



The effects of work conditions on the health of uniformed sanitation workers in New York City, VD education in schools, a cost/benefit appraisal for the Board of Trustees of Springfield (MA) College, and a study of Health Education teaching via television were all among the research subjects studied by Dr. Elena M. Sliepcevich more than six decades ago.

From this eclectic array of research methods, target populations, and findings emerged a woman destined to lead the evolution of an academic discipline. Dr. Sliepcevich was familiar with breaking new ground. A native of Anaconda, at the age of 17 she was the youngest student in Montana to receive an elementary teaching credential. In 1955, she became the first female recipient of a D.P.E. in Interdisciplinary Studies from Springfield (MA) College. She eventually would be instrumental in guiding what is widely considered to be the seminal work in School Health Education curriculum development.

The conceptual model she developed in the School Health Education Study (SHES) (1961-1972) remains relevant over 50 years later. Without federal funding, SHES was a comprehensive curriculum development project, cited as

Elena M. Sliepcevich

A True

the largest such project in the history of the profession. Its conceptual approach has remains a benchmark for developing learning opportunities to meet the goals of both public health and education. According to the website of the Elena M. Sliepcevich Centre for Health Education Studies, "Most health education curricula developed since have been based on the 10 conceptual areas identified by the School Health Education Study." More recently, in March 2014, ASCD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched their Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) initiative for the nation's schools. Central elements of this model reflect the formative work of SHES.

Her biography on the Centre's website dedicated to her memory includes that "Dr. Sliepcevich was a prolific writer, visionary, pioneer in development of patient education, recognized for her extensive research, mentor to colleagues and numerous doctoral (PhD) and Master's degree students, and recipient of many highly respected national awards."

After her tenure at The Ohio State University (1956-1961) and in Washington, DC as Director of the SHES, she was recruited by then Department Chair Dr. Donald N. Boydston to serve as a key leader in the growth at SIUC as one of the leading doctoral programs in HED. Dr. Sliepcevich

was Professor of Health Education and the School of Medicine at SIU from 1973 until her retirement in 1992. Fondly known as "Dr. S.," she similarly guided colleagues across COEHS departments as well as other Colleges in conceptualizing their research agendas and acquiring appropriate funding.

One example of Dr. Sliepcevich's legacy can be seen in the widespread integration of qualitative research methods throughout the COEHS.

Quantitative data collection and statistical analysis methods were long established to be the norm for student and faculty research. The College of Education Dean, Dr. Donald L. Beggs, was considered among the nation's premier educational measurement and statistics experts.

Within this context, Dr. S articulated the relevancy of qualitative methods for social science studies, based on extensive interdisciplinary awareness from her prolific reading in "hard" sciences and futurism journals. She frequently encountered protests and challenges from colleagues who believed solely in the value of quantitative measures. Ultimately, these colleagues became regular members of PhD dissertation and

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Pioneer

MS thesis committees in Health Education using qualitative methods. Under her tutelage, they became “believers” in the rigor and validity/reliability-equivalent standards for naturalistic inquiry and qualitative research.

Elena’s skills in acquiring funding for practical and research projects are perhaps best exemplified by her successes maintaining support for the national curriculum development project. “The School Health Education Study (SHES), supported entirely by funds from private sources, received \$327,000 from the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, New York City, from 1961-1965; \$10,000 from other national sources, and \$751,000 from the 3M Corporation, St. Paul, MN during 1965-1972. [Total \$1,088,000.]”

This abbreviated overview of Dr. S and her career (1939-1992) typifies a generation of exceptional individuals who were instrumental in the “birth” and growth of Health Education. She was a professional treasure for Health Education as well as SIUC. In addition to interest in her personal contributions, apprehension was growing that the history of Health Education (documents; oral history; and so on) was being lost. Professional associations and leaders became concerned about capturing such contributions and historical resources. These groups, and colleagues at university campuses

across the country, initiated several projects to document this history.

At her death in 2008, the creation of a Centre at SIUC that acknowledged Dr. Sliepcevich’s visionary abilities and leadership was deemed an appropriate tribute. A Centre was created that would serve as a centralized resource of primary and virtual resources. The Centre would reflect the guidance in research she provided to many colleagues and mentees. Collaboration among the College of Education and Human Services, Special Collections Research Center at SIU’s Morris Library, the University Museum, and the American School Health Association resulted in the Centre’s development and creation. Dr. Judy C. Drolet, Professor Emeritus of Health Education, served as Centre Director from its conceptualization to the present.

In 2013, Dr. Adrian R. Lyde (PhD, 2008) and Dr. Brandye D. Nobiling (PhD, 2010) were selected as the inaugural Sliepcevich Historical Research Fellows. Dr. Lyde, Assistant Professor of Health Education at Illinois State University, and Dr. Nobiling, Assistant Professor and Program Director of Health Education at Salisbury University began conducting historical research on campus using primary documents from the Centre. Their early

Judy Drolet [in solid blue, third from the right] and SIU faculty at an AAHE Conference.

By Judy C. Drolet

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work is focused on connecting the School Health Education Study to contemporary health education issues. Their paper, *The School Health Education Study: Illuminating the Past to Understand the Present and Prepare for the Future*, was presented at the national conference of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) in Baltimore, MD (March, 2014). A manuscript with similar focus is in preparation for submission to a national peer-reviewed journal this month. A second round of data collection is planned for August, 2014.

This research extends the innovative work directed by Dr. S to yet another era. Dr. Lyde and Dr. Nobiling represent the next generation of professionals who appreciate the seven decades of contributions and resources available at SIUC for scholarly work and creative endeavors.

These, and other researchers, recognize the lessons to be learned from history and their relevance to our times and the future.

Visit the center’s website at: <http://elenamsctr.siu.edu>

