SOCIALIZATION ACTIVITIES AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

WITHIN A GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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With sincere and heartfelt gratitude I dedicate this dissertation to

my husband Michael

and my precious children Grace and Austin~

thank you for supporting me

in this educational achievement.

Thank you for your patience and forgiveness

for the times I missed the mark in our relationship.

A lifetime of appreciation to my Mom, Alice Pope,

who taught me how to be a strong female,

how to have fun, and how to remain humble in all things.

All glory and praise to God

for the gifts of knowledge, persistence and grace.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Background

For several centuries, there were only three recognized professions: divinity,

medicine, and law (Perks, 1993). With the rise of technology and occupational

specialization in the 19th century, other bodies began to claim professional status;

including pharmacy, nursing, teaching, and social work (Buckley & Buckley, 1974). The

claim of professional status includes characteristics of skill based on theoretical

knowledge; testing of competence, work autonomy, code of professional conduct or

ethics; self-regulation, and exclusion, monopoly and legal recognition (Bullock &

Trombley, 1999).

The social work profession has developed aspects of all six characteristics of

professional status throughout the most recent century. Specific to a code of conduct, as

early as 1919, there were attempts to draft a professional code of ethics for social workers

(Reamer, 1998). Due to the sensitivity of the work that social workers carry out with

other human beings, articulating the professional values has multiple purposes;

specifically, (a) identification of the core values of the profession, (b) establishment of

specific ethical standards, (c) identification of relevant considerations when professional

obligations conflict or ethical uncertainties arise, (d) publicizing the ethical behavior of

the professional for public accountability, (e) socialization of new practitioners to the

field of social work, and (f) self-regulation of individual social workers (National

Association of Social Workers, 2008). The socialization of new practitioners to the field

of social work is of utmost importance to the long-term viability of the profession

because ethical breaches jeopardize the social work professional and the profession as a whole. Furthermore, the future of the social work education profession is complicated by dramatic increases anticipated in the number of social workers. Academic units will be challenged to balance quality with quantity in the coming years.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor employment of social workers is expected to increase by 22% during the 2006-2016 decade, which is much faster than the average for all occupations (2005). Recently updated, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (2008) is a 'primer' for all social work students. Unfortunately, ethical violations still occur, with ramifications for society, individuals, and the profession of social workers. Breaches of confidentiality, failure to protect vulnerable people, engaging in non-professional relationships with clients, and personal illegal and/or immoral behavior that impedes professional services are examples of violations with far reaching ramifications. Social workers damage the therapeutic relationship with these actions. Breaching confidentiality can result in information being used against a client. Failure to protect vulnerable people can result in injury and/or death of children. Engaging in non-professional relationships with clients is a form of exploitation and creates long-term mistrust for the client and potential clients. Personal illegal and/or immoral behavior reflects poorly on the entire profession of social work and affects the decision-making abilities of the social worker, which then affects the services rendered to clients.

With the increased need for professional social workers, it is even more imperative that the profession ensures that new practitioners are adequately socialized to the profession, including professional behaviors. Assisting new practitioners with

developing a professional identity is a task for the academic units that educate social workers (Tam & Coleman, 2009). Along with the academic nature of training new practitioners, educators hold a responsibility to ensure that the new practitioner models the professional standards of the profession prior to being conferred a diploma, also known as professional suitability (Tam & Coleman, 2009). The development of a professional identity for social work students has typically occurred within two venues implied in the academic coursework and explicit in the field education setting. Oftentimes these two venues are working in isolation and assume professional identity activities are occurring in the other venue. This disconnect is largely due to the schism between the academic professors and the field education instructors. The field education instructors are agency-based master's-prepared social workers (MSW) who has agreed to mentor a MSW student for an extended period of time, usually 500 clock hours. The field education instructors are given upfront training and intermittent support; however, this is generally facilitated by one faculty member assigned to the coordination of the field placement. Within the academic coursework, the grooming of professional identity often takes a backseat to the immense body of knowledge and theories that must be delivered to the students. Additionally, schools of social work have not explored what activities most impact the socialization of new MSW students into the profession. What remains unanswered is this: Are MSW students receiving training and feedback to ensure competence in the professional behaviors so that they remain ethical social workers for the span of their career?

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

Professional competence training and feedback can be understood through the lenses of various theories. Professional education and competency-based training create a foundation for specific theories related to learning. Learning theories related to social interactions, as described by Bandura (1969) and Bruffee (1999), assist in understanding how learning occurs among others. Learning theories related to types of instructional strategies, as described by Mezirow and Associates (2000), and Nonaka (1994), assist in understanding how learning is converted into a personal perspective or attitudinal change.

Professional Education and Competency-Based Education

Professional education as described by Curry and Wergin (1993) is defined by incremental, sequential stages of knowledge attainment which is collaboratively endorsed by the university faculty and the practitioners of the profession. Professional education is encased within a liberal arts framework, moving beyond technique acquisition and into competencies of critical thinking and clear communication. Thus, professional education, in its highest form, facilitates both technical training and critical reflection techniques (Hackett, 2001).

Competency-based education (CBE) has been widely discussed in the literature, and there are various views of what constitutes CBE (Hackett, 2001). The narrow view states, "Standardized training outcomes can be achieved by all learners if a thorough analysis of the behaviors demonstrated by any competent performer is undertaken and then transposed onto a set of standardized sequences" (Chappell, Gonczi, & Hager, 2000, p. 192). This view is permeated with practices which are primarily concerned with achieving prespecified training goals and/or meeting minimum practice skill standards

(Hackett, 2001). In contrast, the broader view of CBE claims, "One does not confuse performance with competence. It rejects single acceptable outcomes as being indicative of competent performance, proposing that in most situations multivariable contexts inevitably lead to multivariable outcomes, emphasizing human agency and social interrelations. It regards competence as developmental and elaborative rather than static and minimalist" (Chappell et al., 2000, p. 192). The proposed study is firmly developed around the concepts of professional education and competency based education, as the researcher desires to explore graduate level social work competencies within a professional curriculum.

Learning Theories

Bandura's (1969) early work with social learning theory is pivotal to the discussion as he posited that people learn from one another. His theory included concepts of observational learning, imitation, and modeling, all within a social context. It is the social context, as described by Bandura that creates opportunities for one to informally acquire new habits, behaviors, and skills beyond the academic textbook learning. Social learning theory allows for individual social constructs to be evaluated, challenged, and refined against the backdrop of other individuals.

Bruffee (1999) contended that students have been acculturated to talk to and deal effectively only with people in their own crowd, their own neighborhood, and perhaps only in their own family or ethnic group prior to attending college. As a result, students arrive deeply culturated and are asked to join a new community that might challenge their preconceptions of others. Bruffee's (1999) reacculturation theory describes nonstandard discourse as boundary discourse which refers to conversation at the boundaries of the

members of the knowledge community. The knowledge community is comprised of faculty and students who are collectively participating in the knowledge activity or event. Boundary conversation is that of engaging with another at the point, or boundary, between the community in which you are raised and the community in which others are raised. Collaborative learning puts students in a place where they must reconcile their own preconceived ideas and begin to expand their worldview, not by reading or being lectured to, but by having conversations with others. This conversation is a negotiation between those who know and accept a community's values and those who do not, with the goal of modification of beliefs (Bruffee, 1999). Implications of Bandura's (1969) and Bruffee's (1999) theories are important to the proposed research as the researcher has interest in exploring the socialization of graduate social work students who come from different backgrounds into the profession of social work.

Instructional Strategy Theories

Similar to Bruffee's (1999) reacculturation theory, Mezirow's (2000) concepts of transformative learning are the means by which reacculturation might occur. Transformative learning is deliberate acts that assist a student with becoming an awakened person creating attitudinal changes, or transformational changes, within the person. Mezirow stated, "There are four ways learning occurs: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind" (p. 19).

Nonaka's (1994) organizational knowledge creation theory describes four modes of knowledge conversion: (a) socialization, (b) externalization, (c) internalization, and (d) combination. Nonaka's work is specific to two types of knowledge: tacit and explicit.

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Tacit knowledge involves both cognitive and technical elements, and is articulated by a mobilization process. Tacit knowledge is also known as "procedural knowledge" (Nonaka, 1994, p.15). Explicit knowledge is codified knowledge, transmittable in formal, systematic language, also known as "declarative knowledge" (Nonaka, 1994, p. 15).

The first of the four modes of knowledge conversions is socialization, which is defined as converting tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge. The second mode is externalization, defined as converting tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge. Third, combination is defined as converting explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge, and lastly, internalization is defined as converting explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. It is the conversion of tacit knowledge between two entities (socialization) and the conversion of explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge (internalization) upon which this research project rests. Nonaka's (1994) organizational knowledge creation theory and Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning concepts have utility for understanding what activities and instructional methods might assist in the socialization of MSW students into a professional identity.

The model for this research is conceptually based upon aspects of professional education, competency-based education, social learning theory, reacculturation theory, concepts of transformative learning, and organizational knowledge creation theory. The common element of these theories is that of non-textbook, informal learning, and practical knowledge attainment. An additional common element is the process of transferring new information into an attitudinal change which is revealed in the development of a professional identity consistent with the social work profession.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to assess and develop professional competencies with MSW students to ensure they remain ethical social workers for the span of their careers. A recent shift in the accreditation process for schools of social work has highlighted this need, and academicians are creating assessment processes to comply with the new standards. However, at the present time, there is a lack of valid and reliable assessment measurements specific to three practice behaviors. As academic units move toward a competency-based curriculum, activities and processes could be developed to strengthen professional competencies. However, there is no known research on what socialization activities increase professional development within the graduate level social work student.

Issues Related to Assessment

The educational standards for an accredited social work program are developed and enforced by the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE). These standards include not only routine academic criteria, but also criteria regarding students' readiness for professional practice (CSWE, 2007). In 2008, CSWE implemented the "Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards" (EPAS) to shift the accreditation assessment focus from program outcomes to process assessment focusing on student achievement of practice competencies. The EPAS delineates ten core competencies and 41 practice behaviors that may be used to operationalize the curriculum and assessment methods.

Social work educators have demanded the development of standardized measurements on professional suitability, however, transforming these lists of practice behaviors into standardized measures has not yet occurred (Tam & Coleman, 2009).

There are two reasons for this gap in assessment tools. First, EPAS were implemented less than two years ago, and social work educators are currently transitioning into this new method of evaluation. Additionally, several of the practice behaviors are not amenable to in-coursework measurements of skill labs and assignments, which are the predominant current methods of assessment.

Specifically, three of these 41 practice behaviors (see Appendix A) cannot be assessed as easily as the other practice behaviors. The three practice behaviors are demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication; attend to professional roles and boundaries, and recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice (CSWE, 2007). The other 38 practice behaviors are objectively defined and cognitively based which allows for assessment of student competency through traditional methods of instruction, such as exams and integrative papers.

Harris (1993) described complementary roles of different types of knowledge and competence which are essential for professional practice, specifically, reflective competencies, practical knowledge and competencies, and specialized bodies of knowledge pertinent to the profession. Through Harris' framework, these three practice behaviors can be labeled 'practical competencies' as they are intrinsic attributes which develop over time and can have contextual variances. Thus, the assessment of these practical competencies must be made contextually and routinely, whereas the other practice behaviors can be viewed as static and noncontextual, such as having knowledge of specific theories.

Issues Related to Socialization into the Profession

Beyond the development of an assessment tool is an interest of how aspects of these practice behaviors are transferred from seasoned social workers and/or faculty to the social work student. Although the practical competency behaviors were only recently articulated and mandated to assess, they have been a pivotal part of the social work profession for decades. As academicians are responsible for preparing individuals for all aspects of their professional career, it behooves to ask, "What activities increase the socialization of social work students into the profession of social work specific to the three practical competency behaviors?"

Bruffee's (1999) theory of reacculturation offers concepts to describe the process of moving into a professional identity. He defined reacculturation as, "switching membership from one culture to another…which involves giving up, modifying, or renegotiating the language, values, knowledge, mores and so on that are constructed, established, and maintained by the community one is coming from, and becoming fluent instead in the language and so on of another community" (p 298). Bruffee's reacculturation theory might hold answers to consistent socialization of social work students. Mezirow and Associates (2000) transformative learning practices might offer specific methods to strengthen the socialization of social work students. Lastly, Nonaka's (1994) concepts of organizational knowledge creation might have utility for the transferring of tacit knowledge from seasoned social workers to new social workers. However, there is no known research on the combination of any of these three theories and the development of a professional identity within a graduate social work program.

Purpose of the Study

There is a lack of valid and reliable assessment instruments for the three practical competency behaviors articulated in the 2008 EPAS. Additionally, there is no known research on reacculturation and transformative learning activities that might increase socialization into the profession for MSW students. Therefore, this study is intended to develop a tool for the assessment of professional demeanor, professional role and boundary issues, and professional values of the MSW student. Additionally, this study is intended to explore links between specific reacculturation and transformative learning activities, and the socialization into the social work profession. If a reliable and valid instrument, which measures competence of these three practice behaviors, can be developed, and socialization activities that correlate to the competencies are identified, organizational processes can be implemented to ensure all MSW students graduate with the required competencies.

Research Questions

To facilitate the development of an instrument that measures the three practical competency behaviors and to provide further understanding of the connection between student socialization and professional development, the following research questions guide this study:

1. How do master's-level social work (MSW) students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near graduation students) compare in competence level with the practice behaviors of:

    (a) professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication,

    (b) professional roles and boundaries, and

(c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows

professional values to guide practice?

 2. How do MSW students at various stages of professional preparation

(beginning students, mid-point students, and near graduation students) compare in

their involvement with professionalization activities of Pre-student

Professionalization, Professional Association, Professionalization via Instruction,

and Professionalization via Practicum?

3. What types of professionalization activities correlate in competence levels to

these three practice behaviors?

Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

To best answer these research questions, the study was designed from an

objectivist epistemology and a postpositive theoretical perspective recognizing that one

cannot be "positive" about his/her claims of knowledge when studying the behavior and

actions of others (Creswell, 2003). The objectivist epistemology alludes to the

researcher's desire to objectively measure and more precisely articulate the three practice

behaviors that are not well articulated. According to Crotty (1998), a researcher with a

postpositive theoretical perspective utilizes strategies such as experiments and surveys,

and collects data through predetermined instruments.

The limitations of this study are related to geographical area and research design

established by the researcher. For feasibility reasons, the study is limited geographically

to one Midwestern public university's social work graduate level students enrolled in

their field education courses in the spring semester of 2010 and their identified field

instructor. The study is limited in design through the use of self-reporting measures of

socialization activities. It is assumed that participants will be honest when completing the survey instruments and will interpret the instrument as directed.

Design Controls

An authentic research model based on applied learning theory was developed to answer the research questions. Creswell (2003) stated, "Certain types of social research problems call for specific approaches…if the problem is identifying factors that influence an outcome, the utility of an intervention, or understanding the best predictors of outcomes, then a quantitative approach is best" (p. 21). This model matches well with the current research proposal, as this researcher desires to understand and identify predictors of competence attainment for three practice behaviors. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) described various paradigms, including clinical inquiry, within the action research field. Schein (1997) described clinical inquiry as:

> trained helpers (such as clinical and counseling psychologists, social workers, organization development consultants) acting as organizational clinicians in that they: (a) emphasize in-depth observation of learning and change processes; (b) emphasize the effects of interventions; (c) operate from models of what it is to function as a healthy system…and (d) build theory and empirical knowledge through developing concepts which capture real dynamics of systems. (p. 18)

This concept of clinical inquiry lends well to the current research proposal, as the researcher desires to evaluate and, potentially, develop organizational processes within her current place of employment. Due to the insider stance of the researcher, methodological reflexivity is important to ensure identified research procedures and protocols are followed (Cohglan & Brannick, 2005). Clinical inquiry, as a component of

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the authentic research model, is similar to action research in that both are concerned with applying a scientific method of fact-finding and experimentation to practical problems within an organizational system; however, the two methods diverge with regards to sequencing of events and participatory, democratic processes.

Definition of Key Terms

It is important that the reader understand the use of terms to be found throughout this study. These terms include the following items.

Stages of MSW professional preparation. There are three categories of MSW students: beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students. Beginning students are defined as students who are in their first two semesters of the MSW program. Mid-point students are defined as students who have at least two semesters, but are not eligible to graduate in May 2010. Near graduation students are defined as students who were eligible to graduate in May 2010.

Social work competencies. According to Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. They have outlined ten core competencies:

1. Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly,
2. Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice,
3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments,
4. Engage diversity and difference in practice,
5. Advance human rights, and social and economic justice,

6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research,

7. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment,

8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being, and to deliver effective social work services,

9. Respond to contexts that shape practice, and

10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Social work practice behaviors. According to CSWE (2008), practice behaviors are measurable behaviors that may be used to operationalize the curriculum and assessment methods related to the ten core competencies. CSWE articulated 41 practice behaviors to correlate with the ten competencies (see Appendix A).

Professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication. As one of the three practical competency behaviors, demonstrating professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication entails aspects of work habits, appearance and hygiene, communication skills, self-care skills, and professional development skills (CSWE, 2007). It is within this practice behavior that contextual variances might occur, as professional appearance in a hospital setting will be vastly different than in a homeless shelter setting. Additionally, self-care skills and professional development skills take time to develop and to value as important. Lastly, communication skills and work habits begin as intrinsic attributes, and are clarified and refined to match the work requirements of the professional specialty area of practice.

Professional roles and boundaries. As one of the three practical competency behaviors, attending to professional roles and boundaries entails aspects of dual

relationship awareness and potential issues that might arise from blurring the professional

boundaries. Dual relationships are defined as having a second relationship different from

the primary relationship, such as moving from a personal acquaintance to a professional

helper, or from a professional helper to initiating a personal friendship or intimate

relationship (NASW, 2008). Contextual variances can determine the appropriateness of

establishing a dual relationship, such as a rural versus urban setting for the practitioner.

New practitioners can misunderstand the social work value of the importance of human

relationships (NASW, 2008). The value is intended to help practitioners realize that

clients desire connectedness to others; however, new practitioners err by shifting their

professional relationship into the personal realm, assuming that they must not terminate

any relationship.

 Personal versus professional values. As one of the three practical competency

behaviors, recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values

to guide practice entails an awareness of personal biases and knowledge of the

profession's value base. The social work profession is based on the values in the Code of

Ethics (NASW, 2008) and includes skills of neutrality and non-judgementalness, support

of self-determination for clients, and belief in the dignity and worth of all people. These

professional values guide social work practice rather than a personal value system which

might have contrary values (NASW, 2008).

 Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire. The

field instructor instrument (see Appendix B) is a Likert-scaled instrument scoring a

specific student's competencies on 28 items which relate to the three practice behaviors.

The instrument was developed by this researcher and used 16 items from the Professional Suitability for Social Work Practice Scale (Tam & Coleman, 2009).

MSW student socialization activities. Seventeen activities that describe efforts of learning based on Bruffee's (1999) theory of reacculturation and Mezirow and Associates (2000) activities of transformative learning. These activities include prior interactions with professional social workers, involvement in student organizations for social workers, participation in non-foundational learning experiences, and receipt of feedback from their field instructor.

Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey. Student survey with 17 activities which might have assisted with his/her growth as a professional social worker. The professionalization activities were organized to four categories of activities which occurred prior to becoming a MSW student (*Pre-student Professionalization*), professional affiliation activities occurring in the MSW program (*Professional Association*), activities which relate to instructional strategies (*Professionalization via Instruction*) and activities which relate to field practicum education (*Professionalization via Practicum*).

Summary

This study examines the development of a professional identity for graduate level social work students. Primarily, the study explores how to measure practice behaviors that are considered practical competencies (Harris, 1994) with variability due to contextual understanding, intrinsic attributes, and development over time. Additionally, the study seeks to understand student involvement within a variety of professional

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socialization activities. Lastly, the study examines what socialization activities increase the development of said competencies.

The second chapter provides an extensive review and synthesis of the literature for the base of this study. The research design and methods of data collection are contained in Chapter Three. The fourth chapter outlines the results of the data gathered. Discussion of the results and implications for future research are contained in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

There is a need to assess and develop professional competencies with master's-level social work (MSW) students to ensure they remain ethical social workers for the span of their careers. A recent shift in the accreditation process for schools of social work has highlighted this need, and academicians are creating assessment processes to comply with the new standards (CSWE, 2007). Competency-based education and assessment within a graduate social work program is the first step in the assurance of ethical social work practitioners. Currently, there is not a valid and reliable instrument that assesses three practical competency behaviors: (a) demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication, (b) attend to professional roles and boundaries, and (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice. The assessment of these practical competencies must be made contextually and routinely; whereas the other practice behaviors can be viewed as static and noncontextual, such as having knowledge of specific theories.

There are well documented learning theories and instructional strategies that might enhance the socialization of MSW students into the social work profession, such as Nonaka (1994) and Mezirow and Associates (2000); however, this has not been studied previously. The researcher postulates a correlation exists between degree of competency of professional behaviors and involvement in socialization activities of MSW students.

The literature regarding professional education, learning theories, and social work education specific to competency-based assessments and socialization undergirds this

research study. Professional education literature frames the context of the environment within which social work education occurs. Learning theories offer concepts and strategies that directly impact competency assessments and socialization. Lastly, the current discourse within social work education regarding evaluation of student competencies and socialization into the profession lends specificity to this research study.

Professional Education

In 1910, Abraham Flexner revolutionized professional education by publishing a report on medical education (Rice & Richlin, 1993). Flexner's report advocated for hierarchical stages of professional education divided into two stages, the preclinical and the clinical, which reflected the division between theory/research and practice. Rice and Richlin stated this recommendation of stratified, research-based programs initiated the movement of schools of professional education into the research university realm for many professions, including medicine, law, and dentistry. Schools of professional education continue to utilize this stratified structure today, oftentimes having foundational courses prior to practice-oriented courses. In 2000, seventy-six professions identified a degree from an accredited school of professional education as one entry requirement for admission into the profession (Damron-Rodriguez, 2008).

Ideally, professional education mirrors the needs and trends of the profession itself; working collaboratively, practitioners of the profession and faculty members should assess instructional content and its relevance to the current work demands. However, over time, this relationship between the community and the academic units has eroded to the detriment of the practice side of the professional education (Rice & Richlin, 1993). As the demands of university structure and politics increase, schools of

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professional education have been increasingly focusing on the theory and research related

to professional knowledge, thereby minimizing the practice pieces of professional

knowledge. Cavanaugh (1993) stated the culture and belief pattern of academic units has

diverged from the realities of professional practice, resulting in a discontinuity between

institutional and societal views of professional competence. This disconnect is largely

due to differing roles, perspectives, and priorities of practitioners and academicians.

Cavanaugh described practitioners as *users* of technical knowledge, whereas

academicians are *pursuers* of knowledge. Due to this erosion of collaborative

interactions, professional education was at a critical crossroad, according to Curry,

Wergin and Associates (1993). Their seminal text, "Educating Professionals: Responding

to New Expectations for Competence and Accountability," called for reform of

professional education due to the social and political forces affecting professional

practice. From this call to action, many educational accrediting bodies shifted their focus

from curriculum content to competency outcomes (Hackett, 2001).

Competency–Based Education and Evaluation

McGaghie (1993) stated competency evaluations prior to starting a professional

occupation is not new. He cited examples from the Christian tradition regarding the

consecration of bishops according to the Bible, and the British tradition of a sequential,

three part evaluation of medical students since 1693. The two components of

competence-based education and evaluation are identified in clear, measurable terms,

with indicators for levels of performance, specific practice skills, and evaluation of skill

acquisition through measurable criteria (Hackett, 2001). The narrow view of competency-

based education (CBE) asserts, "Standardized training outcomes can be achieved by all

learners if a thorough analysis of the behaviors demonstrated by any competent performer

is undertaken and then transposed onto a set of standardized sequences" (Chappell,

Gonczi, & Hager, 2000, p. 192). This view is permeated with practices which are

primarily concerned with achieving predetermined training goals and/or meeting

minimum practice skill standards (Hackett, 2001). In contrast, the broader view of CBE is

described by Chappell et al:

> One does not confuse performance with competence. It rejects single acceptable
>
> outcomes as being indicative of competent performance, proposing that in most
>
> situations multivariable contexts inevitably lead to multivariable outcomes,
>
> emphasizing human agency and social interrelations. It regards competence as
>
> developmental and elaborative rather than static and minimalist. (p. 192)

 This wide continuum in defining competency-based training highlights the difficulty of

trying to trace this approach back to a unified theoretical foundation. As the approach is

relatively new (within the previous two decades), there is not a large body of empirical

research to validate the approach (Hackett, 2001).

The literature on professional competence evaluation tends to focus on

evaluations that are made at the conclusion of professional school and the beginning of

practice (Schimberg, 1983). McGaghie (2001) believed this one point–in-time evaluation

is shortsighted as evaluation of an individual's competence for professional practice is

rarely a "one-shot" event; rather, competence evaluations occur throughout one's

professional career. He advocated for a continuum methodology of assessment, matching

evaluation tools with types of knowledge and skills needed at certain points in time.

Professional competency literature describes three criterions on this continuum.

Immediate criteria are bits of knowledge and skilled behavior needed to reach a short-run

goal like passing a test, or achieving a high grade point average during the first year of

professional school (McGaghie, 2001). Intermediate criteria go beyond these and include

one's ability to complete a required program of study, interact with clients tactfully, and

preserve confidentiality, according to McGaghie. Lastly, ultimate criteria refers to value

judgments about one's technical skill, professional manner, or character and lifestyle

behaviors that are distant in time and quality from those that are measured at the

beginning of one's professional life (McGaghie, 2001).

     A second key idea, according to McGaghie (2001) is that of contextual variables

that shape the appropriateness of practice at any given time. He described this criterion

problem as vexing because evaluative measures tend to be fixed and static, whereas

professional practice effectiveness is frequently case or situation specific. Situation

specific context includes practice setting, phases of service, service requirements, and

time available. McGaghie remarked that most evaluations of competence for professional

practice assume that professional fitness is stable and does not change, and advocates for

valid assessments involving a wide variety of practical problems and situations rather

than just assessing what one knows.

     Lastly, McGaghie (2001) stated the third key idea is that of the objectivity versus

subjectivity of evaluation measures. Many features of professional competence must be

subjectively evaluated, as they defy quantification. McGaghie stated:

     The real problem here is not recognition of the value of subjective data for

     professional competence evaluation. Instead, the problem concerns which

subjective data to consider and how to fold such information into decision making

in a fair and unbiased manner. (p.152)

He advocated for direct observation evaluation tools in addition to "pen and paper" tests

of knowledge attainment, referencing Eisner's (1976) connoisseurship approach. Eisner

postulated, "The desire for evaluation practices to be described in quantitative, empirical

terms has led to the oversimplification of the particular through a process of reduction

aimed at the characterization of complexity by a single set of scores" (p. 137). Quality

becomes converted to quantity, with negative consequences for authentic evaluation

practices. He advocated for the evaluation of "educational connoisseurship," (Eisner,

1976) by which one is able to appreciate with awareness and understanding what one has

experienced (Eisner, 1976). Schon's (1983) concept of reflective practice is similar to

Eisner's connoisseurship skills. Both believed that subjective data related to how one

thinks and interprets his/her actions, and environment is as important to professional

practice as is the objective data related to knowledge attainment. Schon characterized

professional practice as "judgment and wise action in complex, unique, and uncertain

situations with conflicting values and ethical stances" (p. 12).

Central to the non-technical skills of professional competence are personal

attributes of the individual (McGaghie, 2001). He stated:

No one doubts the importance of personal qualities and life-style habits as basic

elements of professionalism. Who wants to be treated by a surgeon who is a

cocaine addict? Why would anyone confide in a pastoral counselor with a

reputation as a gossip? What intelligent family would entrust its financial estate to

a dishonest accountant? (p. 254)

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Although there is an awareness of personal attributes and their relationship to professional competence, McGaghie stated the national standards for educational and psychological testing defines professional test standards on levels of knowledge and skills necessary to assure the public that a person is competent to practice, noting the statement does not include assessment of one's personal qualities, lifestyle, or private interests. He continued:

> Personal qualities and life-style habits that are basic facets of professionalism: reliability, sobriety, holding of confidences, placement of service to clients before self-interest. In professional life, these traits are as important as knowledge and skill and are most conspicuous by their absence. They are rarely addressed in selection, education, or credentialing unless a problem becomes evident. (p. 255)

There are several reasons to assess personal qualities and the non-technical facets of professional competency. Norcini and Shea (1993) described several impairments or power differentials that would not be revealed in a cognitive evaluation-substance abuse, psychological problems, and initiating intimate relationships with the client-but would definitely impact the professional competency of the practitioner and the fidelity of the professional service. The two cautioned these personal qualities and non-technical facets are less precise to quantify and are probably not captured completely in an assessment of outcomes. They end with a recommendation that more evaluation attention should be devoted to personal, qualitative variables that are crucial to professional practice, such as tact, honesty, humor, and judgment.

In summary, there is a growing acknowledgement that the practice of a profession requires much more than technical knowledge and measures need to be constructed that

assess the interpersonal and moral attributes of the practitioner. The evaluation measures
must include subjective or qualitative mechanisms to assess issues of impairment and
ability for introspection (Norcini & Shea, 1993).

Practical Competencies

Similar to personal attributes described by McGaghie (1993), Norcini and Shea
(1993), and Eisner (1976), Schon (1983) identified practical competencies as a non-
technical facet of professional practice. As opposed to theoretical and technical
knowledge, practical knowledge and competencies are needed for dealing with problems
that do not yield to technical or familiar solutions, those problems that can be construed
as idiosyncratic or that have contextual variances from the routine presentation. Harris
(1993) amplified the critical importance of these competencies to professional education
in the current climate of rapid technological, cultural, and economic changes.

Schon (1983) characterized practical competencies as knowing-in-action, or tacit
knowledge; described as implicit in the spontaneous patterns of action demonstrated in
everyday life, composed of actions, recognitions, and judgments that are typically carried
out spontaneously. Practical competencies are brought forth by reflective practices
according to Schon. Reflection-in-action and reflection-about-action are central to how
practitioners deal with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict
(Harris, 1993). Through these two reflective practices, a practitioner is able to codify
puzzling, troublesome, or interesting phenomena that elude the ordinary categories of a
practitioner's knowledge. This codification is the action of moving tacit, implicit
knowledge connected to the troublesome phenomena to a new explicit or technical
knowledge arena (Harris, 1993). Thus, much of practical knowledge and competencies

are difficult to articulate in a predetermined manner, as individual practitioners learn and gain awareness of tacit information discreetly, based on the context of their practice and the involvement with idiosyncratic situations.

Practical knowledge and competencies are difficult to evaluate due to the contextual nature of practice and the imprecise ability to articulate everyday actions and judgments that occur under the awareness of the practitioner (Harris, 2001). As professional programs evaluate the technical knowledge attainment of their students, it is equally important that evaluations occur with regard to the practical competencies and reflective practices (Harris, 2001). Currently, there are gaps in evaluation tools to assess professional competency in these two domains.

Summary of Professional Education

There is a long history of educating students for practice of a professional occupation. It is understood that professional academic units must deliver both technical and practical knowledge for the lifelong success of the professional practitioner. Competency-based education and evaluation encompasses both elements and challenges the academician to facilitate the attainment of both technical and practical knowledge for all students.

Learning Theories

There are two types of learning theories that undergird the current study. Learning theories related to social interactions, as described by Bandura (1969) and Bruffee (1999), assist in understanding how learning occurs among others. Bandura's early work with social learning theory emphasized the importance of observing and modeling the

behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bruffee's collaborative learning theory refutes the one dimensional approach to teacher/student knowledge attainment.

Learning theories related to types of instructional strategies, as described by Mezirow and Associates (2000) and Nonaka (1994) assist in understanding how learning is converted into a personal perspective or attitudinal change. Mezirow and Associates' transformative learning methods change the student's frame of reference which is then a permanent change in outlook and worldview. Nonaka's organizational knowledge creation theory, although organizationally based, offers understanding and methods of how tacit knowledge is transferred from person-to-person.

Social Learning Theory

In 1969, Albert Bandura theorized learning was not strictly an individual endeavor. He stated:

> Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 22)

This concept of observational learning is pivotal to more recent theories of collaborative learning and knowledge creation. Bandura suggested observational learning becomes coded information, which can be recalled later to guide actions in similar situations.

According to Bandura (1969) the components of observational learning are: (a) attention, (b) retention, (c) motor reproduction, and (d) motivation. Attention to the modeled event includes distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, and

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functional value, and observer characteristics of sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, and past reinforcement. This component of observational learning is akin to apprenticeships whereby one learns their trade in concert with a seasoned trade person.

Retention occurs with methods of symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal. This component of observational learning is the cognitive processing element. Motor reproduction includes physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, and accuracy of feedback. This component of observational learning is the actual doing of the skill, usually with a mentor or supervisor observing with verbal comments (Bandera, 1969).

Lastly, motivation includes external, vicarious, and self reinforcement. This component of observational learning became the hallmark of Bandura's social learning theory. Two important aspects related to motivation are self-efficacy and self-regulation. Self-efficacy describes the belief that people are more likely to engage in certain behaviors when they believe they are capable of executing those behaviors successfully. Self-regulation is when the individual has his/her own ideas about what is appropriate or inappropriate behavior, and chooses actions accordingly. There are several aspects of self regulation including setting standards and goals, self observation, self judge, and self reaction (Bandura, 1969). Self-regulation is similar to Schon's (1983) reflective practices as both theorists postulated that learning is more than attaining knowledge within the cognitive domain. In regard to the current research study, Bandura's observational learning components parallel well with instructional strategies that are utilized in MSW academic programs of field practicum experiences, role playing in the classroom and skills labs which are attached to didactic lectures.

Collaborative Learning Theory

Kenneth Bruffee furthered the idea that learning was more than just the transferring of knowledge from professor to student. He stated:

> College and university professors teach the way they do because they understand knowledge to be a certain kind of thing. Most assume a cognitive–that is, a foundational–understanding of knowledge. Knowledge, they believe is supported or 'grounded' on reality and fact, something that gets transferred from one head to another. (1999, p. xiv)

Foundational aspects of learning assume a one-to-one relationship between students and teacher, not encouraging students to collaborate (Bruffee, 1999). Bruffee refuted this one dimensional approach to learning after many years of teaching and seeking new pedagogical techniques. He advocated a new paradigm for learning, collaborative learning which included opportunities for nonfoundational learning. Further, Bruffee categorized learning as foundational or nonfoundational based on the content of the knowledge. Foundational learning was defined as facts and information that is articulated and known by all participants. Nonfoundational learning was defined as personal and individual changes that occur because of the discourse, such as one's worldview or value system.

Bruffee's (1999) premise is that students attending institutions of higher education bring with them their culture and his/her familiar way of doing things; one task of higher education is to reacculturate these students into the learning environment whereby the student is allowed to reconcile his/her preconceived ideas and expand his/her worldview. He stated that new learning is accomplished not by readings or lectures, but by having

conversations with others. His description of these conversations was 'boundary conversations,' meaning students engage with another student at the point between their worldview and the other's worldview. One's worldview is developed by the community in which one is raised. Thus, the two individuals are communicating at the boundaries of their known worldviews. Through these conversations, one begins to look at others' worldviews and challenge his/her personal tacit knowledge. Bruffee described the content of boundary conversations as nonstandard discourse as the two knowledge communities (or individuals) do not have consensus, or a standard of understanding, to apply to the situation.

Beyond reacculturation to the academic environment, students must negotiate this process with their professional community, as well. Bruffee (1999) stated:

What makes this kind of boundary negotiation especially challenging is that students – people who are not yet members of the community of, say, chemists, philosophers, or literary critics – are not simply members of no knowledge community at all. College and university students are already stalwart, longtime, loyal members of an enormous array of other nonacademic, nonprofessional knowledge communities. (p. 71)

To have success with this, Bruffee suggested:

Instead of thinking about what to put into their students' minds and how to put it there, professors think of teaching as helping students converse with increasing facility in the language of the communities they want to join, and they think about doing that as creating social conditions in which students can become reacculturated into those communities. (p. 73)

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To this end, Bruffee (1999) asserted, "The most important tool professors have to help students reacculturate themselves into the knowledge communities they aspire to join is mobilizing transition communities" (p. 74). Transition communities allow the students to relinquish dependence on their current community language and to acquire fluency in the language that constitutes the professional community they desire to join. Transition communities provide a measure of security to students as they shed their old ideas and ties to their current community, including the comfort and identity provided by the community. He cautioned that the purpose of collaborative learning is not primarily to teach students to speak differently, but to think and behave differently. Bruffee offered the example of watchmakers learning to become carpenters; the learning was more than how to use a hammer and saw. The individuals had to learn how to swear like a carpenter; drink like a carpenter; and walk, eat, and tell jokes like a carpenter. The transfer of this nonfoundational or tacit knowledge is one of the end results of collaborative learning.

In summary, Bruffee's (1999) collaborative learning theory offers social work educators a paradigm for preparing MSW students for professional practice. Social work educators can offer students foundational learning of theories, intervention skills, and facts related to the profession. Additionally, nonfoundational learning of practical professional skills is modeled by Bruffee's theory.

Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory

Bruffee's (1999) terms of foundational and nonfoundational have been described in various other terms including Harris' (1993), Eraut's (1994), and Nonaka's (1994) work. As previously discussed, Harris described knowledge as technical or practical,

which is conceptually similar to foundational and nonfoundational, respectively. Eraut

echoed these two concepts describing knowledge as codified or cultural/personal. He

described codified knowledge as published knowledge, whereas cultural or personal

knowledge is informal knowledge. Nonaka's theory of organizational knowledge creation

outlined dynamic aspects of the knowledge creation process, with its central theme being

organizational knowledge is created through a continuous dialogue between tacit and

explicit knowledge. Nonaka's term of tacit knowledge is conceptually similar to

Bruffee's nonfoundational knowledge, and Nonaka's term of explicit knowledge similar

to Bruffee's foundational knowledge. Tacit knowledge involves both cognitive and

technical elements, which is articulated by a mobilization process (Nonaka, 1994).

Explicit knowledge is codified knowledge, which is transmittable in formal and

systematic language (Nonaka, 1994). Table 1 outlines these terms and their similarities.

Table 1

Foundational and Nonfoundational Terms

Theorist	Foundational	Nonfoundational
Harris	Technical knowledge	Practical knowledge
Eraut	Codified knowledge	Cultural/Personal
Nonaka	Declarative knowledge/ Explicit	Procedural knowledge/ Tacit
Schon		Knowing in action

Although Nonaka's (1994) focus was on organizational knowledge creation, his work has utility with regard to how an individual creates and retains knowledge. Nonaka's theory of organizational knowledge creation describes multiple modes for the conversion of the two types of knowledge: (a) socialization, which is tacit to tacit, (b) combination, which is explicit to explicit, (c) externalization, which is tacit to explicit, and (d) internalization, which is explicit to tacit. Nonaka (1994) called this model a spiral of knowledge creation. Like Bandura (1969) and Bruffee (1999), Nonaka postulated that social interaction between individuals provides the opportunity for the spiral of knowledge creation to occur.

It is the socialization and internalization modes of knowledge conversion upon which this research is based. Socialization moves tacit knowledge from one individual to another by interactions, language, and observation (Nonaka, 1994). Internalization moves explicit knowledge from one individual to tacit knowledge within another individual by modeling and replication of behaviors. As Bruffee's (1999) previous analogy demonstrates, carpenters learn the nonfoundational knowledge, or tacit knowledge, through interactions of apprenticeships with seasoned carpenters. The student carpenter observes tacit knowledge, how to swear, walk, and eat like a carpenter-and might never articulate this knowledge, but informally moves it into his or her own professional schema. Additionally, the student carpenter obtains foundational knowledge, or explicit knowledge, from the seasoned carpenter regarding the use of a hammer and saw. The student carpenter codifies this explicit knowledge into both explicit and tacit knowledge with the replication of task performance (Nonaka, 1994). The task becomes routine and reinforces the technical knowledge attainment. The student carpenter overlays his own

technique on the procedure, e.g.,placement of the thumb in relation to the hammer, and thus, tacit knowledge is created.

Nonaka (1994) cautioned:

A failure to build a dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge can cause problems. The 'sharability' of knowledge created by pure socialization may be limited and, as a result, difficult to apply in fields beyond the specific context in which it was created. (p. 20)

Eraut (1994) added, "Several types of knowledge are involved in a performance of any complexity, and the natural tendency is to communicate the more explicit aspects and neglect those that are tacit" (p. 254).

Nonaka recommended a five-stage process within the spiral of knowledge creation: (a) enlarging individual's knowledge, (b) sharing tacit knowledge, (c) crystallizing, (d) convergence, and (e) networking. The process of the first stage is conceptually similar to Bandura's (1969) and Schon's (1983) introspective practices of self-regulation and reflective practices because stage one requires an awareness of what one already knows and the breadth of the variety of this knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). Nonaka stated, "In order to raise the total quality of an individual's knowledge, the enhancement of tacit knowledge has to be subjected to a continual interplay with the evolution of relevant aspects of explicit knowledge" (p. 22). It is the action of combining the work experience with one's own worldview, or as Schon (1983) said reflection-in-action, that enlarges one's knowledge.

The second stage process is conceptually similar to Bruffee's (1999) nonstandard discourse, that of sharing tacit knowledge. Nonaka stated, "The interaction between

knowledge of experience and rationality enables individuals to build their own perspectives on the world. Yet these perspectives remain personal unless they are articulated and amplified through social interaction" (p. 22). With regard to organizational knowledge creation, Nonaka suggested self-organizing teams whereby members collaborate to create a new concept through conversation.

The third stage, crystallization, is the process by which one makes the new knowledge tangible in concrete form such as a product or a system (Nonaka, 1994). For an individual, this occurs when one demonstrates the new skill or habit, moving from a concept that was endorsed as standard discourse for the profession in the previous stage to meaningful action. Nonaka described this as knowledge conversion from tacit to explicit, or externalization.

According to Nonaka (1994), the fourth stage of knowledge creation is the process of justifying the quality of the new knowledge, and the fifth stage is knowledge sharing, or networking. These two stages of organizational knowledge creation parallel an individual's knowledge creation process as both have components of double-loop learning and integration (Nonaka, 1994). Within an individual, these two stages are framed by internalization modes of conversion, from explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge. That is to say, the individual verifies the new foundational knowledge and upholds it as his own (Nonaka, 1994).

In summary, this spiral approach to knowledge creation, although theoretically based as an organizational learning theory, has utility in the discussion of individual's learning and professional development. The four modes of knowledge conversion and the five stages of the conversion process build a framework for the discussion of instructional

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strategies that develop competent professionals who have both the requisite foundational

knowledge as well as the nonfoundational knowledge of the profession. Nonaka's

concepts could assist social work educators with a framework of understanding how

knowledge is transferred, particularly tacit knowledge conversion from the veteran social

work practitioner to the new social work practitioner.

Instructional Strategies/Transformative Learning Theory

How does one deliver both foundational and nonfoundational knowledge? Are

there specific methods or instructional strategies that facilitate both technical and

practical learning? Brown and Duguid (2001) challenged the idea of independent types of

knowledge; rather, they believed that tacit and explicit knowledge are interdependent.

Ryle (1949) contrasted the difference between knowing 'how' and knowing 'that,'

stating, "Knowing *how* cannot be defined in terms of knowing *that"* (p. 204). And for

one to make *that* knowledge useful, one must also have the *how* knowledge (Ryle, 1949).

According to Brown and Duguid (2001) it is understood that the process of learning *how*

is facilitated by practice. Eraut (1994) concurred, describing the four modes of

knowledge attainment as replication, application, interpretation, and association. In sum,

theorists believe learning of core professional knowledge is best achieved by repeated

experiential activities that incorporate the knowing that with the knowing how.

McCombs and Whistler's (1997), Weimer's (2002), and Cornelius-White and

Harbaugh's (2009) learner-centered concepts can enhance the learning opportunities for

professional competence. McCombs and Whistler described educational institutions as

living systems, with fundamental service to all students. To serve a diverse student body

institutions must have a shift in perspective. They stated, "From this perspective…what is

as important as curriculum and content, and fundamental to the learning of curriculum and content, is attention to meeting individual learner needs" (p. 2). Learner-centered approaches are effective for increasing student motivation and achievement by shifting the balance of power. Weimer succinctly stated, "We (teachers) feel the need to be in control and assert our position and authority over students, but we fail to understand that the need results from our own vulnerabilities and desire to manage an ambiguous and unpredictable situation successfully" (p. 27). The learner-centered educator solicits input from the learner, so that the learning outcomes are authentic and not contrived. Weimer suggested four areas of potential decision-making for students: assignments, course policy, course content, and evaluation activities. Skill achievements are individualized, allowing for greater student motivation and proficiency. Weimer's learner-centered approaches parallel Bruffee's (1999) concepts related to the authority of knowledge and collaborative learning theory as both paradigms place the ownership of learning within the student, not the educator. This shift in focus is applicable to social work education if social work educators are to assist each student with foundational and nonfoundational competencies as directed by the new accreditation standards (CSWE, 2008).

Cornelius-White and Harbaugh (2009) completed a meta-analysis of the learner-centered instructional literature and suggest two instructional strategies to enhance cognition and affective/behavioral outcomes: authentic inquiry and cooperative learning. Authentic inquiry allows for autonomy and self-direction within the student with structure delineated by the teacher. Cooperative learning, in contrast to competitive and individualistic learning methods, is empirically supported with higher achievement, interpersonal and self-esteem outcomes (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh). Lastly, the two

authors assert the overall context of the learning environment affects the cognition and affective/behavioral outcomes. This meta-analysis of learner-centered approaches can assist in the development of new instructional strategies and socialization activities to achieve strong social work practice competencies.

Adding to this discussion, Mezirow and Associates (2000) transformative adult learning theory describes how 'meaning making' is contextually based. The context of one's life is how one interprets new information. Transformative learning, as described by Mezirow and Associates, is the resulting process when students "becomes critically aware of the context - biographical, historical, cultural- of their beliefs and feelings about themselves and their role in society…which can affect a change in the way they had tacitly structured their assumptions and expectations" (p. xii). The transformative theorist built upon Bruner's four modes of making meaning by adding a fifth mode of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow and Associates, p. 4). Mezirow's premise was reflective discourse is necessary to recognize contradictions in one's tacit knowledge and to reject that knowledge or move it into explicit knowledge. Mezirow believed this experience is transformational for learners as it changes one's frames of reference, which is composed of two dimensions, a habit of the mind and resulting point of view. Kegan (1994) stated:

> Transforming our epistemologies, liberating ourselves from that in which we are embedded, making what was a subject into object so that we can 'have it' rather than to 'be had' by it—this is the most powerful way I know to conceptualize the growth of the mind. (p. 34)

Mezirow and Associates stated, "learning occurs in one of four ways: (a) by elaborating existing frames of reference, (b) by learning new frames of reference, (c) by transforming points of view, or (d) by transforming habits of the mind" (p. 19). Further, Mezirow and Associates indicated that transformation refers to a movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives and that the process itself may become a new frame of reference.

Instructional strategies that allow for the elaboration of existing frames of references include mindful learning, perspective transformation, collaborative thinking, and communicative learning (Mezirow, 2000). These processes allow students to articulate what is their existing frame of reference or worldview. It is important that one critically analyze his/her assumptions in explicit processes, so that the knowledge is not hidden or obscured, rather it is in the open for one to assess (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). Bruffee's (1999) boundary conversation amongst individuals in a transition group is similar to Mezirow and Associates processes for elaboration of existing frames of reference.

Instructional strategies that allow for learning new frames of references include abstract thinking activities, observation of unfamiliar practices, developmental intentions, and participation in constructive discourse (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). These processes allow students to obtain new information which can be converted into new frames of references. Nonaka (1994) described this knowledge attainment as explicit. Schon (1983) described this knowledge as technical. Transformative learning theory described new frames of reference as two-pronged—both explicit knowledge attainment and new methods of thinking (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).

Instructional strategies that allow for transforming points of view include reflective discourse, recognition of other's voice as valid, experiencing a disorienting dilemma, and critical self-reflection on assumptions (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). These processes allow students to bring into awareness their meaning schemas which are expressed as points of view (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). It is the awareness of one's schemas, or viewpoint that is pivotal to the process. Schon's (1983) and Bandura's (1969) introspective practices parallel Mezirow's instructional strategies of reflective discourse and critical self-reflection. Critical self-reflection is brought about from teaching with developmental intentions, as Mezirow described, "Rather than depending on information about something, learners are encouraged to experience something" (p.163).

Instructional strategies that allow for transforming habits of the mind include subjective reframing and acknowledgement of one's philosophical, moral-ethical, psychological, aesthetic, and sociolinguistic orientations (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). These processes allow students to challenge their current habits of the mind and develop new processes for increased transformative experiences. Schon's (1983) reflective practices are conceptually similar to the process of acknowledging one's orientation.

In sum, McCombs and Whistler's (1997), Weimer's (2002), and Cornelius-White and Harbaugh's (2009) learner centered approaches and Mezirow and Associates (2000) transformative learning processes offer instructional strategies which move the learning from solely technical knowledge attainment to transformative events and defining the student as the authority in his/her knowledge.

Summary of Learning Theories

There are two types of learning theories that undergird the current study. Learning theories related to social interactions, as described by Bandura (1969) and Bruffee (1999), assist in understanding how learning occurs with others. Bandura's early work with social learning theory emphasized the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Bruffee's collaborative learning theory described nonfoundational learning through the use of nonstandard discourse among students. Learning theories related to types of instructional strategies, as described by Mezirow and Associates (2000) and Nonaka (1994), assist in understanding how learning is converted into a personal perspective or attitudinal change. Mezirow and Associates transformative learning methods change the student's frame of reference. McCombs and Whistler's (1997), Weimer's (2002), and Cornelius-White and Harbaugh's (2009) learner-centered strategies offer a new paradigm in which instructors view their role in the classroom. Nonaka's organizational knowledge creation theory, although organizationally based, offers understanding and methods of how tacit knowledge is transferred from person to person.

These learning theories frame the tasks of social work educators. It is imperative that new social work practitioners are equipped with nonfoundational knowledge as well as foundational knowledge to ensure ethical practice. Social work education must include instructional strategies that allow for both types of learning opportunities.

Social Work Education

Social work has been viewed as a profession for over a century, and the academic training has occurred at the baccalaureate, master, and doctoral levels. As this researcher

is graduate faculty for a social work program, this study seeks to understand how MSW

students are socialized into a professional identity and how to implement the newly

approved accreditation standards of competency-based assessment. Specific to the social

work profession there is very limited research on these two topics. Assessing professional

competencies is valued within the social work education field; however there are few

measurements that have taken on this challenge. Developing a professional identity is

implicit to most professions, and this researcher desires to identify socialization activities

which might facilitate the development of a professional identity and practice

competencies that are expected from graduating MSW students.

Assessing Professional Competencies

Although professional social work education accreditation standards have recently

begun to use competency-based education methods for training and assessment, the need

for valid and reliable competency-based assessment instruments were identified well over

twenty years ago (Bogo, Regehr, Hughes, Power, & Globerman, 2002). Tam and

Coleman (2009) reflected studies have identified criteria for professional suitability,

however, transforming these criteria into standardized measures have not yet occurred.

Bogo et al. stated, "Despite agreement on the importance of empirically-valid methods

for evaluating the competence of social work graduates, there is still little evidence of

progress in the development and use of such tools" (p. 387). A search of the research

literature by this researcher via EPSCO and JSTOR revealed few psychometric

instruments that assess social work competencies. Three instruments have found the

attention of social work researchers: (a) The Practicum Based Evaluation (PBE), (b) The

Foundation Practice Self-Efficacy Scale (FPSE), and (c) The Professional Suitability

Scale (PSS) (Bogo et al., 2002; Holden, Anastas, Meenaghan & Metrey, 2002; Tam & Coleman, 2009).

All three instruments are based on two premises: philosophy of social work and goals of professional education. Philosophically, social work has developed a unique set of professional values and goals of practice (Tam & Coleman, 2009). The belief in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human being, and a commitment to the values of acceptance, self-determination, and respect of individuality is fundamental. The fundamental values and goals of practice characterize the professional identity of social work, and provide a template for schools of social work from which to develop their programs. Educational objectives include imparting essential knowledge, skills, and values for use in social work; developing a capacity for establishing and sustaining purposeful working relationships; developing social consciousness and social conscience; enhancing students' capacity to think critically and analytically; and orienting students to the practice environment (Tam & Coleman, 2009).

The Practicum Based Evaluation. The Practicum Based Evaluation Tool (PBE) was developed in 1979 and has seen several revisions over the years (Bogo et al., 2002). PBE has 149 practice indicator items, which are factored into six dimensions of practice competence: (a) learning and growth, (b) behavior in the organization, (c) clinical relationships, (d) conceptualizing practice, (e) assessment and intervention, and (f) professional communication. It is a Likert-scaled instrument, with five levels of measurement: unsuitable, more training needed, on the cusp, ready to practice, and exemplary. The authors intentionally wrote the instrument in the language of social work practitioners, as they are the raters of the students who are in field practicum experiences.

The PBE is used at the University of Toronto for all MSW students as a means of evaluating student success within the field practicum experience. As noted by Bogo et al.,

> Few studies evaluating aspects of field education use student performance as the outcome measure, the great majority use student satisfaction or student perception of helpfulness…there may even be a negative correlation between student satisfaction and learning; whereas assessment of performance reflects actual competency attainment or not. (p. 386)

In 2002, the instrument was evaluated for reliability and validity by the authors. Results demonstrated a consistent factor structure with excellent internal consistency; however, there was inadequate consistency between ratings of individual students in their first and second field education experiences. The measure had some predictive validity in that it could differentiate between students indentified as having difficulty in Year 1 of the program, but not in Year 2 (Bogo et al., 2002). A second question of the study was, "If social work educators are unable to accurately measure differences in performance (between Year 1 and Year 2), how can we establish which factors produce maximal learning in the field?" (p. 396). Bogo et al. acknowledged the PBE has strong utility for evaluating students in their first-year field practicum; however, it does not have the same reliability for the second-year field practicum. As such, the PBE is limited in its usage as a gate keeping mechanism prior to students entering into the profession. Other than the articles written by the authors of the instrument, this researcher could not find published research on the tool.

The Foundation Practice Self-Efficacy Scale. The Foundation Practice Self-Efficacy Scale (FPSE) was developed in 2000 and is based on other smaller, specialty

practice self-efficacy scales (Holden et al., 2002). The authors replicated their original

study once since the development of the tool (Holden, Anastas, & Meenaghan, 2003;

Holden, Anastas, & Meenaghan, 2005). Bandura's (1969) social learning theory concept

of self-efficacy - people's belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course

of action required to produce given attainments (Holden et al., 2002) - is the conceptual

underpinning for the instrument. The 31 items were developed based on Bandura's

suggested approach and had an 11 point response format, which was rated by the student

within one month of beginning the field practicum placement and within five weeks of

the end of the academic year. The study contained a retrospective pretest within the

posttest to determine if response shift bias was present in the findings. The first study

revealed statistically significant increases in self-efficacy for the overall scale and strong

content validity as the items were directly connected to the EPAS practice skills. The

authors noted the study's limitations in regard to internal and external validity, as the

results were based on a small, nonrandom, convenience sample at a single point in time.

The replication study revealed statistically significant increases similar to the original

study. In both studies, students had the largest pre-post changes in the following items:

(a) understand both the history of the social work profession and its contemporary

structures and issues, and can use that knowledge effectively in practice; (b) use

theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual

development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals and

between individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities; and (c)

influence social policy. The authors concurred that self-efficacy is not a perfect predictor

of future effective and ethical practice, but claimed there is utility for their measurement as there is currently no measure that has perfect predictors of future behavior.

The Professional Suitability Scale. The Professional Suitability Scale (PSS) was developed in 2009 and continues to be refined based on the only published study which described the validation strategies for the scale (Tam & Coleman, 2009). The PSS is conceptually based on the literature surrounding professional suitability with regard to: (a) personal suitability, (b) social work values and ethics, (c) reflective practice, (d) interpersonal suitability, and (e) social awareness (Tam & Coleman, 2009). The instrument contains 50 items and utilized a seven-point Likert scale. To minimize the possible effect of response set, the authors randomly inserted five distracters into the scale. The authors developed the 2009 study to seek face and content validity of the scale. The scale was reviewed by social work educators who were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on statements starting with a stem of "A person who is professionally suited for social work" and ended with each of the fifty suitability items. The results suggested reasonable levels of face and content validity. The authors noted that no validated criterion was available for comparing the scores of the instrument. Lastly, the authors utilized exploratory factor analysis to examine construct validity, which was found to be modest. From this study, the authors reduced the scale to 33 items by eliminating poorly loaded items, and described the reliability of .93. The authors suggested utility of the scale for pre-field practicum BSW students, with professional references completing the scale on the specific student and/or field instructors, and the student completing the scale during the field practicum experience (Tam & Coleman, 2009).

Comparison of the three instruments. Each of the three identified scales has merit

but also limitations in approaching the assessment of competencies for social work

practice. The PBE relies heavily on assumptions of student learning and very little on

student demonstration, whereby cognitive attainment is measured but not the

nonfoundational knowledge that is needed for successful social work practice (Bogo et

al., 2002). Additionally, the PBE is lengthy with 149 items. The FPSE is a self-report

scale which measures perception of confidence in skill attainment, rather than actual skill

attainment (Holden et al., 2002). Additionally, the scale's items do not articulate the

nonfoundational aspects of professional social work practice. Lastly, the PSS construct is

strong with regard to the nonfoundational skills necessary for social work practice. The

PSS is limited only by its current status as in development and without actual usage with

students and field instructors (Tam & Coleman, 2009).

Socialization into the Profession of Social Work

Barretti (2004) completed meta-analyses of the empirical literature specific to the

socialization of social work novices, and found sparse efforts have been made for the

profession to articulate and research this aspect. Of the 54 submissions discovered, most

misused the terminology of socialization (Barretti, 2004), and none attempted to study the

correlation of socialization and specific activities. She synthesized the literature within a

framework of the competing views of professional socialization; the induction approach

titled "Structural Functionalism" and the reaction approach titled "Symbolic

Interactionism" (Barretti, pg. 260). Within these two views, Barretti compared and

contrasted postionality of the student and the instructor; status of the student and the

instructor; and primary assumptions about the profession. In sum, socialization into

professional social work identity is woefully under researched, although it is acknowledged as an important aspect to the development of ethical social workers.

According to Barretti, the studies obtained lost the essence of socialization by virtue of approach in methodology. Barretti postulated that research on the topic had been framed with a structural functionalism, or induction, approach rather than the symbolic interactionism, or reaction, approach. Structural functionalism describes socialization as a uniform, linear, and direct process with a prevailing assumption that faculty and students in professional schools have common perspectives, and subscribe to common values (Barretti, 2004). Symbolic interactionism describes socialization as a diverse, nonlinear, and unpredictable process with a prevailing assumption that professional education impedes the socialization due to its structure and size (Barretti, 2004). Symbolic interactionism asserts students are active and conscious agents in their learning with multiple identities (student, wife, father, professional social worker) occurring simultaneously; and socialization is a process of adjustment to the demands of local contexts of work and training.

From this contrasting approach perspective, Barretti claimed the published research is flawed as it is presented one dimensionally without depth for variances across the student experience continuum. Barretti believed it is this barrier that prevents social work scholars from agreeing on a common definition and studying this phenomenon. In sum, Barretti advocated for different methodologies for the study of socialization as opposed to the foundational knowledge, skills, and values competencies.

Petrovich (2004) advocated for self-efficacy training and methods for the socialization process, including enacted mastery, vicarious experiences, physiological

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and affective states, and verbal persuasion. Enactive mastery is defined as the experience of overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort and is often referred to synonymously as performance accomplishment. Vicarious experience is defined as learning mediated through modeled events and social comparisons. Petrovich noted that human modeling is the most effective approach for learning attitudinal items, and that other forms of social influence, such as a peer group, are variations on the same theme. Additionally, learning via observation is not limited to formal settings but can take place in informal social network settings. Physiological and affective states need to have vigilant self-monitoring and self-regulation for successful socialization; one needs to have an awareness of self as related to the circumstance and events which are occurring around them. Verbal persuasion is defined as encouraging feedback is the weakest source of self-efficacy with less research support, according to Petrovich.

The self-efficacy techniques described by Petrovich are similar to reflective practice (Schon, 1983), boundary discourse (Bruffee, 1999) and transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). Successful socialization for professional practice will occur if self-efficacy strategies are utilized, advocated Petrovich.

Raskin, Wayne, and Bogo (2008) challenged the traditional roles and educational standards that have been identified as most influential in the socialization process: the field instructor and student relationship. Field instructors are given deference because of their practice wisdom; and thus, it is assumed the practice wisdom will be transferred to the social work student. The authors reviewed the historical development of four aspects of the field practicum experience (required hours, faculty liaison responsibilities, employment-based experiences, and field instructor responsibilities) and found:

Although the standards were developed to promote quality social work education, they reflect political compromises, widespread assumptions about how people learn, and strongly held opinions of their creators. Based on the analyses…the authors conclude that it is imperative for the social work educators to recognize that the constraints posed by these untested standards may hinder rather than promote effective field education. (p 182)

Of interest to this researcher is the primary role that field instructors have been given with regard to socializing the social work student into a professional identity. The authors advocated that this relationship is a strong determinate of socialization; however, not all field instructor/student relationships are conducive to optimal learning, and other supports impact socialization as well.

Summary of Social Work Education

Specific to social work education, validated competency based assessments are in demand and not fully developed (Tam & Coleman, 2009). This researcher located only three scales in the empirical literature. There continues to be debate regarding competency-based assessments for all the 41 practice behaviors (see Apppendix A), specifically, those which are not amenable to traditional in class demonstrations or written assignments. The development of a validated and reliable competency based assessment is very timely as new accreditation standards were recently enacted. Socialization of social work students has rarely been studied for a variety of reasons as outlined previously. To this researcher's knowledge, there are no empirical studies of what activities promote positive socialization into the profession. However, as revealed in

the literature review, there is great value in utilizing learning theories to direct the socialization activities.

Literature Review Summary

The literature regarding professional education, learning theories, and social work education specific to competency based assessments and socialization undergirds this research study. Professional education literature frames the context of the environment in which social work education occurs. The professional education literature describes the tension which exists between social work educators' and social work practitioners' end goals of an academic program. Practitioners desire graduates who are capable of performing professional social work including self-awareness skills and commitment to embracing all aspects of the profession (professional identity). Social work educators desire graduates who are cognitively prepared for a variety of practice situations, but have often neglected the nonfoundational learning aspects of the profession.

Learning theories offer concepts related to foundational and nonfoundational learning and knowledge attainment. Learning theories as outlined previously also offer instructional strategies that might directly impact the three practical competency behaviors of professional demeanor, professional roles and boundaries, and professional values which guide practice. Social work educators might find utility in the instructional strategies reviewed within the learning theories literature.

As there is sparse empirical research on social work competency assessments and socialization activities which lead to a professional identity for MSW students, this researcher is led to the three research questions to assist the field of social work educators with the development of a competency-based measurement and dissemination of a new

schema related to professional identity. A description of the methods used to collect the

data as well as research questions is contained in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four,

quantitative data analyses are presented and related to the research questions. A

summary of findings and the implications for future research is included in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

Competency-based education and assessment within a graduate social work

program is the first step in the assurance of ethical social work practitioners (CSWE,

2007). Currently, there is no valid and reliable instrument that assesses three practical

competency behaviors of (a) demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance,

and communication, (b) attend to professional roles and boundaries, and (c) recognize

and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice.

The assessment of these practical competencies must be made contextually and routinely,

whereas the other practice behaviors can be viewed as static and noncontextual, such as

having knowledge of specific theories. The development of an assessment instrument is

necessary and timely for social work education programs to comply with the newly

approved accreditation standards.

Secondarily, there is sparse research on what socialization activities might

enhance professional identity. As graduate students move into professional social work

careers, it is imperative that they have embraced all aspects of the profession and skills of

self-awareness and self-correction, when indicated. This researcher postulates

involvement in various socialization activities increases the three practical competency

behaviors outlined above.

The research design was quantitative with three research questions. Methods of

data collection were two instruments, a self-report of students' involvement in

professionalization activities that have assisted in gaining competence in the three

practice behaviors and a field instructors' questionnaire. The field instructors' questionnaire collected data to answer research question number one. Research question number two was answered by the data collected from the self-report instrument and comparisons with the data from the field instructors' questionnaire. The analysis of data was measures of central tendency and measures of relationship, as described by Mertler and Vannatta (2005) and Frankel and Wallen (2006).

Research Questions

To facilitate the development of an instrument that measures the three practical competency behaviors and to provide further understanding of the connection between student socialization and professional development, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do master's-level social work (MSW) students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students) compare in competence level with the practice behaviors of:

    (a) professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication,

    (b) professional roles and boundaries, and

    (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice?

2. How do MSW students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students and near-graduation students) compare in their involvement with professionalization activities of Pre-student Professionalization, Professional Association, Professionalization via Instruction, and Professionalization via Practicum?

3. What types of professionalization activities correlate in competence levels to these three practice behaviors?

Design for the Study

An authentic research model based on applied learning theory (Bandura, 1969) was developed to answer the research questions. Creswell (2003) stated, "Certain types of social research problems call for specific approaches…if the problem is identifying factors that influence an outcome, the utility of an intervention, or understanding the best predictors of outcomes, then a quantitative approach is best" (p. 21). This matched well with the current research proposal, as this researcher desired to understand and identify predictors of competence attainment for three practice behaviors. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) described various paradigms, including clinical inquiry, within the action research field. Schein (1997) described clinical inquiry as:

> trained helpers (such as clinical and counseling psychologists, social workers, organization development consultants) acting as organizational clinicians in that they: (a) emphasize in-depth observation of learning and change processes; (b) emphasize the effects of interventions; (c) operate from models of what it is to function as a healthy system…and (d) build theory and empirical knowledge through developing concepts which capture real dynamics of systems. (p. 18)

This concept of clinical inquiry lended well to the current research proposal, as the researcher desired to evaluate and, potentially, develop organizational processes within her current place of employment. Due to the insider stance of the researcher, methodological reflexivity was important to ensure identified research procedures and protocols are followed (Cohglan & Brannick, 2005). Clinical inquiry, as a component of

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the authentic research model, is similar to action research in that both are concerned with applying scientific methods of fact-finding and experimentation to practical problems within an organizational system; however, the two methods diverge with regard to sequencing of events and participatory, democratic processes.

To best answer these research questions, the study was designed from an objectivist epistemology and a postpositive theoretical perspective recognizing that one cannot be "positive" about claims of knowledge when studying the behavior and actions of others (Creswell, 2003). The objectivist epistemology alluded to the researcher's desire to objectively measure and more precisely articulate the three practice behaviors that are not well articulated. According to Crotty (1998), a researcher with a postpositive theoretical perspective utilizes strategies such as experiments and surveys, and collects data through predetermined instruments.

Lastly, Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2003) added the research problem is developed on two premises: "something you don't know but want to and the so-what significance of the information" (p. 63). The current research proposal included both elements as this researcher has made observations of students' missteps related to these three practice behaviors, and the profession, as a whole, continues to struggle with social workers who behave unethically, specific to the three practice behaviors. If a reliable and valid instrument, which measures competence of these three practice behaviors, can be developed, and socialization activities that correlate to the competencies are identified, organizational processes can be implemented to ensure all MSW students graduate with the required competencies.

Thus, it was decided that this research proposal was solely quantitative in its design utilizing a convenience sample of cross-sectional MSW students. Data collection was completed by a questionnaire of predetermined questions with fixed answers for professional observers of MSW students and a self-report listing for students. The data was analyzed by performing descriptive analysis of central tendency and correlation statistics.

Population and Sample

Sampling procedures define the size and methods of selecting the individuals who make up the desired population, with the intent of generalizing findings of the study beyond the sample. Quantitative studies depend on large numbers of participants for generalization purposes (Creswell, 2003). Additionally, a sample population must be representative of the whole, possessing the relevant characteristics of the study's population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the population was graduate students in an accredited social work program at a public university in the Midwest. The university was established in the early 1900s, and the social work program began in the 1970s. The School of Social Work added a graduate program in the late 1990s. MSW courses are taught on the main campus, as well as a satellite campus approximately sixty-five miles from the main campus.

There were 103 active graduate students within the program. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) stated there is no clear-cut answer defining an adequate sample size, but for correlational studies, a sample of at least 50 is deemed necessary to establish the existence of a measurable relationship. The sampling scheme was convenience, whereby this researcher found participants at the graduate program where she had affiliation. The

sample size was approximately 75 current MSW students who entered a professional practicum experience in spring 2010 semester, and was categorized by length of time in the academic program. There were three categories: beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students. Beginning students were defined as students who are in their first two semesters of the MSW program. Mid-point students were defined as students who have at least two semesters but were not eligible to graduate in May 2010. Near-graduation students were defined as students who were eligible to graduate in May 2010. Approximately 25 students were in each of the three stages of professional preparation.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Creswell (2003) suggested data collection within quantitative research survey method include: the survey design, the population and sampling procedure, and the instrumentation. Survey design develops the purpose of the survey research, indicates why survey is the preferred type of data collection for this research, and determines if it is cross-sectional or longitudinal (Creswell, 2003). The survey method of data collection is preferred for two reasons: economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2003). A cross-sectional survey instrument provided the researcher with a portrait of things as they were at a single point in time (Fink, 2006). A cross-sectional design allowed for observing differences between the three categories, whereas longitudinal design would allow for observing change over time for the same group of students. A longitudinal design might bring about stronger findings for this research study, however, this researcher chose a cross-sectional design due to feasibility concerns.

Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire (PDRBVQ)

The researcher developed two instruments for data collection. The field instructor instrument (see Appendix B) titled, "Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire" is a Likert-scaled instrument scoring a specific student's competencies on 28 items which relate to the three practice behaviors, as outlined in Table 2. The instrument had three categories which paralleled the CSWE defined practice behaviors.

Table 2

Category, Components and Items on PDRBVQ

Category	Component	Items
Professional Demeanor	Professional Behavior/Work Habits	# 7,17,19,26
	Professional Appearance/Hygiene	# 5,10,23,27
	Professional Communication Skills	# 2, 6,16,21
	Professional Self-Care Skills	#9,14,18,24
	Professional Development Skills	#3,11,25,28
Professional Roles and Boundaries		#1,13,20,22
Professional Values		#4, 8,12,15

The first category was organized into five components: (a) professional behavior/work habits, (b) professional appearance and hygiene, (c) professional communication skills, (d) professional self-care skills, and (e) professional development skills. Each of the components had four items. Professional behavior/work habit items

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involved integrity, honesty, reliability, and dependability. Professional appearance and hygiene items included appropriate daily self-care and professional appearance. Professional communication skill items assessed relationships with clients and co-workers, nonverbal communication skills, and professional verbal communication skills. Professional self-care skill items involved the ability to manage personal life issues including mental health and medical conditions, and maintaining stable emotions. Professional development skill items included the awareness of personal strengths and limitations that relate to professional social work practice, and one's ability to receive feedback.

The second category of professional roles and boundaries had four items: the ability to distinguish between professional and personal relationships, establishing clear boundaries with clients, knowledge of why he/she has chosen a career in social work, and maintenance of clear boundaries with field instructor and other supervisors. Lastly, the third category of professional values had four items to assess: the ability to examine one's personal biases, support of self-determination even if the choices are against one's personal belief system, belief in the value and dignity of each individual regardless of their lifestyle, and awareness of one's personal values and beliefs.

In terms of survey development, this researcher utilized 16 items from the 50 item Professional Suitability for Social Work Practice Scale (Tam & Coleman, 2009). Those items were: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 25. Twelve of the 25 items were authored by the researcher. Items 5, 8, 10, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 and 28 were developed because the published scale did not identify these items as

competencies for social workers. The researcher utilized her own practice wisdom to develop these items.

The instrument was given to identified field instructors during week ten of the practicum experience. The field instructors were trained on the instrument and practice behaviors in January, prior to the commencement of the practicum experience.

To ensure objective, reliable, and valid data, the researcher identified internal and external validity threats (Creswell, 2003). To establish content validity, piloting of the instrument was completed with faculty at the School of Social Work (Creswell, 2003). Tam and Coleman's (2009) study reported, "…face and content validity were examined at the scale-construction stage by two groups of reviewers…from the reviewers' evaluation, the professional suitability scale achieved reasonable levels of face and content validity" (p. 55). To establish reliability, measures of internal consistency were evaluated by focusing on the clarity of the questions via the piloting participant's feedback, both verbally and written (Creswell, 2003). Adjustments were made to the questionnaire prior to the distribution to the sample field instructors.

Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey (SRPAS)

The second data collection instrument, titled "Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey" (see Appendix C) was sent to the identified students during the tenth week of the spring semester 2010. The self-report instrument was distributed by e-mail and hard copy with the informed consent form (see Appendix D. The student was asked to consider which of the listed 17 activities had assisted with his/her growth as a professional social worker, specific to the three practice behaviors of professional demeanor, roles and boundaries, and values. The researcher designed the instrument to

require the respondent to gauge the quantity of involvement in professionalization activities.

The professionalization activities were organized into four categories, and remained grouped for ease of respondent reading: (a) *Pre-student Professionalization*, (b) *Professional Association*, (c) *Professionalization via Instruction*, and (d) *Professionalization via Practicum*. Activities which occurred prior to becoming a MSW student included having a personal relationship with a social worker, working or volunteering around a social worker, and receiving professional services from a social worker. Professional Association included involvement in the student association group and self study of the NASW Code of Ethics. Instructional strategies included various experiential activities in the classroom. Lastly, activities which occurred in the field practicum education included observation and feedback from the field instructor.

The researcher authored all items as there are no known scales regarding professionalization activities in the literature. Practice wisdom was used to author the items based upon the concepts described in Chapter Two. The concepts included social learning theory, collaborative learning theory, and transformative learning theory within the symbolic interactional paradigm. The professionalization activities moved beyond the activities between the student and field instructor, as Raskin, Wayne, and Bogo (2008) highlighted research of socialization has only occurred within this dyad.

Steps to ensure the design, sample, and instrumentation allowed for objective, reliable, and valid data by identifying internal and external validity threats were established by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). An expert review was completed for reliability and validity purposes as the self-report survey was newly created for this

research study (Patten, 2007). To establish content validity, a review of the survey was completed with faculty at the School of Social Work (Creswell, 2003). Criterion and construct validity was not available, as this researcher was unable to find instruments of similar measures (Creswell, 2003). Measures of internal consistency, that the responses to items are consistent across constructs, was evaluated to establish reliability by focusing on the clarity of the questions via the expert review participant's feedback, both verbally and written (Creswell, 2003). Adjustments were made to the self-report survey prior to the distribution to the sample population.

Research Ethical Considerations

As the data for the study was obtained utilizing a written questionnaire which involved participation of human subjects, this researcher had two ethical obligations prior to the collection of data: to ensure written informed consent was given by all participants and approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the sponsoring academic institution (Creswell, 2003). Appendix D is the Informed Consent Form that was given to all potential research participants. It detailed the purpose of the study, the potential risks of participation, and contact information related to the researcher and the IRB.

As there were two data collection instruments which were used for correlation analysis, each student was given a code. The researcher had a non-professional staff member at the University cross-reference the two instruments to ensure the data collected, which was specific to individual students, remain connected and confidential. This procedure to protect anonymity was described in the informed consent letter and occurred before the raw data was viewed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2003) suggested data analysis within quantitative research method include: (a) the number of respondents versus number in sample; (b) a discussion of response bias; (c) a descriptive analysis of data for all independent and dependent variables, which includes means, standard deviations, and range of scores; (d) inferential analysis; and (e) the identification of the statistical test or computer program utilized. The statistical results of this research study can enhance program quality and improvement, specifically in relation to any survey item that reflected poorly on the three practice behaviors.

As there were two data collection instruments, there were also two types of data analyses completed. With regard to the 28 item questionnaire, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16) software was utilized to run calculations on the data. For calculation purposes, each questionnaire item was entered as a variable, and each line in the data set represented an individual respondent's results. The respondents' responses were coded by utilizing the number of the score on the Likert scale of one to five. The data was grouped within the three categories, and category one data was further delineated within the five components thereby having a possible range of 4 to 20. The level of measurement was interval, as the attributes could be rank ordered, had equal distance between each other, and had no true zero (Frankel & Wallen, 2006). The data was analyzed along the lines of central tendency, so that each student's competencies were averaged within the three categories of the practice behaviors (Professional Demeanor, Professional Roles and Boundaries, and Professional Values) and the five components within the first category (Professional Behavior/Work Habits, Professional

Appearance/Hygiene, Professional Communication, Professional Self-care Skills, and

Professional Development Skills). The individual student's means were averaged with

the other students in the same academic category (new student, mid-point students, and

near-graduation students). Descriptive analysis displayed measures of central tendency

for each factor and component of practice behaviors for each grouping of students. The

three groups were also compared using a series of one-way ANOVAs unless sample sizes

prevent this, whereby independent sample *t*-tests was utilized. This analysis answered

research question number one.

To answer research question two, the self-report instrument of students'

professionalization activities was analyzed. The data analysis for the self-report survey

was two-fold. First, the researcher tabulated the number of checked items for each

returned instrument, observing the quantity of involvement in the 17 items of

professionalization activities within the four categories. The data was grouped within the

four categories.   The first category, *Pre-student Professionalization,* had a possible range

of 3 to 15, as there were three items. The second category, *Professional Association*, had

a possible range of 2 to 10, as there were two items. The third category,

Professionalization via Instruction, had a possible range of 6 to 30, as there were six

items. The fourth category, *Professionalization via Practicum,* had a possible range of 6

to 30, as there were six items. The level of measurement was interval, as the attributes

could be rank ordered, had equal distance between each other, and had no true zero

(Frankel & Wallen, 2006). The data was analyzed along the lines of central tendency;

each student's competencies were averaged within the four categories of the

professionalization activities. The individual student's means were averaged with the

other students in the same academic category (new student, mid-point students, and near graduation students). Descriptive analysis displayed measures of central tendency for each category of the professionalization activities for each grouping of students. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16) software was utilized to run calculations on the data. The four groups were also compared using a series of one-way ANOVAs unless sample sizes prevent this, whereby independent sample *t*-tests was utilized. This analysis answered research question number two.

Research question three sought measures of relationship with the student's level of competencies of the three practice behaviors from the PDRBVQ and the four categories of professionalization activities from the SRPAS. Mertler and Vannatta (2005) stated measures of relationship do not imply a causal relationship; rather, they verify that a relationship exists, which is appropriate as this research proposal is premised on a non-directional hypothesis (Patten, 2007). The analysis was correlation with the comparisons of two sets variables: the three practice behaviors categories and the mean of the four professionalization activities categories. Depending upon the parametric nature of the scores, the analysis was either the Pearson or the Spearman rho. Mertler and Vannatta (2005) stated, "The Spearman rho is the appropriate measure of correlation if data for one or both of the variables are expressed as ranks, such as ordinal data" (p. 9). An alpha of .05 was established for statistically significant relationships. The strength of the relationship was expressed as a correlation coefficient ranging from -1.00 to +1.00; with no relationship a coefficient at or near zero was obtained; if they are highly related, a coefficient near +1.00 or -1.00 was obtained (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). The strengths

of the relationship were defined as: .1 to .3 weak, .4 to .6 moderate, and .7 or above strong. The researcher anticipated a positive correlation between the variables.

Summary

The research design was quantitative with three research questions. Methods of data collection consisted of two instruments: a self-report of students' involvement in professionalization activities that have assisted in gaining competence in the three practice behaviors and a field instructors' questionnaire. The field instructors' questionnaire collected data to answer research question number one. Research question number two was answered by the data collected from the self-report instrument and comparisons with the data from the field instructors' questionnaire. The analysis of data was measures of central tendency and measures of relationship, as described by Mertler and Vannatta (2005) and Frankel and Wallen (2006). The researcher anticipated developing new processes for graduate social work programs from the findings of this applied research study.

The quantitative data and analyses of the data for each research question are contained in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five the conclusions formed as a result of analyzing the data are presented. Implications for future research are also contained within Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

There is a need to assess and develop professional competencies with master's-level social work (MSW) students to ensure they remain ethical social workers for the span of their careers. A recent shift in the accreditation process for schools of social work has highlighted this need, and academicians are creating assessment processes to comply with the new standards. At the present time, there is a lack of valid and reliable assessment measurements specific to three practice behaviors. As academic units move toward a competency-based curriculum, activities and processes could be developed to strengthen professional competencies. However, there is no known research on what socialization activities increase professional development within the graduate level social work student. Beyond the development of an assessment tool is an interest of how aspects of these practice behaviors are transferred from seasoned social workers and/or faculty to the social work student.

To best answer these questions, this research study was designed from an objectivist epistemology and a postpositive theoretical perspective recognizing that one cannot be "positive" about his/her claims of knowledge when studying the behavior and actions of others (Creswell, 2003). The objectivist epistemology alludes to the researcher's desire to objectively measure and more precisely articulate the three practice behaviors that are not well articulated. The quantitative methods were outlined in Chapter Three and this chapter contains the findings of the study.

The first research question - How do master's-level social work (MSW) students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students) compare in competence level with the practice behaviors of: (a) professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication, (b) professional roles and boundaries, and (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice? - utilized descriptive analyses. The second research question - How do MSW students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students) compare in their involvement with professionalization activities of: (a) Pre-student Professionalization, (b) Professional Association, (c) Professionalization via Instruction, and (d) Professionalization via Practicum? - also used descriptive analyses. Lastly, the third research question - What types of professionalization activities correlate in competence levels to these three practice behaviors? - utilized Pearson correlation analyses (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005) to determine whether relationships existed between categories within the two survey instruments: Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire (PDRBVQ) and Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey (SRPAS). Data analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0.

Demographics

The sample population of this research study was master's-level social work (MSW) students who were in a field practicum experience in the spring 2010 semester at a public Midwestern university. A total of 54 students were identified as eligible for participation with 81% (N= 44) being female and 19% (N=10) being male. A

return rate for both survey instruments was 65% (N=35), with gender percentages being

77% female (N=27) and 23% male (N=8), which has a slightly higher percentage of

males than the sample population and a slightly lower percentage of females than the

sample population. Table 3 describes the gender makeup of the respondents and the

sample population.

Table 3

Gender of Sample Population and Respondents

| | Sample Population | | Respondents | |
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Female	44	81	27	77
Male	10	19	8	23

The respondents were divided into three student categories: (a) beginning

students, (b) mid-point students, and (c) near-graduation students. Table 4 reflects

frequency of return rate of the surveys within each student category. The overall return

rates for the surveys separately were 91% (N= 49) for the PDRBVQ, which was

completed by the identified field instructor of the student; and 72% (N=39) for the

SRPAS, which was self-reported by the student. Of the 49 PDRBQV, ten surveys were

deemed non-valid due to incomplete answers. Of the 39 SRPAS, five were deemed non-

valid due to incomplete answers. Outlined in Table 4 are the return rates and valid

percentages of the two instruments. Research question three seeks correlation information

between the two survey instruments per individual student, and the return rate was 65%

(N=35). As the analysis was based on categories and components, not the entire

instrument, valid percentages were determined within each correlation analysis.

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Table 4

Return Rates of Instruments (N=54)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Frequency	Valid Percent
Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, Values Questionnaire	49	91	39	72
Beginning students	*12*			
Mid-point students	*4*			
Near-graduation students	*33*			
Self-report of Professionalization Activities Survey	39	72	34	63
Beginning students	*10*			
Mid-point students	*4*			
Near-graduation students	*25*			

As there was a low return rate within the mid-point student category, they were collapsed with the beginning student category for data analysis purposes. The new category was titled 'Beginning and mid-point students.'

Research Questions Findings

Respondent scores from the Likert-scaled PDRBVQ and SRPAS surveys were entered into SPSS version 16.0. Before descriptive and correlation analyses were

initiated, calculations of subscales were completed. These subscales were created by

adding together scores of survey items within the three categgories (professional

demeanor, professional roles and boundaries, and professional values) on the PDRBVQ,

with the professional demeanor category having five components (professional

behavior/work habits, professional appearance/hygiene, professional communication

skills, professional self-care skills, and professional development skills); and the four

categories on the SRPAS (Pre-student Professionalization, Professional Association,

Professionalization via Instruction, and Professionalization via Practicum). Therefore,

there were seven subscales, with four items each, on the PDRBVQ and four categories,

with a range of two to six items, on the SRPAS.

Research Question One

How do master's-level social work (MSW) students at various stages of

professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation

students) compare in competence level with the practice behaviors of (a) professional

demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication, (b) professional roles and

boundaries, and (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows

professional values to guide practice? This question was answered by descriptive data

analyses of the PDRBVQ.

For the seven identified subscales, overall the respondents scored highest in

competence on professional work habits with an average score of 4.36 on a Likert scale

of 1-5 (1=No competency, 2=Minimal competency, 3=Average competency, 4=Above

average competency, 5= Superior competency). Professional appearance/hygiene was the

second highest in overall competence with 4.33 as an average score. Professional

communication skills ranked third in overall competence with an average score of 4.3, professional values was fourth with an average score of 4.25, professional roles and boundaries was fifth with an average score of 4.17, professional self-care skills was sixth with an average score of 4.1, and the seventh ranked competency was professional development skills with an average score of 4.0. Thus, overall the respondents were viewed as having above average (4) and superior competencies (5) in all of the factors and components. With regard to differences between student categories, independent sample t–tests were run and none of these differences were significant (see Table 5).

Table 5

Student Levels and Mean of Competencies

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional Work Habits			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	4.36	.474
Near Graduation Students	33	4.36	.579
Professional Appearance/Hygiene			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	4.45	.501
Near Graduation Students	33	4.27	.785
Professional Communication Skills			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	4.36	.418
Near Graduation Students	33	4.30	.585
Professional Self-care Skills			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	15	4.17	.449
Near Graduation Students	24	3.98	.683
Professional Development Skills			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	3.93	.347
Near Graduation Students	33	4.04	.596
Professional Roles and Boundaries			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	4.22	.554
Near Graduation Students	33	4.14	.612
Professional Values			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	16	4.14	.474
Near Graduation Students	33	4.30	.533

Note. No differences between groups were significant using independent samples *t*-tests.

Individual competency item scores were compared for differences between the two levels of student preparation utilizing crosstab with chi-squared analyses (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Difference was found on four items of the 28 competencies. Two items "Able to examine one's own biases" and "Is open to feedback to improve professional practice of social work" had higher ratings for Near-graduation students than Beginning and mid-point students. Twenty-seven percent of the Near-graduation students received "superior competency" whereas there were no Beginning and mid-point students receiving this rating on "Able to examine one's own biases" item. With regard to the final item, 42% Near-graduation students received "superior competency" and no Beginning and mid-point students received this rating.

Two of the items "Personal hygiene reflects appropriate daily care" and "Clothing is clean and not torn" had lower ratings for Near-graduation students than Beginning and mid-point students. Specifically, no Beginning and mid-point student received "minimal competency" or "average competency" scores; however, 9% of the Near-graduation students received "minimal competency" rating and 12% received "average competency" on the "Personal hygiene reflects appropriate daily care" item. With regard to, "Clothing is clean and not torn" no Beginning and mid-point student received "average competency" scores, however, 15% of the Near-graduation students received this rating. Table 6 displays these findings.

Table 6

Differences in Percentage on Individual Competency Items

_____

	Beginning and mid-point students	Near-graduation students
Personal hygiene reflects appropriate daily care		
Minimal competency rating	0%	9%
Average competency rating	0%	12%
Clothing is clean and not torn		
Average competency rating	0%	15%
Able to examine one's own biases		
Superior competency rating	0%	27%
Is open to feedback to improve practice of social work		
Superior competency rating	0%	42%

_____

Research Question Two

How do MSW students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students) compare in their involvement with professionalization activities of (a) Pre-student Professionalization, (b) Professional Association, (c) Professionalization via Instruction, and (d) Professionalization via Practicum? This question utilized descriptive data analyses of the SRPAS.

For the four identified categories, overall the respondents scored highest in Professionalization via Instruction with an average score of 3.82 on a Likert scale of 1-5 (1=Never, 2=Once, 3=Twice, 4=Three times, and 5=Four or more times). Professional Association was the second highest in overall involvement with 3.21 as an average score.

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Professionalization via Practicum ranked third in overall activity with an average score of 2.82, and lastly, Pre-student Professionalization ranked fourth with an average score of 2.14. Overall, the respondents had mid-range involvement in the professionalization activities identified on the SRPAS.

Independent samples *t*-tests were run and it was discovered that the involvement in practicum activities scores were significantly higher with the Beginning and mid-point students than the Near-graduation students. Table 7 displays the means of professionalization activity involvement for the two student levels.

Individual professionalization activities scores were compared for differences between the two levels of student preparation utilizing crosstab with chi-squared analyses (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Of the 14 professionalization items, one item had difference between the two student categories. "Field Instructor observed your interactions with clients" had lower scores for Near-graduation students than for Beginning and mid-point students. Twenty-eight percent of the Near-graduation students recorded a "Never" on this item, whereas 79% of the Beginning and mid-point students recorded a "Four or more."

Table 7

Student Levels and Mean of Involvement in Professionalization Activities

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-student Professionalization			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	13	2.03	.798
Near-Graduation Students	24	2.19	1.413
Professional Association			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	14	3.07	.513
Near-Graduation Students	25	3.30	.816
Professionalization via Instruction			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	13	3.96	1.043
Near-Graduation Students	23	3.74	.688
Professionalization via Practicum[*]			
Beginning and Mid-Point Students	13	3.10	.459
Near-Graduation Students	25	2.68	.630

Note. *Difference between groups was significant using independent samples *t*-test.

Research Question Three

What types of professionalization activities correlate in competence levels to these three practice behaviors? This question utilized Pearson correlation analyses to determine whether relationships existed between the four categories and seven components within the two survey instruments: Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire (PDRBVQ) and Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey (SRPAS).

Analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level for

Professional Work Habits and Pre-student Professionalization (r=.419, n=33) and

Professionalization via Instruction (r=.411, n=32) involvement. With regards to

Professional Work Habits, there were no other statistically significant relationships with

the other professionalization categories, however the relationship for Professionalization

via Practicum was a weak, positive, but not significant finding. Results are in Table 8.

Table 8

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Work Habits

_____

Professional Work Habits

_____

Pre-student Professionalization*	Pearson Correlation	.419
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.806
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction*	Pearson Correlation	.411
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.223
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.205
	N	34

Note. *Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level for

Professional Appearance/Hygiene and Pre-student Professionalization (*r*=.429, *n*=33) and

Professionalization via Instruction (*r*=.503, *n*=32) involvement. With regards to

professional appearance/hygiene component, there were no other statistically significant

relationships with Professionalization Association and Professionalization via Practicum.

Table 9

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Appearance/Hygiene
_____

Professional Appearance/Hygiene
_____

Pre-student Professionalization	Pearson Correlation	.429
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	.060
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.734
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction*	Pearson Correlation	.503
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.170
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.337
	N	34

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level for Professional Communication Skills and Pre-student Professionalization involvement ($r=.423$, $n=33$). Although not at the statistically significant level, there was a moderate relationship with Professionalization via Instruction activities. There were no statistically significant relationships with Professionalization Association and Professionalization via Practicum. Table 10 displays these results.

Table 10

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Communication Skills

_____

Professional Communication Skills

_____

Pre-student Professionalization*	Pearson Correlation	.423
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.770
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction	Pearson Correlation	.342
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.092
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.604
	N	34

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level for Professional Self-care Skills and the four professionalization categories of Pre-student Professionalization, Professional Association, Professionalization via Instruction and Professionalization via Practicum. Table 11 displays these results.

Table11

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Self-care Skills

_____

Professional Self-care Skills

_____

Pre-student Professionalization	Pearson Correlation	.100
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.614
	N	28
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	.081
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.669
	N	30
Professionalization via Instruction	Pearson Correlation	.183
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.360
	N	27
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401
	N	29

_____

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship at the 0.05 level for Professional Development Skills and Pre-student Professionalization involvement ($r=.428$, $n=33$). With regard to Professional Development Skills, there were no statistically significant relationships with Professional Association, Professionalization via Instruction and Professionalization via Practicum. Table 12 displays these results.

Table 12

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Development Skills

Professional Development Skills

Pre-student Professionalization*	Pearson Correlation	.428
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.966
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction	Pearson Correlation	-.120
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.515
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.677
	N	34

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed no statistically significant relationships at the 0.05 level for Professional Roles and Boundaries and the four professionalization categories, however there are two moderate relationships, specifically Pre-student Professionalization and Professionalization via Instruction. Table 13 displays these results.

Table 13

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Roles & Boundaries

Professional Roles & Boundaries

Pre-student Professionalization	Pearson Correlation	.321
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.930
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction	Pearson Correlation	.327
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.958
	N	34

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Analysis revealed no statistically significant relationships at the 0.05 level for

Professional Values and the four professionalization categories; however, Pre-student

Professionalization did have a moderate correlation. Table 14 displays these results.

Table 14

Professionalization Activities in Correlation with Professional Values

Professional Values

Pre-student Professionalization	Pearson Correlation	.321
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069
	N	33
Professional Association	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.996
	N	35
Professionalization via Instruction	Pearson Correlation	.160
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.382
	N	32
Professionalization via Practicum	Pearson Correlation	.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.345
	N	34

Note.*Relationship significant at .05 level.

Thus for research question three, Pre-student Professionalization did have statistical significant relationships with professional work habits, professional appearance/hygiene, professional communication skills, and professional development skills; and moderate relationships with professional development skills and professional roles and boundaries. Professional Association had no statistically significant relationships with the seven competencies. Professionalization via Instruction had a statistically significant relationship with professional work habits and moderate relationships with professional appearance/hygiene and professional development skills. And lastly, Professionalization via Practicum had no statistically significant relationships with the seven competencies.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore potential relationships of professionalization activity involvement of master's level social work students with professional competencies. To achieve this, the study also sought to develop a competency-based assessment tool for nonfoundational skills and compare the competence levels of these nonfoundational skills among various levels of student preparation. Additionally, the study sought to compare student involvement in professionalization activities among various levels of student preparation.

The competency-based assessment tool (PDRBVQ), a 28-item Likert-scaled questionnaire offered quantitative data for three categories, with the first category having five components. The data analyses offered no statistical differences in the scores of competencies among the two student levels. Overall the students rated highest in competence with professional work habits (4.36) and lowest with professional

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development skills (4.1). Individual competency comparisons between the two levels of student preparation revealed four items of difference. Two of the items show the Near-graduation students having a higher percentage of low scores than the Beginning and mid-point students, which reflect the Near-graduation students performed worse in the competency behaviors. Conversely, two items show the Near-graduation students having a higher percentage of higher scores than the Beginning and mid-point students, which reflect the Near-graduation students performed better in the competency behaviors.

The self-report, 17-item Likert-scaled survey regarding professionalization activities (SRPAS) offered quantitative data for four categories of activities. The data analyses revealed only one difference among involvement scores between the student levels. Beginning and mid-point students scored statistically significantly higher than the Near-graduation students in the Professionalization via Practicum activities. There were no other relationships found. Individual professionalization activities scores were compared for differences between the two levels of student preparation and the analyses revealed a higher percentage of involvement with the Beginning and mid-point students on "Field Instructor observed your interactions with clients" than the Near-graduation students, which reflects more direct observation is occurring for the Beginning and mid-point students than with the Near-graduation students. Overall, the students had more involvement in the Professionalization via Instruction activities (3.82) and less involvement with Pre-student Professionalization activities (2.14).

Research question three is answered by stating involvement in Pre-student Professionalization activities did correlate with higher competencies in professional work habits, professional appearance/hygiene, professional communication skills, and

professional development skills. Involvement in Professionalization via Instruction

activities correlated with higher competencies in professional work habits. Lastly,

involvement in Professional Association activities and Professionalization via Practicum

activities did not correlate with higher competence of any of the practice behaviors.

Chapter Four includes the data collected, the statistical analyses utilized, and the

findings of the study for all three research questions. Chapter Five will discuss

conclusions reached by analyzing the findings and implications for social work graduate

education. Additionally, recommendations for future research will be described in

Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Introduction

Competency-based education and assessment within a graduate social work program is the first step in the assurance of ethical social work practitioners (Council on Social Work Education, 2007). Currently, there is no valid and reliable instrument that assesses three practical competency behaviors of (a) demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication, (b) attend to professional roles and boundaries, and (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice. The assessment of these practical competencies must be made contextually and routinely, whereas the other practice behaviors can be viewed as static and noncontextual, such as having knowledge of specific theories. The development of an assessment instrument is necessary and timely for social work education programs to comply with the newly approved accreditation standards.

Secondarily, there is sparse research on what professionalization activities might enhance professional identity. As graduate students move into professional social work careers, it is imperative that they have embraced all aspects of the profession and skills of self-awareness and self-correction, when indicated.

The intent of the study was to examine the relationship between professionalization activities and competency of three specific social work practice behaviors of master's-level social work (MSW) students. The descriptive design of the

study also sought to develop a valid and reliable instrument for which professional competency could be assessed regarding the three specific practice behaviors. A convenience sample of 54 MSW students at a Midwestern public university was utilized for the sample population. Attributes of the population included enrollment in the field practicum course during the spring 2010 semester. The students completed the 17-item survey describing their involvement in four categories of professionalization activities, titled "Self-Report of Professionalization Activities" (SRPAS). Additionally, field instructors of each student completed a 28-item questionnaire assessing student competency of three practice behaviors, which were categorized in three categories, with category one having five components. This questionnaire was titled, "Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire" (PDRBVQ).

The data collected was first analyzed using descriptive analyses to compare competencies of the three practice behaviors between stages of student training and to compare involvement in the professional activities between the same stages of student preparation. Due to low response rates, the three student levels of preparation were collapsed into two categories: Beginning and mid-point students and Near-graduation students. Correlation analyses, specifically the Pearson *r* (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005), was utilized to analyze relationships between involvement in the professionalization activities and competence levels of the three practice behaviors.

Conclusions

Descriptive analyses revealed the overall sample scored highest in professional work habits competencies and lowest in professional development skills competencies on the PDRBVQ. Involvement with professionalization activities was highest in the

Professionalization via Instruction activities and lowest in the Pre-student Professionalization activities on the SRPAS.

The first research question "How do master's-level social work (MSW) students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students, and near-graduation students) compare in competence level with the practice behaviors of (a) professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication, (b) professional roles and boundaries, and (c) recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice?" was answered using independent sample t-testing (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). The data revealed no statistical differences in the scores of competencies between the two student levels of preparation.

The second research question "How do MSW students at various stages of professional preparation (beginning students, mid-point students and near-graduation students) compare in their involvement with professionalization activities of (a) Pre-student Professionalization, (b) Professional Association, (c) Professionalization via Instruction, and (d) Professionalization via Practicum?" was answered using independent sample t-testing. One category of professionalization activities had statistical difference among the involvement scores between the student levels. This difference was found within the Professionalization via Practicum activities category whereby Beginning and mid-point students scored higher in involvement than the Near-graduation students.

The third research question "What types of professionalization activities correlate in competence levels to these three practice behaviors?" utilized Pearson correlation analyses (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005) to determine whether relationships existed between categories within the two survey instruments: Professional Demeanor, Roles and

Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire (PDRBVQ) and Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey (SRPAS). Involvement in Pre-student Professionalization activities did correlate with higher competencies in professional work habits, professional appearance/hygiene, professional communication skills, and professional development skills. Involvement in Professionalization via Instruction activities correlated with higher competencies in professional work habits. No other relationships were found between the seven components of the three practice behaviors and the four categories of professionalization activities.

In summary, comparisons between levels of student preparation and competencies of the three practice behaviors had no significant differences, thus categories of competencies scores did not increase nor decrease based on length of student preparation. Difference was only found in Professionalization via Practicum category with regard to the involvement in professionalization activities between the student levels, whereby the newer students had more involvement than the Near-graduation students, especially for "Field Instructor observed your interactions with clients" item. Correlation occurred the most within the Pre-student Professionalization category where students had the lowest involvement in the activities. Conversely, students had the most involvement in the Professionalization via Instruction category which correlated with only one of the seven practice behavior competencies.

Discussion

There is minimal empirical data and published research regarding the correlation between professionalization activities and professional competencies within master's-level social work students. Previous studies (Bogo et al., 2002; Raskin, Wayne and

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Bogo, 2008) focused on one aspect of the professionalization activities - that of the relationship between MSW students and their field instructor, and its impact on developing professional identity and competencies; or attempted to develop an instrument to assess professional competencies (Damron-Rodriguez, 2008; Holden, Anastas and Meenaghan, 2005; Holden et al., 2002; Petrovich, 2004; Tam & Coleman, 2009).

The current study is a beginning conversation to explore the connections between professionalization activities beyond the field practicum experience and professional social work competencies. The study utilized four theoretical underpinnings in the development of the research questions and data collection instruments. To this researcher's knowledge, linkages among these four theories had not been previously studied with regard to professional competencies within master's-level social work education. Specifically, the professionalization activities were based on Bruffee's Collaborative Learning Theory (1999), Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1969), Nonaka's Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory (1994), Mezirow and Associates' Transformative Learning Theory (2000), and Learner-Centered Approaches (Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2009; McCombs & Whistler, 1997; Weimer, 2002). Findings from the current study reveal potential relationships between some professionalization activities and some professional competencies. Specifically, the Pre-student Professionalization activities, which were based on professional and personal relationships prior to becoming a social work student, has correlations to higher competencies with four of the seven components of professional competencies. Additionally, Professionalization via Instruction correlated with higher competencies of one component of professional competencies. Both of these categories of

professionalization activities have roots in the four theoretical underpinnings of this study. Pre-student Professionalization activities were primarily based on Bruffee's (1999) reacculturation concepts and Professionalization via Instruction activities were primarily based on Mezirow and Associates' (2000) transformative instructional strategies and the learner-centered concepts of several theorists. All professionalization activities were based on Nonaka's (1994) concepts of tacit and explicit learning.

With regard to construction and validation of a professional competency assessment tool specific to the three practice behaviors of professional demeanor, professional roles and boundaries, and professional values, the current research study was not able to find statistical significant differences between scores of stages of student preparation, nor did overall student scores reveal variability in the range of competency. The assessment tool was partially self-developed by this researcher, based on practice wisdom and partially utilized items from previous research of Tam and Coleman (2009).

Limitations Based on Study

Limitations in design of the study begin with the usage of a cross-sectional design rather than a longitudinal method. Longitudinal data might hold stronger results as the scores would be student-specific at two points in time of their graduate studies, rather than groupings of students who are at two levels of preparation. A second limitation in design is utilizing only quantitative methods. As this was an exploratory study, qualitative and/or mixed methods might have increased new understanding regarding the relationship between professional competencies and involvement in professionalization activities (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2003). The study had aspects of a constructivist

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knowledge claim, which Creswell (2003) suggested lends well to qualitative methods of research.

As the study utilized a small convenience sample of master's-level social work students, generalizability of the results are limited. Only one graduate social work program was utilized for sampling. Additionally, the response rate of both survey instruments was small which limits the strength of the results. Lastly, where primary field instructors were unavailable, the researcher utilized the faculty instructor to assess student competencies of the three practice behaviors. This usage of a secondary respondent might also affect the results of the study. These three limitations in sampling taken together might severely affect the results.

With regard to limitations in instrumentation, both instruments had fixed closed-ended responses and did not allow for 'not applicable' answers. Thus, some respondents did not complete the entire survey, thereby skewing results. The PBRBVQ was partially self-developed by the researcher which might affect the results. Although tested for content validity, it was noted that not all the 28 items were clearly defined and specific to evaluating as a professional competency. The professionalization activities survey was self-developed by this researcher and answered by self-report from the respondents, which is not as reliable as observations or other methods of confirming participation in the identified activities.

In summary, limitations of design, sample and instrumentation negatively impacted the results of this study. The strength of these results was hindered by these flaws in design, sample, and instrumentation. Stronger results might occur if these limitations are to be addressed in future studies.

Implications for Future Practice

Social work education has undergone a drastic change with the revision of accreditation standards in 2008. The standards mandate academicians to measure student competencies of 41 practice behaviors (Council of Social Work Education, 2007). Three of these practice behaviors are not easily articulated or measured. This study made an initial attempt at the articulation and measurement of these three practice behaviors. Social work educators must continue to revise and refine competency assessment instruments, particularly for the three practice behaviors of professional demeanor, professional roles and boundaries, and professional values as this study indicates the difficulty of this endeavor.

Social work educators would be well served to immerse themselves in the theoretical and instructional learning strategies described within this study, especially Bruffee's (1999) reacculturation concepts and Mezirow and Associates' (2000) transformative instructional strategies as both have roots in higher education as well as end results of students who are not just trained but who have transformed their epistemologies and points of view. Additionally, Nonaka's (1994) modes of knowledge conversion has strong utility for professional education in social work, as there is much tacit knowledge to be transferred to the social work student and novice social work practitioner.

Social work programs should implement a process that utilizes pre-student professionalization activity information for graduate applicants, as there was a significant relationship between involvement in these activities and competency in four of the seven components of the nonfoundational practice behaviors. Additionally, social work

programs should review and develop intentional curriculum and instructional strategies

related to nonfoundational learning, as this study reveals no growth of professional

competencies within the student population from early student preparation to near

graduation preparation.

There are various implications from the findings for the specific sample in this

study. The social work program would be well served to critically review every course to

assess for structured, institutionalized nonfoundational learning opportunities. As this

study indicates, the sample social work program does not produce graduate students who

have more or stronger competencies in the three practice behaviors than when they

entered the program. In fact, near-graduation students were rated lower than the new

students on professional appearance/hygiene items. This should be alarming to the

sample social work program and the quality of their graduates.

The sample program should immediately modify their admissions procedures to

include questions regarding applicants' involvement with professional social workers as a

volunteer, co-worker, or recipient of services, as this was the strongest relationship to

high level of professional competencies. Last, the sample social work program should

critically analyze the match between field instructor expectations and actual practice, as

the SRPAS results indicated that students are receiving field instruction in variant

manners, specifically direct observation of the student when interacting with clients.

Recommendations for Future Research

A goal of the current study was to initiate a conversation about the connection

between professionalization activities and professional competencies of three practice

behaviors for master's-level social work students. This conversation is timely due to the

recent changes in accreditation methods and focus for graduate social work programs. There is much to be explored as this study offered minimal new knowledge to the discourse.

Recommendations for further exploration include the continued construction of a valid and reliable instrument to assess social work student competencies, and examination of professionalization activities and/or relationships that assist students with developing a professional identity. Continued development and validation of an assessment instrument is essential for social work educators. Revision of the PDRBVQ scale is suggested as range restriction was apparent with some of the Likert-scaled answer categories not being used, thus hindering correlations.

One recommendation for future research is the usage of live observation for assessment of these competencies. Another recommendation is a clearer more precise description of the three practice behaviors and attributes on the assessment instrument. A longitudinal study of competencies is also recommended.

As the assessed competencies were articulated within new accreditation standards and procedures for all social work education programs, it would be helpful to understand how all programs are interpreting and defining these three nonfoundational practice behaviors. The implementation of the new standards is less than two years old, thus, there is still a great deal of ambivalence and confusion regarding the assessment of these competencies. It is recommended that qualitative methods be utilized to gauge social work educators' comfort level and proficiency with the new standards.

Specific to professionalization activities and their connections to professional competencies, this researcher recommends continued exploration of the four theories that

underpin the current study. There is much to be explored regarding learning theories and instructional strategies within a graduate social work curriculum, with the end goal of acculturating the students into the social work profession. Recommendations include furthering the findings related to Pre-student Professionalization activities, as these activities might assist in the selection and acceptance of graduate social work applicants prior to any involvement in the instructional environment. Previous studies regarding acculturating social work students into the profession singularly studied the relationship between the field instructor and student. It is recommended to expand this notion of role modeling and mentorship into other social work professionals that the student interacts with, such as instructors, co-workers, and practitioners of services to the student.

As this is one of the few known studies attempting to articulate professionalization activities beyond textbook learning, it is recommended that further studies pursue this line of inquiry. Professional graduate programs, by definition, are the melding of knowledge and skills into a professional. It behooves all professional graduate programs to seek greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of training beyond textbook learning. Specific to social work education, the lack of published empirical studies only furthers the need for this type of research.

Specific to the sample social work program, further research is recommended base on the newly implemented "Student Review" procedures, whereby faculty are incrementally reviewing all students with regard to nonfoundational growth specific to the three practice behaviors outlined in this study. Longitudinal research inquiry into the effectiveness of this new procedure and its effects on student competencies is highly recommended.

The results of this study offer limited new understanding of the connections between professionalization activities and professional competencies of three practice behaviors within a graduate social work program. However, it is an initial conversation that has timely utility for continued exploration by social work educators. The learning theories and instructional strategy theories potentially hold keys to enhancing professional social work competencies in graduate education which ultimately ensures ethical, competent social workers in the profession.

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Appendix A

CSWE Practice Behaviors related to 10 Core Competencies

1—Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.
1a. advocate for client access to the services of social work;
1b. practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development;
1c. attend to professional roles and boundaries;
1d. demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication;
1e. engage in career-long learning;
1f. use supervision and consultation.
2—Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
2a. recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice;
2b. make ethical decisions by applying standards of the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and, as applicable, of the InternationalFederation of Social Workers/International Association of Schools of Social Work Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles;
2c. tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts;
2d. apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions.
3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
3a. distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research based knowledge, and practice wisdom;
3b. analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation;
3c. demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.
4—Engage diversity and difference in practice.
4a. recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power;
4b. gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups;
4c. recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences;
4d. view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.
5—Advance human rights and social and economic justice.
5a. understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination;
5b. advocate for human rights and social and economic justice;
5c. engage in practices that advance social and economic justice.
6—Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
6a. use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry
6b. use research evidence to inform practice.
7—Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment.

7a. utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation;

7b. critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment.

8—Engage in policy practice to advance soc and econ well-being & to deliver effective social work services.

8a. analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being;

8b. collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

9—Respond to contexts that shape practice.

9a. continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services;

9b. provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

10—Engage, assess, intervene, & evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, & communities.

10(1)—Engagement

10a. substantively and affectively prepare for action with indiv, families, groups, orgs, and communities;

10b. use empathy and other interpersonal skills;

10c. develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes.

10(2)—Assessment

10d. collect, organize, and interpret client data;

10e. assess client strengths and limitations;

10f. develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives;

10g. select appropriate intervention strategies.

10(3)—Intervention

10h. initiate actions to achieve organizational goals;

10i. implement prevention interventions that enhance client capacities;

10j. help clients resolve problems;

10k. negotiate, mediate, and advocate for clients;

10l. facilitate transitions and endings.

10(4)—Evaluation

10m. Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.

Appendix B
Professional Demeanor, Roles and Boundaries, and Values Questionnaire

Directions: Please place an "x" for the following items utilizing the Likert scale below.

	PRACTICE BEHAVIORS	No competency	Minimal competency	Average competency	Above average competency	Superior competency
1	Is able to distinguish between professional and personal relationships					
2	Establishes positive relationships with clients and co-workers					
3	Is aware of personal strengths					
4	Is able to examine one's personal biases					
5	Personal hygiene reflects appropriate daily self-care					
6	Has effective nonverbal communication skills including eye contact					
7	Demonstrates integrity					
8	Supports self-determination even if the choices are against their personal belief system					
9	Is able to manage personal life issues including mental health and medical conditions					
10	Clothing is clean and not torn					
11	Is open to feedback to improve professional practice of social work					
12	Believes in the value and dignity of each individual regardless of their lifestyle					
13	Maintains clear boundaries with clients					
14	Is able to manage negative life experiences					
15	Is aware of one's personal values and beliefs					
16	Uses respectful, non derogatory language					
17	Is honest					
18	Maintains stable emotions					
19	Is on time for scheduled activities					
20	Knows the reasons of why he/she has chosen a career in social work					
21	Does not curse in professional communications					
22	Maintains clear boundaries with Field Instructor and other supervisors					
23	Dresses in a manner that is not offensive to the general population					
24	Seeks professional advice for handling personal problems, when necessary					
25	Is aware of personal limitations					
26	Is reliable and dependable in completing assigned tasks					
27	Takes great care in professional appearance					
28	Works to rectify habits that might impede professional relationships					

Student Code_____

Code Sheet for PDRBV Questionnaire

3 Categories	Professional Demeanor		Professional Roles & Boundaries	Professional Values
Scale Items:	(#2,3,5,6,7,9,10,11,14,16,17,18,19,21,23,24,25, 26, 27, 28)		#1, 13, 20, 22	#4, 8, 12, 15
5 Components:	Professional Behavior/ Work Habits	#7, 17, 19, 26		
	Professional Appearance/Hygiene	#5, 10, 23, 27		
	Professional Communication Skills	#2, 6, 16, 21		
	Professional Self Care Skills	#9, 14, 18, 24		
	Professional Development Skills	#3, 11, 25, 28		

Appendix C

Self-Report of Professionalization Activities Survey

Prior to becoming a social work student to what extent have you had a personal relationship with a social worker?
___never   ___casual   ___on-going   ___long-term   ___very close relationship

Prior to becoming a social work student how many professional social workers did you volunteer or work around?
___none   ___one   ___two   ___three   ___four or more

Prior to becoming a social work student how many professional social workers have you received services from?
___none   ___one   ___two   ___three   ___four or more

As a social work student to what extent have you involved yourself with the Student Association of Social Work?
___not a member   ___less than 6 mos ago   ___ 6mos-1yr.   ___ more than a yr.   ___more than a yr. and active

As a social work student to what extent have you read and studied the NASW Code of Ethics?
___ not read   ___read somewhat   ___read completely   ___read & studied once   ___studied several times

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As a social work student how often have you:	Never	Once	Twice	3 times	4 or more
Observed role modeling from social work faculty members?					
Interacted with social work faculty members outside the classroom?					
Attended field trips to social work agencies?					
Participated in role plays during social work courses?					
Listened to social work guest speakers during social work courses?					
Been tested on the NASW Code of Ethics in social work courses?					

As a practicum field student, how often has the:	Never	Once	Twice	3 times	4 or more
Field Instructor observed your interactions with clients					
Field Instructor given you specific positive feedback					
Field Instructor given you specific corrective feedback					
Field Instructor identified your personal values that hindered your professional role					
Field Instructor cautioned you about over involvement with clients					
Field Instructor discussed your behavior that impeded successful interactions with clients					

Student Code_____

Appendix D

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for considering participation in the research study **"Socialization Activities and Professional Competencies with a Graduate Social Work Program"** This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The project duration is March 2010 through March 2011.

The purpose of this study is to identify mechanisms of assessing MSW students and to explore socialization activities that increase MSW competence with regard to professional demeanor, roles and boundaries, and values. This information will be useful to understand how to ensure competence is reached for these practice behaviors.

Before you make a final decision about participation, please read the following about how your input will be used and how your rights as a participant will be protected:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any point without penalty.
- There is no known risk to you as a participant. The benefits are you have an opportunity to complete a self-assessment regarding your involvement in socialization activities.
- You need not answer all of the questions.
- Your answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or other identifying information.
- Your participation will take approximately 5-10 minutes. During this time you will complete a questionnaire.
- The data collected will be held in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office and disposed of after 3 years.
- The privacy of your information cannot be protected while in the US Postal Service.

This research project (Project # 1162057). has been reviewed and approved by the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights, and may be contacted at 573.882.9585. The project is being supervised by Dr. Cindy MacGregor, Associate Professor, CLSE, Missouri State University (417.836.6046).

If at this point you are still interested in participating and assisting with this important research project please fill out the attached questionnaire and return in the enclosed envelope. Keep this letter for future reference. You can contact me at 417-850-9003 if you have questions or concerns about your participation. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Renee White, doctoral candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

VITA

Renee White was May 21, 1961 in Kansas City, Missouri. She graduated from Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, Shawnee, Kansas in May 1979. She attended Johnson County Community College in 1979 and 1980, transferring to Pittsburg State University to complete her Bachelor's degree. She was awarded a Bachelor's in Social Work degree in May 1983. She earned her Master's in Social Work degree from University of Arkansas-Little Rock in May 1994. She completed her Ed.D in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia in May 2010.

Renee was a social work practitioner for over 20 years, specializing in the delivery of services to vulnerable populations including children, victims of domestic violence, substance abusers and the dying. In 2005 Renee left social work practice to become full-time graduate faculty at Missouri State University School of Social Work. She is currently the Field Education Coordinator and Program Coordinator for the Joplin Missouri satellite campus.