EDITORIAL:
Social Work and Service-Learning in the Age of Competency-based Education

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We are pleased and proud to have served as Guest Editors for this special issue of *Advances in Social Work* focusing on "Social Work and Service-Learning in the Age of Competency-based Education." This compilation of peer-reviewed articles provides a timely update to the growing literature on service-learning in social work education. Each article provides a snapshot of how individual faculty and their respective programs have embraced service-learning to enable students to achieve mastery of the competencies as articulated in the Council of Social Work Education's (CSWE, 2008) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). As a whole, this issue demonstrates how the 2008 EPAS challenges faculty to be innovative in preparing students for professional practice. With each article as a snapshot, the issue itself provides a panorama of how service-learning pedagogy provides multiple opportunities for social work education to operationalize and assess the competencies necessary for professional practice in the current dynamic practice environment.

The special issue grew from a workshop held in Indianapolis in May of 2010 entitled *Assessing Professional Competencies through Service-learning: A Dialogue and Think Tank*, or the Think Tank from here forward. The Think Tank brought together over 50 faculty members from around the nation who were using or interested in implementing service-learning pedagogy in their courses. The Think Tank began with the opening plenary delivered by internationally-recognized service-learning scholar, Dr. Robert G. Bringle, who presented *Service-learning, Social Justice and Assessing Competencies: An Overview*. The group then engaged in a passionate dialogue exploring the social justice mandate of the profession and basic issues of competency-based education. Participants voiced concerns that competency-based education in social work, as articulated by the EPAS (CSWE, 2008), might limit faculty members' ability to be creative with experiential pedagogies such as service-learning. There was also concern that the emphasis on assessment might dilute the professional purpose of promoting social and economic justice. These concerns were not surprising given that service-learning pedagogy is part of a larger movement to facilitate the civic engagement of higher education (Boyer, 1990; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003) and that faculty members who are interested in service-learning are likely to highly value civic involvement for themselves and their students. Feeling that a competency-based approach was leading to the "rubric-ization" of social work education, and away from the mission

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of social justice, the first morning of the dialogue ended on a somewhat somber, if thoughtful, note.

In the afternoon, faculty members grouped themselves around selected EPAS (CSWE, 2008) competencies including diversity, policy and human behavior and the social environment (HBSE). Social work faculty proved their resilience as they began to share how they had integrated service-learning activities to provide learning experiences for students in these areas. The synergy created in these discussions refocused faculty members on the competencies that they had watched their students develop through their service-learning experiences. Discussions continued through dinner and participants regained their resolve to find the fit between the requisite competencies, service-learning pedagogy, and assessment.

With the second plenary from Dr. Patti Clayton entitled *Cultivating Competencies through Integrating Critical Reflection and Assessment*, issues began to come together. Service-learning has always emphasized reflection as a requirement for high-quality pedagogy (Eyler, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999) and Dr. Clayton's presentation provided a roadmap for utilizing reflection as a tool to not just document and deepen, but also assess, learning (Ash & Clayton, 2004). Providing examples from her consulting work, she demonstrated how using rubrics in a positive manner could "Bloom-ify" (Bloom, 1956) the EPAS (CSWE, 2008) practice behaviors, facilitating students in moving from the lower levels of "identify and explain" to the high levels of "apply, analyze and evaluate." The critical thinking required in reflection was demonstrated to provide the means to both assist students in deepening their learning while also demonstrating competence. Participants went away from this session energized by the possibilities of utilizing structured, critical reflection to not only evidence the impact of service-learning pedagogy, but to also demonstrate a wide range of competencies.

The Think Tank certainly challenged and inspired participants to continue their exploration of service-learning pedagogy and encapsulate their experiences in many of the articles in this special issue. Burke's (2011) conceptual exploration of civic education and social work is an excellent reflection of issues raised in the first session of the Think Tank, while Twill, Elpers, and Lay (2011) provide a demonstration of using a structured reflection assignment to move students forward in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy with HBSE content. Lucas-Darby (2011) offers an innovative example of how social work education may focus students on aspects in the physical environment, moving the profession forward to consider important issues of energy conservation and recycling as emerging social issues.

Combined with the contributions of other scholars who have also explored service-learning pedagogy, this issue includes a broad array of thinking around service-learning in the age of competency-based education in social work. The issue begins with a review of social work and service-learning provided by Phillips (2011). Building on her previous article (Phillips, 2007), she provides a summary of the "state of the art" regarding service-learning, both in higher education and social work education. Focusing on the dearth of conceptual clarity around service-learning in social work education, she proposes critical questions and some tentative ways to ameliorate the risks of losing the

civic engagement focus of service-learning in a context of behavioral assessment of competencies. Burke (2011) continues the exploration of the civic engagement aspect of service-learning with a thought-provoking review of concepts such as democracy and professionalism as they relate to the civic education of social work students. Next, Nino, Cuevas, and Loya (2011) present an example of how one social work program has created a community-based agency which provides an array of services, utilizing the service-learning volunteers along with practicum students to address the unmet needs of the community. This innovative endeavor models civic involvement by social work faculty and provides opportunities for transformative learning for students.

The remaining articles provide exemplars of the utilization of service-learning pedagogy in ways that are particularly important to current social work practice. In fact, if one were to make of list of emerging challenges for social work education, it would certainly include issues such as the need to become globally and culturally competent, the importance of linking theory to evidence-based practices, the benefits of interdisciplinary collaborations, the challenge to prepare students to meet the growing need for competencies in gerontology, and the mandate to move to a greener way of community life to protect the environment for current and future generations. An example of utilizing service-learning pedagogy is presented on each of these important topics.

As mentioned earlier, Twill, Elpers, and Lay (2011) present an example of how a service-learning experience may provide evidence of mastery of competency/practice behaviors designated for HBSE (CSWE, 2008). Social work education programs have traditionally been organized around content areas and the shift to competencies may be challenging for faculty who teach theory. Service-learning pedagogy, including reflections structured around the identified practice behaviors, provides a framework for the shift, as well as a way to provide evidence of student mastery.

The next two articles provide examples of international service-learning (Ericson, 2011) and interdisciplinary collaboration to develop cross-cultural knowledge (Belliveau, 2011). Ericson (2011) highlights the opportunities and challenges of an international service-learning course to develop competencies/practice behaviors in human rights as well as diversity and difference. Utilizing quantitative survey and qualitative journal data, students demonstrated increases in their self-reported competency and the gains seemed to continue beyond the trip itself. Belliveau (2011) addresses similar competencies around human rights and social justice as well as diversity and difference in a cross-cultural project much closer to home. This example is powerful in illustrating an interdisciplinary collaboration with the university Spanish language department to provide an immersive experience with Latino parents in a school setting. The planned activity presented serendipitous opportunities for students to experience how the socio-political context of immigrant families, as well as language differences, creates barriers, as well as opportunities, for parents and children alike.

The final two articles focus on emerging issues that face our country, as well as the planet, and are those which future social workers will need to address, long after social work educators of today have completed their careers. As older adults are becoming increasingly represented in the American population, as well as in the client populations

served by social workers, Jones (2011) provides an example of service-learning to expose students to this underserved population and explore attitudes toward aging. Encouraging students to reflect upon their own aging process while building competencies measured by the Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale II (Damron-Rodriquez, 2006), students demonstrated gains on all 4 subscales of the tool, which supports previous research of the utilization of service-learning in geriatric settings. And finally, Lucas-Darby (2011) focuses attention on the protection of the environment, supporting sustainability of the environment as a basic human right. A service-learning assignment in a community practice class resulted in three diverse projects which allowed opportunities for students to build competency in multiple areas of the advancement of human rights, community context and community practice.

As the articles discussed above were reviewed, edited and made ready for final publication, the editors identified overarching themes that transcend the individual contributions to the literature on social work and service-learning as related to the current context of competency-based assessment in higher education. The movement to assess learning outcomes in higher education has come from both regional accrediting bodies as well as professional accrediting organizations such as CSWE (Holloway, 2008), which provide the broader context for this analysis. The first theme relates to the importance of civic engagement and the mission of social work education. Although much of the emphasis in preparing for CSWE accreditation/reaffirmation seems focused on curriculum and competencies/practice behaviors, the new standards also highlight a School/Program's mission and the need to provide evidence that the mission is being met. Given that the professional purpose focuses on issues of social and economic justice, respect for diversity, and elimination of poverty and oppression (NASW, 2008; IFSW, n.d.), one would be hard-pressed to find a social work program whose mission did *not* focus on these issues. Service-learning pedagogy, with the emphasis on civic engagement and services to vulnerable populations, may provide powerful evidence that Schools/Programs are indeed meeting their missions. These efforts of individual faculty members in implementing this pedagogy may be thus viewed as part of a School/Program's strategy to demonstrate Educational Policy 1.0 – Program Mission and Goals (CSWE, 2008). In addition, the efforts of a social work program to implement service-learning and foster civic engagement become part of the overall college/university strategy for civic engagement, which is now required for regional accreditation as well.

As part of the clear emphasis on program mission and goals, EPAS (CSWE, 2008) also has added a standard to specifically address program context. Holloway (2008) identifies that "(a)ttention to context is found throughout the new standards" (p. 3). The Educational Policy 1.2 Program Context states that "(p)rograms are further influenced by their historical, political, economic, social, cultural, demographic, and global contexts and by the ways they elect to engage these factors" (CSWE, 2008, p. 2). Each of the specific examples of service-learning courses in this volume provides opportunities to identify factors particular to the college/university context (e.g., traditional age undergraduate students working with older adults, students from homogeneous communities participating in an international experience, students developing services for

a changing demographic, etc.). These unique opportunities grow directly from the local needs of the area and provide evidence that Schools/Programs are indeed responding to their university mission and setting in providing social work education to students.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, service-learning provides the opportunity for an emphasis on the *process* of learning over time. As discussed by Phillips (2011) and Nino, Cuevas, and Loya (2011), as well as by other scholars, service-learning pedagogy is often utilized by faculty in the beginning of a student's academic career. This has multiple benefits for students in professions such as education, nursing and social work. These include allowing for career exploration, ensuring that a career is a good fit and introducing some of the major challenges and themes that will be explored throughout the student's academic program. Given that EPAS (CSWE, 2008) focuses attention on the *outcome assessment* for student competencies and practice behaviors at the end of their academic career, service-learning creates an opportunity to focus on the journey toward competency, through its emphasis on early experience and reflection.

It is clear that many service-learning courses have the potential to generate direct evidence of the achievement of specific competencies and practice behaviors. In addition to summative assessment, the opportunity to apply complex content on topics as far-ranging as HBSE theory, community practice, and cultural competency to specific situations in a service-learning course may only serve to better prepare students for demonstrating competency in the field, where it is appropriately required to be assessed. The requisite emphasis on the development of structured, critical reflection becomes instrumental in describing, deepening, and documenting learning (Ash & Clayton, 2004). Highly developed skills of structured, critical reflection will be necessary for students to identify and provide evidence for the wide array of competencies and practice behaviors from their practicum experiences. Although field is certainly the "signature pedagogy" (Shulman, 2005) of social work, skills in reflection are arguably necessary for students to be able to maximize their learning and integrate classroom content and the field activities for competent practice. Well-designed service-learning courses have the potential to be a powerful tool for social work educators to meet the expectations of professional education as well as the civic mission of the profession itself.

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Service-Learning and Social Work Competency-Based Education: A 'Goodness of Fit'?

Amy Phillips

Abstract: *As social work education moves to a competency-based approach, faculty are increasing their use of pedagogical tools designed to provide students with opportunities, in addition to traditional field placements, to develop practice skills. Faculty are no doubt turning to service-learning, and other forms of experiential education, to provide these opportunities and to offer an additional means for departments to demonstrate and measure student practice behaviors. To help focus the use of service-learning in social work education, this article uses sources from the larger service-learning field and from social work scholarship to examine the nature of service-learning, to review current service-learning trends, to summarize its use in social work education, and to raise questions about its goodness of fit with competency-based education.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, social work, competency-based education*

INTRODUCTION

As social work education moves to a competency-based approach, faculty are increasing their use of pedagogical tools designed to provide students with opportunities, in addition to traditional field placements, to develop practice skills. Faculty are no doubt turning to service-learning, and other forms of experiential education, to provide these opportunities and to offer an additional means for departments to demonstrate and measure student practice behaviors. The purpose of this article is to help provide a focus for the use of service-learning in social work education and to encourage a common disciplinary understanding and language about service-learning. A broad lens is first employed to examine the definition of service-learning and its role in the higher education civic engagement movement. Current service-learning trends are reviewed, and then the focus is narrowed to a discussion of its use in social work education. The article concludes with a section that raises questions about the goodness of fit between service-learning and social work competency-based education.

WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING? SERVICE-LEARNING AND THE HIGHER EDUCATION CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MOVEMENT

In the context of higher education, service-learning is cited as one example of the various activities reflective of the higher education civic engagement (HECE) movement (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Jacoby, 2009a). Other HECE activities include participatory action research, public scholarship, and college-sponsored service abroad. In the past decade, numerous initiatives, both inside and outside higher education, have emerged to encourage and support the civic engagement of college students and

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their institutions. In addition, over 15 years' worth of research demonstrates positive impacts of civic engagement generally and service-learning specifically on student academic learning, critical thinking abilities, heightened sense of civic responsibility, and sense of personal efficacy (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Seifer, 2005). Researchers studying effective educational practices view engaged learning activities, such as service-learning, as "high impact" educational practices that improve the quality of undergraduate education (Indiana University Center, 2009).

The term "service-learning" emerged in the late 1960s at a time when national service initiatives such as the Peace Corps, Job Corps, VISTA, and university-community partnerships were drawing thousands of college students and other young adults into community service activities (Learn and Serve, n.d.a). By the mid-1980s, grass roots and campus-based organizations such as the Campus Outreach Opportunity League and Campus Compact were in place to encourage civic engagement among college students and to support service-learning initiatives in higher education. The federal government offered its support to the burgeoning higher education civic engagement movement through passage of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the creation of the Corporation for National and Community Service in 1993. Through its Learn and Serve America program, the Corporation provides grants, training, and technical assistance to community-service and service-learning programs in community, K-12, and postsecondary institutions.

The higher education civic engagement movement can claim success in encouraging student service involvement. By 2006, college students had logged 377 million service hours (NYLC, 2008), and at present there are over 1100 member colleges and universities in the Campus Compact national coalition (Campus Compact, n.d.).

Service-Learning Described

Service-learning projects and programs may be curricular or co-curricular. Curricular service-learning, sometimes called academic service-learning, is classroom-based and is used to meet course learning objectives. Curricular service-learning may also take the form of fourth-credit option courses, stand-alone service-learning modules, introductory service-learning courses, course clusters with service-learning, capstone service-learning projects, and service-learning majors and minors (Enos & Troppe, 1996). Co-curricular service-learning takes place outside the classroom and may take the form of school-wide service learning programs, campus leadership-development initiatives, residence hall or Greek organization projects, and athletic service-learning programs (Scheuermann, 1996). Both curricular and co-curricular service-learning "make intentional efforts to engage students in planned and purposeful learning related to service experiences" (Howard, 2001, p. 10).

Service-learning is sometimes viewed interchangeably with volunteerism and internships. However, there is widespread agreement among service-learning scholars and practitioners that there are three necessary conditions for service activities to be considered service-learning: civic engagement, reflection, and reciprocity (Jacoby, 1996;

Howard, 2001; Welch, 2009). Regarding the first condition, student participants must engage in a service experience designed to address real community problems and to develop student civic engagement skills. The second condition requires that the service experience be grounded in curricular learning objectives that are facilitated not only through instruction and the service experience itself but also through intentional, deep, and structured reflection on that experience. Without routine reflection on the root causes of community problems, on the relationship between the service, community problems, and curriculum, and on the student's role in the service activity, the experience is solely volunteerism. Thirdly, service-learning requires a reciprocal relationship between all participants in the experience. In other words, students and their instructors take leadership from community members in defining and addressing issues, and community members are receptive to the contributions of their educational partners. There is mutual responsibility and accountability in the relationship. As Jacoby (1996) notes,

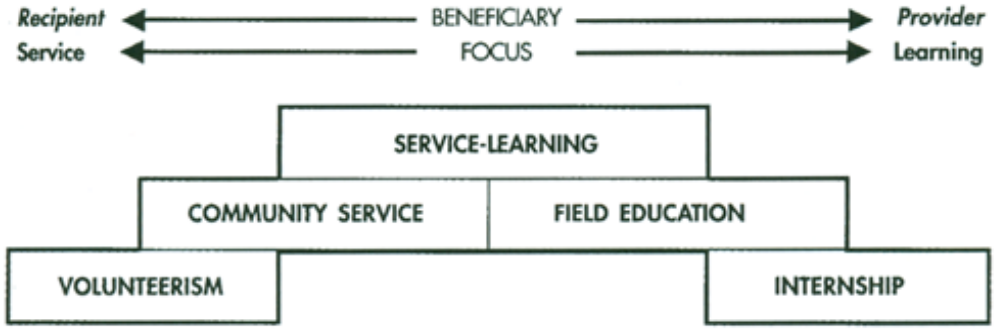
> Service-learning thus stands in contrast to the traditional, paternalistic, one-way approach to service, where one person or group has resources that they share with a person or group that they assume lacks resources….Service-learning encourages students to do things *with* others rather than *for* them. (p. 8. Italics in original.)

Service-learning, then, is distinctly different from volunteerism due to service-learning's focus on intentional learning (both curricular and civic), and because of its emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between students, their instructors, and community members.

In addition to confusion with volunteerism, service-learning is often viewed synonymously with internships and field practica. Field training, however, places primary focus on student disciplinary skill development and little to no focus on development of civic engagement skills. In addition, the condition of reciprocity is generally absent from internships, with the student playing a traditional one-way service provider role in relationship to some service recipient.

In summary, the three essential components of service-learning outlined above set it apart from volunteerism and internships and ensure the equal weight of learning and service, as the term's hyphen represents. In a well-known conceptual tool, Furco (2003) highlights this required balance via demonstrating service-learning's distinction among other service programs on a beneficiary and focus continuum. As seen in Figure 1, service-learning is distinguished from recipient-oriented activity where the focus is primarily service, and from provider-oriented programs, in which the focus is on student learning.

Figure 1: Distinction Among Service Programs



Furco, A. (2003). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In Campus Compact, *Introduction to service-learning toolkit: Readings and resources for faculty* (2nd ed.). Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

In addition to promotion of service and learning through civic engagement, reciprocity, and reflection, there is often an expectation that service-learning will promote the larger goals of democratic participation, improved community well-being, civic responsibility, and social justice (Calderon, 2007; Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Colby et al., 2003; Jacoby, 2003; Kelshaw, Lazarus, Minier, & Associates, 2009). Service-learning has been viewed as a "model for community development" (NYLC, 2008, p. 9), a pedagogy for shaping "student civic and moral values and dispositions" (O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009, p. 25), and a type of "justice-learning" (Butin, 2010; Conley & Hamlin, 2009). These expectations are reflected in numerous definitions of service-learning, including the following used by Learn and Serve America to describe service-learning at the K-12 and college levels: "Service-Learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Learn and Serve, n.d.b.). While service-learning research may not yet be able to demonstrate the direct correlation between service-learning, social justice, and strengthened communities, it is clear that numerous scholars, practitioners, and organizations view service-learning as a tool for social, as well as academic and personal, transformation.

CURRENT HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICE-LEARNING TRENDS AND DELIBERATIONS

From the late-1980s through the1990s, discussion about service-learning moved from debate about what constitutes service-learning to delineation of best practices and assessment of its impact on student learning outcomes (Furco, 2009). Over that time, numerous professional associations, publications, conferences, and university service-learning centers emerged to provide a broad array of texts, workbooks, discussion opportunities, and research all designed to support the novice or seasoned service-learning practitioner.

In the first decade of the 21st century, research, such as that conducted by the National Survey of Student Engagement, has demonstrated the importance of service-learning as a valuable pedagogical tool for promoting civic engagement (Indiana University, 2009). Service-learning scholars have also published models and processes for ensuring service-learning institutionalization and sustainability (Billig, Holland, & Bowden, 2008; CCNCCE, 2006; Chadwick & Polowski, 2007; Hartley, Harkavy, & Benson, 2005). Grounded in what appears to be a solid foundation, new trends in service-learning practice and research, as well as deliberations about service-learning, are emerging. The following section reviews some of these areas.

Service-eLearning

As various forms of distance learning have exploded onto the educational scene (e.g., videoconferencing, computer-based courses, and web-based courses), faculty are developing pedagogical models which blend e-learning activities and service. "Service-eLearning" is the name given to this blend and it is defined as "an integrative pedagogy that engages learners through technology in civic inquiry, service, reflection, and action" (Dailey-Hebert, Donnelli-Sallee, & DiPadova-Stocks, 2008, p. 1).

Service-eLearning may involve the simple addition of a discussion board into a traditional face-to-face (f2f) service-learning course, or in the case of a completely online class, it may involve blogs, wikis, web-conferencing, Skype, or other e-communication methods for all academic activities. In addition, the service portion of service-eLearning may be conducted either f2f in the student's location, or take place purely online, with students providing an online service to a local or distant community (Dailey-Hebert et al., 2008; Guthrie & McCracken, 2010; Pearce, 2009). As Strait (2009b) outlines, service-eLearning may look different depending on the course delivery method, but the core components of service-learning such as civic engagement with community partners, course content, and reflection, are expected to remain constant. A variety of online resources are emerging to provide support for and dissemination of information about service-eLearning and other forms of civic engagement via the use of communication technologies. These resources include the *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, the *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, the *Journal of Community Informatics*, and university-related resources such as Minnesota Campus Compact's Center for Digital Civic Engagement, Massachusetts Campus Compact's Digital Engagement Initiative, and the University of South Dakota's *Service-Learning Handbook for Distance Learning*.

International Service-Learning

Although students have involved themselves in civic engagement through service abroad for many years (Chisholm & Berry, 1999; Yates & Youniss, 1998), the most rapidly growing service-learning programs today are those promoting international learning and global citizenship (Jacoby, 2010). Parker and Dautoff (2007) make a clear distinction, however, between study abroad and service-learning, noting that students are the primary beneficiaries of study abroad while international service-learning also benefits faculty and community members. In addition, international service-learning refers not only to students from the U.S. providing service abroad, but now "embodies

the many different models and methods used by international students and practitioners outside the United States in international settings" (Strait, 2009a, p. 5). There is a growing body of academic literature related to international service-learning that provides case examples, guidelines, and resources (e.g., Grusky, 2000; Metcalf, 2010; Sternberger, Ford, & Hale, 2005). In addition, international networks and associations exist to support global service-learning initiatives in a variety of countries, to link initiatives to each other, and to provide resources for examination and dissemination of research on international programs. Examples of these associations include The Talloires Network, the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership, and the Global Service Institute. While international service-learning is a growing area, Jacoby (2009b) notes that challenges to global service efforts include affordability and accessibility, concerns about exploitation of community partners, and questions about whether service abroad inhibits responsiveness to domestic social issues.

Service-Learning Research

In addition to the National Survey of Student Engagement mentioned earlier, service-learning practitioners are fortunate to have a body of research to support assertions that service-learning positively impacts student academic learning and personal development. Research by Eyler and Giles (1999; 2002), Astin et al., (2000) and other scholars whose studies are found in publications such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* and *Advances in Service-Learning Research*, have contributed to the evidence base of service-learning practice and pedagogy. Publications also exist to provide guidance to faculty for assessing service-learning outcomes in their own classes (Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001).

Current service-learning research includes what Shumer (2009) describes as constructivist approaches. These approaches view knowledge as socially constructed and work toward inclusion of all participants in the development and implementation of research studies. Constructivist researchers view service-learning itself as "a constructivist process in which those being served create new understandings so that they can control their own destiny" (Shumer, 2009, p. 193). Examples of this kind of research include community-based research, empowerment evaluation, youth participatory research, and utilization focused evaluation and research (Shumer, 2009). Constructivists researchers are also attempting to extend the conceptualization of service-learning through a community inquiry framework that, instead of the classroom, identifies the "community as a locus and source of learning" (Bishop, Bruce, & Jeong, 2009).

In addition to the research on service-learning's impact on students, the service-learning literature provides case studies and models of university-community collaborations and some research on service-learning's impact on community partners (d'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Jacoby & Associates, 2003; Kelshaw, Lazarus, Minier, & Associates, 2009). Additional research is still needed, however, to determine the effect of service-learning on partner organizations, community members, and on whether service-learning is having the larger transformative effects many intend it to have (Jacoby, 2009b).

Deliberations about Service-Learning's Function and Purpose

Service-learning is variously discussed as pedagogy, practice, theory, philosophy, or some combination of these. Authors trace its philosophical and theoretical roots to John Dewey's early twentieth-century experimentalist theory of knowledge (Rocheleau, 2004) and his advocacy of active learning tied to democratic participation. As a pedagogy and practice of civic engagement, service-learning is linked to Ernest Boyer (1990) and his influential work, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities for the Professoriate* which promotes civically-engaged teaching, learning, and scholarship (Colby et al., 2003). Stevens (2003) connects service-learning roots to African American social thought and action. Various authors also ground service-learning in the context of theoretical models such as the philanthropic model (Abel, 2004), the civic engagement model (Watson, 2004), or the communitarian model (Codispoti, 2004).

Building on, and responding to, the perspectives mentioned above, some authors have offered critical examinations of service-learning's functions and purpose in higher education. Mitchell and Donahue (2009) posit that service-learning is a pedagogy "that has traditionally targeted privileged students" (p. 173). Their work highlights the "service" in which students of color engage in the classroom, "helping White classmates learn about the communities where they serve and challenging their peers to understand that White and middle class are not normative perspectives" (p. 188). The authors' examination of the classroom experience and what constitutes "service" raises questions about the potential disconnect between service-learning's transformational aspirations and its functional reality.

Consistent with long-standing concerns raised about the purpose of service-learning and its potential to reinforce stereotypes and systems of privilege, (Chesler & Vasques Scalera, 2000; Morton, 1995), Jones, Gilbride-Brown, and Gasiorski (2005) found that service-learning activities can, in fact, uncover student stereotypes, assumptions, and privilege, resulting in student resistance. These authors promote a critical whiteness and developmental approach to address resistance and to promote critical awareness. Jacoby (2009b) also takes a critical perspective by asking if service-learning perpetuates the status quo and calling on practitioners to ensure that service-learning confronts "the structural inequities that create unjust and oppressive conditions" (p. 98).

Butin (2006; 2010), probably more than any other author, has challenged the service-learning field to take a hard look at the definitions, conceptualizations, and underlying premises of service-learning. For Butin, the most commonly accepted understandings of the purpose and nature of service-learning (described in this article's first section above) are grounded in a generally unacknowledged "modernist, liberal, and radical individualistic notions of self, progress, knowledge, and power" (2010, p. 7). He elaborates as follows:

> Specifically, such a worldview is grounded in the notion that individuals are autonomous change agents who can effect positive and sustained transformations. It is the belief that we can consciously and deliberately bring about betterment (by the more powerful for the less powerful) through a downward benevolence whereby all benefit. (2010, p. 7)

Despite this benevolent urge, Butin (2010) points out that there is significant lack of evidence about the beneficial impact of service-learning on service recipients or communities in general. In addition, Butin interestingly uses the work of Stanley Fish to assert that any foundational declarations about the ultimate purposes of service-learning—to encourage democracy, support social justice, or whatever—actually work against achieving those purposes by shutting off critical examination of service-learning conceptualizations, practices, and underlying assumptions. As Butin notes, for service-learning to be "justice-oriented education," it must be "antifoundational," operating "from the presumption of service-learning-as-question rather than service-learning as answer" (2010, p. 63). Butin also asserts that service-learning has reached the limits of its ability to be institutionalized and would be more effective as a transformative tool if it were an actual academic discipline rather than a pedagogy used in various forms primarily by faculty in the "soft" disciplines.

The various deliberations about service-learning found in the literature and discussed at conferences may strike some service-learning practitioners as somewhat extraneous to their on-the-ground efforts. However, critical thought about service-learning is consistent with one of its core components, reflection, and is also indicative of the growth, influence, and discipline, of the service-learning field.

SERVICE-LEARNING IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

In the context of its disciplinary focus on service and empowerment, and with its traditional use of field practica, social work education has been viewed as an historic contributor to the development of service-learning (Zieren & Stoddard, 2004) and even indistinguishable from service-learning (Jarman-Rohde & Tropman, 1993). In truth, however, social work education has suffered from a lack of clarity about the nature of service-learning and, in comparison to other disciplines, has been late to incorporate service-learning into its curriculum (Phillips, 2007). In their review of service-learning in the social work education literature, Lemieux and Allen (2007) demonstrated that social work education has often confused service-learning, field practica, and volunteerism, ignoring service-learning's focus on community-led activities and development of student civic engagement skills. The authors noted that this lack of "conceptual clarity and consistency" has posed problems for service-learning development and research in social work education (p. 312). They provided examples from the social work literature, however, which described service-learning experiences they considered to be based in established theory and practice from the larger service-learning field. Such established practice meant that the experiences were a part of academic coursework undertaken by "a group or class of social work students that integrated a community-based service component distinct from both voluntary service and field instruction (Lemieux & Allen, 2007, p. 313). Examples included a cross-cultural service-learning project which assessed students' perceptions of race and culture (Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli, 2003), a summer course at a camp for children with burn injuries which assessed student self-efficacy and value orientations (Williams, King & Koob, 2002; Williams & Reeves, 2004), and a housing needs assessment project conducted by a research class (Knee, 2002).

As Phillips (2007) outlined, the lack of conceptual clarity, along with the perception of field practica as service-learning, has resulted in social work's arrival as a late-comer to service-learning scholarship. In addition, such scholarship has occurred without a common language for service-learning and without broader disciplinary recognition of service-learning's role in supporting social work as a civically engaged discipline. As a result, articles have appeared in the social work literature related to "experiential education," "community-based learning," "participatory action research," "hands-on learning," "social change interventions," and "service-learning" (Phillips, 2007).

Despite the range of civic engagement pedagogical examples and the general lack of conceptual clarity in the literature about what constitutes service-learning (Lemieux & Allen, 2007), a body of work related to service-learning across the social work curriculum is emerging in the literature. Service-learning has been used to foster beginning-level knowledge and skills in introduction to social work and social welfare courses (Allen, Rainford, Rodenhiser, & Brascia, 2007; Watkins, Charlesworth, & House, 2007) and in the context of micro, mezzo, and macro practice courses (Bye, 2005; Norris & Schwartz, 2009; Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007; Singleton, 2009; Williams, King, & Koob, 2002). Service-learning has been applied in policy classes (Droppa, 2007; Pierpont, Pozzuto, & Powell, 2001; Rocha, 2000) and social work research courses (Hyde, 2004; Kapp, 2006; Knee, 2002). It has been used to influence student attitudes, values, and self-awareness while working collaboratively with diverse community groups (Arches, 2001; Forte, 1997; Lowe & Medina, 2010; Sanders et al., 2003; Williams & Reeves, 2004). Service-learning has also been used to support the application of theory to a community project in the context of a human behavior and the social environment class (Ames & Diepstra, 2007). It has even been incorporated into social work internships (Poulin, Silver, & Kauffman, 2006).

All of the pedagogical projects listed above, and others in the social work literature, may or may not reflect the necessary components for designation as service-learning (as discussed in the first section of this article), yet all may represent a movement toward a more civically-engaged curriculum, with service-learning as a core component of the movement. In an effort to support both conceptual clarity and civic engagement, social work educators and authors are offering theoretical tools, pedagogical models, and discussion forums to promote a common language, purpose, and research agenda for service-learning in social work education. For example, Lemieux and Allen (2007) provide a review of service-learning practice and assessment issues for social work education, and the Nadel, Majewski, and Sullivan-Cosetti text, *Social Work and Service Learning* (2007) offers models for service-learning across the social work curriculum. Discussions about service-learning and social work education have taken place via the University of Nebraska's service-learning and social work education conferences in 2003 and 2004, Indiana University's service-learning conference in 2010, and this special issue of *Advances in Social Work*.

As in the larger service-learning arena, social work education will best utilize service-learning if it understands its distinction from internships and volunteerism, builds on its current best practices as pedagogy, and undertakes research to determine its effectiveness and encourage its development. These activities are particularly important

in the context of social work's current focus on competency-based education (CSWE, 2008). It is natural that social work educators would seek to use service-learning as a tool for enhancing and assessing student competencies. But social work programs may want to move this agenda forward with some caution, taking the questions and accompanying discussions in the following section into consideration while determining the "goodness of fit" between service-learning and competency-based education.

SERVICE-LEARNING AND SOCIAL WORK COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Question 1: What is at risk in the application of service-learning to social work competency-based education?

Educational Policy 2.1 of the Council on Social Work Education's *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* states the following about competency-based education:

> Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. (CSWE, 2008, p. 3)

The current CSWE EPAS lists 41 practice behaviors and skills and states that "practice behaviors may be used to operationalize the curriculum and assessment methods" (p. 3). Developing curricula and assessment around the teaching and learning of practice behaviors to ensure the competency of graduates makes undeniable sense and, in fact, a competency-based approach is not new in social work education (see, for example, Arkava & Brennen, 1976). With such an approach, educational programs must then provide students with the opportunities to practice the behaviors. Since it may be difficult for all practice behaviors to be measured in internships or field practica, and since programs are required to undertake multiple measures of the behaviors, additional active and experiential learning activities such as simulations, role plays, and service-learning offer opportunities for behavior development and assessment.

Competency-based education focusing on the development of student practice behaviors is just that, though – a focus on student practice behaviors -- and any active or experiential learning experience which has student skill development as its singular goal is ultimately reflective of the learning-side focus of Furco's (2003) diagram shown earlier. In other words, using service-learning for practice behavior development runs the risk of losing the service/learning balance, and particularly runs the risk of losing service-learning's focus on service to the community informed by reciprocal relationships with community members. In addition, if the focus is on learning a prescribed set of practice behaviors, service projects may be developed for the purpose of practicing some subset of those behaviors but none of the behaviors may be related to civic engagement—and developing civic engagement skills is another intended by-product of service-learning.

Lastly, unpacking the relationship between service activities, community issues, and learning objectives through structured, critical reflection is a *sine qua non* of service-learning. However, the breadth and depth involved in critical reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009) may be more than what some instructors feel is manageable, or necessary, for practice behavior development.

In summary, using service-learning for competency-based education risks the watering down, if not complete loss, of service-learning's critical, civically-engaged, and transformative potential. This is not a problem if social work educators choose to define service-learning in ways other than that outlined in the first section of this article. Nevertheless, it is possible for educators to use service-learning as outlined above to develop practice behaviors which would require intentional application of the elements that characterize service-learning. This should not be difficult given the close alignment of these elements to the mission of the social work profession.

If there is a risk to service-learning in the context of competency-based education, could the opposite also be true? As referenced earlier, service-learning has been viewed alternately as a pedagogy potentially promoting the status quo (Jacoby, 2009b) or "a progressive and liberal agenda under the guise of a universalistic practice" (Butin, 2006, p. 483). These perspectives highlight the fact that service-learning, or any pedagogy, is not a value-free, objectivistic endeavor, and that the act of using service-learning is also a philosophical, if not political, statement. Social work education was attacked just a few years ago for "having ideological proclivities and a strong penchant for advocacy" (National Association of Scholars, 2007). While the profession might be inclined to dismiss such statements as coming from a fringe sector, social work educators might want to be aware that adoption of service-learning for competency development could raise further questions about the ideology, and resultant competencies, into which social work students are being indoctrinated.

Question 2: What are some practical considerations for the use of service-learning in competency-based education?

As mentioned earlier, if social work programs begin using service-learning more frequently in their curricula, they may want to hold faculty discussions to clarify their definition of service-learning and for what purpose it will be used. It would also be useful to review best practices from the service-learning and social work literature for replication purposes, and to make assessment plans to measure not only practice behaviors but also other service-learning outcomes. In addition, programs may want to think strategically about the placement of service-learning in their curricula. Service-learning has been used variably in a number of disciplines in introductory classes to introduce new majors to the field, in methods or practice classes to enhance disciplinary skills or to prepare students for practica, and in capstone courses to demonstrate cumulative knowledge and skills. Since service-learning courses generally require substantial work in and out of the classroom on the part of both instructor and students, programs may want to determine the best strategic location for service-learning. In other words, consideration should be given not only to service-learning's best fit in a course,

but also its best fit in the curriculum as a whole, taking multiple issues such as faculty time, community needs, and practice behavior development, into account.

Another practical consideration already alluded to is the effort and time needed to develop and implement quality service-learning courses. A service-learning center may exist on campus to assist with course mechanics and community placements, but most faculty who use service-learning probably have a very hands-on approach to their courses to ensure course/service compatibility, reciprocity with community partners, student support, and meaningful assessment. Many such faculty also choose to use service-learning courses for their scholarship, undertaking action research, community-based studies, and collaborative inquiry projects. While a scholarship of engagement has been recognized as a viable endeavor for at least two decades, an individual college or university may not always value it. As Driscoll notes (2008, as cited in Sandmann, 2009), "most institutions continue to place community engagement and its scholarship in the traditional category of service and require other forms of scholarship for promotion and tenure" (p. 41). Social work programs that decide to incorporate service-learning for competency development will need to ensure that faculty are not penalized in the professional evaluation process by their use of service-learning for scholarship or teaching.

The questions above and the challenges they raise are intended to stimulate dialogue about service-learning and competency-based education. However, individuals new to service-learning may be reading this special issue in search of tools for competency-based education. Also, as of the writing of this paragraph, the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a federal funding bill which would eliminate the Corporation for National and Community Service and all its programs (including Learn and Serve America). For both these reasons, a summary of the benefits of service-learning in competency-based education is certainly appropriate and timely. The benefits are many and the list below comes primarily from those already mentioned throughout the article and from this author's own experience. Additional service-learning adherents can easily add to the list.

1. As mentioned earlier, the CSWE Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards define competency-based education as "an outcome performance approach to curriculum design," the goal of which is to "demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice" (CSWE, 2008, p. 3). Key words here are "performance," "application," and "competencies." It is not enough for students to demonstrate *knowledge about* competencies; they must also demonstrate *ability* in the *performance* of them. The more opportunity students have to use skills and behaviors, particularly in practice courses, the more able they will be to demonstrate competence by graduation. Service-learning is an experiential methodology which can be adapted to any social work course and which aptly serves the purpose of providing opportunities for skill integration and application in practice.
2. Since social work programs are required by the EPAS to undertake multiple measures of student competencies, service-learning offers programs an initial

point-in-time course-based measurement of practice behaviors before a second measurement which could occur during internship. Service-learning is also an educational method with a substantial body of literature providing implementation and assessment tools (see the "Service-Learning Research" section above). Some of these tools could be useful in the development of assignments and assessments related to social work practice behaviors.

3. Service-learning has been used effectively as preparation for field practica and for development of skills in areas which practica may not offer (such as macro practice). Service-learning projects give programs the opportunity to measure practice behaviors not used in internships, and if sequenced appropriately, service-learning activities may give students a beginning-level exercise in certain skills, which they can then deepen and develop once they are in capstone field experiences.

4. Finally, service-learning offers social work education an additional mechanism to reinforce to students the core values of the profession. Service-learning's primary conditions of civic engagement, reflection, and reciprocity (see "Service-Learning Described" section above), support all social work values, but particularly the values of "service," "social justice," and "the importance of human relationships." These values are reflected in the core competencies outlined in CSWE's Educational Policies (e.g., EP 2.1.5 and EP 2.1.8). To the extent that social work educators who use service-learning meet its core conditions, they will be enabling students to act out of the profession's core values while developing core competencies of social work practice.

Service-learning and social work competency-based education would seem to be a good fit given their shared values, social work's history as an engaged profession, and the opportunities service-learning affords students to apply knowledge, values, and skills. Yet, as I hope this article has reinforced, a head-long rush to use service-learning in social work competency-based education without consideration of their unique purposes, reciprocal impacts, and practical implementations may result in an outcome that does not do justice to either or to the constituents they intend to serve.

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Educating Citizens as well as Professionals: Using Service-Learning to Enhance the Civic Element of Social Work Education

Tracey Kathleen Burke

Abstract: *Schools of social work have put considerable energy into civic engagement and community partnership. Despite the attention paid to the civic mission of the university and/or of the profession, however, very little attention has been paid to the civic education of social work students. It will be argued here that social work education must include discussions about citizenship and democracy, about participating in our communities apart from our work. Service-learning, with its emphasis on civic learning and a complementary focus on social justice, provides both a lens and a pedagogy for accomplishing this.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, citizenship, civic education, social justice, professionalization*

INTRODUCTION

Schools of social work have put considerable energy into civic engagement and community partnership. Published accounts of such activities describe research linked to community development initiatives (Allen-Meares, 2008), an MSW concentration organized as a partnership effort (Ishisaka, Farwell, Sohng, & Uehara, 2004), even an entire MSW program with a single Community Partnerships concentration (Wertheimer, Beck, Brooks, & Wolk, 2004). Programs that have not wholly restructured still are likely to offer community-based service-learning courses, which feature a reciprocal relationship between the classroom and the community (Furco, 1996), in addition to the student-centered internships that are the "signature pedagogy" of social work education.

Despite the attention paid to the civic mission of the university and/or of the profession, however, very little attention has been paid to the civic education of social work students. A growing body of literature attests that service-learning enhances students' mastery of and engagement with professional (academic) material (Anderson, 2006; Faria, Dauenhauer, & Steitz, 2010; Kapp, 2006; Knee, 2002; L. A. Lowe & Medina, 2010; Rocha, 2000; Scott, 2008; see also numerous chapters in Nadel, Majewski, & Sullivan-Cosetti, 2007). As illustrated in this special journal issue, service-learning can provide the means for assessing key social work competencies. Service-learning also promotes certain personal traits and attitudes social work educators deem important (L. A. Lowe & Medina, 2010; Williams, King, & Koob, 2002). Yet, particularly at the bachelor's level, we are "educating citizens" (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003) as well as social workers. Service-learning has the potential to promote civic learning as well. A review of social work's partnerships and service-learning literature, however, reveals that even when on occasion civic education is acknowledged in course design (Droppa, 2007; Poulin, Kauffman, & Silver, 2006), it is conspicuously absent in discussions of outcomes (Lemieux & Allen, 2007).

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Why has social work neglected this element of education? Perhaps we assume that social work values categorically incorporate civic values (King, 2003; Lucas, 2000). Certainly we highlight our professional commitment to social justice and social change, even identifying the ability to "advance human rights and social and economic justice" and the ability to "engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being" as two of ten core professional competencies (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). There is evidence to support the use of service-learning in promoting a social justice orientation (Poulin et al., 2006; Sather, Weitz, & Carlson, 2007). Some suggest that social work should be a leader in service-learning *because* of our long-established commitment to social justice (Campbell & Bragg, 2007). Instead, social work is a relative newcomer to service-learning (though not to other forms of community-based education) and a minor player on the national service-learning stage.

It will be argued here that social work education must include discussions about citizenship and democracy, about participating in our communities apart from our work. We must attend to our students' civic education because the most intractable issues that social work has claimed as its professional purview – such as poverty, violence, and discrimination – are, in the civic engagement parlance, "public issues." Everyone has a stake in addressing them. By reducing them to social work issues, we risk communicating to our students that they need only care about them during business hours; we risk communicating a myopic vision that only professional social workers can legitimately resolve them. Service-learning provides a platform from which to resist such a message.

JANE ADDAMS AS CIVIC ROLE MODEL

It is common in the social work and service-learning/civic engagement discourse to see references to founding mother Jane Addams, and indeed, Addams is an exemplar for what we might wish our students to become. Crucially, however, she did not establish and lead Hull House *as a social worker*. She saw herself and was seen by contemporaries as a sociologist, albeit a female sociologist based in the community rather than the university, one who was relegated to the margins as (male) disciplinary sociology solidified (Deegan, 1988). More importantly, she also saw herself as a citizen whose lot was intrinsically tied to that of the people around her (Elshtain, 2002; Knight, 2005). Her first book, a collection of reflective essays she wrote and re-wrote over the course of a decade, she tellingly called *Democracy and Social Ethics* (Addams, 2002/1902). Being a member of a democratic society means much more than voting to Addams, who as a woman could not vote for most of her life. It means openness to "perplexity" and rethinking one's certainties given new experiences; it means valuing the contributions of all, not just those who share her elite background. She begins her essay on education:

> As democracy modifies our conception of life, it constantly raises the value and function of each member of the community, however humble he [sic] may be….We are gradually requiring of the educator that he shall free the powers of each man and connect him with the rest of life. We ask this not merely because it is the man's right to be thus connected, but because we have become convinced that the social order cannot afford to get along without his special contribution (Addams, 2002/1902, p. 80).

Even before Addams' ideas of democracy were fully formed, she intuited its importance. She frames the "subjective necessity for social settlements" in an 1892 speech as more about the democratic impulse of the upper-class settlement residents (including herself) than the concrete and cultural needs of the neighborhood. Settlement residents "are taking to the notion of human brotherhood…. These young men and women, longing to socialize their democracy, ...[live in the settlement as] an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city" (Addams, 1961/1910, pp. 75, 76, 83).

Addams became president of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, a precursor to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), arguably a signal that she did eventually identify with social work. Still, in her presidential speech, Addams (1910) downplays "relief and charity" and elevates "prevention, amelioration and social justice" (p. 441/3) – not words associated with emerging efforts to build the profession. "Social work" for Addams was coalescing into a compelling means of addressing public problems, but professionalizing social work was not itself an end.[i]

Since Addams' time, professionalization has become an end, some would say an obsession. Numerous accounts trace the relationship between social work's professional identity and its relative emphasis on services or reform (Ehrenreich, 1985; G. R. Lowe & Reid, 1999; Walkowitz, 1999). In periods of increased anxiety over social work's professional status, the pendulum has favored services or direct practice. The suggestion is that in these times, the commitment to social justice is diminished. It has been argued, too, that social work's professional project has subsumed its social justice project (Olson, 2007). The best-known indictment of social work's turn away from poverty and related issues to psychotherapy remains *Unfaithful Angels* (Specht & Courtney, 1994).

If we are consistent in following Addams' lead, however, these critiques prove to be distractions. It is not enough for social work to renew its commitment to reform-oriented, macro practice, if social workers still think of it merely as a job.[ii] It is exactly this compartmentalization that threatens the integrity of social work's role within a social justice project that is bigger than the profession.

PROFESSIONALISM IN SOCIAL WORK

Sullivan (2005) examines the public, or civic, commitments of the professions, and argues that the status of the professions is threatened because the social contract is not being kept. Professionals must meet "expectations of high standards of competence coupled with public responsibility" (p. 3) to the citizenry served. In return, the manner in which professions are structured grants more autonomy and more discretion for making judgments than occupations organized strictly as part of bureaucracies or only as a function of market forces (i.e. Freidson's (2001) "third logic"). Social work, like other professions, is increasingly subject to bureaucratic regulation and the market. Nonetheless, in Sullivan's analysis, the professions remain distinctive (social work, for example, largely regulates itself as through NASW, licensure, and accreditation), and he

argues that there is at least the perception that professionals are betraying the public trust, that expert knowledge has been put up for sale.

On the face of it, it seems absurd to accuse social work of not keeping its contract with the public. Surely it is we, more than most others, who do the dirtiest work with the people of least status, for relatively little remuneration and status ourselves. It is here that *Unfaithful Angels* (Specht & Courtney, 1994) and similar critiques become pertinent: is social work, in fact, doing this kind of work? A study commissioned by NASW (Whitaker, Weismiller, & Clark, 2006) answers, in effect, "Yes, but." Of the licensed social workers sampled, fewer than 2 per cent identify working with homeless/displaced people, income assistance, or community development as their primary practice area. Likewise, in the description of social workers' clientele and their challenges, poverty is not identified. We know that members of the client-groups that are named (e.g. people with behavioral health issues, people involved with the criminal justice system, families involved with child welfare) are disproportionately likely to be poor and from historically oppressed racial and ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps the social workers most committed to community work and/or work with the poor do not pursue licensure, and thus are excluded from this study. Nonetheless, licensed social workers' apparent neglect of poverty as a practice area in its own right, combined with the relatively high proportion of these workers who identify as in mental health and particularly in private practice, does suggest that social work is not immune to Sullivan's (2005) critique.

Perhaps there is confusion as to what exactly our contract with the public is. As social work has wrestled for turf within a system of helping professions (Abbott, 1988), there have been few arenas over which social work can claim exclusive authority. Mental health, child welfare, gerontology, etc. are contested domains, but they are more contained – and the battle for jurisdiction over them is more winnable – than social justice issues such as poverty and discrimination. Social justice is firmly ensconced in the professional Code of Ethics and now accreditation competencies, and this core value is central to why many people become social workers in the first place. But because social justice cannot be restricted to one profession, or even to the expert knowledge of the professions more broadly, it must undergird how social work approaches its work rather than be the focus of polarized debates over what the work *is*.

"The great promise of a profession is the possibility of institutionalizing vocation in the modern economy. Professionals have traditionally been ascribed vocation as well as a career or job. Besides earning a living and striving to distinguish themselves in their domain of activity, professionals have been expected to carry out their work as part of a larger collective project," Sullivan asserts (2005, p. 15). The challenge for social work education is to remind ourselves and our students of what Jane Addams understood: social work can be a powerful means of enacting a social justice vocation, but a social justice project is a "larger and collective" one, not social work's own. Service-learning provides both a lens and a pedagogy for accomplishing this.

SERVICE-LEARNING FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

Most definitions of service-learning include a civic dimension, such as the oft-cited definition from Bringle & Hatcher (1996): "a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such ways as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and *an enhanced sense of civic responsibility*" (p. 222, italics added). Civic responsibility includes a recognition of oneself "as a member of a larger social fabric" (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000, p. xxvi) and therefore takes public problems seriously and engages in "behaviors that produce public benefits" (Perry & Katula, 2001, p. 333; cf. Saltmarsh, 2005). It is no coincidence that we hear echoes of Addams here – though most commentators cite the influence of John Dewey, her friend and contemporary (Seigfried, 1999).

Across disciplines, many faculty use service-learning to foster civic dispositions in their students (Chickering, 2006; Eby, 2001; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009). Others use service-learning to promote social justice (Cuban & Anderson, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010), though there is not uniform support for faculty choosing pedagogical strategies for political purposes (Butin, 2010). In short, faculty members from myriad fields find service-learning to be a useful means of responding to Boyer's call to increase the civic importance of academic work (Boyer, 1990). Reflection activities are a key component to service-learning, linking the service experience to the broader questions of the class. Although instructors can use reflection to focus only on narrowly-defined academic issues and/or personal growth (e.g. confidence), commentators generally assume a focus on civic learning as well (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Eyler, 2002).

The ways in which civic learning is operationalized sound a lot like social work. Civic skills include "collective action, community/coalition building, and organizational analysis" (Saltmarsh, 2005, p. 55). Measures of civic commitment include "understanding of service users" and "concern for disadvantaged groups in society" (Ngai, 2009, p. 381). "[C]ivic professionals are those who work *with* citizens, rather than acting *on* them" (Boyte & Fretz, 2010, p. 83; emphasis in the original) we are told, arguably summing up a social work empowerment orientation.

What distinguishes the civic dimension of the service-learning literature from social work is the emphasis on the public realm. Many civic skills, values, and bodies of knowledge mirror social work skills, values, and knowledges – but their import is at a different level of magnitude. What students learn in class matters not only in relation to that course and that discipline or profession, but in relation to students' shared lives in community. It matters to democracy, as Jane Addams pointed out over a century ago.

An example is in order. A community partner, a local elementary school in a low-income neighborhood, has requested language arts tutors for its students. Education majors and English majors who tutor learn lessons related to teaching and language, important issues for their disciplines, and perhaps the principal reason their instructors include this service-learning component. They also may learn some value-added lessons about the lives and concerns of fellow citizens. Reflection activities can be structured to

highlight the importance of resource distribution for the children and their families – a civic lesson that may carry over into how these college students engage with their communities, and how they vote.

In social work, learning about the lives of the children and their families might be the intended outcome of the same tutoring activity, but the same lesson about resources is framed in a professional/academic context rather than a civic one. The children and their families are positioned as clients, not fellow citizens. There are risks here for students interested in both direct practice and macro practice. First, for students and instructors focusing on direct practice, the lesson from the tutoring may be reduced to one of finding resources for these children. The issue of resources is addressed, but in a narrow way that does not require questioning how they were distributed in the first place. Social justice issues may be sidestepped entirely.

For students and faculty interested in macro practice, the risk is more subtle. Issues of resource development and policy change may be seen as social work-specific issues rather than as public issues regarding which social work is one player. At worst, social work students may not consider – may not even welcome – the participation of their education- and English-major colleagues in addressing these issues because they do not see the other students as having a legitimate role. Later, a similar attitude toward non-social workers may limit social workers' willingness to collaborate with others, be they professionals or not.[iii]

The civic component of service-learning directs attention outward; for social work students, it directs attention beyond the profession. Through structured reflection in particular, social work faculty can bid students (in line with the previous example) to notice other volunteers; how do their contributions differ, what motivates them, how do they conceive of the (public) problem and their stake in the well-being of the clients? In other contexts, civic-oriented reflection may challenge students – and faculty – to articulate the public purposes that led them to social work. What has been their non-social work involvement in addressing the issues about which they are most passionate? If they should decide that the social work profession is not for them after all, how will they remain involved; would they still have an interest and a stake; in what ways? What does it mean to address social justice issues *as a social worker* – or not?

Community-university partnerships are embedded within a web of interpersonal relationships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Schools of social work have pre-existing relationships with many social service agencies through their field education programs. This provides a foundation for growing those relationships in new directions, but also puts the scope of such growth at risk of being defined too narrowly – i.e., only in "professional" terms. Even if social work faculty are committed in principle to civic education, community partners may assume that social work service-learning students seek field-specific experiences. Faculty may need to work harder with service-learning partners to create projects or tasks that move beyond social work skills, and that lend themselves to a citizenship dimension.

CONCLUSION

Research suggests that holding "a combination of career attitudes that incorporates favorable perceptions of one's *ability to express oneself in the world of work* through a successful career" is negatively correlated with aspects of burnout among some social work students (Ngai & Cheung, 2009, p. 115; italics added). In other words, engaging in social work as an expression of a larger commitment rather than as an end in itself may foster professional satisfaction. In contrast to medicine, where some doctors are consciously moving away from seeing medicine as a vocation in favor of seeing it as "a job and part of a work-life balance" (Jones & Green, 2006, p. 937), social work educators may want to re-emphasize the vocational aspects of social work. Social work is a powerful means of participating in a social justice project that encompasses but is bigger than social work itself. Taking sides in polarized debates about micro vs. macro practice misses a key point: poor people, old people, victimized people need both services themselves and changes to the structures that shape their social environments (Hugman, 2009). Social work does all of this.

But it does not do it alone, and social work educators must take care not to let students think that only social work should be doing it, or that they need not worry about it after they leave the office. Other professionals and other citizens have a stake in each others' well-being and in the health of their communities. Emphasizing the civic component of service-learning, already a valued pedagogy within social work education, helps us frame social work issues as public issues so that our students can view their activities both as social workers and as citizens.

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[i] The decision to exclude other specific social workers from the discussion is made not to minimize their contributions to the profession or to broader society, but to acknowledge Addams' prominence in the social work/civic engagement discourse and to challenge the assumption that her activities demonstrate something about social work per se.

[ii] Two recent studies support the notion that paid social work may undercut other community engagement activities. Gibelman & Sweifach (2008) identify a pattern of licensed social workers volunteering less than in the past. Focusing on political engagement, Rome & Hoechstetter (2010) find a pattern of NASW members being very engaged but "most often [in] those [activities] that require the least amount of effort" such as following the news and knowing their elected representatives (p. 118). The more actively engaged social workers are those whose jobs incorporate the "engaged" activities.

[iii] The concern described here is inspired by Karger & Hernandez's (2004) analysis of social workers as public intellectuals. Again the legacy of Jane Addams is evoked; now she is a model public intellectual. She was engaged with the issues of her day not just at Hull House but through her speeches and writings, sharing her observations and thoughts with public audiences. Karger & Hernandez argue that more recently, social work's quest for professional status has led to parochialism, such that we no longer engage with a generalized public audience.

Transformational Effects of Service-Learning in a University Developed Community-Based Agency

Michael Nino
Mo Cuevas
Melody Loya

Abstract: *The purpose of this article is first, to provide a model for the development and implementation of a university developed, community-based agency that incorporates service-learning projects infused throughout the social work curriculum. The inspiration for the community-based agency was grounded in Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformational learning and designed to provide social services to underserved populations and a training ground for future social workers. Second, we examine the transformational effects on students engaged in a competency-based, service-learning course at the agency, Methods of Social Work Practice. Using Clark's (1991) adaptation of Mezirow's theory of transformation, results indicate students experienced three dimensions (psychological, convictional, and behavioral) of transformational learning while engaged in the course and provide evidence that service-learning is directly related to the developmental process of social work students.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, transformational learning, social work education, competency-based course curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

The education and professionalization of future social workers has long had roots firmly established in experiential learning. Experiential learning places students in a social learning context, with a range of learning environments, providing experiences on ways to help people deal with their challenges (Bialeschki, 2007). In social work education, experiential learning has been the keystone to cultivating needed skills for future social workers. The inclusion of a field practicum at the end of both the Bachelor and Master's degree program has served to ground social work as an applied profession. Field instruction may be identified as the "signature pedagogy" for the profession of social work (CSWE, 2008); however, this hands-on pedagogy should not be confined only to the experiential learning inherent in field practicum courses. As social work education moves toward a competency-based practice model, which includes the ability to fulfill obligations to the client, the community, society and the profession, it becomes apparent that experiential learning should be introduced early in a student's academic career in the form of service-learning projects.

Service learning is an approach to pedagogy that requires social work students to engage in direct contact with individuals considered to be part of a vulnerable population early in their educational careers, allowing students to apply classroom knowledge with real-life situations. In doing so, students become more aware of their own beliefs and

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practices and how they can contribute to a socially just society (Carrington & Selva, 2010. The positive effects of service-learning have been documented in numerous studies (Dauenhauer, Steitz, Aponte, & Faria, 2010; Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli, 2003; Williams, King, & Koob, 2002; Williams & Reeves, 2004); however, little research has examined if there is evidence of transformational learning in competency-based social work education curriculum that incorporates service-learning. Furthermore, arranging a service-learning project for an entire cohort of students at community-based agencies can be extremely challenging and time consuming, forcing many faculty within social work education to continue using traditional models for educating future social workers. To our knowledge, there has been no attempt to establish a community-based agency solely developed and supervised by social work faculty that not only provides meaningful services to the community but also a training ground for future social workers through service-learning projects.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is twofold. The first is to provide a model for the development and implementation of a university developed and supervised community-based agency that incorporates service-learning projects, which can be infused throughout the social work curriculum. The second is to examine the transformational effects on students engaged in a competency-based course that incorporates service-learning into the curriculum at the university developed community-based agency.

Service-Learning in Higher Education

Over the last two decades service-learning has become a prominent form of educating students in higher education. This trend to utilize service-learning models within the halls of academia is aimed at solving society's most challenging social problems (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). There are varying definitions of service-learning within academic scholarship. For the purposes of this article the authors have chosen to use the most cited definition of service-learning developed by Bringle and Hathcher (1996):

> We view service-learning as a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of service responsibility (p. 222).

Service-learning places emphasis on three overarching outcomes: (1) service to the community, (2) enhanced critical thinking and problem solving skills, and (3) the cultivation of lifelong, morally just, democratic citizens (Harkavy, 2004). Service-learning models have one primary goal, to connect classroom theory with real-world experience (Dauenhauer et al., 2010). Considering social work's deep-rooted history as an applied profession, it is obvious service-learning occupies a compatible niche within social work education.

Service-learning activities can have a tremendous positive impact on students and the faculty that initiate their experiences. Students engaged in service-learning activities have

had changes in attitudes towards lower-socioeconomic groups (Sanders et al., 2003), significantly increased levels of perceived self-efficacy (Williams et al., 2002), growth in personal and professional learning (Williams & Reeves, 2004), and retain course content in a meaningful way (Dauenhauer et al., 2010).

Service-learning programs established at institutions of higher learning typically develop collaborative partnerships with community-based agencies, which provide students with direct contact with client groups considered to be vulnerable populations (Rothman, 1994). However, creating and sustaining partnerships with a community-based agency requires the goals of both the agency and the university to intersect, ultimately providing a mutually beneficial collaborative project (Rubin, 2001). This can be challenging, considering universities and community-based agencies have different cultures and agendas. In order to bring service-learning more closely into the curriculum construct of social work education, new and innovative models must be developed. These new models must be grounded in both theory and research, ensuring experiences that will allow students to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and human needs (Dauenhauer et al., 2010).

Theory of Transformational Learning

The concept of the university developed, community-based agency's foundation lies in Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformational learning, which posits that learning is an understood process that utilizes prior interpretations to construct new and revised interpretations to guide future behavior. These new and revised interpretations are promoted through two major domains of learning, with different purposes. The first domain (instrumental learning) involves learning through task-oriented problem solving with the objective of improving a person's performance. The second domain (communicative learning) involves understanding the meaning of what others communicate concerning concepts such as social justice, freedom, love, commitment and democracy. When these two domains of learning are coupled with critical reflection, a transformational process occurs. Mezirow defines this process as perspective transformation, which "refers to the transforming of a problematic frame of reference to make it more dependable in our adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20).

Since the inception of transformational learning theory, most researchers have concurred with Mezirow's original definition of perspective transformation. However, there is an increasing body of evidence that suggests Mezirow's theory is too narrow and places too much emphasis on individuals becoming more aware of their rational perspective, thus discounting other ways of learning (Clark, 1991; Courtenay, Merrriam, & Reeves, 1998; Hunter, 1980; Lucas, 1994; Neuman, 1996; Pierce, 1986; Pope, 1996; Scott, 1991; Van Nostrand, 1992). Characteristics of transformation that have emerged from other studies include three dimensions of transformational learning: psychological, convictional, and behavioral (Clark, 1991); new revelations of knowledge, mystical experience, and redefined perspective (Van Nostrand, 1992); an increase in personal power (Hunter, 1980; Pierce, 1986; Pope, 1996); compassion for others (Courtenay et al., 1998); creativity (Scott, 1991); and courage (Lucas, 1994; Neuman, 1996).

Over the last decade a number of researchers have suggested transformational learning can be fostered in a variety of settings. Based on a review of thirteen studies (Bailey, 1996; Carrington & Selva, 2010; Cusak, 1990; Dewane, 1993; Gallagher, 1997, Herber, 1998; Kaminsky, 1997; Ludwig, 1994; Matusicky, 1982; Neuman, 1996; Pierce, 1986; Saavedra, 1995; Vogelsang, 1978), transformational learning has occurred in settings such as respite groups for terminally-ill children, meal support for adult and child literacy programs, tutoring programs for fourth and fifth grade children, teaching for racial understanding, and self-help groups.

With the advent of new projects designed to promote transformational learning, much more research is needed to understand how educators in higher education establish the conditions necessary to produce positive outcomes. This includes the completion of course objectives, and the promotion of social work competencies, while still allowing for in-depth personal exploration (Taylor, 2000). The following section provides a brief historical outline of the university developed community-based agency, the competency-based service-learning projects integrated into the agency, followed by an overview of the competency-based course, Methods of Social Work Practice.

Community-Based Agency Designed to Promote Transformational Learning

The community-based agency was created by the Department of Social Work at a mid-sized public university located in Texas, for a dual purpose: (1) to provide social services to underserved populations and (2) to provide a training ground for future social workers through field practica and service-learning projects.

The first phase in the development of the community-based agency stemmed from a community needs assessment conducted as part of a class project for a macro-level practice course. The results of the needs assessment revealed a lack of comprehensive case management and free counseling for those who were homeless or at-risk of being homeless. From this groundwork, social work faculty submitted a proposal to a local charitable foundation to develop the agency. Faculty located space in a local outreach center, which houses a consortium of agencies providing services to the homeless and other vulnerable populations.

Senior field practicum students were the first to initiate services while more stable funding was secured. Initially, social work faculty supervised the students by holding office hours on-site. Funding was awarded through a local foundation, one year after the initial needs assessment. During the subsequent fall semester, two full-time and three part-time senior social work interns were placed in the agency and several graduate students offered counseling. While unstable staffing and funding was challenging initially, faculty and senior interns provided a measure of continuity and stability.

Two years after the agency was first awarded funding, the university was able to hire a full-time Director with over twenty years of experience practicing social work in the field. With a committed Director now in place and outside funding currently secured, the center continues to grow, change, and expand services. Bachelor’s students provide case management to the homeless and other at-risk clients with administrative oversight. Additionally, students provide psychoeducational groups, such as anger management for

teens and adults, financial literacy, nutrition, and parenting instruction, as well as women's self-esteem groups, and grandparents parenting grandchildren support groups.

The agency has also secured funding to provide services to military personnel and their families previously or currently deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Various other projects have provided outreach and services to the elderly and persons with disabilities through a supplemental food program, micro-lending to a group of refugees through a local resettlement agency, and parenting classes to mothers in a shelter for homeless women. Most recently, the agency was awarded a sub-contract with local government in a city adjacent to the university. Clients are assessed and certified for rental assistance offered through federal stimulus monies and receive more comprehensive case management services in the process.

Since opening its doors, the agency has served over 3,500 clients, with faculty providing over 1,500 hours of supervision, and service hours provided by interns have totaled more than 9,500. Additional volunteer activities provided by social work students included child care, answering phones, researching resources, and assessments -- these hours have numbered over 4,500. The agency continues to operate year to year on grants, so agency continuity is always challenging; however, the university has recently begun to provide some monetary support and administrative officials often promote the agency.

Integrating Service-Learning into University Developed Community-Based Agency

With the need for more competency-based service-learning in social work education, coupled with the overall positive community oriented outcomes resulting from these activities, three service-learning courses were developed and integrated into course curricula at the agency. All three courses were designed to promote transformational learning through social work competencies. These courses, which included Group Processes, The Community, and Methods of Social Work Practice, allowed for the cultivation of relationships between students and underserved populations like the homeless and other at-risk groups in multiple settings. The following section provides an overview of course objectives, class activities, assignments, and core competencies addressed in the most comprehensive service-learning course offered, Methods of Social Work Practice.

Methods of Social Work Practice

The Methods of Social Work Practice course was designed to introduce students to a broad base of knowledge, skills, values, and ethics, which underlie all forms of social work practice: micro, mezzo, and macro. The generalist practice framework included exploration, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, and termination as applied to multi-sized client systems. The course framework also included the processes of establishing professional relationships, communication, role taking, the principle of empowerment, and decision making around ethical dilemmas in practice.

Course objectives for Methods of Social Work Practice were developed in conjunction with the ten core competencies for social work practice identified in the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) Education Policy Standards (CSWE, 2008).

Of the ten core competencies, eight were addressed (see Table 1) in the course and their outcomes were measured using a variety of course assignments.

Table 1: Core Competencies Addressed in Methods of Social Work Practice

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.
5. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
6. Engage in policy practice to advance social & economic well-being & to deliver effective social work services.
7. Respond to contexts that shape practice.
8. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Utilizing the eight core competencies addressed in the course, seven course objectives were developed. Table 2 identifies the course objectives.

Table 2: Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define the components of a problem solving method for social work practice: exploration, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and termination by in class analysis activities, interview assignment and class project.
2. Demonstrate the application of the problem solving method at the various levels of social work practice by assessment with assigned clients and class project at community-based agency.
3. Recognize levels of theory and apply them for appropriate use of social work practice by client assessment, interventions and class project.
4. Define a professional relationship in social work practice, differentiate it from other relationships, and identify its benefits to clients by self-assessment in journals, exploring personal values in papers and developing a client relationship through community-based agency.
5. Relate social work professional values to a system of ethical reasoning for decision making in social work practice situations and explain how this reasoning aids the resolution of ethical dilemmas.
6. Demonstrate the understanding of the effects of culture, gender, age, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, spirituality, national origin, and other personal characteristics

on work with various client systems of social work concern through the community-based agency, and the development of interventions for clients.

7. Demonstrate good verbal and written communication skills that emphasize an understanding of the cultural, social, and economic factors that affect social work systems and their functioning through the final essay, individual handout exercise, in class exercises and class project.

The Methods of Social Work Practice course was held in the training room at the community-based agency. Each week the class met with the instructor, where lectures were conducted on a multitude of topics, including case management process, contracting, interview skills, and methods of helping. Periodically, the instructor had local social work professionals with various areas of expertise provide presentations on community resources and information on working with different at-risk populations in the community. Student assignments included reflective journaling; papers on individual topics of interest with at least six readings, articles and other resources related to the topic; classroom presentations on individual topic papers; a write-up and processes for handling an ethical dilemma; response papers on mandatory course readings; and a summative reaction paper as to what each student learned from the course and how their new-found knowledge will be used in future social work practice.

The service-learning component of the course, offered exclusively to junior-and-senior bachelor's level social work students, required students to work approximately three hours per week, or a total of fifty hours over the semester at the university developed community-based agency. Tasks were assigned to each student based on community needs at that given time. This is a critical distinction to make. In order for the task to truly be considered service-learning, student roles must be "determined by the needs of the community they are serving, not the learning goals of the student or institution" (Lemieux & Allen, 2007, p. 311). Through the course of the semester, students spent time talking to clients who came into agency, visited clients at their homes, conducted psychoeducational groups, or provided case management to clients served at the agency. Students were required to keep a log of their hours at the agency and their activities. This log was turned in at the end of the semester and verified by the Director of the agency by comparison with the log kept on-site.

There were three primary assignments integrated into the Methods of Social Work Practice course structure. The first assignment, designed to provide opportunities for service-learning engagement, required students to conduct a recorded interview, utilizing clients engaged in services. Before conducting interviews, students developed realistic goals to meet during the interview process. Once the interview was completed, each student exchanged recordings with a peer to evaluate. Peers were required to address strengths and weaknesses in the interview, goals for the interview, and if those goals were met. The evaluation of the interview was provided in a one page summary and given back to the student with the recording. Using peer feedback, students conducted a second interview in order to address peer identified weaknesses from the first interview. Each student was to then listen to the second interview and required to self-determine the

quality of their interviewing skills and if their original goals had been met. Finally, students submitted a two-to-three page paper answering the following questions:

1. How you think you did in this interview as compared to your first one?
2. Have you met your working goals, or where are you on the goals you initially set for yourself?
3. What were your strengths during the interviewing process?
4. What are ways you could improve the interview process?
5. Identify what you learned from the clients you interviewed in this process.

Summative papers, along with the two recordings, were then turned at the end of the semester and counted as a substantial portion of the final grade.

The second assignment focused on the policy side of the community-based agency. At the beginning of the semester each student was given a copy of the policy and procedures manual and given a brief introduction to all of the policies and procedures that play an integral part in the agency's social service structure and success. After spending at least thirty-five of the mandated fifty hours at the agency and familiarizing themselves with agency processes, students were required to develop a policy that could potentially be added to the policy and procedure manual.

The third and final assignment required students to write a two-page reaction paper in reflection of their experiences at the community-based agency, what they learned from these experiences, and how they would use this new found knowledge in future social work practice. Students were also encouraged to describe any personal changes made, as a result of their experiences, along with any concerns or challenges they may have encountered.

Since the inception of the community-based agency, seventy-five junior-and-senior bachelor's level social work students have completed the Methods of Social Work Practice course and submitted reaction papers regarding learned experiences. As stated earlier, much of the research regarding service-learning in social work education has suggested that service-learning provides an opportunity for positive outcomes; however, there is a lack of empirical research that has examined the transformational effects of service-learning in a competency-based course in social work education. Thus, the purpose of the following research was to examine the transformational effects of students engaged in a competency-based, service-learning course, Methods of Social Work Practice.

METHOD

Selection of Participants

All seventy-five students that completed Methods of Social Work Practice were invited to participate in the study; however, the majority of students selected had since graduated from the university and dispersed throughout the United States. In order to obtain proper consent, emails and phone calls were made to all students and all were given the option of a verbal or electronic consent. Additionally, all students were given the option of receiving a hard copy of the consent for their records. Students were assured of the confidential nature of their responses and were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at anytime without question or prejudice. Ultimately all seventy-five students agreed to participate in the study and consisted of one male (1.3%) and seventy-four (98.7%) females. Prior to obtaining consent the research design and all corresponding forms were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Analysis of Data

In order to examine the transformational effects of competency-based, service-learning, student reaction papers were analyzed. Initial coding of data began by reviewing all seventy-five reaction papers. In the coding process each line was reviewed and scrutinized. In order to identify dimensions of transformational learning, themes were coded using qualitative techniques developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). To uncover and develop concepts, open coding was first used to expose broad recurring ideas and the meanings contained within them. Data were then dissected into parts, examined for similarities and differences, and then grouped into broad categories. Broad categories were then further scrutinized, regrouped, and developed into core concepts or subcategories. Data were initially analyzed using Mezirow's (1978) original theory of transformational learning. However, once patterns emerged, it became evident Mezirow's original theory of transformational learning was too narrow. Thus, an adaptation to the original theory developed by Clark (1991) was utilized. Clark argues that transformational learning does not occur in two domains (instrumental and communicative); rather, transformational learning occurs in three dimensions: psychological, convictional, and behavioral. This adaptation of transformational learning will be expounded upon in the next section.

RESULTS

Building on the work of Clark (1991), the results of this study identified three dimensions of transformational learning: psychological-structure or understanding of one's self was altered; convictional-belief systems were revised; and behavioral-lifestyle was changed. These dimensions were identified in a variety of the service-learning experiences at the agency but in different proportions. The following will illustrate how transformations were triggered and the dimensions of transformational learning students experienced.

Behavioral Dimension

The service-learning model established in the Methods of Social Work Practice course created an environment that allowed students to combine classroom theory with real-life situations by being placed into direct contact with clients considered to be vulnerable populations. This type of interaction creates what Clark (1991) refers to as an "integrating circumstance." Integrating circumstances are considered "indefinite periods in which a person consciously or unconsciously searches for something they are missing in their life; when they find this missing piece, the transformation is catalyzed" (p. 117-118). By placing students into direct contact with clients, students are introduced to the missing piece of the puzzle, creating an environment for a transformational experience. In this case, students enrolled in Methods of Social Practice experienced a behavioral transformation, meaning students' lifestyles were transformed. One student explained her experience by saying:

> *I feel like I have grown tremendously during this semester and feel more dedicated than ever to the social work profession… In the beginning I was really worried about how little I knew from our community. Now I find myself helping friends and even family find resources…this class gave me the real life perspective that social workers can really impact lives.*

Overall, students enrolled in the Methods of Social Work Practice course expressed that this unique interaction acted as a catalyst for students to experience a dramatic behavioral dimension of transformational learning. More specifically, students were empowered to work with other vulnerable populations, were motivated to find new avenues for resources and donations, became more assertive in their personal and professional lives, and were enabled to build friendships beyond the classroom.

Convictional Dimension

Before engaging in the service-learning component of the course, students were provided with demographics, social characteristics and risk factor associated with the homeless. Students were also encouraged to participate in classroom dialogue regarding their current attitudes and expectations when interacting with the homeless. Additionally, throughout the entire Methods of Social Work Practice course students were required to submit a weekly journal to be posted anonymously to an online discussion forum, creating a reflective community that is essential in triggering a transformational experience (Mezirow, 2000).

When examining students' reaction papers, most expressed that the open classroom dialogue and journaling process allowed for the discovery of hidden prejudices that existed. Students were uncomfortable with the notion of working with the homeless population. Some even expressed that they had "no desire to work with the homeless" prior to beginning the service-learning portion of the course. For most students, the root of these prejudices resulted from prior experiences with the homeless or was shared by members of their primary group. "I was raised by someone with the stereotype that all homeless individuals are bad people who will take anything from you and was told to just stand clear of them if at all possible." Students did not realize the extent of their prejudice

until they were faced with the challenge of working with the population, producing a disorienting dilemma or acute internal or personal crisis (Mezirow, 2000). Once students realized the extent of their prejudice a remarkable convictional dimension of transformation occurred; according to Clark (1991) this can be described as an actual revision of one's belief system. One student exclaimed:

> *I had really bad misconceptions and assumptions about the homeless population…those feelings went away the further I got into my hours…I will never think of people that are homeless the way I used to. I have more compassion and am more aware of the facts that surround the issue of homelessness…I learned that the homeless population is not scary, their[sic] people just like you and me, who just need a little boost, and a lot of them are eager to share information about their life experiences. The skills that I've learned will never be forgotten, they will be so valuable to me in the future.*

Clark (1991) argues that when a convictional dimension of transformation is primary, a secondary behavioral dimension of transformation can occur. In the current study, the majority of students experienced this secondary dimension of behavior change. One student exclaimed:

> *I did not want anything to do with the homeless…after my first interaction with a client, it all changed…it completely changed who I am on the inside, and it also began to be reflected in the way my family perceives the homeless.*

Psychological Dimension

During the course of the service-learning project students were required to interview at least two clients engaged in services at the agency. Students expressed an overwhelming fear of interviewing clients on their own, "the first interview I was so scared and shaking that I could barely talk." Many believed that they would "mess up" a client psychologically or would be unable to provide the client with solutions needed to overcome their current problems. This event triggered a disorienting dilemma. Once students initiated conversations with clients, their fears (acute internal or personal crises) began to lessen. As their experiences progressed throughout the semester this self-expressed fear of interviewing seemed to vanish, prompting a primarily psychological change, what Clark (1991) describes as transformational understanding of oneself. "I have overcome my interviewing fear and believe that I could do this more out in my field work because I have had this experience." Student also realized that "it is ok not to know everything." It is important to note that most students credited the recorded interviews as the key for identifying critical points in the interview process.

Patterns within reaction papers revealed that students not only had an initial fear of interviewing but also possessed a deeper overall fear of working with clients faced with real problems, needing real solutions. "It may have been more intimidation than fear but either way I did not feel comfortable at all." The idea of confronting these fears produced varying levels of anxiety among the majority of students; however, once these fear were confronted, students experienced increased levels of confidence that did not exist prior to client interaction, again prompting a significant psychological change.

> *I get nervous doing anything that is out of my comfort level…I have never had a high level of confidence…Working at the agency has taught me that I am educated enough to handle most situations. If I didn't know the answer I was able to find the answer out. I look back at certain situations and how I handled them, and I am proud to say that I handled them professionally. I was surprised at how easy it was to interact and help those that I came in contact with… gaining confidence is the biggest tool that I will take with me from my time at the agency.*

Clark (1991) also argues that when a psychological dimension is primary, convictional and behavioral dimensions of transformation can exist, however, only secondarily. The changes students experienced by overcoming their initial interviewing fear and larger overall fear of interacting with clients also had a secondary impact on their behavior (behavioral dimension). Initial interactions inspired students to work with more clients from vulnerable populations, educate themselves and persons in their primary groups concerning community resources, and motivated some to solicit community businesses for monetary support or hygiene products distributed at the agency to the homeless. Although these experiences produced both psychological and behavioral dimensions of perspective transformation, there was no evidence suggesting a secondary convictional dimension.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the research was to first provide a model for a university developed, community-based agency that incorporates service-learning projects into competency-based social work courses. Second, the research demonstrates the transformational effects on students engaged in a competency-based course that incorporates service-learning into the curriculum.

The results of this study revealed that a university developed, community based-agency model provides a rich environment for both service-learning and transformational learning. The introduction of client interaction through service-learning allowed students to utilize concepts learned in the classroom and connect them to real-life situations, while also providing a service to the community. The primary difference between this model and traditional models of service-learning is this type of model alleviates the challenges of collaborating with local community-based agencies. The university developed, community-based agency model also allows faculty to integrate appropriate measures for examining course effectiveness, without the constraints of agency policy. Finally the model encourages students to examine agency policy and to find areas that need improvement. This type of openness allows students to experience necessary policy practice with the potential for real-world application.

Shifting to the transformational impact service-learning had on social work students, results indicated that this service-learning course promoted three dimensions of transformation and provided evidence that service-learning is directly related to the developmental process of social work students. This first dimension of transformation, behavioral, instilled a new found confidence to work with vulnerable populations,

motivated students to identify new avenues for community resources, and produced more personal and professional assertiveness in students. This type of transformational experience also gave students the confidence needed to establish new social networks amongst their peers. The second dimension, convictional, allowed students to uncover hidden prejudices towards vulnerable groups and forced students to confront those prejudices. For the majority of students this resulted in an overall positive behavior change towards the group. Finally, the psychological dimension of transformation prompted students to overcome fears of interacting with vulnerable groups. The psychological dimension of transformation also invoked a secondary behavioral change, leading students to seek further education about groups such as the homeless.

The implications of these findings are wide-ranging. For students enrolled in Methods of Social Work Practice, dimensions of transformation produced varying levels of personal and professional growth, interpersonal and moral development, and commitment to serving the community. For social work education, incorporating the three dimensions of transformational learning used in this study can provide a format for exploring the impact of other service-learning, volunteer, and field experiences students experience during their education. It also provides a framework for discussing these experiences with students and helping them to see the ways they are impacted by their learning, increasing their self-awareness and appreciation for the processes involved in their education.

Although students experienced revisions to both their behavior and belief systems, a critical question remains unanswered. Once these transformations occur, do they have a lasting positive effect when students enter the field? It is unknown whether or not the transformations experienced in their service-learning project produce a permanent behavior and belief change and this is an avenue that needs to be explored in the future. Additionally, the findings described in the study also come with some limitations. First, the overall sample was relatively small and confined to students from one university, making the results of the study difficult to generalize. Second, the study utilized student reaction papers, which can only capture organized thoughts retrospectively. This made it impossible to access actual changes in meaning structures during the process of transformational learning. Therefore, longitudinal studies examining transformational learning are needed, studies that incorporate social work students from a variety of universities, in a number of settings, creating a framework to examine the immediate impact service-learning has on the restructuring of meaning systems in social work education.

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Achieving HBSE Competencies through Service-Learning

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Abstract: *Service-learning pedagogy allows social work educators to create meaningful learning opportunities for students and better prepare them for practicum, while at the same time, meeting a community need. This paper outlines the relevance of incorporating service-learning into the social work curriculum, specifically the human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) area. Using Bloom's taxonomy as a guide, the authors propose how the CSWE competencies and practice behaviors specific to HBSE may be assessed using service-learning pedagogy. An example is reviewed to illustrate how service-learning can assist faculty and students achieve the HBSE competencies and practice behaviors. Finally, implications for service-learning as a pedagogical strategy for social work education are discussed.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, human behavior in the social environment curriculum, CSWE competencies*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of service-learning in higher education as well as in social work education is not new and is frequently utilized as an experiential form of teaching to connect students in the community in a variety of formats. Service-learning has a long history in higher education beginning with the Morrill Act establishing land grant institutions and continuing through the passage of the National and Community Service Trust Act (Phillips, 2007; Titlebaum, Williamson, Daprano, Baer, & Brahler, 2004). Based on early involvement with the community beginning with the establishment of the Hull House, the values of the social work profession, and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) practicum requirements, service-learning and social work complement one another in that they serve to assist students achieve competencies.

How service-learning is defined and incorporated as a pedagogical methodology has varied in social work education, depending on the course and the instructor's perspective on service-learning methods (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; King, 2003; Larson, 2008; Palm & Toma, 1997; Teater & Baldwin, 2009; Todd, 2008; Waters & Moran, 2001). "Service-learning (SL) is a collaborative teaching and learning strategy designed to promote personal growth, civic learning, and academic enhancement" (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p. 1-1). Jacoby (1996) defined service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (p. 5).

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McCrea (2004) reviewed and summarized the commonality of service-learning definitions to include the following components: "the service must meet an actual community need; the learning from service must be clearly integrated with course objectives; reflection about the service experience is essential; and the relationship between service recipients and learners must be reciprocal" (p. 5). These service-learning components are similar to those discussed by Ash and Clayton (2009) which highlighted community partnerships, meaningful activities, and guided critical reflection. Ash and Clayton also postulated that the impact of service-learning will enable students to have a better understanding of their personal and professional learning while better understanding how the world works, as well as their place and responsibility to the world.

Social work has a long-standing tradition of community-based service that dates back to the early settlement houses (Blank, 1998). Service is essential to the mission of the social work profession. The core values designated by the National Association of Social Workers are: "…service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, [and] competence" (NASW, 1999). Service as an ethical principle demands that social work practitioners put service to others above their own interests and use their professional skills throughout their careers in a volunteer capacity (NASW, 1999).

The model utilized for service-learning in social work courses should include connecting and collaborating with a community partner so that the students and community partner benefit in a meaningful way from the service-learning activity and uphold the values and ethics of the profession. Moreover, students should be guided on how to develop professionally and personally from the service-learning experience through critical reflection on the knowledge, skills, and social work values integrated in bridging theory and practice. Service-learning, from this pedagogical approach, parallels the paradigm shift of postmodernism in social work education. Postmodern approaches emphasize understanding the world of others through their lens, which encompasses culture, history, personal, and social constructs rather than objectifying individuals through theory or cause-and-effect alone. In other words, social workers need to practice with a stance of open-mindedness rather than a deterministic or linear view of knowing what is best or needs to happen (Greene, 2009; Payne, 2005). By incorporating service-learning within this framework, social work education can provide an integrative approach for students to understand social work from a real world context, connect with the profession, develop social work competencies, and critically reflect on their personal and professional growth.

In summary, social work students, through service-learning, are provided with "active, relevant, and collaborative learning…" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000, p. 274.) in a agency or community context. The focus of the engagement benefits the community, while at the same time, the context provides a rich learning environment for the student. Service-learning creates a learning experience in which students and community members engage in collaboration with social work's "…emphasis on social justice and the amelioration of social problems…" (Lemieux & Allen, 2007, p. 309).

Service-Learning is not Synonymous with Volunteerism and Practicum

Service-learning is often used synonymously and intertwined with volunteer work, community service, and field placements (Larson, 2008). Essential to service is volunteerism. Many agencies and community organizations rely on volunteerism and in the current economy volunteerism may mean the continuation of services to those in need. Lundahl and Wicks (2010) document the benefits of volunteerism related to the value of professional skills for agencies and also the importance to individuals and groups who have a life-long commitment to service.

Lowe and Reisch (1998) acknowledged that social work programs, for over a century, have developed educational models linking the classroom to community-based learning. These early service-learning models were influenced by the work of John Dewey and Paul Freire which stemmed from an "apprenticeship model of education" (p. 292). Building on these previous models, schools or departments of social work have adapted and expanded their educational programs to include a repertoire of community-based learning activities including volunteering, community service, and field placements. However, it is service-learning that most often serves to reinforce a commitment to future civic engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000).

Although all of these types of community-based activities are often described as service-learning, there is some disagreement among social work educators regarding the differences between volunteering, social work practicums, and service-learning (King, 2003; Lemieux & Allen, 2007). As part of assignments for social work courses, faculty often require students to perform a number of hours to volunteer or provide community service for a community project or with a social service organization. Practicum requires a certain number of hours a student must work in a social agency to meet the course requirements. Nevertheless, although all of these community-based educational activities involve students and a connection with the community in some form, either on a micro or macro level, not all of these course activities are service-learning.

The principles of service learning including engagement for the public good, reciprocity with the community partner, the public dissemination of knowledge with those outside of the academy, and students' critical reflection of experiences differentiates service-learning from other teaching pedagogies (Heffernan, 2001). Performing community service or volunteering largely focuses on service, field placements primarily focus on student learning while service-learning emphasizes both service and learning. Larson (2008) viewed field placements as developing learning objectives based primarily on the student, faculty, and social work program's goals as opposed to developing common goals and service activities that are mutually beneficial. Although some would argue that both the student and the agency benefit from volunteering and student field placement, these types of activities do not always include components of organized and collaborative partnerships with community agencies, critical reflection, civic engagement, personal growth, as well as integrating social work knowledge, skills, and values with practice. In summary, service-learning is a pedagogical strategy, in the context of a course, which requires intentional planning, partnering with community organizations, and focusing on both service and learning for

the benefit of the agency and student within the framework of social work values and course outcomes (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; King, 2003; Lemieux & Allen, 2007). Additionally, students "reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112).

HBSE AND SERVICE-LEARNING

Students often begin their social work educations with limited practical experience or formal study of human behavior and the social environment (HBSE). Many are from other disciplines that do not incorporate contextual influences or the dynamic interaction between individuals and their environment. Kropf and Tracey (2002), writing specifically about MSW students negotiating the transition from the foundation year to the concentration curriculum, postulated that service-learning can be an "educational bridge" that enable students to understand and apply social work concepts (p. 63). Social work is a discipline that demands the practitioner acknowledge and take into account the social, political, environmental, and historical contexts of human strengths and challenges. This calls for real world examples along with academic content. Service-learning provides experiential learning through civic engagement.

Theory for HBSE facilitates how individuals make meaning of human behavior and their social environments. How individuals make meaning influences how others and the social world are viewed, as well as how human strengths and struggles are defined. Social work practitioners, as life-long learners, must maintain a rigorous and current study of HBSE theory that is relevant to the historical, cultural, political, and global societal influences. Faculty are often challenged to choose a pedagogy that prepares future practitioners for this on-going task of theory application to the real world.

Understanding HBSE theory should not be an abstract endeavor that has no relevance or influence on social work practice; therefore, connections for the learner with the real world are essential. We all theorize by constantly making meaning of everyday life experiences (Flax, 1999). However, all theorizing and theory are not created equal. Personal meaning making and theorizing are subject to bias and judgments that are often absent of critical reflection. Service-learning, along with the presentation of academic content and critical reflection, facilitates an examination of value judgments that shape our thinking. It is essential to make explicit those implicit assumptions that ultimately influence our practices (Flax, 1999).

A mere understanding of human behavior theory through knowledge acquisition does not prepare students for real world practice. Therefore, instructors strive to challenge students to move from a basic understanding of HBSE theory to synthesis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956), as well as think critically about the potential harm of applying abstract theory to individuals and the social environment. In order to facilitate this learning, students must be provided with experiences that allow application of theory in the real world as well as oral and written structured critical reflection on their experiences (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Lay & McGuire, 2010). This brings theory alive for the learner as opposed to abstractly studying theory in a classroom that is void of real world

experiences and the challenges of the social world. Active and relevant learning experiences (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000) have the potential for deeper learning and require direct contact with the subject matter (Lundahl, 2008). In this case, the subject matter is theory regarding human behavior and the social environment.

Theory is not *truth*. It is an abstraction that seeks to predict, explain, and make meaning of the social world. Theory is constructed in a historical, social, and political context (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Because it is subject to certain contexts in its construction, faculty may become partial to theoretical understandings that are a reflection of popular cultural explanations of HBSE. For example, Erickison's psychoanalytically oriented developmental theory was based solely on the male developmental experience, yet it is generalized as if it is applicable to all (Schriver, 2011).

Life stage theory, like many human behavior theories, provides a metaphor for understanding development; however, it does not tell us the terrain of life experiences. Social problems may influence individual and collective experiences. For example, the experience of homelessness may alter one's developmental process in ways that both strengthen and challenge. By focusing our lens only on the individual living in homelessness, the struggle may be framed as belonging to the person and the struggle viewed as a "…result of personal deficiencies, such as substance abuse…" (Cronley, 2010, p. 319).

In that theories are abstractions with the potential for cultural, historical, and political biases, our pedagogy must include opportunities for students to reflect and examine theory in the real world Service-learning brings real world experiences into the classroom. The application of theory is no longer a mere abstraction. These student experiences challenge linear and reductionist approaches that strip individuals, groups, families, and communities of their social context. Human behavior does not happen in a vacuum where abstractions can simply be applied. Our theories must reflect the complexity of the social environment.

The factors discussed above position human behavior and the social environment as a course that is ideal for service-learning. Theory is abstract and can be difficult for students to appreciate without real world experiences. In order to be relevant, practical application is necessary with the inclusion of critical reflection that seeks to bring into focus the social work mission of social justice and the social change. Service-learning provides settings where the context of people's lived experiences challenge abstractions that may be removed from the realities of practice.

OPERATIONALIZING THE HBSE COMPETENCIES

In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) redesigned the social work competencies used for program accreditation (Council on Social Work Education, 2010). Human behavior in the social environment (HBSE) content was defined and practice behaviors were established. The following is the core competency for foundation education in HBSE and the practice behaviors which stem from it:

> Educational Policy 2.1.7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.
>
> Social workers are knowledgeable about human behavior across the life course; the range of social systems in which people live; and the ways social systems promote or deter people in maintaining or achieving health and well-being. Social workers apply theories and knowledge from the liberal arts to understand biological, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.
>
> Social workers:
>
> - Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation; and
> - Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment. (Council on Social Work Education, 2010).

Along with the other competencies, social work faculty have begun reshaping curriculum and programs to meet the new competencies. Based on the authors' personal experiences at three different universities, conversations with other faculty around the country, and postings on the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD) listserve, we contend that programs have faced challenges in conceptualizing, creating, and assessing the new competencies. For example, at the 2011 Baccalaureate Program Directors Meeting, many sessions were devoted to the new competencies. Faculty reported multiple ways of operationalizing practice behaviors and their assessments. Some programs have developed competencies exams and rubrics, while other programs have approximately four hundred assessments of students' knowledge and behaviors. In this paper, we suggest that service-learning is one pedagogy that will assist social work faculty in addressing the competencies and practice behaviors.

In order to provide a framework for identifying and assessing practice behaviors using service-learning pedagogy, we propose that a framework from Bloom's Taxonomy be utilized. Bloom (1956) articulated six classifications in the cognitive domain that are essential to learning. The classifications are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. During the development of the taxonomies, Bloom found that the majority of testing students were exposed to required recall of facts, the lowest level of intellectual engagement. Bloom believed that the classifications were sequential and represented a cumulative hierarchy. The higher levels represent more sophisticated and critical thinking. Since its introduction, critiques have been made and revisions proposed; these include considering critical thinking as a continuum rather than hierarchical, that there is some overlap in the categories, and that the taxonomy should be multidimensional (Anderson, et al., 2001; Marzano & Kendall, 2007). Changes were also made to rename the categories to be verbs (remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create) (Anderson, et al., 2001). For the purpose of this paper, we recognize that readers can debate the critiques and modifications to the original taxonomy, but contend that the basic premise that there are differences in the complexities of critical thinking and that these differences aid in planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment make rational sense for examining our topic.

An example will best illustrate how to connect the CSWE competencies in HBSE to the taxonomy. Examples of learning objectives for *practice behavior A* (Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation) and *practice behavior B* (Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment) are given for each category in the taxonomy (See Table 1, next page).

HBSE SERVICE-LEARNING EXAMPLE

The following is an example of a service-learning experience that permits students to demonstrate HBSE competencies. This experience focuses on a mentoring program in a public school, but a range of settings including homeless shelters, assisted living facilities for seniors, and child development centers have all been used as service-learning sites by the authors. Engaging in service-learning experiences requires students to use higher level cognitive domains such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating knowledge related to HBSE theory and social work practice. In the next section, the level of Bloom's taxonomy in which the students were thinking and performing will be highlighted in italics or an explicit example will be given.

Overview of the Mentoring Experience

The college students engaged in the service-learning are juniors in the baccalaureate social work program. The course takes place prior to the senior practicum. The HBSE course includes both micro and macro theories of HBSE and is taught over a ten week quarter. Staff from the Office of Service Learning orients the college students to the philosophy of service-learning and the policies and procedures of the tutoring program.

This service-learning experience takes place at a K-8 school in an urban center. Students in the school struggle with academic proficiencies as measured by standardized testing (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.). The subject proficiencies range from a low of 2.9% for 8th grade social studies to a high of 55.8% for 6th grade reading (75% pass rate is considered proficient). Over 96% of the K-8 student body identifies as Black or bi-racial, 100% of the students are classified as "economically disadvantaged," and over 20% of students are identified as having a disability.

The social work students interact with each assigned K-8 student for 30 minutes each week over the course of seven weeks; at the end of seven weeks, social work students have interacted with each student for a minimum of 3.5 hours. The K-8 students may benefit from the tutoring/mentoring because they have an opportunity to have positive adult interactions and receive assistance with academic material. Social work students may benefit from the service-learning because they have the opportunity to *apply* HBSE course content, practice beginning social work skills like rapport building, and be exposed to challenges faced by a public education system in a local, urban community.

Table 1. Practice Behaviors and Learning Objectives

Practice Behavior:	Learning Objective #1: Remember (skills: recognize, recall)	Learning Objective #4: Analyze (skills: analyze, differentiate)
A. Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation B. Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment * Examples of theories are given; however, students were often given the choice of selecting a theory discussed in class or the textbook. This is especially true at the higher levels of the taxonomy. This was purposeful to allow students to begin to develop their theoretical orientation.	*A. Students will identify the levels in Maslow's Hierarch of Needs. ** *B. Students will list the feminist critique of Freud's psychodynamic theory.* Learning Objective #2: Understand (skills: explain, classify, summarize) *A. Students will explain the key characteristics of social capital in their own words so that someone not familiar with the concepts could understand them.* *B. Students will summarize the postmodern critiques of Kohlberg's stages of moral development.* Learning Objective #3: Apply (skills: execute, implement) *A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will demonstrate how social learning theory applies to the students they are mentoring.* *A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will articulate how the systems perspective guides their practice.* B. *Based on their service-learning experiences, students will chose which theory best helps guide social work practice with a student who they are mentoring.*	*A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will analyze if the tenets of the Erickson's stages of development are true of today's children and youth.* *A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will analyze if using the family life cycle perspective is appropriate with the service-learning population.* B. *Based on their service-learning experiences, students will consider person-in-environment factors influence human development.* Learning Objective #5: Evaluate (skills: critique) *A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will critique how the social constructionist perspective either supports or opposes social work values.* B. *Based on their service-learning experiences, students will articulate why/how some theories are appropriate to use in guiding practice with one client, but not another.* Learning Objective #6: Create (skills: plan, produce, generate) *A. Based on their service-learning experiences, students will pick a theory discussed and propose modifications to it to incorporate changes in modern society and social work values.* *A. Students will compare and contrast how such changes to the theory may impact assessment, intervention, and evaluation.* *B. Students will demonstrate their understanding of a theory by appropriately engaging with the student they are mentoring.*

Social work students are expected to select one of the students they tutor to use as the "client" for their *application* of HBSE theory. Through the tutoring (e.g. assessing developmental milestones and learning tasks), guided learning activities (e.g., writing a story about family or completing sentences about likes/dislikes), and spontaneous interactions, the social work students learn about the K-8 students and the social environment. This requires students to *apply* the knowledge they are learning in the classroom to a practice setting. Students are encouraged to listen and make observations of the student, the school personnel, and the larger community in order to *evaluate* and think critically about the value of HBSE in facilitating meaning making.

In addition to the service-learning in the school, the students organize and participate in a canned food drive that benefits the tutored children. Based on Feeding America's Backpack Program, which recognizes that school children often go hungry on weekends, the college students organize a food drive of kid-friendly foods. Using HBSE theory as a guide to *analyze* why American children live with hunger and the community's response to the problem, they participate in the food drive to provide the K-8 students with additional food over the Thanksgiving and winter holidays.

Description of the Assignments that Help Achieve the HBSE Competencies

Students complete a portfolio over the course of the quarter. The portfolio has twelve assignments, which account for over 60% of the course grade (the remaining points are achieved from reading and lecture quizzes). As part of the portfolio, students select one of the K-8 students with whom they have been working for the focus of their service-learning experiences. Before they began to *apply* the theoretical perspectives, students complete a brief review of the literature based on a topic related to urban youth. Students also complete an ecomap which sets the stage for the theoretical analysis. The literature review assignment requires students to *understand* and summarize current knowledge about at-risk youth, while the ecomap assignment requires students to *create* a comprehensive pictorial representation of person-in-environment factors that influenced their "client's" life. Students then complete portfolio assignments regarding the *application* and *evaluation* of two micro theories (e.g., developmental), one mezzo theory (e.g., family systems theory), and one macro theory (e.g., the social capital approach). In completion of the portfolio, students choose one theory to *evaluate* using the criteria (e.g., coherence and conceptual clarity, comprehensiveness) set forth by Hutchison (2008, p. 31). This assignment also asks students to *create* knowledge by suggesting changes to a theory that would be more inclusive of their experiences working with at-risk urban youth. Throughout the aforementioned application of theory assignments, the students are using their work with their K-8 student to inform their social work *analysis*.

Students complete scholarly reflection assignments at the beginning and end of the service-learning experience and twice during the course of the quarter. The first reflection assignment is a pre-write to establish baseline knowledge about their understanding of the population with whom the student will be serving. The final reflection requires students to grapple with professional issues of social justice and service. The other two reflection assignments allow students to choose from guided reflection topics such as addressing cultural competence, ethical dilemmas faced during the service-learning, and a national

and global comparison of youth and public education; all of which serve to demonstrate competencies relevant to HBSE. The second reflection assignment requires that students contextualize their comments by *applying*, *analyzing*, *evaluating*, and (sometimes) *creating* knowledge related to HBSE theory and social work practice.

DISCUSSION

Social work is primarily a practice profession; social workers are licensed professionals working in all arenas in society, in a variety of roles, at the micro and macro practice levels to ensure that all members of society receive the necessary services to function at their highest capacity. Incorporating service-learning pedagogy as a integral part of the curriculum provides social work educators an opportunity to create meaningful learning opportunities for students and better prepare them for practicum (Kropf & Tracey, 2002), while simultaneously benefiting the community and increasing their understanding of and commitment to the public good. Service-learning philosophies also align with the values and ethics of the profession, as well as Council of Social Work Education's (CSWE) standards. The CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards state the following as the goal of social work:

> The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons (CSWE, 2010).

According to Zastrow (2010) social work is unique from other professions in its mandate and primary focus on providing social services and advocating for the social welfare of others. From our experiences, service-learning in HBSE courses typically occur in agencies serving vulnerable populations. When this is true, in addition to mastering the HBSE content, social work students have the opportunity to practice their values of service, while at the same time, focusing on an issue of social inequality. Further, service-learning complements academic content and the achievement of competencies. Service-learning can facilitate the promotion of social work values, provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, and foster civic responsibility.

As faculty rethink social work education in light of the CSWE 2008 changes in HBSE competencies and practice behaviors (Council on Social Work Education, 2010), designing learning objectives and the assignments that measure them will be important in helping programs demonstrate a competency based education. The shift to addressing the competencies through a demonstrated practice behavior aligns with the methodology of service-learning. Interactions with clients are fluid, dynamic, and unpredictable. Students must learn to determine if a given theory helps explain human behavior and formulate a hypothesis under such conditions. Providing a real life setting in which to practice these skills has pedagogical value. What better evidence of competency is there than when

students can demonstrate that they understand theory by applying it in a real person-in-environment setting?

In a well designed HBSE service-learning experience, students will be able to utilize complex critical thinking skills. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy provides a structure for assessing higher level thinking. Using the new HBSE competencies and practice behaviors, students will be able to apply and evaluate the effectiveness of a theory. The nuances of a theory, including identifying situations in which a theory does not apply, may become illuminated when working with a person rather than a textbook example. Students will also gain practice in identifying a shortcoming or needed modifications of a historical theory which often fails to take into account perspectives of women, people of color, individuals with disabilities, or issues faced by non-Western individuals. Table 1 is intended to give readers at framework for designing HSBE service-learning projects that increase critical thinking and allow a way to measure practice behaviors.

Since the ultimate goal of social work education is to prepare social workers for competent professional practice in their work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and society at large, taking the classroom into the community is an important and necessary component of the social work curriculum. Service-learning opportunities in HBSE courses will allow students to learn firsthand about social work concepts such as person-in environment, problem solving, and an array of theoretical perspectives, which are essential in understand the sociopolitical and environmental conditions that contribute to the social problems faced by the clients and communities.

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Pura Vida with a Purpose:
Energizing Engagement with Human Rights through Service-Learning

Carolyn Bartick Ericson

Abstract: *This paper examines the effects of an international service-learning course with a strong human rights component. Human rights have social justice as an essential component and advancing both are considered core competencies in social work. International education in colleges and universities has gained in popularity as has service-learning. Research has been carried out in both these areas. However, less research has been done on the combination of the two. In this paper a course is described during which students spent three weeks in Costa Rica, the land of Pura Vida, learning about its human rights efforts, its language, getting to know its people, and providing service to some of its citizens. An analysis of student surveys and journals revealed a strengthened belief on the part of the participants that they are competent to have an impact on the world as well as having a responsibility to do so.*

Keywords: *International education, service-learning, international service-learning, human rights, competencies*

> *And so the story goes, fifteen kids got the chance of a lifetime in an unknown place…and they were never, ever the same. Home may be where the heart is, but a little piece of it is missing now because it's been left in Costa Rica. Pura Vida!* (Closing statement in the journal of an undergraduate social work student.)

Pura Vida! The Pure/Good Life. This common phrase in Costa Rica took on a new meaning for two groups of 15 students and their professors from the United States who came, learned, and contributed. This paper examines the effects of an international social work course with a service-learning component. The research was designed to expand the existing knowledge of the impact of international service-learning. It assesses the effect on students in several areas relevant to social work competencies, including cultural competence, engagement with diverse populations, commitment to social justice and human rights, awareness of international issues and civic engagement. This paper will also address best practices in designing international service-learning courses.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Service-Learning

Service-learning has become increasingly common across disciplines, including social work, on many college campuses. Students in Campus Compact member schools performed 366 million hours of service through organized service-learning at an estimated value of 7.4 billion dollars to communities in the 2008-2009 academic year (Campus Compact, 2009). Students at other colleges and universities provide countless

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additional hours of service. Service-learning is a special type of course, providing unique opportunities to the learner and the recipient of the service. It is not simply a course that has a volunteer requirement. "Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content." (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, N.D.)

Reflection is a key part of service-learning. Only through reflection can students process their experience in such a way that it is integrated into their understanding of the populations they are serving, the environment in which they live and the course curriculum. "Experiential education is inductive, beginning with raw experience that is processed through an intentional learning format and transformed into working, usable knowledge" (National Society for Experiential Education Foundations Document Committee, 1998, p. 3).

A review of studies on the effects of service-learning from 1993-2000 (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001) found a number of positive effects of service learning on personal, social, learning and career outcomes. These included development of cultural and racial understanding and reduced stereotyped thinking. Batchelder and Root (1994) found students who participated in service-learning, compared to those who did not, evidenced greater increases in pro-social decision-making and pro-social reasoning. Ericson and Ford (2008) found that students gained an increased appreciation for the universality of childhood from students' service learning experience with children; that is, that there are common experiences that children can share despite their circumstances. This helps students relate to children of all backgrounds and facilitated connections between social policy and direct practice issues. Wakefield and Ericson (2003), in a qualitative analysis of journals of students involved in service-learning with children, found that the students developed an appreciation for the children as unique individuals who cannot be classified according to specific expectations. Closson and Nelson (2009) found that during an experience with Habitat for Humanity, students were able to learn cognitively, affectively and pragmatically. However, they did not find that the students developed an increased understanding of social justice issues, despite an increase in awareness of their middle-class privilege.

In social work education, service-learning is distinct from field practica although the two have sometimes been confused (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). In field practica, the emphasis is on the students' development of knowledge and skills. Although learning is a core part of service-learning and it is not simply volunteerism, the service to the community and the development of the value of civic engagement are also core goals. Curriculum and service must be integrated.

More recently, Philips (2007) found publication about civic engagement "sporadic but present" (p. 7). She sees social work as a relative late-comer in using the service-learning pedagogy, but that it is increasing in usage. She has a strong belief that the "social change for social justice" model should guide the development of service-learning

in social work, Lemieux and Allen (2007) determined that there was insufficient rigorous evaluation research in the social work literature regarding service-learning pedagogy. It was their belief that "research on service-learning has not kept pace with the idealism that permeates much of the scholarly literature on social work community practice, as well as the advances in knowledge development in the broader service-learning field" (p. 316). They advocated for further research to strengthen the use of service-learning in social work.

The research described in this article had as its goal to determine outcomes of service-learning in an international context, including its potential to foster the development of core social work competencies. The course particularly addresses Education Policy and Accreditation Standards 2.1.4, "Engage difference and diversity in practice", and 2.1.5, "Advance human rights and social and economic justice" (Council on Social Work Education, 2008).

International Education

Like service-learning, international education has also become increasingly popular. In the 2008-2009 academic year, 260,327 American college students studied abroad for academic credit from their home institutions, a 100% increase in the last decade (Institute of International Education, 2010). The Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Program called for sending 1,000,000 students to study abroad by 2016-2017 stating that this needed to happen to further "global competence" and "national needs." (Year of Study Abroad, N.D.).

In comparison to other studies of academic programs, however, the research is less developed in the area of the effects of study abroad programs. Positive effects that have been found include language acquisition, personal and professional development and positive academic outcomes (Dolby, 2007). Ford and Ericson (2003) found that social work students, participating in an international experience in the Netherlands, showed changes in self-perceptions that were still present six months later, most notably for students who had never left the country before. All student participants were more aware of global issues and expressed interest in to travelling more for professional reasons.

According to Long (2009), "social work has been pursing and building momentum for international work based on the profession's long-standing devotion to principles of human rights and social justice" (p. 5). It is his belief that social work must think about justice from a worldwide perspective. International courses offer a special opportunity for students to do this, particularly in courses with service-learning components.

International Service-Learning

International service-learning combines international education with a service-learning component. In their article, *Going Global with Service-Learning*, Hartman and Rola (2000) described their experiences with students in Mexico and found that they were "transformed as individuals and re-evaluated themselves as persons" (p.21). These students often study second languages, become involved in additional international service-learning courses, and maintain contact with host families. Kiely and Nielsen

(2002/2003) emphasized the importance of partnerships, noting that recognition of partners' needs supports the creation of a program with service-learning course objectives for mutual benefit. As a result, students were able to achieve, among other things, intercultural competence, language skills, and an appreciation of difference.

Many studies of international service-learning are in the form of case studies. Monard-Weissman (2003) found that students in Ecuador became more sensitive to the needs of citizens in other parts of the world and were able to examine their own roles as citizens of the world, developing an enhanced sense of social justice. Using a longitudinal case study design, Kiely (2005) concluded that a transformational learning experience occurred for students performing service-learning in Nicaragua. Students experienced transformative learning in one or more of the following areas: political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual. Students were less likely to adapt to the status quo, reflecting a greater sense of social justice.

Gorka and Niesenbaum (2001) stress the importance of interdisciplinary courses that support language immersion in other countries as a way of showing the relevance of learning a foreign language to non-language majors. They also emphasize the importance of a partnership with organizations in other countries. This partnership allows for opportunities for students beyond traditional tourism or study abroad programs without a partnership. International service-learning may also generate profound questions such as: Why are so many people poor? Why is there so much inequality and injustice? (Grusky, 2000). Service-learning provides the opportunity for "teachable" moments, noting that the real power of international service-learning is at the "critical juncture where experience meets study, critical analysis, and reflection" (p.861). She cautions, however, against exploiting poor nations to provide a life-enriching experience for students. Consistent with this, Porter and Monard (2001) emphasize reciprocity (or the Bolivian term "Ayni") as imperative. They describe several aspects of Ayni based on their experience with students building a school in Bolivia, including that "service programs must be based upon a foundation of genuine need as expressed by the recipients" and "Ayni cycles involve a different conception of time and place, and place participants in an ongoing relationship that extends across both generation and geography" (p.8). Monard-Weissman (2003) also found that students developed a deeper sense of social justice in her case study of an international service-learning experience in Ecuador.

In addition to promoting an understanding of human rights, international service learning has also found to impact students' cultural competency. Through an analysis of reflective journals of graduate students performing service in Peru, Porter (2003) found that students engaged with others, not only with the head but with the heart. As they constructed a new Head Start-like preschool building along with local residents, students were able to fulfill Wegner's charge that "educational design must engage learning communities in activities that have consequences beyond their boundaries, so that students may learn what it takes to become effective in the world" (Wegner, 1998, p. 274 as cited in Porter, p. 61).

Boyle, Nackerud and Kilpatrick (1999) determined that, following a service-learning experience in Mexico, students showed an increase in cultural competence. They stress

the need for preparing students to interact with the Hispanic/Latino population because of the ongoing increase in this population in the U.S. This international experience was designed, in part, to support the students' competence in working with the Hispanic/Latino population.

Although not completely consistent, research in service-learning shows positive outcomes in the development of an increased understanding of human rights and commitment to social justice. International service-learning is not unique in its ability to do this but provides an opportunity for students to immerse themselves in another culture and understand the need for a universality of human rights. A social work international service-learning course has definite potential to build competencies around diversity and difference as well as human rights and social justice. This research was designed to determine the effectiveness of one international service-learning course at accomplishing those things.

METHODOLOGY

The Course

This research was carried out during two three-week international courses with service-learning components in Costa Rica. The implementation of the two courses took place two years apart. The social work course title was Human Rights: The Costa Rican Perspective. All goals of the course reflect The Educational Policies and Accreditations Standards (EPAS) (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). As noted earlier, the course particularly addresses Standards 2.1.4, "Engage difference and diversity in practice", and 2.1.5, "Advance human rights and social and economic justice". The goals of the course were for the students to:

1. Understand the concept of human rights.
2. Understand the historical development of global human rights.
3. Understand the role of the United Nations in working towards the protection of human rights.
4. Understand what governmental and non-governmental organizations are doing to advance human rights.
5. Have an understanding of the rights of women, minorities, indigenous peoples, children and other vulnerable populations.
6. Develop self-awareness with respect to one's own perception of human rights.
7. Understand efforts that have been put forth in Costa Rica in the service of human rights.
8. Understand the importance of language within a culture.
9. Increase facility in the Spanish language at the appropriate level.
10. Understand cultural norms and traditions within Costa Rican society.

11. Understand the culture that the immigrant Central American population brings to the U.S.
12. Understand the relationship of the U.S. to other countries in the process of enhancement of global human rights.

The international experience was designed to quickly immerse the students in the culture and life of Costa Rica and was developed in partnership with a language school. During their language education, students were housed with Costa Rican "Tico" (local) families with whom they lived for two weeks. Most of the family members spoke little or no English which allowed for a full immersion experience. Upon arrival in Costa Rica, students were tested for placement in Spanish classes and began those classes the next morning. The students had 24 hours of small group instruction. Although the course was not intended to be a Spanish language course, language is a critical part of a country's culture and was intended to support the development of students' cultural competence.

A total of three weeks was spent in Costa Rica. During the first two weeks, the students stayed with their Tico families, studied Spanish, visited social service agencies and area neighborhoods and met with Costa Rican university students and faculty. The second group to participate in this course also developed a program for older adults in a day treatment center and did a beach cleanup. The third week was spent at a residential center for 80 children in the mountains about an hour outside of San Jose, the capital city of Costa Rica. The center provides services for children and adolescents who have little access to social services and few economic resources or opportunities for their healthy development. The children at the center were temporarily living apart from their families as a result of abuse, neglect, or extreme poverty and ranged in age from preschoolers to teenagers. Students shared one of the many houses on the grounds of the center and were assigned to have meals with the children as well as interact with them after dinner. While the children were in school during the day, the students performed several service activities at the request of the partner staff of the center. This insured that the needs of the partner organization were clearly met. Service activities included painting the interior of a building which was to be used as an art center, painting the playground equipment, preparing lunch for the children and staff, painting of houses and reconstruction of one of the houses. Two students requested the opportunity to volunteer in the school which was eagerly accepted. In fact, their second day in the school, they were substitute teachers for the first grade! This occurred despite their limited Spanish ability and lack of prior teaching experience.

Prior to leaving for Costa Rica, all students were asked if they would be willing to participate in a research study designed to assess the impact of an international service-learning experience. The proposed research had undergone review and been approved by the university's Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. All students agreed to participate and signed consent forms. During the second trip, one student was unable to complete the program and therefore, did not complete her research participation and was not included in the study. The research design was a pre/post study to measure the impact of the international service learning course, with specific attention to issues of cultural

competency and commitment to social justice, including quantitative surveys and qualitative data from student reflection journals.

The Students/Participants

The students were 29 undergraduates enrolled in a small liberal arts university in one of the Middle Atlantic States. All students were traditional age students, reflecting the demographics of the university as a whole. Six had never traveled outside the country before but the majority had and most had some prior service-learning experience. Only one had volunteer experience outside the country and this was not service-learning. A summary of participant demographics are included in Table 1.

Table 1: Student Participant Demographics

Demographic				
Gender	M 3 (10.3%)	F 26 (89.7%)		
Age	18-19 2 (6.9%)	21-22 25 (86.2.7%)	22-23 2 (6.9%)	
Family Income	Wealthy 2 (6.9%)	Middle Class 21 (72.4%)	Working-class/Poor (13.7%)	Other 2 (6.9%)
Childhood Home	Rural 5 (17.2%)	Suburban 24 (82.8%)		
Ethnic Background	Caucasian 23 (79.3%)	Hispanic 2 (6.9%)	Multiethnic 3 (10.3%)	Asian 1(3.4%)
Previous International Trips	0-2 16 (55.5%)	3-5 6 (20.7%)	6+ 7 (24.1%)	

Surveys

Surveys were administered just before the start of the course and before departing from Costa Rica. The survey was adapted from Markus, Howard, and King (1993) and the Civic Attachments and Public Life Survey (The Walt Whitman Center, 1997) and utilized a four point Likert-type scale. Items one through sixteen were self-rating items on a list of skills and activities. Students were asked to rate themselves as compared to most people on a scale of one to four with one being not as good and four, much better. Items 17 through 24 asked the students to rate the importance of a number of items to them. Items 25 through 34 asked students to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements. These items were chosen because they are reflective of a commitment to human rights and social justice.

Journals

The students' reflective journals provided qualitative data about their reactions and were analyzed for content themes. Students were required to use the "What? So what?

and Now what?" model of journal reflection. They described what they observed and experienced, what they thought about it, and how they might incorporate this into their thinking about human rights as well as actions they might take as a result. This is a method favored by many experiential educators and is designed to foster reflection and promote an understanding of how the insights gained through service-learning might be applied (Campus Outreach Opportunity League, 1993).

RESULTS

Paired samples t-tests were run using SPSS 17 on all items in the survey. Of the 34 items in the survey, significant differences pre and post test were found on 21 items. Results are shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4. There was a significant statistical change in 21 items and all changes were in the direction that indicates an increased awareness and commitment to human rights on the part of the students and a sense of competence in their belief that they are able to make a change.

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-post Measures of Self-rating of Personal Characteristics

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*t*
Respecting views of others	3.17	.6017	3.62	.5615	-3.882***
Attentive to social issues	2.52	.8709	3.17	.7105	-4.335***
Thinking critically	2.65	.7688	2.89	.7243	-1.367
Communicating ideas to others	2.55	.8274	3.00	.7559	-2.776**
Engaging in discussion with others	2.79	.8610	3.24	.7862	-2.041
Ability to compromise	2.75	.8304	3.03	.6804	-1.864
Listening skills	3.03	.6804	3.27	.5914	-1.653
Moral or ethical judgment	2.96	.8230	3.13	.6394	-1.543
Identification of social issues or concerns	2.58	.9070	3.14	.7427	-2.911**
Thinking about the future	2.82	1.002	3.20	.9775	-2.807**
Ability to take action	2.82	.8048	3.17	.6584	-2.415*
Tolerant of people who are different	3.37	.7415	3.70	.5417	-2.360*
Effective in accomplishing goals	2.96	.7310	3.24	.6894	-2.117*
Empathetic to all points of view	3.00	.9258	3.24	.7394	-1.885
Feeling responsible for others	3.00	.8864	3.10	.8596	-.648
Knowing where to find information	2.62	.7752	2.96	.6804	-2.774**

N=29 * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 3: Comparison of Pre and Post Ratings on the Importance of Behaviors

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*t*
Working toward equal opportunity for all U.S. Citizens	3.38	.6768	3.44	.6316	-.812
Working toward equal opportunity for all citizens of the world	3.06	.9610	3.48	.6876	-3.550***
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	2.76	.9876	3.27	.7510	-4.050***
Becoming involved in a program to improve communities, including those in other countries	3.24	.6894	3.59	.5680	-2.281*
Being very well off financially	2.34	.7209	2.37	.7277	-297
Volunteering my time helping people in need	3.20	.6750	3.59	.5680	-4.137***
Giving 3% or more of my income to help those in need	2.34	.8974	2.83	.9284	-3.136**
Finding a career that provides the opportunity to be helpful to others or useful to societies	3.45	.8695	3.55	.6316	-2.254*

N=29 * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 4: Comparison of Pre and Post Agreement with Statements

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*t*
Adults should give some time for the good of their community or country	3.34	.4837	3.59	.5012	-3.360**
Adults should give some time for the good of other countries	2.93	.5298	3.27	.7018	-1.468
Most misfortunes that occur to people are frequently the result of circumstances beyond their control	2.64	.6214	3.21	.5681	-5.279***
If I could change one thing about the world, it would be to achieve greater social justice	2.96	.7784	2.96	.7310	.000
I make quick judgments about homeless people	2.24	.6324	1.90	.5936	3.025**
People, regardless of whether they have been successful or not, ought to help those in need	3.06	.7036	3.17	.6584	-1.140
People ought to help those in need as a “payback” for their own opportunities, fortunes, and successes	2.06	.7799	2.41	.5680	-3.035**
I believe that I can make a difference in the world	3.41	.5680	3.62	.4938	-1.797
Having an impact on the world is within reach of most individuals	3.03	.7444	3.39	.6852	-2.785**
Having an impact on the world is within my reach	3.21	.5681	3.64	.4879	-3.576***

N=29 * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Journals

Entries in student journals were done on a daily basis and journals were collected at the end of the course. They were reviewed for recurring themes. Several themes emerged. Themes are identified and supported by student journal quotes.

Human Rights

Human Rights, the major focus of the course, emerged in all journals. Students were able to think about the importance of Human Rights in their own country as well as others.

> *We also talked about human rights in the U.S. and how social workers should realize the importance of human rights. We talk about cultural relations and how it is difficult to decide on basic human rights standards for the whole world when culture varies so greatly. I think it is impossible to hold everyone to the same standards, especially American standards. Who are we to judge other countries and their problems when we haven't even accepted the UN Convention? America really needs to accept those conventions and be a good example for other countries.*

Language

Language emerged, without exception, as an important ingredient of the course. This supports the assertion by Gorka and Niesenbaum (2001) that it is important to engage non foreign-language majors in immersion experiences to help them see the importance of learning a foreign language (only one of the participants was a Spanish major). Language competency is not essential for cultural competence but this experience demonstrated how it may contribute to it in very important ways. The students felt more empowered and competent as a result of their increased language ability and also developed an understanding of the difficulty a new language poses for people entering a new country.

> *Today in class we were able to learn important expressions such as hello and thank you. These phrases will help me in getting around when I am talking to the locals. It actually gave me a sense of hope that I could contribute in the conversations that my fellow student and host family are engaged in every minute. When I am in a position where I don't understand the language it makes me believe that Americans in general go to countries expecting everyone to speak English. Not only internationally but also in the United States. having expectations of others is placing judgment and assumptions that can hinder the services when working with a client who is racially different or even speaks only one language.*

Existence of poverty

Students made frequent observations of the poverty within which many citizens have to live. Rather than turn their eyes away from it, they took it in, processed it, and wanted to share their experiences with others.

After viewing downtown and all of the historical landmarks, the professor from the University of Costa Rica took us into the slums. This was a very sad part of the day for me. There was trash all in the streets….The houses of the people who lived in the slums were made of boxes and dirt. Their ceilings consisted of old boxes and metal that they could find laying around. What hit me the hardest was to see all of the school children in the streets. No one deserves to live like that. …It is one thing to see stuff like that on TV, but when you see it with your own eyes it is totally different. I wish that everyone could have seen what we saw today.

Personal growth

Many of the students were aware of personal growth while on the trip. They were thoughtful about changes taking place within themselves and the impact it would have on them in the future.

I am truly growing as a person on this trip. The way I view life, people, and happiness has all changed for the better. I no longer take for granted the life that my parents have provided for me. I am so grateful!

All I can really say is that I am changed due to this experience….I shouldn't limit myself to only working in the U.S., especially when so many people in other countries need help. Overall, this three-week adventure in Costa Rica has made me tremendously more culturally competent with Costa Ricans. I can't wait to learn more about other cultures!

Needs of Children

Students were very affected by the children with whom they interacted. They attempted to understand the children's behavior within the context of their experiences.

We got assigned to the house of Jessie which was a house of all boys aged from probably nine to twelve years old. From the second we met them I was receiving huge hugs and high fives and acceptance without even having to prove myself which is something I haven't ever really seen…..I just don't understand their attachment to us but I guess that's what they really need.

DISCUSSION

Students participating in this international service-learning course evidenced important gains which contributed to their development of social work competencies. Although the implications of this study are limited by the fact that there was no control group, it seems unlikely that students who spent their first three weeks of the summer pursuing more typical summer experiences or even those who studied similar content without the international service-learning experience would show similar gains. It is important that the students were immersed in the culture and language of Costa Rica before they began their service experience. By the time they entered the service sites, the students had completed basic Spanish instruction, had visited some of the neighborhoods

from which the children in the Center came, and had learned about social services in the country. They had also learned about and examined the human rights approach of the government and citizens of the country. The combination of the course content with cultural immersion and service activities contributed to the overall gains and contributions made during this experience.

The survey results indicated that students believed more strongly that they could have an impact on the world and showed an increased sense of responsibility to do so. The change in their sense of their own capacity, as well as the capacity of all people, to make a difference was empowering to them. Rather than become overwhelmed by what they experienced, they developed an increase sense of their own competence to help to improve the lives of others. Further evidence of these changes was visible when they began a university-approved club to support the Children's center in Costa Rica where they had done a week of service. They are developing fund-raising activities to buy new playground equipment that they observed to be old and unsafe. This club will recruit members from the general university population and will go on after the trip participants graduate.

In addition to the changes in their competency around social justice, they also demonstrated increases in competencies around dealing with diversity and difference. They believed that they became more tolerant and less judgmental. If students are to develop a sense of how to support the rights of other, they cannot be judgmental of others.

The importance of volunteering and making financial contributions, another form of action to promote social justice, was also strengthened. In fact, some of the students chose to become continuing sponsors of children in the center which is often difficult to manage on a student budget.

In addition to the survey findings, the student journals also demonstrated the students 'sense of the importance of human rights overall, particularly of children, and, for those who were in the group that went to the older adult center, of that population as well. They recognized the importance of language to a country's culture and a need to learn how to communicate in that language to be most effective in serving others. Students evidenced in both journals and in the surveys development which will enhance their ability to serve other world populations in the future. There was growth in all students even though most were social work majors who came into the service experience with a pre-existing strong commitment to others.

This was a small sample involving one course and the results cannot be generalized. However, it supports the belief that service-learning has tremendous potential to help students recognize the value of service as well as to enhance their learning in many areas, particularly human rights and social justice and diversity and difference, in direct support of the related EPAS competencies (CSWE, 2008). International experiences have the potential to broaden student thinking in ways that are hard to replicate domestically. Combining the two has even greater potential to strengthen the competencies identified above.

However, there are certainly challenges to maximizing the opportunity for learning in international service-learning courses. Each course must be designed to prepare students adequately for the experience, incorporate reflection, and have a strong academic component. Several meetings were held with the students prior to the inception of the course to familiarize the students with Costa Rica, its people, its culture, as well as the behavioral and academic expectations of the service-learning course. Students may see a summer international experience as a vacation and it is not. In this course, students were involved with course content at least 8 hours a day, however, weekends were left for recreation to allow students to take advantage of the many opportunities available. In addition to journaling, students were required to do an oral presentation on human rights to the group and were required to write a paper after completion of the trip comparing and contrasting Costa Rican and U.S. policies with human rights implications. A continued examination of the effects of these experiences and the best way to design courses which provide them is important to social work.

In addition, this type of course is not without its challenges for the educator. There is a tremendous amount of preparation time. Practical matters such as housing, meals, flights and in-country transportation have to be planned. Universities increasingly have protocols for issues of safety and legal liability that must be followed. It is very important for the instructor to have familiarity with the country, have visited the country previously, and ideally to have had the opportunity to go there ahead of time for planning purposes. A strong relationship with the service-learning site and sensitivity to their needs of the organization is critical. The primary instructor for the course had a pre-existing relationship with the University of Costa Rica, the Spanish school and the service site which was very helpful.

Faculty have a great deal of responsibility when taking students out of the country to an unfamiliar environment. Behavioral expectations need to be made very clear to the students and cultural sensitivity needs to be emphasized. On only one occasion was a student blatantly culturally insensitive on this trip and the language school partner (a citizen of the host country) was able to effectively challenge her misconception, but it is often the role of the instructor to facilitate recognition of cultural insensitivity on the part of the student.

The post-service evaluation completed by the partner organization staff who came into contact with the students during the service experience revealed that there were several areas that were important to them. These included coordination of efforts between the service site personnel and university faculty as well as the leadership of the faculty. The work which the partner organization requested was accomplished and relationships developed between the program participants, site personnel and older adult children to the benefit of all.

The importance of respect for the host institution and coordination with them both before and during the experience was clear. It seems that the Ayni described by Porter and Monard (2001) was present, based on the partner comments and those of the students. It did not come easily, however. Much work had to take place for this to be possible.

Benefits outweigh the challenges and careful planning and preparation for the students can result in students' enhanced cultural competence and awareness of social justice on an international scale. These qualities and skills support student achievement of the EPAS (CSWE, 2008) competencies as well as becoming citizens of the world. The world benefits also when well-prepared students who are sensitive to the culture with whom they are engaging dedicate themselves to service.

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Interdisciplinary Service-Learning: Building Student Competencies through the Cross-Cultural Parent Groups Project

Michele Belliveau

Abstract: *Changing demographics and an emphasis on competency-based social work education call for innovative approaches to the delivery of curricular content. In an effort to introduce BSW students to the socio-political issues facing the local Latino immigrant community, a service-learning project was developed in collaboration with the Spanish Language Department and a local middle school. An analysis of outcomes from social work student evaluations showed that students engaged with the community and issues in new and unexpected ways. Through their engagement in a cross-cultural group project, students developed greater cultural sensitivity, honed their group practice skills in an unfamiliar context, provided a needed service to the community, and raised their awareness about the working conditions of new immigrants as part of a developing framework for social action. Details and implications of the project as a means to build student competencies are described.*

Keywords: *Cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, service-learning, core competencies*

INTRODUCTION

Demographic Shifts: Implications for Social Work Education

Given recent shifts in macroeconomic and social processes that have feminized migration flows and drawn immigrants to non-traditional receiving states, communities that were once homogeneous find themselves more linguistically, ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse than ever before (Greenlees & Saenz, 1999; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002; Singer 2002, 2004). As a result of growth in immigration from Latin America, the Latino population has become the largest ethnic and racial minority in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2003). In 2008, the largest percentage of immigrants in the U.S was from Latin America; 49.9% of all immigrants were female; and the children of immigrants accounted for 29.9% of all children in low-income families (Migration Policy Institute, 2008). With these trends, graduates of social work programs will most likely work with Latino families, prompting programs to review whether their curriculum is keeping pace with shifting demographics and contexts of need.

The region where the author's social work program sits is comprised of multiple Latino communities. The Latino demographics of the region reflect its geographic diversity, with a well-established Puerto Rican, urban community; a longstanding, rural migrant farmworker community; and a newcomer undocumented Mexican and Central American community that works in both the rural farming and urban and suburban service sectors. According to population estimates, the county where the university sits experienced substantial growth in its Latino population between 1990 and 2009. Between

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1990 and 2000, the Latino population increased from 2.3% to 3.7% (Chester County Planning Commission, 2001) and to an average of 5% between 2005 and 2009 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). Given that these are official estimates and may not account for the presence of undocumented immigrants (Bean, Corona, Tuiran, Woodrow-Lafield, & Van Hook, 2001), it is likely the population growth is even more significant. As a result, community-based social service and health care providers have struggled to serve monolingual Spanish-speaking newcomers with their largely monolingual English-speaking staff.

As one response to this changing context and in an effort to increase student awareness of the social, economic, political, and psychological issues facing the local Latino community, a service-learning project that matched social work students with Spanish language students was conceived; together students facilitated groups on the topic of adolescent depression for the parents of Latino middle schoolers in the community, a need identified by the community itself. Completed in the spring of 2009, the project crossed disciplines, cultures, fields of practice (university and local school district) and the roles of expert-recipient. Such crossings were consistent with the building of student competencies specified in the 2008 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) educational policy and accreditation standards and described below.

Pedagogical Shifts: Competency-Based Education

At the same time that U.S. communities are diversifying, the Council on Social Work Education has issued new, competency-based standards for social work education that allow programs to respond to such diversity with greater agility. The 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), in specifying ten core student competencies, encourage the infusion of content across the curriculum (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). This is different from the 2001 EPAS that used the lexicon of "sequences," tacitly underwriting, for example, the marginalization of policy within practice or cultural competency within social work competency. Under the new EPAS, course content is conceptualized as building the core competencies that are demonstrated through a program's practice behaviors and assessed through multiple measures. In addition, programs must specify how their mission and goals not only connect with core competencies but reflect the context of the program (for example, the geographic region in which the university resides). This standard fosters greater flexibility and creativity in the development of a curriculum that responds to the changing and diverse context of a social work program.

In addition to the EPAS, the mission of the social work program in which the service-learning project to be described took place reflects that of the broader university, which as a public institution is to serve the residents of the region and state. Therefore, a service-learning project that could fulfill the mission of the university and social work program, while simultaneously meeting the unmet needs of the community, was well-suited to the mandates of the 2008 EPAS.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Service-Learning as a Pedagogical Tool

Service-learning in higher education has proven effective in helping students to develop their skills of civic engagement, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). University students that have engaged in service-learning credit their experience with better success in the job market and believe it should be practiced in more courses at their colleges (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). In professional programs like social work that include a field practicum, service-learning has been found to complement the practicum by providing students with a field experience where the primary focus is on service and not professional development (Eby, 2001). Moreover, by engaging in a project that meets a need identified by the community and its providers, the service-learning project becomes an authentic service activity (Eby) and socializes students to both the ethic of service and the practice of viewing clients as experts in their own experience, the latter of which is consonant with the EPAS standard for cultural competency.

Given this seemingly good fit between service-learning and social work education, educators have integrated service-learning into their courses, though literature on the subject remains limited (Bye, 2005; Lemieux & Allen, 2007). Given the 2008 EPAS emphasis on field as the signature pedagogy, service-learning projects offer opportunities to connect classroom and field learning either concurrent with or earlier than the third and fourth year when the undergraduate practicum typically occurs, and to infuse the pedagogy of field throughout the curriculum. However, what distinguishes service-learning from the field practicum may ultimately be found in the role of the student as learner. Service-learning provides a field learning experience unmitigated by the traditional structure of the professional social work internship. Whereas in the field practicum students are socialized to take guidance from field instructors and other professionals, in service-learning students may have greater opportunities to learn directly from community members and stakeholders.

Cross-cultural service-learning has proven effective in facilitating social work students' cultural and racial understanding, preparing students for cross-cultural practice, and helping them to recognize racism and inequality (Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli, 2003). Importantly, cross-cultural service-learning has helped students make the connection between cultural competency educational goals stated in the curriculum and the real world (Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli), and moved them to social action. Of equal importance in the context of competency-based education for work with client systems of all sizes, service-learning has been effective in the teaching of group practice skills to social work students (Bye, 2005). Given that field placements do not always afford students the opportunity for groupwork, a service-learning project completed as a group and within a group can potentially bridge theory and practice outside of the traditional realm of the field practicum.

Building a Framework for Social Action

Given that the cross-cultural service-learning project was designed for the second of two generalist practice courses (in this case, practice with groups, organizations, and communities), students came with the foundation of social work practice with individuals and families. Larger systems were difficult to comprehend and intimidating, particularly when viewed as potential realms of social work practice. While students often take a social policy course prior to the second practice course, their framework for social change is based in a client-centered mode of practice. Using Pearlmutter's (2002) conceptualization of helping social workers (and in this case, social work students) progress towards social change, the project was designed to introduce students to the meaning and impact of oppressions so that they could eventually achieve the integration of individual client work and social change agent, an integration spelled out in the 2008 EPAS core competencies. According to Pearlmutter (2002), movement from client-centeredness to radical practice occurs along a continuum and is fostered through personal growth and skill-building. The service-learning project, in meeting a need that would highlight the marginality faced by Latino immigrant families in the region, was designed to move students along this continuum.

Critical to the learning process was the building of an affective connection between students and the Latino parents in the community. Pitner and Sakamoto (2005) argued that the building of critical consciousness in multicultural practice must be both cognitive and affective; if it is one to the exclusion of the other, practitioners risk engaging in oppressive practices. In order for students to become aware of the potential oppressive structure of the helping profession, they must understand on both a cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) level how clients construct their own realities. One method for doing this is for students to take the role of "ethnographer" instead of "expert" (Pitner & Sakamoto). The cross-cultural parent groups project facilitated this method in that social work students were placed simultaneously and purposefully in the dual role of learner and educator. This enabled students to recognize and value not only the challenges facing Latino parents in the community, but also their strengths.

THE SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT: INTERDISCIPLINARY, CROSS-CULTURAL PARENT GROUPS

The impetus for the project came from a bilingual, bicultural social worker in one of the local middle schools that serves the children of Latino farmworkers. The social worker served as a field instructor for the social work program and, on several occasions, had expressed her concern that she and her staff were not able to meet the growing needs of the Latino community. To illustrate, she described a meeting that drew approximately 70 Latino parents frustrated by the quality and level of their communication with their children. Among other things, families struggled with differential levels of acculturation between parents and children, as well as parenting in a foreign context. Of primary concern to the social work staff were the symptoms of depression, suicidal ideation, and other mental health issues that were at times dismissed or misunderstood by well-intentioned parents. The social worker wanted to hold informational and discussion

groups for parents at the middle school but had one problem: a shortage of bilingual social workers to facilitate groups.

At the same time these conversations occurred with the school social worker, the author discussed the possibility of collaborating with a colleague in the Spanish department who had a record of engaging her students in community service-learning projects in order to improve their fluency and fulfill a need. Therefore, a meeting was held at the local middle school between the author, Spanish professor, and social worker, and the project outline emerged. Small groups of students in the social work class would be paired with an advanced Spanish student who would serve as their language "consultant." The designation of consultant was made in order to fulfill the expectations of the Spanish course which was billed as "Spanish for Business." Spanish consultants would serve as translators in order to help prepare and facilitate parent groups.

Project Design, Preparation, and Goals

Design. Coordination of the project presented several logistical challenges, not the least of which was the matching of student schedules in order to facilitate their collaboration. This is a challenge of both group projects and service-learning within the context of one classroom; in the context of matching across disciplines, it became more daunting. It was decided that the author would create a timeline for the project based on the social work students' schedules, which took into consideration the meeting time of the advanced Spanish course. This would allow for some meetings to occur during class time, while others would have to occur outside of class time. Spanish language students would be recruited for the project by the social work professor in order to maximize the duration of student interest needed in order for the project to be successful.

Once the semester began, nine Spanish students were assigned to nine groups of approximately 3-4 social work students. Social work students were charged with creating a 5-minute role play and discussion questions in English; role-plays and questions were translated into Spanish by the Spanish student "consultants" and presented to small groups of Latino parents around the issue of youth depression and suicidal behavior during one night in April. Students planned and prepared for a group that could last up to one hour, including the time spent acting out the scenario in English and translating it into Spanish. Role plays were chosen as a medium to convey critical information based on the school social worker's sense that they would put parents at ease and engage them in a discussion of the issues. Table 1 provides the assignment description as it appeared in the course syllabus, as well as the timeline created for students to collaborate with their Spanish language consultants.

In addition to the schedule of assignments, both professors agreed to request funds through the university's office of service-learning and volunteer programs that had small stipends to support service-learning initiatives. Funds from the office covered the chartering of a school bus to transport college students to the middle school on the night of the cross-cultural parent groups.

Table 1. Project Description and Timeline from Course Syllabus

Cross-Cultural Parent Group Project (20% of grade)
This group project presents a unique opportunity to (1) work in a group (2) plan for a group (3) work with a translator/consultant and (4) facilitate a group with a diverse population. This project has three partners: you the students, advanced Spanish-language students, and the Middle School. For this project students will be assigned to small groups and asked to design a single-session group for Spanish-speaking parents of middle-schoolers. Students will be assigned one Spanish language consultant in order to create a 5-minute role play and questions in English and Spanish for the parent groups, around the issue of youth depression and suicidal behavior. Student groups, with the help of their consultant, will facilitate their one-session parent group on the night of Thursday, April 2nd at the Middle School.

The following will help to prepare students for this project: an immersion trip to [rural areas of the County]; a visit from the social services liaison at the Middle School to discuss the issue of mental health and the Latino community; in-class time devoted to group meetings and preparation; out-of-class time to meet with the Spanish language consultant; and coordination with course content in SWO 395: Junior Seminar.

Student groups will produce their plans in two stages: the first will be a rough draft of the role-play and a list of literature you read to prepare for the role-play and group (e.g. mental health access and the Latino community, running parent groups, adolescent-parent communication, signs and symptoms of depression and suicidal thoughts in adolescents). The second stage will be the final draft of the role play (in English and Spanish) and questions (in English and Spanish) that you have developed for the group.

Draft of Role-Play and References Due: March 9th

Role-Play and Questions Due: March 23rd

6. Reflection on Group Process (and Ratings) (5%)
This should be a brief summary of your experience in creating and participating in the cross-cultural parent group project. What did you learn about yourself in this process? What did you learn about preparing for a group? Working with the parents? What challenges did you face? What strengths did you discover or use in the process? Suggested length: 2-3 pages. ***Due April 10th.***

Project Timeline

Date	***Task***
Wed. Feb. 11	*Meet with Spanish language consultant to discuss role-play and timelines, room reserved and specified.*
Mon. Feb. 23	*Submit draft of role-play and questions to Professor—NOT GRADED—will return by 2/25*
Wed. Feb. 25	*Meet with Spanish language consultant, review (and submit to consultant) role-play and questions in preparation for translation—room reserved and specified.*
Mon. Mar. 9	*Submit role-play, questions, and references (ENGLISH) to Professor*
Wed. Mar. 25	*Submit English and Spanish versions of role-play and questions to Professor*
Week of March 23 and March 30	*Find time to meet with consultant to practice role plays!*
Thurs. April 2	*Parent Groups Night at Middle School* *Meet in Parking Lot at 5pm*

Preparation for the Groups. In order to prepare students for their work with Latino parents, two specific activities were planned as exercises in "preparatory empathy" (Cournoyer, 2008). The first was a visit to the social work class from the school social worker and another bilingual, bicultural mental health provider in the community to whom the school often referred families. The purpose of this visit was to give students an understanding of the unique issues confronting the Latino immigrant community such as low wages, long working hours, language barriers, and the generational differences between parents and children that were often exacerbated by adjustment to a new culture and language. In addition, the visitors described some of the signs and symptoms they observed in the students they helped, and how some of these were unique to first and second generation Latino middle schoolers. Finally, students learned about the impact of social stigma in the local immigrant Latino community on those that seek professional mental health services.

The second preparatory experience was a brief "immersion" into the county where most Latino families reside. With funding from the university's educational services budget that covered transportation and lunch, social work students spent the day visiting with four different providers in the community: a traditional multi-service agency with an emphasis on culturally and linguistically competent services, a faith-based mission organization that operated out of the ground floor of a small strip mall, a youth drop-in center, and a farmworkers' committee that emphasized capacity-building in the Latino community over the provision of services. This gave students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the strengths and challenges facing both the community and the providers that served them. It also connected students affectively to some of the struggles faced by local Latino families, a connection made more real when (coincidentally) one of the organizers for the farmworkers' committee attended the parent groups night at the middle school.

One final preparation for the groups was made by a social work student in the class that was engaged in an independent study. As part of the student's independent study, she surveyed the student groups and the resources in the area in order to create a resource list in Spanish and English to give to parents on the night of the parent groups. It was decided the best way to provide this information was in the form of a "wallet-size" card.

Goals of the Project. Learning goals (and corresponding competencies) for social work students were to: (1) Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and challenges facing the local Latino community of parents and children; (EP 2.1.3; 2.1.4) (2) Demonstrate an understanding of the social, economic, and political context of families' lives such as language access, work arrangements, and parenting, in order to lay the groundwork for social action; (EP 2.1.5) (3) Demonstrate an increased interest in bilingual/bicultural social work with the Latino community (EP 2.1.9); and (4) Demonstrate the ability to plan and facilitate a group, particularly in a cross-cultural context (EP 2.1.9; 2.1.10) (For linkage of competencies, practice behaviors, and project goals, see Table 2.) While not the focus of the author, there were also learning goals for the Spanish students such as improved comprehension and communication skills with native speakers and application of knowledge of the Spanish language and Latino culture.

Table 2: Linkage of Competencies, Practice Behaviors, and Project Goals

EPAS Competency	Relevant Practice Behavior	Project Goal
2.1.3: Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.	Distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom.	(1) Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and challenges facing the Latino community of parents and children
2.1.4: Engage diversity and difference in practice.	--Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power. --Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups. --Recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences. --View themselves as learners and engage with those with whom they work as informants.	(1) Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and challenges facing the Latino community of parents and children.
2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice.	--Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. --Engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.	(2) Demonstrate an understanding of the social, economic, and political context of Latino immigrant families' lives.
2.1.9: Respond to contexts that shape practice.	Continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services.	(3) Demonstrate an increased interest in bilingual/bicultural social work with the Latino population. (4) Demonstrate the ability to plan and facilitate a group, particularly in a cross-cultural context.
2.1.10: Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.	--Substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. --Use empathy and other interpersonal skills. --Assess client strengths and limitations. --Help clients resolve problems. --Critically analyze, monitor and evaluate interventions.	(4) Demonstrate the ability to plan and facilitate a group, particularly in a cross-cultural context.

ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SOCIAL ACTION

In order to evaluate the project and assess student learning outcomes, students were asked to submit (1) a copy of their role play with empirical references; (2) a self and group evaluation form; and (3) a reflection paper on the experience. In addition, feedback offered in the classroom was recorded in notes and analyzed. For the paper, students answered the following questions: What did you learn about yourself in this process? What did you learn about preparing for a group? What did you learn about working with the parents? What challenges did you face? What strengths did you discover or use in the process? Student role plays, qualitative comments from self and group evaluation forms, reflection papers, and classroom feedback were coded and categorized; analysis of data was inductive, with themes emerging directly from the multiple sources of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "Comparative analysis" of the different sources of data for each category allowed for the latent pattern in students' words to emerge (Glaser, 2002). A small number of codes were "theory-driven" (Boyatzis, 1998) and consistently checked against and revised according to codes created from the data. For example, consistent with CSWE Accreditation Standard E.P. 2.1.4, one facet of cultural awareness is the ability to recognize and communicate the importance of difference in shaping life experiences. This practice behavior served as the basis for coding data for instances of recognition.

For the most part, student role plays focused on the theme of miscommunication between parents and children that resulted from generational splits, differential acculturation, and parents' work schedules; symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation in children; and the challenges of peer and school relationships faced by Latino middle-schoolers on account of their "outsider" status. Based on an analysis of student role plays, evaluation forms, papers, and notes from class discussion, four key learning outcome themes emerged that corresponded to the goals for the project and laid the foundation for social action: language, challenging stereotypes, understanding the social and political context of Latino immigrant families' lives, and personal and professional growth. While some student learning was anticipated, some was not and could only occur as a result of "live" learning in the context of a field-based project. Each of the four themes is described below.

Language

The majority of social work students described their experience on the night of the parent groups as the first time they had ever experienced the powerlessness of being in the linguistic minority. One student commented that she had lived in an international context in the past but had never needed to deliver vital information in that context. Another student expressed the empathy she developed for the Spanish-speaking parents: "This project showed me how frustrating it is to be on the receiving end of not knowing the language…while the parents were speaking with the translator in Spanish, us English-speaking students did not know what they were saying." For some students, the experience validated the Spanish-speaking skills they had developed through their university studies; for others, the experience spurred them to further their language study

either through the college curriculum or supplemental language study. Two students spoke of revaluing their own bilingual/bicultural identities. Prior to the parent groups night, one Latina social work student had not believed that she could engage professionally by using her Spanish, the language of "home." After the project, this student had not only used her Spanish to communicate with parents when her consultant struggled to translate more complex ideas, but she secured a senior-year field placement at the school based on her bilingual competence.

Challenging Stereotypes

On the night of the groups, approximately 35 parents showed up to the middle school, all of them expressing concern for their children. While this was nearly half of what was expected, it was still considered a strong turn-out for an evening program held at the school. Based on the content of their questions and their willingness to come to the school at 7pm on a weekday evening, the parents conveyed a commitment to their families that students did not necessarily expect to see based on some of the stereotypes they held of first generation Latino immigrants, many of which they formed through their readings and the media. Students expected parents to be either skeptical of outside professional help or disinterested, both of which were dispelled. Instead, parents conveyed a willingness to work with professional systems of care, but a lack of information about how to do so. Fortunately, students were able to explain and demonstrate the role and purpose of professional help and link families to potential services by reviewing (in person) the resources on the wallet-size card.

As the students presented their scenarios and the parents responded, students were impressed by the thought and knowledge about parenting that mothers and father brought to the groups. While students had been encouraged to describe the evening as a "partnership" with parents, they still viewed themselves in an instructive role. While parents did refer to students as "teacher," they also engaged in mutual aid, in part due to the lag time in translating from Spanish to English and back. In one group, students could see that parents were responding to each other and encouraged this mutual aid process to unfold, asking the Spanish consultant to translate the words being exchanged between parents. As "problem-swapping" occurred (Shulman, 2009), students gained an appreciation for the mutual aid process, but also viewed the parents as experts in their own experiences. This forced the students to respond to the needs of the parents as defined by the parents themselves. This latter learning outcome had particular salience in a socio-political context where parents' voices were marginalized on account of culture, language, and economic status.

Understanding the Social and Political Context of Families' Lives

One of the learning outcomes of the project occurred as a result of unanticipated circumstances. The parent groups night, as advertised through the school social worker, was to be held from 6-8pm. Parents were to gather in the school cafeteria to be welcomed, and would then divide into smaller break-out sessions where the role-plays and discussions would occur. At first, only a few parents arrived, something that puzzled the school that had received several responses indicating parents would attend. However,

word soon spread that one of the local factories had let its workers out late and that several parents were still on their way. As a result, the groups started later than expected. Importantly, the situation highlighted the tenuous working conditions that Latino parents in the county faced. Students commented on the work arrangements of parents as a possible impediment to securing services for their children. In recognizing some parents did not control when their workday ended, students understood the nuances of access for parents, not only to services that required set daytime (or evening) "appointments," but to the afterschool and evening lives of their children.

As a result of this experience, several students dedicated their time to the farmworkers' efforts to improve their working conditions. During the academic year that followed the parent groups project, the social work student honor society sponsored a panel to raise awareness of the migrant workers' plight for the campus community and held a fundraiser on behalf of the farmworkers committee. Other students worked directly with the committee in the development of a survey to document the working conditions at farms and factories in the county. Such community-based research and capacity-building occurred as a result of the affective and cognitive connection forged between parents and students through the service-learning project.

Personal and Professional Growth

As stated previously, some of the learning that occurred though the project was both unanticipated and only possible through the field-based project. This was the case in terms of both the structure and content of the evening. For example, due to an ultimately smaller group of parent participants than expected, student groups doubled-up in order to perform their role-plays (under the supervision of a bilingual social worker or one of the professors), circumstances that forced students to collaborate and recreate on-the-spot. Students developed a newfound appreciation for the importance of "flexibility" in social work practice, a skill not easily taught in the context of the classroom. Students wrote about their initial negative reactions to the loss of their anticipated "scripts," but that they learned how to think critically and engage with clients in situations where even the best-laid plans must be altered in order to meet client needs. In addition, students described their struggles in working with a translator, a cross-disciplinary experience that they might not otherwise have had in the field practicum. In reflecting upon this experience, and the experience of working with students that were not trained translators, social work students demonstrated recognition of the need for truly bilingual workers or translation services.

In addition to learning the value of flexibility, students applied the social work concept of "use of self" in the creative act of performing their role plays. This creativity not only stimulated strategies for students to communicate across cultures, but made parents comfortable enough to engage with "outsiders." Similarly, students viewed themselves in a professional role that night, whether they intended to or not. One student was able to connect a family with the afterschool program where she was placed in her practicum; another student, after the groups had ended, walked the school's hallways with a family in order to find and connect them with the bilingual mental health specialist who was there that night. A third student commented that she recognized how

empowerment was as much about providing direct answers as it was supporting an individual through the decision-making process.

Finally, learning outcomes for the project were presented by the author and two undergraduate social work students that participated at the annual Baccalaureate Program Directors' (BPD) Conference in the spring of 2010. In presenting on their own learning outcomes from the project, students were able to demonstrate competency and hone their professional communication skills in a national, professional venue. Among the social work practice skills the students discussed having honed were their skills in planning for and facilitating a group, integrating theory and practice through the application of concepts, and talking to clients about taboo subjects (such as depression and suicide), significant in that, up to this point, social work students had primarily talked about these subjects "amongst ourselves."

LESSONS LEARNED AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Several lessons emerged from the cross-cultural parent groups project. For one, the logistics of such a project are challenging and must be accounted for in the development and delivery of the project. Given the value of the project, advocacy may be needed in departments to demonstrate the time and resources needed for faculty to prepare and execute such learning experiences. While the project was well-supported by the author's department, it still required more preparatory and teaching time than the standard group assignment. Similarly, students must be prepared for the amount of time such a project requires outside of class in preparation for one evening in the semester. While some collaborative time was built into the class schedule, the parent groups project required that social work students spend approximately 10 hours of time outside of class in order to meet with consultants, meet with one another to prepare role plays and questions, and travel to the middle school on the night of the parent groups. This amount of time does not include the hours spent on the day-long immersion trip into the county, nor the time expected from students to complete assignments without a service-learning component (for example, time spent doing the literature review for the role plays). However, it was this investment of time and preparation that facilitated the delivery of content to build the core competencies.

One key lesson learned highlights the limitations of any assessment of the project's effectiveness. While the social worker for the school deemed the night a success where "a lot of intervention happened" based on the reactions she heard from parents, the parents themselves were not surveyed. In future, such a project would need to be evaluated from both the perspective of the students and the individuals or community served. Similarly, students recommended that any future parent group nights allow more time and opportunity for parents to network with one another.

IMPLICATIONS: LINKAGE TO COMPETENCIES AND TEACHING OF GENERALIST PRACTICE

The goals and outcomes of the cross-cultural learning project supported the building of several core competencies under the 2008 EPAS: to apply critical thinking (E.P. 2.1.3), to engage diversity and difference in practice (E.P. 2.1.4), to advance human rights and social and economic justice (E.P. 2.1.5), to respond to [changing] contexts that shape practice (E.P. 2.1.9), and to engage, assess, and intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (E.P. 2.1.10). (See Table 2.) Moreover, the project enabled students to build the professional skills of cross-disciplinary collaboration and working with a translator.

The project was also beneficial in terms of program development. Partnering across disciplines to better serve the surrounding community fulfilled the mission of the social work department as well as that of the university. Under Standards One and Two of the 2008 EPAS, a program must demonstrate how its mission and goals respond to the unique context of the program, how the goals are derived from the program's mission, and how the mission and goals are consistent with the core competencies that define generalist practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Changing demographics and needs call for unconventional approaches to the delivery of social work practice and policy content in the curriculum.

With its emphasis on field as the signature pedagogy and the infusion of content throughout the curriculum, the 2008 EPAS implicitly supports the development of additional field-based opportunities to build the core competencies. Whether offered to students that are already in the field practicum or those that have yet to enter, cross-cultural service learning projects hone practice skills, meet a community need as identified by the community, and raise student awareness of the socio-political conditions faced by different groups such as racial and ethnic minorities, new immigrants, and migrant workers. Moreover, service-learning in a cross-cultural context creates opportunities for students to take risks, develop their critical thinking skills, and build the foundation for social action.

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Life is Experienced Until We Die: Effects of Service-Learning on Gerontology Competencies and Attitudes Toward Aging

Sally Hill Jones

Abstract: *This mixed methods study examined the effects of service learning in an undergraduate gerontology course on student learning outcomes. Eleven of thirteen students chose to provide companionship and practical help to community-dwelling older adults and link course assignments to this experience. Participating students were mostly female and social work majors or minors, of various races and ethnicities, and of traditional and nontraditional ages. Self-ratings using the Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale showed significant skill improvements for students from pretest to posttest. Analysis of student journals indicated improvement in interaction skills, knowledge of aging processes, dismantling of stereotypes, awareness of issues affecting healthy aging, valuing older adults, and cultural competence. Career plans were positively affected for most students. Letters offering advice to their 70-year old selves appeared to impact students' plans for self-care. Service-learning is recommended to increase students' gerontology competencies and attitudes toward aging in others and themselves.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, gerontology, competencies*

INTRODUCTION

With the burgeoning growth of the older adult population comes the well-established need for social workers trained in gerontology (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Social workers encounter older adults in a variety of settings, and therefore need skill development to work effectively in this area. Engaging students in the field of gerontology can be difficult due to stereotypical beliefs or lack of experience with older adults, although progress is being made in this endeavor (Cummings & Galambos, 2002; Mason & Sanders, 2004). Service-learning exposes students to direct encounters with older adults, which when connected to assignments, has the potential to challenge learners' beliefs about aging and the value of gerontology work, as well as increase their gerontology competency levels. This mixed methods study examined the effects of service learning in an undergraduate gerontology course on student learning outcomes.

BACKGROUND

Service-learning is an educational approach that ties experiential learning specifically to course objectives through assignments and equally benefits the students and community. It differs from experiential education, which does not include the intentional connection to assignments, and also from internships, which are designed to primarily benefit students (King, 2003; Lemieux & Allen, 2007). Bringle and Hatcher (1997) defined service-learning as a:

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> Type of experiential education in which students participate in service in the community and reflect on their involvement in such a way as to gain a further understanding of course content and of the discipline and of its relationship to social needs and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (p. 153).

Benefits of service-learning have been demonstrated in many studies. These include increases in students' civic attitudes, ability to solve social problems, and positive individual development; however, evidence of its effectiveness is limited by the use of varying definitions and standards of service-learning (Boyle, 2007).

Service-learning has been described as particularly suited to the field of social work, but underutilized. King (2003) outlined the compatibility between service-learning and social work core values, while also pointing out the paucity of examples in social work literature. Lemieux and Allen (2007) acknowledged the natural fit between service-learning and social work's emphasis on social justice. However, their examination of published research supporting this fit revealed the need for substantial development to catch up with the general service-learning field and with the promise described in social work literature. They also found that most of the literature described projects that did not include direct involvement with clients. King and Lemieux and Allen called for further research in these areas.

Recent examples of service-learning in social work include use in an undergraduate research course (Knee, 2002), a graduate policy course (Rocha, 2000), a Maymester experience at a children's burn camp (Williams, King, & Koob, 2002), an innovative field model (Poulin, Kauffman, & Silver, 2006), and cross-cultural learning in introductory social work courses (Sanders, McFarland, & Bartolli, 2003). These authors described positive results in students' self-efficacy, policy skill competencies, political activity, attitudes toward research, scores on field evaluation practice skills, and qualitative differences in cross-cultural learning.

Service-learning has also been used in gerontology to enhance learning, overcome students' negative beliefs and perceptions of work with older adults, and increase the likelihood of students choosing careers in the field. Cohen, Hatchett, and Eastridge (2006) presented an overview of intergenerational service learning, describing vital components, outlining advantages and challenges, and providing several examples for use in graduate foundation social work courses. Among the benefits listed were students' exploration of and changes in attitudes toward older adults and their own aging, as well as improved university-community relationships. Anstee, Harris, Pruitt, and Sugar (2008) presented a model for including service-learning in undergraduate gerontology courses. The Foundation for Long Term Care's decade-long development and study of gerontology service-learning in 28 colleges included social work and several health-care professions (Hegeman, Horowitz, Tepper, Pillemer, & Schultz, 2002). Results included positive ratings by students, agencies, and older adults, as well as statistically significant positive changes in student attitudes toward older adults. However, no significant changes occurred in student attitudes toward community service or careers in gerontology. Vandsberger and Wakefield (2005) studied students' experiences of a 10-hour intergenerational service-learning component in an undergraduate practice class.

Although no change in majors were found, students exhibited stronger desires to explore gerontology career options.

Others who have introduced service-learning in undergraduate gerontology courses described improved student attitudes toward and desire to work with older adults, reduced myths about aging, better understanding of course concepts and the realities of long-term care, and an increase in positive feelings of self-worth, efficacy, and skills (Blieszner & Artale, 2001; Brown & Roodin, 2001; Gutheil, Chernesky, & Sherratt, 2006; Singleton, 2007). Laganà (2003) offers several creative ideas for students to become involved in service-learning research aimed at improving older adults' quality of life. Bringle and Kremer (1993) specifically studied the effect of intergenerational service-learning on students' attitudes toward their own aging and reported increased positive attitudes. A recent study measured geriatric competencies in a small sample of mostly graduate social work students before and after a service-learning gerontology course (Dauenhauer, Steitz, Aponte, & Faria, 2010). The authors found significant positive differences pre and posttest, as well as between service-learning and non-service learning students.

This study builds upon existing research in intergenerational service-learning in social work in several ways. It studies service-learning involving direct client contact, called for by Lemieux and Allen (2007). Geriatric competencies are measured in undergraduate social work students, which has not been a focus of the literature. Analysis of students' journal themes offers insight into the learning processes of intergenerational service-learning. A reflection tool is also described that guides students to link their awareness of others' aging realities with their own.

METHOD

Procedure

In an elective undergraduate for-credit course introducing students to social work with older adults, enrollees chose a 10-hour intergenerational service-learning project or a research paper. Offering this option was based on discussion in the literature of possible negative effects when service is mandated (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998; Rama, Ravencroft, Wolcott, & Zlotkowski, 2000). Although the course was elective, it was one of the few choices for students with required minors in social work or gerontology. The service-learning option also required students to provide their own transportation to older adults' residences in a rural community.

Mutual Adoption Pact (MAP) is an established university program providing gerontology service-learning opportunities for courses across this large university campus. MAP employees screened and assessed community-dwelling older adults in need of assistance, and paired each older adult with a service-learning student who offered companionship and practical help. For the social work course, service-learning students were required to spend at least ten hours with their assigned older adults, who were referred to as MAP clients. Initial class sessions included content on stereotyped beliefs about aging and basics of interviewing older adults, as well as role plays to

practice interviewing skills. Handouts were provided summarizing class content on how to get started, including making introductions, clarifying expectations, possible conversation topics, and maintaining boundaries. A multidimensional assessment, intervention plan, and policy analysis were based on students' experiences with their older adult clients.

Service-learning students also completed seven journal entries that tied their service experiences to course material. The initial entry was completed before meeting the older adult, followed by five entries, each covering two meetings. The seventh and final journal entry was a summary of what students learned from their experiences with their MAP clients. The instructor provided specific instructions for each entry and a sample. Journal entries were to include meeting descriptions, feelings and thoughts about the relationship process, and how specific course content covered during that time period pertained to MAP clients and their situations. Based on the idea that students learn more easily when they relate personally to concepts being taught, students were required to include letters to themselves at age 70. In these letters, they offered advice based on course content and experiences with their MAP clients.

Students who chose the research paper option also completed the assessment, intervention plan, and policy analysis, based on an older adult they located themselves. They were not required to spend 10 hours with the older adults or to complete journals or letters to their future older selves, instead submitting a research paper on a topic related to course content. All students gave final presentations on the most important course learning and completed pre and posttests measuring self-rated geriatric competencies in the first and last class meetings.

The university internal review board approved the research. The study was designed to determine the effect of the course on students' ratings of their gerontology skills. In addition, the research explored students' experiences interacting with older adults, in particular changes in their attitudes toward older adults and their own aging.

Participants

Thirteen students completed the course, with 11 choosing the service-learning project. Twelve were female. Seven were Caucasian, three African American, two Hispanic, and one Asian American. Eight were traditional students, while five were non-traditional. Three majored in social work and one was a social work pre-major. Other majors were psychology, urban and regional planning, exercise and sports science, recreation administration, health and wellness promotion, art, and health administration. Nine students had minors, five in social work and four in gerontology. Although 10 hours were required, the mean time students spent with their older adult partners was 19.2 hours (SD = 8.41), with a median of 16 hours and range of 10 to 36.5 hours. Ten of the 11 service-learning students exceeded the required number of hours.

Non-service-learning students were female and of traditional age, one Caucasian and one Hispanic. They held majors in exercise/sports science and recreation administration, with one minor in social work and one in gerontology.

Measurement

Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to measure learning outcomes. Students completed the Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale II (GSWCS) (Damron-Rodriguez, 2006) in the first and last class periods to measure students' ratings of their gerontology skills. Ratings were on the following Likert scale: 0 (*not skilled at all – I have no experience with this skill*); 1 (*beginning skill – I have to consciously work at this skill*); 2 (*moderate skill – this skill is becoming more integrated in my practice*); 3 (*advanced skill – this skill is done with confidence and is an integral part of my practice*); and 4 (*expert skill – I complete this skill with sufficient mastery to teach others*). The scale's 40 items describe skills important to social work with older adults in four domains of 10 items each: Ethics and Theoretical Perspectives; Assessment; Intervention; and Aging Services, Programs and Policies. The maximum total score is 160 and 40 for each domain. The instrument has reported convergent validity and strong internal reliability (Nakao, Damron-Rodriguez, Lawrance, Volland & Bachrach, 2008). It has been used by the John A. Hartford Partnership Program for Aging Education (Social Work Leadership Institute, 2010) to measure competencies of foundation graduate social work students. It was chosen as the appropriate measure because undergraduate social work majors are considered in the field to be learning material comparable to foundation level master's students.

The researcher also analyzed the content of student journals and final presentations on course learning using qualitative content analysis. After an initial reading to get a general sense of the content, journals and final presentation summaries were read several times to determine and confirm emerging themes and categories. The number of non-service-learning students (n = 2) was too small for meaningful comparisons with service-learning students.

RESULTS

Quantitative

Means for domain and total scores on pretests and posttests were compared, using paired samples t-tests. As shown in Table 1, posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores on total competency mean scores and the four domains. Students progressed from initial ratings of having no or beginning skills to being moderately skilled at the course's end. The largest increases in skill ratings were in the domains of Assessment and Aging Services, Programs and Policies, which were initially the lowest rated domains. The smallest increase was in the Values, Ethics, and Theories domain, which also had the highest ratings at the start and end of the course. Because students' number of contact hours varied, Pearson's correlations were computed for contact hours and mean competency scores. No significant correlations were found.

Table 1. Pretest/Posttest Mean Scores for All Students (N = 13)

	Mean scores		Significance
Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale	Pretest	Posttest	
Values, Ethics & Theories	1.84 (0.71)	2.91 (0.53)	*t* (12) = -4.18*
Assessment	1.07 (0.88)	2.70 (0.71)	*t* (12) = -6.22**
Intervention	1.36 (0.85)	2.57 (0.93)	*t* (12) = -4.92**
Services, Programs & Policies	1.05 (1.05)	2.56 (1.00)	*t* (12) = -5.23**
Total Scores	1.33 (0.77)	2.69 (0.73)	*t* (12) = -5.84**

*Note: S*tandard deviations are in parentheses.
*p <.01; **p <.001.

Qualitative

Qualitative data provided depth and indicated rich learning had occurred. The researcher examined students' journals and final presentation summaries several times, extracting common themes. Categories emerged from service-learning students' journal entries, letters advising their 70-year old selves, and final journal entries summarizing what they had learned in the course. Students' final presentations on applications of course learning also generated common themes.

Journal: Developmental process of relationship-building.

An overarching theme in students' journals was the developmental process of building relationships with older adults. Subthemes emerged within each relationship phase.

Prior to the initial meeting, students described nervousness and anticipation, with fears of being boring, not knowing what to say, or having misunderstandings. They also described hopes and desires to be helpful and learn from older adults. One student noted, "He is 82 years old and would be the oldest person I have ever met – I am nervous about our interactions." Another student stated, "I hope to learn from her and prevent making the same mistakes she made." They described class discussions and materials as helping them feel more prepared in areas of maintaining confidentiality, active listening, and showing respect.

In describing the beginning phase of the relationship, three subthemes emerged. Students were becoming more comfortable, as indicated by one student's comment that ". . . the second meeting was much more vibrant … I feel that already she is getting more

comfortable with me being around." They also appeared to struggle with maintaining appropriate boundaries. One student stated, "I notice she has little control of her hands – should I ask? I'm glad we talked about this in class." Other examples of comments included a student who wrote, "I need to know when to keep my views to myself," and "She asked me lots of questions and wanted to take me with her to church." A third subtheme was the challenge to students' beliefs about aging, indicated by comments in their journal entries that aging is not a disease, and that older adults can still learn, are not necessarily hard of hearing, and still have romantic lives.

In the middle phase of the relationships, it was clear that many students were feeling closer to their MAP clients. One student reported, "We are getting to know one another more and more each day; our relationship has grown into a very open one." Another stated, "I look forward to our games during each visit – I have to say one of the highlights of visiting with my client is seeing her face light up when I get there because for that time she gets to do her favorite thing." A third example was a student's comment that, "I actually felt very close to Mrs. X today – she and I really 'let our hair down' so to speak today. She is an endearing person and I am so glad I was matched with her." Students described helping clients with tasks of cleaning, organizing, setting up online account systems, shopping, and enrolling in home-delivered meals programs. They also observed psychological or physiological aspects of aging discussed in class.

Some students encountered barriers and frustrations as their involvement increased. One student wrote, "She was not there three times . . . asked her and she was embarrassed . . . maybe she needs a calendar." Another student described her struggle, "I've noticed that she is comfortable living in a cluttered and unclean environment … the amount of stuff she has accumulated would take days and weeks to remove or organize – I don't understand this." However, deeper understanding often followed, such as when the student later stated, "I realized that these things I thought was just stuff are her keepsakes and it reminds her of her past."

As they struggled with barriers, some students hit upon new ways to relate to their MAP clients. A student assigned to an older adult in a long-term care facility became frustrated with her partner's reluctance to engage in conversation or participate in arts and crafts projects she planned. Applying her skills as an urban and regional planning major, the student discovered a way to connect with the older adult. Using a laptop computer and program that displayed current images of geographical locations, the student gave her MAP client a virtual tour of places that were meaningful to her. These included the home and church in which the older adult grew up, the campus of the university she attended, the nursing home where her sibling resided, and her child's new business, all located in other states. The student reported that this activity thrilled her MAP client and brought new life to their interaction.

As the semester concluded, students described feelings about ending with their MAP clients that revealed the attachments they had formed. For example, one student stated, "I wonder what will happen to him; there are just a few more weeks remaining for the semester," and "Our last visit was more difficult for me then I had originally anticipated." Many students decided to continue the relationships. They also wrote comments

evaluating their experiences, such as, "We have built an open relationship – one I have not had sense the passing of my own grandmother," and "Working with Ms. X will be an experience that will remain with me through my life – so much of what she has taught me and shared with me has been inspiring."

Journal: Racial, ethnic, and religious differences.

Experiencing and grappling with racial, ethnic, and religious differences were commonly discussed in student journals. Students appeared to be at various levels of cultural competence and to increase cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills from their experiences.

Some students described increased awareness of cultural differences and reflected on biases in themselves and others. For example, an African American student went shopping with a Caucasian client and was taken aback that the salesperson assumed they were not together. An Asian American student confronted her stereotyped beliefs when she was surprised that a Mexican American senior cooked healthy foods. In another situation, a Caucasian student struggled to identify whose biases were involved when her Caucasian MAP client complained that nursing facility staff members where she lived spoke only Spanish around her.

Some students reported increased awareness of generational differences within the same ethnic group. For example, an African American student described discovering a difference with her African American MAP client: "She told me 'race and culture only plays a significant role in your life if you are weak and let it' – African American elderly I have grown up around set boundaries on their own freedom." A Caucasian student described being challenged in a different way when learning about generational differences from her African American MAP client:

> *In my studies of racism I have found a lot of people that feel we aren't doing enough to end racism, whereas Mrs. X thinks the Black youth don't appreciate that they have a place in society and it's nothing like when she was growing up – it was eye-opening to me and reminds me not to start thinking things are a particular way.*

Journals also indicated students gained knowledge of other cultures from interacting with their MAP clients. A Caucasian student paired with an American Indian older adult described valuable learning from attending cultural events with her and discussing her beliefs. An Asian American student applied knowledge of societal oppression in understanding her African American MAP client. She connected his deep distrust of medical professionals to discrimination he had encountered and historical uses of deceptive medical practices with persons of color.

Students also demonstrated culturally-informed interaction skills with their MAP clients. One example occurred in the introductory phone call, described by a Caucasian student:

> *The client said, 'You need to know that I am black.' I said okay, and that it won't bother me if it doesn't bother her and she laughed and thought that was good. . . I hope she has not had someone from the school discriminate when visiting.*

One African American student negotiated cultural differences with her Caucasian MAP client at several points in the relationship. She initially reported comments indicating the older adult had little experience with people of other races. Description of improvement followed:

> *I believe my client has become more comfortable being around someone of a different culture and ethnicity. I believe that she is starting to see beyond the color of my skin and seeing me as an individual. She grew up during a different time than I have and she may still carry some prejudices and stereotypes but I can tell that she is making a conscious effort.*

The student then encountered a situation in which she felt treated like a servant or "White Lady's Companion." She questioned the validity of her perception, but set reasonable limits on the older adult's expectations. The student worked hard to "keep the relationship in perspective," since she believed the older adult saw herself as a mentor. At the semester's end, the student recognized multiple realities in the situation, feeling "more like a protégé than a hired companion," while also acknowledging structural inequities. A productive partnership was forged, while the student also made plans to advocate for the oppressed in the community.

Students also appeared to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills in the area of religious differences. Initially, many students noted that their MAP clients were active in their religions. One student explained, "The spiritual aspects of aging are going to be a new thing to me also since I was not raised under any strict religious guidelines." They learned about different faiths and also demonstrated skills in this arena. For example, one student stated, "I am a religious person, but it is really important that I keep my beliefs and opinions about religion to myself." Another student noted, "We have different religious beliefs but I try to find common ground." As relationships progressed, many students appreciated the important role religious communities played in clients' lives, providing social and spiritual support, as well as meaning.

Journal: Independence.

Students' journal entries indicated an increased awareness of the importance of independence as one ages. They observed challenges to remaining independent and talked with their MAP clients about planning for the time when more care is needed. Students noticed that older adults' independence was affected by their home situations and that they preferred to live at home, even in a dysfunctional situation, rather than in a long-term facility. Students also noticed financial concerns influencing independence, such as the comment, "She needed four additional prescriptions which has really set her back financially." Health status was a third factor of independence noted, as students observed the impact of health challenges.

Journal: Family and social support.

Another pervasive theme in students' journals was the importance of family and social support in later life. Students observed the value of quality relationships with family and friends and their effect on the aging process. For example, one student wrote, "I believe that what she needs from me is for someone to pay her some attention, listen to her or be the daughter or grandchildren she does not get to see." Another student described, "She expresses her strong desire to let all of her family know she loves them and has appreciated them – it is so beautiful." Students saw pets as crucial in older adults' support systems, such as the student who explained:

> *The family has adopted a small dog for the house and I can see how it has had a positive effect on her. She remembers his name and picks him up and lets him lick her – she loves that dog. The dog has her reaching down and petting him and getting her to move around.*

Advice to 70-year old self.

In letters students wrote giving advice to themselves at age 70, several themes emerged that paralleled descriptions of their MAP clients' aging. Themes included physical self-care, staying active, managing independence/dependence, maintaining social and family relationships, financial planning, staying organized, benefits of pets, and having a positive attitude about aging.

Taking good care of their physical health was a strong subtheme in the advice, exemplified by the following statements: "Take care of your body – you only have one;" "Your body is not a prison, it is your vehicle in life as Mrs. X advised you;" and "Keep up with your doctor's visits and follow your doctor's instructions – this is extremely important – get plenty of exercise, go for a walk every day." At times, the advice was for their younger selves:

> *I am of course hoping that in the next 44 years there will be many scientific breakthroughs … however if science stays at a standstill then you will have to start now to live a healthy lifestyle and age gracefully.*

Staying active was another subtheme in the advice letters. Examples included: "Although I may have some degenerative diseases does not mean that I cannot stay active;" "If you keep moving, motion is lotion to your bones, joints, and muscles;" and "I would advise you to always keep in touch with technology, it is your friend, it can make life easier and more enjoyable." Again, some advice was preventive: "I should develop and build more healthy activities today. I will start building the audio book library."

Just as students observed independence as key for their MAP clients, students gave advice to their 70-year old selves about independence and accepting help, such as "I hope I continue to stay open minded so that I do not close out the help that is available to me." Another student advised, "Remember that you can retain your independence while accepting assistance." More specific advice came from an older student: "Please allow others to help you when you truly need it; you know that if you need assistance getting

organized, you cannot ask your children because they will not have the patience, so ask grandchildren." Practical advice included, "Live in an area where you have access to groceries and doctors," "Give up driving when you are scared to drive, have had others mention that your driving is lousy, or by instinct know that it is time," and "Make sure you have a house you can get around in." Some students referred to psychological help for depression or grief, such as "… take the time and fully devote immediate attention to grief … Seek out the counsel of a close friend, therapist, or pastor who is willing to listen … Or just date the young ones so you go first."

Students recognized the crucial role social relationships will play in their healthy aging, as they had observed in their MAP clients. Several examples included, "I hope you are still pleasant to be around so that way you don't get lonely," and "Don't be the cliché grumpy old man like your grandpa was because kids will be afraid of that." One student paired with a woman in a long-term care facility wrote, "Make friends wherever you go especially in the lunchroom because that may be the only way to get a refill on tea."

Staying involved in the community was also seen as important, exemplified by the comment, "Make sure you are well connected to your environment like neighbors, friends or staff so you can be involved in plenty of activities and remain in people's consideration." One student wrote, "Try to live in a town with a college so you can have student helpers like this."

Maintaining ties with family was strong advice and sometimes preventive. One student stated, "I need to improve my relationships with others, such as with family and friends – as I get older I want to have a good support system and be a support to others." Another student's comments summarized this advice:

> *Keep your family close – I hope in all these years you haven't cut any ties with anyone in your family… it seems to me that family surrounds us when we enter this world and I hope that it is family that is surrounding us when we leave it.*

Maintaining healthy boundaries was part of students' advice about family relationships, sometimes humorously stated. For example, one student advised, "Don't let your children live with you when they can grow a beard." Another wrote:

> *Learn to say NO to your children when they get older. Know where your boundaries should be and stick to them. Know that there is a time to help and a time to not. Know and understand what an enabler is.*

Student comments indicated an awareness that it was necessary to expand their circles of support since family may not be available. One student wrote "Don't let your age dictate the age of your friends – just as people come in all shapes and sizes so do friendships and that is what my client has shown me." Another comment expanded on this idea:

> *I know you sometimes worried about having a relationship with your children but your client has showed you that it isn't necessarily your blood family who are the ones who you have a close relationship with but those who you have mentored over the years and adopted who have now become your family.*

Finances and future planning were also seen as essential. Warnings to save money and stay out of debt were common, such as, "If I save up money now, I will be more secure when Social Security runs out," "Begin investing more money immediately after college … wean your friends and relatives off now," and "Plan ahead no matter how morbid you think it is."

Organization and clutter was a minor theme. Advice included, "Buy a scanner and shred" and "I beg of you to not keep so many things around." One student offered practical advice after helping her MAP client decorate for the holidays, "Keep Christmas lights on the cardboard."

Based on observations of pets helping older adults, students recommended pets for their old age. One student wrote, "Find time to involve myself with animals … the joy they bring her is more than can be explained and I hope that I can have that same companionship." Other students made decisions about specific pets they would get, exemplified by this statement, "70-year old self, first things first you're going to get a dog whether you want one or not – it will improve your mood and give you companionship when there is no one around to visit with you."

Students offered recommendations on keeping positive attitudes about aging. Examples included, "Life does not end when you get 'old', only that the challenges in life change" and "I must keep a 'can-do' attitude and try new opportunities." One student decided, "I want to make a promise to myself that I never quit on life." Another advised, "Keep painting your toe nails funky colors and be the cool grandma." Finally, a student recommended the following:

> *Enjoy the sunshine and the fact that you have two functioning legs on which to walk on. Love and live life to the fullest and don't let a day go by that you do not mention something that you are thankful for… keep on laughing never lose your sense of humor because you are definitely going to need it.*

Final journal entry: What I learned.

In their final journal entries, students summarized what they learned from interacting with their MAP clients. Several themes emerged.

Patience was a consistent theme in what students stated they learned from the experience. For example, "It has shown me the value in taking my time so things are done correctly."

Once again, the importance of personal and professional relationships came through as a theme in student learning. One student described, "My client has taught me that the relationships you build with other people can last a life time whether they are good or bad." Another stated, "I have learned that building healthy relationships are important when being a social worker – if you do not build healthy relationships with your clients they will not open up to you." A third student remarked, "It only takes a little bit of time to improve someone's quality of life."

Many students described acquiring skills in relating to older adults. They described becoming good listeners and taking into consideration physical limitations. Some were more specific, such as, "I have learned how to interact with someone in early stages of dementia." Another student described learning to be more attentive and present:

> *I was a task master with this MAP client and one day he said to me, hush and just slow down. You worry too much and you do too much. I did not realize this because I thought that's what he needed me for, which is to get things done. Wrong!*

Students also reported expanding their knowledge of aging processes, individual differences, and faulty stereotypes. Examples were: "It is good to know that depression is not a normal aging process;" "I also believe that we learn until we die. I have also seen that life didn't take my client down the road that she had visualized;" and "Physical ailments as well as mental do not stop one from living – age is not a disease or a disaster, only an extension of our life."

Final Presentations: Application of Course Learning

All students gave brief presentations at the end of the course reporting how they will apply their learning to two areas, the first being their own aging. They described decisions to change current physical health habits (eating, exercise), to focus on relationships so they are not alone in old age, and to plan practically for their later years. They also described changes in attitudes about aging, feeling more optimistic about the aging process, as well as fearing death less than before. Some described learning the necessity of preparing financially for old age.

The second area addressed application of what they learned to interactions with older adults. Most students described building healthy and meaningful relationships with older adults, particularly listening well, being sensitive and patient, respecting and valuing them, and focusing on the person when dementia takes over. One student wrote:

> *Learning how to build this relationship was huge step for me because I have always been afraid of conversation with the elderly. I feared that I would not be able to relate to them, but now I am certain I can do it.*

Some students described increasing their knowledge of elder abuse and learning the importance of including older adults in decisions concerning them. One student stated, "The one most important thing I am taking away from this course that I will use when interacting with older adults is that they were just like me at one point and I will be just like them at some point."

Changes in Future Plans

In journal entries or final presentations, students indicated changes in future plans as a result of the course. One student described an overall impact: "I have gained more knowledge in talking with her about her life and the obstacles that she has overcome and in doing so have reexamined my own life and the direction I would like to go." Others described plans to become advocates for older adults, particularly for elder-friendly

communities. One student decided to involve her community service organization in a volunteer arts and crafts project at the nursing home. She also became involved in forming a student gerontology club the following semester.

Ten of thirteen students indicated some movement toward gerontology careers. One student indicated a definite new decision to work in the field of dementia care, announcing she had obtained a job in a dementia care facility and found her career path. The student least certain about change indicated she began the course only wanting to work with children but now would not limit herself. Five students described confirmation or increased clarity about their decisions to work in gerontology. Of these, two narrowed their interests to long-term care, exemplified by this statement, "Now I know what my next set of goals will be after I receive my LCSW – I am going to look into opening my own long term care facility." Three students described increased interest in gerontology work. For example, one student decided to explore "where I can take my career to change the way America sees the elderly, nursing homes, and their involvement and place in the physical community and society." Another student stated, "This semester the experience with our MAP client … has moved me closer to working with the older adult by way of seeing that life is experienced until we die."

DISCUSSION

Several findings from this study have potential importance for gerontology education, given the limitations of the small non-representative sample and use of self-report instruments. Results suggest that intergenerational service-learning in social work can be a valuable pedagogy. Through relationships with older adults, guided reflections, and assignments tying experiences to course objectives, rich learning occurred. Significant improvement was reported in gerontology competency skill ratings and many areas found by others (Brown & Roodin, 2001; Cohen, Hatchett & Eastridge, 2006; Vandsberger & Wakefield, 2005). Career plans were reconsidered, confirmed, or refined, with most students describing plans to use the skills learned in their chosen fields, similar to findings of Vandsberger and Wakefield. Students appeared to progress on the continuum of interest in aging outlined by Gorelik, Damron-Rodriguez, Funderbunk, and Solomon (2000), and these findings support their suggestion for gerontology courses that include interactions with older adults to be offered to undergraduates. Further research needs to include essential components of intergenerational service-learning outlined in the literature that tie experiences to course objectives, distinguishing it from experiential learning and internships. In this way, a body of work can be built based on a common definition. A scale measuring career plan movement could also capture such changes quantitatively.

Findings suggest that a tool such as the Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale is promising as an effective measure of student ratings of gerontology skill development. The scale could be used to compare effectiveness of teaching methods and measure levels of increasingly advanced skills in gerontology programs. The posttest ratings in this study were in the moderate range, compared to the advanced ratings of the graduate students in the study by Dauenhauer, Steitz, Aponte, and Faria (2010), suggesting a progression through educational levels may be measured. Although more research is needed using the

scale, this study suggests its use should be studied at the undergraduate level. Including independent ratings of student competencies and feedback from older adult participants may produce a fuller picture of student outcomes.

As social work education becomes increasingly competency-based, the GSWCS is also a potentially useful tool to demonstrate social work programs' compliance with accreditation standards. Competencies measured in the GSWCS are compatible with the 2008 Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), used to guide social work educational curricula (CSWE, 2008). Many skills listed in the GSWCS overlap with CSWE standards, as applied specifically to work with older adults. Measuring gerontology competencies could therefore demonstrate student learning outcomes.

Intergenerational service-learning may enable students to demonstrate many competencies in actual relationships rather than in case studies. For example, Educational Policy (EP) 2.1.1 (p.3), which focuses on identifying and behaving as a professional social worker, outlines the importance of personal reflection, professional boundary management, and career-long learning, all of which students had the opportunity to practice in this course. Another key area in which students demonstrated competencies is EP 2.1.4, which involves diversity in practice (p.4, 5). Students in this course demonstrated positive learning outcomes described in many components of this standard, as they engaged diversity on multiple levels in interactions with MAP clients. Students also demonstrated skills of engagement, assessment, and intervention described in EP 2.1.10 (p.6, 7), applied knowledge of human behavior in social environment (EP 2.1.7, p. 6) and analyzed policies affecting older adults' well-being (EP 2.1.8, p.6).

The relationship-building process was a significant theme in the qualitative findings, supporting the notion that a one-on-one relationship with an older adult is a significant aspect of gerontological service-learning (Dauenhauer, Steitz, Aponte, & Faria, 2010; Vandsberger & Wakefield, 2005). Assisting students through the phases of relationship-building is therefore warranted to ensure positive experiences for all. Practical guidance for the initial interview and maintaining boundaries, as well as role plays may help students allay early anxieties and gain confidence in their abilities, as suggested by others (Blieszner & Artale, 2001; Brown & Roodin, 2001; Laganà, 2003). Attending to frustrations and barriers as relationships progress may deepen students' understanding of older adults and prevent misunderstandings. Students also may need assistance negotiating the ending process. Research of effective methods of fostering relationships in intergenerational service-learning could contribute to its success.

An important finding was that student letters to themselves at age 70 fostered intentional connections of course learning to planning for their own aging, with positive results. This assignment set the stage for students to expect reciprocal learning and to gain personally from the experience. Tying course material to students' personal lives also appeared to enliven classroom discussions. This student group entered with fairly high interest in gerontology, given the number with gerontology minors and interest in the field. However, guided reflections that focus on students' aging processes, within the context of intergenerational relationships, may contribute to overcoming reluctance of

younger, less interested students by making the material personally relevant. Research in this area is sparse and may be productive to investigate further.

Another key finding was students' learning about cultural differences. The service-learning project offered rich opportunities to increase cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. The potential for this type of learning is invaluable for students at all points along the cultural competency continuum. In a review of culturally competent social work practice, Kohli, Huber, and Faul (2010) recommended that students be "immersed in cultural experiences where they observe the uniqueness of every individual" (p. 268). Intentionally matching students and older adults to enhance cross-cultural learning is one way to provide such opportunities and prepare students for work with diverse older adult populations. More focused investigation is needed into cultural aspects of intergenerational service-learning, specifically in social work. Sanders, McFarland, and Bartolli (2003) advocated for specific measures of changes in students' perceptions of cultural differences. Measurement of cultural knowledge and skills would also be valuable, as would research that includes experiences of students from oppressed populations who encounter prejudicial attitudes in older adults during service-learning projects.

The substantial time requirement for faculty and students in implementing service-learning projects has been described as a barrier (Hegeman, Horowitz, Tepper, Pillemer, & Schultz, 2002; Rocha, 2000). The university program that located and assessed the needs of community-dwelling older adults and matched them with students was invaluable. As suggested by King (2003), advocating for such institutional support is highly recommended.

For student time investment, ten to thirty hours seemed adequate for these students to significantly increase competency ratings and experience qualitative changes. Within this range, number of hours did not seem to affect competency ratings. Interestingly, the student who spent 10 hours made the most decisive career change. Ten hours appeared feasible to students initially, perhaps contributing to their willingness to participate, and many chose to invest more time. Of the many variables that potentially impact outcomes in service-learning projects, number of contact hours may be worth further investigation to inform future project planning.

Service-learning in gerontology education has the potential to open students' minds to the complex realities of aging, for others and themselves, and to increase their competence in building productive relationships with older adults across a broad spectrum of diversity. As one student put it, "I have learned a lot about older adults through my meetings with my MAP client that you would not have gotten out of reading a textbook." As such, the needs of the growing older adult population, social work profession, and society compel further development and study of the effective components of gerontology service-learning.

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The New Color Is Green: Social Work Practice and Service-Learning

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Abstract: *Attention to saving the environment is gaining momentum daily. Citizens have a fundamental right to protect the environment from harm due to human activities. The profession of social work has a role to play in greening and sustaining the environment. The inclusion of this content in social work courses is a natural fit given the profession's person-in-environment perspective which emphasizes the relationship between individuals, their behavior and the environment and advocacy for preservation of human welfare and human rights. Participatory environmentalism considers the role of community members in demonstrating their civic responsibility toward preservation of the natural environment and resources. Social work students must be encouraged to accept vital leadership roles that address environmental concerns in addition to serving client populations. A community practice course which includes a service-learning requirement chose "greening" as a theme. Students worked with communities to identify and implement semester-long "green" projects.*

Keywords: *Service-learning, environmental concerns, greening community practice*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues cross micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work practice and are begging for increased attention. Growing concerns for the environment are positioning social workers and educational institutions alike to be proactive. Environmental conservation efforts have been documented since the 19th century (Cronin & Kennedy, 1999), and recent decades of public consciousness have pushed the environment to a more recognized societal value, one that must be acknowledged and preserved. Generally, global citizens believe they have a fundamental right to protect themselves and their communities from technological intrusions and environmental abuse. Thus, they are entitled to clean air, clean land, clean water, good health, safe transportation and water, among others amenities (Cronin & Kennedy, 1999; McKinnon, 2008; National Association of Social Workers, 2009; Scabecoff, 2000; Schwartz, 2006). More citizens also believe they have a fundamental right to protect the environment from the harm of excessive and careless activities.

Students are among these citizens who have a growing interest in saving our environment. Expanding students' knowledge about the expansive volumes of information available and many ways they can become more engaged will contribute to saving the earth, as well as local environments within their communities. Educational institutions are responding to the increasing interest in environmental conservation and sustainability with new and expanded curricula, outreach and service efforts, policies and timely planning.

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Social workers are advocates for change and all aspects of social justice including concerns for the environment in which groups and communities exist. A healthy environment is viewed as a human right and is specifically related to human dignity and nondiscrimination in a socially just world (Wronka, 2008). The future health and survival of humans is directly impacted by the consciousness of all humans regarding the global world. Increasing students' awareness of their role in protecting and saving our environment is critical for the future. Internationally known environmentalist Jones (2009) and Hembd and Silberstein (2011) note the importance of engagement by students. Jones further suggests that students' energy and enthusiasm have already "turned up the heat" in the movement to prevent catastrophic climate change. Most important is his observation that the "sky is the limit" for the next generation‘s leadership role. This paper discusses the inclusion of environmental issues, specifically "greening" in a Community Practice Social Work course. Students completed "green" projects as part of the course requirements. This course was also designated as a service-learning course and satisfied the Core Curriculum requirement.

GREENING, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND SOCIAL WORK LINKS

Although historically primary attention has been given to social, cultural and economic issues, more social workers now give consideration to the natural environment. According to the National Association of Social Workers (2009), concern for the environment is a critical component of the person-in-environment (PIE) perspective. The PIE concept emphasizes the relationship between individuals, their behavior and the environment, the social ecology. Thus, this perspective begs for a holistic consideration of one's functioning in the environment. Mounting environmental preservation concerns require an emphatic response from social workers, according to Park (1996). Evidence of a consciousness of the connection between the environment and social work exists in responses and reactions to population growth, synthetic organic compounds and changes to the Earth's surface. As humans regard the Earth and her components as an artist's tapestry, Park (1996) correctly suggests a need to eliminate the partition separating the artist's studio and everyday life. Social work must build on its historical roots and, therefore, is a natural advocate of environmental preservation and sustainability. Social work has historically been dedicated to the betterment and preservation of human welfare (Berger & Kelly, 1993). They further identify a new ethic that human societies need, one that is consistent with an emerging awareness of our connectedness to the natural world and our understanding of nature's limits of tolerance. Updated information regarding human connection to the environment piques increasing interest as humans realize the responsibility they have to address this concern. An extension of these connections to nature is critical. Human behaviors can impact the situations client populations face from global warming to health issues and from technological and manufacturing to employment issues. Jones (2010) and the United Nations Environment Programme (2000) indicate environmental changes affect human development options, with poor populations disproportionately impacted. Therefore, the robustness of social work as a helping profession positions itself as a natural connect to the environment, ecological preservation and humanity. This achievement is inevitable if social work is to maintain its relevance as a profession during this time of escalating environmental crises. This

transformation pushes social workers to better understand ways in which not only economic but also environmental factors affect the lived reality of the people with whom they work. Reformed curricula through connections made between theory, practice and environmental issues will shift the profession to real-time expansion and integration of environmental knowledge and engagement (Jones, 2010; McKinnon, 2008).

Global citizens are more aware today of the impact of the environment on their daily lives and the extent to which their daily survival is affected. What are the rights of citizens regarding the environment? Robert Kennedy Jr. states:

> I recognized that environment is not something distant and inaccessible to most Americans. It is not an issue that can be separated out and dealt with on its own. The environment is our neighborhood, our community. It is our quality of life. I began to see the environment not as a privilege that was part of my affluent background, but as a right for every American, one that was being subverted by greedy, powerful, and corrupt interest in our society (as cited in Cronin & Kennedy, 1999, pg. 116).

Expansive personal consumption and possession drive habits where individual fulfillment is addressed without consideration of consequences of this behavior. Shabecoff (2000) believes this thinking springs from the systems, institutions, values, and habits of thought created by humans through the centuries to manage, sustain, and order our civilization. Efforts to establish environmental standards have a long history including smoke abatement laws in the 11th century to regulatory actions and more recent policies including the U.S.'s Clean Air Act, Clean Water and Waste Management Acts and international efforts such as Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Each of these regulations has addressed the rights of industry, as well as citizens, and has led to disclosures by industry while establishing far-reaching environmental standards (Cronin & Kennedy, 1999, p. 154-155).

The immensity of environmental concerns requires more than a top-down regulatory approach. Global citizens are concerned and desire to be actively engaged in ways that embrace environmental activism. In their classic study *Citizens and Politics: A View from Main Street America,* The Harwood Group (1991) identified citizens' desire for involvement in civic life where they can make a difference and where they may choose to sit out a situation unless they "feel they can bring about or witness change." This notion of participatory environmentalism endears community-based action where communities actively demonstrate civic responsibility toward saving, preserving and restoring our natural environment and resources. The upsurge of environmentalism is due to societal recognition of the fact that human activities are causing a deterioration of the quality of the environment *and* that environmental deterioration in turn has negative impacts on people (Shabecoff, 2000).

As concerns for the sustainability of the environment increase, the role of education has become more involved and now includes strategies for increased public awareness and engagement. Environmental concerns are buttressed by choices citizens make about transportation patterns, water distribution, housing developments, hazardous waste disposition, energy usage, and control of air and water pollution (Park, 1996; Stapp, Wals

& Stankorb, 1996). Incorporating environmental awareness into courses highlight the importance of this topical area while providing students with opportunities to identify the role they can play in saving the environment. Stapp, Wals, and Stankorb (1996) recommend an inclusive view of environmental education, one that includes political, social, economic, and bio-physical aspects (p. 4). They further state that environmental issues involve ethical questions that focus on the sharing of the world's natural resources (p. 5). Encouraging reformation of thinking regarding the environment led Shabecoff (2000) to conclude, "It is in the classrooms, from preschool and kindergarten through graduate school, that a major part of the struggle to achieve a sustainable, livable habitat and society in the 21st century will be won or lost" (p. 70). Addressing the preservation of all natural resources is timely for citizens in an effort to become more responsible regarding current personal thinking and habits and usage for future generations. Such an educational process not only aims to better understand symptoms of current irresponsible actions but also ecological dysfunction behavior (Shabecoff, 2000, p. 178). Hoff (1997) also asserts courses in ecological science and interdisciplinary environmental studies would deepen one's understanding of how human health and differing cultures are grounded in various ecosystems. McKinnon (2008) identifies an important statement from the West Australian Council on Social Service that appeals to social workers and their role in sustainable communities: For social workers, in particular, social sustainability is a functional approach that encompasses a myriad of processes, systems, and structures, and supports the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and livable communities (p. 265).

Communities have joined the environmental justice movement and are addressing environmental insults that impact their daily lives. Most often communities confronted with these issues tend to be poor, people of color and inner city residents. These are the same communities where social workers are entrenched and deeply involved with service provision. Community sustainability must include a focus that supports development as opposed to only intervention service. A developmental approach (Homan, 2011), recognizes potential and strength which may prevent problems from happening in the first place. Social workers must work to develop communities while also responding to immediate personal needs. The link between community development and environmental justice is highlighted by Alice Shabecoff, a community developer:

> Environmental protection and economic development, frequently described as contradictory goals, have in fact proved mutually reinforcing at the neighborhood level…The environmental initiatives developed by community groups are prime examples of "sustainable development," that is development that clearly takes into account three elements – the economy, ecology and community (as cited in Shabecoff, 2000, p. 60).

As an advocate for the inclusion of all local residents in the environmental movement, Jones (2008) asserts that people of color and other disadvantaged communities must be involved in the struggle for a green economy and their voice in this area can possibly lead to solutions for some of their problems (p. 109). Such involvement is also aligned with the concept of self-empowerment.

Interactions with community members allow students to focus on local environmental concerns that have immediate as well as far-reaching implications. Social interaction theory underscores the complexity of aspects of local life. The myriad of concerns in a community provide a rich source for social interactions around common concerns. Involvement in activities that meet common needs and interests give direction to collective action with local well-being as an ultimate outcome (Bridger, Brennan, & Luloff, 2011; Shandas & Messer, 2008). Addressing environmental concerns starts with awareness at the individual and community levels. Linking global concerns to local behaviors is jettisoned by increasing interdependence and requires good governance and accountability (Miekle & Green, 2011).

GREENING DEFINED

A wide range of individuals are working, thinking, buying, advocating, designing and legislating green. Greening may be based on one's personal perspective and level of awareness. Definitions of greening fit well with diverse areas (micro to macro) within the social work profession. Aspects of protecting the earth, and more specifically local communities, are deeply rooted in an understanding of greening. A global definition of greening is one's consciousness of the impact one makes on the planet. With this understanding expected behaviors include taking steps to try to minimize one's carbon footprint, or the amount of environmental damage that one causes (Middletown Thrall Library, 2008). Re-claiming and promoting an investment in the future allows local residents to reinvest in the future. Jones (2008) declares:

> Greening is not just throwing away stuff not longer needed or wanted. It should be about reclaiming thrown-away communities. It should be about recycling materials to give things a second chance…Also, our youth deserve the opportunity to be a part of something promising. Across this nation, let's honor the cry of youth in Oakland, California, for "green jobs, not jails" (p. 19).

Social workers are concerned about community sustainable development on both the domestic and international fronts. Sustainable development emphasizes "the meeting of needs, as opposed to wants, and places a clear focus on intergenerational equity" (Hembd & Silberstein, 2011, p. 262). Sustainability may be defined both narrowly as the long-term protection and health of the natural environment and broadly as the triple bottom line of environmental health, economic viability, and social well-being (Calder & Dautremont-Smith, 2009). This implies making decisions on behalf of those yet unborn and unable to participate in the process but who will nonetheless be affected by the outcomes of the process. Current behavior about the environment will indeed affect future generations.

Aspects of greening also involve preserving environmental quality at all levels of society including the promotion of renewal resources that support a green economy. Social workers have daily contact with varying aspects of a green economy and its impact on client populations. For example, Stone (2010) identifies workforce development areas including transportation, energy efficiency, energy generation, construction, environment protection, and waste reduction – areas that effect vulnerable clients. Social Work

curricula must include materials that highlight environmental preservation and green economy and their impact on client population. The integration of these topics into Social Work courses promotes an increasing aware of individual responsibility to environmental preservation and the long tentacles of the 'greening" concept that impacts client populations in myriad ways.

Increasing students' exposure to the importance of environmental preservation is possible through a Social Work curriculum. A description of the course the author developed follows. While student awareness of global concerns is highlighted, the immediate focus in the course described in this paper is "greening", a short-term approach. This term-defined approach may be readily structured to the semester length of the course. Information regarding the need for more sustained interest in "greening" is emphasized. Local presenters involved in the green movement covered topics including LEED buildings, urban gardening, food deserts, work force development and green jobs, solar energy, and recycling. Throughout the semester, students are also encouraged to think about more personal habits and focus not only on immediate greening efforts but also on fostering energy independence. Students are residents of communities wherever they live, and as such they play important roles in building assets that improve their quality of life especially around social and economic issues at the local level (Robinson & Green, 2011).

THE COURSE

The course, *Community Practice*, is the macro practice course in a three-course practice sequence for the undergraduate Social Work major. The course includes content on groups, organizations, and communities inclusive of their development, structure, and effectiveness within society. Specifically, one question presented to students is: Do these entities respond to human needs that are relevant to their quality of life in culturally competent ways? Local residents are critical actors in changing conditions that exist in their communities. Students, as future macro social work practitioners, are reminded of their roles as change agents and advocates of social justice. Green innovations compel important global considerations, and social workers must find their niche in making these focal points for the profession as well. One strategy is to include greening concepts in Social Work courses. The course, *Community Practice*, requires a community project that involves a detailed study or analysis of a community/agency problem, need, or concern and addresses the implementation of a change process. The service-learning project simultaneously increases students' awareness of community life while also providing engagement on a small scale and time-limited (one semester) basis. These activities support Jones' (2010) suggestion that additional inclusive strategies for ecological awareness and preservation content must be forthcoming.

The impetus for choosing a theme grew out of the recognition that "greening" is critical to social work course content. The presentation of information on local and national efforts led to a realization by students that they could play a more immediate role in and address complex environmental issues. This provides the framework for identifying a course theme each year. Such a focused theme enriches opportunities for oral in-class reflection sharing and serves as the common link between projects. Projects

identified in this paper were implemented to correspond with the "Goingreen" course theme. Students selected a community of their choosing, worked with them to identify a greening/environmental need or concern, and implement a "green" service-learning project. Project criteria included the following guidelines:

- Why is this viewed as a problem or issue?
- What is the history or background of the problem?
- What are the anticipated changes?
- With respect to community change, what are the major strengths and weaknesses of this organizing, development, or planning effort?
- What are the obvious benefits to the community?
- What is the role of a macro social worker?
- What kinds of leadership skills (strategies) do you anticipate needing to address this problem/issue?
- What are the most effective strategies used for addressing this social problem?

This course responds to the 2008 EPAS. Specifically, the following Educational Policies (EP) are identified:

- EP 2.1.4 – Engage diversity and difference in practice.
- EP 2.1.5 - Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
- EP 2.1.9 – Respond to contexts that shape practice.
- EP 2.1.10(a). – Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

The ability of social workers to recognize the many dimensions of practice and basic human rights regardless of a person's position in society is an integral part of the profession's skills. Social workers also recognize basic human rights, while acknowledging global interconnections of oppression and theories of justice and strategies that promote human and civil rights. Further, social work must incorporate social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice. The engagement of social workers to substantively and affectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities is highlighted as contemporary issues affect service provision to vulnerable populations. Attention to environmental preservation is critical to social work at all practice levels – micro, mezzo, and macro. Social work is a "best fit" for addressing this area given its attention to the impact of ecological issues on individuals, advocacy actions that target environmental injustices against vulnerable populations both domestically and internationally, and engagement that targets changing oppressive situations for improved future outcomes.

Selected Projects – Employing the Goingreen Theme

Descriptions are provided for three service-learning projects that were completed during a recent semester (see Table 1, next page). Students worked with local residents to determine the "green" project that met an existing need and could be completed in a semester. Students provided reflections of their learning experience and also recorded a critical analysis of the experience in a journal.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Driving this interest in civic engagement is the belief that each student could initiate and plan an activity that would result in an identifiable level of change. Students were encouraged to give careful thought to all engagement activities and seek their meaning. Critical reflection, a decisively important exercise that employs critical thinking skills and allows for the assessment of the learning, assists this process. Further, Jones (2010) indicates this approach also allows social work students to consider socio-cultural assumptions that have led to the crisis, ways they have viewed these, and how they can actively address these concerns. Students recorded reflections of their service-learning greening project in journals that were submitted monthly. Guidelines that helped students to focus on the learning, rather than pure, straightforward descriptions of activities, were identified. Key questions used as guides for reflective writing included: What did you learn from each moment, interaction, observation, and/or activity? Were additional questions or challenges raised? What did you enjoy most? What was most challenging? Were personal goals relating to this experience met? If so, how? What's next regarding this experience? How can the engagement continue after this experience ends? There is no absolute template for reflective writing; however, with trigger questions and critical thinking, students were able to provide in-depth analysis of the service-learning experience. Such triggers transcend a recounting of every minute interaction or activity to deeper and meaningful considerations.

In-class reflection sessions allowed students to share their weekly service-learning experiences. The sharing of students' project experiences provided information about individual and community "greening" engagements across all practice areas – micro, mezzo and macro. These exchanges identified new and different engagement opportunities and helpful community resources. Students also used PowerPoint presentations with pictures of their project. This sharing exercise actually excited additional sharing of specific project activities that involved the planning involved, community interactions, self-evaluation, and a review of expected outcomes. Student comments indicated connections made regarding an expanded role of social workers, greening and sustainability. Even those students who were focused on careers as micro level practitioners made connections with their personal actions, workforce development and green jobs, environmental injustices and dumping, and global concerns.

Table 1. Selected Student Goingreen Service Learning Projects

Project Title	Problem	Plan	Outcome
Polluting the Community: A Concern for Dog Waste	Neighbors walking their dogs without pick up their waste. Dog waste is a public health hazard, aesthetically unappealing and causes tensions between neighbors.	The student worked with local residents who shared her concern. They concluded that the local government should be involved and requested sign postings along the main walk areas used by dog owners. Funds were also sought to purchase posts with free dog waste bags.	The student testified before the local governing council regarding this growing problem and health hazard. One councilman agreed to assist in this effort to find a funding source for posts and bags. Signs were posted. Together they are exploring funding sources and will write a grant proposal.
Greening a School's Grounds	The grounds around a local public school included dead shrubs, other plants, and barren space due to walking paths made by students. The school's principal asked the social work student to coordinate this project after learning of the student's interest in greening efforts.	The project planned to uproot existing dead and sparse plantings, cleared spaces, and plant fresh shrubbery and trees. The project sought partners including the public school system, a local conservancy, and a local foundation.	Students, teachers and the principal worked with local landscaping experts on a chilly Fall Saturday to beautify their campus and also received information on soil types, measurements, and plant placement exposure to natural elements. A more aesthetically pleasing outdoor environment was created. Other benefits included slowed storm water drainage, improved air quality, and reduced outdoor maintenance.
Promoting Greening in Residence Halls	The University had provided recycling bins specifically for paper, glass or plastic and another bin for aluminum. However, students were not using the bins, cross-mixing the items placed and throwing food products and other dirty containers in the bins.	Presentations that focused on the importance of recycling to the campus community and society were scheduled during 10 dorm floor meetings. Students would be encouraged to properly discard recyclables and were informed of implications of local actions on global communities. Resident floor counselors would publicize the meeting and encourage maximum attendance.	The attendance at each meeting was 10 - 15 students. With increased awareness students became aware of the role they could play in environmental preservation and eliminated wasting valuable recycling items by not placing them in the correct bin. The social work student stressed opportunities for exhibiting leadership qualities by championing this effort.

By employing critical reflection students consider the meaning of all aspects of the experience. After all, service-learning is a learning process with expectations of immediate and future actions. The DEAL Model (describe, examine and articulate learning) is presented as a critical template that maximizes the reflection process. Ash and Clayton (2009) note that critical reflection generates, deepens, and documents learning and further supports the learning that results from thinking about the experience. Students more readily identify the function of systems affecting the particular experience, provide more definitive responses and dissect social issues to determine future involvement (Reed-Bouley & Reed-Bouley, 2007). Thinking deeply about each experience or activity encourages more comprehensive analysis and critical thinking of each occurrence. This deeper reflective process also promotes an examination of personal values and long-held beliefs. By the end of the semester, the journal should provide a good retrospective picture of intellectual growth that occurred during the service-learning experience. Students are urged to be cognizant of their writing style, to employ all proper mechanics, and to carefully proof their journals.

CONCLUSION

The new ethic referenced earlier by Berger and Kelly (1993) identifies an emerging awareness of the connectedness to the natural world and our understanding of nature's limits on tolerance. Environmental preservation is not a fad and Kinzie (2008) declares it is fully entrenched in academic life and effects not just how students live but what they learn and as graduates how they change workplaces and neighborhood. She further notes, as does Kosnik (2008) students are advocates for curriculum infusion and research have environmental consciousness. The real challenge we face in embracing a more sustainable future, according to Orr (as cited in AASHE, 2010, p. 1), rests with our ability to educate students differently. AASHE (2010) fully supports forward thinking regarding inclusion of greening and sustainability in the curriculum and states

> The fundamental problem faced in meeting the goal of education for a healthy and sustainable society for all students is that the existing curriculum in higher education has not been developed to examine how we shape a sustainable world. Much of the curriculum has been developed to provide students with an increasingly narrow understanding of disciplines, professions and jobs and is focused on specific knowledge and skills employed in the given area. What is needed is a curriculum that prepares learners for living sustainably, both professionally and personally, and that explicitly helps the learner deeply understand the interactions, inter-connections, and the consequences of actions and decisions (p. 2).

The integration of green concepts into Social Work courses is critical. Resources exist that provide assistance for this at the local, state, national and international levels. As green-aware stewards of our environment, social work students can contribute to a growing consciousness regarding the need to save the earth and the more-immediate communities in which we work. Becoming more aware of individual contributions to the green movement is another strategy by which social workers provide potential benefits to populations they serve. This knowledge encompasses energy conservation, future

employment, health and wellness awareness and other survival possibilities. Incorporating a "greening" theme in a *Community Practice* course provided students with information about the contributions they and their clients can make to advance this environmental priority. Direct engagement in the green movement through service-learning experiences provided immediate opportunities to become engaged in a hands-on experience. Encouraging students to consider their current and future contributions to environmental preservation uncovers various leadership roles as well. While working with students who were engaged in "green" projects Torrise (2010) observed enhanced leadership roles as they made contributions through community S-L placements. With increased knowledge about greening, environmental preservation and sustainability, social work students can use this information to better serve clients and communities alike. The profession of social work, asserts Hoff (1997), has a role to play in the restoration of a viable physical environment and the development of norms and practices to support sustainable communities. The PIE perspective and the profession's grounded values provide a solid framework from which to continue to build. Additionally, service-learning courses offer prime opportunities for social work programs to give more attention to this topic and for students to advance their knowledge of sustainable concepts, implement projects, think critically, and problem solve about existing concerns and future opportunities for making continuous contributions.

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