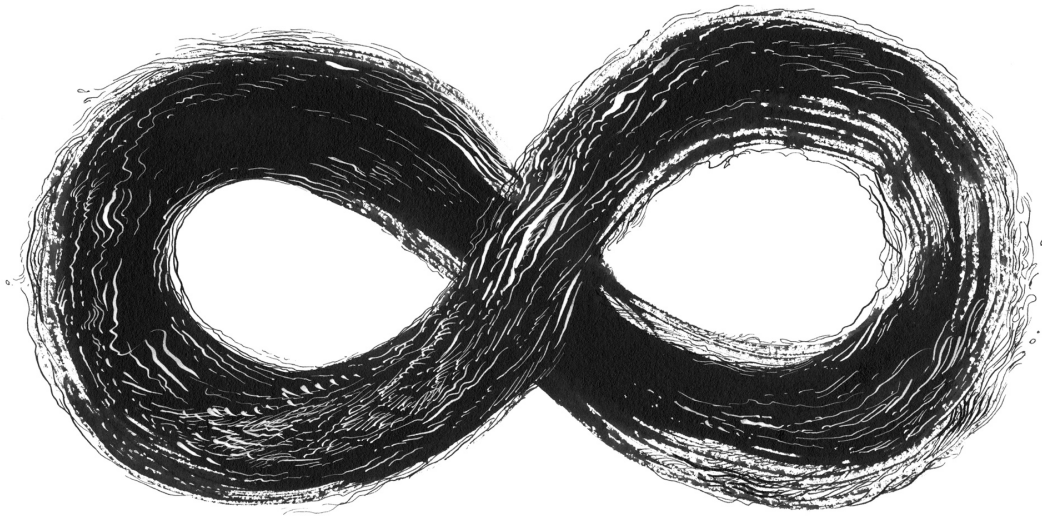


REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING



"It did not start with me, it will not end with me."

Special Issue on Field Education

Denice Goodrich Liley and Martha V. K. Wilson

Guest Editors

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Letter from the Editor

Michael A. Dover

This Letter from the Editor introduces the first issue from the new publisher, Cleveland State University School of Social Work. The editor stresses continuity from the previous publisher, California State University Long Beach School of Social Work; appeals for contributions of narratives and funds; announces the growing editorial team; discusses the way in which the journal's peer reviewed narratives enrich practice, theory, and research; shares perspectives on the nature of narratives published in the journal, and discusses the value of process recordings and field education as sources of Reflections narratives.

Since its founding in 1995, *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping* has had a distinctive appearance and distinguished content. One goal of this first issue from Cleveland State University School of Social Work is continuity of appearance and content. A concerted effort has and will be made to evoke the memory of the journal founded by Sonia Leib Abels at California State University Long Beach (CSULB) School of Social Work.

Illustrative of this commitment, this issue's cover is re-published from the last print issue of *Reflections*, published in Winter 2012. The graphics were based on the legacy left by John Feijoo, University Print Shop, California State University Long Beach. The artwork was created by Robin Richesson, M.F.A., Professor of Art at CSULB, who has agreed to continue to serve as Art Director. The cover saying, "It did not start with me, it will not end with me," is adapted from Misty L. Wall's narrative in the last printed issue (Wall, 2012), and is republished here in the Special Issue for which it was originally intended. This issue contains narratives submitted both before and after we became publisher. It is back dated to Spring 2012. This is a standard practice for journals and will continue until our issues are back on schedule.

Reflections has had several editors in its first 18 volumes: Sonia Leib Abels, the late Jillian Jimenez, Eileen Pasztor and now myself. The journal was also long nurtured by Wendi McLendon-Covey, former Assistant Editor of *Reflections*. Here's hoping that others will serve in the editorial

leadership of *Reflections* over the next 18 volumes. During my editorship, the content will respect the tradition which *Reflections* editors, reviewers, authors, and readers have long appreciated.

The appearance is also similar, but the columns are wider, we use open source Liberation Fonts, and we have laid out the journal using open source Scribus software. The journal is published using open source Open Journal Systems (OJS) software from the Public Knowledge Project.

Ensuring the Publication of *Reflections*

However, unlike most OJS journals, *Reflections* is not an open access journal. Registration of all readers is required. Individual subscriptions of \$18 a volume will commence with Volume 19, although they will apply only in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the Eurozone. Library subscriptions are \$100 per volume. Over 40 libraries have already subscribed, many for the first time, now that IP-range access is available university-wide. Individuals, social agencies, schools of social work, and other academic units can also become Friends of *Reflections* and receive an annual or permanent username and password. For more information, please visit www.csuohio.edu/class/reflections or www.reflectionsnarrativesofprofessionalhelping.org. Please consider becoming a subscriber or a Friend of *Reflections*. Please also consider arranging for your academic program or social agency to become an Institutional Friend of *Reflections* or asking your university or community library to subscribe.

After all, one lesson from the near loss of this beloved journal – following the 2012 announcement that *Reflections* would cease publication – is that *Reflections* needs a sound fiscal foundation that protects it from public university budget cuts. Another lesson is that while one university or school of social work may publish *Reflections*, the journal is ultimately the province of those for whom *Reflections* occupies a special place in our hearts. The future of *Reflections* depends on the continued support of past readers, authors and reviewers and on the involvement of other practitioners and scholars from social work and other helping professions, in the U.S. and internationally.

Growing Editorial Team

The inside cover page shows that the *Reflections* editorial team is already growing beyond our university. In addition to Robin Richesson serving as Art Director, Denice Goodrich Liley will serve as the first Associate Editor for Field Education. She will oversee an ongoing Special Section on Field Education, with articles appearing in most issues.

Also, as announced earlier during the journal's transition, members of the previous Editorial Board were invited to serve as reviewers for *Reflections*, as were the nearly 500 surviving authors we were able to contact. Nearly 100 persons stepped forward to offer to serve as reviewers, and 50 persons have already completed a review. For each volume, the reviewers who have been most active in that volume and cumulatively will be listed on the inside cover page as serving on the Narrative Review Board.

By Volume 20, we will constitute a Policy Advisory Board, made up of persons who have contributed to and are devoted to *Reflections*. In my view, peer-reviewed journals require a mechanism for advice to the publisher on succession of editorial leadership and renewal of editorial policy. In addition, there must be accountability of the editor to the publisher for budgeting and publishing matters, editor autonomy for strictly editorial decision, affirmative efforts to ensure diversity at all levels, continued attention to international content, and concerted action to achieve enhanced interdisciplinarity. My editorship will reflect those views.

From Special Issues to Special Sections

Special Sections will replace Special Issues,

beginning with Spring 2012. Such special collections of articles are selected by the section editor(s) following peer review by both a regular *Reflections* reviewer and one among several special reviewers chosen by the guest editors. One advantage of Special Sections is flexibility of length. Depending on the quality and quantity of submissions, they can be shorter or longer than the wonderful Special Issues of the past, given our new online format. Another advantage is that Special Section guest editors are freed from concerns about filling an entire issue. Special Section Calls for Narratives will contain submission deadlines, but because there will not be a hard and fast issue deadline, there is more flexibility in making editorial decisions, such as accept with required and/or suggested revisions or revise and re-submit. Finally, this policy ensures that all issues beginning with Spring 2012 contain general submissions, in addition to any special section, thus reducing delays in publishing such articles. Inquiries to the Editor about Special Sections are welcome. Please see Special Section policies on the CSU website.

***Reflections* is a Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal**

Reflections narratives are valuable for education for practice but also often contribute to theory and research. With respect to theory, our narratives often make important conceptual contributions to the literature. They do this by reflecting upon narrative content, drawing on relevant literature, and addressing unresolved theoretical problems. The Review Guidelines ask reviewers to provide feedback about whether the article draws or might draw “conceptual or theoretical conclusions about the nature of professional practice in the helping professions.” Not all *Reflections* articles include or need to include citations from the literature. Not all narratives contain reflections which engage practice or social theory. Some of the best do not do so but still contain reflections of intrinsic value.

Reflections narratives are also an important source of empirical knowledge about the nature of practice in the helping professions. *Reflections* doesn't publish formal research results or reviews of the literature. However, *Reflections* articles contain narrative content conveying interpersonal interactions, witnessed events, and felt experiences. This narrative content is placed within the context of a well-told story that helps readers discover new

ways of thinking about the personal, the professional and the political in our lives. Reviewers are asked whether they would encourage authors “to draw conclusions about the need for qualitative or quantitative research related to the issues arising from the narrative.”

In the next issue, the Letter from the Editor will provide further confirmation that *Reflections* is a double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal, discuss the indexing services and databases in which content will appear (please see the inside cover), and announce plans to re-publish all back issues.

***Reflections* is a Journal of Narratives**

Sonia and Paul Abels pointed out (Abels & Abels, 2012, p. 6), “Different from other scholarly journals, [*Reflections*] sought to publish professional narratives of practice. The authors were asked not only to tell the story of how they dealt with the services they offered, but how they were personally impacted as the helping process evolved.” Since that time, *Reflections* benefitted from dialogue with with dozens of authors and reviewers about how to build upon that original vision.

Reflections publishes narratives of interpersonal practice, community practice, macro practice, and what Friend of *Reflections* Alex Gitterman calls teaching practice. We also publish narratives of activism for social justice, the subject of a Special Issue – edited by Paul and Sonia Abels – to which Charles Garvin (also a Friend of *Reflections*) contributed (Garvin, 2010).

Over the years, I have arrived at a personal perspective on narratives which I would like to share. Prior to serving as editor, I contributed two narratives (Dover, 2009; 2010). In addition, I edited the Spring 2010 Special Issue on Work and the Workplace and co-edited the Spring 2000 Special Issue on Responding to War: Social Workers and War in the Balkans. As I see it, one of the many ways to write a *Reflections* narrative is to begin with a distinct moment of interaction, shown via narrative content that is conveyed in a vignette. One or more vignettes are then placed within the context of an engaging story (exposition). That story produces reflections which are shared with the reader. Showing, telling, and reflecting are three elements which enrich *Reflections* narratives. For

the helping professions, such narratives add knowledge, enrich theory, and inspire research; often, they also produce tears and laughter. Please consider writing a narrative, in a style which makes sense to you, and submitting it to *Reflections*. If you would like initial feedback, even on an early idea for a narrative, email me at reflections@csuohio.edu or call (216)687-3564. Having an accessible editor is another part of the *Reflections* tradition.

Special Acknowledgements

The co-editors of this Field Education issue and the upcoming Mentoring issue extended their commitment by seeking additional articles. The faculty of Cleveland State University School of Social Work and other Cleveland-based *Reflections* authors and reviewers have played an essential role in bringing *Reflections* to our School. Several hundred *Reflections* authors agreed that we could re-publish their narratives. Subsequently, Cleveland State University entered into an agreement with California State University which now authorizes us to scan and re-publish all back issues. Dozens of authors contributed to a booklet of memories which was shared with Sonia Leib Abels, a former Cleveland State University faculty member, at a reception held in Cleveland in Fall 2012.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, *Reflections* benefitted from the thoughtful contributions of the late Josh Kanary, M.S.W., our graduate assistant. Josh's thoughtful piece, “Show and Tell: Narrative and Exposition in *Reflections*,” available now as a link from our Review Guidelines, has proven helpful to authors and reviewers alike. It will be published our forthcoming *Many Ways of Narrative* series, which will publish narratives on the writing of *Reflections* narratives.

The name of the series is inspired by the seminal editorial essay in *Social Work* by *Reflections* author Ann Hartman (Hartman, 1990). In some ways, this series began with Benjamin Shepard's piece in Winter 2012 (Shepard, 2012). Additional contributions are sought.

I am personally grateful to Alex Gitterman and Charles Garvin, with whom I studied at Columbia and Michigan, for their advice and support during this transition. I am also indebted to Eileen Pasztor and to Sonia and Paul Abels, who have been

frequent sources of feedback and affirmation. This journal would not be publishing were it not for the support of our School's former Director Murali Nair and former Interim Director and two-time *Reflections* author Lonnie Helton, now both retired. The Dean of our College, Gregory Sadlek, our Library Director, Glenda Thornton, our Social Work Librarian, Fran Mentch, and the administration and support staff of Cleveland State University have provided much appreciated fiscal support, procedural advice and operational facilitation. Special thanks also goes to our 2012-2013 work-study students, Kaitlyn Probst and Taylor Garten.

Field Education and *Reflections* Narratives

This is a Special Issue on Field Education. For most helping professionals, field education is where we really begin to learn about ourselves in relation to helping and being helped. That was certainly the case for me as a student at Adelphi and Columbia in the late 1970s. In those days, all students were required to regularly write process recordings. These were accounts written in as verbatim: a manner as is possible about the verbal and nonverbal interactions of work with clients and in organizations and communities. Process recordings often informed practice papers that also drew on the literature about social work practice.

Process recordings continue to be used, although less frequently, in field education. Audio and video recordings are also used to permit retrospective reflection on practice and to examine practice decisions (which I define as something said or not said, done or not done in working with a client system). As the late Irving Miller pointed out in his classroom, "Every little practice decision is affected by the organizational context." Accordingly, it is valuable to try to understand and write about how our interactions are at one and the same time both socially structured and socially constructed in ways that are not at first apparent. Having an ongoing section on Field Education, overseen by an Associate Editor for Field Education, is consistent with seeing field education as the signature pedagogy of social work education (Larrison & Korr, 2013; Boitel & Fromm forthcoming). The section will publish articles by social work students in their field practicum, students in psychology internship programs, speech pathologists in their clinical fellowship year, and narratives from

supervisors, field seminar instructors, field advisors, and field directors.

There is perhaps no better starting point for a *Reflections* narrative than the learning process of students in the helping professions. In fact, Jennifer Bellamy, co-editor of the upcoming Special Issue on Mentoring in the Helping Professions, has suggested that students be assigned to draw on process recordings and other accounts of practice, and to write narratives according to the guidelines of this journal. Might an appropriately disguised account of practice which honestly and fearlessly reflects upon learning and teaching in the practice of social work (Reynolds, 1943), written according to this journal's guidelines as a potential *Reflections* submission, consolidate key practice behaviors and help achieve the requisite competencies of a helping profession? I will leave you with that question as you proceed to enjoy the present issue.

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Introduction to the Special Issue on Field Education

Denice Goodrich Liley and Martha V. K. Wilson, Co-Editors

This introduction to the Special Issue on Field Education focuses on the theme of transformation. Stressing that the path of transformation is never simple, the Special Issue Co-Editors begin by pointing out that this issue of the journal represents the transition from the journal being a print journal published at California State University Long Beach to being an online journal published at Cleveland State University School of Social Work. The editors trace how each of the contributions to this special issue reflects a transformation that takes place, whether in a person, a community, a faculty member, a field instructor, or a student.

This publication is finally here! This very long journey began two years ago, when we agreed to be guest editors for a *Reflections* Special Edition on Field Education with some apprehension and much excitement. As with all journeys, one expects some twists and turns, ups and downs. The path is never straight. As we were approaching the closing date of our call for manuscripts, the unfortunate news came that the publication of *Reflections* by California State University Long Beach would end. Good news came just as what was believed to be the last edition of the journal was published – another university was taking over *Reflections*.

It is an honor to be in the inaugural issue of *Reflections* from Cleveland State University. This Special Edition – Field Education is a testament to the role that narratives play in social work education. The articles in this edition provide the details of many stories that have shaped individuals and communities of learning, as well as physical communities of living, affecting the professional development of many people.

A theme in each of these articles is that of transformation. You will note the use of the word *transformation* in many of the narratives that follow. This theme seems only fitting as this journal has recently emerged from a transformation. Each of the narratives in this edition describes a transformation happening, maybe within an individual, a student, a faculty member, or a

community. Sometimes the individual knows and plays an active part in the transformation; other times it is by looking at the situation through another's eyes or through a rear view mirror that one sees a transformation has occurred. As you will see, each of these articles tells a tale of transformation.

This edition starts with a professional transformation – extending over twenty years – as Dr. Diane Calloway-Graham, of Utah State University, in “My Life as a Practicum Director,” details her years as a field director. Using the metaphor of a global positioning system as her guide to field education practice, Dr. Calloway describes the skill sets of scanning the environment, networking, knowing the community that builds the connections for fieldwork, and developing ongoing relationships with students that become colleagues.

A transformation that happens within the time frame of one practicum year for both faculty and students is shared by Dr. Desiree Stepteau-Watson, of University of Mississippi, in “Ready or Not, Here We Come: Field Education and Developing a Professional Identity.” This narrative provides a glimpse of field practicum – beginning to end – from the eyes of a faculty educator. She shares her story of reluctance at seeing for the first time the incoming social work field interns at their orientation. Her overarching perception is that of a lack of professionalization of the students. This narrative shares what can occur within one

practicum session that has lasting effects, resulting in changes in teaching approach.

Diane Michaelsen, of Southern Connecticut State University, chronicles the transformation that she professionally experienced in “From Direct Services to the Director of Field Education.” She accounts her personal journey from practitioner, to adjunct teacher to director of field education. She credits her social work skills and experiences within each prior position as complementing and enhancing each of the changes that she has experienced.

Have you ever considered the role of “opportunity”? Elizabeth Harbeck Voshel, of University of Michigan School of Social Work, in “Reflections of a Field Director: An Opportunity to Look into the Past and See the Future,” provides an account of opportunities within her life. Ms. Voshel remarks, “I began to realize that life isn’t always about what you make it, but sometimes it is about where you are when opportunities present themselves.” She keeps the question, “So what has the field program done to earn the ranking you have received?” as a constant reminder of her responsibility to her students and to the profession.

What happens when relatively privileged young students step out of their familiar comfort zones for a field practicum experience? Dr. Jerry Watson of University of Mississippi, in “‘Driving Ms. Jane Addams’: Students and Instructors Learn in Field Education,” gives an account of his own learning as the field instructor, from his students’ learning experiences. This narrative explores challenges of cultural competency. Dr. Watson acknowledges his students’ eyes provide him a fresh look and a reaffirmed conviction for social work practice.

On the other hand what happens when a student, very familiar with and a member of a minority community, does his practicum in the community? Imad A. Mohamed and Robin R. Wingo, of Minnesota State University, in “Finding Balance: Group Membership and Professional Development,” offer a narrative dialogue between a social work student and social work faculty/field instructor. This dialog explores the challenges and benefits of group membership for the student completing a field internship and practicing social work within his cultural community. As field liaison and seminar

instructor, Ms. Wingo provides strategies and insights for social work educators that address group membership and professional development within a cultural context.

At Adelphi University, Dr. Laura Quiros, Lorin Kay, and Ann Marie Montijo, in “Creating Emotional Safety in the Classroom and in the Field,” address emotional safety from the perspectives of professor, student and field educator. This piece discusses elements of emotional safety between classroom and field, drawing on the authors’ personal experiences. Illustrations of the parallel processes of professor and student, student and field instructor, and student and client are used to highlight ways of experiencing emotional safety that support both learning and growth.

Dr. Misty Wall, of Boise State University, in “A Lesson Brought Home From Seminar,” describes a unique challenge from the perspective of a social work educator. This narrative describes the unavoidable dual relationships of client, parent, and social work educator with a child needing mental health treatment in a small community. Regular confrontation with students – current, past and future – and an overall loss of a personal world of privacy make it difficult to maintain faith within the profession. Remembering that “fruits of our labor” are often outside of our time limits is applicable even more as a parent, educator, and social worker.

Transformation of teaching is described by Sarah LaRocque, of the University of Calgary, in “The Social Work Student as a Participant Observer in Group Training.” This narrative explores the challenge of assisting students to move from a focus on learning evidence based theories and translating these into practice to developing skills and understanding group process. Through modifications in teaching and group process, students are able to learn value of group process for themselves as witnessed in supervision.

Dr. Katie Johnston-Goodstar of the University of Minnesota, in “A Funny Thing Happened at Internship Today: A Reflection on Ethical Dilemmas, Decision-making and Consequences of a Questionable Field Work Situation,” describes an ethical dilemma that “happened upon” her. Responding to the “dilemma” could have an impact

on a project that was running smoothly; not responding would challenge her professional and ethical obligations. Dr. Johnston-Goodstar details her experiences, highs and lows, and the strategies of discussion, consultation, and negotiation as avenues to get to ethical practice.

Dr. Dorie Gilbert, Tim Bailey, and Peter Dwumah, in “A Village, an Intern, Two Professors and a Chief: Developing a Field Practicum within the Traditional Chieftaincy Structure of a Rural Village in Ghana,” provide insights on establishing a community development practicum internationally. Resolving the challenges of preparing students, establishing a viable placement, field instruction, language, and placement oversight are key to making a student’s learning experience successful.

Amy Fulton, of the University of Calgary, in “Dealing with Client Death and Dying: A Letter to Social Work Practicum Students,” provides an open letter to social work practicum students about dealing with client death and dying in field education experiences and their future practice. The author chronicles her personal experiences as a faculty liaison working with students who experienced a client death. She stresses professional competency and asks, “What kind of death do you want to help facilitate for your clients?”

Dr. Merydawilda Colón and Dr. Sharon Hines Smith, of Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, in “Challenges to Leadership in a Transitional Environment,” discuss their leadership challenges in the process of implementing a new field education structure relevant to the 2008 EPAS, as well as how contingency theories of leadership facilitated the process. They offer a “how to” on implementing changes that do not lose the support of stakeholders, have a focus and vision for change that is intentional, and include all parties affected by the change.

At the University of New England, Wanda Anderson, Nancy Ayer, Amy Cocha, Betsey Gray, Ellen Rondina, and Mary Bragdon White, in “Virtual Field Education: Global Connection,” highlight the challenges and rewards encountered in designing and implementing a fully online field education program. The authors discuss questions

they asked of themselves as they were designing the program, including: Is this possible in a profession that identifies itself as grounded in relationship building? Is it possible to teach social work skills in a virtual classroom? Can we develop and monitor field sites in countries around the world?

We conclude this issue with Dr. Julie Drolet, of University of Calgary, “Reflecting on Field Education Partnerships on Migration and Immigration: A Canadian Perspective.” This narrative explores migration and immigration in social work education. She argues that social work education must consider how to improve knowledge of immigration policy and practice through coursework, community involvement, and field education placements to prepare social workers for the evolving needs in this era of globalization.

We hope that you enjoy this broad array of articles and share in the transformation of possibilities that field education present to all of us.

About the Co-Editors: Denice Goodrich Liley, M.S.W., Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Social Work, Boise State University School of Social Work (208-426-4395; dliley@boisestate.edu). Martha V. K. Wilson, M.S.W., D.S.W., Ph.D. is Professor, School of Social Work, and Associate Provost for Online Worldwide Learning, University of New England (207-221-4985; mwilson13@une.edu).

My Life as a Practicum Director

M. Diane Calloway-Graham

This is an account of my personal experience as a practicum director over the past 21 years. The intent is to provide a practical context for theoretical ideas about the signature pedagogy of the field practicum. Through a narrative lens, I pay particular attention to the intricate process of maintaining a practicum program that meets the needs of the community and students, while adhering to the standards of social work programs.

My Beginnings

The field practicum experience can be expressed in a quote by T. S. Eliot: “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” I started my journey as a practicum director over 21 years ago fresh out of my PhD program. Prior to receiving my tenure track position as Assistant Professor and Practicum Director, I worked as a professional counselor at another university's Women's Center and taught courses in the Social Work Department. In the beginning, my exposure to the essence of a practicum program consisted of my own experience as a practicum student and an unusual assignment at the Women's Center supervising a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student in need of a successful field experience, but who was challenged because of a disability. When I was hired in my new position I thought it sounded fun and exciting. It seemed to parallel my love of teaching, mentoring students, program development, and working in the community. In the beginning of my journey this is what I knew about being a practicum director.

Lucky for me, I have always been a networker. As a social work therapist I considered it my primary obligation to make connections with other professionals in the community and to know the full range of resources and opportunities that existed for my clients. My own internship experience helped me understand the general framework of the

practicum. My approach to the practicum was to be responsible, proactive, and assertive, all of which translated into success. My valuable experience supervising that BSW intern taught me that students come to the field with different degrees of developmental readiness. I soon learned the value of these orientations.

My first day as a faculty member consisted of me showing up to my office with no other faculty member in sight. I sat in my temporary office and wondered why social work was located in this strange building (Animal Science) while trying to determine what a practicum director should be doing. As a doctoral student I was trained to be a teacher and researcher, but no one ever mentioned the word practicum. Reflecting back after 21 years, I find this to be an interesting notion given the fact that there has always been general consensus that the field experience is the most significant, productive, and memorable component of social work education (Kadushin, 1991). In today's jargon we refer to field education as the signature pedagogy of social work. Signature pedagogy means it is the central form of instruction and learning through which students are socialized to perform the role of social work practitioner (CSWE, 2008). I think we still have much to learn about the implementation of field education as the signature pedagogy. Much of the research today focuses on the challenges of field education being validated and the creation of pedagogical standards that extend beyond required hours and qualifications of field

instructors (Lyter, 2012; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010).

Now back to my beginnings. I sat at my desk in Animal Science and decided to take a proactive stance and look through the old practicum files that my predecessor had left behind. I soon found a current list of practicum instructors, students, and agencies. Given my orientation toward assertiveness, networking, and building relationships, I got on the phone and made appointments with agency practicum instructors. I took responsibility for orienting myself to the community and our placement sites. I also reviewed the current practicum manual and prepared myself to meet the practicum students for the first time in seminar. However, I soon found myself challenged with the following issues: (a) students' lack of trust toward me because I had replaced the former practicum director, (b) field instructors who also had a connection to the former practicum director, feeling that she could not be replaced and (c) working with a student exhibiting potentially harmful behavior at his practicum site.

The role statement of my position was based on teaching, research, and service. This means those components were the basis of faculty evaluation. However, these did not acknowledge the leadership qualities, energy, and time involved in building trust, establishing positive relationships, gaining acceptance with others, and resolving problems so necessary to a practicum director. In the context of social work practice, I would have been evaluated as an effective therapist with these types of qualities but not in higher education. Generally, no one trains or educates you to be a practicum director. You just grow into that job and create your own direction and path based on social work practice experience, the shared experience of others, and CSWE educational guidelines to try and make sense of it all. Bogo (2010) suggests that our understanding of field education today comes from the shared experiences of field directors who have contributed theoretical ideas and influenced the research on what it takes to provide a quality field education with concrete guidelines.

In my second year as practicum director I applied for and was awarded a course development grant from the college to do an extensive revision of

practicum materials. I took the opportunity to immerse myself in the practicum literature, as little as there was at the time. My responsibility as practicum director in the midst of trying to work towards tenure was a challenge. I became a sort of educational specialist for my tenure committee and others, helping them to understand my role as practicum director. With practicum being its own domain, it is much different than the university conceptualization of teaching, research, and service. It is an ever changing process of student growth and development, student challenges, agency challenges, and evolving expectations based on CSWE educational reform. It requires continual engagement with student development, community development, program development, and traditional problem-solving. The literature today would suggest that if the field is intended to carry the prominent position of signature pedagogy then we must recognize the essential leadership provided by the practicum director in understanding the curriculum, the competencies of students, and the needs of the practice community (Lyter, 2012). In my beginnings I felt like a newborn kitten just waiting for this new world to unfold before my eyes. I had the natural instincts to direct the field but at the same time I stood before a vast new world that I had to learn to navigate.

Experience: The Master Teacher

Firsts or first experiences, are part of life. I consider my experiences to be pivot points that have informed my process. My first year as a practicum director built the foundation for my ongoing story. I learned that my primary responsibility was to orchestrate the overall learning experience of the student and act as a facilitator between student and the field work agency. I emphasize the word orchestrate because it communicates the sense of complexity that is inherent in composing and arranging field experiences.

For example, I will share one experience that illustrates my point. I mentioned earlier that one of my initial challenges was working with a student exhibiting potentially harmful behavior at his practicum site. At the beginning of the school year this student was dismissed from his practicum site for inappropriate relationships with a client. The student was from a well-known and well-respected family in the community. My process for working

through this situation was to make sure that I consulted with all the appropriate people needed to resolve the issue. The program director and I met with the student to inform him of his due process rights according to existing student policies and procedures. For the rest of the quarter I met with the student, the agency, and college administrators. The situation was reviewed by student services, the college dean, and social work faculty. We met on several occasions with the student and agency to hear their stories. The student also had a lawyer and family guiding him through the process, which later became a court case. The looming question remained: should the student be dismissed from the program? In the end, the student chose to withdraw from the university with no future intention of majoring in social work.

Unfortunately, endings are never really endings. After the student won the court case he would periodically show up in my office again wanting to major and graduate in social work. No became a regular part of my vocabulary. I think the word no symbolizes the need to create a structure to ensure student and agency success in the practicum and to protect the public interest. Over the years I have had numerous experiences with both students and agencies that posed challenging situations for success in the field. All of my experiences have informed my practice as practicum director and influenced my frame of reference about what makes a practicum program great. Becoming a field education director is like using my own global positioning system (GPS) for the first time. I had to study the instructions and learn how to navigate this vast new world of the practicum.

The Student

I have had a variety of both positive and negative experiences with students for many years. I view my students as if they were clients, and it is part of my task to know their strengths and empower them for success in the practicum. My most negative experiences have been those when the only option left was to counsel students out of the program. Although those numbers are relatively few in comparison to a much larger number who successfully graduate, there is a lingering sorrow that those students' hopes and dreams could not be realized. Even as I write this, the images of those students flood my mind, and a sense of sadness

enfolds me. On a happier note, I have the privilege to say that many of my former students are now my colleagues and lead social service agencies in our community. When social work faculty and I attend community events, we all laugh because I am constantly pointing out that most of the practitioners in the room are my former students. In that context, I would like to share several student situations that have informed my practice over years.

In working with students I have tried many approaches to ensure a good fit in the student placement process. I believe the process is an essential foundation for student success in the field. Effective field placement strives for a process that matches students' interest, personalities, cognitive and interactive skills, learning styles, career goals, and other factors with agency settings and individual supervisors. Students are interested in knowing the tasks they will perform, roles and responsibilities, and supervisory styles (Kiser, 2012). For a number of years I would set up an initial placement orientation that consisted of practicum instructors presenting information about their agency to the students. With the number of agencies involved it generally lasted for three hours. I used this format because that was the program process prior to my arrival. With this format even I was falling asleep from boredom. The amount of information shared with the students in this context did not seem to inform their interests and desired choices for the application process. I was spending too much time helping students sort through the information. I decided this process needed to be more fun and informative at the same time. Having an inclination toward being creative, I visualized all the agency practicum instructors and students coming together for dinner and having the opportunity to visit with agencies at their respective tables.

On the designated night of the first event in this format, agency practicum instructors and students ate dinner together. After dinner the students visited different agencies every ten minutes for the next hour and a half. I spent most of my time helping students with questions about who to visit and worrying about the empty tables at the less popular agency sites. The noise volume was loud and it seemed chaotic. The beauty of having a GPS is that it is constantly recalculating our destination. I have

refined the process over time and used this format for the last seventeen years. It is fondly referred to as the Practicum Orientation Buffet. We meet in the student center ballroom. One side is set up as a social with a buffet meal. Senior practicum students, practicum instructors, and students applying to the practicum eat and mingle together. We then adjourn to the opposite side where students are assigned seven agencies to visit with one free choice based on their interest. It is quiet and organized, and everyone is happy. I have learned that success in the placement process is based on a practicum director's conceptualization of the process and that even small corrections matter when recalculating our destination. I have come to view the practicum as a partnership between the student, the agency, and the program. This partnership is based first and foremost on the relationship that exists between all the players. Secondly, it needs to be a collaborative process which elicits commitment and investment from all parties. Lastly, it is a learning process that empowers students and agencies to make the necessary connections that inform the rest of the placement process handled by the practicum director.

I recall a situation where a student placed in a school setting came to me two months into the practicum experience feeling lost because her practicum instructor was not providing quality supervision or opportunities for a valuable experience. She was a skilled student and ready to succeed at her practicum. I asked her why she had waited so long to talk with me. She confessed that she feared I might be disappointed in her, and she wanted to first try to work it out herself. We strategized together and decided that we would both meet with the supervisor. I had developed a positive relationship with the supervisor over the years and my student trusted that I had her best interest in mind. Initially, when I was challenged with trust issues I learned that putting my energies into forging a positive relationship with students and agency supervisors helps built trust.

A positive resolution and understanding was reached in this situation, which resulted in a successful practicum experience. In the field, viewing relationships as a collaborative partnership enhances the probability that the educational goals of the student will be achieved (Bogo & Vayda,

1998). I think the essence of problem-solving is based on well-established relationships that are collaborative and the utilization of assertive skills. I now teach assertive behavior to my students in the integrative seminar. I believe when it comes to challenges, assertive communication sooner is always better than later. Assertiveness is a useful skill for understanding and managing emotions that help students to identify issues that need to be addressed in the internship and express those needs to others for problem resolution (Kiser, 2012). I like to think of assertiveness as one of the power sources for using a GPS. When using a GPS to navigate through the field, one must have a power source in order to operate.

The Agency

Working with the community to make a difference has been exciting for me. I am a firm believer that students should be assets to the agency. It is our responsibility as a social work program to prepare our students for practice in the real world. I view the practicum as integral to social work education because it represents the culmination of undergraduate and graduate education. The field experience forms the basis for the transition from student to professional and is a critical component of student training. Thus, the role of the agency supervisor is pivotal to the students' professional development. The agency supervisor is an essential key to guiding students, like a GPS, to a positive experience as a helper, and enables students to gain a thorough understanding of social work practice. As practicum director I recognize there is a delicate balance in meeting the needs of both students and agency supervisors.

At this point, I would like to share a significant experience in the community with an agency supervisor. One year about two months into the practicum placement, the agency supervisor from a corrections agency called me to express concerns about a practicum student. Those concerns revolved around the student's professional demeanor. The student was inconsistent in her attendance, exhibited ineffective communication skills, and lacked follow-through on some assignments. My first question was, "Do you think these issues can be resolved?"

As the agency supervisor thought the issues could be addressed, I arranged a meeting with the student

to hear her version, and then met with both of them to develop an improvement plan. Together we developed the plan and for the next two months the student was successful in her performance. After two months I got another concerned phone call, and asked again, “Do you think these issues can be resolved?” The supervisor replied yes, and I met with both of them to discuss and revise the improvement plan. All was well for the next couple of months until I got a third call with the same issues. As I conversed with the agency supervisor about the situation I sensed his ambivalent feelings. At this point, he expressed frustration, and yet felt responsible to help the student succeed. I posed a new question to myself, “What is most important in this situation: to preserve the university’s relationship with the agency and maintain the integrity of the practicum, or to let the student continue this pattern of behavior?” I answered in favor of the agency and the university practicum program. I found that my GPS was continually recalculating my destination as the situation unfolded.

Through this experience, and many others, I have learned that a practicum director has to answer tough questions and deal with challenging issues. To do this effectively, I had to establish ownership of decisions to be made in the practicum and develop a structure of procedures and policies that informed my practice in that setting. Not only is it important to empower students, but it is vitally important that agencies have positive experiences with their students so these practicum sites can be maintained for future interns.

Field Seminar

An essential responsibility of a practicum director is to ensure integration of academic and practice learning during the field experience. In our program, we have always had a weekly field seminar, which is valuable for several reasons: (a) to influence student socialization and inculcate a sense of self as a professional, (b) to provide an opportunity for me to keep in touch with the students’ developmental experiences, (c) to offer an opportunity for peer learning, (d) to communicate support, (e) to promote the development of reflective practice, and (f) to make the connection regarding how academic learning influences practice and development in the field. I believe the

field seminar is the appropriate place for students to experience a sense of competence in their professional development during the internship. The seminar is like a GPS for students; it helps them to successfully navigate the road of professional development. Sweitzer and King (2009) identified five developmental stages that students experience in the field. These stages, which help us understand student concerns and the resolution of those concerns in their journey of learning, include: anticipation, disillusionment, confrontation, competence, and culmination.

Let me share a story that illustrates my ongoing commitment to provide a structured format for student socialization, professional development, and integration of learning. For a number of years I have been reading the literature that promotes the idea of blended learning in social work education; blended learning consists of on-line and in-person learning formats. After reviewing the literature and talking with other faculty, I decided to pilot test a blended approach in seminar.

Typically, seminar had always been held on a weekly basis at 7:30 a.m. I am a morning person with a high energy personality, so I have never minded this time, but students do mind. Student lives are filled with practicum, work, relationships, other classes, and many other activities. I discussed this new structure with the students and explained the class format would now consist of in-person meetings every other week mixed with on-line discussions. Because of the students’ frequently-stated dislike of early morning classes, I expected that this would be a relief for them so I was not fully prepared for their negative reactions. Apparently, the students felt abandoned, disillusioned, and disconnected within this new format. The disillusionment elicited unexpected emotions, frustration, confusion, and disappointment in the students (Sweitzer & King, 2009). It became apparent to me that students needed a sense of ongoing connection with and support from the faculty, especially because they spend more time in the field than on campus.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) suggest that effective teachers possess the capacity for connectedness with their students and choose methods that encourage students to become

involved in their learning. I learned that, regardless of my willingness to experiment with a new approach, I needed to stay connected with the students regardless of the format. Again, my GPS was recalculating my eventual destination. As practicum director, I think the field seminar is essential for “best practice” in the signature pedagogy of social work education. It provides a forum for students to stay connected and receive guidance to overcome obstacles associated with professional development in the context of the social work program.

The Essence of Leadership

Now that I have shared some stories and ideas, I would like to revisit the word orchestrate and its meaning. When a practicum director orchestrates the overall learning experience of the student and acts as a facilitator between the social work program, student, and field work agency, it is a complex process with varied commitments to those involved. The student seeks a valuable and positive experience. The agency expects interns who are well-prepared and ready to engage in social work activities. The social work program expects both student and agency to meet the goals and objectives of the program. Bogo and Vayda (1998) suggest that all of these players come from different frames of reference. The social work program and agency have different purposes, values, and processes. The social work program is focused on education and knowledge building while the agency is focused on service. The student also has a personal sense of purpose, value, and process that is vested in their career choice.

As practicum director I have learned I am responsible to negotiate a process that meets the needs of the student, the agency, and the social work program. In all of my knowing I can tell you that the most important quality for negotiating these needs rests in the context of the relationship with students and agencies. Relationship is the key component for ongoing development, maintenance, and resolution of challenging issues in the practicum. Relationship is another key source of power for a GPS. The other key factors are ongoing commitment toward developing effective structure, procedures, and operating policies, as well as evaluation of the practicum program. The field education director is an essential leader in social

work education that represents an essential link to the community, and understands the needs of students and the social work curriculum (Lyter, 2012). As practicum director, my vision and understanding of what it takes to lead the field is crucial for success.

My World

I end my story back where I began, with T. S. Eliot: “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” What is it that I have come to know? The practicum is a pedagogical process that empowers the professional development of students in part through linkage to the community where the reality of social work practice exists. It is a process of relationships, connections, partnerships, collaborations, and problem-solving complex challenges. The practicum is the essence of teaching students what it means to be to be a professional social worker. While many faculty continue to struggle with the value of field and liaison roles in social work education, I embrace them and understand what they can provide. I consider myself a scholar of field education who knows the value of leadership, building trust, establishing positive relationships, making connections, and resolving problems.

What is it that I have come to be? My life as practicum director has allowed me to make a positive impact as a social work professional and educator. I have had an opportunity to influence the field of social work through mentoring and teaching students who become a part of us. It has been my life, my career, and my calling.

What is it that I hope for in the future? I hope the signature pedagogy of field education moves from a belief to a substantial reality. That we develop more pedagogical standards that actually define leadership in the field and the important functions embedded in the process. That in our doctoral programs we would actually train future faculty to become field practicum directors – now that is a novel idea. I have added many maps to my GPS over the years to calculate my destination, and even more exciting is the fact that I have so many more maps to add!

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Ready or Not, Here We Come: Field Education and Developing a Professional Identity

Desiree Stepteau-Watson

This paper explores my experiences conducting a field seminar for bachelor of social work (BSW) students. I discuss the transformational process of moving from student to professional and my observations during this fourteen-week course. From my early concerns about their readiness to enter their field placement to their acquisition of a professional identity, the students demonstrate that professional identity development is a process that can have a rocky start, but result in a positive outcome.

Beginning

Eighty students sat in the medium-size auditorium, anxiously awaiting the beginning of the initial field seminar. In two days they would begin their social work field experience where they would be expected to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, values, and demeanor of professional social workers. Yet, despite their excitement, which was contagious, I felt a small degree of unease. Listening to their chatter and observing their interactions and dress, I have to admit I was less than certain that these undergraduate students were ready to handle the responsibilities that would soon be thrust upon them.

There they sat, dressed in attire that was typical of students on most college campuses: T-shirts and baggy shorts. Both men and women alike wore some variation of the same uniform: oversized shirts, khaki shorts, and flip-flops. Some looked as though they had just rolled out of bed, others were more pulled together, but none were dressed professionally. It is important to note that instructions regarding the field seminar given to students prior to its start did not include a dress code; however, it was disconcerting to see how little importance seemed to be attached to their attire and the image that was being projected.

Although they had not officially reported to their internship site, it still seemed somewhat incongruous that they were not dressed more

professionally. As the morning progressed and we began to discuss the expectations of internship, it wasn't only their attire that was cause for concern; their demeanor and the nature of their comments and questions raised my eyebrows as well. With few exceptions, the students did not seem serious. In fact, their behavior was more reminiscent of young adolescents than pre-professionals. I was not alone; the other faculty members, who along with me were conducting the field seminar, were equally put off by what we were witnessing.

Questions and comments were about process more than anything. "How many pages should written assignments be?" "How will grades be assigned?" Few had questions or comments regarding the field experience itself. Even when the orientation focused on more substantive content, such as the application of theory to practice, the students seemed more focused on what was required of them.

Other behavior was also cause for concern. Some were using their cell phones to send and receive text messages, and others were also engaged with their mobile devices—holding on to them or just staring off into them. Even when we asked that they put them away, they continued to surreptitiously use their cell phones. We faculty members were accustomed to this kind of behavior in the classroom, and have had spirited discussions about classroom management amongst ourselves; but here in field seminar, which held such importance for their future as professionals, including their ability

to perform competently and reach their overall goal of obtaining a professional degree, their behavior seemed especially disingenuous. Some were distracted, not listening to what was being communicated. Others were engaged in conversations with their neighbors. We had broken the group into smaller, (what we thought would be) more manageable, groups; yet, their behavior did not improve much. The small discomfort that I felt early on grew to a full-blown panic by mid-morning. I had expected to observe hopeful anticipation about the experience that they were about to embark upon. I thought I would see nervous anxiety; after all, they were moving into unknown territory. They had no idea what the experience would be like, what kind of relationships they would develop, or how they would measure up (Shulman, 2005). It would seem that on some level trepidation would be apparent. In fact, it has been argued that learning can be enhanced by small levels of nervous anticipation (Gelman & Baum, 2010).

Their having progressed to the point that they were entering field was evidence that these students had successfully mastered the curriculum. Wasn't it? Or, had they simply mastered test taking and paper writing, with no internalization of what it really means to be a professional and a social worker? The internship is generally considered the capstone aspect of the social work educational experience (Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). It is during internship that students are expected to demonstrate the persona of a practicing professional (Loseke & Cahill, 1986).

Understanding fully that developing a professional identity is a process that occurs over time, I have always felt that my responsibility as a faculty member in a department of social work is to teach theoretical concepts, social work values, and ethics, while imparting the skills necessary for competent practice. I also hope that the learning environment I am responsible for creating includes opportunities for socialization into a new role identity, and that the educational experiences are also transitional in nature. I assume that the role-plays, case studies, and application papers that are so integral to BSW education will facilitate movement from student to professional; from chrysalis to butterfly. Therefore, I have also assumed that by the time students are entering internship, the transition would be nearly

complete. Yet, to my dismay, these students seemed to be holding on to their student identity for dear life.

Quite frankly, I saw little evidence that these students were prepared to perform in a professional capacity. My disappointment stemmed from my fear that as a social work educator, I had failed to provide adequate preparation for competent social work practice. Social work education provides students with a theoretical foundation on which to base professional practice, and also involves acculturation to the profession by studying its history, learning its values base and philosophy, and observing professors and other practicing professionals (Knight, 2001). Indeed, the Council on Social Work Education's *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS) standard 2.1.2 states that an expected educational outcome is that students will "identify as professional social workers and conduct themselves accordingly" (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008, p. 3). Implicit in the EPAS is that identification as a professional social worker is an expected outcome after having undergone the process of learning the history of the profession, adapting the values, and understanding its mission.

As a result of faculty observations, we modified some of the agenda for that first seminar and included discussion on the professional self. In addition to outlining expectations of professional practice, we discussed how competence is demonstrated. At the end of the day we sent them off to begin their work, and (hopefully) develop a professional identity. Field visits would not begin until a few weeks into their internships, and the next seminar was one month away. Would our next contact with the students yield different outcomes? We would see.

Becoming

One month later, the students returned as scheduled to their second seminar. Some field visits had occurred in the meantime. We learned the students were making good progress. Not one problem was reported. Some were making better progress than others toward developing competency in areas stipulated by the EPAS, but each evaluation that was conducted returned a positive result. There was a range of internships, including positions with the

department of children services, the department of public health, hospice, community medical centers, substance abuse centers, and juvenile residential facilities. The students, according to the field instructors, were eager to learn and demonstrate the ability to apply what they learned in the classroom to actual practice. Despite the encouraging reports, I still approached the second field seminar with both expectation and dread. Would they appear this time as disinterested as before? Did they have the capacity to move beyond process into more substantive areas? I eagerly anticipated getting my questions answered.

One by one they began to arrive, not in the boisterous manner that marked the initial seminar meeting. No, on the whole they seemed more quiet and reflective. There was none of the loud chatter of before, but more restrained conversations were evident as they compared experiences. This seminar required formal presentations about their placement. They were to have learned organizational structure, mission, goals, and objectives, and then they were to present cogent description of what they had learned. The students met the requirements of the assignment but some were better prepared than others. Additionally, some were clearly more invested in their agencies. Still, overall the presentations were good. Their questions and comments reflected critical thought and analysis. I asked the students if they themselves were aware of any differences in their level of professionalism. According to many, there had been a definite change that they attributed to the accountability that was an inherent part of the field. Social workers are accountable to their agencies, supervisors, and clients (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2008). The students were emphatic that the more that was expected of them, the more they were required to stretch to meet the expectations.

As I said, change was more evident in some than in others. However, on the whole, these students were engaged and excited to discuss their experiences. In one month they had already experienced so much. They talked about what it was like to navigate the workplace, dealing with different personalities and work styles. They discussed the work in which they were engaged with various types of clients (Maidment, 2003). They reported what it was like to physically travel to unfamiliar locations. These were exactly the kinds of experiences I expected

would take place during the internship experience. They were professionals in the making.

Transformation

At last the day arrived for the final field seminar. All of the field visits had been completed. After fourteen weeks of working in a professional capacity, the students returned to examine the experience and complete the final requirements. During this session, the students would present projects that they conceived and implemented during their placements. In conjunction with their field instructors, the students were to develop an intervention that served large groups of clients and met a community or organizational need. What a difference a few months had made. They had been instructed to dress as they would if they were conducting a professional presentation. There were also clearly defined objectives included in the project. While each student cleared the hurdle of meeting the minimum requirements for the assignment, there were some who soared above the rest. For example, one group of students conducted a thorough statewide examination of social work licensure passage rates, to try to predict the workforce capacity in the state. This was an excellent presentation. The students were enthusiastic, committed, and proud of what they had accomplished. One student stated, "This was the most difficult task I've had to do in school, but I learned so much, and I understand what you all have been teaching us about preparation for practice." Compared to other presentations, such as one where some students described compiling a resource manual, there was a clear distinction between the students who had not stretched themselves and were only fulfilling the minimum requirements to complete the class, and those who were motivated by an internal drive to engage in meaningful work.

These were the students who demonstrated the most preparedness for professional practice. Their projects were conceptually strong, reflecting a link between various theories and practice. Their presentations also conveyed significant involvement in the projects. The superior presentations were creative and showed they had taken a concept and run with it. When these students delivered their presentations, there was a noticeable difference in the room. Discussion was sparked, the students were interested in each presentation, and this was as

near as one could get to a professional discussion among peers.

Although some students excelled more than others, during the final seminar none of the indifference and immaturity was displayed that had so concerned me at the first seminar session. They had transformed themselves and seemed ready to enter professional practice. The excitement and hopeful anticipation that were lacking during the initial seminar meeting were now in full display during our final meeting. Many could clearly articulate how their field experience had helped them develop into their professional selves (Loseke and Cahill, 1986). In her reflections, one student commented, "Over the past few months, everything that was taught in the classroom became clear; all of the dots were finally connected."

Beginning Again

At the time these students were being launched into the world of professional social work practice, I was prepping for courses with students who were entering the social work program. My summer experience informed my preparations in ways that I never anticipated. I made a conscious decision to brief students on the internship experience starting very early in their program. I decided it was not only necessary to ensure that students have ample opportunity to apply theory to practice, I must convey the link between theory, internship, and professional practice. I learned that I must incorporate expectations for internship into the classroom experience. I learned that I learned as much as these students.

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From Direct Service to Director of Field Education

Diane Michaelsen

What are the pitfalls and promises of someone moving from direct service as a clinician and then clinical supervisor to the world of academia? They are multiple and varied.

I graduated in 1991 with my Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. At that time, I was working in a traditional 28-day chemical dependency program as a primary counselor. My supervisors and peers planned a little party for me after I graduated; they had all been in school with me, more or less: picking up my slack when I had to leave early for a two o'clock class, handing out the questionnaires when it was time to do the research for my thesis, and tolerating my over-the-top enthusiasm when an intervention echoed something I had learned in class.

Treating individuals with addiction had been my bread and butter, my passion, and my *raison d'être*. I found too that I had a knack for being the one who led the psychosocial education groups; I had no fear as I stood in front of the blackboard and talked to the residents about the difference between assertiveness and aggression, the impact of their addiction on their families, and how to write out Step I so they could recognize their disease and self-diagnose. I learned to prepare for the didactic work; Lord knows I did not want an addict to punch a hole in my wisdom in front of his peers! I learned to attend to what the residents were saying, and got better at reading the emotional angst under their skin and behind their faces. In the therapy group, I became more skilled at sitting with silence, being with people when they cried, and knowing when it would be appropriate to put my hand on another person's. I learned how to confront nonsense and

actual bullshit with calm tact and humor, inviting other group members to take on the challenge, because as we know, there is power in a group.

I was working in a rehabilitation hospital, and there were multiple opportunities to integrate substance abuse education into the various therapies that were developed for persons with new head injuries or who were new to a wheelchair as a result of paraplegia. I worked with psychologists, nurses, aides, and doctors, imploring them to share my vision of having Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) slogans on every wall, workbooks full of word-find puzzles that had prevention or self-esteem as their theme, and meetings with family members to whom the patients would return home. I rewrote our residents' workbook, so that individuals with an acquired brain injury could achieve the same end result without getting buried in the verbiage of the "regular" workbook. I felt it a mission to educate as many people as possible, including staff, so as to decrease the ever-present stigma the residents dealt with all day long.

I volunteered to be the person who would do the special evaluations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF was piloting a program that would identify and intervene with substance abusing parents by paying for an evaluation and a treatment recommendation, as well as the requisite chain-of-custody urine toxicology screen. I found that doing these kinds of evaluations over and over

enhanced my skills at assessment, creating a clinical formulation, and writing them up. Attending meetings with DCF and other providers put me on a path to networking with other professionals in the field of addiction treatment in the state.

I remained employed at the rehab hospital for ten years. I attained positions as senior counselor and finally as program director. I worked with marketing to create a shiny brochure touting our work: individualized treatment planning, family work, liaison to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), capacity to do ambulatory detoxification for any substance abuse (I had no idea at the time how far ahead of the curve the program was relative to the willingness to do detox on an ambulatory basis), nutritional assessments, interviews with an employment specialist, and ability to adapt treatment content for individuals with disabilities of all kinds. I participated in the reorganization of our program so that it would more closely align with the expectations of commercial insurance payers.

And then I heard from the chair of the social work department from the school that had graduated me some four or five years earlier. Would I like to teach part time, he wondered, with him? I thought about it for all of ten seconds before I answered in the affirmative. I would SO like to teach! He gave me a section of Social Work 200 – the introduction to social work class for freshmen at this state university. I took a desk copy of the text and pored over it, making meticulous notes for myself, from which I would lecture. I was full of my bad self. “That’s right, I am going to be a professor, how do you like me NOW?”

Teaching freshmen is a bit like herding cats, I found. How do I keep the attention of twenty or twenty-five 17-, 18- or 19-year-olds, who are finally out from under their mothers’ wing, experimenting with their freedom and with sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll?? It was, after all, an 8 a.m. class. On Monday mornings.

I understood intuitively, I think, that I needed to treat them the way I treated my addicts—I know my addicts were smart, creative, resilient folks who were capable of manipulating me like it was their job. So, too, are adolescents who come to class late, don’t do their homework, fail to complete their

papers on time, and get poor grades on their midterms. I levied consequences for these transgressions without judgment: “Hey, kid, no hard feelings, but you did not do x, y, or z, so your grade stands.”

I discovered I could be really funny in front of a group of students. I was a good mimic, talked like a valley girl or street boy, talked back to the smart asses. I would take opportunities to point out the discrepancies between what I was teaching them (the ideal) and what was really happening in the world (the real). I coaxed them along and let them ask questions that were off topic. I had become the mistress of the reframe in my day job as addictions counselor, and used that skill now, saying to the students, “Ah, you are so close, who can help him with the idea?” I praised approximate incremental successes toward the students’ ability to articulate concepts.

I received positive evaluations from the students. The chair gave me a different class to teach: group work, with juniors and seniors instead of the freshmen. He reminded me when we would meet that it was my role to act as gatekeeper—for the school and for the profession. I took that charge very seriously. When I doubted the capacity of one of my students, I would talk to her or his advisor, and get a sense of how the student was doing overall. There were times when I participated in the conversation that led to a student changing his or her major, or even to drop out of the program. Never an easy conversation, it was also never a surprise to the student.

I left direct service with addicts, and went to a new company. This company was a home-grown affiliation of behavioral health providers who anticipated managed care coming to the public sector, and they wanted to have a company in state that knew how they ran their business, rather than a commercial company based somewhere in the Midwest, who didn’t know that we still had residential programs for addiction, a large population of methadone maintained folks, and freestanding detox facilities. I started as a utilization reviewer, doing managed care for the public sector.

My training at the rehab hospital held me in good

stead. I understood criteria for patient placement, and was assertive and direct but collegial and collaborative with callers from the hospital, the detoxes, and the day treatment settings. I would engage the caller in a dialogue, asking how she or he was going to implement that strategy, and inquire, "Have you thought of this or that?" I coached them, encouraging them to use the language of managed care when they talked to us, so we could authorize what they were asking for.

It wasn't long before I was also coaching other new hires about what to ask, and what to expect from the callers. Soon I was doing brief in-services for us on specific topics—what does alcohol withdrawal look like and how do we know if someone needs an inpatient setting for detox? How do we respond to the fifth or sixth or twentieth request for another episode of treatment at the same level of care? I saw my mission as engaging this network of providers, going out to visit them on site, and bringing articles about strengths-based treatment, samples of treatment plans, and information that could connect one house with another. I was trying to dismantle the silo effect so common for so long in addictions treatment. I started to interface with our stakeholders from the state, as we were the administrators of the contract that paid for the behavioral health services of the poor and the uninsured: the folks formerly known as welfare recipients. I talked with my bosses and the state about creating special programs for high utilizers of services, for the opioid-addicted folks, for folks with co-occurring disorders. I learned how to collect and analyze data. I learned how to ask the data wonks for information (after all, they spoke a very different language than I did).

I continued teaching as an adjunct. I communicated by phone and then via email; I avoided coming to campus for anything other than those two classes. I taught a Saturday morning class if none of the full-time faculty wanted to do so. I was finally offered the field seminar that went with the MSW students' first-year field placement. There was little structure, other than what I wanted to make of it! But there were broad expectations: the student should know how to write a solid biopsychosocial assessment at the end of that academic year. Such autonomy! I nurtured my seminar groups and brought them coffee on Saturday mornings; we took turns

bringing donuts or bagels. We sat in a circle. I made them say "I" whenever they spoke, harkening back to the days of direct service with my addicts. "Own your thoughts and feelings," I would tell them, "stop saying you and they." I played referee between feuding students, momma bear to weeping women who just did not know how they were going to manage the whole year with another 18 hours out of the house, and patient Yoda to those students who were so sure they already knew everything.

One day in March of this year, one of my seminar students, who worked part-time in the field education office, told me that the man who had been in that position for years was going to retire.

"Oh my goodness," I thought to myself, "I must have that job." I wanted that job!! I had no idea what it takes to become a new hire at a state university inside the school of health and human services. I didn't know that this man's resignation had pitted the union against the social work department—that there was an argument that making the job administrative (my translation: no need for a doctorate) vs. faculty (my translation: holy crap, I may have to go for a doctorate) might result in the loss of a faculty line. In the interim, the chair fixed it; he created, with the university's blessing, an emergency appointment as Interim Director of Field Education and MSW Admissions that would be nine credits for each of two semesters for field work, three credits one semester for teaching, and three credits for the second semester to do the work of shepherding the MSW admissions process. I met with the chair, as well as the professor who was going to retire. They had put me to a vote with the faculty, and I was unanimously elected to the temporary position. I was overjoyed! The professor said to me, "I think it's important for you to know why the faculty voted for you," and as I tried to imagine who knew me well enough to say anything at all about me, he continued: "They see you as unafraid to speak your mind, as conscientious, and as committed to the profession." I was floored at such high praise from this faculty that I continued to hold in high esteem.

The dean let me know fairly early on that this emergency appointment would likely last all of the two years it could. I set about taking stock of all that I had learned that brought me to this place in

my life. What skills was I bringing to this position? I did love teaching, providing history and context to a change in policy on the job, and using the job to illustrate a theory or concept when in the classroom.

What skills would translate? In my previous day jobs, if I needed something for which I did not yet have the answer, I would ask questions of the resident experts. I found that folks who really knew their stuff enjoyed talking about it, and I was a very willing audience. I found that I was able to take a lot of information and distill it to bullet points that could then be distributed as appropriate, given the topic and the audience.

I found that the information in the records of existing field placements was outdated. I revised forms (application for field agency, application for field supervisor), and sent them out with a cover letter to 125 established agencies, explaining our desire to update our information. Through this process, I found out which agencies had folded, which had merged, who had name changes, and who had new supervisors. I started making calls, then making visits, to some of the agencies I had worked with before, and asked if they would like to take BSW or MSW students on as interns. I got some very excited, very immediate responses in the affirmative, adding five, then eight, then 10 new agencies to the pool. Each agency pointed me to another. Networking was a skill I could capitalize on.

I was going to be the big sponge that was thirsty to soak it all up! I learned about acronyms brand new to me, asked for a table of organization, and then realized it would be ridiculously big for this state university, so settled on learning the formal and informal relationships in the social work department and in the school of health and human services. I learned about the bureaucracy here in the state system: the layers of documents and the length of time from asking for something to actually getting it, similar to how the state agencies I previously interfaced with operated.

I found that qualities I had developed over the years have served me well in this position: not being afraid of confrontation (be it gentle or a toe-to-toe disagreement), having a good sense of humor, being deferential to authority (both of my parents were in

the military), and respecting the chain of command.

I have also learned that people here in the department trust me to do a good job. I was asked in my second week to contribute to the writing of the self-study that will result in the reaccreditation of the program by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). I found that it's a lot like responding to a Request for Proposal (RFP)! I was asked to take over teaching the Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) class, and I have. I was asked to moderate a disagreement between a professor and the coordinator of the BSW program, and subsequently to write a memo for distribution about the student's role as a mandated reporter in the field, and I did.

The differences between my role as clinical director of a large agency and the role of director of field education were crystallized for me the first time I had to deal with a student who was not doing well in her field placement, some four months into the job. I had followed and then inserted myself into the emails between the seminar instructor and the field instructor, as they talked to each other about the student. Both seemed reluctant to confront the student, so I reminded them that they needed to do that—they needed to meet with her and describe what was not working and come up with a plan with her that would solve the problems.

In spite of their efforts, the student was just not able to live up to any expectations. As the end of the semester came, and it was clear that on top of the other problems the student had not completed her requisite hours in the field, I called for a meeting. When I was the clinical director, it was my job to prepare a written summary of the issues when having a meeting like the one I was preparing for. When I was the clinical director, there was no democracy; I decided what we were going to do, based on the best information we had, and if there was discussion, it was about how to operationalize the decision I had made.

So, I did what I knew how to do. I wrote the summary, made the decision about what we should do with the student, and told the seminar instructor, the field instructor, and the student's advisor how we were going to deliver the message. The advisor instantly bristled. I was baffled. What was the

problem?

The advisor and I debriefed the next morning. I had had time to think about the sequence of events. I told him I had been instantly furious with him for not supporting me and that I had also come to understand that I was not responsible for orchestrating the outcome of that meeting. I no longer supervise 35 licensed clinical professionals who are making decisions all day long about what levels of care to approve; I no longer have to argue my points with psychiatrists who fear the para-suicidal patients, and I am NOT the administrator on call. My word is no longer the rule of law. I am working WITH people, FOR students. Everyone has a say. Committees make decisions. Whoa. The pace is very different in academia. Lots of things are very different in academia. This was my defining moment.

As the leaves turn their glorious fall colors and start to drop from drowsy trees, I sit in my office, which has a window that opens to the outside, and listen to the chatter of students on their way to classes. I am only now starting to get what it means to be the director of field education. Although I am confident it is a job I can do well, clearly the culture in academia is one I need to become more comfortable and familiar with. I must share my thoughts and decision making; I do not work in isolation, although I have a lot of autonomy. I have often been the lone social worker in my work, so to be surrounded by social workers who love the profession the way I do is a gift. I am grateful every day that the chair and the departing professor saw possibility in me, and that they were willing to take a chance on me.

Life is good!

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Reflections of a Field Director: An Opportunity to Look into the Past and See the Future

Elizabeth Harbeck Voshel

The following narrative describes how the author's curiosity led her to appreciate the role and impact that opportunity plays in life. She describes her journey in social work and how the transformative power of opportunity set her free from previous constraints. She discusses how opportunity widely influenced her personal and professional choices and how she came to realize that opportunity does indeed impact the student experience.

*"To find out what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness."
- John Dewey*

I most likely found my roots as a social worker growing up as the oldest of 5 siblings, and the only girl, in a large family. My mother was a 1950s "stay-at-home mom" and very active in our small town, serving on many boards and contributing on multiple levels across our small provincial community. My father worked in business and later the banking industry and was a philanthropist at heart. We enjoyed the support of my paternal grandparents on a regular basis – as they were very generous in their care of my family – as well as that of my aunt and uncle and cousins who lived in the same town for many years. We also looked forward to the annual visits from our maternal grandparents who lived in another state and the raucous holidays spent with cousins galore.

My family experiences and expectations taught me the importance of developing a solid work ethic, as we were all expected to pitch in at home and to establish our own source of income at an early age, even if it was only spending money. As the oldest, I naturally became responsible for helping with my four younger siblings by tending to them, entertaining them, and – as they got older – ensuring that their youthful enthusiasm didn't transgress the "getting in trouble" boundaries. For the most part, we all got along quite well into our teen-age years and continue to enjoy very close relationships today,

in spite of the distance that separates us. This has always been the case but particularly since our parents passed on.

My curiosity about how others lived, and my unquenchable thirst for knowledge about how and why things worked or didn't work in the "interpersonal realm," were natural inclinations given my upbringing and life experiences. Looking back with wisdom and maturity, I can easily conclude now that my life was one of extreme privilege in many regards, but most importantly with regard to the concept of opportunity. Our family's basic needs were always met; we attended good schools and colleges, which was considered an "automatic step" after high school. To better envision my environment: I vaguely remember one or two African American families living in our town with whom we socialized during school hours or at church-related activities. I don't remember seeing these families outside of those two venues and they were not in my parents' circle of friends.

I didn't truly appreciate or understand this concept called opportunity until I accompanied a local youth group from my friend's church to Chicago, where we stayed at the YMCA and spent the weekend learning about the inner city. Needless to say, I came home with my eyes wide open after that experience. I became aware of all kinds of disparities whether they were financial, racial, or otherwise. I became insistent in focusing conversations at the dinner table on how the world

had suddenly become unequal in my eyes, relentlessly asking why everyone isn't responsible to ensure that all people, a.k.a. human beings, have enough to eat and a place to lay their heads at night.

Opportunity continued to raise its head more and more as I traipsed off to my small liberal arts college as a person intent on fixing the world. During my time in college, the Vietnam War was raging, and the opportunity to serve was relegated to those who were in the lower socioeconomic brackets, those who didn't get a draft deferral due to college attendance, or those who didn't become conscientious objectors. This would have been what Morris (2006, p. 22) called a "defining characteristic of opportunity" in an undesirable situation; this proved true as there were not a lot of veterans in the ranks of college attendees during the time.

Politically, I moved farther and farther to the left as a result of this war and my studies, where I learned about the roots of social work in sociology courses. I became fascinated with people's individual life circumstances and the opportunities they had or had not been afforded. I learned more and more about life's challenges and the barriers people faced in our society. By participating in two full field placements in my junior and senior years and by volunteering for the local Junior League as a babysitter for families in distress due to job loss and other factors, I became acutely aware of the inequities all around me.

I remember one such occasion when I was caring for a new baby and a toddler while their mother was assisted in attending medical appointments by a Junior League woman. I thought I would be helpful and clean the kitchen, do the dishes, etc. About half way into this venture, the kitchen sink leaked all over the floor because the pipes were not hooked up and the kitchen sink was set up to drain into a bucket that had overflowed due to my lack of attentiveness. From this experience, I learned that when minimal attempts to "help" are extended, they usually only alleviate the symptoms of a sometimes larger problem, but this may be nevertheless gratifying for the helper. In this case, what I learned as a young college student, was that what I saw on the surface in this home didn't fit with the family's reality, and that possibly helping them access resources to fix their pipes was more likely a lost

opportunity which could have resulted in a more meaningful outcome. It seems that most of us in the beginning stages of our careers focus on what Morris (2006, p. 23) perceived as "missed opportunities." Upon further exploration, it became clear to me that people in distress were not only unable to perceive an opportunity but that they were indeed actually deprived of equal access to opportunities that others may take for granted. In this great country of ours, it seems elementary and relatively simple that we should all agree and adhere to several basic principles for all our citizens, including having opportunities to enough food, shelter, medical care, and education, as well as a basic means to earn a living and contribute. The debate can ensue about how to meet these goals but it seems that these should be the minimum basic standards for all.

I graduated, got married right out of college to my high school sweetheart (we have been married for 40 years), and relocated to a larger city. My partner/husband had been drafted right after school but had been very fortunate, due to his college degree, to be selected for the medical corps. He spent his two years in a psychiatric hospital in Germany working to get veterans with serious mental health difficulties back to care in the states. We had the traditional 1950s-style wedding, thanks to my parents who provided us this opportunity, and we drove to Washington, DC for our honeymoon, thanks to the loan of my father-in-law's car.

My husband was fortunate enough to have had an opportunity to interview and subsequently land a job in the Veterans Administration (VA) system; this was probably in great part due to his military experience, followed by serendipity stepping in when he found himself on several occasions working with those same vets whom he had helped to "air-vac" home from Germany. At my urging, he returned to school to earn his master of social work (MSW) degree, becoming a first-generation college student pursuing a graduate degree. His work turned into a life-long career of 40 years.

However, my career began with a job in a restaurant because, I soon learned, "Who hires someone with a sociology degree?" During my job search, I was told on many occasions that I was either "over-qualified" or "under-qualified," depending on the

position. All I wanted was an opportunity to show what I was capable of contributing.

In my stint as the day manager in a local restaurant owned by a Chinese family, experience taught me that both hard work and humility play a role in the success of any employee. My boss was a difficult man to work for, but was in many ways a fun loving person who handsomely rewarded any employee who attended his staff meetings, which were usually held late in the evening. These meetings actually turned into celebrations where he cooked for all of us. Despite that generosity, I soon decided I couldn't cope with the hours in this job, and I was also getting pressure from my parents to apply my talents in a position that was closer to my field of interest and college preparation.

I subsequently landed a job as a head teacher, and later worked my way into the executive director position of a very large daycare corporation. The center's goal was to provide care for children so their parents had time to hone their job skills and find employment, without neglecting their children to do so. Looking back, I realize that at the tender age of 23, I really didn't know much despite having been in the role of director and in charge of a center that hosted about 75 children daily, with a \$250,000 budget funded by the state's welfare agency. This job did allow me many opportunities, including the ability to save up to go to graduate school. I decided to pursue my MSW. The decision to study social work seemed like a good fit given the complex situations that I was facing on a daily basis with the children and their families. Deciding to focus on the clinical versus the management curriculum track in graduate school was a tough decision for me, but I really wanted to understand why individuals and families were struggling, and I wanted to learn how to positively intervene. At the time, I remember being convinced that opportunity was in this equation somewhere. John Dewey refers to securing opportunity in the opening quote. I have often wondered about how one secures opportunity and truthfully thought that one had to be offered opportunities. I found out at a young age that it is a little of both.

Graduate school provided me ample opportunities to improve my knowledge, skills and abilities. I had great professors, several of whom became mentors,

and great field placements. As the doors (opportunities?) kept opening for me, I became increasingly committed to figuring out how to not only assist the families with whom I worked, but also to address the inequities in the systems in which we all are a part.

Most likely as a result of my field placement experience, I ended up working for the VA, and was thrilled to finally be making good money. I was able to reflect with pride on my steps toward success at this point in my life, and was slowly starting to be convinced that it was my responsibility to help create opportunities for others. I spent 22 years in the VA system (enough for one soul) and really enjoyed my work there. I soon learned that the system was indeed my client and that those veterans with whom I had the privilege to work were by virtue of their circumstances, the by-products of a very large bureaucracy designed to meet their needs. I spent most of my days creating opportunities for my vets and my team, and focused on receiving promotions so I could increase my earning power. I was rewarded many times over for my efforts, and am proud of the national award my intensive outpatient program won from the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Because my time in the VA system as a student had opened doors (opportunities?) for me, I created an intern coordinator role for social work service, whereby I made student assessments and facilitated placements for MSW students placed at the VA. I was persuaded that the VA was an excellent placement choice and that serving those who had born the battle was a way for future students to give back. Working with students over the years as a field instructor, as well as the intern coordinator, taught me how critical it is to prepare students, not only intellectually but pragmatically, through experiences that would enable them to effectively handle situations and cases that were becoming more and more complex and arduous.

During my time as a field instructor and intern coordinator, I had several very challenging experiences with graduate students. Now, you have to realize that I am talking about experiences that happened in the early 1980s when the federal laws regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act were much less stringent. Also, VA social work service

hosted students from three different universities. So I was dealing with various field curriculums as well as a multitude of diverse expectations. On one such occasion, I was assigned to work with a student who had a major psychotic break and who had to be removed from placement. Fortunately, I knew what I was dealing with, because I was working in a psychiatric hospital! On another occasion, I found out three months after a student had started placement that he had spent time in prison for manslaughter. On several other occasions, I had to manage students who were struggling with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse issues, and were at times unable to perform due in part to their medication regimens. This was challenging for me as the assigned social work field instructor, and was potentially unsafe for the veterans I was charged with serving. It also proved to be traumatic in some cases for the students as well.

It seems that my neat and tidy little world, with my preconceived notions of who could or should be in the helping role, and who should be the recipient of help, was being tossed about on a grand scale. This prompted me to seek closer ties with one of our placing universities. I served on the field advisory committee for one school for a number of years. My goal was to establish a closer relationship with my academic colleagues, so that I could better understand how and why people got into the field of social work and also learn about the kinds of admissions screening tools that were being used by the schools of social work. My experiences had taught me that I needed to figure out a way to protect the vulnerable public and – as it turns out – the vulnerable student. I was constantly challenged with trying to understand how some of these young people were not only attracted to the field of social work, but also how they seemed to end up placed with me in a large mental health system.

Throughout this time, I was also very active in our local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). I served on the local programming committee, which focused on everything from clinical presentations to community activism related to local concerns or elections. I soon gravitated toward another NASW group that was charged with overseeing ethics violations among their social work members. This work fascinated me. I hoped to build a connection

between my concerns about students who had issues in field placement and the universities with which I was working at the time.

It was during an annual NASW conference that I met someone who I consider one of my greatest mentors to this day. She was the director of a school of social work, so in my mind she could address the trepidations I had experienced regarding student performance issues. We would talk for hours about academia and the role of field instruction. This led me to conclude that there was one degree or more of separation between how each of us accessed opportunities and how we put these opportunities into play. Incredibly enough, the position of field director became open, and she recruited me, as she once said, “to the other side.”

This incredible opportunity had felt like it landed in my lap, but it nearly cost me my marriage, as I drove my husband crazy by crunching numbers to determine if we could financially take such a steep step backwards. In the end, it was a good decision. I have been wondering ever since how I got so lucky.

Looking back, I see that I made many contributions in my first academic position. These included bringing aboard new technology, updating the field curriculum, and forging connections with the local field community. As I always told my friends, what better job could someone have than to drive all over town visiting your professional friends and getting paid for it at the same time? I had also given up a longish commute, which improved my day overall. By reinvigorating the field advisory committee and inviting some of my most trusted professional colleagues to join, I hoped to improve the overall field program and identify opportunities that would make a difference in students’ field experiences.

As I got older, I began to realize that life isn’t always about what you make it. Sometimes it is about where you are when opportunities present themselves. It seems that it isn’t about what you know, but who you know as well. Oddly enough, my husband was a field instructor at the VA when a field liaison from a university in another town was doing a routine field site visit with her student. During the visit, she mentioned that the field director position was open at her university, and

encouraged him to invite me to apply. When presented with this suggestion, candidly, I was floored. I wondered how I would ever compete for this position. I was concerned about the ramifications it would have on my family. We had lived in the same house for the last 18 years (it was almost paid off), and I was reminded that I had already taken a significant cut in pay. Now what was I potentially getting us into? Was this another opportunity or a pie-in-the-sky notion? When reflecting on this, I wondered how on earth this girl from a small provincial town would ever fit into a large urban setting let alone learn how to drive the freeways with all those crazed drivers. Again, it was the gentle but persistent prodding of my partner who slowly, but surely, nudged me to once again be my best and grab another ring of opportunity.

The rest is history. I landed on my feet, and realized quickly how wonderful it was to once again be surrounded by a team of consummate professionals who make up my field team (all are licensed professional social workers with a combined total of more than 120 years of post-MSW experience). We spent the first few years fixing things and then focused our efforts on earning the reputation that has been bestowed upon our school many times over the last few years. I once had a visiting scholar from an international university ask me: “What has the field program done to earn the ranking your school has received?” This question remains on the white board in my office as a constant reminder of my responsibility to my students and to the social work profession overall.

Fitting into academia was, and continues to be, a challenge for me due to the fact that the academy is at times an indifferent environment. The academic calendar also required some getting used to, as did people disappearing on sabbatical every so often. I am not afraid of hard work and enjoy a fast pace, most likely a result of my medical center training and upbringing. I have learned that academics work hard but it is at a different pace nevertheless. I also learned early on that sometimes the academic system has to be pushed to become accountable to its clients who are the students. I was very disconcerted when a professor one time approached her field responsibilities with less enthusiasm and eagerness than I expected, and when another didn’t go on a scheduled field site visit because it was

raining. These attitudes were completely foreign to me, as I asked myself: “Who wouldn’t want to prepare the next generation of social workers to enter the work force more than a professor of social work?” Remember, I was the field instructor of old who had experienced some challenging student situations and had relied on my academic colleagues to establish normative educational and behavioral expectations for field placement.

Many times over the years, when I have attempted to push the accountability envelope in academia, my concerns have been stifled. When I worked in the very large and bureaucratic VA system and pushed issues in this environment, time and time again my veterans would become empowered and more able to improve the quality of their lives, in spite of organizational issues resulting from my advocacy with those “in charge.” While intrinsic rewards are not enough to live on, they certainly provided me the momentum that enabled me to continue to strive to do better. Sometimes I imagine myself working at Google and pushing them regarding issues of accountability, etc. I envision that I would most likely be embraced, appreciated, and rewarded, not dismissed.

Confronting the academic environment regarding these attitudes is more than thought-provoking. It can be stressful and has the potential danger of ensnaring you in the ripe old game of politics. The good ol’ boys network amongst those with tenure is a force to be reckoned with; that is for sure. Regardless of the context, however, my focus has always been on the client – and in the academic context, this means the student – in the equation. At the end of the day, my goal and my job is ultimately taking care of the students regardless of a perceived lack of investment in field instruction on the part of some faculty. The students are, after all, why we are here; aren’t they?

Developing means to systematically tie practice to teaching to research to scholarship is an ongoing opportunity. However, I fear that the notion of privilege may indeed be at the center of this triangle. I am not in a tenure-track position, and, therefore, I have declined to be beholden to a system that from time to time hamstrings open frank discussions, deflects accountability, and occasionally is illustrative of the arrogance the system appears at

times to promote. How and why did a title become so important? What happened to applying the basic principles of social work practice and professional comportment? How, in a professional school, has the attention been allowed to shift from a focus on the greater good? How is it that no one appears to have a clue that the silo approach isn't working? What are the signposts of good curriculum stewardship? Why are these ignored? Think about it from an organizational perspective. How comfortable are people allowed to get before they actually become ineffective? Remember, there is a fine line between being irreverent and becoming irrelevant.

Opportunities abound across academia to engage in worthwhile discussions focused on re-engaging faculty; most importantly in professional schools of social work, with a focus on bridging the gap between practice — on-the-ground practice — research, and scholarship. After all, the largest numbers of providers in the mental health systems across the country today are social workers. Opportunities are abundant! The potential reward realized from reinvigorating faculty in fieldwork is enormous, but will not occur without the cost involved in provoking the institutions where the rules regarding the material rewards (tenure, promotions, merit raises, and the like) are dared to be tested.

It is fairly common across schools of social work that field directors are not a part of the tenure system, and with good reason in most cases. The job of a field director is more than full-time when you take into consideration that we are responsible administratively for multiple constituents that include the students, the field community, the faculty, the field curriculum and outcomes, and the university; not to mention teaching and service responsibilities. For most of us, this is more than a full-time job even when spread over 12 months.

Many field directors are still considered professional staff and are non-voting members of their school's curriculum committees. Some are considered clinical faculty and don't have the performance requirement of scholarship, but do teach and have a service requirement. However, the generally low status that field directors contend with in their schools perpetuates and parallels the attitude

that many faculty exhibit regarding the role that field instruction plays in the overall fabric of the educational culture. There is not widespread agreement across schools of social work that 25% of the curriculum (field education) is important, despite what the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) says. According to CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) Standard 2.3 (CSWE, 2008, p. 8), "In social work, the signature pedagogy is field education." If field education is indeed respected as the signature pedagogy of social work education, why isn't 25% of faculty time spent (and rewarded) for work connected to field-related issues such as curriculum development, liaison work, and field-focused grants and research, etc.?

Field directors are isolated by virtue of the nuances of their positions. The number of colleagues they can rely on for candid and honest feedback can probably be counted on one hand. There is no like position or peers who are on the same level. Those whom field directors can rely on are usually found outside of the school, outside the academic environment, or even outside of the social work profession. Field consortiums have become invaluable supporters for field directors and, with the advent of better technology, have proved more and more useful. One of the hallmarks of sound professional practice is recognizing the need to engage in basic consultation on an ongoing basis. Having limited access to consultation, feedback, and even just the ability to vent about stressful situations, can and does create barriers to success, and has incapacitated some field offices over the long haul.

Due to retirements, schools of social work appear to be striving to fill the many soon to be vacant field director positions with newly minted PhD candidates who will hop on the tenure track. This in and of itself raises a commanding concern about the already tenuous bridge between practice and the academy. The recently updated CSWE EPAS has eloquently developed practice behaviors as a means to measure curriculum outcomes. But with more and more newly hired young faculty fresh out of doctoral work, heavily trained in research methods and having little to no experience as a field instructor, and with less pre- and post-MSW practice experience, how will this improve the already

visibly weak investment in field instruction? I like to think of this as another opportunity which can be addressed as follows.

First, it undeniably will take solid leadership on the part of the deans and directors of schools and programs of social work, who must openly embrace professional competency-based social work education, who must kick-start these sorely needed discussions, and who must promise to commit to change. There is no greater goal worth striving for than preparing professional social work practitioners who will be equipped to eagerly embrace our perplexing world.

Second, schools of social work need to actively support and openly partner with professional social work associations such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). How many social work faculty are active members of NASW? I suspect it is a very low number. Why? What message does this send to our students?

Third, social work faculty, with the leadership of the deans, need to engage and openly collaborate with their state licensing boards to ensure that professional standards are met and adhered to. This would entail faculty embracing the licensing laws, becoming licensed, and participating in the ongoing important work of their state licensing board.

Last, open discussions using a case-based decision making model that is relevant and focuses on social work values and ethics need to be at the forefront of curriculum efforts, especially given the transgressions post-MSW social workers have been charged with that inevitably have influenced the perceptions and credibility of our profession worldwide. Striving to build social work as a professional vocation with a multifaceted base (knowledge, skills, and ability) should be our mutual goal. Strengthening the bridge between the practice world and the academy is an opportunity that should not be ignored.

Coming full circle, today I realize that I was able to indeed take advantage of what Morris (2006, p. 29) calls “high-end opportunities.” The decisions I made along the way changed my life for the better. Yes, I do want to retire someday and pass the baton, but I also want to ensure that those upon whom we

bestow the title of “helper” are ready and equipped to meet the daily personal and professional challenges they will face. Now that I have been looking at the “readiness to help” situation for many years, I have to admit that my lens has taken on a much wider view from that small-town girl of long ago. I have embraced the concepts of privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice (what we call our PODS initiative in my school). I have been given the gift of reflection related to my own privilege and the opportunities that have accompanied it. I have slowly but deliberately realized the effect wide-spread oppression has as it relates to educational opportunity. I have concluded that if we don’t appreciate diversity, we won’t recognize the inherent beauty in life. We also won’t understand or appreciate different problem-solving capacities. Should we shy away from issues of social justice, we are also choosing not to promote opportunity for others.

Personally, I also have to add that I am the proud parent of two children who have dedicated their careers to federal service; my daughter, a social worker who has just started her career in the VA system working with homeless veterans, and my son, who works for the Department of Defense in information technology. I would like to think that being raised in a home where opportunities to give back were important had an impact on their respective career choices.

Professionally, I still have to confront situations where students are not healthy enough to participate in their field experience. I still have to deal with the fact that field instruction does not have the 25% focus or support it should have in the school’s curriculum. This has meant coming to terms with my own professional trajectory. Am I getting too old to do this work? Am I too biased? Are my expectations too high?

I also recognize that our student body is getting younger and younger, and that they have limited personal – but also at times very inadequate professional – experience from which to deal successfully with the issues that confound our world. So, we all must learn how to capture youth and capitalize on it as another opportunity to assist these striving eager potential colleagues in their growth as professionals. Simultaneously, we must

ensure that we protect the vulnerable client and that we reduce the cost for our agency partners.

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We need to remain true to our roots, maintain a professional social work focus, have fun, and remember where we came from by appreciating our social work history.

Recognizing that someone has the heart, the drive, and the motivation to provide opportunities for those less fortunate has become good enough for me at this point in my life, since I am focused on growing my own; i.e., influencing, impacting, and inspiring the students I work with in order to empower them to leave their individual legacy. Have I settled for second best? Have I lowered my standards? I think not.

Assisting students in meeting their professional goals, while a daunting task at times, is also my goal. Helping students find the path to wellness is important when we understand and recognize that this is once more, just another opportunity that we all need to be able to take advantage of. Assisting social work faculty in re-focusing their efforts on the development of professional social workers who are proficient in becoming licensed, and encouraging faculty to join and contribute to their professional social work associations, are indeed opportunities for us all. The by-products of life will be the result of the opportunities that each of us has been given. How we use these opportunities will be the telling tale. Recognizing the transformative power of opportunity can set you free. Working hard on behalf of others, opening as many doors as possible, and creating opportunities where none existed before, may indeed be where we find our individual happiness.

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“Driving Ms. Jane Addams”: Students and Instructors Learn in Field Education

Jerry Watson

In this narrative article, I share the story of two white female social work students from small predominantly white Midwestern towns, who were placed at the same site in an African American urban inner-city field assignment in Chicago, Illinois. Invariably, the students and I encountered challenges and obstacles while attempting to work with the youth, parents, and teachers at their site. In the process of supervising the students, we all learned valuable social work lessons.

This article describes my experience supervising two undergraduate social work interns in a field placement at the same project site. Both students were from a small, private Christian college located in the Midwest. Each student reviewed descriptions of a variety of potential placement sites and self-selected their placement at the university-community wellness project in Chicago. I became a field instructor for undergraduate social work students while directing the university-community health partnership in Chicago, Illinois. The project was housed in a public elementary school in the urban inner-city community, West Englewood.

The community was populated with over 98% African American residents. One out of three households was headed by a single female, compared to 13% – or slightly less than one out of eight households – across the city. The median income of West Englewood residents was \$22,131 compared to \$45,734 for all city residents. West Englewood had very high rates of unemployment. In Chicago, slightly less than 20% of the population lives below the poverty level. In West Englewood, 43.8% of the population lives below the poverty level (United States Census Bureau, 2010). West Englewood was a crime-ridden, poverty-filled ghetto with under-performing public schools.

The primary goals of the university-community health partnership were to improve the health and wellness among third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade youth and their families through community

organizing activities and educational, medical, social, recreational, cultural awareness, counseling, and mentoring services. The students were assigned to every area of the project (Angelique, Kyle, & Taylor, 2002). The project offered a uniquely exciting opportunity for students to learn while practicing social work. As their field instructor, I had an opportunity to learn the importance of how to guide them through their conceptualization of cultural competence in social work practice.

Student Profiles

Ms. Avery* was a 21-year-old white female; an only child who was raised in a Jewish home in a predominantly white small Midwestern town. She attended predominantly white primary and high schools and admitted having little or no contact with African Americans while she was growing up. Ms. Avery was an observer, with a dry but keenly intelligent manner of someone who obviously had difficulty with new people and new places. She spoke at a very fast pace with precise and measured words and absolute authority. She seemed to unconsciously keep people at arm's length while exuding a kind of snobbery. She was clearly xenophobic. She voiced her most important goal for the field placement as “really wanting to make a difference by helping people to change their lives.” While her emphatic expression was an important component, it was clear to me that she would need some direction with this population.

The other student, Ms. Karson,* was a 23-year-old

white female; a third child from a middle-class Christian home. Ms. Karson grew up in an overwhelmingly white community in a small Midwestern town of about 50,000. She attended high school with a handful of African American students. She described having at least one "Black associate," not friend, during high school as a result of participating in the publication of the school's newspaper. As she spoke, Ms. Karson's eyes glowed with a sparkle of curiosity. When queried about what she expected to get out of her experience, Ms. Karson said that she "planned to learn about how to do social work in real live situations, with real live people," where she "could really help." It was evident to me from the beginning that she was eager to learn and also needed some direction with this population. Together the two students mutually shared the goal of wanting to help and the belief that they could do it.

The Journey Begins: Orientation

I designed a comprehensive orientation experience for both students. I wanted to make sure they were well prepared for what was ahead. I envisioned that the young interns would be like "fish out of water" in this new and tough environment. The students had much to learn as they were so culturally different from the population they would serve. The West Englewood community was a rough neighborhood, and the youth and families were experiencing a diverse set of long-standing and hard-to-handle issues. I knew that I would have to conduct a considerable amount of cultural education in order for them to be prepared for their placement. While I was hopeful about the students' ability to adjust to their new work environment, I was admittedly frightened and lacked confidence in their dedication to continue the momentum they had each so eagerly displayed.

The students' seasoning began with a windshield survey tour of the community. I drove slowly through the neighborhood. I wanted them to see it all. If they were going to back out, I wanted them to withdraw early in the process. I pointed out significant sites which included the neighborhood police station, key restaurants, the district offices of the Department of Children and Family Services, the whereabouts of drug sales, street gang hangouts, prostitutes' gathering places, and the locations of

partner community-based organizations. It was important for them to get a real sense of where they would be working, and with whom, on a day-to-day basis. This neighborhood would be their working home for the next several months. We stopped several times, got out of the car and walked to get a more intimate feel of the area. They commented about the large number of obviously unemployed men hanging around the streets pan handling. I understood their questions and comments. It was clear that the students were in a foreign land with a totally different custom and language than what they knew.

I was concerned about their ability to understand the realness of this poverty stricken neighborhood right from the start. I began to ask myself, "Would they be able to make the adjustments required to successfully work in West Englewood?" This concern unfolded even more when the students questioned me about the language used by the youth and families. I encouraged them to write down slang terms and listen to the teenagers for cues to understand the language. I also suggested that the novice interns find youth (cultural brokers) that they felt comfortable with to ask questions about language and the community (Poulin, Kauffman, & Silver, 2006). It was imperative that I address each cultural barrier as it arose.

I arranged a series of meetings with youth, parents, school officials, and a group of social workers (mostly aboriginal residents of West Englewood) who had been working and living in the community over the past ten to twenty years. Each social worker gave short presentations about their projects and detailed their experiences in the community. The youth, parents, and school officials introduced themselves and welcomed the students to West Englewood. Six weeks had passed. This officially concluded the students' orientation. They were ready to go. At least, I hoped they were ready to go. Quite frankly, I was still apprehensive about their launch into the community.

The Work Begins...

Each student was assigned to five youth and their respective families in addition to their group and other activity responsibilities. They were expected to facilitate a minimum of one individual session and one family session per week. After several

difficult and busy weeks, the newness of the placement had worn off. During weekly supervision sessions Ms. Avery continually complained about the youths' lack of motivation and complete disrespect for their teachers (Collardey, 2012). She explained how the youth and their parents frequently used profanity, which was often directed towards authority figures. She was frustrated by parents' repeated tardiness or missing appointments without notice. Youth and parents began to routinely refuse to attend or participate in their counseling sessions. Teachers at the project came across as being uncooperative. Ms. Avery asked, "Who do they think they are?" She exclaimed, "They do not want help from me!" It seemed as if nothing was going right, and it continued for weeks. Ms. Avery was frustrated, discouraged, and unfulfilled. It was difficult for me to listen.

Ms. Karson received the same treatment. What began as a richly promising opportunity had quickly turned into the beginnings of a nightmare. Youth were unruly in classes and groups and the majority of the time was used just trying to maintain order. Strangely, Ms. Karson expressed a different attitude while discussing her experience after a month. With a puzzled look on her face Ms. Karson angrily proclaimed, "These children and their parents are stretching me. I can see that it is going to take more than me just arriving and them getting better. All I can say is that I don't know what to do." Clearly Ms. Karson was perplexed, puzzled, bewildered, and embarrassed about not knowing what to do. To my astonishment, the social work students were clearly in a state of uncertainty and indecision as to what to do in this difficult situation. I was becoming impatient and intolerant of their naiveté. All I could do is ask myself, "What have I gotten myself into?"

I was puzzled about how to help the student social workers. Ms. Avery expected that both youth and parents would be readily receptive to her help and respond with change. Ms. Karson was confused and searched for direction from me (Poulin, Kauffman & Silver, 2006). I must admit, at first I was baffled and sorely disappointed at the students' responses to what I thought was a terrific placement. It made no sense to me that senior social work students would be so obviously out of touch with how to do social work.

As I went over and over the student's experiences, I realized that both were motivated by common forces. Ms. Karson and Ms. Avery were driven by their Judeo-Christian values to help others in need. I knew they would not give up the fight easily, and neither would I. While I had over twenty years of social services experience, and recently completed the field instructor training at the University of Illinois, I didn't know much about social work. I was just two months into the Masters of Social Work program myself. Something very strange began to happen. As I became more and more comfortable with understanding who the students were, my confidence grew in their ability to be successful. I realized that the students' deeply religious faith and beliefs would somehow get them past their current hurdles and obstacles. I also recognized the importance of my learning through the student's experiences.

One thing was certain; I needed to change my strategies for helping the students to learn to practice social work. I recognized that I was too relaxed with making sure that their weekly supervision sessions took place. I also realized that I was not thoughtful about what the supervision sessions need to cover. I tightened up my planning of the sessions to better address their ongoing practice needs and concerns. I began to meet with both students at least once a week for supervision, and for a while two or three times a week to make sure that they had the support they needed to be successful. I observed Avery and Karson in practice with the youth and their parents. I planned out the supervision meetings to make certain we covered topics important to both me and them. I began to sing the song over and over that the entire field placement was a "great learning opportunity." Much to my surprise, Avery and Karson never listened to the youth, parents, or teachers, but had all the answers, a critical engagement error. I could see the social work students preparing their answers while the youth were talking. They were not listening. I began to realize they were lacking the necessary skill of active listening, a foundation taught during their practice classes prior to entering their field placement.

I remembered my introduction to the planned change process in social work practice classes (Wilson, Pereira, & Valentine, 2002). This was an

opportunity for me to try out what I had recently heard about in class. I was unsure if I had really learned the material. All I could do is to give it a try. For the next several weeks I reviewed the basics of the planned change process. I worked with Ms. Avery and Ms. Karson to pay strict attention to each phase of the process, beginning with engagement and moving through assessment, planning, and implementation. We worked on authenticity, genuineness, being present, and active listening. The automatic and quick responses slowed and eventually disappeared from their interactions with the youth and parents. They were actually listening, learning, and beginning to conceptualize the importance of the change process.

I began to see the change in how the social work students interacted with the youth, parents, and school personnel. More importantly, I could see an improvement in relationships between the interns and the youth and parents. The youth and parents began to search out the social work students. There was no longer any need for the social work students to hunt down the youth and parents for groups or individual sessions. The interns had finally begun to build rapport and engage the youth and families, imperative first steps in the change process. I realized that my assessment of my own teaching style, coupled with the belief in the students, was an integral component of teaching for both me and the social work students.

We All Learned...

We all learned from the supervision meetings and regular check-ins that changes were possible for some of the youth, their families, and for us. Staying focused was critical to any chances we had at being successful. The student social workers had to earn the respect of the youth and parents. They had taken for granted that they would be automatically respected. I modeled active listening instead of doing all the talking. I stressed focusing on the seemingly small things that were really the most important things like authenticity, genuineness, and empathy (Paying, 2011). Positive results of our work were forthcoming.

After professional development training on cultural competency, I learned that the first stage of becoming culturally competent is self-awareness or self-assessment. This important ingredient leads to

self-knowledge and is the direct result of deep thought. I had totally neglected this step as I focused all of my teaching energy and attention on the neighborhood. I subsequently learned that the idea of cultural competency goes beyond the superficial level to that of introspection and self-understanding (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989).

The students helped me put what I had learned in the classroom into practice. I never thought that I would learn from what I had termed as "their learning experience." We made "lemonade from lemons" through constant collaboration and self-reflection. I was energized, encouraged, and confident about being a social worker. It never dawned on me that I would learn as much as, if not more than, the students from their field placement. Seeing the social work world through the eyes of the students gave me a fresh look and reaffirmed my conviction to the profession. Supervision was an opportunity for me to learn. I learned while the students learned (Thorndike, Gusic, & Milner, 2008).

Ms. Avery and Ms. Karson both sung the same songs stating that, "Change is a process not an event. Change takes time and usually does not happen quickly. And, change generally happens in tiny steps." Over the course of nearly 500 hours, I had watched two young women grow as social workers. Oh, and I nearly forgot again, I grew too. While the experience was not all "peaches and cream," when we evaluated their work it was clear that some things were positively different in the lives of a few West Englewood youth and families. Likewise, I was changed forever.

I would go on to work in university-community partnerships, complete two masters' degrees, and earn a doctorate in higher education. Many social workers are motivated to become field instructors so they can give back to the profession, influence and impact the development of new social workers, and to build their own careers (Ensher, Thomas & Murphy, 2001).

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* The names of the students are pseudonyms.

Finding Balance: Group Membership and Professional Development

Imad A. Mohamed and Robin R. Wingo

Field education is said to be the experience that all students talk about and remember the most after they graduate. Social work students from immigrant backgrounds experience unique challenges in applying and finding a balance between the obligations of the NASW code of ethics and being culturally responsive. These challenges may be even greater for immigrant social work students who are working directly with the target populations with which they identify. A crucial challenge and asset that is experienced by immigrant social workers is the knowledge and identity membership that they hold in dual cultural systems. Learning to manage that balance in a field practicum setting will be examined in this narrative.

Co-author Introduction: Field education is said to be the experience that all students talk about and remember the most after graduation. I'm sure this particular student and co-author, Imad, will never forget his field placement. The context for the field education for Imad, a first-year MSW student at the time of this experience, was a social work program in a northern rural state, with a general catchment area of 150 miles. Field practicum is student driven, meaning that students plan with the field director (in this case myself, Robin) for a placement that meets individual learning goals, fits within the ability to travel, and provides for supervision, time, and learning opportunities commensurate with graduate education. Specific agencies are vetted based on those and other criteria to meet accreditation standards, department mission and goals, and capacity to provide meaningful learning. The particular agency that Imad was placed in focuses on developing housing within small and rural communities. This placement, particularly, focused on the development and enhancement of home-ownership capacity for new immigrants. Imad and I recognized immediately the opportunity to contribute to his education, his community, and his skills by seeking and accepting this placement. I immediately recognized that this student's maturity, professionalism, community awareness, and cultural fluency made this a singularly unique opportunity for both him and the agency. While we both were aware of the need for thoughtful, ethical, and respectful engagement in this placement, I'm not sure either one of us fully appreciated the degree to

which Imad would be challenged to find his footing. In this conversation, we explore Imad's efforts to maintain his cultural identity as he worked to establish a professional presence.

Imad: I knew from my course work and from cultural peers that social work students from immigrant backgrounds experience unique challenges in finding and then applying a balance between the obligations of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* and being culturally responsive. I think those challenges may be even greater for immigrant social work students who are working directly with the target populations they identify with. A crucial challenge and asset that is experienced by immigrant social workers is the knowledge and identity membership that they hold in dual cultural systems. On one hand, when working with the population they identify with (in my case Somali), they have knowledge and experience to engage in culturally responsive practice. On the other hand, having a shared cultural identity with their clients may place these student social workers in situations of blurred boundaries that are influenced by competition between their cultural values and professional values.

Robin: I know that almost immediately our conversations and those in the field seminar began to really focus on the challenges you were experiencing.

Imad: I would agree. It was essential that I talk about how culture shapes our social interaction through systems of norms, values, expectations, and behavior. It was also important to discuss the dual cultural systems that immigrant social workers operate in and the competing values and norms imposed by these systems. My first-year practicum experience, working with the Somali community, was really an illustration of those issues.

Robin: I know that you take a very academic approach to understanding your experiences while at the same time embracing the more personal aspects of the experience. What did you find to support your understanding in the literature?

Imad: From readings in another course, a theory that helped structure my thinking and allowed me to conceptualize the power of culture was social constructivism. Through this school of thought I understood the principle that “nothing is universal” and that our interpretations on how we view life are different due to the influences that are guided by culture. Scholars from this school of thought reminded me that “it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action by situating its underlying intentional states in an interpretive system” (Bruner, 1990, p. 34). I could see culture not only facilitates social interaction through sets of norms, values, and expectations but also provides me ways for internalizing these factors. In addition, social institutions are grounded in the values and ideas of culture. The principle that “nothing is universal” alludes to the idea of cultural differences. As a social work student from an immigrant background, I get the pleasure and challenge of interacting in a dual cultural system. On one hand, my Somali and Muslim cultural identities have an influence in shaping my values, norms, and expectations. On the other hand, my education and work is grounded in Western values, norms, and expectations.

Robin: Imad, there was this very strong impression of you doing this balancing act between your “professional self” and your “cultural self.”

Imad: I was wearing two hats! When I was in my primary identity group my frame of reference in social interaction was shaped by Somali/Muslim culture but in my interaction with mainstream

society I switched my frame of reference to that of the Western culture. This system of operation seemed to work smoothly as long as the two cultural worlds didn’t cross. However, as an immigrant social work intern who worked directly with the group that I identify with, I began to experience the merging of my dual cultural systems.

Robin: You were also engaged in field seminar with other students who were beginning field practicum. Those cross-over moments made for some interesting discussions. The issues related to creating a niche for oneself in the agency were very familiar to others while the issues of merging cultural systems opened a whole new avenue of thinking and understanding.

Imad: I think because I was the only Muslim-Somali in our field seminar, my experience was really different than the others. The merging of the dual cultural systems was influenced by the role of identity in the interaction with the group I identify with. To understand the role in identity change it is important to first examine what my identity was prior to the change. In my original identity the role that I operated from was based on my membership in the Muslim-Somali group. Thus, as a male Muslim-Somali, my interaction with the group was governed by the values and expectations set forth by the group membership. Thus, following these values and expectations was part of exercising the group membership identity. Furthermore, members in the group are expected to follow the cultural values, norms, and expectations. However, in my role as a social work student intern, my interaction with the target community was no longer based on my membership identity. In other words, the cultural values and expectations guiding my work with the target community were shaped by my profession which is grounded in Western culture. The change of role identity introduced new values and expectations in my interaction with the target community.

Robin: I know something about how active you are in the Somali community. I can’t help wondering how the community experienced these changes you were experiencing as part of your educational process.

Imad: While I was aware of the change in my role

identity, the target community was not aware of the change. The consequence was that the expectations that the members in the target community had for me were based on my original role identity as a Somali group member as opposed to my new role as social work student. The challenge was that the target community had the assumptions and expectations that as a member of the Somali community I would uphold the Somali cultural values and norms. In addition, the group assumption was that I would use the group culture as my frame of reference to govern my interaction with the target community. On the other hand, as a social work student I have professional values, norms, and expectations. For the most part, the two cultures meet at a common ground in regard to values and expectations. However, there are times where I have experienced cultural conflicts in values and norms in regards to my work with the target community. From my experience, cultural conflicts can place immigrant social workers in situations where stakes are high in the professional and group membership role. Consequently, the responses to these cultural conflicts may impact their personal group membership and professional relationship with the target group.

Robin: There was a lot going on with you as you were making a place for yourself in this practicum site. How were you thinking about all that day to day?

Imad: This was my first MSW practicum, and I was excited that I had the opportunity to intern with an agency that would allow me to work with the Somali community. Since I have a shared identity with this population, I didn't think my personal values, beliefs, and behaviors would cause me practical conflicts. Nevertheless, I know that I couldn't take this assumption as a fact so I utilized self-reflections, evaluation, and consultation frequently. Through self-reflection, seminar, evaluation, and consultation I learned that working with a population where I have shared identity can present unique challenges.

Robin: The use of the field seminar allowed you the opportunity to write, discuss, and take us along on your journey and was a remarkable opportunity for your peers to understand at a more meaningful level what the issues are of being immersed in two

cultures. Each experience that you shared with us could be explored from the Western social work perspective and that of your cultural group membership. Your willingness to share that made a rich learning experience for all of us.

Imad: One of the greatest learning experiences in balancing was being culturally responsive and being congruent with the *Code of Ethics*. Culture influences both individual and social factors such as thoughts, behavior, policy, institutions, and social expectations. Taking the influences of culture, I can make the case that our social work profession in regard to values, norms, ethics, and expectations is grounded in Western cultural values. We know that cultures differ in views, values, norms, and expectations. An example of this is the role of age in society in terms of expectations and authority. On one hand, in the American Western culture, once you are an adult there are levels of expectations that apply across the board for all adults. However, in many Eastern cultures, including that of the Somali people, age is linked to authority, power, and respect. When I began the internship I had a challenge in dealing with Somali leaders. Almost all of the leaders were older adults. In many of my early meetings, the Somali leaders did not deal with me as a representative of my agency but as a community member. Dealing with me as a community member only introduces cultural expectations that are associated with age and other factors such as gender and tribe. Many times the decision-making process of community issues is highly dominated by the elders, mostly men. As a young person participating in community affairs, I may be influenced by cultural expectation to yield to this tradition. On the other hand, as social workers we promote equal opportunity and involvement for all regardless of the domain of diversity. Nevertheless, it is daunting to break cultural expectations because of fear of change in group membership identity and the practical impacts it may have on relationship building. In my early meetings I experienced challenges voicing my views in regard to community affairs (especially) in front of elders. This fear or anxiety was mainly due to cultural expectations associated with age.

Robin: You spoke earlier, Imad, about how social constructivism provided you one frame for thinking about your experience. Were there other conceptual

perspectives that influenced how you were balancing the cultural/professional draws?

Imad: Another example of cultural conflict, specifically in the area of values, is the competing nature of individualism and collectivism. The cultural value of collectivism is not a value that is abandoned by immigrants after they move to the United States. In the community that I identify with, collectivism governs our expectations and practices of loyalty, support systems, and conflict resolution. The value of collectivism is highly exercised in the family and tribal system. When dealing with conflict, the value of collectivism can bring interesting challenges. Prior to starting the internship I knew that there was a tension among community members and especially among community leaders. Another layer of challenge was that some of the community leaders were from my extended family. In the Somali culture the expectation set forth by collectivism is that loyalty to the family and tribe is important. This loyalty has both pros and cons. One benefit is that it may establish support systems among specific groups. However, the downside is that this loyalty may lead to unfair treatment of people who are outside the family and tribe. Prior to the internship I knew I could not let tribalism influence my practice because it promotes the idea of favoritism and exclusion. Plus, the consequence of such action is not only a violation of professional expectations but also both agency and legal obligations. Nonetheless, abandoning these cultural expectations without careful reflection would not only damage my ability to work with the group but my membership in the group as well.

Robin: Can you describe the resolution you found?

Imad: After reflecting and consulting about these issues, I knew that I could not let my primary cultural expectations alone govern my practice with the target community because this would lead to sacrificing my professional expectations and values. On the other hand, it was clear that if I only utilized my professional expectations and values it would damage my group identity and my ability to work with the community. The realization of these two extremes at hand drove me to explore a balanced perspective. In order to find this balance my first requirement was to take control in an effort to

influence how the community leaders viewed me and what expectations they were to have of me. I had to let them know frequently that they should not only deal with me as a community member but also as an agency representative who has to operate under different sets of values and expectations. Getting this point across allowed me to find strategy in dealing with my professional and personal cultural conflicts.

Robin: I recall that we talked and strategized at length in seminar about how to communicate respectful caring, while at the same time establishing new boundaries that integrated the best of both Western and Somali relationships and opportunities.

Imad: Some of the strategies that I applied were engaging in continuous dialogue and discussions with the members from the Somali community. The dialogue and discussions were based on educating the community members about the change in my role identity and the impact it would have on our social interaction in regard to cultural values, norms, and expectations. This allowed me to educate community members about the values, ethics, and norms that came with my new role as a social work intern. These discussions allowed me to get the point across that my interaction with them would not only be governed by cultural values but also my professional values. Engaging in this dialogue allowed me to build a pool of shared understanding with the community in regard to the expectations they should have for me as social work intern. My clients' understanding of my professional values, norms, and expectations was a significant factor in understanding their own rights.

For example, if I provided services to a particular Somali group based on tribal relation and discriminated against another Somali group due to tribal differences, the response of the group that I discriminated against would depend on the frame of references that shapes the expectations they have for me. Unfortunately, from a cultural perspective the group that I discriminated against may see my practice as being consistent with cultural practices. On the other hand, if that same group were educated about my professional values, norms, and ethics, they would have the frame of reference needed to come to the conclusion that I was not violating their

rights but upholding my professional obligations. Thus, educating the Somali members I worked with about my professional code of ethics was an empowerment process that helped clients understand their rights and when or if those rights were being violated. In contrast, the process of educating them also helped them understand that I had both cultural and professional values and expectations that would influence my behavior and decisions.

Robin: From this dialogue one can clearly see the potential landmines that you navigated throughout practicum. You were able to use the agency field instructor, who possessed a wealth of cultural acumen to draw on, for consultation and support. His cultural experiences certainly helped you find a path. You were also strongly encouraged in field seminar to talk about your experience as a means to deconstruct the experience and from that construct interaction strategies that would allow you to practice effective social work without compromising cultural relations.

Imad: I think the other thing that happened in seminar was that other students were able to see beyond the platitude of “be culturally sensitive” and understand what that can represent in terms of practicing in culturally responsive ways. I was also able to talk about my experience with individuals from my culture who are practicing social workers, and that was helpful because they had experienced some of the same sorts of things I was going through.

Robin: The issues related to being a member of the cultural group while practicing within the community as a social worker were ones that you grappled with over the months of practicum. You sought out support from social work professionals from the Somali community, the field liaison, and the field seminar as part of that process. I believe, though, Imad, your willingness to actively, and sometimes painfully, engage in finding a balance between your cultural group membership and your chosen profession was a remarkable feat. You continue to develop your professional capacity for providing social work services within and external to your cultural group as you actively seek supervision, mentorship, and support throughout your contacts, which are numerous. Your focus and

capacity for self-reflection and using resources to refine and extend your thinking are ongoing. Without all those efforts, I’m not certain that you could have found the balance that you did.

Robin: As the field liaison for this practicum as well as the seminar instructor, I found this experience made it abundantly clear that as educators we need to be willing to hear our students clearly, to set aside any preconceived notions that we have about how to manage complex placements, and stay focused on what the student is experiencing. Imad, you and I had lengthy conversations that focused not only on developing strategies within the agency but also focused on your cultural coping. Additionally, consultation with the field agency personnel with whom you worked was beneficial in helping to reinforce the boundaries that you were working to establish. Imad, the willingness you showed to reach out to other social workers within your cultural group was also an important source of support. While it is true that all students in field practicum need such supports, I learned that these are critical for those students who come from non-Western backgrounds. As the social work profession continues to diversify, clearly we need to develop a pipeline for students who have these rich experiences to graduate and to serve as mentors, field instructors, field liaisons, and seminar instructors, and to engage in the classroom.

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Creating Emotional Safety in the Classroom and in the Field

Laura Quiros, Lorin Kay, and Anne Marie Montijo

In our narratives, supported by research and our practice, we discuss significant parallels in teaching in the classroom and in the field. Together, we help to illustrate the necessary requirements needed to create emotionally safe environments. That is, feelings of connectedness and acceptance, accessibility, clear boundaries and expectations, and presence by the facilitator. Attention to the emotional safety of an environment illustrates the importance of safety and how it can help to encourage safe exploration and an evolving sense of personal and professional awareness for the student, the client, and the clinician. It is only when we feel emotionally safe that we are able to unleash our voice, ask questions, speak with conviction, challenge, and internalize new information.

Introduction

It has been assumed that a school or a university setting is considered to be an emotionally safe environment. However, what exactly does “emotional safety” mean? And how do educators create such environments? In this paper we discuss specific aspects of emotional safety from three perspectives: the student, the professor, and the field educator. Together, we help to illustrate the necessary requirements for emotionally safe environments in the classroom and in the field. That is, feelings of connectedness and acceptance, accessibility, clear boundaries and expectations, and presence by the facilitator. We draw on our experiences and the literature to further explain these concepts.

Some of the recent literature emphasizes that therapists can help assist clients in making the office an emotionally safe environment – a container, if you will – a place for the client to feel they can freely speak their mind and do so in a safe and trusting environment (Miller, 2001). We believe that the same can be applied when considering both classroom and field. In the following sections of the paper we discuss emotional safety in the classroom and in the field. We believe emotional safety to be an underdeveloped topic in pedagogy, and one that has implications for social work practice. To conclude, we believe there are parallel processes that take place between the professor and the student, the student and the field supervisor, and

ultimately, the student and the client (Miller, 2001).

Emotional Safety in the Classroom

Student Perspective

While there has been much written about how to create a safe space from a professor’s perspective, little is readily available from the perspective of the student (Holley and Steiner, 2005). We believe that information from the student can help both educators and universities in assessing and working toward the creation of emotionally safe environments. This paper begins with the student’s experience of emotional safety in two different social work practice classes.

A Student’s Voice: Emotional Safety

As a master’s social work student, I expected that by entering the social work program, I would be tapping into my trauma history. However, and in spite of the fact that I was open to the process, I was still surprised, not by my reaction to the case studies and literature, but rather how I was still able to glide quietly through the process, seemingly “smiling.” As a young adult, I used bulimia nervosa as a means of shutting down in order to disassociate from situations that made me anxious. This disorder also allowed for my traumas and subsequent anxiety to go undetected and unnoticed throughout much of my life. I was outgoing, I did well in school, and I was always smiling. Only I knew just how unhappy I really was and how unsafe I really felt. I understand how convincing I was but on an

unconscious level, I was still desperate for someone to see that my talking about my traumatic history experiences did not equate to feeling safe. The need to feel emotionally safe was one reason that I chose social work, as a form of healing, yet that healing did not begin until I found myself in an emotionally safe environment.

The Practice Course: The First Year

Like most social work programs, it was required that I take a social work practice course in which it was expected that I gain mastery of core competencies related to engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. This class allowed for discussion and consideration as novice clinicians in the making. I remember during those first few weeks I shared a personal story that I believed to be applicable to the theories and literature being discussed. I was aware before entering the program that it may be best to consider the idea of revisiting my experiences in a setting outside of therapy. The classroom setting could allow for further articulation, conceptualization, and exploration of what I experienced as a child. However, and in spite of how strongly I felt about the healing process, sharing still left me feeling incredibly vulnerable.

Intellectually, I understood that I was not in any real danger. Yet opening up personal wounds in the classroom was never without some apprehension. Still, I shared. A few moments after I shared, I saw two students whispering and giggling in a corner. After I spoke about something so personal, I regressed and quickly became the frightened little 6-year-old girl who was not accustomed to feeling safe.

Soon after, I went to my professor. I told her of my feelings and what I felt in the moment. The truth was I did not want to tell on anyone. However, I did not feel emotionally safe. I was in graduate school, I was 30 years old, and while I continued to preach about the importance of safety and security for the clients, I realized that I too had needs. I wanted to know what “emotional safety” felt like as an adult, a student, and a clinician in the making.

My professor told me she appreciated my feedback and understood why I would feel this way. She

thanked me for sharing this with her, and she also encouraged me to “...stay with the process and to keep sharing.” I could tell, based on her eye contact and her keen sense of understanding, that she understood where I was coming from. I felt a sense of presence, connectedness, and acceptance. For me, as someone who was dealing with childhood issues regarding lack of protection, this was a step in the right direction. I felt protected and safe because she was present and non-judgmental, and challenged me to stay with the process.

The following class, at the end of the group discussion, she did not bring up the specifics of our meeting. She gently reminded the entire class of how vulnerable we are while in a mental health graduate program and how perhaps we should continue to be aware of our actions while in front of our fellow students. She said that while she would do her best to make this a “safe space,” how safe this environment would be was ultimately up to us, the students. Like we were learning to do with clients, she gave us the gift of recognizing that we too play an important role while on this journey.

The Trauma Elective: The Second Year

During my second year I enrolled for a course on children and adolescent trauma. The curriculum included evidence-based learning where we, the students, utilized descriptive and disturbing case studies to examine and discuss both the personal and societal impact of trauma. Prior to enrolling, I felt incredibly apprehensive. I knew that I wanted to continue my studies in trauma; however, I was unconsciously frightened that further exposure to traumatic narratives and trauma literature would leave me feeling incredibly scared, overwhelmed, and disrupted.

Clearly I was still carrying personal demons both into the classroom and into adulthood. At this point, I felt that I had to share with my professor my specific concerns. I explained that I was confused because having already shared components of my story, shouldn't the initial pain or vulnerability diminish? I did not understand exactly what I was afraid of. I did, however, understand that the fear was intense and as real as anything.

When I explained this, as expected, she gently suggested that fear alone might be reason enough to

consider taking the course. She suggested that instead of denying my fear and apprehension, I face it head on. Again, she challenged me to dig deeper and trust myself. She articulated her expectations for the course and the days and times she would be available to meet with me outside of class. I trusted her enough to know that she would help me just as she had in the practice class. It was during the trauma class that I watched this professor closely. I knew that if I observed carefully, I might come to understand why I felt emotionally safe with her.

For one, she was accessible. I asked her if I could email her after each class in addition to keeping my journal. She said of course. It was not the act of “getting it out” that was so helpful to me but rather, the connection that I craved. In speaking to my classmates, they too made mention of her accessibility and connectedness. I noticed that she was gentle with our process as growing clinicians. Yet she still challenged us. She had clear boundaries and expectations. She was present. It was in the forming of this new, secure relationship with my professor, and subsequently with myself, that emotional growth was allowed to take place.

Professor Perspective

Social workers learn early on about the connection between person and environment. In an effort to create an emotionally safe environment, I reflect on my experience as a student. As a student, there was a time when I was fearful of raising my hand in the classroom. I did not trust my voice and feared ridicule by the teacher and my classmates. I vividly remember several occasions throughout my college student years when I had a comment or a question and I held back from using my voice. Seconds later the professor or another student in the classroom would voice my thoughts, taking ownership of my comments, leaving me silent and frustrated. Growing up, I never felt secure in my intelligence, having come from a tumultuous home; my grades in high school suffered and my SAT scores could never predict that I would spend my life as a Ph.D. social work professor. In sum, my world, from a very young age, lacked emotional safety. As a result, I lived in a world of fear and silence.

Emotional Safety: Creating Community

The context in which a person, group, agency, or community functions is paramount to the

development of the person, group, agency, or community. Therefore, as educators, in order to help students grow both personally and professionally, it is our duty to create emotional safety in the classroom. Throughout my 10-year career as an educator, first as an adjunct and presently as an assistant professor, I have come across multiple students who are scared to speak. That is, literally fearful of using their voice in class. Therefore, my goal in every class that I teach is to create a community where students learn to take a risk to speak. In the following section of this paper I discuss creating community in the classroom as an avenue to fostering emotional safety.

Creating Community

Emotional safety is the foundation for my work as an educator. I embrace an approach to teaching that is inspired by passion and awareness and tempered with humility. My goal is to create a learning community and that begins on the first day of class. I start every class with a discussion of creating a communal place that will enhance students’ personal and professional growth. We discuss the meaning of community and how to create it in the classroom setting. As a social work educator, my teaching models my practice. That is, I start with introductions, contract with students, and clearly state, verbally and in writing, my expectations for the particular course. It is my goal that students own their learning and are active and engaged participants. As a class we create a list of rules that help to facilitate safety in the classroom. Safety in the classroom is discussed as respect of difference, not as an arena where conflict is repressed. As bell hooks (2005) suggested, “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (p. 8). It is during this first class that I set expectations and explain my role as an educator and mentor, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. In addition, I use this beginning session to discuss cultural awareness, difference, and the ongoing development of culturally sensitive practice.

In the beginning classes when I am faced with silence or resistance, I use different icebreaker techniques, conversation starters, and articles for discussion. I also use literature as a way to promote critical thinking and help students gain a deeper

understanding of the human condition. I break the class up into groups, pairing students with other students with whom they are less familiar. I move back and forth between PowerPoint and small group discussion, as I understand that students have diverse learning styles. I am also accessible, making myself available to students for extra help outside of class. I explain to students that this class is more than just an academic exercise. It is about people taking risks, needing to be vulnerable and to share. It is about making connections between field, the texts, and their own lives.

Educational institutions that are critically informed challenge social inequality by fostering dialogue, critique, and student voice (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). I learned from bell hooks (2005) that teaching becomes not merely an avenue to share information but to participate in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students by valuing and encouraging student expression. I invite and challenge students to be didactic learners in their quest for knowledge and to work from the assumption that they have a valuable contribution to make to the learning process.

As one student shared with me at the end of a social work practice course, "I think there was an intentional focus on creating community and confronting the silence, and contracting about the purpose/meaning of the class." The ways in which emotional safety is fostered in the classroom must be translated to the field, as it is in this arena that students integrate their classroom knowledge with real-life experience. Helping students integrate research, policy, theory, and practice is crucial to the development of their professional selves. In the next section of this paper the director of field education discusses emotional safety in the field. This section concludes with the student's experience of emotional safety in the field.

Emotional Safety in the Field

As suggested by the field placement pamphlet at one university (Adelphi University, 2012-2013):

It is in the field work experience that students, utilizing classroom theory and knowledge, test out skills toward developing professional competence and identity. The overall objective of field education is to produce a professionally

competent, ethical, self-evaluating, knowledgeable social worker with the capacity to learn and the initiative to keep on learning. ...[educators] need to model and to help our students bring their humanity and authenticity to their practice, to act with courage, and to develop a vision about making a contribution toward the amelioration of the social problems that face our society today. (p. 8)

However, how to achieve these goals is not clearly defined. In fact, due to the subjectivity of mental health, the goals and paths will vary with each student. There is no specific guidebook for field instructors on how to really connect with each student. This is why we must ask ourselves how field instructors can create an emotionally safe environment for the interning student.

Field Educator's Perspective

Building emotional safety in the field with students can be a difficult task, as the field instructor needs to be capable of creating a warm and welcoming environment, while at the same time establishing professional and ethical boundaries. Students begin placement with fear, anxiety, and apprehension; therefore, the first few days of placement and supervision are critical. This time period can set the tone for a positive or negative learning experience for students. Field instructors need to demonstrate to students that they are prepared to teach them.

To begin with, students' work area should be prepared for them in advance of their arrival. Other staff should also be aware that students will be starting placement. Field instructors need to be prepared to meet with students on their first day of placement. This demonstrates the eagerness and readiness of the field instructor to have students at the agency. It is also important to orient students over a period of a couple of weeks, as many students feel overwhelmed with the initial entry into the agency culture.

Establishing expectations from the first day is a critical point in building the supervisor-student relationship. Expectations may include: date and time of weekly supervision, process recording requirements, etc. By knowing that there is a set day and time for supervision, students recognize that their supervisor has dedicated a special time just for

them. This can assist in validating the importance of supervision, help ease students' anxiety, and ultimately increase emotional safety. Often times, students report that their field instructors are too critical and not supportive. They are afraid to make mistakes. This produces more anxiety for students, therefore, leading to more mistakes and students struggling to learn. Students are keenly aware that they will be evaluated by their field instructor, and don't want to be seen as lacking knowledge or skills. Field instructors should reinforce during supervision that field is a learning process for students, and that they expect them to make mistakes.

It has been my observation that providing supervision is like walking a high wire. There is a fine line between providing professional supervision and providing therapy. Both explore feelings; however, supervision focuses on the student's feelings with respect to the work with their clients, not their personal experiences. This is a delicate task for the student as well, because their personal experiences influence their work with clients. It is up to the field instructor, as the proven professional, to establish the professional boundaries. Invariably, when feelings are discussed by the student the supervisor needs to stay focused to ensure they are focusing on the work with the client. If the field instructor recognizes that their student's feelings seem to hinder their work with the client, the supervisor needs to discuss the possibility of the student seeking outside counseling. This is a critical point in the supervisor/student professional relationship. How that situation is handled is critical to what the student will bring forth in future supervisory sessions. A supportive supervisor provides an emotionally safe environment for students by establishing clear boundaries and expectations, listening to the student without judgment, assisting them with reflecting on their practice, giving positive feedback about their performance in a non-critical fashion, and remaining present.

Student Perspective

My field instructor was a model for professionalism within an agency. She was the head of the social services department, which meant she was frequently busy. However, she did her best to make sure I understood that no matter what, her door was

always open. Initially, I probably took the offer as nothing more than a gesture of what she was supposed to say. After some time, I felt myself slowly warming up to the idea of connecting with her.

For example, I found that I was (unconsciously) frightened to make a mistake. Not so much in front of my supervisor but rather, in front of myself. This is why she made it a point to remind me weekly, if not daily, that I should allow myself to be the student throughout the process: "Just take a deep breath and be the student. I will be here to help you; continue to be the student..." It took quite a bit of time for this message to actually be absorbed. However, it did eventually sink in and I continued to carry this lesson with me throughout much of my placement while making it a part of my practice. It was by allowing myself to be the student that I was able to see that I was desperately trying to avoid making any mistakes. This idea of perfectionism kept me so anxious that it kept me from learning and growing. I was denying myself the chance to be vulnerable and succumb to the process. Thankfully, my field instructor suspected this of me, and we continued to talk about it up until the time that I graduated.

This process allowed for me to further recognize countertransference with the client and transference with my field instructor. It also helped me to distinguish the difference between what was in my past versus what was in my present. In short, my supervisor modeled acceptance and respect. Perhaps it was not the same exact experience with regard to my professor. But it did create a tremendous learning opportunity, a unique relationship, and an emotionally safe environment.

Final Thoughts

Regardless of the titles or the labels that anyone has (i.e. professor, field instructor, student, intern, client, etc.), the truth remains that our classrooms and offices are not typically a conducive context for personal disclosure just because we know them to be safe. It is the students and clients who need to feel that they are safe.

In our narratives, supported by the literature, we have discussed significant parallels between teaching in a classroom and in the field specifically,

as well as treatment while in session. Attention to the emotional safety of an environment illustrates the importance of safety and how it encourages safe exploration and an evolving sense of personal and professional awareness for the student, the client, and the clinician. In class, we are taught about theory and how to apply it to practice. However, when it comes to our work in the field, things are not so obvious.

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Role theory would suggest that by being a “student” one is assuming the role of being more vulnerable or perhaps even inferior, because traditionally the student is assumed to know less than the professor and/or field instructor. However, in the cases discussed in our narratives, we were all students. By definition and specific to the classroom setting, we were all in a position to learn and grow. It is only when we feel emotionally safe that we are able to unleash our voice, ask questions, speak with conviction, challenge, and internalize new information.

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A Lesson Brought Home from Seminar

Misty L. Wall

As an adoptive parent of a child with severe and persistent mental illness, and as a social work educator in a rural Intermountain area, I have struggled with unavoidable dual relationships as a client, parent, and educator. In the following narrative, I review my experiences and navigate these overlapping responsibilities and roles.

It's not quite dark, but the sun is setting. Its location in the sky makes me feel like I am in a spotlight. After another discharge from the psychiatric hospital, my daughter is deemed safe for discharge, but as yet it is unsafe for her to be home with the stress of her siblings and a family-like atmosphere. With the sun shining on me, I reluctantly ring the bell on the secured shelter door, where I will leave my thirteen-year-old daughter. Dizzy and numb with exhaustion from the ordeal of discharge planning and discharge, I reel with the shame of having failed as a parent, and the fear of checking my daughter into a shelter with those kids. As the shelter door opens, I squint into the sun to see a popular social work senior, who enrolled in several of my practice courses, answer the door. Puzzled, but enthusiastic, she speaks, "Dr. Wall, are you here for a field visit?" Feeling defeated, I looked down, wishing the sun would set, and that my time in the spotlight was over.

Past, Current, Future Students, Oh My

The social services in my conservative state are skeletal, at best. There are no residential treatment facilities, no group homes that work with private pay clients, and no residential options for any long-term care for children or teens with significant mental illness. Almost all agencies with a social service component depend on the work of students to provide services to their swollen client loads.

There is one small shelter for runaway, abused/neglected, or otherwise unmanageable teens

in the state's capital, where I reside. This is where my daughter will remain for the agency's maximum of three nights, while my family determines our next step. The shelter employs two social workers, both graduates of the program where I am a professor, and is supervised by a social worker who oversees several additional social work students each year. As part of the admission process, I sit down with the popular social work student, who greeted me at the door to complete the required intake paperwork, consisting of a description of my family's history, my relationship status, preferred parenting methods, religious affiliations, income, etc. As I complete the same paperwork for what seems like the hundredth time, I continue wishing for my time in the spotlight to be over.

Between the local inpatient psychiatric hospital, the larger, less acute setting of the state hospital, and juvenile detention; my daughter has been a resident of a facility approximately 80 days this year. Each incidence has involved encountering a number of my students doing internship hours or being paid for post graduate (BSW or MSW) work. Some of these students/former students have taken a special interest in her as my daughter; others have kept their distance because she is my daughter, but all have struggled with defining boundaries in this hazy realm of dual relationships. The extent at which students' systems and mine have overlapped is mind boggling to me. In absence of other available staff, a former student facilitated several family planning sessions, a current student observed one discharge

planning session – in order to have two staff members in the room – and countless students have checked us in or out. One especially difficult night, a current student working as a psychiatric tech while waiting for his social work license was involved in restraining my daughter after a physical altercation following a family session. When she is not in a hospital setting, my daughter receives the services of a therapist and psychiatrist, both of whom employ social work students and graduates of my program.

Parenting, Living, Failing in a Fishbowl

When I adopted my children, I had many dreams, some of which I have grieved, as most adoptive parents do. Other dreams have softened into new, less defined dreams that are more in line with the people my children really are, rather than whom I thought I could make them become. While I knew that parenting was taxing, none of my visions included police at three a.m., secure transports to psychiatric hospitals, or appearances before a juvenile detention judge. Although universal and natural, the loss and softening of those dreams has been sharpened by the fact that it appears that everywhere I turn there is a student, eager to learn, drawing attention to the complexity of parenting and living in a small community and dissolving my new dreams of quietly floundering through parenting.

Looking for Resources and Losing Faith

Each time my daughter has been admitted to some form of facility, I have been bewildered by the reports from staff indicating that she is their “best patient,” “so kind and funny,” “really insightful and helpful,” and even “perfectly behaved.” Yet, time and again, upon discharge, she would spiral out of control with violent acts in the home, threats and plans to end our lives, running away, destroying property, injuring herself, others, or pets. Each discharge has culminated in another admission to the psychiatric hospital, where she would be the shining star for staff, and make frequent, tearful phone calls pledging to change dangerous behaviors and expressing love and gratitude toward me, her adoptive mother.

Full of hope, I would return to the hospital during visiting hours, only to be greeted with more verbal and physical explosions, or her outright refusal to attend visits or family therapy sessions. The

contradictions in responses left me feeling mystified, emotionally exhausted, frightened, self-conscious of my ability as a social worker and mother, and wary of the skills I taught students for intervention with children and families.

The discharge letter prepared by the psychiatrist provided an introductory theory to the contradictions in my daughter’s behavior when outside of my home. He wrote more than three pages after patiently listening to my exasperation and self-blame. The day following this letter, Amy was discharged home when no other long-term placement as described in the psychiatrist’s letter was available in our state. During the discharge planning session requested by the social worker to outline expected behaviors and consequences when Amy returned home, Amy became angry and attempted to choke me. She was carried back to a locked unit, but the discharge continued as planned, with the social worker saying “She is just a [diagnostic acronym], acting like a [diagnostic acronym]. That can not be fixed here.”

As a parent, I was terrified to bring this wounded child into my home again. As a social worker, I was aghast at the crushing collapse of the system that could anticipate failure, in this case meaning further psychic injury to my daughter and physical injury to me and my family. As an educator, I felt lost and angry that a young social worker was so ambivalent to leaving my family’s needs so clearly unmet. I felt uninspired to continue encouraging noble young people to seek a job in this “helping profession” and dialoguing with students about the power of effecting change.

Redefining Success for Me and Amy

Realizing that parenting Amy was not a task I could master with more reading, workshops, reflection, or by finding the “right” resource nearly shattered me. Survival depended on my ability to redefine success for my daughter, for me as a mother, and for me as a social worker. I came to understand (or remember) that Amy is a beautifully bright, talented, and passionate young woman, who is aware of her limits, and not mine to “fix.” She is my daughter and is wounded deeply from the tragedy of child abuse and neglect, abandonment, multiple attachment disruptions, and horrors I cannot begin to comprehend. As a mother, I had to do what I tell

students in the field everyday: talk less, listen more, allow her take the lead in her own treatment, focus on strengths, surround myself with helping professionals competent in the field of attachment, and trust in the process. As a social worker, I have to be a relentless advocate for a reorganized system that is responsive to the client's needs.

Recommitment to Educating Social Workers

During this period in my family, I sat on the graduation stage looking out at the students who had completed their degrees, many of whom had inadvertently been brought into my personal world. This year students elected to display a PowerPoint presentation containing "words of wisdom" they had gained from each faculty member as a part of their contribution to the graduation ceremony. When my picture flashed across the screen, "It did not start with me and it will not end with me" scrolled under my picture. This is a mantra I adopted many years ago, while working in child welfare, to remind myself that I did not cause injury to my clients, change is not up to me, nor is it usually done within the short time I am able to work with them. I have shared this mantra with many students in seminar struggling to "see" the fruits of their labor with clients. Somehow, seeing that mantra shared helped me reframe the job of change back to its rightful owner – my daughter. In the end, my students reminded me they are listening and learning and that I am giving a valuable piece of the puzzle, which they helped me see that day despite all the pomp and circumstance. Indeed, I am not the origin of the injuries in my daughter's soul. Nor, will I be the cure for them. I am merely one in a line of supportive people planting seeds of difference, and that is how to be a change agent.

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The Social Work Student as Participant Observer in Group Therapy Training

Sarah E. LaRocque

Field instruction in group work requires training social work students in both applying evidence-based practice within a group setting and attending to the complexity of group processes. A framework of field instruction was developed to enhance the social work students' abilities to weave group process with specific therapeutic methods and group structure.

The challenges and joys of instructing social work students in the art of group therapy are, in themselves, continuous processes of learning and critical reflection for the supervisor. As a field instructor for a master of social work (MSW) program at a local university, I believed I was providing a comprehensive learning experience in group work for my students through a combination of knowledge-building activities at the outpatient mental health clinic where I was employed. The clinic's field instruction protocol was heavily geared toward teaching the theories and methods of evidence-based group therapies, such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT; Freeman, Pretzer, Fleming, & Simon, 1990; Hunot, Churchill, Teixeira, & Silva de Lima, 2010; Paterson, 2000) or Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT; Linehan, 1997; Linehan, Dimeff, & Koerner, 2007; Stoffers, Vollm, Rucker, Timmer, Huband, & Lieb, 2012).

The experiential training component focused on the translation of these evidence-based theories into group practice. Information on the developmental stages of groups; the therapeutic factors at play in groups; and the structuring of short-term, psychoeducational, and interpersonal groups, was secondary. Professional development issues centered around working within an organization's values and standards of practice while maintaining an identity as a social worker.

Although this instructional framework adhered to

what Counselman and Abernathy (2011, p. 200) described as the "two core tasks" of supervision, mainly "1) ensuring that the therapist provides good patient care and 2) providing teaching of psychotherapy along with professional development," I acknowledged at the end of one MSW student's field instruction that I was simply not satisfied with the outcomes or the structure of the group therapy training component of the practicum.

I was troubled by this particular student's lack of understanding of group processes and her role as a group therapist. She had been too focused on learning the evidence-based theories and translating the methods into direct practice, and not focused enough on developing her own skills and identity as a group therapist. This was not the first time I had experienced a social work student overlook the value of learning the process-outcome relationship in groups. Yalom (1995) described this relationship as the interpersonal learning that occurs for individuals in groups, which mediates therapeutic change along with the therapeutic factors that operate in all groups, and which influences the effectiveness of the group as a whole.

Furman, Rowan and Bender (2009) put this more simply by describing the "group process (what happens during group) and its outcomes (the effects of group participation on members' well-being)" as a measure of a group's effectiveness (p. 41). The

authors further noted that social work “students must be helped to develop a complex set of behaviors that facilitate change within the group context” (p. vi). Too often, it appeared to me, students were not learning to weave group process knowledge with evidence-based practice in useful ways.

This was concerning me for two reasons. First, there was sufficient cumulative empirical group research that the efficacy of psychotherapy is related to the quality of the client-therapist relationship (Furman, Rowan, & Bender, 2009; Rivera & Darke, 2012; Rose & Chang, 2011; Yalom, 1995; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Developing successful client-therapist relationships in group work is particularly challenging, and I was not satisfied that the social work students were demonstrating sufficient understanding of the factors that contributed to the therapeutic alliance in the complexity of a group setting. Second, having worked for many years on interdisciplinary mental health teams, I had witnessed the barriers to effective group work when the therapists were ill-equipped to respond to the group dynamics. I reminded myself that I was preparing the MSW students for entry into the social work profession, and I was acutely aware that the intensity, frequency, and quality of clinical supervision that they would receive in their future employment would run from extensive and excellent to almost non-existent and inadequate, and thus they needed to be adequately trained at the field instruction level. In addition, regional group therapy training programs were closing down in Canada, reducing the opportunity for new mental health professionals to obtain didactic and experiential training in group processes (Canadian Group Psychotherapy Association [CGPA], 2009).

Consequently, I was interested in regenerating the field instruction framework that I was using in order to address what I felt was being left out in the group therapy training of MSW students. As Furman, Rowan, and Bender (2009, p. vi) identified, “Many social work programs do not adequately prepare students for practice with groups, because they do not provide them with the context to master them.” I felt this critique accurately reflected my field instruction experience, and as such, I endeavored to regenerate our group therapy training component. The usefulness and relevance of this new

framework, I have since discovered, is that it can be implemented in many group therapies, regardless of the group structure and across disciplines.

In the following narrative I will: first, elaborate on the rationale for this shift in group work training; second, provide an outline of the regenerated framework; third, provide rationales for the regenerated framework and detail some of the features; and fourth, summarize the benefits and challenges that I have witnessed to date as a result of implementing this regenerated field instruction framework for MSW students.

Defining the Gap in Knowledge Building

Through reflection and in conversation with colleagues, some of whom I had trained in long-term group psychotherapy as new mental health professionals, I came to realize that what was being left out in the training of the MSW students in short-term and structured evidence-based groups was a comprehensive understanding of the stages of groups, the therapeutic factors that influence change in all group therapies, and the learning and practice of therapist techniques that respond to group dynamics.

Whitaker (2001), in her instructional book on group work, advocated for social workers to develop a sound theoretical base in group processes as a foundation to practice techniques. As there is no shortage of literature on the stages of group development and group dynamics, for example Yalom and Leszcz (2005), or the tasks and strategies available for group therapists to enhance the effectiveness of groups during the different developmental stages (Furman, Rowan, & Bender, 2009), the gap in field instruction group training related to the problem of students gravitating toward learning to translate evidence-based therapies into practice. Despite my reminding students that the evidence is inconsistent as to whether adherence to treatment manuals relates to treatment outcome (Hunot et al., 2010; Rivera & Darke, 2012; Stoffers et al., 2012), when faced with learning evidence-based group therapies the students tended to spend more time implementing the manualized therapy techniques in a group setting than on understanding group processes and their role as therapists in mediating the therapeutic factors in groups. By the end of their field instruction many of the MSW

students demonstrated a lack of understanding of group processes and the inability to identify and respond to problem dynamics. These group skills need to be basic standards of competency, as the research indicates that group processes influence the effectiveness of evidence-based group therapies (Furman, Rowan, & Bender, 2009; Rivera & Darke, 2012; Rose & Chang, 2011; Yalom, 1995) and it was essential that the field instruction facilitate this knowledge for students through a combined group theory/evidence-based methods learning approach. This was the first gap in training that needed to be addressed.

Another area of the field instruction that required attention was the lack of opportunity for MSW students to learn and practice clinical skills that focused on group techniques and strategies intended to productively move the group along and attend to the dynamics. In the existing field instruction framework, the students – as group trainees or simple observers, sometimes behind a one-way mirror – were not being provided with sufficient opportunities (time/space) for critical reflection in the here and now of the groups' interactions. The expectations to learn/teach the evidence-based therapy techniques interfered with the observation/reflection of group dynamics and the practice of clinical group skills in the moment. As Rivera and Darke (2012) noted, "Specific theories and techniques are far less relevant to a therapeutic outcome than the collaborative relationship and work of the client and therapist" (p. 504). This was precisely what the students were not spending time on.

To complicate things, many MSW students have no prior experience in group work or participation in groups. Without the experiential component of what it is like to be an active group participant, the students often do not comprehend the relevance of the relationships that are built over the course of the group's life, the therapeutic factors at play that impact any one individual member's treatment goals and the likelihood of significant change, and the therapist techniques unique to group therapy that mediate the effectiveness of group (Jaques, Muran, & Christopher, 2010; Furman, Rowan, & Bender, 2009; Rivera & Darke, 2012; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). One student group trainee's comment at the end of her four months in a CBT group illustrates

this lack of understanding of the importance of specific group processes in evidence-based therapies. A young adult male in the group, who had worked hard the first six weeks of group to reduce the intensity, duration, and frequency of his panic attacks, persistently resisted any further goal setting that targeted return to work or attending university courses. The social work student described him as difficult and help-rejecting, and suggested discharging him from the group as she felt he had been taught all the CBT skills outlined in the group manual. When queried how she could use the group as a whole to help motivate the client to engage in self-directed goals, she replied that she did not perceive this as her role as a group facilitator. The student had learned the evidence-based therapy and techniques, but she could not conceptualize the therapeutic factors that could identify the group member's resistance nor her role as a group therapist in challenging him to move forward in his therapy.

Most group work field instructors will recognize that when resistance interferes with teaching skills or when conflict arises amongst the members in a group, students struggle to respond effectively. MSW students need to develop a repertoire of group specific skills that they can feel comfortable and competent using in any group format. As Yalom (1995) suggested, once group trainees "master" the process of change in groups "they will be in a position to fashion a group therapy that will be effective for any clinical population in any setting" (p. xiii). The regenerated field instruction framework would need to address this gap in skill acquisition in group work.

The final area of concern in the existing field instruction framework was the lack of attention to the personal journey a student travels as they develop their identities and roles as group therapists. In my experience, evidence-based therapies are designed to provide empirical practice guidelines and by design demand a rigid adherence to the manualized therapy (Linehan et al., 2007; Pollio & Macgowan, 2011; Paterson, 2000; Rivera & Darke, 2012; Yalom, 1995). For students in the role of group trainee, this focus can at times place too much emphasis on following the evidence-based therapy, which reduces their experiences of self in the group and their interpersonal interactions with the group

members. Rivera and Darke (2012) reflected this when they noted that “manual-adherence is not always associated with positive treatment outcomes and has led to mechanical applications, premature interventions, and interference with the therapeutic alliance” (p. 503).

As a supervisor I marvel at the self-learning that occurs when students sit with their own experiences in group and critically reflect on their identities and roles as group therapists as they immerse themselves in the complexities of the therapeutic alliance and its mediating influence on the group members’ behaviours, thoughts, and emotions. As Swiller (2011) noted, “education about and attention to personal styles and characteristics are important to therapists in training” (p. 270). The hazard of evidence-based therapies, to my way of thinking, is the inattention to the role and identity and unique style of the therapist in productively supporting group members toward significant change. The regenerated field instruction framework would need to incorporate training students in the professional use of self in groups.

To respond to these identified gaps in knowledge building and adequately prepare MSW students to become skilled in both group process and evidence-based therapies, I needed an instructional framework that balanced the acquisition of the theories/methods of group therapy, along with the acquisition of the evidence-based therapies. I was ready in my own professional development to explore a different way of providing field instruction in group therapy that retained the didactic components of instructing students in evidence-based practices, for example CBT, while enhancing the experiential components necessary for understanding the process-outcome relationship in groups. I turned to the group work and knowledge translation literature. As I waded through this information, a revised framework for field instruction began to take shape. What was generated was a shift in emphasis on knowledge-building activities. The revised field instruction framework that I would implement would provide the MSW students with the opportunity to: (a) learn how to apply evidence-based practices first through group participation and observation, then through direct practice; (b) experience the process-outcome relationship in groups first-hand through the role of

participant; and (c) understand the different positions possible for the group therapist through reflection and self-directed learning.

The Social Work Student as Participant Observer in Group Training

In order to shift the emphasis in knowledge-building activities toward the complexities of group dynamics and the influence these factors have on the implementation/effectiveness of evidence-based theories in practice, I required a learning framework that would enhance the facilitation of both knowledge transfer and practice of each of these two aspects of group work. Knowledge translation refers to the dissemination, learning, and application of theoretical and empirical knowledge into practice (Parry, Salsberg, & Macaulay, n.d.). The knowledge translation literature provided an overview of recommended educational practices in clinical settings to promote the translation of theory into practice on the ground. Davis and Davis (n.d.) and Hergenrather, Geishecker, McGuire-Klutzn, Gitlin, and Rhodes (2010) have suggested that the facilitators to knowledge transfer in clinical settings are most useful when they are developed in collaboration with, and generated by, the knowledge users.

In my experience this was precisely what was missing in the field instruction framework: the building of group knowledge from a subjective student position. The CGPA national training standards recommend that group trainees complete up to 20 hours of group experience as part of their comprehensive group psychotherapy training (2012). Swiller (2011), in a review of the benefits of providing process groups for trainees in psychiatric residencies, commented that “experiential learning can lead to a far greater mastery than ordinary academic learning” (p. 265). With this in mind I reflected on conversations with my colleagues and former group trainees on the matter of how to maximize MSW student learning of group processes, while also learning the evidence-based therapies over a four- to six-month field instruction timeline. The message I had heard was consistent: find a strategy that immerses the students in the group process through participation, while enabling them to critically observe the interplay between the group therapist’s strategies guided by the evidence-based practices and the

process-outcome relationship. After a period of reflection, the social sciences qualitative research literature provided the foundation for field instruction in group work that I was looking for: the participant observer.

The participant observer concept is described as a method of data collection wherein a researcher interacts with the participants of a study through active participation in the activities of the specific group under study over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2013; D'Cruz & Jones, 2012). Wilson (2006) described the participant observer role as "simultaneously observing their [a group's] behavior and analyzing why they are things in their way" (p. 40). The participant observer role would become the foundation for the social work student's knowledge-building activities over the course of their field instruction in group work by enabling them to gain an awareness of group processes through their interactions in the here and now in the group as a whole while concurrently practicing the techniques of the evidence-based practice from the perspective of a group member. Positioning the MSW students as participant observers in the therapy groups would situate them as group trainees without the pressure to perform as group therapists or miss the group-as-a-whole atmosphere in the more removed role of simple observer. As Swiller (2011) noted, the benefits of group trainees engaging as participants is the "potential for a deeper understanding of group dynamics, individual dynamics (including one's own psyche), [and] interpersonal communication skills and difficulties" (p. 269).

To reinforce the experiential learning in the group setting for participant observers, I revised the field instruction framework to include a weekly supervision group of three to four students from various training sites. The benefits of supervision groups in group training are described in the literature, for example Counselman and Abernathy (2011), Swiller (2011), and Yalom (1995); however, this essential instructional component is, in my experience, frequently absent in social work student practicums (Furman, Rowan, & Bender, 2009). Counselman and Abernathy (2011), Davis and Davis (n.d.), Hergenrather et al. (2010), and Parry et al. (n.d.) all recommend self-directed learning for clinicians on the ground and weekly facilitated

small groups of peers to promote the sustaining of learning by providing multiple perspectives on any one student's learning question, enhancing multidirectional co-learning, the sharing of expertise and decision-making around intervention strategies, and the capacity to effectively participate in communities of practice. These strategies reportedly have a demonstrated impact on competence and performance (Davis and Davis, n.d.). The format of the supervision groups would be such that students could discuss their observations and experiences of the interplay between group processes and evidence-based therapies.

Experiential Understanding of the Process-Outcome Relationship

With the students positioned as participant observers, they were perhaps now more situated to capture the nuances of the process-outcome relationship, or change process, as they learned the specific techniques of the evidence-based therapies through direct practice as a student group member. In the participant role the students were encouraged to experience the group process and dynamics through the lens of being a group member. By direct participation each week the students could draw upon their own change experiences as they learned and practiced the skills being taught in the group, thus gaining an experiential understanding of the processes of change through skill development. In addition, as student participants they would experience first-hand the influence of the therapeutic factors over the duration of the group.

To illustrate the power of the participant observer role in group training, I turn to one student's professional growth as she participated in a DBT skills generalization group. During a review of the emotion regulation skills, the student had become aware of her anxiety as she sat across from a male group member whom she experienced as always angry. When she later brought this up in group supervision, a male student enquired if she was afraid of him. She sat back in her chair and with dawning awareness acknowledged that she usually avoided working with male clients and avoided interacting with them in group because she was uncomfortable with any expression of anger. The student had experienced interpersonal learning through her role as participant observer in the group.

This enabled critical reflection of her interaction style with male clients. In keeping with the DBT techniques being taught in the group, the student decided to use the skill of opposite-to-emotion-action and sat next to the male group member the following week. She was now moving into the change process through social skill practice.

In group she shared her use of the emotion regulation skill in the here-and-now of check-in, noting that the trust she had developed in the group as a whole afforded her the safety she needed to confront her fear of conflict. The group members and the therapist responded non-judgmentally, reinforcing her interpersonal learning and skill practice. In her observer role the student later reported that through this experience she had developed not only a better understanding of the evidence-based skills being taught in the group but also of how individual change is facilitated in groups. This reflected what Furman, Rowan, and Bender (2009) have noted: “The group becomes a wonderful place where [group members] can experiment with new ways of acting and being” (p. 11). The student’s use of the participant observer role in this example captures how students can combine the use of experiential learning as participants with observation of the therapeutic factors at play in a manualized therapy group.

Included in this instructional framework for learning group process was a requirement for the students to identify and report on their observations as part of a systematic method of building, over time, an understanding of the process-outcome relationship in groups. As participant observers the students were asked to identify phenomena occurring in the group as a whole, such as universality, cohesiveness, the stages of development, and corrective relational experiences. The interactions between the group members – such as how they supported, influenced or confronted each other and their outcomes in therapy – were also to be recorded through observation and linking theory with practice. The goal was for the student, as participant, to experientially learn the impact of the therapist interventions over the life of the group, and as observer understand the complexity of applying different sets of therapist skills at different stages of the group and in response to specific group dynamics. This aspect of the field instruction is in

line with Pollio and Macgowan’s (2011) integrated instructional model for educating MSW students in group work in the classroom. The authors stress the importance of an approach that incorporates not only evidence-based knowledge from the empirical and authoritative literature but also practice-based evidence; that is, the “systematic accumulation of our own decisions” through “knowledge of the impact of dynamics such as group processes and structures, group leadership, member roles, and other factors” (Pollio & Macgowan, 2011, p. 98).

Building an Identity as a Group Therapist

In a review of the literature, Jacques et al. (2010) found that the characteristics of the therapeutic relationship consistently correlated with client outcome to a greater extent than did specialized therapy techniques. Furman, Rowan, & Bender (2009, p. 13) noted that group leaders “often underestimate the degree to which their own behavior influences the group” and they recommended that social workers learn to become “self-reflective” of their interactions with the group members and the group as a whole. Cohen (2011), Rivera and Darke (2012), Rose and Chang (2011), and Yalom and Leszcz (2005) also reinforce the importance of understanding the professional use of self in groups. In this light, the participant observer role places greater emphasis on the MSW student’s understanding of their use of self as a group therapist. My own training in group work was deeply grounded in the tradition of interpersonal group psychotherapy (Dies & Mackenzie, 1983; MacKenzie, 1990; Piper, McCallum, & Hassam, 1992; Yalom, 1992; Yalom, 1995; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). This enamored my focus on group processes in concert with the idea of providing structured group content.

This orientation to group work would underpin my instruction to the students on what to observe in the group processes as a means of gaining an understanding of the role of the group therapist. Thus as part of their observations students were encouraged to reflect upon the following questions: Is the group therapist understanding, accepting, genuine, empathic, challenging, or supportive? Has the therapist communicated clear boundaries to the group members? How does the therapist use self-disclosure, and how do the group members respond when this occurs? How does the therapist provide

feedback to the group as a whole and to individuals? How does the therapist build trust with the group and within the group? These questions were designed to help the social work students reflect on how they are building their own styles and identities as group therapists. The ultimate goal of this part of the field instruction was to promote the practice of critical self-reflection and professional growth as the student discovers the unique role of the group therapist. This aspect of the field instruction is illustrated in the dynamics that unfolded for one student as she struggled to find her footing and build relationships in the group. The student was in her fourth week as participant observer in a group comprised mostly of mothers with adult children with borderline personality disorder when the discussion turned to the shame that many of the women experienced for their perceived roles in their children's problems.

At this point the student disclosed to the group that both of her teenage sons also struggled with mental health issues and that she understood their shame. In group supervision later in the week the student reflected that she had spontaneously lied to the group about her sons "to fit in and be liked." This awareness surprised and embarrassed her. The participant role had triggered her need to be liked and included, which made it difficult for her to be authentic in the room and offer feedback from her own experiences. This was an invaluable teaching moment for the student. She had gained first-hand experience that the here-and-now interactions of the group could trigger a therapist's personal struggles and interfere with her or his ability to be effective. She now realized that she did not need to be part of the universality of the group to be helpful. She returned to group the next week and disclosed to the members that she had lied to fit in, and then, in the service of group cohesion and trust, she role-modeled a healthy repair with the group as a whole. Over the course of the coming weeks the student, as participant observer, engaged in critical self-reflection. Through this journey her role and identity as an emerging group therapist developed and she practiced a more judicious and strategic use of self-disclosure.

Following this episode, I decided to assign additional readings on developing clinical skills, critical thinking and self-reflection in group work to

foster the students' development of their identities as group therapists. I selected Yalom's (2002) book *The Gift of Therapy: An Open Letter to a New Generation of Therapists and Their Patients*, as it specifically attends to the therapeutic relationship. In that book, Yalom used personal vignettes to highlight effective techniques for responding to individual and group as a whole interactions that challenge the client-therapist boundaries and relationships. I find his guidelines to be useful starting points for the MSW students to learn the practice of self-reflection as they gain experience in the here-and-now interactions of the group and develop an understanding of how their own interpersonal issues and communication styles impact the health and effectiveness of the group.

The Regenerated Framework in Action

As I implemented this revised group training framework, I took notes on what I noticed was promoting learning and what seemed to get in the way. At the group level, it appeared that the participant observer role promoted a working relationship between the social work students and the group members, validating the professions values of empowerment and respect. As a learning strategy it appeared that by situating themselves as participant observers, rather than in the role of group trainee or simple observer, the students demonstrated the ability to be curious and uncertain without having to appear competent. They were able to ask questions without fearing if it was the "right one," to practice judicious self-disclosure without attempting to belong to the group members' problems or to be accepted, and to practice self-reflection in their interpersonal styles without having to appear infallible. For example, for the students who were participant observers, the anxiety experienced by many students as they entered groups became a declared area for professional self-development as opposed to an obstacle to engaging in clinical practice for group trainees.

An initial concern that some of the students might use their roles as participant observers to work on personal problems did not materialize. I have found that the students' focus on self in the groups centered around their professional self-development and, through the supervision groups, critical reflection of their interpersonal styles of interacting with group members and the group as a whole.

When one of my students disclosed that historical personal problems were being triggered in group and interfering with his ability to maintain his professionalism, he readily followed through with a recommendation to attend counseling at the university wellness centre, which provided the support he needed to continue his practicum. Pre-group preparation for both the MSW students and the group members also facilitated the instructional framework. Clear guidelines on the goal of the participant observer role (to experience the change process and the importance of relationships in groups through direct participation), the professional use of self, and the function of the supervision groups provided the framework most students needed to enter this learning style. The feedback from the group members was also positive. They liked the idea of students learning the group experience “from the ground up” and often provided critical feedback to the students on therapist strategies and group processes that they found helpful.

As a final note, the extent of previous training and experience in group work guides the length of time in the practicum dedicated to the participant observer role before moving the student forward to group trainee. However, I consistently observed that once students settled into the participant observer role most requested to continue in this style of learning. They concurrently moved into group trainee positions as they experienced valuable learning about groups in the former role.

My original concern, knowledge-building of group processes, was achieved through the experiential components as group participants. This provided an opportunity for the student to experience/observe the interplay between group theory, group processes, and therapist strategies. Through direct participation in the group processes, the students learned first-hand what Rose and Chang (2011) suggested: “[that] group structures or processes either interfere with or enhance individual or shared motivation” (p. 165). The debriefings that followed each group session in the weekly supervision groups enabled the students to describe and deconstruct what they had observed about the evidence-based practices and the interplay with group processes. The best feedback I received on this revised field instruction framework occurred during the third

supervision group. The students conceptualized group theory into practice and spontaneously jumped into their own group process to work through a relationship conflict that had been brewing amongst them. I knew that I had found the balance that I was looking for as a field instructor when my MSW students learned the value of group therapy for themselves.

Relevance to Social Work Field Instruction

The use of participant observation as a field instruction framework in group work accomplishes two tasks concurrently: training the MSW students in evidence-based practices, and providing an experiential understanding of group processes and the therapeutic factors that mediate change in individual members and the group as a whole. The strength of the participant observer role appeared to be in the increased critical reflection and clinical skills in group work demonstrated by the students who participated in this instructional framework. Some constraints included the limited exposure to group processes due to the short time scale of the MSW practicums (four to six months), and the limited time to move to the next stage of instruction as group trainees, while practicing translation of the skills and knowledge learned as participant observers. The concern that social work students will enter the participant observer role and focus on personal problems can be addressed through diligence on the part of the field instructor along with adequate pre-group preparation.

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A Funny Thing Happened at the Internship Today: A Reflection on Ethical Dilemmas, Decision-Making, and Consequences of a Questionable Field Work Situation

Katie Johnston-Goodstar

Ethical dilemmas in field work often challenge field work supervisors to engage students in a process of learning and reflection. This narrative presents the flip side of that supervision experience as a field work instructor re-tells the story of her own ethical dilemma and decision-making, and explores the consequences of that decision on her field placement, her student's learning, and her professional relationships.

Introduction

Ethical dilemmas are a common experience in professional practice and subsequently in field work placements. These dilemmas need not be approached with trepidation. To the contrary, a deliberative examination of them can be a profound learning experience for students.

One of my faculty responsibilities is to supervise numerous internships and field placements in two programs in a school of social work. The programs are not accredited social work programs, but they concentrate on youth work, a field of study that shares history and philosophy with the social work profession. Additionally, I hold graduate degrees in social work and am professionally affiliated as a social worker.

Both of our programs require a field work experience prior to graduation; field work supervision is an essential component of that experience. In fulfilling my duties, I have had the opportunity to engage many ethical situations with my students, often broadening the scope of traditional professional ethics to the recognition of the ethical dimensions in all aspects of our practice (Banks, 2008a).

This past year, I had the pleasure of supervising a graduate field placement that, in part, included the student's participation in an evaluation I was conducting for a critical youth media project at a

local high school. As part of her learning experience, the student proposed to refine her skills in evaluation and to develop a better understanding of youth development and education within the context of critical media education.

Over the course of the semester, the field experience was relatively uneventful. The project progressed as expected, the student was diligent and reflective, and we were fast approaching completion of the field experience. As is typical for my evaluation projects and supervision, I visited the site frequently, became acquainted with participants and site staff, and provided guidance on the occasional supervision question or reference to academic literature. That was, until a sudden unexpected situation occurred.

As I prepared to leave from a seemingly inconsequential site visit near the tail end of the evaluation, I was approached by a group of students at the school. This didn't seem unusual to me. I am often approached by students at field visits and evaluation sites. I am a member of the local community. I was a youth work practitioner prior to my appointment as a professor. I know many relatives and friends of young people in the community. I attend high school sports games and various community gatherings. In other words, I frequently work on projects where my professional and personal identities overlap. I am comfortable negotiating these multiple identities. In fact, I think they have made me a better evaluator and field

supervisor. On this day, however, I was faced with an ethical dilemma that I didn't quite expect.

The Dilemma

Through their tears, shaking hands, and broken voices, I began to piece together the multitude of stories I was hearing. The voices were overlapping; there was an investigation at the school involving the possibility that the students had earned credits from incorrectly licensed teachers. Furthermore, most of the students would "lose credits" setting them back months, if not years, from graduation.

The students told me they had attempted to seek clarification and asked for legal representation and resources for advocacy. They alleged that administrative staff had declined and heavily-handedly advised teachers and school staff that it was NOT their role to provide students with these resources. They did not know where else to obtain assistance so they reached out to me.

The students felt their complaints had fallen on deaf ears. Some were contemplating quitting school altogether, and they were desperate for someone to help them. I was hesitant to believe their claims. Surely, I thought, "there must be an explanation, a simple misunderstanding...." At my very core, I believed the students deserved an opportunity to have their concerns heard regarding such a life-altering decision and I couldn't imagine administration refusing this basic right. I reassured them that I would respond and asked them to give me a little time to investigate the situation.

I went home and contemplated what I knew to this point. Despite multiple attempts, school administrators hadn't responded to my inquiries for quite some time now. Initially, I had thought nothing of it; there was a new administrator and she appeared extremely busy. The evaluation project was going along smoothly, the teacher was always hard working, and the school staff pleasantly greeted me with each visit. The evaluation project was nearing completion; I hardly wanted to rock the boat.

I reached out to familiar staff to gather more information. They were reluctant; some outright refused to discuss the issue with me. There was an unstated and uneasy feeling present in each

interaction. It quickly became apparent that I could not guarantee that legal and advocacy resources would be provided unless I delivered them myself. This seemed like a couple of simple referrals and yet it also left me with a dilemma. I began pondering many questions: If I respond to the students' request, what was the potential impact on my evaluation project and on my student's field placement? If students were being silenced and I did nothing, was I complicit in these actions? Did I have an ethical and professional obligation to assist them in obtaining the resources they requested?

The Decision-making Process

I am a firm believer that we cannot and should not pursue rule-bound or exact social work practice, most especially when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Banks (2008a) urges us to consider new approaches to social work ethics, which "pay attention to the situated nature of values and conduct" (p. 1245). Like Husband (1995), I share skepticism about the "universality and objectivity of ethical frameworks." My professional experience has led me more toward an ethics of uncertainty: "a fluid approach, tailored to specific circumstances; an approach to ethics that is firmly linked with politics; and an ethics of empowerment" (Banks, 2008b, p. 2).

This approach to ethics has allowed me to craft my social work practice in both place and time, and to draw upon the wisdom of my experience and those I work with. I believe it is vital for social workers to explore contexts, think critically, examine the evidence and their own assumptions deeply, and negotiate an ethical decision in consultation with colleagues who ascribe to similar values. In other words, "reading, thinking, and talking about ethics can make a difference" (Reamer, 1990, p. x).

As I often do when negotiating a particularly difficult practice decision, I consulted the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. (I also frequently consult the Youth Work Code of Ethics created by the Australian Youth Coalition but for the purposes of this article, I will focus here on the social work profession and its code.) I did not use this code to determine a specified course of action but to begin an internal conversation about the values of my profession and the possibilities for ethical practice within it. I also

began discussions with colleagues about the situation. I furthermore discussed the possible consequences of my decision and my ethical obligations with my student. I insured her that completion of her field placement would not be jeopardized.

The Decision

After much consideration, I decided I was bound to provide the resources requested, regardless of the potential consequences to me or my evaluation project. Below, I explicate my decisions using the core values and principles of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2011; Kirst-Ashman, 2009).

I am a social worker; I value service to those in need and to address social problems. In this situation, I could NOT guarantee that these resources would be provided by someone else. Because “social workers elevate service to others above self-interest” (NASW, Value of Service, 2011), I determined that I could not prioritize my evaluation project and my desire to not “rock the boat” above the needs of the students.

I am a social worker; I value social justice and have a responsibility to promote the self-determination of the individual. “Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people” (NASW, Value of Social Justice, 2011). Further, “social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals” (NASW, 2011). I determined that the students had a right to access requested information and resources in order to defend themselves and their positions.

I am a social worker; my professional actions must reflect my value of integrity. “Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated” (NASW, Value of Integrity, 2011). I determined that it was my duty to promote ethical practice at my evaluation and field placement sites as well as to reflect positively upon my own institution and profession. The social work profession seeks to “enhance human well-being and

help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 2011).

The Consequences?

As is apparent in this narrative, I chose to provide assistance, which included referrals to a legal-aid office, a local congressional office, and two community activists interested in educational justice issues. The referrals proved beneficial to the students in countless ways. These benefits provided reassurance to me in the days that followed; reassurance that was needed because this was a decision that came with multiple consequences despite my attempt to make an ethical decision.

First and foremost, the evaluation project and I became a target for the administrator, who was not pleased with my decision to provide referrals to resources or (I assume) the additional resistance or legal actions that could follow. When I confirmed to the administrator that I had provided the referrals, I was asked to leave the evaluation site. My evaluation project was temporarily halted less than 24 hours later. The situation escalated and was eventually resolved, but my institution and I had to devote significant time, energy, and resources to the defense of the evaluation project and my decision.

In addition to the direct consequences, this was an all-around uncomfortable and nerve-racking experience for a junior faculty member. Whether justified or not, I felt like other faculty members would judge my ability to properly manage an evaluation site and I worried whether or not my situation impacted their own research collaborations. I needed to reevaluate my ability to collaborate with the evaluation project site despite having an intense interest in and commitment to that small community. All of this had potentially serious implications for me.

The students also faced consequences that can be tied to my decision. They were intimidated and pushed to the margins as a result of their legal and political actions. Already strained relations soured even further. Some students felt uncomfortable; some felt pushed out and chose to leave the school. The students were determined; they may have eventually reached out and obtained these resources

from another person, but ultimately I was the actor who put the wheels in motion and thus I felt indirectly responsible for their intimidation.

On the flip side, there were also many positive consequences of this decision. I have received encouragement, friendship, and support (albeit quiet at times) from within my institution and the evaluation project site. My student reports having a frustrating, yet amazing, field experience that provided for unique and profound ethical learning. Moreover, some of the staff at the evaluation project site have subsequently reached out to say they found their working conditions unbearable. They report benefiting vicariously from the empowerment of the students. Students received the resources they requested, and students reported that some (although not all) of their credits were restored following their resistance.

In addition to providing positive benefits, my decision also contributed to negative consequences. I was left to choose between the worst of two evils: do I support the repression of these young people or do I expose them to possible repercussions resulting from their empowerment? Regardless of, and because of, these outcomes and consequences, I find value in the experience despite its troubling aspects and contradictions (Weinberg, 2008). The processes of discussion, consultation, and negotiation have provided me with a roadmap to continued and 'situated' ethical practice (Banks, 2008b); one that I intend to carry with me in my future practice.

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A Village, an Intern, Two Professors, and a Chief: Developing a Field Practicum within the Traditional Chieftaincy Structure of a Rural Village in Ghana

Dorie J. Gilbert, Tim Bailey, and Peter Dwumah

Increasingly, students are completing field assignments abroad, and thus schools are challenged to establish international placements that will build culturally-grounded skillsets with appropriate structure and supervision. In this paper, the first author reflects on how a rural, village setting and its centuries-old chieftaincy system in Ghana, West Africa, gave new meaning to establishing an international field practicum.

The field practicum has historically been at the core of social work education, providing an opportunity for the student to build, integrate, and apply knowledge and skills of the profession while serving individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities. Yet, our conception of “neighborhoods” and “communities” is generally from a western perspective. As a seasoned international field liaison, I was recently challenged to think creatively in establishing a field practicum to be structured within a rural village in Ghana, West Africa. Having already developed international field practicums in Ghana and South Africa, working closely with agencies, hospitals, orphanages, and schools, I was excited to explore a new, community-based graduate-level internship in Ghana’s Ashante region.

The village of Patriensa – its people, culture and landscape – had captured my interest since 1998. It’s a relatively large rural village, and one of the 26 villages/towns within the Asante Akim district. The village has an agrarian economy, with about 74% of the population working in the agricultural sector and surviving through subsistence farming. The community struggles with health, sanitation and employment concerns but has much to offer in the way of enthusiastic interest in development. With an established history of community development initiatives, Patriensa may be described as a progressive place with ambitious community leaders.

Initially, I was introduced to this village as part of an international conference on sustainable development in Ghana. The international conference, held in May of 1998, was organized by Dr. Osei Darkwa, a native of Patriensa, then working in the United States as a social work professor. The event included a post-conference site visit to Patriensa, where we broke ground on a multi-purpose community center. The most recent former First Lady of Ghana, Her Excellency, Dr. Ernestina Naadu Mills, wife of the late President John Atta Mills (then Vice President), known for her support of empowerment programs, attended the ribbon cutting. This was a major encouragement for the community to continue on its path of development.

Over the years, I found my way back to the village several times and became committed to its development. In 2011, Tim, the second author, was assigned to the village as his advanced field placement, under our school’s community and administrative leadership (CAL) concentration. Tim was familiar with Patriensa, having worked jointly with a group of engineering students to implement water and sanitation projects in the community as part of an ongoing international academic service-learning project. Tim’s practicum was centered on sustainable community development, organizing, and empowerment, and working closely with the community to solidify the launching of a community-owned social enterprise. As an

innovative practicum focused on community-based development immersed in a rural West African village, this was old-fashioned community development work. This is a practice, some argue, which is rooted in African tradition. As George Bob-Milliar (2009) posits:

The dominant concept of development – based on the idea of human progress, with the broad aim of increasing the standard of living of people as a whole, a notion whose ownership has been claimed and hijacked by the West – has been practised by Ghanaian kings, chiefs, and queens for generations. (p. 544)

In other words, this practicum was taking community development-focused social work practice back to its traditional African roots. We embraced this idea!

In developing this placement, a key question had to be answered: how does the structure of the placement fit within the village and, more specifically, within the indigenous chieftaincy system? Field practicums, whether domestic or abroad, tend to be partnered with a public sector organization or a non-governmental organization (NGO). International field placements sometimes fall outside the agency domain and a rural West African village clearly challenged the typical structure and conceptualization for an international placement in terms of both student characteristics and supervision support. The challenges of developing this placement are captured in Rae's (2004) analysis of arrangement and structure of U.S. international field placements, which centered around 6 questions:

1. What kinds of backgrounds do students interested in overseas placements have?
2. How do students finance and prepare themselves for the experience?
3. What is the opinion of schools regarding language requirements?
4. Where do students reside in the host country?
5. What kind of supervision and support system is available to them in foreign countries?
6. What kind of difficulty do schools experience in relation to international internships?

When examined through these factors, we built a

case for Tim's strong suitability, at least for the first four points related to student characteristics.

Preparation, Language and Accommodations

Rae (2004) found that students who chose field placements overseas had very interesting backgrounds, such as Peace Corps or previous volunteer experience abroad. Tim had familiarity with community practice work in India, Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Financial preparation is difficult for many students, and most schools of social work struggle with being able to assist students in undertaking an often expensive international practicum experience. As a non-traditional student, Tim came into his graduate program from a successful seven-year medical administration career. This provided access to financial resources that made it possible for him to pursue this internship despite its cost. To help offset some expenses, he sold self-designed T-shirts that advertised the clean water project in the village, held small fundraisers, and solicited family and friends for financial support.

Rae's findings also indicated that the overseas experience of faculty was a key factor in encouraging students to choose particular placements. In this case, the student was integrated not only through my own previous connections to the village but also his previous involvement with other student-driven global development projects in the same village.

As part of his academic preparation for the international placement, Tim enrolled in the required international field seminar that occurs the semester just before departure. In this seminar, students study the historical and socio-cultural issues of the country, develop their educational goals and objectives, work on their travel details, and make initial connections with local support and practicum supervisors. In addition, students work on the logistics for in-country lodging, meals, transportation, and strategies for maintaining communication with a faculty liaison throughout their experience utilizing email, phone, Skype, blogs, and a mid-semester liaison visit to the host country. As the faculty liaison for this placement, I worked closely with Tim and the local community leaders and social networks. From the community stakeholders to the common resident, locals saw to

it that Tim was properly welcomed into the community with the necessary supports in place, such as complimentary lodging within a family compound and a host of community members committed to ensuring all his needs were met while in Patriensa.

It helps to understand a few things about Ghana's Ashante region – for starters, the notable hospitality of Ghanaians translates to “no visitor will be without food, shelter and camaraderie.” For this student, the village quickly started to feel like a place where the necessary rapport building could be accomplished with ease and aplomb. As a matter of fact, he was already half Ghanaian, according to some in the community. Tim's initial reflections echoed this connection:

Everyone has been so welcoming of my arrival. It is very quiet here. Last night a thunderstorm moved through in the evening after dark. I sat with Pastor Kofi and his family and listened to the raindrops fall on the tin roof. As we visited, the electricity went out. The air was cool and there was a breeze blowing. We moved outside and continued conversing under the dark sky. All around us I could hear the sounds of people in Patriensa gathering. From the gates of the courtyard I could see periodic beams of light from flashlights. There was a hum about the place. The noise of life, making it easy to feel at home.

As humans we have so many dimensions. The complexity of life allows us to encounter many people much different than ourselves. The moments of human connection are a chance to share and celebrate. The Ghanaian people I have met are so open to that experience. I hope to mirror such warm and welcoming demeanor in my steps as well.

The official language spoken in Ghana is English but nearly all people speak the indigenous languages, specifically Twi (or Akan) in the Ashante region where Patriensa is located. Once in the village, Tim took to learning Twi right away. He related his experience in a blog entry:

So I am on the adventure of learning the language of the Ashanti people (Twi). Apparently

it must be pretty amusing because as I practice with the people I meet, they all seem to laugh. I don't feel they laugh at me, but with me. The kindest thing most often happens. They let out a shriek – A!, and then say “you speak my language!” This point of connection is proving to be invaluable in building relationships. Most often this conversation turns into a mini Twi-lesson where they will help me understand how to say whatever it is I am attempting to communicate. This is followed by a handshake, finger snap, and “God bless” as we move along.

The choice of words in stating “you speak my language,” for me, shows the pride of the tongue. This language is part of me, who I am. It is my heritage and history. It is the words spoken by my ancestors and to be carried on through my children and grandchildren. That is what I hear when they say “my language.” There are some things I understand but most I'm still learning; however I do not feel excluded from their presence. There is a lot of laughter here. Consistent throughout dialogue is the release of energy in this manner. It calms me.

Supervision and Support

Support from the community and so many other sources was clearly not an issue, but the question of practicum supervision in the village relates back to Rae's study (2004) on the process and challenges of making arrangements and setting up the structure for some of these international field placements. Finding a qualified field supervisor was a difficulty experienced by schools of social work Rae surveyed. Initially, I sought out a colleague, Peter Dwumah (third author), who is a professor of sociology and social work at the nearby Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi. With a specialty in development studies, he was certainly qualified to serve as the field instructor. His role as academic and cultural advisor to the student, as well as my own long-distance support, were critical to the student's growth and skill-building. However, to truly engage this community, Peter assisted me with making sure Tim aligned with the chief's council and worked within the chieftaincy system. Indeed, the chief and elders, albeit extremely supportive, would need to approve a temporary position for the intern within the chieftaincy structure.

Similar to traditional structures of other African countries, chieftaincy is an indigenous system of governance including executive, judicial, and legislative powers. The institution has survived British imperialism and post-Independence regimes, and endures through the larger political economy of Ghana. One of its primary roles is socio-economic development. A few years back, the king of the Ashante Region, the Asantehene, His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, had this to say about today's chieftaincy:

These days, a chief is expected to lead his people in organizing self-help activities and projects, and take the initiative in establishing institutions and programmes to improve the welfare of his people in areas such as health, education, trade, and economic or social development. (Excerpt from the keynote address presented by His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene at the Fourth African Development Forum, Addis Ababa, October 12, 2004).

Recently, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II established a fund to assist in the education of outstanding but financially needy students in the region. Bob-Milliar (2009) shares:

[...] a good number of chiefs are taking up the challenges of the twenty-first century, tackling very modern issues as diverse as children's rights, the environment, women's rights, and HIV/AIDS. These leaders perceive initiating development processes as their primary role today. (p. 544)

But the chief doesn't act alone. In the Ashante region, the paramount chief is the head of the traditional area and is known as the *Omanhene* (*hene* indicating chief status) and his roles include implementation of the laws on customs and maintaining traditional programs and policies for the region. Below the Omanhene are divisional chiefs or sub-chiefs that assist the paramount chief in the performance of his duties. These sub-chiefs are the Kontihene, Akwamuhene, Adontehene, Nifahene, Benkumhene, Kyidomhene, Gyaasehene and Sanaahene – all of whom serve specific functions. It is the Kontihene, the sub-chief for development, however, who is charged with the task of community development. Organizing and implementing development programs falls to the

Kontihene, and he either mobilizes the material and human resources locally or looks outside for resources. Thus, a position as assistant to the Kontihene was a natural fit for the student, and the Kontihene then served as the field instructor for this macro-level community social work student. Inasmuch as the field instructor's primary role, in relation to the student and the school of social work, is as an educator, the Kontihene was the culturally grounded choice. In this village setting, he was the daily on-site primary teacher to facilitate the student's best learning opportunities and engage the student in knowledge, values, and skill development related to social work practice within the Ghanaian rural village context. He provided trusted access to the people of Patriensa, relevant cultural context to situations and valuable insight into the community dynamics that are at the heart of his village.

Community development is no stranger to chiefs. Many are becoming innovative in promoting development for their communities. A community development social work intern working alongside the chief's elders and under the direct supervision of the Kontihene is, no doubt, novel and represents social work and chieftaincy practices, re-inventing themselves together. With additional supervision from Peter, my Ghanaian development studies colleague, as well as guidance from me as his field liaison, Tim was exposed to a number of community development responsibilities, working under the direct supervision of the Kontihene within the centuries-old chieftaincy tradition.

So, in establishing this macro-level practicum placement in a rural, Ghanaian village, social work and the chieftaincy tradition came together in an innovative practicum structure. The village sub-chief for development, the Patriensa Kontihene, Nana Owusu Akyan Agyekumhene II, took on a new role as social work field instructor. And social work was welcomed back to its roots in community development – in Africa.

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Dealing with Client Death and Dying: A Letter to Social Work Practicum Students

Amy Fulton

The article is written as a letter to social work practicum students about dealing with client death and dying in their field education experience and in their future practice. The author's personal experience as a faculty liaison working with a student who experienced a client death is presented in order to illustrate the importance of preparing to encounter client death and dying in social work practice. Readers are also referred to several resources available in the literature in order to build their professional knowledge base.

Dear Social Work Student,

You may not think this is a very exciting or entertaining topic; however, it is one that is critically important as part of your preparation for your practicum and your future professional helping work (Hobart, 2002; Kramer, 1998). Death is inevitable. In your professional practice you will encounter client death and dying issues. It is extremely important that you are able to appropriately and effectively deal with these clients and their issues. When I was a beginning social worker I did not become aware that I was uncomfortable with client death until I experienced it for the first time in practice. I can still recall how unprepared I felt the first time a client died during my BSW practicum. Over my years in professional practice I have worked with many students and social work colleagues who have struggled to cope emotionally with the death of their clients. If right now, at this moment, you are feeling uncomfortable with talking about (or even reading about) death and dying, as many people in our society are, the good news is that you can learn and develop in this area. To help illustrate the importance of death and dying as a social work practice issue, I will share a story about client death and dying from my own practice experience in the form of a personal letter. This letter reflects my experience as a faculty liaison working with a student who experienced a client death. I will also direct you to other sources available in the literature to assist in developing your professional social work practice knowledge

base further. The key purposes of this letter are to share with you why knowing how to deal with client death and dying is vital to your own professional practice and to suggest ways in which you can develop your ability to deal with this aspect of social work practice. My wish is that you will become inspired to become adequately prepared before you encounter death and dying in your own practice. I recognize this is a sensitive subject; however, this does not mean that it should be avoided, neglected, or excused as being too difficult to deal with. My hope is that by us connecting as writer and reader you will be exposed to a more personal and intimate reflection of my experiences as you shape your own ideas and reflections.

My Personal Experience with Client Death and Dying as a Faculty Liaison

As a faculty liaison for social work field education, I served as the link between the university, the student, and the field instructor at the practicum setting (Bennet & Coe, 1998; Ligon & Ward, 2005). The specific functions of the faculty liaison role include “(a) facilitating field teaching, student learning, and the integration of theory and practice, (b) monitoring educational opportunities offered by the agency and students' progress, (c) fostering interchange between school and field... [and] (d) evaluating field instructors' efforts and students' achievements” (Bennet & Coe, 1998, p. 346). At mid-term evaluation time I would regularly complete site visits at practicum agencies to check in with field instructors and students regarding how

the practicum was proceeding, what was going well, and if there were any emerging issues or concerns. The mid-term visit also allowed for joint reviewing, revising, and confirming of the student's learning plan for the remainder of the term. Mid-term site visits provide an excellent way to monitor the progress of the practicum student, and if necessary, provide some on-site coaching or troubleshooting in order to help ensure success (Ligon & Ward, 2005). Since I was responsible for assigning the final grades at the end of the practicum course, I needed to determine if students were developing professional social work practice competencies and progressing in their professional skill and knowledge building, as well as in the development of their personal and professional attitudes, values, and beliefs.

As a faculty liaison, I was privileged to visit a large number of agencies where social workers are engaged in a vast range of practice activities (Ligon & Ward, 2005). I would personally become most enthused whenever I was presented with the opportunity to visit developing practitioners in long-term care homes, hospitals, or hospice settings as this was closest to my own professional practice interests.

In order to illustrate the importance of dealing with client death and dying effectively in your professional practice, I want to share with you a specific incident that occurred during a mid-term evaluation visit I conducted for a BSW student in a hospice care setting. A hospice is a setting in which palliative care is provided for people who are dying. In recent decades, palliative care has emerged as the "model for quality, compassionate care for people facing life-limiting illnesses or injuries" (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2004, p. 11). This is an approach to care that focuses on improving quality of life for both clients and families through "the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and comprehensive assessment and treatment of pain and other physical, psychosocial, and spiritual problems" (NASW, p. 12).

The objectives of palliative care are highly consistent with the social work values, ethics, and philosophies that you, no doubt, have been learning about (Small, 2001). For more about the specific

role of social workers in hospice palliative care, see Bern-Klug, Gesstert, and Forbes (2001); Bosma et al. (2010); Cagle and Bolte (2009); Chan and Tin (2012); Small (2001); and NASW (2004).

The community in which I worked had one stand-alone hospice facility with one full-time social worker who worked tirelessly to support individuals and families through end-of-life, grief, and related issues. She was also the field instructor for my student's practicum. During my mid-term site visit I noted that the mid-term practice competency assessment form completed by the field instructor was outstanding. The student also shared that she was enjoying her practicum experience and that she was benefiting from the valuable learning opportunities available in the hospice setting. We determined that the student's learning plan required only minimal revision to meet her learning objectives. All of this was positive news. However, what was most enlightening for me about this student's development was a brief conversation that I overheard between the student and the field instructor just before our meeting officially began.

Right before the meeting started the field instructor leaned over to the student, Kim.* The field instructor stated that a client, Grace,* had died the day before. She imparted that the family had been by Grace's side and that her passing had been peaceful. The field instructor mentioned that she was not personally on-site at the hospice at the time of death, but that the nurses told her about it earlier that morning. She also advised that she was going to follow up with the family later that day, and invited Kim to discuss the role that she could take in this follow-up work. The field instructor also offered to discuss Kim's emotional response and processing of this news, given that she had been working closely with this client and her family.

Immediately, I began to wonder how Kim would process this news on the personal, interpersonal, and professional levels. I questioned whether or not the BSW program had adequately helped to equip her to deal with this situation. However, to my surprise, Kim responded to her field instructor's question with a big smile. Suspicious about her seemingly positive response, I wondered what was happening; was the smile fake? Was she overcompensating to mask her true feelings of sadness or an inability to

cope? I wondered if we needed to put the practicum evaluation aside and address what I believed to be Kim's true emotional response to the information she had just received. Although I recognized that in a hospice setting death was relatively common, it is not typical for a student to experience a client's death. I was also puzzled as to why the field instructor had not waited until after the evaluation meeting to share this information with the student. However, Kim's response eased my concerns. She sincerely thanked the field instructor for immediately sharing this update and added that she was happy for Grace as she knew dying was what Grace had wanted and was prepared for at this point in her life. Kim also shared her personal beliefs about what happens to people after their physical body dies and, perhaps more importantly, what Grace had told her about her own spiritual beliefs. The field instructor then shared briefly her philosophy around death and dying. She also explained how her viewpoint provides a source of strength that has allowed her to engage in hospice work for many years without becoming burned-out or vicariously traumatized.

I am interested in what your reaction might be to the news of a client death. What are your personal values and beliefs around death? How might these influence and inform your professional practice as a social worker?

The encounter I observed at the mid-term site visit with my student, Kim, and her field instructor taught me a great deal about the need for social workers, from the first practicum onwards, to be able to competently deal with client death and dying. Based upon my own experience as a practicum student who experienced a client death, I had previously realized that preparing to encounter client death was important for practice. However, prior to this site visit I had never before witnessed such a profound moment in regard to client death in my role as a social work educator. Witnessing my student's highly evolved and mature understanding of her client's death, along with her desire to respond to the grief of the family in a genuine, warm, and helpful manner, was an epiphany for me. I was left in awe of my student and her field instructor, not only in terms of their knowledge for practice, but also in regard to their positioning and use of themselves in their work (Chan & Tin, 2012).

I felt enlightened by the practice wisdom that was shared during this discussion. It illustrated for me the advancement of my student's practice and the quality of the learning experience and practicum instruction that she was receiving at the hospice. It also demonstrated to me that, in addition to filling her practicum hours at the hospice, my student was doing personal work on developing her values and belief system and integrating these into her professional self. As noted by Chan and Tin (2012, p. 900), "Death work demands not only knowledge and skills of helping professionals but also personal preparation for death, dying, and bereavement."

As a social work educator and lifelong learner, I was provided new insight by this encounter regarding the value of deeply tuning in during something as routine as a practicum site visit – a presence of mind that is sometimes challenging to hold in the midst of pressing deadlines and competing priorities on faculty time. However, upon reflection I find that among the greatest rewards of teaching in social work is engaging and learning from students and field instructors. I am reminded to embrace with an open mind what they have to teach me. I would have never expected such an inspirational site visit that morning. Based on this experience, I am motivated to help other students achieve this level of professional competence too.

The learning goal that I want to assist students to achieve can be defined as integration of personal and professional values and beliefs with practice knowledge and skill in a manner that creates the greatest effectiveness in working with people who are dying and/or grieving. I recognize that I can only help guide students in this learning since this goal cannot be achieved without a great deal of personal effort, self-awareness, reflectivity, and building of practice knowledge through reviewing the literature, and then actually engaging in the work through practicum, and later, through professional social work practice. I regard this letter as a starting point in this work. Developing our understandings of death and integrating these into our professional work is more of a journey than a destination, and it is a journey I encourage and support each student to embark upon. Unfortunately, however, evidence from the literature suggests that most social work students receive limited education on death and dying (McIlwaine, Scarlett, Venters, &

Ker, 2007), as client death and dying is a neglected topic in social work education (Christ & Sormanti, 2000; Huff, Weisenfluh, Murphy, & Black, 2006; Senate of Canada, 2000). As such, it is unlikely that death and dying will be presented as an integrated topic within the content of your courses. Further, the opportunity of taking a course specifically focused toward becoming sufficiently educated on death, dying, and grief in your program of studies is likely limited (Chan & Tin, 2012; Kramer, 1998).

Reflections on Implications for Social Work Practice and Education

Death is a physical, spiritual, and sociocultural phenomenon. In order for you to be prepared to address client death and dying, it is critical for you to examine what death means to you and to prepare in advance for how you will deal with it within your own practice (Hobart, 2002). This is the type of personal work my student Kim had clearly engaged in, even without the university providing a formal course on client death and bereavement. I believe the individual preparatory efforts Kim engaged in paid dividends as a key ingredient of her success in her practicum experience at the hospice.

Regardless of the specific professional practice setting you decide upon, providing appropriate social work involvement requires understanding organizational and social policies around death and dying, in addition to developing your direct practice competence at the micro level (Hobart, 2002; Konrad, 2010). In our professional roles as social workers, we are privileged to engage with people who need our help across the lifespan. Indeed by now you will have completed, or may currently be completing, courses in human development or lifespan development as part of your social work education. In thinking about human development and the lifespan, we often associate death with older, frail, or ill people (Konrad, 2010). However, death can come at any age and at any time. Death can result from a number of causes, including: natural causes, illness, accident, homicide, and suicide. Although your interests may lie in other areas, it is important to acknowledge that even if you do not specialize or focus your work in gerontology, you are still likely to enter into some clients' lives when they are about to end. You may also work on cases where someone close to your client is dying or has recently died (Bethel, 2005).

As a helping professional, it is essential that you provide effective and competent support and assistance to your clients when addressing end-of-life and related issues (Hobart, 2002). This means you will be asked to respond to diverse client and family needs in various environmental and practice contexts. Sometimes circumstances associated with client death and dying are beyond our control, and this can add additional dimensions of challenge to our work. For example, if you work in the field of child welfare or in a paediatric hospital setting you may encounter traumatic child deaths. Indeed, in some rare cases, social workers have been accused of causing or contributing to the deaths of children, especially when children are in the care of the state (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2002). In your role as a professional social worker, it will be incumbent upon you to make thoughtful evidence-informed practice decisions no matter what the circumstances may be (Gibbs, 2003; Konrad, 2010).

At this point you might wonder what your role is in working with a person who is dying. As a social worker you will most often address educational and psychosocial needs which are varied and diverse. This means that a host of therapeutic responses which are individualized to the specific client will be required (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Lloyd-Williams, 2008; Lynn, Harold & Schuster, 2011). Psychosocial needs near the end of life can include needs for intimacy, defined as emotional and physical closeness with loved ones, as well as a desire for sexual activity (Cagle & Bolte, 2009; Lloyd-Williams, 2008; Redelman, 2008). Although intimacy needs are just one area of focus for social work assessment and intervention, they are often neglected in practice with clients near the end of life (Cagle & Bolte, 2009; Redelman, 2008). Assessing and intervening in the sexual health and intimacy aspect of the client and family's relationship addresses an important part of personhood and interpersonal relationships for the client and family. Furthermore, it can be viewed as part of the biopsychosocial approach to care and a key component of quality of life (Cagle & Bolte, 2009; Cort, Monroe, & Oliviere, 2004).

As you read this you may be experiencing some level of discomfort. Perhaps these feelings arise because someone close to you has recently died, or perhaps you are worried about someone very ill.

You might just not want to think about it or talk about it. You are not alone. In Western society, death and dying are commonly considered to be taboo subjects. North America has been referred to as a “death denying” and “death defying” society (Waldrop, 2011). We do not like to think about or talk about our own mortality or that of our loved ones and friends. However, not all cultures and peoples share this view (Neuberger, 2004; O’Gorman, 1998). Indeed, a myriad of personal, societal, spiritual, religious, and cultural beliefs and practices surround death and dying (Hobart, 2002; Neuberger, 2004). Being familiar with some of these beliefs and practices is essential for culturally competent practice with dying people and their families. For example, did you know that many Chinese people believe the spirits of their dead relatives stay with them on earth and that by displeasing these spirits bad luck will come to the family (Hsu, O’Connor, & Lee, 2012)? Or that when a Hindu person dies it is traditional to conduct rituals for several days prior to cremation in order to facilitate the soul’s transition into the next world (Lobar, Youngblut, & Brooten, 2006)?

Konrad (2010) highlights the importance of preparing social work students to become “culturally attuned” practitioners, noting that working with death and loss brings additional and unique cultural dimensions to social work practice. This does not mean you need to know the values, beliefs and customs surrounding death and dying of every culture or faith community. It does, however, mean that when you are faced with this issue in your practice you need to think critically about your approach and individualize your assessment and interventions to the specific needs and cultural identity of the client and family with whom you are engaged. You must address your gaps in knowledge and attend to cultural competency and safety by locating literature and/or making inquiries with your client and his/her family about appropriate practices (Cagle & Bolte, 2009). There are several excellent sources on cultural competence in professional practice which I highly recommend for you: Abrams & Moio (2009), Fontes (2008), Kirmayer (2012), Laird (2008), Lynn (2001), and Williams (2006). In addition, information regarding beliefs and practices around death, dying, and bereavement of various cultural and religious groups are also available in the literature (see for example,

Baddarni, 2010; Hsu et al, 2012; Neuberger, 2004; Sneesby, Satchell, Good, & van der Reit, 2011; and Toscani et al., 1991). It is not enough to become familiar with the various spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices about death and dying. It is also imperative that you are able to effectively cope with it on the personal, interpersonal, and professional levels (Konrad, 2010).

A central aspect of preparing yourself to deal with client death in your professional practice includes building your knowledge of grief responses and processes (Bethel, 2005). Grief is a universal, multifaceted, natural, and normal response to the loss incurred when someone close to an individual dies (Bethel, 2005; Casarett, Kutner, & Abrahm, 2001). Bethel (2005, p. 198) reminds us that we can encounter grief work in our practice due to a number of factors, for example “at times a client we are working with will experience loss through death”; at other times a client may “request our services, specifically to help them work through the grieving process,” and in other cases you may discover that through the course of your work with a client “an unresolved grief issue, perhaps from long ago, is surfacing and impeding the client’s progress toward growth and actualization.”

You may also encounter a client who is grieving even before loss occurs; this is a rather common phenomenon referred to as anticipatory grief. Although grieving is normal and natural, it can become complicated and abnormal, possibly leading toward the development of depression or other mental health concerns. This occurs in up to one third of all bereaved individuals (Bethel, 2005).

In any case, grief is extremely stressful and may present itself both emotionally and physically. People who are grieving are at increased risk of serious health issues and of dying, either by suicide or other means (Bethel, 2005; Casarett et al., 2001). Grief can also remain hidden from being outwardly expressed if the client fears that his or her grief will be viewed by others as being inappropriate and/or socially unacceptable. This form of grief is referred to as “disenfranchised grief” (Bethel, 2005). When working with bereaved individuals and families, you must attend to their grief responses using evidence-informed practice strategies (Bethel, 2005; Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999). Dealing with your own issues

and experiences of loss and anticipatory grief is also a vital component of being completely present and engaged with clients as they process grief (Bethel, 2005). There are many excellent resources available on grief and loss that can help you to provide effective responses and supports to bereaved people (Doka & Davidson, 1998; Humphrey & Zimpfer, 2008; Walter & McCoyd, 2009).

Conclusion

In concluding my letter to you, I invite you to reflect upon the ideology of a good death (Hobart, 2002; McIlwaine et al., 2007; Steinhauser et al., 2000). The term "good death" emerged in the 1970s with the rise of the hospice movement. A good death concerns the amount and nature of control that the dying individual has over her or his body, and the care that the person receives at the end of life. It represents the "ideal of dying with dignity, peacefulness, preparedness, awareness, adjustment, and acceptance" (Hart, Sainsbury, & Short, 1998, p. 65). While there are critiques of how the concept of good death is utilized in practice and in the management of the dying process, it has also been applauded for its usefulness in meeting the psychosocial needs of dying clients and their families (Hart et al., 1998).

The central theme here is that while everyone may want something slightly different for their own personal experience of death and dying, there are some basic elements that many people would agree are desirable for a good death to occur. For instance, in their study on perceptions of good death with clients, families, and service providers in the healthcare system, Steinhauser et al. (2000, p. 825) identified six components of a good death, which are: "pain and symptom management, clear decision-making, preparation for death, completion, contributing to others, and affirmation of the whole person." I would add time and intimacy with loved ones and culturally competent care to this list. What would you add or take away from the list? Many of the needs and wishes of clients and families at end of life can be viewed as psychosocial rather than physical in nature (Hobart, 2002). This means there is much for the social worker to attend to, and we need to do it well, so that we can help dying people to experience a good death as they personally define it. Social work's ethical obligations and commitments to client dignity and self-

determination are central to this effort. As Steinhauser et al. (2000, p. 825) note, "There is no 'right' way to die." Therefore, as my student Kim so skillfully demonstrated, our mission should be to understand what the client values at the end of life. I believe the first step on this journey is to acknowledge that sometimes our clients die, and it is our professional responsibility to be prepared to respond in a competent and confident manner (Hobart, 2002).

I want to end by thanking you for reading my letter. I hope this information will help you in your practice and possibly serve as a launching pad to developing your own deepened understanding of death and dying, as well as serve as inspiration for beginning the journey toward building professional competency with end-of-life care and grief issues in your practice. I hope the concept of a good death serves as a starting point to engage in your own critical self-reflection. Consider: What death do you want for yourself and your loved ones? What type of death do you want to help facilitate for your clients?

Sincerely,

Amy

*Grace and Kim are pseudonyms.

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Challenges to Leadership in a Transitioning Environment

Merydawilda Colón and Sharon Hines Smith

This narrative reflects on the role of the authors in the leadership of an undergraduate social work field education program transitioning to a competency-based curriculum while seeking reaffirmation under the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) and incorporating a master of social work (MSW) program under the 2001 EPAS. Drawing on contingency theories of leadership, the process described required continuous communication and negotiation with administrators, field agencies, instructors, faculty, and students. Frequently these stakeholders held vested interests, conflicting priorities, and differing decision-making styles that demanded attention. We had to maximize opportunities for the field program to guide and assist field instructors and students on a path to achieve curriculum competencies while meeting college expectations for faculty performance. Budget parameters and CSWE standards for field education and administrative leadership also demanded attention. Contingency theory provided a guide and framework to navigate the transition. This narrative describes that experience and discusses strategies employed in light of power, authority, diversity, and decision-making themes.

Introduction

Several years ago, as the coordinator and field coordinator (respectively) of an undergraduate social work program, the authors found ourselves challenged with the transition to a competency-based curriculum. Our program as a whole was pursuing reaffirmation of the undergraduate program under the 2008 *Educational Policy and Curriculum Standards* (EPAS), and was also in the process of incorporating a new MSW program that had begun under the 2001 EPAS (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008, 2001). It was important for us to act with immediacy and intentionality. The 2008 EPAS created a change in the academic environment. Under the 2008 EPAS, field became the “signature pedagogy,” playing a pivotal role in the curriculum – the center stage where students would refine practice behaviors (knowledge, values, and skills) and show mastery of program competencies. In such a curriculum, the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities would be the core. Conversely, in the 2001 EPAS the curriculum design centered on program objectives, with field playing an important role, but not as “signature pedagogy.” Hence the implementation of an outcome performance approach to curriculum design was essential in order for us to address the new EPAS (CSWE, 2008) in our undergraduate program while maintaining an objectives curriculum design to address the 2001 EPAS (CSWE, 2001) in the MSW

program. This narrative will discuss challenges to our leadership in the process of implementing a new field education structure relevant to the 2008 EPAS and the 2001 EPAS, how contingency theories of leadership facilitated the process, challenges for fieldwork, and lessons we learned.

As discussed by Lyter & Smith (2005), field education is an arena rich in opportunity for the advancement of curriculum objectives. However, few opportunities are realized because of ambiguities about leadership, power, authority, and influence. Participant discussion at the June 11, 2004 Bryn Mawr Symposium on Leadership and Empowerment in Field Education (part of the East Coast consortium) noted that power and authority issues tended to interfere with the integration of theory and practice – a basic curriculum objective of most social work programs. Since the institution of the 2008 EPAS many social work programs have needed to reassess the viability of their systematic approaches to effective curriculum goals and the role of field educators. Field educators potentially bring to educational dialogues the most comprehensive understanding of the need for integration of curriculum content with competencies of students, and the needs of the wider practice community. However, often field programs do not have the power to achieve the level of integration required among all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, faculty, students, and field instructors) to affect the quality of education identified in curriculum goals (Knight, 2001; Lager & Robbins, 2004; Rhodes,

Ward, Ligon & Priddy, 1999).

Situation

At the time, we were the coordinator and field coordinator of the undergraduate social work program in a mid-size northeastern state college, consisting of nine faculty members, with three on tenure-track lines (including one of us, the field coordinator.) Undergraduate social work majors totaled approximately 175 students with 65-70 in field placements at any given time. The program had been consistently accredited since 1975 and it was preparing for reaffirmation under the 2008 EPAS, which required a complete revamping of the curriculum to accommodate the competency-based approach with attention to the field component as the “signature pedagogy.” Additionally, the program was preparing to offer a new MSW program under the 2001 EPAS and receive its first class of 25 students by Fall 2009.

At the beginning of the process, practice faculty (those faculty who taught practice courses) and the field coordinator were responsible for visiting field agencies, monitoring students’ progress, and supporting field instructors in exchange for a course release. These were difficult tasks to accomplish given teaching schedules, students’ and field instructors’ schedules, and the need to visit students in a geographical area that included nine counties. Upper-level administrators, including the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences dean, college provost, and president, were supportive of our program efforts during the transition but hesitant to change the field structure. This hesitancy was related to faculty concerns regarding loss of teaching credit hours if field supervision responsibilities were transferred to field liaisons during the transition. In our continuous assessment of field since 2005 we found that having faculty who teach practice courses monitor the field experience led to inconsistencies in quality.

Therefore, we encouraged program faculty to pay attention to the field assessment data, and to agree to pilot a new liaison model during the transition phase to a competency-based curriculum. The liaison model would require additional administrative responsibilities for the field coordinator in supervising and monitoring the development of field placements, liaison site visits,

evaluation of student performance, facilitation of field seminars, support of field instructors, and consistent field instructor training. However, faculty teaching the practice seminars had reservations and expressed those reservations frequently. Their concerns were that a new model for field would create another tier of faculty/staff with differing agendas, insufficient material to cover practice courses with the institution of field seminars, and reduced communication between field and practice faculty. Practice faculty also wanted to retain authority for assigning student field grades.

Faculty and administrators proposed that the new field structure model be piloted to encompass both the undergraduate and MSW programs. The field coordinator would at least initially administer field with three liaisons hired as adjunct instructors. Liaison responsibilities would include monitoring student performance, support and training of field instructors, grading, problem-solving placement challenges, and bi-monthly field seminars. Students were ambivalent about the new field seminars. They expressed concerns that more was being required of them than was required of previous students. Practice faculty verbalized concern as they adjusted their teaching loads to compensate for the lost four credit hours of field responsibilities; upper-level administrators pondered just how many program coordinators/directors and additional resources would be required with restructuring. Field instructors needed reassurance that no additional demands would be made on their time. The climate was particularly unsettling for one of us, the field coordinator, who was a tenure-track faculty member expected to produce significant scholarship, be an excellent teacher, and compile a record of service to the college and community, while also managing a complex network of field agencies. It was also unsettling for the program coordinator, because she did not have authority to supervise faculty members. Last but not least, the assigned CSWE program specialist at the time repeatedly advised us that having one field director for both undergraduate and MSW would not be acceptable to the Commission on Accreditation, and thus program reaffirmation would be jeopardized if this arrangement continued.

The Role of Contingency Theories

Contingency theories of leadership address concern

for people and concern for production (Weinbach, 2003). Sometimes more concern for production is needed. In transitioning to a competency-based curriculum, we had to maximize opportunity for one of us, the field coordinator, to achieve program goals of guiding and assisting field instructors and students to successfully demonstrate achievement of competencies, while meeting college expectations for tenure and promotion and CSWE standards for determining the field coordinator's assigned time to provide educational and administrative leadership for field education. More importantly, the field education program needed the power to achieve the level of integration required among all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, practice faculty, students, and field instructors) to assure the quality of education identified in curriculum goals (Knight, 2001; Lager & Robbins, 2004; Rhodes, Ward, Ligon & Priddy, 1999).

The following principles of contingency theories led us in the process of changing the field program's structure. First, we allowed the situation to dictate the leadership needed (Fiedler, 1967). Second, we understood (Morgan, 1997) that "there is no best way of organizing. The appropriate form depends on the kind of task or environment with which one is dealing," and that "...organizations are open systems that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and to adapt to environmental circumstances" (p. 44).

Field Organizational Structure

The old field structure in our program identified a field coordinator position as a 33% time commitment from a full-time, in this case tenure-track, faculty member responsible for negotiating field placements, internship contracts with agencies, and initial student placements.

The assigned practice course instructor monitored the field experience with the support of the field coordinator as needed. No regularly scheduled training of field instructors was in place. No field advisory board existed. The faculty during the spring semester, prior to student placements, reviewed placement decisions. Hence changes were needed.

One of us, the field coordinator, immediately organized a field advisory board. Members of the

new board were oriented to new EPAS standards. The board then reviewed assessment data and field seminar syllabi for compliance with those standards. Other stakeholders could not ignore the board's input and enthusiastic participation since many served as field instructors, were alumni, and/or had longstanding relationships with program faculty in general. The advisory board also assisted in identifying placements that would expose students to diverse clients, and discussed how community agencies could provide opportunities for students to master program competencies.

Both of us, the field coordinator and program coordinator, served on the curriculum and assessment committees to ensure that field objectives and issues were voiced in committee efforts to revise program curriculum and structure. The field coordinator was now also included in meetings with the MSW director and the program coordinator. Written descriptions of the new field education model, including the liaison roles and budgetary concerns, were discussed with program faculty, the dean, and the provost. Students, agency representatives, field instructors, and field liaisons completed assessment tools to evaluate the field experience and context. The president of the social work club attended program meetings, and the club nominated and selected a Field Instructor of the Year – measures that integrated students more fully into the transition process. The field coordinator also provided Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) trainings and field instructor orientations on the new competency-based student assessment instrument to field instructors. Gradually field instructors became more accepting of the competency-based assessment instrument, which had initially been experienced as demanding on their time and resources. This acceptance was facilitated by the fact that other competing social work programs in our geographic area came under the new EPAS (CSWE, 2008) during this transitional period as well. Field instructors began to understand that the competency-based model was a broad-based accreditation requirement.

Challenges for Fieldwork

One of the biggest challenges was to move forward with needed changes without losing the support of stakeholders. While feedback was solicited from all parties, it was still necessary to institute changes to

meet self-study timeframes and deadlines. Stakeholders came to agree that change was needed but held varied ideas as to the nature, extent, and pace of those changes. Field instructors and students reported increased satisfaction with the more frequent contact and support provided by field liaisons. However, field instructors continued to struggle with assessment of student practice behaviors across individual, group, and community contexts. This doubled the time field staff had to invest in helping field instructors apply the new assessment instrument and plan internship experiences for students inclusive of diversity, individual, group, and community practice.

Students initially felt that field seminars duplicated the practice seminar experience. These concerns seemed to diminish but not totally disappear. Providing learning opportunities with diverse populations within field agencies also continued to pose a formidable challenge, as many agencies frequently targeted very homogeneous client groups and/or only offered very specific types of services (i.e., case management, individual counseling, or community direct practice).

We both continued to struggle; the field coordinator struggled with the quest for tenure and issues related to establishing field as an equal partner with other program components. Permitting a junior faculty member to have an equal say in program decision-making was a new and sometimes uncomfortable experience for senior members and risky for the field coordinator. The program coordinator struggled with lack of authority to supervise faculty at a time when such authority would have eased the field restructuring process.

Lessons Learned

In this instance our relationship as the program coordinator and field coordinator was key in moving structural changes forward. However, the non-tenured status of a field coordinator or staff status of coordinators and/or liaisons may foster power differentials that could compromise the elevation of the field program. Being willing to battle for field education may be a prerequisite for acquisition of the resources and recognition to elevate field to “signature pedagogy” status.

The situation of our social work program was not

favorable, but our task-oriented leadership performed well to revamp the field structure in existence for more than 30 years (Fiedler, 1967). Ongoing assessment and communication among all stakeholders were essential in the process, but more important was our sense of responsibility for the integrity of the field education program, the successful reaffirmation of the undergraduate program, and the anticipated success of the new MSW Program. To any program leaders in similar circumstances, our advice is to have a vision for the change sought and be intentional. Involve all relevant parties and work tirelessly—our students and community partners deserve no less. Last but not least, remember that sometimes “the end justifies the means.”

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Virtual Field Education: The Global Connection

Wanda Anderson, Nancy Ayers, Amy Coha, Betsey Gray, Ellen Rondina, and Mary Bragdon White

University of New England School of Social Work field educators reflect upon the successful implementation of an online field education program within their fully-online master in social work program option. They discuss the early meetings, the school's history, efforts to find a common voice, and the model adopted, defined as a translation not migration. They stress the value of collaboration and share their favorite do's and don'ts. They conclude by stressing the value of a strong infrastructure in place prior to attempting such a project.

The Announcement

Several years ago, we learned of a mandate that charged us with creating a fully-online master in social work program option. We might have appeared to be apoplectic at first. We certainly had not anticipated a relational profession such as social work being offered online, much less to become an educationally sound online program. We could not even imagine it.

Our campus-based program was highly successful, and we were very proud of it. We could not visualize that work, those classes, translating into online course work. We asked ourselves: With the steep learning curve present in this campus-based program, what are the possibilities of creating a successful online education environment for this program? How do we even begin to identify the appropriate questions we need to explore? These, and other questions, came fast and furious about the university's mandate to create a fully-online master in social work program option. Truth be told, we seriously doubted the possibility that the online plan could become successful at all.

In spite of these strengths, even this close knit, hard working, creative group of field educators had that deer-in-the-headlights look. Where do we begin?

The Early Days: Meetings and More Meetings

In the beginning, there were meetings, and then,

there were more meetings. Many meetings.

Initially, our school's director met with the field faculty to flesh out our thinking, our questions and feelings about this project and the process. After that, we branched out to many meetings with highly skilled course designers, and with computer technology staff who responded and answered many of our questions. Their responses and expertise facilitated our learning to generate the appropriate questions, and also helped us to understand the wide spectrum of options online technology can provide.

In hindsight, this phase facilitated our process of addressing our fears and pushing through them and through our anxiety. In doing so, we were able to shift from fear and anxiety into curiosity and possibility. Amazingly, this seemed to have been a reasonably rapid transition, as we discovered that we were motivated by the possibilities and the challenges. While the work to transform our campus-based program option to an online program option was enormous, we found the challenge to be exhilarating. This, indeed, was another huge surprise. And, yet another unexpected outcome of this project was to learn more about one another's strengths, tolerances of the unknown, and hidden or assumed skill sets.

Our History

Before we continue to share the story about our journey in creating a virtual field education classroom, we want to provide some information

about our history as a school of social work. In 1988, the University of New England School of Social Work officially came into existence as a part of the Westbrook College of Health Professions, and is located on the Portland, Maine, campus. To date, we have graduated 913 master level social workers. Our full-time faculty has grown from six to nineteen faculty members. Our online program option currently has 567 students enrolled, with 254 students involved in field orientation, field planning, or in the process of completing their internships/seminar course. Our students are located in 48 states, as well as in Central America, Asia, Europe, Canada, Guam, and in American Samoa.

Finding a Common Voice

At this point in our journey, we came to understand that it was essential to have many thoughtful conversations, but that it was essential to move forward with a common voice. We had many lofty goals, which would require a great deal of hard work. We were united in our belief in the need for a common voice, and we functioned well as a team.

Our team met often, using critical thinking to hammer out each issue in pursuit of our common voice. We credit our instinct to find a common voice and our history of having worked with one another as major factors in creating a successful translation from the campus-based field education program to the online field education program. While it was certainly more work for us to find our common voice, an easier route may have been to have assigned one person to do all the work and design. There was value in striving for a broad-based consensus, but it was a more difficult and longer process. Nevertheless, we adamantly believe this improved our outcome.

Determining Our Model

Our first significant challenge in the actual program development phase of this journey involved determining whether to use a synchronous model, with all students logging into the course at the same time, or to use an asynchronous model, with students having the option to log into the course at any time. This was a critical decision, one that needed to be made early in the process. We chose the asynchronous model because we understood that this model would allow the school to maximize the

benefits of online education. Our decision to create the flexibility for students to log on our classes within a reasonably generous time frame expanded the possibility for working students to fit in school, as well as for their personal lives and other responsibilities. Those of us who teach in our campus-based program exclusively admit to online Integrating Seminar envy. The asynchronous model expands the time for the Integrating Seminar class from 90 minutes weekly in the campus-based program to a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week time frame for the online Integrating Seminar class. Time zones are not an issue with this model; therefore, it opens up the possibilities for more diversity within a global classroom.

Another strong positive for the asynchronous model and the online class environment was that it appealed to a wider variety of learning styles. We realized that students who are shy will more likely find their voice through this type of class offering. Also, students who need more time to process their responses can take the time they need before responding.

Because students make a bi-monthly video to create their check in for the Integrating Seminar class, they have the benefit of seeing themselves present an issue, and to learn more about their body language and presentation styles.

The further we delved into creating the field education program, the clearer it became that this model capitalized on more of the opportunities offered with online education. Our course designer helped us to be mindful regarding the importance of setting limits and expectations with all assignments, which promoted more concise, thoughtful discussions, small group work, quality presentations, and check-ins. In addition, it helped to address a potentially overwhelming workload for the teacher. We learned that another significant benefit to online education was that it required the participation of all students. A student cannot hide online!

Students receive timely feedback from the course instructor, as most of the faculty who teach online join in the discussion forums on a daily basis, and most peers provide reasonably quick responses to presentations. Also, students quickly form strong

alliances with one another, and use their colleagues and the instructor during the week for consultation on difficult situations or cases they may encounter during their internships. A unique difference between teaching in the classroom and in the online environment is the transition from the instructor as expert to the instructor as facilitator. As noted earlier, we do not need to solve the issues in an hour seminar, but can work on solutions over the course of seven days, or even longer, if necessary.

We discovered unexpected gains that benefited our already well-developed and positive professional relationships. We had created new situations to learn more about each other's strengths, and we were successful in understanding how to play to each other's strengths. For example, one of us was strongly opposed to the asynchronous model, and initially could not grasp the assets of the online educational environment. Now there is a mutual understanding of the difference between distance education and online learning. Distance education does not capitalize on the many assets of the virtual classroom and has drawbacks and limitations.

We Have Done a Translation, Not a Migration

The principles of the University of New England School of Social Work Field Education Program remained consistent, both for the campus-based and for the online program options. Each student is seen as the expert. We believe students know who they are and that they understand how to use the faculty and their advisors to understand and recognize their strengths, as well as to identify the areas in which they need further development. Students also receive guidance to help them focus on where they may want to go in the profession. The field education program guides, supports, and is closely involved in field planning. The field education program faculty have final approval regarding field placement selections, as well as in selecting who becomes field instructors in both programs. In the online field education program option and in the campus-based option, the field planner or the field advisors make sure the fit is there for all students with their field placements and their field instructors.

Critical thinking has been a constant from day one. All students have field visits each semester. Campus-based students are visited at their field

placements and online students meet virtually via Skype. This is a three-way meeting with the student, field instructor, and the field advisor, and takes place live online. Frequently, the field instructor or student will pick up their laptop computer and walk it around the agency to provide a tour for the field advisor, similar to how field advisors in the campus-based program receive agency tours from students during field visits.

All field instructors, new and seasoned, are provided with an orientation, which is typically five to six hours long, and receive CEUs. In our campus-based program option, a field instructor orientation is held at the school of social work during the beginning of the academic year. Our school provides a CD with all the resources a field instructor might need over the academic year. We maintain contact throughout the year via email, phone calls, and face-to-face visits. In our online field education program option, we created an Online Field Instructor Orientation, which includes all the same field education resources that are made available over the academic year for our online field instructors. We also created the Field Instructor Corner, which provides our online field instructors with networking and support for each other. Occasionally, they may learn of other social workers in their area who are also field instructors with the University of New England. They also discover they can network globally with social workers throughout the United States and beyond.

In determining our model, we examined what works well for the long established campus-based program, and then developed a different model that translated the essence of our field education program for the online program option.

In the campus-based program model, the field advisor is one field education faculty member who fulfills the role of the field planner, field liaison, field developer, and Integrating Seminar instructor. In the online program option, this role encompasses three positions. The field planner guides the student in securing their field placement and their field instructor. Both the field placement and field instructor must be approved by the field planner. The field advisor is the seminar instructor and the field liaison to the field agency. As the online field education program grew, we created opportunities

for field faculty to choose to work primarily as foundation year field advisors and seminar instructors or advanced year field advisors and seminar instructors. This provides more opportunities for field faculty to teach to their strengths, and as this occurred, they developed more passion for their teaching, which has translated to a better experience for students. Although the two program models may appear different, the key component for both models is the communication among the field faculty. This also insures comparability between the campus and the online option.

Translating what worked well for the campus-based program was an exciting process. Fortunately, we had excellent course designers and computer technology staff to help us understand this new way of learning. The outcome resulted in keeping the best of the goals and principles of the established campus-based program option, while creating an online program field education option in a new environment.

How does an online field education program option address the relational connection with students and their faculty? The relational connection in seminar is alive online. This is evident in the following description from one of us who is now teaching totally online:

Having taught in the classroom since 2003, I did not believe this true transition could occur. I often say, I moved into the online teaching role with much reservation and little faith. I am now a happy convert and could not imagine going back to the classroom. I LOVE teaching in the online environment. I feel a part of a learning environment that never existed in the same intense way in the classroom.

The 24/7 model allows for a continuous learning environment. We have taken full advantage of technology, and, therefore, have created the ability for our students to connect, communicate, and develop online relationships. We use a hallway forum for students to talk on an ongoing basis, but we also moved beyond this and have students use a video check in format. They video record themselves and talk about weekly challenges from their field placements. This allows the students to

see and talk to each other throughout the week. This check-in format mirrors our in-class seminar up to a point.

In the classroom, we are constricted by the weekly one to two hours of classroom time. Online students can check in at anytime during the week as they need support, consultation, or just to vent. We have watched these students develop meaningful peer relationships over the period of 32 weeks. The students spend more time and detail in the online conversations than they did in the classroom. (See comments from online students below).

Students in the field seminar spend 32 weeks conversing, consulting, learning, and advising. They see one another and develop true relationships. Student comments include: "This class will definitely be difficult to end. Because all of us have gone through this together. We have become close and have developed a relationship that not many other people can understand. Fortunately, I think that we will have more opportunities to rely on each other!" (D.A., SSW 522); "Bringing ethical issues to this group reminds me to continue to raise ethical issues with colleagues as we leave this group" (E.R.P., SSW 522); "Thank you all. This was such a great learning experience." (D.S.B., SSW 522). The student feedback has been very positive. We have seen how an online environment can be equal to or better than teaching in a classroom.

Another advantage to the online MSW program is the ability to have all assignments shared with peers. Again the classroom often limits the students' time to share their learning projects. Students online post assignments, and they chat in a discussion forum daily. The assignments include a presentation relating to a social justice issue at their field placement, research and discussion on mandatory reporting in their states, process recordings, case presentations, and a self-care corner. This seminar is further enhanced by having the above assignments researched and reported from all across the United States and internationally. Students are asked to post in the self-care corner weekly about how they are taking care of themselves. They discuss family, traditions, stress, and techniques they find helpful for stress reduction. This has been a wonderful addition to our seminar, and our field instructors have shared that this reminds them to

focus on their own self-care.

If you are willing to explore a variety of computer technologies available, think outside of the box and remain flexible, the sky is the limit.

Some of Our Favorite Do's and Don'ts

Finally, we would like to share some lessons and principles we truly believe were key to our success:

- * Collaboration and Teamwork. The knowledge that we, as colleagues, already had to tackle difficult tasks is what enabled us to plow through and use our collective thinking to resolve dilemmas and challenges.

- * Flexibility and Patience. These traits are never-ending, useful, and familiar social work skills

- * A tireless willingness to problem-solve together and to keep our sense of humor!

- * Having a solid, highly-skilled and talented technology support department is an essential resource

- * Having talented instructional designers who recognize that the faculty are in charge of the content and use their expertise to translate our ideas into a virtual classroom.

We learned that it is extremely important to have a solid infrastructure in place prior to initiating an online program. This was not the case for us at the University of New England School of Social Work, and consequently, we encountered, and continue to encounter, many challenges as we build that infrastructure, while at the same time offering our program.

So, roll up your sleeves, and be ready for a challenge. Don't expect a smooth transition. Don't get discouraged. Don't accept no for an answer. Don't expect that you will have all the answers all the time. Don't forget to make time to take care of yourself.

Remember to laugh often!

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Reflecting on Field Education Partnerships on Migration and Immigration: A Canadian Perspective

Julie Drolet

There is growing interest in social work education to consider migration and immigration policies and practice. Based on reflections on my experience as a field education coordinator in Canada, this article contends that social work education needs to consider field placements in immigrant-serving agencies and organizations, as a way of developing new knowledge and practice to address social exclusion in society.

It is widely acknowledged that field education remains invaluable in social work education. Students, as learners, are provided with opportunities in the field to develop practice skills, apply and build knowledge, and develop a professional identity under the supervision of their field instructor. Every year social work students undertake field placements or practice in immigrant settlement agencies and organizations providing services to newcomers, immigrants, and refugees in Canada. Immigrant settlement agencies and organizations provide an important site of learning for social work students interested in developing new knowledge and skills in social work practice with newcomer, immigrant, and refugee clients and systems.

In the field, students can improve their understanding of immigrant and refugee settlement and integration experiences; learn about services offered by nonprofit organizations in partnership with government; more fully experience social action and social justice; and gain increased understanding of the historical, political, economic, and social factors associated with international migration and immigration. As a field education coordinator in an undergraduate social work program in western Canada, I have often met with immigrant settlement workers, human service practitioners, and other community members to discuss the learning opportunities available for these students. This article draws from my reflections as a social work field education coordinator on the

importance of better preparing social work students to address diversity in social work practice and the needs of newcomers through field placements in immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies and organizations.

Migration is one of the defining global issues of the early twenty-first century, as more and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history (International Organization for Migration, 2012). There is growing recognition that migration is an essential part of the economic and social life of every nation. This manifestation is evident in our social work practice. There are multiple and complex dimensions of migration, for example, in labour migration, family reunification, and integration, among other practices. As the first-wave generation of migrants ages, their children and even grandchildren are reaching adulthood having spent their entire lives in the countries their families chose long ago (Frideres & Biles, 2012). Increasingly, many Canadian universities are attracting foreign-born international students who bring diverse life experiences to the classroom and may consider permanent resident status in the future. As educators we strive to address social work practice in the context of diversity in our curriculum; our students are being called upon to serve clients of increasing diversity in society. This reality needs to be reflected in social work field education. In Canada there is a need to address the new Standards for Accreditation (9 and 10) in order to better prepare social work graduates to work with

newcomers to Canada in their settlement and integration process.

Immigration and Integration

Canada, like other immigrant-receiving states, welcomes migrants for economic, family, and humanitarian reasons (Bhuyan and Smith-Carrier, 2010). Immigration is a recognized aspect of Canada's social, cultural, political, and economic development. Total immigration levels have remained unchanged in recent years at 240,000 to 265,000 per annum. Immigrants make up 19.8% of Canada's total population, and this is projected to rise to 22.2% by 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2005). It is estimated that by 2031, roughly 30 percent of the Canadian population will likely be a visible minority, with 36% of those being under 15 years of age (Biles, Drover, Henley, Ibrahim, Lundy, & Yan, 2010, p. 5). The 2006 census revealed that there were over six million immigrants in Canada, representing one in five Canadians at the highest proportion in 75 years. The ethnic profile of Canada's newcomer population has changed from predominantly European to non-European ancestries. Today over 200 ethnic origins are represented within Canada's diverse society. The majority of immigrants belong to a visible minority and report a mother tongue other than French or English. There are a number of global trends that will continue to impact migration and immigration such as labour force growth, economic disparities between developing and developed countries, natural disasters, globalization and trade liberalization, technology, and transnational migration practices.

To ensure a cohesive and inclusive society, there is a need for policies and programs that will be effective and efficient in integrating newcomers (Biles & Frideres, 2012). Practicum students are often confronted with the complex reality that the integration of immigrants in host communities is a multi-dimensional process. Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, and are able to fully participate in the social, cultural, political, and economic structures of their society (Biles & Frideres, 2012). In this process a variety of community-based partnerships may be required at different levels to promote immigrant settlement and integration. Given contemporary challenges in serving immigrants and their

communities, Engstrom and Okamura (2007) call for a reexamination of social services, social work practice, and social work curricula.

I would further argue that social work field education needs to consider how to improve knowledge of immigration policy and practice in order to prepare social workers for the evolving needs of the field, and to acknowledge the importance and complexity of Canadian society, including the dynamics affecting anglophone, francophone, indigenous peoples, and newcomer populations. Many immigrants face systemic barriers in our institutions and seek out supports and services in immigrant-serving agencies and organizations. There is an important role for social workers and students in this process. I have been told by many students of the value of their learning in understanding Canadian immigrant policy and immigration policy, and its impact on social justice and relationship to social work practice. Students can learn how personal and social factors influence practice with diverse clients and communities in terms of identities, values, experiences, and structures.

In the Canadian context, diversity refers to a range of characteristics including, but not limited to: age, colour, culture, disability/non-disability status, ethnic or linguistic origin, gender, health status, heritage, immigration status, geographic origin, race, religious and spiritual beliefs, political orientation, gender and sexual identities, and socioeconomic status. In the field, students can begin a process of identifying and challenging their own personal assumptions, views, and stereotypes regarding diversity and learn how immigrant-serving agencies respond to the needs of diverse clients in the community. Developing competence with diversity can be a learning objective in the field education learning contract in addition to providing effective service to diverse clients and communities.

Social Exclusion

Many factors affect the social integration of immigrants, such as racism and institutional barriers in the health care, education, and justice systems, among others (Derwing & Waugh, 2012). In Canada, many racialized groups and newcomers experience marginalization in many economic and social spheres. In field seminars, students are

encouraged to share their practicum experiences in a group setting to facilitate cooperative and experiential student learning. I have found the concept of social exclusion articulated by Galabuzi (2009) as particularly insightful in helping students understand immigrants' settlement and integration experiences. Galabuzi (2009) defines social exclusion as "the inability of certain subgroups to participate fully in Canadian life due to structural inequalities in access to social, economic, political, and cultural resources arising out of the often intersecting experiences of oppression relating to race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, immigrant status, and the like" (p. 254). Moreover, "Social exclusion is both process and outcome" (p. 253).

In the current neo-liberal global order, processes of social exclusion have intensified with the deregulation of markets, the decline of the welfare state, the commodification of public goods, and the increasing non-standard forms of work and exploitation in workplaces (Galabuzi, 2009). Social exclusion provides a space for a discussion and analysis of oppression and discrimination in this policy environment by shifting the focus back to the structural inequalities that determine the intensity and extent of marginalization in society (Galabuzi, 2009).

For example, overall unemployment among immigrants to Canada is high at 14%, compared to the national rate of 7.4%. In their field placements, students learn about the lack of credential recognition and their impact on newcomers' employment options and livelihoods. Martinez-Brawley and Zorita (2011) argue that social workers could play a more central role in serving immigrants and in incorporating anti-oppressive practices. Reflective practice allows learners to practice reflectively and apply methods of critical thinking and inquiry to their developing social work practice.

During supervision and in field seminars, I encourage students to consider their own values, beliefs, behaviours, biases, prejudices, and knowledge paradigms, along with how these may differ in their agencies. In the early weeks of their placements, I ask students to participate in agency orientations to learn about the agency history, organizational structure, policies, funding sources,

and key stakeholders, as well as about the roles of immigrants and newcomers in the community. As students become aware of personal identities and experiences, socialization, values, and attitudes in relationship to diversity, a social justice approach can allow students to deepen their understanding of oppression, and adopt cross-cultural and antiracist perspectives and practices. Field agencies may facilitate students' participation in advocating for change and social justice at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels through social action strategies. Sometimes students' greatest learning comes from the challenges experienced in their field placement when there are difficulties in meeting client needs. This is particularly true with respect to the situation of temporary foreign workers in Canada.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Barriers remain for temporary foreign workers who have few rights and are vulnerable to abuse due to systemic inequality (Elliott, 2012). Using temporary workers to address permanent labour demands creates a two-tiered society with a disposable workforce that is admitted only for its labour and that has fewer rights and protections than Canadians (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2012). Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation because of their lack of status, isolation, and lack of access to information about their rights.

Field education provides new learning opportunities for the integration of knowledge, values, and skills in practice. One of the current challenges faced by many immigrant-serving organizations is the emergent need for services for temporary foreign workers.

Temporary workers have little to no access to settlement services to help them integrate, even if they should want to transition to permanent residency. Field agencies are placed in situations where they are asked to provide services without recognition or support. On October 16, 2012, it was announced that Canadian Denhua International Mines Group plans to bring as many as 2,000 Chinese nationals into Canada to work at its mine, in a situation reminiscent of the workers who came to Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Canadian government apologized for the Chinese head tax, offering individual payments of

\$20,000 to anyone alive who had paid it or any living spouse of those who had paid it.

Under the temporary foreign worker program employers can pay 15% below the average wage for that job in that region, and workers will be fully reliant on Canada Denhua for assistance in getting housing, health care, and ensuring their safety. Why are low-skilled workers from developing countries treated differently than high-skilled workers from developed countries? What is the government's role in forcing employers to make working conditions more attractive for Canadians to relocate and retrain? Why is the government allowing the majority of the jobs in the Denhua mines to go to Chinese nationals? This action has now prompted a review of the temporary foreign worker program in Canada. Social work practicum students confront such human rights and social justice issues in the field and in their placements with immigrant and multicultural services societies.

Reflections on the Field

Although social workers have been working diligently toward culturally sensitive practice, the predicaments and challenges that immigrants and refugees face are beyond cultural or racial discrimination (Lundy, 2010). The case of temporary foreign workers highlights the evolving current dilemmas facing many practitioners and policy makers. Challenges such as social exclusion require a comprehensive response, and social workers are positioned to become actively engaged in raising awareness, contributing to knowledge and skills for practice, and promoting the role of social work among policy makers and practitioners in immigrant settlement and integration. Yan and Chan (2010) explain that "we are keenly aware that social workers need to have knowledge not only of the relevant policies and laws that tell us what to do and not to do but also of the rights of our clients and the challenges that they confront" (p. 22). This knowledge can also be facilitated in field education. Social workers need to be aware of the issues, challenges, and barriers faced by newcomers. In addition, it is imperative that social workers become increasingly involved in the debates surrounding immigration policies to provide a critical and anti-oppressive voice for recognition of the issues of human rights and social justice that face newcomers to Canada (Drolet, Robertson, & Robinson, 2010).

Social work education curriculum, field practica, and research contributions have the potential to advance knowledge and increase student understanding of migration and immigration. In this era of globalization, immigrants' settlement experiences are relevant to the education and training of social workers in a diverse society.

As a field education coordinator, I have encouraged social work students to consider field placements in immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies and organizations. Students report transformative learning in their field placements where solidarity is recognized through human rights and social justice approaches (Drolet, Clark, & Allen, 2012). For example, listening to newcomers' stories, joyful and painful, allows for new knowledge and thinking to emerge through reflectivity by considering the role of power (and inequality) within our society. Reflective practice allows for the possibility of multiple truths and the inclusion of a diversity of perspectives by privileging voices from the margins or those excluded from the expert role (Bolzan, Heycox, & Hughes, 2001). By acknowledging oppression as a complex structural issue that interacts with other forms of oppression and manifests in different ways, it is possible to actively pursue social change. Students are often personally affected by the change being sought—protection of workers' rights, access to permanent residence, and access to services. Immigrant-serving agencies and organizations provide a variety of services to newcomers, immigrants, and refugees, and often experience challenges in meeting the full range of needs due to policy limitations.

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REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

An Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Online Journal

Published by Cleveland State University School of Social Work

Call for Narratives for a Special Section on People and Animals Together ***Heart on Sleeves: On the Transformative Power of the Human-Animal Bond***

Submissions due December 15, 2013

Rationale

Extensive research in disciplines such as social work, nursing, rehabilitative psychology, special education and other related fields have documented the powerful nature of the interaction between humans and animals and the different ways the human-animal bond impacts and enriches lives. Furthermore, the bond between people and their companion animals is sustained by veterinarians and related professionals who play a crucial role in providing care for the companion animals' health as well as providing support to individuals and families during difficult times when their pets are ill. Despite the odyssey of the human-animal bond, little is known about human-animal relationships from the perspective of professionals who work with both humans and animals.

Aim and Scope of Special Themed Section

The editor is seeking lively narratives from practitioners, educators, clinicians, and other helping professionals who work with people and animals in a broad array of practice and applied settings. The editor is particularly interested in narrative expositions and reflections that are delicately nuanced and personalized. Submissions of any length – from short narratives focused on a single vignette to longer stories with multiple portrayals of interaction and references to the literature – are welcome (within an overall range of 1200-8000 words).

This Special Section Focuses on Narratives From.....

Professionals in the Field of Human-Animal Interaction

The editor welcomes narratives from professionals from a variety of fields who work in the area of animal assisted intervention, animal assisted therapy, animal assisted education, animal assisted activities and related fields.

Professionals in the Field of Veterinary Medicine

The editor welcomes narratives from professionals who provide health care to companion animals in a variety of places. These include but are not limited to veterinarians, veterinary technicians and related professionals who provide healthcare to companion animals.

For inquiries about submissions for this special section, contact Guest Editor:

Brinda Jegatheesan, Ph.D., University of Washington, brinda@uw.edu

To Submit a Manuscript, Register (Check the Reader and Author boxes) and Submit to the Special Section

Please read Helpful Instructions and Review Guidelines prior to submitting manuscripts

www.reflections narratives of professional helping.org

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

An Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Online Journal

Published by Cleveland State University School of Social Work

Call for Narratives for a Special Section on Therapeutic Relationships With Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

Submissions due February 15, 2014

Rationale

This special section will include submissions from helping professionals who work with military service members (active, guard and reserve), veterans, and their families. Settings include but are not limited to: mental health and combat stress active duty units, homeless shelters, substance abuse treatment programs, hospitals, family support programs, Vet Centers and Veterans Affairs, community-based agencies, rehabilitation centers, outreach programs, veterans courts and other criminal justice settings, universities and schools, and religious and spiritual settings and organizations.

There is much that helping professionals have yet to understand when establishing meaningful therapeutic bonds with service members, veterans, and their families. Therefore, this special section seeks narratives from the helping professional's perspective on the process of engaging military populations in treatment and establishing a trusting therapeutic relationship. Potential areas to explore include: When a therapeutic relationship was established, what were the strategies used to overcome potential barriers? What led to the development of a therapeutic relationship? Similarly, what are the "lessons learned" from situations where a therapeutic relationship was not established, or, where you, as the helping professional, changed course, in order to engage the veteran in treatment? What can providers do to identify barriers and remove them? How did the treatment context, e.g. organizational setting, policies, resources, social context, facilitate or impede the development of a therapeutic relationship?

The editor is seeking lively narratives on therapeutic engagement with individuals, families, and groups, from practitioners, clinicians, educators and other helping professionals who work with service members, veterans, retirees, and their families. We are also open to narrative from those who have experienced a positive, beneficial helping relationship. The editor is particularly interested in narrative exposition and reflection that are personalized and touch on the unique features of the helping relationship(s) with military populations that facilitated growth and change. Length of submissions can range from 1,200 to 8,000 words.

For inquiries about submissions for this special themed section, contact Guest Editor:

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