been a contributing and active member of the ANSWER coalition since 2000. ANSWER—Action Network for Social Work Education & Research is a coalition of the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors, Council on Social Work Education, Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research, Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education, National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, National Association of Social Workers, and Society for Social Work and Research.

Nancy Hooyman and Paula Meares, President and President-elect respectively, of SSWR currently represent SSWR on the ANSWER coalition. We are enthusiastic about progress towards a National Center for Social Work Research. Congressional support for the Center for Social Work Research Act (S 70/HR 663) continues to grow as does executive branch awareness of and interest in the legislative proposal. Sen. Tim Hutchinson (R-AR) signed on as a cosponsor on October 2nd, becoming the first Senate Republican to do so. Regrettably, it is highly unlikely that the National Center will be given the attention needed to have it enacted into law in this session as Congress deals with the military action in Afghanistan and anthrax at home. The legislation still faces the concern of a few key members that it will contribute to more "big government" though they recognize the need for more social work research and indicate an interest in addressing the problem. The considerable bipartisan support enjoyed by the National Center legislation has sent a message to executive branch agencies about the need for more attention to social work research. Key supporters in Congress and the ANSWER coalition are discussing the importance of increasing social work research both

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATION BILL 2002 – NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Social work research – The Committee commends NIMH for its continued recognition of the importance of social work research in the delivery of disease prevention and treatment services. The Committee urges NIH to explore ways to further involve social workers in research efforts and to report back to Congress on the involvement of social work in promoting effective prevention and treatment outcomes throughout all NIH institutes and programs. The Committee continues to support the NIMH's efforts to expand the number of social work research development centers in light of the important work the centers do to inform the delivery of mental health services by social workers and other providers.

within NIH and within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research was specifically recognized within NIH as having complementary functions that can be strengthened. The social work organizations comprising ANSWER will continue the campaign for a Center in 2002.

In addition to the momentum gained for the Center legislation, the report accompanying the Senate Labor-HHS-Education appropriations Subcommittee bill (see text box) included language promoting social work research within NIH. This increased visibility and recognition for social work research is a direct result of the advocacy efforts made by social workers throughout the country in educating their members of congress. Social workers are urged to continue to contact members of Congress about the National Center and the need for more social work research.

Specifically, the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee urged the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to further involve social workers in research efforts and to report back to Congress on the involvement of social work throughout all NIH institutes and programs. NIH pays careful attention to this report, as it comes from the subcommittee responsible for NIH funding. ANSWER and its organizational constituencies can work with NIH on behalf of the social work community to assist it in carrying out this congressional direction.

Social Work Researchers Urged to Initiate or Renew Congressional Contacts.

Social work researchers are urged to initiate/renew contact with their members of Congress because:

- We must keep the issue of the need for social work research before members of Congress' eyes to ensure that they make acting upon the National Center a priority next year.
- Social workers' contributions to helping people cope following September 11 and its aftermath provide a good opportunity for social workers to educate Congress about the profession.
- Republican senators may be more willing to cosponsor following Senator Hutchinson's endorsement. Social workers should inform their Republican senators of his support.

Please see the following page for suggestions concerning Congressional contacts in support of the National Center for Social Work Research.

IT'S A PLAN! THE MAKING OF THE IASWR STRATEGIC PLAN

Over the past several months IASWR has engaged in two strategic endeavors. One, the development of a Strategic Plan, is aimed at setting direction to guide the organization. The other, the formalization of relationship with SSWR, is aimed at connecting a significant group of stakeholders to the process of advancing social work research. The SSWR Atlanta conference provided opportunity for unveiling the plan and the new relationship of SSWR members and IASWR board, committees, and staff.

Newly elected IASWR Board President, David Biegel, demonstrated his community organization background as he tackled the task of leading the organizations and related key social work researchers through the process of developing a new Strategic Plan to guide the organization and the social work research community. Within two months of assuming the presidency, he had enlisted 36 people to work on four planning task forces. The group was selected to include IASWR Board members who represent the IASW's supporting organizations (CSWE, BPD, NASW, GADE, NADD, NASW and SSWR) and the IASWR Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) members. SSWR President and IASWR Board Member, Nancy Hooyman, played a key roll in involving

A National Center for Social Work Research: Making Congressional Contacts

Who to Contact –

Contact your two senators and your one representative to set up a meeting with them in the home district this year. If you can only arrange one or two meetings and would like assistance in prioritizing whom to visit, please contact Sue Hoechstetter at shosh4prog@aol.com. Sue is the highly skilled lobbyist working with ANSWER to obtain legislative support.

How to Contact –

Call or fax your senators' and your representative's local offices. They may be listed in your telephone book, and definitely can be found on the congressional members' web sites. Visit www.house.gov or www.senate.gov, click on the member's name, and find the local office locations.

Sample Messages –

Please find more information about what social work is doing to help in the current crisis on NASW's web site www.naswdc.org. Also, starting in November, find Updated Talking Points for Contacts with Members of Congress on CSWE's web site www.cswe.org. You can use the Updated Talking Points information when you actually meet.

For members of Congress who are not already cosponsoring

"In this difficult time, I want to thank you for your service to the country despite the threats to health and safety. I am a member of the social work profession who is engaged everyday in helping individuals and families to prevent illness, despair and catastrophe and to treat and cope with these problems when they are present. Please take the time to meet with me to learn more about how social work is involved in the current crisis and how you can help the country make the most of our efforts. I would like to meet with you while you're in the home district in November or December. Thank you again."

For members already cosponsoring –

"In this difficult time, I want to thank you for your service to the country despite the threats to health and safety. I also want to thank you for cosponsoring the National Center for Social Work Research Act (S 70/HR 663). Perhaps now, more than ever, all policymakers should be informed about how the social work profession is engaged everyday in helping individuals and families prevent illness, despair, and catastrophe and in treating and coping with these problems when they are present. Social workers are hoping that Congress will enact S 70/HR 663, which recently became a bipartisan bill in the Senate, into law in 2002. Please take the time to meet with me to learn more about how social work is involved in the current crisis and to discuss how you might help move this legislation through Congress. I would like to meet with you while you're in the home district in November or December. Thank you again."

Congressional Visit Follow-up –

Your feedback from congressional visits is always helpful. Please send it to Sue Hoechstetter at shosh4prog@aol.com or by fax to 202/363-9750.

**We are all busy, but making these contacts requires only a small investment of time that can yield huge results. This is the closest we have come to obtaining Congressional support for social work research. We do not want to lose this opportunity and look back in ten years, lamenting that we did not do more to achieve our goal?
Thanks for your support and advocacy.**

**Nancy R. Hooyman
President, SSWR**

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several SSWR members in this effort as well. Four subcommittees convened or met electronically:

- Mission, Values, & Vision Subcommittee - Lynn Videka-Sherman.
- Research Development Subcommittee - Rowena Wilson.
- Research Dissemination/ Research Agenda Setting - David Biegel and Enola Proctor
- Research to Policy - Ann Nichols-Casebolt

After review by the IASWR board and some editorial work by staff the *Plan* was once again reviewed by stakeholders before being presented at the SSWR conference. *Strategic Plan 2001-2003* includes a statement of mission, of IASWR values and vision and is organized around three major themes: **1) Research Development, 2) Research to Practice and 3) Research to Policy** Each of these areas will utilize short and long-range actions to drive the work not only of IASWR staff and board, but also to involve many researchers, educators, practitioners, and policy setters within the social work research community and beyond.

The *Plan's* vision includes:

- Creating infrastructures for social work research
- Leading advocacy efforts to expand funding
- Influencing internal and external stakeholders to view social work research as integral to practice and solving social problems
- Providing high quality professional development
- Building collaborations within the profession and with other professional groups
- Informing key stakeholders about research opportunities, resources and findings
- Encouraging social work students to choose careers in social work research

Research Development Priorities:

1. To create on-going strategies to develop social work researchers
2. To partner with social work and other professional organizations to enhance social work research
3. To expand efforts to disseminate information to the social work community about research funding sources
4. To articulate the benefits to society for funding support

Research to Practice Priorities:

1. To work with NASW and CSWE to enhance practitioners' use of evidence-based practice
2. To work with schools and departments of social work and research centers to identify barriers to the use of research in practice and to develop and test mechanisms for dissemination
3. To work with other professional disciplines to promote evidence-based practice

Research to Policy Priorities:

1. To develop a long term strategy to increase the influence of social work research in the national scientific and policy arenas
2. To increase links to other disciplinary research organizations for cross-discipline research and advocacy initiatives

Each of these areas include specific efforts, which will provide ample opportunity for involving many of SSWR's members. Voices raised during the SSWR Conference Plenaries, joint IASWR and SSWR meetings, and the SSWR membership meetings attest to the convergence of interests as articulated in the Plan. The continuing involvement of the broader social work research community is essential to realizing its vision. The Plan is available on the IASWR Web site: www.cosw.sc.edu/iaswr/

First Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

One of the most exciting recent developments promising to promote more evidence-based social work practice is the Campbell Collaboration—or “C2” as it is referred to by many of its members. The Campbell Collaboration was formally established in February, 2000 at the University of Pennsylvania and named after the American psychologist and research methodologist, Donald Campbell,

Like its decade-old sister organization in the biomedical sciences—the Cochrane Collaboration—the C2 is an international effort attempting to promote more scientifically based policy and clinical decision-making by facilitating the preparation, maintenance, and distribution of systematic reviews evaluating the effectiveness of professional interventions.

The primary efforts of the C2 to date have focused on the development of a standard protocol for the preparation of systematic reviews of educational and criminal justice interventions. C2 systematic reviews rely heavily on recent theoretical and procedural developments pertaining to the meta-analysis of randomized and quasi-experimental controlled trials.

The First Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium held at the University of Pennsylvania during February 23-24, 2001 was a progress meeting. It offered the 150 participants a chance to evaluate for themselves the extent to which the first year of the C2 could be judged a success.

The first day of the conference was primarily devoted to methodological issues involved in conducting C2 systematic reviews. Specific presentations examined issues pertaining to literature searching, publication bias, study coding, coding reliability, and statistical issues important to conducting useful meta-analytic reviews of the type that C2 encourages. Appropriate methods for including the findings of qualitative studies and process evaluations in systematic reviews were examined in the afternoon plenary sessions. The first day of the conference concluded with a stimulating presentation by John Dilulio, President Bush’s then nominee for Director, White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, examining “What Works in Delivering Government Services: Faith-Based or Not.” A key point of Dilulio’s presentation was the notion that all social interventions—those faith-based and otherwise—should be subjected to scientific scrutiny and only the promising elements

retained for implementation and dissemination purposes.

The second day of the proceedings provided conferees with a useful discussion of consumers’ perspectives on C2 reviews—the kind of topics that should be the focus of systematic review development, the proper format for optimally useful reviews and other related considerations. The second day concluded with breakout groups dedicated to exploring systematic review possibilities across professional groups. Although the Social Work/Social Welfare group did not publish systematic reviews during the first year of C2, several promising developments suggest that the C2 may become a vigorous force in systematic social work review development.

Mark Peticrew was named the Director of the Social Work/Social Welfare group and the group itself decided on a number of projects in important policy and practice areas. Greater social work involvement in the activities of the C2 is likely and the movement may do much to promote the publication of systematic reviews of social intervention effectiveness.

Recent evaluations such as Fortune and Reid’s review of randomized and other controlled trials of social interventions published over the past decade suggest that a body of practice-relevant empirical findings sufficient to guide practice is accruing. At the least, meta-analyses of the sort proposed by C2 would do much to highlight needed areas of inquiry for social work.

The first annual meeting of the Campbell Collaboration concluded with great optimism and an ambitious agenda, but it remains to be seen whether the movement will gather the momentum and yield the products yielded by its sister organization. The effort to summarize all extant controlled studies relating to social interventions is certainly a laudable one and would have powerful, positive social repercussions even if it was less than wholly successful.

Matthew O. Howard, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
George Warren Brown School of Social Work
Washington University
Society of Social Work Research Representatives to
the Campbell Collaboration Meetings

How Are We Doing?: An Evaluation of the SSWR Annual Conference

Kevin Corcoran
Mona Williams

At the membership's fifth annual conference, an evaluation of opinions about future locations, recent changes, and the general quality and quantity of paper presentations and poster sessions was conducted. This report summarizes the findings.

Methodology

Participants and procedures. Of the 706 persons registered for the conference, 121 persons returned the one-page evaluation form. This represents a 17.1% response rate, sufficiently low enough to indicate that these results represent only those responding and not necessarily all conference attendees.

This sample consisted of 27 males (22.3%) and 93 females (76.9) and one who did not indicate his or her gender. Respondents were primarily tenured or tenure track faculty (55.4%) and doctoral students (32.2%). A slight majority (55.4%) noted that they had delivered a paper or a poster session at the 2001 conference. Slightly more respondents indicated they had not interviewed as either employer or employee at any of the annual conferences (54.8%).

Results

When and where

Our first question addressed the timing of the conference. Conferences are typically held during

the winter months to avoid the crowded schedule during autumn (e.g., NADD, GADE and NASW) and to precede CSWE's Annual Program Meeting.

Winter, however, presents a challenge which has resulted in our holding conferences in typically warm and sunny locations, although ice storms and snow showers the past two years have called the efficacy of this practice into question.

Members overwhelmingly supported (68.2%) holding the conference in winter. Fifteen percent of respondents endorsed autumn, 10.3 chose spring and 6.5 percent summer.

Thirty-three different locations were suggested for the 2003 conference. The idea of a sunny and warm location prevailed. Five most frequently recommended locations were, in order: New Orleans, New York City, Chicago, Washington DC, and Arizona, although "some place warm" was mentioned as often as Washington DC.

Recent Changes

The 2001 conference was marked by three major changes: the substitution of an awards reception for the awards banquet, scheduled "Interest Groups," and initiation of a Presidential Plenary. The evaluation asked members' opinions of these changes.

Regarding the awards reception instead of the banquet, five respondents had no opinion (32.8%), while 12.1% somewhat preferred the banquet over the reception, and an additional 14.7% definitely preferred the banquet.

In contrast, 12.9 somewhat preferred and 27.6% definitely preferred the reception to the banquet. When the somewhat and definite categories were collapsed, 40.5% preferred the reception over the banquet in comparison to the 26.8% preferring the banquet. A test of proportion suggests the preference of the reception over the banquet was not statistically significant ($Z = 1.32, p < .10$). These findings suggest that within this non-representative sample, there is not a persuasive opinion for one forum over the other.

Endorsement was fairly strong for scheduling "Interest Groups," such as the qualitative methods interest group. Only two respondents op-

Members overwhelmingly supported holding conference in Winter .
SSWR 2002 Annual Conference to be held in New Orleans-- most frequently recommended location .

posed the idea (i.e., 1.7%) and 14.3% had no opinion. Eighty-four percent supported the idea by indicating either "Yes" it is a good idea or more enthusiastically with the response of "YES!" These two categories reflect 33.6% and 50.4% endorsements, respectively. Apparently there is widespread support among respondents for interest groups.

Similar support was found for the Presidential Plenary. Only 6.7% answered "No" or "NO!" indicating that it was not a good idea to include the Presidential Plenary,

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Conference Evaluation

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and 17.2% had no opinion. In comparison, 75.9% endorsed the plenary by indicating "Yes" (36.2%) or "YES!" (39.7%) it was a good idea. This difference does not warrant a test for statistical differences, as they meet the "intra-ocular traumatic significance test" (i.e., the results are so obvious they hit you right between the eyes!).

Quality and Quantity

In addition we asked about the quality and quantity of the paper presentations and poster sessions. Quality and quantity were ascertained using 5-point scales ranging from "excellent" to "poor" and "way too many" to "way too few," respectively.

The average score for the quality of the presentations 3.9 (SD = .77), suggested those responding to the item thought the presentations were just about "better than average." Only 18.1% thought the presentations were average and only 3.4% considered them less than average or poor. Most of the respondents indicated that the number of presentations was "just right" (i.e., 66.7%), while 23.1% indicated there were too many and 10.3% too few.

As for the poster sessions, the average score was 3.62 (SD = .82) suggesting that those responding thought the quality was just between average and better than average. The responses to this item were, in fact, fairly skewed with only 5.7% considering the poster sessions less than

average and 1.9% indicating they were poor. In addition, 31.4% indicated they were average and 50.5% better than average and 10.5% considered them excellent. The quantity of posters was judged "just right" by 70.8% of respondents.

More respondents thought there were too few posters at (18.9%) than the 10.4% who indicated that there were too many. Differences Between Papers and Poster Sessions

Differences were found for both the quality and quantity of papers and posters. A t-test for paired means indicated that the average for the quality of paper presentations (M = 3.9, SD = .79) resulted in a greater average score for the quality of the poster sessions (M = 3.62, SD = .82), which was statistically

significantly different ($t(101) = 4.14$, $p < .01$). In other words, respondents evaluated the paper presentations to be of better quality than the poster sessions. This was apparent, as well, in the written feedback. A number of respondents noted the need to improve the posters by using a standardized format, a better schedule, more time to peruse, and less crowded locations. In addition, differences were found between the scores for the quantity of papers and poster sessions. The mean quantity score for paper presentations (M = .15, SD = .7) compared to the mean score on the quantity of the poster presentations (M = .08, SD = .63) was statistically significantly different ($t(101) = 2.86$, $p < .01$). The respondents considered there were slightly too many papers while the number of posters was "just right." In essence, then, respondents seemed to think that the paper presentations were better than the posters but that there could have been fewer of them.

When we considered differences due to delivering a paper or a poster, differences were found for the evaluation of posters. The quality of the poster sessions differed for those respondents who indicated they had delivered a paper or a poster (M = 3.8, SD = .79) compared to those who had not (M = 3.4, SD = .91), which was statistically significantly different ($t(103) = 2.56$, $p < .01$). This difference suggests that respondents who had a personal investment through presenting a paper or poster may have been biased; may have evaluated the posters more favorably than those respondents who did not present. It is possible to speculate that preparing and delivering a paper or

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PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR 2003 CONFERENCE

Paula Allen-Meares, President-elect

I am very pleased to announce that the 2003 SSWR Conference will be held in Washington DC, January 16-18, 2003, at the Hilton Washington & Towers. We hope to be able to attract some Program Officers and policy makers to this conference and perhaps invite them to participate in workshops/seminars, etc. As the planning unfolds, I will provide you with more information regarding the schedule of events for 2003 in Washington, DC.

In addition to planning the 2003 conference, I am currently working with the Hilton organization to secure a location for the 2004 conference, which will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Conference Evaluation

Continued from page 14.

poster precluded time to attend sessions and thus restricted evaluating them objectively. Alternatively, respondents delivering a paper or poster may have artificially inflated the evaluations of all others simply because they were presenting; that is, with some sort of projective identification, those presenting may be of the opinion that since theirs is of quality the others must be too. This is simply conjecture at this point, however.

Similarly, respondents who indicated they would be willing to volunteer to review abstracts for future conferences evaluated the poster sessions higher ($n = 54$, $M = 3.74$, $SD = .8$) compared to those who indicated they would not be willing to volunteer ($n = 27$, $M = 3.25$, $DS .71$). This difference was statistically significant, $t(79) = 2.63$, $p < .01$, and suggested that those invested enough to volunteer to evaluate abstracts rated poster sessions more favorably than those who indicated they would not volunteer.

No differences on the quality or quantity of the papers or the poster session were found for females and

males, or between faculty and doctoral students.

One final question concerned who actually delivered papers and posters. The majority were delivered by tenured or tenure track faculty (67.2%), followed by doctoral students (23.9%). These results, however, are not necessarily reflective of the actual conference, but simply those who responded to the evaluation. Inferential statistics are not warranted and may be misleading under these circumstances. All we can conclude is that of those respondents who delivered papers or posters, the majority were tenured and tenure track faculty.

Summary and Conclusions

Although the response rate was low (17.1%) and other limitations in the study exist (i.e., bivariate statistics), several relationships can be noted. The majority of the respondents (68.2%) supported the continuation of the conference in winter, with the location generally preferred in warmer geographic regions. More respondents also favored having a reception as opposed to a banquet,

but results were not significantly in favor of one over the other. Respondents strongly supported the scheduling of "Interest Groups," and the Presidential Plenaries.

With regards to conference content, most respondents thought the quality of the posters and papers were satisfactory or better, with papers generally considered of better quality than poster sessions. Significant relationships existed for differences between the quality and quantity of papers and posters. In general, respondents indicated there could have been fewer paper sessions. Respondents who delivered a presentation themselves considered the poster sessions to be of a higher quality than those respondents who did not deliver a paper or poster. Respondents who indicated that they were willing to volunteer to review abstracts were also more likely to consider the poster sessions to be of a higher quality. Neither gender nor academic status moderate the evaluation. And finally, most of those responding to the evaluation, who reported delivering a paper or poster, were tenured and tenure track faculty.

NEEDED

book reviews
for next
issue!!!!

BOOK REVIEW

Barbara E. Solt,

Pellmar, T.C. & Eisenberg, L. (Eds.) (2000). Bridging Disciplines in the Brain, Behavioral, and Clinical Sciences. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. 130pp.

Though a slim volume, this report of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Building Bridges in the Brain, Behavioral, and Clinical Sciences is packed with recommendations intended to expand human behavior research

perspectives and policy in major ways. The book, a charge to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute of Health's Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences research, (NIH/OBSSR), the National Institute on Nursing research (NINR), and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) is to examine or define:

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Book Review

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- Needs and strategies for interdisciplinary training and to enhance the translation between clinical and research settings.
- Components of true interdisciplinary training in these areas.
- Barriers and obstacles to such research and related training.
- Current programs to identify models to facilitate interdisciplinary training.

This 1999 report provides specific recommendations for each of the four areas. An Executive Summary, that includes all of the recommendations, is available for down-loading through the National Academy of Sciences Web site. Given the stature of the commissioning agencies, the composition of the committee, and the initial response to the book within the behavioral science research community, this volume can provide a major impetus for interdisciplinary research development.

It should be noted that social work is not mentioned until page 71, where the profession is noted as having an "interdisciplinary character" to its practice domain and research focus. The disciplines mentioned as partners in the social sciences include anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology, but not social work. Although we question why the social work profession was not part of the constituting groups and why no social workers are identified among the committee's membership, social work researchers should welcome this expansion of research perspective among its social science colleagues. We should use this re-port to advance our profession's position as experienced practitioners of both things interdisciplinary and translational.

The terms *indisciplinary* and *translational* as used in the book are defined in a broad sense, but a closer reading shows a rather parochial limiting combination of laboratory oriented researchers with their clinical

counterparts or closely related clinical disciplines, noted as "bench to bedside." The concept of social environment, it's impact on behavior, and reference to social work's understanding of the person-in-the-situation *gestalt* is largely absent from the specifics and examples in the report. The social work profession would do well to respond to this report, offering its perspective as well as positioning itself as a research partner who can bring expertise to interdisciplinary research

The report defines interdisciplinary research, translational research, and interdisciplinary training as components of a team oriented endeavor integrating information between investigators and practitioners.

Though the Committee recognizes its bias toward interdisciplinary research, it acknowledges the lack of data supporting the relative value of this approach. The final chapter addresses the administrative and methodological difficulties of the approach, calling for outcomes research to empirically evaluate the bias. Here, social work has an opportunity to contribute through it's tradition of program evaluation and out-comes measurement.

The recommendations include suggestions for amending NIH funding mechanisms to address identified barriers, such as the knotty problem of administrative overhead in departmentalized academic sponsorship, and the fact of "intellectual turf." The identified training need to become conversant in languages of multiple disciplines, recognizing that similar terms mean different things in different disciplines, is but one example of a thorough look at the subtleties and details involved in changing the historic *modus operandi* of the single-discipline orientation. Both public and private funders are cited in the section addressing ventures into interdisciplinary efforts, thus providing some validation to the bias that this

approach is, at the least, congruent with the interests of significant players in the world of research support.

The references and section on reviewed training programs are rich for mining by social work researchers endeavoring to access research resources as well as for finding partners in advocacy efforts. This book provides additional, collegial, legitimacy for our practice and methodological tradition of synthesis of knowledge from several streams in the endeavor to address complex social and behavioral ills. Social work researchers would do well to read this book and then set about introducing their academic peers to the potential for participatory inquiry.

Thank you

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