

Advances in Social Work



Indiana University
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Editorial

What is the “Cutting Edge” of Social Work?

James G. Daley

Social Work is a proud, complex profession with a broad, sweeping mandate. Every time some theorist or academic scholar or street-wise advocate asserts the “mission” of Social Work, a flood of alternative interpretations pour in. As scholars are busy building “evidence-based practice models,” post-modern cynics naysay the premise of science. Advocates of best-practice protocols butt heads with zealots of the “Social Work is an art” camp. This conflict was raging in 1986 when I earned my doctorate. Today’s swirl of arguments has a lot in common with the fiery debates of my doctoral class. Capturing the essence of Social Work seems clearly confirmed by each person’s passion for a cause but seems rarely affirmed by a majority.

There have been clear advances since 1986. There are a growing number of research centers at schools of social work. Hopefully, there will soon be an NIMH Social Work Research Center. There have been myriad studies on the effectiveness of Social Work practice. There have been dozens of textbooks on practice, policy, and advocacy. Various authors have even asserted their own models of Social Work. But have we made progress? The same arguments are being made that were made in 1986 (and probably in 1916). We are Science; we are Art. We are a professional service; we are “save-the-disenfranchised” missionaries. Work within the system; fight the system as outsiders.

As teachers, we face a fascinating challenge. We teach the professional skills, while flaming the inner fires of advocacy. We teach strategies for clinical intervention, while cautioning against blind acceptance of the diagnosis. We teach how to use the DSM, while discussing the stigma of labeling and the importance of context. We prepare the next generation of social workers to be professionally prepared for both clinical and advocacy roles.

The above beef stew of issues sets the stage for my question: what is the “cutting edge” of Social Work? As editor, I strive for articles that stimulate the reader and push the edge of our knowledge. But what cutting edge should I look for?

One argument would be that the best article is the one that systematically builds on existing research literature and adds a small piece to the slowly emerging theory or model. Empirical articles with large sample sizes, multi-site locations, and precise measures that are directly linked to the statistically confirmed model would step to the front of the line. A series of articles that repeatedly confirm the model would add credence that the model is the cutting edge.

Another argument would be that the best article is the bold, new direction previously untapped or perhaps even conceived. Such an article puts old ideas or strategies together in a unique way. The article would shake our paradigms to the core. No data would be necessary, just clear, thoughtful, provocative ideas.

As you look at this issue, have the authors pushed to the cutting edge? Besthorn and Saleebey’s fascinating review of and advocacy for biophilia is certainly thought provok-

ing. Collins' in-depth discussion of the issues that child victims of violence face is invaluable in bringing the reader up-to-speed on the topic. Both Early, Vonk, and Kondrat's multi-cultural practice article and Dalton and Wright's empirical exploration of redundancy in a school of social work give the reader some data-based ideas that can improve how we teach students. But are they cutting edge articles?

I would advocate that the articles are cutting edge. My reasoning is simple. Do they provoke new ideas? Do their findings encourage us to re-evaluate how we do business? Do they add to our understanding of an issue, perhaps even prompt us to read more on that issue? Are they eloquent arguments from authors who are passionate about their topic? I submit that all of the articles in this issue (and previous issues) meet the criteria in these questions. They make us think. They give us a chance to advance our skills or viewpoints.

So what is the "cutting edge" of Social Work? We bump up against it every day. The cutting edge is the new and stimulating. It might be an evidence-based skill. It might be a bold new idea. It might be new data that suggests we should change how we do business. It could be marching together to a state capitol to advocate for change. The cutting edge is not defined by camp leaders or by excluding people who do not think the "right" way. For a complex profession, the cutting edge is multi-faceted and embracing. For Social Work, the profession that prides itself with being inclusive, the cutting edge is a place that welcomes science and art, advocate and clinician, the data-obsessed, and the dreamer. As editor, I hope the cutting edge is *Advances in Social Work*.

So, to the reader I give this simple invitation. Sit back in a comfortable chair and begin to read this issue. I promise you will be tasting the cutting edge.

Nature, Genetics, and the Biophilia Connection: Exploring Linkages with Social Work Values and Practice

Fred H. Besthorn
Dennis Saleebey

Abstract: *Social work's notion of environment and its environmental responsibilities has always been narrowly defined. The profession has tended to either neglect natural environmental issues or accept shallow, ecological conceptualizations of nature as something other, quite separate from the human enterprise and/or outside the reach of social work activity. The Biophilia Hypothesis, first articulated by Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson in 1984, offers social work as a fundamentally different view of the person/environment construct and argues for a primary shift in the way the profession views its relationship with the natural world. This article traces the conceptual development of the Biophilic theory and reviews pivotal empirical evidence explicitly arguing for the essential Biophilic premise that humans have acquired, through their long evolutionary history, a strong genetic predisposition for nature and natural settings. It offers key insights and examples for incorporating Biophilia into social work's values and knowledge base and how it may impact the profession's practice strategies and techniques.*

Keywords: *Values, genetics, practice, Biophilia Hypothesis, environment, ecological/systems, nature*

Nearly every culture, from the early Aboriginal tribes of Australia to the most devoted urbanites of post-industrial Europe or America, have recognized that nature is good for the soul and absolutely critical to physical survival. Daily, untold numbers of people gaze out a window at an uncomplicated scene of trees and diminutive wildlife or tend a flower garden and feel a deep sense of satisfaction and connection to an unseen natural beneficence. At any given moment a child or older person caresses a cherished pet and feels less alone and more loved. These phenomena and countless others like them furnish compelling evidence of what Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Harvard biologist, and Distinguished Professor Edward O. Wilson calls the *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Wilson (1984) concluded in his groundbreaking work *Biophilia: The Human Bond with Other Species*, after a generation of research and observation, that human beings not only derive specific

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aesthetic benefits from interacting with nature, but they also have an instinctive, genetically-determined need to deeply affiliate with natural settings and life-forms. Wilson (1993, 2002) and other biophilic theorists contend that the need to affiliate with non-human organisms and eco-systems is innately biological and intensely emotional. Human responses to these deep affiliations have complex benefits that not only enhance psychic and physical well being but they are critical to our adaptive skill for survival as a species.

Evidence of this biologically determined need to affiliate with and experience nature has persisted throughout pre-modern and modern cultures. For example, more than one-half of all U.S. households own pets (Beck & Myers, 1996) and animal depictions comprise over 90% of the imagery used in language and counting acquisition exercises in children's preschool books (Kellert, 1993). Recent research also shows that an estimated 70% of all adolescents speak to or confide in their pets (Frumkin, 2001). More Americans visit zoos during an average year than attend all professional football, basketball, and baseball games combined (Kellert, 1997). People crowd into national parks to experience natural landscapes or travel thousands of miles to stroll on a beach. Visits to national parks and protected areas have risen so dramatically in the past few years that many are now beset with an excess of interest (Kellert, 1997) that threaten to harm or even destroy the fragile ecosystems of these cherished locations. This inclination to affiliate with nature is more than an aesthetic sensibility or emotional support mechanism. It is, according to biophilial theory, integral to healthy human development (Kellert, 1997; Orr, 1993). The essence of biophilia is that human beings have a need—a biological imperative—to connect with nature in order to maximize their potential and lead productive, fulfilling lives.

Biophilia theory is still in its early developmental phase. Nevertheless, researchers from diverse disciplines such as architecture, landscape design, psychology, biology, genetics, child development, geography, and evolutionary science are beginning to critically examine and detail both the limits and possibilities of this emerging inter-disciplinary impulse (Frumkin, 2001). Wilson, considered the progenitor of the nascent fields of evolutionary psychology and sociobiology, has led the way in these efforts by asserting that humans developed in a co-evolutionary manner. In other words, genetic pre-dispositions arose within natural settings and local contexts, and as a species, we have been intimately tied to a variety of natural environments. Cultures, too, have developed over time, partially in response to local, natural conditions. These pre-dispositions play a pivotal role in human evolution because they have led to the adaptation of the species. Other eminent scientists and scholars, including Stephen Kellert, Professor of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University and Robert Ulrich, Professor of Architecture at Texas A&M, also continue to verify from extensive cross-cultural research that our eon's old affiliation with nature has conferred advantages in our species' survival throughout history (Kahn, 1997). From this evidence it seems clear that people continue to need and value nature precisely because of the genetically encoded adaptive benefits it has conferred upon us physically, emotionally, and intellectually (Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Kellert, 1997). This article focuses on a portion of this expanding data, suggesting a biophilia connection and what this has to recommend to social work theory and practice.

EVOLUTIONARY FOUNDATIONS OF BIOPHILIA

For nearly all of human history people have lived in situations that are deeply embedded into the natural environment (Eisler, 1990). Survival depended on familiarity with all aspects of physical, natural surroundings. Over millions of years, a kind of bio-cultural evolution progressed, wherein genetics and culture evolved simultaneously (Verbeek & de Waal, 2002). Propensities for certain behaviors (culture) were spread by natural selection if they bestowed adaptive advantage and, thus, the ability to reproduce successfully (natural selection). Wilson (1993, p. 33) explains: "A certain genotype makes a certain behavioral response more likely and the response enhances survival and reproductive fitness...the genotype consequently spreads through the population and the behavioral response grows more frequent." It would be highly unlikely that these adaptive advantages, developing over the course of literally millions of years from early *homo habilis* to more recent *homo sapiens*, would somehow be diminished simply because humans began cultivating crops, domesticating animals, creating technologies, and forming collective settlements. Thus today, an intriguing body of research suggests that people still routinely choose natural landscapes such as water views or eminences near water from which park-like land can be viewed. This is probably an important remnant of the fact that all natural selection is "about adaptation to changing local environments" (Gould, 1996, p. 139).

Safety and the Savanna

It is now generally accepted in the scientific community that humans lived and evolved for most of their two million years on the savanna of East Africa (Eisler, 1990; Haila & Levins, 1992; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Ulrich, 1993; Wilson, 2002). This setting was ideal, because certain features of the landscape offered enhanced chances for survival. A basic tenet of biophilia is that "humans function optimally in environments that possess attributes of the natural settings in which they evolved" (Knopf, 1983, p. 213). The savannas provided numerous major advantages for early humans. They offered visual openness and thus few hidden predators. They had abundant plant and animal food sources and reliably available water. The trees were spaced distances apart or in small clusters and were shaped to provide either vantage points for surveillance or escape opportunities (Ulrich, 1993; Wilson, 2002). Because humans evolved over millions of years in this environment, biophilic theory asserts that we have become physiologically and psychologically adapted to these particular types of natural settings (Kahn, 1997; Kahn & Kellert, 2002).

Indeed, Ulrich (1993) found that certain cross-culturally consistent preferences provide empirical support for the hypothesis that biophilia is grounded in genetics. Groups as diverse as North Americans, East Asians, Australians, Europeans, and Central Africans show a pervasive bias toward savanna-like natural environments. These preferences have also been found to exist across all age groups and even among children as young as seven years old (Ball & Falk, 1982; Newell, 1997). The research demonstrates, for instance, that the species of trees rated most attractive by virtually all cultural groups match the prototypic savanna tree (Ulrich, 1993, p. 5) where "canopies were moderately dense and trunks bifurcate

near the ground." Findings of cross-cultural preferences for globular or small groupings of trees and away from conical or columnar tree forms and other savanna-like conditions of spatial openness support the genetically-based condition of biophilia (Sommer & Summit, 1996; Wilson, 1993). Other features of the savanna biome that continue to be cross-culturally valued are uniform grassy ground surfaces or open landscapes with smooth ground texture and low-action waterscapes (Kahn, 1997). A preference for green, verdant vegetation, flowers, and especially water, exists today probably because throughout evolution they could be associated with the necessities of food and water (Ulrich, 1993).

Biophilia asserts that these seminal preferences and many others like them are closely tied to the genetic model of environmental response. Thus, "People may have an evolutionary predisposition to view vegetated places as safe and resource rich" (Sheets & Manzer, 1991, p. 301). Kaplan (1983), for example, studied views from homes and found a positive correlation between the presence of trees and neighborhood satisfaction. Proximity to natural areas and/or the increased presence of trees also increased the perception of support from neighbors and feelings of friendliness toward neighbors. Neighborhoods are perceived to be better, safer, cleaner places in which to live and easier places in which to make a living. Not only do people prefer to see the natural world from their homes, but having such views alter people's experiences of places and effects their satisfaction with physical and social environments. People think more creatively, feel friendlier, and become more cooperative and less sad when surrounded by vegetation. There are also economic advantages to having nature close to home. Features such as trees and water increase property values (Kellert, 1997). Gold (1997) found homes and business property located next to well-landscaped parks hold higher value, rental rates the highest for properties with a view of water, and a lower rate of turnover in property ownership in well-landscaped neighborhoods versus those lacking in vegetation.

Natural Versus Built Environments

One of the most revealing empirical findings of the existence of biophilia is the consistent tendency of people to prefer natural scenes over built views. Numerous studies (Heerwagen & Orians, 1986; Kaplan, 1983; Newell, 1997; Shafer & Tooby, 1973; Sheets & Manzer, 1991; Ulrich, 1981, 1983) have been unanimous in showing that even unspectacular or sub-par natural views elicit higher rates of aesthetic preference and pleasantness compared to very few well-known urban views. Earlier research has assumed that preference was a matter of learned response and therefore predicted differences would be found among urban and rural dwellers, as well as among cultures. Shafer and Tooby (1973), among others, found this not to be the case. There is great similarity in response to natural scenes among individuals and across groups. Lacking natural views, people prefer environments built with water, trees, and other vegetation to those without these features (Kahn, 1997). Ulrich (1983) and Smardon (1988) found that urban parks with savanna-like features add greatly to the aesthetics of a cityscape. Kellert (1997) notes that when asked to depict an ideal landscape, people consistently describe scenes containing waterfalls or nearby water, flowers, vegetation with fruits, park-like settings, and branching-canopy trees. Kellert (1997, p. 41) is convinced that this "...instinctive

aesthetic appears to be tied to the increased likelihood of encountering sustenance and security." When given the option, people will choose landscapes that "...fit with patterns from deep in human history on the savannas of East Africa" (Kahn, 1997, p. 1).

BENEFITS OF NATURE AND ANIMALS

If certain natural settings have promoted and currently reflect evolutionary survival, and if the biophilia connection to these natural places exist as hypothesized, then, these same constituent places should still show evidence of continuing to nurture human well-being. Ulrich (1993) and Kellert (1997) analyzed more than 100 studies that had shown exposure to natural areas, especially those with savanna-like properties which have powerful impacts on human physiology, psychology, and metaphysical awareness. They concluded that this postulated biophilia relationship does, in fact, exist even if not yet fully understood. Indeed, minimal contact with nature and other-than-human beings, such as looking out a window or having a pet, has a profoundly positive impact on human functioning, which is often disproportional to the amount or degree of exposure to these natural domains (Herzog & Bosley, 1992; Kahn, 1997).

Nature: Physiology and Stress Reduction

The belief that exposure to trees, water, and other natural scenes tends to promote well-being and provides restorative benefits from the burden of everyday living is documented from Roman times (Perlman, 1994; Ulrich et al., 1991). In more recent history, Frederick Law Olmstead, the architect of Central Park in New York City, wrote of his belief that the pressures associated with cities could be mitigated by viewing nature (Ulrich et al., 1991). Olmstead believed that nature exercised the mind without fatigue and that it acts as a tranquilizer for the mind while simultaneously enlivening it. Even today, more than 130 years later, there is mounting evidence from a variety of disciplines that he was correct; natural settings have restorative capacities (Hartig, Mang & Evans, 1991; Ulrich, 1984). Affiliating with nature, either directly or through a surrogate, frequently provides a way to escape from the pressures and strains of daily life. Even short exposures to nature have an important function for many city-dwellers in facilitating recovery from noise, crowding, and the annoyances of urban life (Herzog & Bosley, 1992; Ulrich et al., 1991). Kellert (1993) states: "The solitude of nature can be an antidote to the excessive stimulation of modern life" p. 94).

Similar kinds of benefits have been documented for persons suffering from severe stress. One study (Ulrich, 1993) asked people to describe the settings they sought when they were stressed or depressed. More than 75% of respondents described outdoor places that were either natural environments or urban settings dominated by natural elements such as wooded parks, places with scenic views, or the beaches of lakes and oceans. Once individuals are stressed, encounters with natural environments have a restorative influence, whereas, many urban environments will hamper recuperation (Ulrich et al., 1991). Decreases in heart rate and blood pressure, relaxation of muscle tension, and increases in brain alpha waves indicative of relaxation are all typical responses when exposed to natural scenes. These measures are stronger still when people are exposed to scenes containing

water (Ulrich et al., 1991). Parsons (1991) points out that another potential influence of natural environmental perception on human health includes an increase in immune system functioning that occurs when stress levels remain low.

Nature: Emotional, Cognitive, and Spiritual Responses

While suggesting clear associations between experiences with natural settings, physiology, and stress reduction, the nature connection appears also to go beyond these to include shifts in a broad range of emotional and cognitive states (Herzog & Bosley, 1992; Tennessen & Cimprich, 1995; Ulrich, 1993). Nature seems to have a positive effect on a cluster of emotions, including friendliness, playfulness, elation, and affection (Ulrich, 1979; Coley, Solomon & Shafto, 2002). For example, Sheets and Manzer (1991) report positive emotional attachments rising in direct correlation to the amount of vegetation present in a view. Hull and Harvey (1989) found that when fatigued and pressured, feelings of pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction rise in proportion to the number of trees within view. Ulrich (1979) and Hartig, Mang and Evans (1991) report reductions in anxiety, fear, anger, and aggression when viewing nature scenes, and feelings of tranquility and serenity as common reactions to open spaces, lush vegetation, and large trees.

Research has also explicitly demonstrated that nature can evoke important cognitive responses. Kaplan and Talbot (1983) found that when people have difficulty concentrating or find mental work unusually effortful, an experience with nature can provide a feeling of escape. The experience provides opportunities to be interested in something else and removes the demands on one's behavior that are imposed by humans. This lessens irritability, increases awareness of one's own thoughts and feelings, and enhances self-confidence.

Ulrich (1993) cites research which indicates that nature experiences stimulate intellectual activity by increasing curiosity and enhancing creativity. In addition, increased abilities to problem solve can result from contact with nature. The "relaxed attentional state produced by nature may facilitate a more creative, less stereotyped pattern of thought...and could offer advantages...through better problem solving" (Katcher & Wilkins, 1993, p.).

It seems clear that certain aspects of nature can elicit powerful emotional and cognitive responses. Only recently, however, have scholars and researchers begun to systematically look at those feelings of awe, mystery, excitement, and spiritual transcendence that are typical reactions to experiences with natural places. Kellert (1993) and many others, such as Besthorn (2000; 2001) and Besthorn and Canda (2002) go beyond conventional emotional responses and emphasize deep metaphysical and spiritual attachments that human beings often form with the natural world. A certain plant, a nearby forest, or any favorite location can evoke feelings of familiarity, intimacy, and transcendence. Even ordinary and unspectacular nature can assume a deep meaning if encountered as a daily part of life. Human kind often comes to deeply, passionately, and spiritually "depend on trusted and familiar places" (Kellert, 1997, p. 185). Destruction of these well-known landscapes can produce feelings of profound loss, despair, and even grief (Kellert, 1997). The intimacy people feel with nature fulfills social and transcendent needs for relationship and can provide "the emotional strength to confront life's vicissitudes" (Kellert, 1997, p. 110).

Animals: Physiological and Emotional Well-being

While direct experiences with natural landscapes contribute to stress reduction and a wide range of physiological, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual benefits, it is humankind's deep-seated affinity with animals that offers the most convincing expression of biophilia. For millennia, animals have shared our land, air, and water. They have been essential to our physical survival and the source of intense personal friendships and affection. They suffered with us, died for us, inspired our daily tedium, animated our stories of creation, and have been singly most important, well ahead of our connection to the natural world around us (Hogan, Metzger & Peterson, 1998). Kellert (1997) asserts that animals "represent the most common focus of bonding to the non-human world" (p. 94). So long standing and resonant are our bonds to animals that we have a tendency to consider animals as kin (Katcher & Wilkins, 1993).

Contact with animals promotes physiological health and emotional well being (Kahn, 1997). Adults are more likely to be approached when they are accompanied by an animal, thereby, increasing the likelihood of social interaction among people (Katcher & Wilkins, 1993). Numerous studies show a strong correlation between the tactile comfort and companionship provided by pets and better health and life expectancy. People have a need to feel accepted, respected, and cherished. Animals fill that requirement by providing us with uncritical attention, devotion, and a sense of being valued and wanted (Kellert, 1997). They can evoke a sense of belonging that has an impact on our ability to cope and can provide "an antidote to isolation and aloneness" (Kellert, 1997, p. 107). Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch & Thomas, (1980) and Friedmann and Thomas (1995) have found that patients with heart disease have better survival rates if they are pet owners. Affiliation with pets has lessened feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and loneliness and has thus reduced physiological arousal and the likelihood of ongoing cardiac distress.

Pet ownership among elderly people has been shown to decrease visits to doctor's offices (Siegel, 1990) and increase positive measures of mental health. Katcher and Wilkins (1993) cite dozens of studies showing the beneficial effects of resident animals on institutionalized elderly suffering with chronic brain syndrome. Patients who were previously unresponsive focus their attention on animals and interact with them. Residents begin smiling, laughing, and talking to the animals and the volunteers who accompany them. Over the long-term, these patients are less hostile to their caregivers and generally more socially communicable (Kahn, 1997). Kahn observed, that people:

"...are happier and live longer in the regular presence of animals... There is calming among the bereaved, quicker rehabilitation by alcoholics, improved self-esteem among the elderly, increased longevity by cardiac and cancer patients, improved emotional states among disturbed children... more cheer among the mental and physically handicapped...and general facilitation of social relationships. (p. 9)

SOCIAL WORK VALUES AND PRACTICE IN A BIOPHILIC CONTEXT

Social work has always had an ambivalent understanding of its relationship to the natural world. The profession has consistently claimed for itself an ecological

awareness. Our person/environment, ecological, systems, and eco-systems models of practice have centered the profession's collective attention on the link between the individual and his or her unique surroundings (Besthorn, 2002; Besthorn & Canda, 2002; Besthorn & McMillen, 2002). They have served as helpful guides to our intervention strategies and our understanding of the human condition (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). Indeed, few social workers would allege that their professional orientation is not guided, if only peripherally, by some form of environmental or ecological consciousness. Yet, with few exceptions, for all their descriptive and explanatory power, social work's conventional environmental models have shown an almost complete disregard for integrating a comprehensive understanding of the connection between person and the natural environment and the way we derive individual and collective meaning from this association (Bartlett, 2000; Besthorn, 2000, 2002; Coates, 2000; Hoff & McNutt, 1994; Hoff, 1998; Kahn & Scher, 2002; Rogge, 1994). With few exceptions, social work does not generally recognize the connection between person and nature or inquire into it, develop theory around it, or place it in its computations of what is important to those the profession serves (NASW, 2000; Besthorn, 2001; 2002). Nature has tended to become the benign backdrop for more fundamentally important personal or social interactions. When it comes to nature, social work's diffidence also may be a part of a general reluctance to venture too deeply into the biological sphere, believing it to be the domain of other disciplines and professions (Saleebey, 1992; 2001; 2002).

Yet, scant justification remains for a continuation of this epistemological myopia. Indeed, as has been suggested, experiencing nature and finding intense connections with animals enriches people's lives in ways never before understood. Nature in all its forms is a critical ingredient for healthy development and realization of full human potential. It is certainly essential to survival. While many scholars believe that expressions of biophilia represent, as with most complex phenomena, weak biological tendencies clearly "shaped by the mediating influence of learning, culture and experience" (Kellert, 1997, p. 4), it is, nonetheless, clear that natural affiliations, operating through as well as expressing our biophilic propensity, represent a vast accumulation of resources critical to the way social work understands and responds to the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual development and well-being of the clients we serve.

Core Values: Dignity and Justice

The Biophilia Hypothesis and the multiple manifestations we see of it in contemporary life are compatible with the core values and concerns of social work. Like social work, biophilia theory recognizes the intrinsic worth and dignity of all human beings inasmuch as biophilia respects the significance and integrity of all beings in the biospheric community. Biophilia acknowledges the complex interrelationship of life. This means that all living organisms, not just a select few, have inherent value and this value is created and sustained in the context of deep relationship. Each of us is dependent on all others in this immense planetary ecosystem we call Earth. We are interrelated to such an extent that the lessening of one member of this system is ultimately the diminishment of all. The dignity of individuals and the well being of society are tied fundamentally to the dignity that eco-

logical and social justices are intimately intertwined. Severed, fractured, and unjust human relationships threaten and diminish the existence of nature. One need only look as far as the incalculable damage done to the natural world as a result of civil strife and international conflict. Biophilia is very much about dignified, just, supportive interrelationships built upon integrity and mutual respect and, in this sense, it fits impeccably with the core values of social work.

Following the principles of biophilia, humans have developed biological preferences for nature beyond the basics of physical survival because nature has enhanced their ability to survive emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. Humans need nature not just to sustain life, but to enrich and enhance it (Besthorn, 2001; Hoff & McNutt, 1994). Having little or no access to vital, healthy, natural areas and animal encounters decreases the value of the human experience. Thus, people who are denied the availability of rich, healthy environments and intimate nature experiences are denied the dignity of having full access to resources critical to their healthy development. This is likely to be the case for most if destruction of the environment and loss of bio-diversity continues at its present rate. Currently, the impact of environmental degradation falls most heavily on people of color, those living in poverty, or those otherwise socially or politically disenfranchised.

Not only are the poor and marginalized more likely to reside in settings devoid of healthy nature, they are also more likely to be victims of environmental destruction due to industrial exploitation of land and resources. Large industries that cause pollution and community disruption are not likely to be placed in affluent neighborhoods populated mostly by people who are white and prosperous (Bullard, 1993). Corporate interests have shown little hesitancy to locating these enterprises in poor neighborhoods where a few, often individuals of color, are forced to bear the burdens of industrial processes and residual waste from which the majority benefits.

Industrialization, pollution, poverty, oppression, and environmentalism are all inexorably linked (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002). In recent reviews, Boerner and Lambert (1995), Stephens (1996), and others have found clear patterns showing that communities with greater minority populations are more likely to be the sites of heavy industry and commercial hazardous waste facilities. These investigations have also discovered that significant disparities exist in the fines levied against polluters in white communities and those in minority areas. It was also found that the Environmental Protection Agency took longer to clean up waste sites in poor and minority communities than in affluent areas. Not only are the hazardous waste sites noxious and potentially very dangerous, but social ills in the form of increased vandalism, crime, and drug use tend to follow placement of these sites in or near communities. At best, this is social and environmental injustice, and at worst, it is the embodiment of environmental racism. It is the denial of equal access to resources in the form of a healthy environment in which to live, and it results in the further marginalization of already disenfranchised people. As such, it is counter to the core values of social work. Social workers should find it unacceptable and consistent with our ethical commitments to political and social action (NASW, 1999) to do everything in our professional ability to bring it to an

end. In a sense, thinking of social justice as the provision and, if necessary, the redistribution of those social resources required to undergird and support adequate human development, those resources should be expanded to include those natural ones that have the same purpose and effect.

Core Values: Community, Diversity, and Inclusion

Whether or not social workers choose to be active in environmental causes, they certainly can no longer choose to be uninformed regarding the impact that degraded environments have on their clients (Rogge & Combs-Orme, in press). When we poison an environment, we jeopardize much more than pretty neighborhoods. We also limit the possibilities for vital, secure, sustainable communities and healthy personal and social development. When communities are burdened with pollution and decay, there is often an erosion of community stability. People feel less pride. They become less secure, more alienated, more uncertain of their futures, and less able to realize their dreams. When we do not respect the worth of the natural environment, we do not respect the worth and dignity of the people who reside in and depend on it. If social work is to continue its focus on poverty, discrimination, oppression, and other forms of social injustice, as well as its emphasis on respect for diversity, it must begin to take a far more active role in the eco-justice/social-justice dialogue.

Small changes can have big results, as an old expression foretells. This is certainly the case when it comes to our place in the natural world. The presence of even minimal experiences with natural settings and/or non-human beings genuinely matters to people. We are more whole when we can draw sustaining energy from our surroundings and our relationships. As Kaplan (1983) observed, "Big trees, and small trees, glistening water, chirping birds, budding bushes, colorful flowers—these are important ingredients in a good life. To have these available only rarely...deprives people of tranquility and of spiritual sustenance." (p. 155) Effective social work practice must recognize the impact that nature, or the lack thereof, has on the life of community. As Gladwell (2000) says, "...an epidemic of [disorder or disorganization] can be reversed, can be tipped, by tinkering with the smallest detail of the environment" (p. 146). Community workers have long recognized that modest changes in the physical appearance of a neighborhood can reap big dividends in terms of increasing the sense of security and involvement of residents. However, the natural environment has never been given much attention in these efforts. Recently, however, a number of community programs have begun to attend to elements of the natural environment. One of the most common developments is the planting and maintaining of a vegetable and flower garden; an oasis, often, in a built environment that has been the victim of official inattention (Delgado, 2000). Hynes (1995), commenting on the salubrious effects of community gardens, says:

At its core, the community garden movement in the late twentieth century is about rebuilding neighborhood community and restoring ecology to the inner city...For the give-and-take of working in gardens attaches gardeners to a particular place through physical and social engagement. Community gardens create relationships between city dwellers and the soil, and instill an ethic of urban environmentalism that neither parks nor

wilderness—which release and free us from the industrial city—can do. Gardens offer a more intimate and local space than the large landscape parks can offer. (p. x, xv-xvi)

Access by all people to the opportunities and resources which can result in a better life is one of the dominant historic themes of effective social work practice. Social workers recognize that these resources and opportunities are not as readily available to or are frequently denied to some members of society. Social workers also understand that for all of its rhetoric to the contrary, modern Western culture tends to value conformity at the expense of diversity and difference. It typically rewards people who have the same tastes, buy the same consumer products, and share the same collective attitudes. Indeed, the economic system could not function without this homogenization of attitudes, ideas, and being. Individuals and groups who appear to be different, have alternative beliefs, or represent diverse cultures and backgrounds often find themselves having to make do with scant resources and far fewer opportunities. While social workers recognize that respect for human diversity is vital to good social work practice, it must also begin to affirm that diversity is also an imperative for nature.

Just as loss of human diversity diminishes the richness and potential of our lives, loss of bio-diversity is equally, if not more, destructive. The dominant social paradigm in the West regards humanity and nature as separate entities. Humans are viewed as not only separate from nature, but above and superior to nature. Biophilia theory, on the other hand, recognizes the inherent inter-relatedness and bio-centric equality of all life forms. Bio-diversity is essential for the survival of the human species and its loss is a threat to the entire eco-system (Suzuki, 1997). Extinctions, species endangerments, and callous acts of resource exploitation are often seen as inconsequential to the global, human community because they do not seem to impact individuals directly. This sense of human identity as separate and independent of others, both human and non-human, is illusionary and self-destructive. It is a fallacy that humans live apart from and are superior to nature. Not all cultures have this view. In fact, "Many Afrocentric, Native American, and Asian worldviews share this sense of inter-relatedness of humans with all elements of the environment...Such a holistic perspective is useful and appropriate for social work with its concern for human behavior in the context of the larger environment." (Shriver, 1998, p. 92)

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND PRACTICE: BIOPHILIC CONNECTIONS

Principles of biophilia can be comfortably incorporated into social work education and practice. They can provide the basis for the development of effectively fashioned means to help people maximize their potential and empower them to achieve control of their lives and the communities in which they live. Focusing on nature in its many forms and expressions has great potential for social work education for practice and for specific practice settings. Let us examine some possibilities.

First, since many elements of the natural environment are implicated in reducing levels of stress, promoting healing, and aiding in problem solving, social work educators should begin to instruct their students regarding the importance of

employing natural elements in interventive settings. The design and sighting of buildings and practice spaces is a logical place to begin. Observations from office windows can include natural views, gardens, or nicely landscaped areas. Flowers and plants can be placed in offices and reception areas. How people respond in a given situation is highly contingent on the immediate ambient environment in which they find themselves (Gallagher, 1993). What the decor reflects or says to the observer, what symbolism and messages are embedded in its structure, and the intimate details of the surroundings can be critical to the character of the work that goes on. Organizational environments denuded of plants, flowers, water—any hint of the natural—may not be the best place to for productive, interpersonal work (Saleebey, 2002). Use of water fountains, small ponds, and aquariums should be increased. Even things as simple as walking outside or sitting in a picturesque or tranquil natural setting while working with clients can have a profound impact on their progress. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) talks of the importance of “flow,” a kind of optimal experience in which people feel involved, exhilarated, and unself-conscious doing something that feels important or stimulating. What kinds of experiences do the physical environments of social service agencies, social work schools, residential centers, and hospitals encourage? What do they say about the kinds of experiences clients are going to have? What kinds of expectations for involvement do these environments create?

Second, educating students to discuss with their clients the possibilities of: a) combating depression, b) relieving stress, c) creating more tranquility, and d) renewing energy by attending to and altering the immediate natural environment is no different in some ways than encouraging them to attend to and alter their interpersonal environment in particular ways. A study by Marc Fried (cited in Gallagher, 1993) demonstrated that the quality of life (measured by feelings of satisfaction) for married people was most strongly influenced by a “good” marriage. But the second most important factor was the immediate surroundings, especially the natural environment. Research and teaching in environmental health increasingly attests to the benefits associated with attending to and altering ones physical surroundings. While spotlighting the hazardous effects of toxic chemicals, radiation, and biological agents is an important agenda for social work education, especially in light of the new security realities stemming from 9-11, it must not overshadow attending to environmental experiences that have a positive impact on health and well-being.

Third, this knowledge provides social work students and practitioners with a set of possible scenarios for work with specific populations. In working with the elderly in long-term care facilities, introducing plants and animals (pets brought on visits from the local Humane society, birds in cages, and fish in aquaria, for example), may bring some residents a noticeable increase in interest, awareness, energy, and positive feeling (J. Nolley, Presbyterian Manor, Lawrence, KS, personal communication, 2001). There has also been much work with adults and youth, some who have serious mental and behavioral problems, involving experience and involvement with nature. The results, at least for a period of time, generally tend to support the idea that these experiences can provide some opportunities for self-discovery and a desire to maintain contact with natural environments in the future (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Community work in specific geographic locales or among specific sub-populations is a reemerging practice domain that can benefit from a biophilic emphasis. Community building that involves restoration and rehabilitation of the proximal natural environment through community gardens, planting of lawns and greenswards, and flower gardens for apartments is a clear case in point. An elderly resident of a public housing community (a development undergoing significant change, much of it stressful and frightening) kept a small flower garden in front of the porch of her apartment. It afforded her and her children respite and renewal. In another example, a program in an urban community in the Midwest put adults and children together to develop projects that can improve the natural settings of the neighborhoods which make up the community. In an urban high school in the same city, youth were given small grants to work on programs that would benefit the school or the surrounding community. The two largest projects involved rehabilitation of a ramshackle neighborhood block and building a garden with a pond in a school courtyard—a place, as one student said, that would be “peaceful, beautiful, and make us proud” (University of Kansas, 2001).

Finally, a professional alliance with biophilic principles and ideas provides social workers with a chance to engage with other professionals and grassroots organizations in meaningful advocacy. Perhaps it is time for the profession to consider assuming a more active role in educating our society about the consequences of our present lifestyle choices. Currently, the rate of habitat destruction outpaces environmental education. Ecological activism is usually seen in terms of saving the whales or hugging trees, because it is often framed in terms of wildlife and wilderness and thus appears to be only about saving the earth and its natural systems. Most people do not make the connection from this framework to saving humanity. Why not also save the people of the earth by saving the earth? Initially, it may seem out of place for social workers to be advocates for the environment. Citizens are comfortable with the traditional role of social workers as advocates for foster children, hospital patients, or the poor, for this is the work of helping people. However, if we accept the notion of the deep biophilic connection between nature and humanity, it also becomes our work to improve the quality of life by improving the environment in which people live. Nothing is more basic to the quality of life than the water we drink or the air we breathe or our ability to enjoy a natural vista on a beautiful day. Social workers need to make a more overt connection between the environment, human survival, and human happiness. It is also true that the most serious depredations of environments occur in poor and inner city places and spaces. If we believe that our mission as a profession includes addressing conditions that oppress and marginalize people, focusing on the diminishment of resources of the natural environment is one of the most important of these conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Long and vigorously promoted by the profession of social work, an ecosystemic view, oddly enough, often overlooks its very own origins. That is, the idea of ecosystems arose, in part, from the articulation of ways of thinking about animal and plant life and how they interact. Yet, in the social work version of this complex

perspective, it is the natural world and non-sentient being that is overlooked. While we might examine individuals, families, communities, social institutions and organizations, support and interpersonal networks, cultural and ethnic factors under the ecosystemic aegis, we do little to assess and understand the important role of nature in the daily lives of human beings.

The social work profession also has as one of its primary missions the enhancement of human well being. Nature and natural connections, mediated through our biophilic attachments, offer an essential vehicle for human identity formation and a tool for healing, both individually and collectively. However, increasing urbanization and sprawl have diminished vast areas of natural habitat and caused immense declines in biological diversity. Over-development and sprawl has resulted in habitats suffering unsustainable levels of exploitation, thus, accelerating the scale of species endangerment and extinction. At this point we have precious little understanding of how such factors affect the well being and identity of populations of people that the profession typically serve.

The questions now facing us as social workers include: do the prospects of these ecological threats pose a serious threat to the survival of humanity? More immediately, can people experience full lives with material, emotional, and spiritual significance if the natural environment is substantially diminished and degraded? While the answer to the first question is not yet clear, it seems that the unequivocal answer to the second of these questions must be no in light of what we now know about our biophilic connections to the natural world.

No, the extinction of our species does not appear to be imminent, but our quality of life being eroded will only continue to deteriorate without attention and action. Advocating for a rich and rewarding relationship with nature does not imply a desire to return to the pre-industrial past or a pastoral way of life. This is not possible and probably not ultimately desirable. What is desirable, however, is a respect for nature that helps us to live within it, not in spite of it.

As social workers, we need to act in our client's best interests by helping to arrest loss of bio-diversity and habitat destruction. We need to support creating protected areas where development should not be permitted to occur. We must develop educational strategies that support efforts to fight species extinction. We must educate our students and the public regarding the importance of nature to human well being. We will need to find ways to integrate nature into our values, theories, and practices and into our daily lives. We must also develop strategies to assist our communities and neighborhoods incorporate biophilia into our homes, our places of work, and our social interactions and recognize the extent to which our physical health, mental health, and happiness depend on a vital, diverse, bio-rich planet. This means we must alter our attitudes about what constitutes the good life.

When we impoverish the world, we inevitably reduce our potential for individual physical, material, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth and well being. In addition, "we diminish the possibilities for...collective development. We achieve our fullest humanity by celebrating our widest and deepest dependence on nature" (Kellert, 1997, p. 205). Understanding the importance of our biophilic

connections to the earth and the role that nature plays in our survival and in assisting a healthy lifestyle empowers social workers and their clients and helps both to achieve their highest potential.

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Hearing the Silence: Children's Voices on Violence

Kathryn S. Collins

Abstract: *Each year more than five million children in the United States are exposed to traumatizing events in their communities. This paper presents a discussion of multiple areas in violence and victimization research that needs to be continued as well as provides suggestions on how to un-silence child survivors through bridging the gaps between research and practice. It reviews the overarching problem of violence in the U.S. at the domestic and global levels and the effects of victimization. Suggestions on how to study possible mediators and moderators of victimization and individual and family adjustment, including: 1) The ecological perspective; 2) Court process and verdict; and 3) Utilization of victim services, are explored. Finally, a rationale and examples of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in future research that uses children's attributions of violence as a mediator are presented.*

Keywords: *Children, victimization, community violence, court process, victim services*

Each year more than five million children and adolescents in the United States are exposed to traumatizing events in their communities and they represent one-quarter of American crime victims. Further, the Children's Defense Fund (2001) indicates that in 1999 more children and teens died from gunfire than from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined. Violence endured in children's homes, neighborhoods, and communities must continue to be considered one of the most alarming public health concerns in our society.

This paper presents a discussion of multiple areas in the research that needs to be continued and provides suggestions on how to un-silence child survivors by bridging gaps between research and practice. It reviews the overarching problem of violence in the U.S. at the domestic and global levels and the effects of victimization. Suggestions on how to study possible mediators and moderators of victimization and individual and family adjustment including: 1) The ecological perspective; 2) Court process and verdict; and 3) Utilization of victim services are explored. Finally, a rationale and examples of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in future research that uses children's attributions of violence as a mediator are presented.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of Victimization

The U.S. is a culture with an interwoven thread of violence from its birth in revolution to recent violent episodes at the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Violence is the foundation of many revered ideals and institutions and a common and defining characteristic of American society (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Van Soest & Bryant, 1995). However, even as the evidence of violent events appears to be decreasing in the U.S., its presence in the lives of children is still a signal for alarm. Violence figures significantly into the lives of children and families, and researchers and social scientists often underestimate its effects (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Gibbs, 1988; Osofsky, 1995; Richters & Martinez, 1993a). An abundance of literature recognizes the impact of violence on children; however, there is little to direct researchers and practitioners in developing effective victimization services to address the long-lasting effects of such violence. Furthermore, research on the mediators and moderators of the effects of violence is still in its infancy (NIMH, 2002).

Children are exposed to violence through direct victimization or by witnessing violent episodes. They also hear about accounts of community and domestic violence from parents, friends, relatives, neighbors, and the media. Children who witness violence experience co-victimization or secondary trauma. The line of demarcation between direct victims and those who witness or hear about violence is obscure because of the similar reactions and effects produced by each (Figley & Klebeer, 1995; Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991).

Jordan (2002) examined the complexities of the impact of domestic violence on the child survivor. Primary care physicians and mental health practitioners claim that children are the silent victims in their work with mothers who are survivors of domestic abuse (Zuckerman, Augustyn, Groves & Parker, 1995). Research indicates that children are present in 80% of the homes where there is violence against a woman (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). The relationship between spousal abuse and the physical or sexual abuse of children in the home is now documented to reach 30% to 70% (Bowker, Arbitell & McFerron, 1988; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988; Suh & Abel, 1990).

Several studies from metropolitan areas have addressed frequency and prevalence and the extent and nature of adolescents' exposure to violence (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Hill & Madhere, 1996; Osofsky, Wewers, Hann & Flick, 1993; Pynoos & Nader, 1990; Richters & Martinez, 1993b; Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991). The number of gun-related deaths and injuries to children are on a decline in the U.S.; however, nearly 12 children, approximately one every 100 minutes, die each day from gunfire in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods, which is the equivalent to a classroom of children dying every two days in the U.S. (Children's Defense Fund, 2001). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1997), the rate of firearms deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the U.S. than in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

Trauma Symptomatology and Exposure

A variety of trauma symptoms follow violence exposure. Children who are victims and witnesses to violence experience increased levels of fear, anxiety, and depression as well as psychopathological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, physical injury, and sometimes death (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Garbarino, 1986; Pynoos, Frederick, Nader, Arroyo, Steinberg, Eth, Nunez & Fairbanks, 1987; Richters & Martinez, 1993b). Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder include emotional and physiological hyper-arousal, intrusive and frightening thoughts, feelings, and images of the trauma, and the numbing of emotional responses. Some children exposed to violence demonstrate a sense of futurelessness characterized by a belief that they will not reach adulthood, along with a sense of anomie associated with feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem (Freeman, Mokros & Poznanski, 1993; Terr, 1989). These reactions may be accompanied by feelings of vulnerability, self-blame, and retaliation (Finkelhor, 1980; Saunders, 1996).

The clinical effects of children who witness parental violence are characteristic of trauma, with dissociation and defensive projections against recall and resolution, which can be pathological (Silvern & Kaersvang, 1989). The child who endures family violence, such as parental homicide, has to cope with the trauma of the terrifying event; the grief associated with the loss of both parents (offender and victim) simultaneously; dislocation and insecurity regarding where and with whom they will live; and stigma, secrecy, and conflicts of loyalty (Black & Kaplan, 1988; Burman & Allen-Meares, 1994). Dyson (1990) states that the damage caused to African-American children from exposure to homicide perpetrated by a family member or an acquaintance reflects in post-traumatic stress disorder, behavior problems, and poor school performance. Furthermore, children who witness domestic violence are subject to cognitive and social developmental delays, a potential increase in violent and aggressive behavior, and a limited ability to establish trusting and empathic relationships (Coffee & Coffee, 1996). Nationally, children in preschool, elementary school, and high school who experience frequent verbal aggression and severe physical violence from parents exhibit the highest rates of aggression, delinquency, and interpersonal problems within the student population (Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer & Rosario, 1993; Vissing, Strauss, Gelles & Harrop, 1991; Wolfe & Jaffe, 1991).

Some researchers have focused on exposure to violence as a cause of later perpetration of violence (Prouts, Shopler & Henley, 1982; Widom, 1989). Studies indicate that prolonged exposure to violence may constitute a form of early childhood socialization toward violence. Perry, Perry and Boldizar (1990) suggest in a theoretical framework that environments of community violence: 1) provide aggressive models, 2) reinforce aggression, and 3) frustrate and victimize the child who is exposed. All of these factors may contribute to the development of aggressive tendencies in children. Some adolescents and children cope with their feelings of helplessness and being out of control by identifying with individuals who frighten them and deny their vulnerability (Safyer, 1994). Osofsky, Wewers, Hann and Flick (1993) found a direct correlation between exposure to violence and violent behavior. For example, children and adolescents who have been exposed

exhibit higher incidences of fighting with peers compared to adolescents who have not been exposed. These individuals put themselves at risk for further harm by associating with gang members or aggressive individuals and by participating in activities such as assaults, robberies, rape, and murder (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Herman, 1992; Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991).

The degree of children's victimization and exposure to violence correlates with distress symptoms. However, Richters and Martinez (1993a) caution against overinterpreting children's psychological distress symptoms as indices of maladjustment. Just as fear, anxiety, and depression can cause long-term negative consequences, they may also serve as adaptive functions in dangerous environments. The distress may signal increased vigilance and normal, healthy reactions to loss and pain. Richters and Martinez (1993a) further assert "It remains an important task for researchers to develop strategies and criteria for discriminating between adaptive and maladaptive responses to violence exposure" (p. 6).

Mediators and Moderators of Effects

Considerable variation exists in the amount, type, and severity of violence children experience. Because of distinct worldviews, coping strategies, self-concepts, and constructed ideas of violence, adolescents respond and endure exposure to violence differently. Very little is known about the mediators between the stressor of victimization and the exposure and effects of symptomatology in children. Information developed through qualitative and quantitative research can be used to increase understanding of the mechanism and etiology of trauma symptomatology in child survivors of violent crime. Examining individual and aggregate factors of the ecological perspective, attributions, court process and verdict, and service provision and utilization associated with individual and family adjustment will provide data for research and development of interventions to reduce trauma and stress.

Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective enables one to simultaneously focus on person and environment and their reciprocal relationship. According to Germain and Glitterman (1995), "Instead of valuing prediction of maladaptive exchanges based on simplistic cause and effect, ecological thinking embraces indeterminacy in complex human phenomena" (p. 817). Therefore, it is necessary to examine adjustment of child survivors and their families from an ecological perspective. Specifically, researchers and practitioners must take into consideration the child's individual and family characteristics, such as race, gender, coping styles, socioeconomic status, health and mental status, social support, history of violence exposure, and neighborhood and school supports, resources, and history of service utilization.

Research literature recognizes application of the ecological perspective to the impact of violence. One such study by Richters and Martinez (1993b) argued that the mere accumulation of environmental adversities such as community violence does not lead to adaptational failure of children living in violent environments. Rather, the odds of their adaptational failure increase only when community violence contaminates or erodes stability or safety levels of the children's

homes. Their study concluded that the erosion of quality of the child's microsystem and macrosystem is not an inevitable process (Richters & Martinez, 1993b). Elbedour, ten Benseel and Bastien (1993) and Walton, Nuttall and Nuttall (1997) proposed that the amount of failure and suffering of children exposed to different levels of war violence is ecologically conceptualized with their interaction among five factors: intensity and duration of exposure to violence, the individual, the family (microsystem), the community (exosystem), and the culture (macrosystem).

The level of influence of the person-community ecosystem in which the person experiences trauma, copes, and makes meaning out of violent events depends on the child's individual characteristics and her/his relationship with other individuals involved, the child's perceptions of the events experienced, and her/his description of the larger environment (Harvey, 1996). Research also suggests that abuse is more common in families where economic hardship and unemployment are issues (Meiselman, 1978; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Jordan, 2002); in families where the decision-making process is hierarchical, in which the male figure has significant power and control, instead of a more cohesive and collaborative relationship structure (Finkelhor, 1980; Gelles, 1974); and where there is little to no social support from the community, extended family, friends, and agency and institutional affiliations (Finkelhor, 1980; Garbino & Gillian, 1980; Gelles, 1974).

Garbarino (1995) asserted that children are often capable of coping with one or two major risk factors in their lives, though the risk of developmental damage increases substantially when the experience of violence occurs in combination with other factors. Many children in such conditions are poor, live in father-absent homes, contend with parents who cope with depression or substance abuse problems, have parents with little education or employment prospects, and are exposed to domestic violence.

Family adjustment and functioning relates to how family members of child survivors perform necessary roles and tasks, adapt to problems, and communicate with one another in such a way that promotes family health and well being (Fobair & Zabora, 1995). The relationship between family adjustment and functioning and a child's individual adjustment is a transactional process—the family system both affecting and being affected by the behavior of individual family members (Freisen & Koroloff, 1990). Furthermore, social support is an important factor in the ecological perspective which prevents child symptomatology. Individual family members' social support is the experience of intimacy, acceptance, companionship, and tenderness from peers and other family members. Research has shown that social support is a protective factor for children and families enduring stress (Wasserstein & La Greca, 1996).

The school environment is a variable in the ecological perspective. "Nowhere has this nation's educational system failed more dramatically than in inner-city schools serving predominantly poor African-American populations," stated Gerdes and Benson in their 1995 needs assessment of inner city school children. (p. 139) In many Eastern urban schools, the drop-out rate for African-American youth living in areas of poverty and community violence is almost 40% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). Schools fail to accommodate the variance of abilities, interests, learning styles, and individual needs such as poverty, parental illit-

eracy, poor health, and community violence of inner-city children and youth (Gerdes & Benson, 1995).

Safyer (1994) indicated that many children and adolescents living in areas where violence is prevalent face considerable academic distress. She cited examples of adolescents not sleeping soundly at night as a result of not feeling safe in their home environments. As a result, these students find it difficult to concentrate in the classroom, causing some teachers to erroneously believe that these students are disinterested or lack academic motivation and the ability to succeed (Safyer, 1994).

Pynoos and colleagues (1987) found significant relationships between proximity to violence and the type and number of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in their study of 159 elementary school children sampled after a sniper attack on their school premises. Richters and Martinez (1993b) discovered in their study of children in the Washington, D.C. area that 22% of the victimization, according to the children's reports, occurred in school, and another 30% stated victimization took place near their school.

Court Process and Verdict

Although not all accounts of experiences with violence are reported or end up in the court process, one must consider the difficult challenges that court processes pose for children and families who are survivors of violent crime. Designed with short-term, narrow interventions without adequate follow-up, they need to be considered as part of the research, practitioner, and legal system agenda; the judicial system is a harsh environment that is not child-centric. Children often feel intimidated by the criminal justice process and "re-live" the abuse and victimization, particularly in the courtroom. This is predominantly true of younger children. This "re-living" of the abuse may intensify the victim's trauma, thereby, causing the child to be a poor witness and provide weak testimony that poses additional barriers to successful investigation and prosecution (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 1999). Children involved in court situations rely on professionals across several disciplines and viewpoints (e.g., law, mental health, policy, advocates, victim services, batterer programs, etc.) to help them through the lengthy process of navigating the justice system that can affect the child's psychological development in significant and long-term ways (Rossman, Hughs & Rosenberg, 2000).

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime (1999) and Lipovsky and Stern (1997) report a number of court-related factors that have been identified as stressful for child victims and witnesses: (1) Multiple interviews and not using developmentally appropriate language; (2) Delays and continuances; (3) Testifying more than once; (4) Lack of communication among professionals; (4) Fear of public exposure; (5) Lack of understanding of complex legal procedures; (6) Face-to-face contact with the defendant; (7) Practices that are insensitive to developmental needs; (8) Harsh cross-examination; (9) Lack of adequate support and victims services; (10) Sequestration of witnesses who may be supportive to the child; (11) Placement that exposes the child to intimidation, pressure, or continued abuse; (12) Inadequate preparation for testifying; and (13) Lack of evidence other than the testimony of the child. However, there is paucity in the

research and practice literature regarding the impact of court related factors on long-term individual and family adjustment.

The Office for Victims of Crime (1999) reports that some researchers and practitioners have found that testifying is not necessarily harmful to children, as long as they are adequately prepared (Goodman, Taub, Jones & England, 1992; Oates, Gray, Schweitzer, Kempe, et al., 1995). Having a trusted person, such as a victim-witness advocate, helps to reduce the anxiety and traumatic stress symptomatology of the child (Henry, 1997). Research further indicates that by reducing the number of interviews from lawyers, court officials, medical examiners, and police officers regarding the victimization can help to minimize psychological harm to child victims (Tedesco & Schnell, 1987).

Victimization Services

Child survivors and their families do not choose to be victims. Therefore, it is necessary for survivors to choose and utilize a wide range of services that help them maneuver the criminal justice system and promote healing from victimization and trauma. For many children and families, violence is an unavoidable part of their lives (Noguera, 1995). Children need safe havens and people to help them overcome their experiences of vulnerability and ambivalence. Early interventions and services for child survivors and their families are essential for their health and well being (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 1999).

In the U.S. and other countries, there has been a phenomenal growth in victim service programs. Roberts (1990) reports that there were only 23 victim programs in 1975 but more than 600 such programs by 1986. Likewise, there were only seven emergency shelters for women survivors of domestic violence and four police-based crisis intervention programs in 1974. By 1987, however, there were more than 1,250 emergency shelters and crisis programs for women survivors of domestic violence and their children. During 1982 the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime identified the American justice system as "appallingly out of balance" and made 68 recommendations for how rights and services for crime victims in this nation could be substantially improved. These accomplishments include the Victims of Crime Act in 1984, the landmark Crime Act of 1994, and the countless state statutes that strengthen victims' rights and provide effective community-based victim services. However, there is still a lack of comprehensive services for victims of crime in every community, resulting in part from inadequate funding (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victims, 1998; Lippert, 1999; National Victims Assistance Academy, 1999; Jordan, 2002).

Research indicates that the participation of victim services, such as interventions provided by victim-witness advocates in child cases, appears to increase the percentage of guilty verdicts and promotes coping and adjustment for child survivors (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime, 1999). Dible and Teske (1993) found the conviction rate for child sexual abuse cases almost doubled (38% to 72%) after a district attorney in Collin County, Texas implemented child victim-witness advocacy programs. The proportion of offenders receiving prison sentences also almost doubled from 25% to 48%. Over the same period, prison sentences increased from 9.24 years to 16.48 years.

There is a need to create individualized interventions and services for children and families who are survivors of violent crime. Child advocates and researchers are becoming more aware of the unique effects of a myriad of violence and abuse situations. Intervention efforts should be tailored to what is needed by families at a particular point in time, with careful analysis focusing on the context of the violence, specific incidents, patterns, and psychological reactions (National Victim's Assistance Academy, 1999). Access to a continuum of ecologically-based services for families and children rather than short-term, narrow interventions without adequate follow-up need to be considered part of the research, practitioner, and legal system agenda (U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, 1999; Rossman, Hughes & Rosenberg, 2000; Jordan, 2002).

BRIDGING FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

In our society, children represent a population whose voices are often ignored and silenced. As stated previously, psychology, social work, public health, sociology, and medicine have begun to study the effects of children's exposure to chronic community violence. However, little research has been done to both quantitatively and qualitatively examine children's perceptions of the violence they are experiencing. For example, a study that was initially designed to rely only on quantitative methods to gather frequency and perceived severity data of children's exposure to violence as part of a larger study on perceptions of safety (Collins, 2001) turned into a more valuable and comprehensive study, because the researchers found that the children wanted to tell their stories of violence.

Children's Perceptions

Hill and Madhere (1996) confirmed in their study that "the saliency of children's perceptions of violence in their communities, the nature of their exposure to it, and what meaning they attach to it all become critical in understanding how they interpret the stressor of violence and how it affects them" (p. 26). Considerable variation exists in the amount, type, and severity of violence children experience. Because of distinct worldviews, coping strategies, self-concepts, and constructed ideas of violence, children respond and endure exposure to violence differently.

Garbarino (1995) stated that the most crucial feature of child development is the child's emerging capacity to form and maintain social maps. He suggested that social maps represent the world, reflect the simple cognitive competence of the child, and indicate the child's moral and affective inclinations. Children's social maps include experiences in the larger environment in counterpoint with the child's inner life, both rational cognitive forces and the unconscious impetus (Garbarino, 1995). Through these social maps, children may develop a framework within which to understand danger and safety. Simpson (1996) stated, "Perceptions of safety and danger are 'intersubjective' products of social construction, collective agreement, and socialization" (p. 549). She insisted that while objective danger and violence exist, perceptions do not derive directly from observation of the empirical world. Instead, the objective environment provides only discrepant and ambiguous information about danger and violence, providing room for socially constructed beliefs.

Children's Voices

Children are placed in a subordinate role and are not relied upon as resources for understanding concepts related to their well-being. As LeCompte (1993) described it, those in subordinate roles are those who are oppressed, silenced, and "have been deprived of voice without their consent" (p. 10). It must be the researcher's goal to make the voices of the children heard. The role of the researcher in this type of comprehensive study is to be the mediator between those who are powerless, the children, and those in power who do not have the ability or do not choose to hear children's voices. Being a mediator between the powerful and the powerless has been described as the traditional perspective of feminist researchers (Kerlin, 1997). For example, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) suggest that their data indicate that children are safer at school and most harm and violence occurs within the home or en route to and from school. Yet, Collins (2001) has discovered through using a combined qualitative and quantitative research design that none of the children (high or low exposure) indicated that they felt safe at school. To many children violence is more than the number of incidents reported or the number of weapons children are "caught with" and safety is more than having structured rules, wire fences, or metal detectors.

LeCompte (1993) described silence as occurring at two levels during the research process. The first level of silence occurs among the overall population of children. The second level of silence is within each individual child. Using the research role and providing a safe, warm environment of trust can be created between the children and the researcher so that children feel empowered to tell their stories and break the silence.

Attributions

An example of breaking the silence is qualitatively and quantitatively studying children's attributions of violence. Attributions are the suspected or inferred causes of an event, situation, or behavior. The research on abuse-specific attribution style is important to understanding the sequelae of childhood victimization (Brown & Kolko, 1999; Cohen & Mannariono, 1996; Spaccarelli, 1994; Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989).

Attributions are possible mediators of the response children undergo who have been sexually abused (Celano, 1992; Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Mannarino & Cohen, 1996; Wolfe, Gentile & Wolfe, 1989), physically abused (Brown & Kolko, 1999), or exposed to natural disasters (Joseph, Williams & Yule, 1993). Attributions have been demonstrated to be positively correlated with psychological and behavior problems. However, research has not examined the relationships among children's attributions regarding the causes of violent crime, court process and verdict, and service utilization in children. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) suggest that specific attributions may be associated with specific trauma symptomatology. Children who perceived less blame and felt more empowered also reported a more positive adjustment and less trauma symptomatology. Another attribution, personal vulnerability, reflects adolescents' beliefs that abuse happens often to adolescents, that it could happen again, and that adolescents are not able to prevent bad things from happening. Youth also may have a dangerous worldview—

children will be victimized in society and adults cannot be trusted for protection. The issues of self-blame/guilt, responsibility, and power/control have been found to mediate symptoms associated with child sexual abuse (Gold, 1986; Wyatt & Newcomb, 1990; Cohen & Mannarino, 1996).

Children who are psychologically manipulated tend to blame themselves, take on responsibility for the abuse occurring, feel extreme amounts of guilt and shame, and have a sense of isolation from their peers and other family members. The perpetuation of abuse under these circumstances is common, therefore, increasing the likelihood of child survivors having low self-esteem, depression, suicidal tendencies, an inability to trust, and difficulty developing interpersonal relationships (Herman & Hirschman, 1977; Walker, 1979; Jordan, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

A paradigm shift from traditional methods of violence research to more comprehensive and revealing research that includes the voices of children would continue to advance the knowledge and skills of child advocates in the areas of practice, policy, and research. Delineating the factors in the individual and her/his social environment, which could be addressed in interventions, may also provide support for more effective victim services and treatment programs.

Research on the impact the court process and verdict have on child survivors' adjustment in relation to the victim services provided to children and families is an area of research that has been afforded little attention, yet has promising policy implications. To effectively pursue and prosecute offenders in cases involving child survivors, the investigators, prosecutors, and judges must adjust their practices to meet the needs of these children in an age-appropriate and responsive manner. Reducing trauma to the child increases the child's participation, leading to an increased chance of a successful outcome to the investigation and prosecution. This research also contributes to the children's mental health and health services research literature.

Few, if any, studies examine access and barriers to services for child survivors and their families. Victimization is an incident in one's life that demands a response; however, few families are prepared to deal with this crisis. The child and family are forced to make decisions regarding reporting and services. The decision to report or obtain additional services is based not only on the coping and functioning of the survivor and family, but also on the interaction of the survivor with institutional, community, and social support systems. It is critical to explore the decision-making process of survivors and their families in light of the environmental and system factors encountered in their healing process. Exploring these concepts will provide significant information on the obstacles to services that will be beneficial to service providers and policymakers.

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Translating Concept into Act for Multi-Cultural Practice: Comparison of Students' and Field Instructors' Perceptions of Diversity Training Effectiveness

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Abstract: *Education for culturally competent practice increasingly is a responsibility for social work educators. Using data collected for an evaluation of the field education component of a large, Midwestern social work program, the purpose of this study is to shed light on students' application in the field practicum setting of classroom training in culturally competent practice. Responses were obtained from field instructors (n=76) and students (n=70). Students reported learning in areas dealing with diversity at statistically significant levels; however, instructor ratings of student competence were significantly lower than student ratings. Results are discussed in light of necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Implications for program monitoring and improvement, education, and further research are discussed.*

Keywords: *Cultural competence, practicum, education*

The ability to practice social work effectively with diverse populations, commonly referred to as cultural competence (Lum, 1999), has become increasingly important as demographic trends have resulted in more heterogeneity among social work clientele. In response, social work educators have sought effective ways to develop or enhance students' awareness, knowledge, and skills in preparation for practice with diverse populations.

This response to the mandate to educate for cultural competence is well documented in social work literature. Several authors have described conceptual models designed to guide learning. For example, McPhatter (1997) describes a conceptual model for cultural competence in the field of child welfare. She emphasizes that cultural competence grows through a developmental process that involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. Thus, the model includes knowledge, awareness, and skill development. Sowers-Hoag and Sandau-Beckler's (1996) comprehensive model for cultural competence education in the generalist curriculum also includes knowledge, awareness, and skill components. The latter

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authors suggest objectives related to cultural competence and several learning activities related to each curriculum area, including field.

Other more specific, classroom-based educational strategies abound, many of which are experiential in nature, in order to foster both cognitive and affective learning.

Although strategies vary, many are designed to increase students' awareness and knowledge of self and others in terms of racial, ethnic, or cultural identity. For instance, Aponte (1995) requires students to write about their experiences with an unfamiliar cultural group. Chau (1990) details a technique termed "ethnic self-profiling," which involves a process of identifying feelings associated with various words that refer to racial or other forms of human diversity. Following a semester of activities, Torres and Jones (1997) ask students to write an "integrative cultural paper" in which they must address their own and others' cultural identity, dynamics of aversive incidents, and thoughts about their potential for culturally competent practice. The discussion of vignettes containing examples of bias provides students with the opportunity to increase their ability to think critically about the function of bias (Latting, 1990). The utilization of "cultural guides" (Ronnau, 1994), "intergroup dialogues" (Nagda et al., 1999), web-based discussion groups (Van Soest, Canon & Grant, 2000), and "critical incident interviews" (Montalvo, 1999) allow students of diverse group memberships the opportunity to interact in order to gain awareness and knowledge of one another. Finally, Boyle, Nackerud and Kilpatrick (2000) describe a non-classroom-based international immersion experience.

Articles that describe educational strategies, such as those mentioned above, have made several important contributions to diversity education, including providing social work educators with a source of teaching strategies that can be adapted for use in numerous diversity related courses. Furthermore, this body of literature illustrates approaches for combining didactic and experiential teaching methodologies, strategies considered important in reaching the range of adult learners enrolled in social work programs (Knowles, 1990). In addition, the strategies described target change among various combinations of the dimensions of awareness, knowledge, and skills. Several strategies (Latting, 1990; Montalvo, 1999; Nagda et al., 1999; Van Soest et al., 2000) also include a focus on social justice issues and diversity practice.

Although many authors have strongly supported the need to evaluate the effectiveness of educational strategies for cultural competence, relatively few have reported outcomes. Of these, most examine specific educational interventions. Table 1 briefly describes interventions, objectives, measurement, and results for eight studies that report outcomes of educational interventions designed to increase competence for practice with diverse populations. Although the interventions vary somewhat by conceptual foundation and strategy, most of the objectives are similar in their aim to increase students' levels of awareness, knowledge, or skills. A few of the authors, however, were also interested in objectives related to the methodology, for example, the creation of a safe, facilitative environment (Ronnau, 1994; Van Soest et al., 2000) or students' reaction to the intervention itself (Montalvo, 1999).

Table 1: *Evaluations of Social Work Education for Practice with Diverse Populations*

Author, Year	Intervention	Objectives	Measurement	Results
Chau, 1990	Classroom model and strategies based on concepts of cultural ethnocentrism and pluralism.	1. Awareness re: ethnocentric views and importance of pluralistic attitude; 2. Knowledge re: a minority group as related to practice concerns. 3. Skills: modifications of basic interviewing skills for diversity.	Students' perceptions of learning based on written comments post intervention.	Positive change noted for Obj. 1,2,3
Latting, 1990	Classroom strategy based development of critical thinking.	1. Awareness: re personal biases; 2. Critical thinking re: personal and others' biases.	Students' perceptions of learning based on qualitative analysis of written and verbal comments gathered during and post intervention.	Positive change noted for Obj. 1,2
Ronnau, 1994	Practical classroom strategies adaptable for students' needs.	1. Awareness of importance of CC; 2. Creation of safe/facilitative classroom environment. 3. Knowledge re: personal and others' cultures.	Students' perceptions of learning based on written comments and Likert-style survey questions ($n=42$) post intervention.	Positive change observed for Obj. 1,2,3
Torres & Jones, 1997	Classroom model and strategies based on cognitive and affective integrative framework.	1. Self-awareness re: identity and views of others; 2. Knowledge re: ethnic groups; 3. ethnic groups; 4. Awareness re: consequences of stereotypes; 5. Skills re: assessment w/people of diverse groups.	Students' perceptions of learning based on written comments, departmental evaluations, and informal feedback post intervention.	Positive change noted for Obj. 1,2,3
Montalvo, 1999	Classroom strategy based on racial identity development theory.	1. Empathy development; 2. Decreased engagement in stereotyping; 3. Application of classroom knowledge to "real-life";	Students' perceptions of learning and of teaching methodology based on open-ended survey ($n=68$) post intervention.	Positive change noted for Obj. 1,2,3,4,5

Author, Year	Intervention	Objectives	Measurement	Results
Nagda et al. 1999	Classroom strategy designed for learning related to diversity oppression, and social justice.	<p>4. Increased comfort interviewing;</p> <p>5. Increased confidence in assessment of client's racial identity.</p> <p>1. Awareness re: self and others in terms of group memberships and status;</p> <p>2. Awareness re: dynamics of difference and dominance;</p> <p>3. Skills re: analysis from multiple perspectives;</p> <p>4. Skills re: working w/cultural differences.</p>	Students' perceptions of learning and of teaching methodology based on survey ($n=50$), qualitative analysis of focus groups and in-depth interviews ($n=10$) post intervention.	Positive change noted for Obj. 1,2,3, 4. Positive response to by most.
Van Soest et al., 2000	Classroom model and strategies designed to combine diversity and social justice; utilizes computer technology.	<p>1. Create safe environment in which to express feelings and thoughts, and to engage in productive conflict re: issues related to diversity and social justice;</p> <p>2. Provide forum for continued discussion following classroom interaction.</p> <p>3. Provide instructors with access to students' awareness and questions.</p>	Students' perceptions of teaching methodology based on analysis of web-usage and survey ($n=65$) post intervention.	Positive response to method related to Obj. 1,2,3
Boyle et al. 2001	Immersion experience in Mexico,	<p>1. Cultural competence (Knowledge/skills, and awareness);</p> <p>2. Language skills;</p> <p>3. Collaborative project development.</p>	Students' perceptions of CC and overall experience based on standardized measure of CC ($n=6$) pre-post; and qualitative analysis of journals.	Positive change for Obj. 1,2,3

The eight studies share other characteristics as well. All of the studies measured outcomes by obtaining students' perceptions of learning immediately after the interventions were completed. A few authors measured outcomes solely by students' verbal or written comments (Chau, 1990; Torres & Jones, 1997). Others increased the methodological rigor somewhat by including Likert-scale or open-ended survey questions (Ronnau, 1994; Montalvo, 1999; and Van Soest et al., 2000) or formal qualitative analysis (Latting, 1990; Nagda et al., 1999; Boyle et al., 2001). Pre-post testing with a standardized measure of cultural competence was utilized in only one study (Boyle et al., 2001). Finally, all eight studies reported positive outcomes for every objective with the exception of one, which was related to skill building (Torres & Jones, 1997).

In summary, existing evaluations of the effectiveness of educating social work students for cultural competence have focused on immediate outcomes of specific classroom interventions and relied on students' perceptions of learning for outcome measurement. Without exception, the various educational strategies have produced positive outcomes. We know very little, however, about how students are applying what they know about cultural competence to their practice.

We have located only one study that reported on the application of cultural competence education to practice. Rittner, Nakanishi, Nackerud & Hammons (1999) surveyed agency-based social workers with at least two years post-MSW experience in order to examine the effect of cultural competence content in MSW curricula on social work practice with small groups. A large majority of those surveyed indicated that diversity content was part of their MSW education, most frequently recalling attention given to areas of age, culture, gender, national origin, and race. Despite the reported breadth of exposure, however, respondents indicated difficulties with applying diversity content to their small group practice. Many respondents acknowledged that they frequently failed to address group member differences through their interventions. In addition, the repertoire of interventions was extremely limited among those who reported addressing diversity. The authors concluded that their results suggest MSW diversity content is applied in very limited ways among social workers practicing with small groups.

If cultural competence involves a developmental process, the knowledge and awareness developed in classroom learning should result in a display of skills in the field practicum and in later practice. The literature has documented classroom strategies to develop knowledge and awareness and continued recall of cognitive content several years into practice; however, the literature also reports limited application of this content in post-MSW practice. Notably missing from the literature is information about one of the steps in the developmental process: application, integration, and amplification of cultural competence learning in the field practicum. A national survey of social work faculty documented this gap (Le-Doux & Montalvo, 1999). Respondents indicated that they observed minimal to no linkage of classroom instruction for cultural competence with students' fieldwork. The authors point out that this is particularly troublesome since the field practicum represents the primary opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice. It is in the field that students are expected to apply the awareness, knowledge, and skills learned in the classroom to actual practice with diverse populations.

The other major omission in the literature is an evaluation of cultural competence learning from perspectives beyond the student *per se*. Field instructors, in particular, are in a unique position to observe the application of classroom learning and, through supervision, to promote further growth. Their perspectives could be expected to provide an invaluable addition to faculty members' observations and students' self-reporting.

Using data collected for an evaluation of the field education component of a large (approximately 600 students) Midwestern social work program, the purpose of this study is to shed light on students' application in the field practicum setting of classroom training in culturally competent practice. Responses were obtained from students and field instructors. Thus, this study adds to the literature in three ways: (a) by looking at cultural competence in the field practicum, (b) by eliciting field instructors' perspectives on student cultural competence, and (c) by allowing for a comparison of students' and field instructors' perspectives. The data were collected during the 1999-2000 academic year. Although each level of field practicum (baccalaureate, foundation, concentration) includes objectives related to diversity, this study focuses specifically on the MSW foundation practicum.

CONTEXT

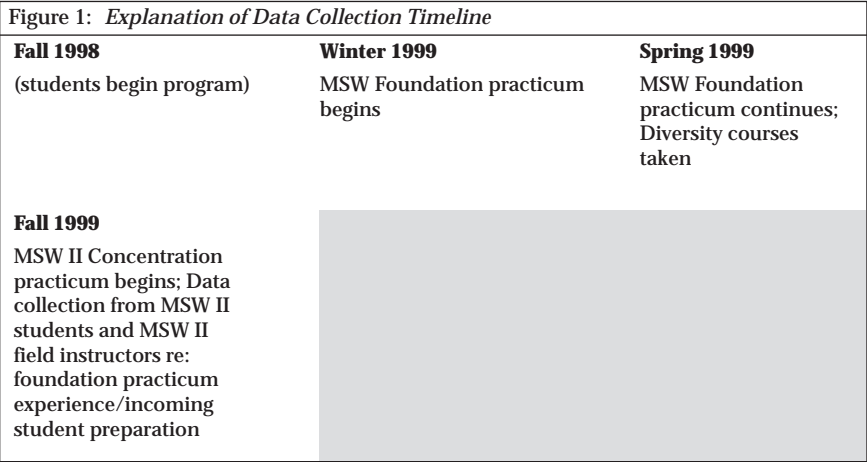
The MSW program which serves as a base for this study uses a model for diversity education in which this content is offered in specific courses. Students choose between focusing on race/ethnicity or women's issues, although both courses include content related to within-group diversity and a range of other diversity issues. Both courses use a variety of didactic and experiential techniques. In addition, as appropriate to the course, diversity content appears in most of the courses in the curriculum. Faculty are required to document in materials for their annual performance evaluations that content on women, ethnic minorities, and gays/lesbians is appropriately included in their courses. Such content is included widely across the curriculum, as documented in a recent review of course syllabi conducted as a part of the self-study for reaffirmation of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation (Kondrat et al., 2002).

Students begin the MSW foundation practicum during the second quarter of the first year after completing one course in each of the foundation areas: human behavior, generalist practice, policy, and research. At the time the program evaluation was conducted, students are typically enrolled in the diversity course during the third quarter, when they would have been completing the final quarter of foundation field. The study was conducted at a time when the respondent cohort of students had completed the first year of the program and were beginning the second concentration year classes and practicum. In contrast to previous studies, then, this study attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of diversity training which occurs in a number of different ways throughout a major portion of the curriculum rather than the effects of specific activities confined to a single course.

METHODS

For the field program evaluation, mail surveys were designed to collect data from students and field instructors. For this study, respondents were students in the

concentration year, along with concentration field instructors. The student survey asked students to rate their achievement of foundation learning objectives, stated as foundation level competencies, using a retrospective pre-test post-test design. The field instructor survey asked instructors to rate the level of competency of their incoming concentration students on the same foundation level competencies in a post-test only design. Ratings were obtained late in the first quarter of concentration field instruction. Figure 1 details the data collection timeline.



The format of the student survey included pairs of “when I began my MSW II field placement” (post-test) and “before my MSW I placement” (retrospective pre-test) items on which students rated their skills on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = fully agree. The retrospective pre-test is a way to obtain pre- and post-intervention ratings in a single data collection, which was necessary for the evaluation timeline. Furthermore, retrospective pre-tests represent a way to enhance validity by guarding against response-shift bias that may occur in a pre-test, post-test design where the perception of the dependent variable is initially abstract. For instance, in a traditional pre-test, the student might be asked to rate her or himself on “being aware of and able to observe appropriate boundaries with clients in regard to self-disclosure and dual relationships.” Having never experienced boundary dilemmas, the students’ rating of such behavior may be based on the abstract perception of the expected or desired behavior. Over the course of the field practicum, if the student actually encountered boundary issues or struggles with self-disclosure or dual relationships, he or she then had more concrete experience on which to rate actual awareness/behavior. The change in consciousness may result in a lower rating at post-test, not because the student got “worse” in this skill, but because the student did not have an adequate basis on which to make the pre-test rating. Conversely, a student rating of improvement also could have been unrelated to actual improvement in the skill but, instead, it may have related to having more information about the issues.

The format of the field instructor questionnaire asked the respondent to evaluate her/his student's professional preparedness and skill level as the student began the concentration placement. The items mirrored the content of the student questionnaire. Respondents were directed to answer the questions in relation to their current student or, if providing concentration field instruction to more than one student, to responding in regard to the student whose name occurs first alphabetically. Because instructors were asked to rate incoming students who had just completed their foundation practicum, instructor-respondents were not placed in the (potentially biasing) position of having to rate the effectiveness of their own work with the student. There was no effort made to match student and instructor responses.

The surveys were mailed to students' home addresses and field instructors' agency addresses. Completed responses were returned by mail or hand-carried to a collection location in the MSW program office. Identification numbers on the surveys allowed an administrative staff member to follow-up with reminders and additional mailings to non-respondents. Data were entered into SPSS by a doctoral student and analyzed by one of the authors who served on the field practicum evaluation committee.

Responses were obtained from 76 field instructors (68% response rate) and 70 students (40% response rate; an additional 16 student responses were unusable because a second mailing contained the wrong instrument). Reflective of the MSW student population, the majority of students were enrolled in the clinical concentration (81%) and as full-time students (76%). The average number of years of prior work experience in the human services field for respondents was four, although 35% reported no prior human services work experience. Experience ranged from none to 29 years. Field instructors reported having provided concentration field instruction for six years on average, although 33% reported two years or less. Overall, experience ranged from being a first time concentration field instructor to providing this level of field instruction for 27 years.

Field instructors rated the degree to which their agency was able to provide students with experience dealing with clients or systems that represent a range of diversity with special reference to ethnicity, gender, culture, and sexual orientation. On average, the rating of this item was 4.6 on a scale from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = fully agree. Some 70% of respondents fully agreed that the agency was able to provide these experiences and 26% agreed to some extent, indicating that there would have been opportunities to observe the students' skills in culturally competent practice.

The analysis reported here focuses on two items directly related to diversity and preparation for culturally competent practice. Figure 2 details the items.

RESULTS

To determine whether students' skills increased during the foundation practicum, we compared the retrospective pre-test and post-test ratings using paired sample *t*-tests. *T*-tests for both items were significant (both items $p < .0001$) (see Table 2).

To determine whether students and instructors perceived similar levels of competence, we compared student post-test and instructor average ratings, using

Figure 2: <i>Survey Items</i>	
Field Instructor Survey	MSW Concentration Student Survey
<i>At the time the student began his or her current placement at my agency...</i> The student demonstrated awareness of and sensitivity to ethnic, minority status, and cultural issues in assessment and goal-setting for clients and client systems. The student demonstrated awareness of the impact of gender, ethnic, minority, and cultural issues on her/his own interactions with clients and others.	<i>When I began my MSW II field placement...</i> I was aware of and sensitive to ethnic, minority, and cultural issues in assessment and goal-setting for clients and client systems. I was aware of the impact of gender, ethnic, minority, and cultural issues on my own interactions with clients and others with whom I interact.

Table 2: <i>Comparison of Retrospective Pre-Test and Post-Test Means</i>					
Item	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t-value	df	sig.
Aware of cultural issues in assessment and goal-setting	3.99	4.43	5.386	66	.000
Aware of impact of cultural issues on own interactions	3.99	4.45	4.750	66	.000

Table 3: <i>Comparison of Student and Instructor Means</i>					
Item	Student Mean	Instructor Mean	t-value	df	sig.
Aware of cultural issues in assessment and goal-setting	4.43	4.12	-2.333	142	.021
Aware of impact of cultural issues on own interactions	4.45	4.09	-2.833	141	.005

independent samples *t*-tests. Using the Bonferoni procedure to take into account multiple comparisons, the *p*-value for significance is .05 divided by 2, the number of comparisons, or .025. The *t*-tests for both items indicate that instructors rate student abilities significantly lower than students (*p*=.021 and *p*=.005, respectively) (See Table 3).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

This study is a first attempt at determining MSW student cultural competence in the field practicum. The study also goes beyond earlier evaluations in obtaining data from multiple respondents, although it should be noted that responses from students and field instructors may not match (i.e., concern the same student).

Consistent with previous studies of classroom education for cultural competence, students in this study report acquiring a significant level of knowledge and skills during the time of the first MSW field practicum. In this sense, the foundation field practicum objectives are being met. However, concentration field instructors, on average, reported their incoming students as having less developed cultural competence than the students reported. This apparent difference warrants further investigation.

Possible explanations for the difference noted here include instructors and students using different criteria for judging cultural competence, based on individual differences, experience, and/or point of reference. Although demographic data on race/ethnicity of students and instructors were not collected in the study from which the present data were drawn, the proportion of minority group members is higher among field instructors than among students. Furthermore, field instructors who have greater experience may have a different understanding of cultural competence. Ideally, this would be a better understanding, although the possibility exists that instructors with many years of practice might actually have a less sophisticated understanding, depending on how thoroughly they have accessed and utilized emerging new perspectives on cultural competence. Finally, students may actually have skills that instructors were not able to observe. Field agencies are under increasing pressure to maintain productivity, which may translate into less contact between instructors and students (Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, in press).

Another possible explanation for the difference may lie in the way the questions were asked. Students were asked about their awareness and in knowing how to take into account cultural issues, while instructors were asked about students' ability to demonstrate their awareness and knowledge of how to take into account cultural issues. Perhaps we have failed to measure *skills* from the student perspective. If that is the case, then the appropriate interpretation of this difference might be that although students are aware of the issues, they are less able to act on that awareness than they think they are.

The students' perspectives, compared to that of the field instructors', may not represent disagreement about skill level, but rather, it may reflect the cultural competence developmental process. Students must have a great deal of awareness of cultural issues in assessment, intervention, and overall interactions with clients and others *before* they can put this knowledge into practice. As McPhatter (1997) put it, "Enlightened consciousness and a grounded knowledge base are the bricks and cement that build *cumulative skill proficiency*." (p. 271, emphasis in original) Students reported that they have the necessary level of awareness. Instructors, on the other hand, reported a lower level of demonstrating use of this awareness and knowledge.

This study used data collected for another purpose, which presents both positive and negative issues. On the negative side are problems common to secondary analysis of other types of data, including the lack of control over what is asked and how questions are phrased. The existence of these data, however, is a positive step, as they evidence attempts being made to evaluate the effectiveness of social work education in producing cultural competence outcomes in graduates. One implication for social work education is that data such as these should be collected and evaluated on a regular basis and gathered from multiple perspectives. Although it was not practical in the program evaluation which provided the data for this study, attempts should also be made to obtain matching responses from students and field instructors. Finally, for program monitoring, data collection on the effectiveness of education for cultural competence should be an integral part of social work education and practice. For example, as a result of the program evaluation reported here, routine data collection instruments (in the form of student exit surveys, alumni surveys, and telephone surveys of employers of our graduates) were expanded to include items rating cultural and diversity competence. In addition, although items related to accomplishing culture and diversity learning objectives have been a regular part of the instrument used by practicum instructors to report evaluation of student learning in field instruction, items were revised to replace the original yes/no format with a Likert scale on each item so that changes over time may be tracked for quality improvement.

Some important issues still need to be addressed in the ongoing research and evaluation of cultural competence outcomes. Beyond the issue of whose perspective is more accurate or what the various perspectives actually represent are the issues of how to measure skills and which skills are important to measure. If a practitioner were culturally competent, what would we see them do? The literature here is a bit vague and abstract. Is cultural competence a matter of attitude, awareness, understanding, experience, skill, or knowledge? Probably all of the above. Yet, the literature is not entirely consistent in the way that it deals with the cognitive/affective status of cultural competence. This study suggests the importance of distinguishing more clearly between attitudinal, conceptual, and skill components of practice for cultural competence and when measuring the effectiveness of our educational efforts. It also suggests the importance of focusing more attention on the practicum experience, where affect, attitude, experience, concept, and skill become integrated. Does education for cultural competence occur at the interpersonal level, the level of the agency, the community, social policy? Most authors define culturally competent practice largely in terms of interpersonal or direct practice with individuals, families, and groups. Some, however, like McPhatter (1997) and Sowers-Hoag and Sandau-Beckler (1996), suggest that culturally competent practice includes skills to intervene at every level necessary, identifying and removing barriers at the organizational, community, social, economic, and political levels and "correctly identifying and confronting issues of racism and discrimination." (McPhatter, 1997, p. 273). As helpful as the literature has been to enhancing our understanding of what it takes to educate culturally astute and diversity competent practitioners, clearly, much more needs to be done empirically, conceptually, and educationally to define (and develop professional consensus around) the concrete educational objectives and tasks that together

operationalize the overarching goal of cultural competence. The ultimate aim, of course, is to provide students of the profession with the most effective learning experiences possible to meet this important educational/practice goal.

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Exploring Redundancy in Social Work Education

Bruce Dalton
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Abstract: *The issue of redundancy has not been well explored in the social work curriculum. The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) (CSWE, 2001) requires redundancy in the form of integration of material across content areas and addresses redundancy vertically between levels of education and year of program. Furthermore, research and theory support the notion that various types of redundancy produce educational benefits. This paper uniquely uses MSW students to track instances of redundancy over their first year of study and distinguishes between helpful and unhelpful redundancy. It presents both the study results and a description of the study process so that other schools may use or adapt it.*

Keywords: *Curriculum review, curriculum building, redundancy*

Redundancy is a persistent concern in social work education. Faculty guard against it by trying to ensure that teaching materials (e.g., readings, films, case examples) are not used in more than one class and that course content is discrete. Though social work educators generally aim to purge redundancy from curricula, the concept of redundancy in social work education has not been fully explored, its positive functions have not been articulated, differentiation between useful and useless redundancy not defined, and differing perceptions of educators and students regarding redundancy not considered.

This paper addresses these concerns. It first explores the concept of redundancy as variously defined and studied, with particular attention given to social work education. It then describes a study in which the authors asked students to record and describe instances of redundancy that they experienced during their foundation year of the MSW program at a large state university. The authors hope the findings will increase faculty sensitivity to the issue of redundancy and help to support integrated, vital curriculum building.

This paper also describes a process that other schools may use to identify redundancy in their own curriculum. This process will be a valuable tool for informing the periodic self-study required by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) of all accredited schools.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Redundancy in curriculum building often has negative connotations and has been viewed as something to be eliminated. In social work education, this is most clearly seen in relation to the BSW/MSW continuum. Anderson (1976) looked specifically at BSW/MSW education and identified advanced placement as a strategy for eliminating redundancy. Seipel (1986) surveyed policy sequence coordinators of 100 BSW and 91 MSW programs to analyze policy course content areas, focusing especially on knowledge and skills taught at different educational levels, including articulation between BSW and MSW content. Examining course outlines and questionnaire results, he concluded that students could experience extreme gaps or redundancy between BSW and MSW levels and recommended that educators generate models and principles that could be used to distinguish appropriate content on different levels to avoid these.

There is also reference to student perceptions of redundancy within one educational level. Tungate, Lazzari and Buchan (2001), reporting student responses to exit interviews from a BSW program, concluded that students wanted content that was integrated and could be applied but not redundant. This begins to get at the heart of the redundancy issue: Though students do not like what they view as repetition, they value other curriculum features, such as integration. In short, redundancy is not always a negative.

In fact, in contrast to these criticisms of redundancy, various fields offer examples of redundancy that enhance learning. For instance, an article from the field of mass communications that focused on television messages defined redundancy as "simultaneous presentation of the same or similar information through two or more channels" (Hanson, 1992, p. 7), that is, both auditory and visual. The assumption was that repetition in more than one channel reinforces messages already present in each so that the sum is greater than its parts. Useful redundancy is also addressed in relation to reading comprehension (Bensoussan, 1990). Prior knowledge of a topic is one form of redundancy, and Smith (1978) argues that one only comprehends text which has been previously encountered in the real world, and that written text, in order to be understood, must reflect information that is already present in the reader's mind.

A strong case for redundancy in curriculum design comes from the field of legal education. In an article describing a seminar that revisits the entire first year of law school education through a feminist lens, providing a "unifying and altering perspective" (p. 218), Bernstein (1996) states:

Law school curricula in the United States are full of revisits...The educational benefits of such revisits...are indisputable...Common ground emerges when students hear the same concepts in different classrooms....

Redundancy is integral to legal education, not least because it distinguishes what is central from what is marginal. (pp. 217-218)

From the field of psychology, Winstanley and Bjork (2002) discuss the effectiveness of repetition in terms of both spacing information and repeating key ideas

from various standpoints. Each of these strategies provides multiple opportunities to revisit the same content, thereby, encouraging various ways of encoding information and aiding retention.

From the field of social work education, the concept of useful redundancy has been long present. Towle (1954), drawing upon the work of Ralph Tyler, while warning against repetition that "deadens interest and engenders resistance" (p. 168), speaks eloquently about the value of repetition that progresses, or repetition with a difference. Towle's examples of useful repetition include (a) repetition of major ideas, principles, and methods in new situations; (b) repetition which provides the learner an "expectancy of success (p. 168)" or reassurance based upon past successes and upon finding old elements in the new; (c) repetition that involves different learning experiences focusing on the same outcome, thus giving the learner confidence in the methods being taught; and (d) repetition in which students are encouraged to find common and distinctive elements, thus assisting with transfer of learning and supporting the students' integration of learning.

A major difficulty in exploring the literature on redundancy, however, is that the concept is seldom addressed explicitly as "redundancy" or as "repetition." Rather, it is implied within discussions of various learning and teaching theories and strategies. Subsumption theory (Ausubel, Novak & Hanesian, 1978) addresses the need to integrate new material with previously presented material using comparisons and the cross-referencing of new and old material to enable differentiation and specificity. Elaboration theory (English & Reigeluth, 1996; Reigeluth & Stein, 1983) addresses the need for ongoing summary and synthesis to form a context for assimilation of new ideas, thus aiding retention and transfer. Closely related is the work of Bruner (1966) on spiral curriculum that describes various ways of connecting new material to old. Winstanley and Bjork (2002), discussing learning as an interpretive process, state that new information is stored by linking it to existing knowledge through associations and that recall is heavily cue dependent. In addition, they discuss the elaborative process which requires that information be thought of in different ways and practice in retrieval of previously presented information as aids to memory encoding and retention.

Implicit references to redundancy are also found in the social work literature. Aviles (2002) explored mastery learning, which involves multiple testings and feedback (repetition) to move students toward achievement. Both Sokolec (2001) and Walsh (1998) discuss the use of integrative assignments, designed to draw upon material from several courses, as a strategy for deepening learning. Haynes (1999), in an article on teaching professional social work values, suggests a framework that uses an "interconnected continuum of values dimensions that fosters the ongoing processes of reexamining and reanchoring student values within a professional social work context." (p. 44)

CSWE has addressed redundancy both explicitly and implicitly and its negative and positive uses. At the time of this writing, CSWE is in the process of implementing new Educational Policy (EP) and Accreditation Standards (AS) (collectively known as EPAS) (CSWE, 2001), with full implementation required by February 2004. Both EPAS and the outgoing Curriculum Policy Statement (CPS)

and Evaluation Standards for MSW Programs (EVS) address redundancy (CSWE, 1994). The outgoing standards address redundancy in EVS M5.8, stating "Duplication and redundancy of content mastered at the baccalaureate level must be avoided in master's programs." EPAS similarly permits course waivers, exemptions, advanced placement, and other allowances by stating "In those foundation curriculum areas where students demonstrate required knowledge and skills, the program describes how it ensures that students do not repeat that content." (AS 5.3) This avoids students retaking courses similar to those they have already taken. While this is important, the crux of the issue of redundancy as discussed in this paper is the avoidance of useless redundancy in the courses that students are required to take and the seeking of painful repetition.

EPAS (CSWE, 2001) addresses issues of redundancy in several ways, though the word redundancy is not used. EPAS addresses vertical integration in terms of (a) "curricula that build on a liberal arts perspective" (EP 1.2), (b) "baccalaureate and master's levels of educational preparation are differentiated according to ...depth" (EP 2.0), and (c) "build an advanced curriculum from the foundation content" (EP 5, AS M2.0.1). These requirements ask for repetition in the form of vertical redundancy involving sequencing of material in which subsequent mentions of a concept or theory are dealt with at a deeper, more abstract, or more conceptual level. This allows for cumulative and continuous learning over time (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). EPAS addresses horizontal integration in terms of "baccalaureate and master's levels of educational preparation are differentiated according to...breadth, and specificity of knowledge and skills." (EP 2.0), and "integration" into the curriculum of content on values and ethics, diversity, populations-at-risk, and social and economic justice (EP 4.0, 4.1, 4.2). Designing curricula for horizontal integration means linking different topics and elements that students may experience simultaneously (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993). Both vertical and horizontal integration require overlap of content that allows repetition with progression or repetition in different contexts. EPAS requires consideration of different practice contexts (EP 2.0), thus it is appropriate to consider a theory or concept's application in different curricular areas, such as policy, micro practice, or macro practice.

In summary, though the literature offers only limited explicit references to redundancy, tending rather to include it as a concept within the discussion of some more general theory or approach, we believe that it is important enough a concept for social work education to merit special consideration. It is a concept that is recognizable to both faculty and students, regardless of their familiarity with teaching or learning theory. In addition, the structure of social work education, with its emphasis on connections between BSW and MSW curricula, between foundation- and advanced-year curricula, and among concurrently taught courses, brightlines the issue of redundancy.

Thus, well-designed curricula require some repetition, while avoiding useless and "deadening" redundancy. We believe that it is important for faculty who are involved in curriculum design as well as faculty who want a better understanding of teaching integration and connectedness to closely examine the concept of redundancy. Faculty need to examine the usefulness of redundancy in the

curriculum and to differentiate between useful and useless, “deadening” redundancy.

We assume that faculty have some sense of techniques to help ensure that using repetition has the desired effect on students—promoting and facilitating lateral connectedness, application across contexts, and vertical knowledge building. Yet, we know little about how students experience our efforts. Both Hanson (1992) and Bensoussan (1990) address the subjectivity of interpretation and individual differences in perceptions that people bring to the learning situation. Certainly, we may expect differences between student and faculty perceptions of redundancy as well as differences among students. The methodology used in this study makes a unique contribution as it accesses student perceptions of redundancy in the social work curriculum.

METHODS

This is an exploratory, two-year longitudinal study of redundancy among courses in the MSW program at a large state university. Students were recruited to provide their perceptions regarding redundancy during their two years in the program. This report is for the first year of the study.

Sample

During orientation for the 1999/2000 school year in August 1999 the authors made a presentation to the incoming class of full-time MSW students. The authors explained that the purpose of the study was to improve the curriculum and that participation would require keeping a log, turning it in periodically, and attending three meetings to discuss material from the logs.

Initially, 27 students agreed to participate, though only 17 turned in logs for the fall semester. Of these, five were African-American, 12 were European-American, and four were male and 13 female. Further attrition resulted in only 12 students' completing logs in the spring semester. Of these, two were African-American and 10 were European-American, and three were male and nine were female. These students resemble the student body at large, which is mostly European-American and female. As this was a convenience sample, it was not expected that it would be truly representative due to both the sample size and self-selection effect. Though fewer students participated than we had hoped, those who did were dedicated to the project and provided much useful data.

Procedures

The participants attended a one-hour orientation meeting soon after recruitment. At this time (a) the study was further described, (b) educational concepts that related to redundancy were explained, (c) consent forms signed, and (d) the journal forms and data collection process reviewed. Three additional meetings were held. To encourage attendance we scheduled all meetings for the lunch hour on class days, with lunch being provided. The meetings' discussions were recorded and transcribed. The first meeting was held at the end of September to discuss how the data collection process was proceeding up to that point. Twenty students attended this meeting.

Two further meetings were conducted, one near the end of the fall semester and another near the end of the spring semester. Participants were asked to turn in their logs early so that the authors could present material from the logs (e.g., redundancies that were identified) at the meetings for general discussion. This allowed students to elaborate upon the material, especially the helpfulness or lack of helpfulness of the redundancies. Students were paid \$40 for each semester of participation.

Analysis

A content analysis of the students' journal entries was performed to categorize identified redundancies according to course, content, and perception of usefulness. A considerable qualitative focus was also maintained, as the students went beyond merely identifying instances of redundancy and commented on many aspects of the curriculum, both in their logs and in the group meetings.

Results

Collecting data at two time periods allowed students to report redundancy both within and between semesters.

Results from Fall 1999

Seventeen students attended the end-of-semester meeting and turned in completed logs. As part of their first semester, the students take four classroom courses and field placement. The courses are human behavior in the social environment I (HBSE I), which covers culture, community, and organizational theories; introductory courses in micro practice and macro practice; and policy.

Fall 1999 Content

The first stage of data analysis consisted of reading the journals and counting the number of times materials (e.g., readings, videos, and class activities) and content (e.g., ideas, information) were noted as having been covered in more than one course. There were 28 separate types of content redundancy noted in the journals and a total of 161 entries. While some content topics took considerable class time and were cited by more than half of the participants, others were minor topics in the class and were cited by only one person. For the sake of brevity, only the most commonly cited topics will be discussed. Table 1 lists the more common content topics cited, the classes the content was identified in, the number of students placing the content in a particular class, and the number of students who stated whether the redundancy was helpful.

According to participant logs, social work history was the most commonly identified content redundancy, appearing in all four classes (Table 1). It was gratifying to see that so many participants believed the redundancy was helpful. When horizontal redundancy works, it works as shown in this comment made by a student who identified social work history in both the policy and micro practice class: "Both classes showed historical significance for different areas, e.g., how settlement houses affected policies." This student had an experience in which similar content was made relevant to different curricular areas. Other students made comments indicating that this topic was important to stress in the different curriculum areas for the purpose of socializing into the profession, such as "helps to

Table 1: *Content Redundancies Identified in the Fall 1999 Semester*

Content	Classes cited in	Number of citations	Was the redundancy helpful?		
			Yes	No	Unsure
Social work history	Micro	6	6	3	
	Macro	7			
	Policy	8			
	HBSE I	3			
Feminist theory	Micro	8	5	1	2
	Policy	1			
	HBSE I	8			
Ecosystems theory	Micro	7	5	1	2
	Macro	3			
	Policy	1			
	HBSE I	8			
Values and ethics	Micro	5	3	2	2
	Macro	6			
	Policy	4			
	HBSE I	1			
The various U.S. cultures, cultural differences, and race	Micro	3	5	1	
	Policy	2			
	HBSE I	5			
Community structures and dynamics	Macro	4	1	1	2
	HBSE I	4			

reinforce what social work is all about" and "This was very helpful to me coming from a psychology background." It also seems that students have different reactions to hearing content for the second time, with some appreciating it and others not. One student who thought the redundancy useful commented that it "helped reinforce the material," while another who thought it was not useful commented, "I have had social work history in every class."

Social work history was further discussed at the fall end-of-semester meeting. The oral comments made at the meeting were more negative than the written comments from the logs, with no one speaking positively about redundancy in this area. The first three comments in the meeting about history were as follows: "It was overdone," "It was dealt with the same way," and "It was just thrown out and then left." The moderator of the meeting asked specifically whether the topic of social work history was dealt with differently in the different classes and gave the example of how the policy course might focus on how social workers have had an impact on public policies. One participant said, "I think they tried to bring it out later, but it didn't work very well." Another participant said that two classes had very similar articles on social work history and that all classes had some type of reading on the subject. The reason for the difference in tone between the written comments in the logs and the comments made at the meeting is unclear, but the consensus at the meeting was that redundancy in this area was not helpful.

Eight participants cited the topic of feminist theory as being present in both the micro practice class and the HBSE I class (Table 1). Five students believed that this repetition was helpful and wrote comments such as: "wasn't clear the first

time," "difficult to understand, but repetition helped to clarify it," and "refresher." It seems that the difficulty of the topic and the ability of the instructor may have influenced whether the students appreciated the repetition. In the end-of-semester meeting, several students spoke to this while discussing feminist theory, saying, "Well, some of the instructors are better at teaching, too, so you may have heard it in one class and not fully grasped it, and then the same information is presented similarly but maybe in a little more in detail or something, and... its plainer." Another added that students like to hear and recognize information for the second time as "...it is a reaffirmation for myself that I did understand it..."

The college's curriculum committee had been intentional when placing content on feminist theory in both courses. The curriculum was constructed so that feminist theory would be explained in the HBSE I course, and the micro practice course would focus on implications of feminist theory for the practice relationship and treatment. Participants in the end-of-semester meeting disagreed as to whether this separation worked as planned. One participant said, "In my HBSE course, it was just one of the theories. It was kind of a quick overview, and then in micro, it was more practice, how to put it into practice. I didn't see it as a redundancy." However, another participant said, "It was never reviewed that way in micro."

A further issue is temporal coordination between courses. It would be best if the components of the theory were discussed in HBSE I before the implications and applications of the theory were discussed in micro practice. As individual instructors are in charge of their own course calendars, the sequencing of material may not occur this way. One participant said that feminist theory was covered in the micro practice class before it was covered in the HBSE I class.

Ecosystem is the organizing theory that undergirds the curriculum at the college. It would be disappointing if it did not appear in each class, though it would be expected that different use of the theory would be made, depending on the system level or curriculum area. Indeed, the logs showed a high level of redundancy of ecosystems content (Table 1). At the end-of-semester meeting the participants were able to understand why this repetition was important, and one participant recognized that different applications were made in the different courses, saying, "One applies it to... behavior in humans, one applies is to institutions and organizations and how they operate, and then one, I think, in practice..." Others were not as sure whether such good use was made of the theory in their various courses, but this seemed to be a matter of their having unclear memories of how it was dealt with in each course rather than having any clear impression that the repetition was not handled well. Thus, the discussion around ecosystems indicated that students could identify and understand the importance of repeating material in different ways across courses.

The topic of values and ethics is also one that should appear across the curriculum and, in fact, the participants did identify it in every course (Table 1). The only written comment on this topic noted from the logs was that the micro and macro practice courses discussed different ethical responsibilities. In the end-of-the semester meeting, it was stated that the topic was dealt with in policy and

macro practice and it was also covered in field placement and orientation. The students felt that this was an important topic and valued the times it was applied to particular material in the micro practice and policy courses. The students did not value it when the facts of social work values and ethics were all that was presented, as in HBSE and orientation.

Redundancies of information on U.S. cultures, cultural differences, and race were largely seen as helpful (Table 1). One person made the log entry "Micro focused more on counseling, HBSE focused on behaviors and values in general." Another noted that "HBSE focused on differences, and micro practice on the 'inclusive cultural model of practice.'" It thus seems that the topic was covered appropriately, yet differently, in each class. The one student who believed that redundancy was not helpful commented, "should be in HBSE only," offering no explanation. At the end-of-semester meeting several students commented that they believed this redundancy was often not helpful and cited cultural preferences for the degree of eye contact and physical proximity as examples that were presented identically in both HBSE I and micro practice. Another student thought that the level of discussion was too shallow and that the information was often presented as a generalization about a culture. The background of the students was a factor for how this topic was viewed, as shown by the following excerpt from the transcript.

Student One: I don't think it's that difficult a concept to grasp.

Student Two: It's not if you've already done a lot of stuff...I mean, you're talking to someone who was a music major.

Student Three: I was in hotel administration.

Redundancies regarding information on community structures and dynamics were identified by four participants in the macro practice and HBSE I classes (Table 1). Only one participant judged the redundancy as helpful, and this was not because a different use or application was made for the material but rather because it was "more detailed second time, reinforced." This sentence fragment seems to indicate that if the material had been presented in a more complete fashion the first time, it may not have been seen as helpful the second time.

Fall 1999 Materials

It is frustrating and embarrassing to a teacher when introducing a video to have one or more students brightly say, "Oh, we saw that last semester in Smith's class." These participants identified many such instances of identical materials, usually videos, being used in different courses. The college maintains a list of videos that are reserved for particular courses. In no case have videos been reserved for two courses with the intent of making different use of them. Six participants identified five videos as being used in two different courses. In three instances, this was cited as being helpful, in one instance it was not, and in one instance the participant was unsure. There was one case of missing data. In addition to the videos, there were two in-class exercises and two similar articles identified in two different courses. The five students who identified these judged them as being helpful on two occasions and not helpful on three.

Overall, though findings were mixed, there was limited support for redundancy of materials and students perceived that when materials were repeated, there was little attempt to highlight different uses or learning anticipated from the repetition.

Results from Spring 2000

During the second semester of the foundation year students again take field and four classroom courses—practice with groups, research I (research methods), research II (single subject design [SSD] and descriptive statistics), and human behavior in the social environment (HBSE II), which covers theories of family and individual development. The types of redundancy that may emerge during this semester include redundancies between semesters and those among current courses.

Spring 2000 Content

There were 33 separate content areas of redundancy noted in participant logs and a total of 129 entries. There were slightly more types of redundancy noted than in the fall semester (5) but fewer actual entries (32). Since the course work is different and there were fewer respondents (reduced from 17 to 12), any direct comparison of fall-semester and spring-semester findings is not possible. Table 2 shows the content areas that were most often noted in the spring semester.

The degree of overlap between the two research courses was not surprising. Level of measurement is a basic research concept relevant to both research methods and statistics. Whether the students believed the redundancy was helpful depended in part on how it was presented each time (as was seen in the fall semester). For example, a student who said that the redundancy was not helpful commented in the log, "In both classes it was explained and defined in the same way." A student who said that the redundancy was helpful commented that the second time, "There was more information and there were relevant examples that helped me understand the terms." The same was true for the threats to internal validity item. A student who thought the topic was helpful when repeated in Research I commented, "We went over it so quickly in Research II." A student who did not think the redundancy was helpful commented, "It just repeated the same

Table 2: Content Redundancies Identified in the Spring 2000 Semester					
Content	Classes cited in	Number of citations	Was the redundancy helpful?		
			Yes	No	Unsure
Level of measurement	Research I	6	4	2	
	Research II	6			
Reliability, validity	Research I	5	3	1	1
	Research II	5			
Threats to internal validity	Research I	5	2	3	
	Research II	5			
Ecosystems theory	HBSE I	6	5	3	
	HBSE II	6			
	Groups	3			
	"Fall"	2			

threats to research studies like history, maturation, etc.” For the reliability/validity item the only comments were from students who thought the redundancy was helpful.

Ecosystems was a topic taught in both the fall and spring semesters. Whether or not students perceived redundancy around this topic as helpful related to how the material was presented. A student who believed the redundancy was helpful commented that the repetition demonstrated a “new way of using theory in group setting” in the group class. Another stated that the repetition “expanded upon previous base.” Ideally, vertical redundancy would demonstrate increased depth of analysis and application of ecosystems theory. Students recognized and appreciated when this occurred. This was not always the case, however, and two students who thought this redundancy was not helpful commented, “Recap, but was too long” and “Re-presented in a confusing way.” It seems the ability of the instructor plays a crucial role in whether redundancy is helpful, regardless of whether it is planned redundancy or not. At the spring end-of-semester group meeting a student noted that in two of the spring classes the professor asked whether everyone was clear on ecosystems theory from the fall semester before applying the theory in class. Time was thus saved by the professor allowing the students to ask clarifying questions they might have had rather than re-presenting the entire theory.

Spring 2000 Materials

Four videos were identified as having been shown in the spring semester of HBSE II and in the previous semester of HBSE I. The six students who reported this were unanimous in believing that this redundancy was not helpful. A group activity that had been done in micro practice during the fall semester was repeated in the groups course in the spring semester. The student who identified this commented, “Enjoyed activity, but 1st time was enough.” An article that was used in both HBSE I and HBSE II was also identified. This student did not think the repetition was helpful.

Process Evaluation

A surprising aspect of this study was the high attrition rate. The researchers believed that the food and monetary compensation would be adequate to keep the students involved considering the minimal amount of time and effort requested from them. While we may have correctly estimated the relative value of the compensation to the time and effort requested, we may have underestimated the competing demands for time and effort made upon the students by school, family, and employment. One student who did not participate in the spring semester said he was overwhelmed by planning his wedding, to which 600 guests were invited.

The quality and quantity of comments made by the students varied considerably. Some students were very thorough in their recording and highly verbal during discussions, while others made minimal written and oral contributions. Some were highly organized and analytical in their comments, while others made more concrete comments. One had difficulty grasping the full definition of redundancy, persisting in thinking that if he benefited from or enjoyed the repetition, it was

not redundancy. Other students provided very insightful comments aimed at the overall organization of the curriculum.

Just as faculty may advocate for the inclusion of particular content of interest to them, students also bring their personal agendas to the educational process. At the spring end-of-semester meeting, while discussing the balance of content among gays, lesbians, and minorities compared to some other groups, such as the disabled and the elderly, some students reacted on a personal and very emotional level. As several students persisted in their contention that there was too much content on gays and lesbians, the conversation grew more animated with a louder tone and fewer pauses, indicating a higher emotional content. A student who several times stated that there was too little content on the elderly mentioned that after graduation she planned to work with the elderly.

DISCUSSION

Usefulness of the Methods

This methodology adds a valuable new source of information to the curriculum-building process. Students have not been used previously to inform the curriculum about redundancy. They identified teaching methods and areas in the curriculum that needed more attention, planning, and conceptualization. These methods ranged from being more careful not to repeat videos to the planned application of similar theories to different content areas.

What Participants Told Us

As noted by Hanson (1992) and Bensoussan (1990), participants vary in their perceptions of redundancy. Discussions during group meetings showed that students brought to the educational experience different attitudes toward content (e.g., views on feminism), different educational backgrounds and preparedness (e.g., BSW, other social sciences, non-related), and different levels of attention and analytical abilities. These differences contributed to variation in awareness of redundancies as well as to lack of unanimity regarding its helpfulness or unhelpfulness.

In addition, student perceptions of redundancy were influenced by what instructors brought to the classes, regardless of the formal requirements of the curriculum. In accordance with the findings of Shavelson (1986), students noted that in different sections with different professors they can get very different content, depending upon the professor's interests and personal life experiences. They described some professors as having "soap boxes" and talking about their interests regardless of the course. Thus, students generally thought that choosing different professors would reduce redundancy. An exception was noted in relation to the two concurrently taught research courses in which having one instructor contributed to greater discretion of content.

Students related the usefulness of redundancy to the skill of the instructors. For instance, if an instructor presented a concept ineffectively, a repetition of that content in another course was seen as helpful redundancy. Likewise, students noted that some instructors were better than others at deepening and expanding material.

Students not only were aware of redundancies but also for the most part could differentiate between helpful and unhelpful redundancy. Though individual students had different perceptions based on their own characteristics and experiences or on sections/professors, they generally agreed on certain factors that contributed to helpfulness or unhelpfulness.

Generally, students found redundancy not useful when it was merely repetition, dealing with the same material in the same way, and they were able to recognize “repetition with a difference” (Towle, 1954). They did, however, note that sometimes simple repetition can be reinforcing and thus feel good, as also noted by Towle (1954). Students could discern different levels of coverage of material—e.g., readings without discussion, description of theory, depth of discussion, or application. Students were generous in allowing that faculty might have attempted to handle repeated concepts differently, though they might have missed the mark.

Other comments and observations from students included that:

- sequencing of some material was off, resulting in a lack of the intended progression (e.g., theory to application);
- there was more redundancy at the beginning of courses than later, when each course took a more distinct form; and
- the shorter the time between the initial presentation of content and the repetition, the less helpful, with greater time lapses adding to the perception of helpfulness.

Students perceived some differences between first and second semesters. They reported that teaching styles changed, as the first semester focused on giving information through lectures, while the second semester used more application and discussion, thus enhancing the usefulness of redundancies. In addition, some students reported that their attitudes had changed by second semester, when they were more able to accept the positive uses of redundancy.

In terms of redundancy in materials, overall, students reported less redundancy than we had anticipated and generally saw it as not helpful. Students reported that when materials were repeated, instructors made little attempt to highlight different uses or different learning anticipated from the repetition.

Findings as Related to the College's Curriculum

The college's 1999 Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation identified several major themes that were infused throughout the curriculum. These included (a) social work values and ethics as the base for practice; (b) an ecosystems perspective to provide conceptual and theoretical integration; (c) a commitment to social and economic justice, with a focus on the needs of the poor, oppressed, and populations at risk; and (d) awareness of and appreciation for diversity. One of the benefits of redundancy is reinforcing themes, helping students “distinguish what is central from what is marginal.” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 218)

The curriculum aims to support horizontal and vertical integration. Student comments provided some support for horizontal integration (e.g., repeating material during the first semester in different contexts) and some for vertical integration

(e.g., focusing on depth of understanding or application during the second semester). Further examination of vertical integration particularly will occur during the second year of this study.

Findings as Related to CSWE Requirements

Findings suggest that students experience the college's curriculum in a manner consistent with CSWE requirements. Whether or not they experience horizontal and vertical coherence, students at least recognized and valued that repetition of content and themes both horizontally and vertically was reinforcing and knowledge-building.

The EPAS (CSWE, 2001) requires that "Frameworks and perspectives for concentration include...practice contexts" and students recognized redundancy of theories applied to different settings, groups, and problem areas and saw it as helpful. They commented particularly on the importance of infusion of values and ethics throughout the curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

What has been described is a new process of gathering student feedback on the curriculum. This first year of the study has suggested that students are aware of redundancies in the curriculum and, though their perceptions vary, can differentiate between helpful and unhelpful redundancies and can state reasons for each. It is likely that any educator reading these results will be spurred to think about redundancy in his or her own program in new and different ways. We offer as an aid Table 3, which summarizes the types of redundancy discussed explicitly or implicitly in the literature or by students and the benefits suggested.

Faculty may want to consciously emphasize these positive uses of redundancy in curriculum design and implementation. They may want to check to ensure that their uses of redundancy clearly are those which can produce a range of learning benefits for students and ensure that teaching does not lapse into "boring repetition."

The authors present this study as a process other schools may choose to replicate or adapt in their own ongoing curriculum planning, as it would constitute a new feedback loop, systematically entering student perceptions into the curriculum revision process. Though the ultimate responsibility for the curriculum design rests with faculty, understanding how students experience the curriculum is vital information.

We have only begun the empirical study of redundancy in the social work curriculum. How, where, and when to place purposeful redundancies into the curriculum remains based largely upon opinion and theory, and research into the effect of redundancy upon educational outcomes is lacking. Future challenges involve becoming better informed and more intentional in our use of redundancy and to empirically assess the relationship between educational outcomes and redundancy. To make the process of including purposeful redundancy overt and empirically guided will both streamline the curriculum and make it more effective.

Table 3: *Types of and Benefits from Redundancy*

Types	Benefits
Present material through several channels	Synergistic reinforcement
Connect old material to new	Can comprehend only in relation to what already know
Repetition with progression	Reinforce and build
Vertical integration, building over time on previous material	Deepening, cumulative, progressive understanding
Present same concept in different classes and from different perspectives	Distinguish what is central from what is marginal
Presenting material from different standpoints	Opportunity for various ways of encoding information
Horizontal integration, linking concepts that are experienced at the same time in different courses	Aids transfer of learning, applying material across contexts and in new situations
Spacing presentation of material, return to same material later	Opportunity for various ways of encoding information, aids retention
Presenting old material in new situation	Aids with transfer
Finding new elements in old material	Build confidence, feelings of success
Using different methods to arrive at same outcomes	Build confidence
Exploring common and distinct elements	Aids transfer of learning, integration, and discrimination
Interpreting new material in relation to old, with comparisons and cross-references	Aids with differentiation, specificity, while reinforcing
Using periodic summaries and syntheses	Aids with transfer and retention as context for new ideas
Elaborating, interpreting in different ways	Builds multiple cues which aid with recall
Practicing retrieval of information	Supports memory encoding and transfer
Offering multiple opportunities for testing and feedback in relation to same material	Supports mastery
Making integrative assignments that use material from several courses or content areas	Deepens learning
Conducting ongoing reexamination of concepts	Fuller understanding and integration
Repeating material previously inadequately presented	Opportunity to learn what was missed on the initial presentation

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