

# Social Work Student Perceptions of Group Work and the Presence of Value Themes That Correspond to Group Work Success

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## Abstract

Often group work is used as a teaching tool to enhance a students' experience in group socialization and academic achievement (Kolb, 1984; Humphrey, 2014). During the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years, Baylor College of Medicine administered the Value Teams Survey to a cohort of students during their psychiatry clerkship. The psychiatric medical science study results showed that team learning is perfect for problem-solving, communication, and class engagement, as well as providing clinical information (Levine et al., 2004). This research study explores what students report or perceive is valuable from group work participation. During the spring semester, April of 2015, an amended Value Team Survey (VTS) was administered to twenty graduate level social work students. Evaluating the respondents' results supports the emergence of two value themes, "peer value" and "group work value." This new association of values creates the emerging values model (EV). "Peer value" themes reflect relationships, behaviors that are directly affected by peers, and outcomes related to peer influences and their level of importance. "Group work value"

themes reflect the worthiness, success, or failure in the active engagement process of teamwork. Overall, the small group process is *productive, rewarding, and enhances the student's decision-making and problem-solving abilities*. Students self-reported that working in a group improved their achievement and that working with their peers was an important skill. Knowing that students recognize the value and importance of group work proves to be an advantage for instruction in higher education. The student-acknowledged value themes can be incorporated into course learning goals in order to successfully meet the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) guidelines.

*Keywords:* Group work, student values, peer collaboration, student success, and group decisions

## Introduction

Social work practice and ethical decision-making are guided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. The guiding core values for the code of ethics include: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and

competence (Code of Ethics, 2015). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation standards expect that social work students will obtain the appropriate practice skills during their education. It is critical that educators provide an education that matches the accreditation criteria for social work education (CSWE, 2008).

Various course group assignments and experiences contribute to the education of social work students. Valuable group work student learning experiences include the use of case examples (Knight, 2014), virtual groups (Davis & Goodman, 2014), and experiential learning (Clements & Minnick, 2012; Kolb, 1984). Additionally, developing group guidelines and policies to govern online interactions and services to clients is a critical online ethical consideration (Voshel & Wesala, 2015).

Assignments requiring group work are often given to students in social work. There are conflicting results about the effectiveness of participation in groups. Goodman, Knight, & Khudododov (2014) found students felt unprepared to practice the group work modality due to a lack of group work course preparation. When group work content is delivered effectively some students have been able to make a connection between group work course learning and application to field work (Knight, 2014). Group work is also noted to enhance group socialization experiences and academic achievement (Kolb, 1984; Humphrey, 2014). According to Peterson & Miller (2004), challenges encountered during the group work process include a lack of exchange of respectful behaviors and a lack of equal contributions amongst all group members. Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte (2008) report that less than twenty percent of Schools of Social Work require a group work course. In contrast, every social work professional will participate in and facilitate a group during their career (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2008).

### **The Value of Group Work**

Challenges and benefits continue to emerge in research related to group work in the classroom. The benefits from group work participation range from reported research gains in middle school

student group work challenges (Frykedal & Chiriac, 2011) to equal participation from group members for assignment completion (Peterson & Miller, 2004). Often group work is used as a teaching tool to enhance students' experience in group socialization and academic achievement (Kolb, 1984; Humphrey, 2014). Research has examined the reason graduate social work students decide to take advanced group work classes and the findings reveal three prominent themes. According to Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2008) students reported the following positive influences: 1-student self-efficacy in their ability related to group work, 2-help in achieving personal goals (employment opportunities) and 3-a previously positive experience with groups or group work faculty.

According to Naslund (2013), participation and demonstration of respectful behaviors towards all group members are common themes related to group member satisfaction (as cited in Chiriac, 2014). Peterson and Miller (2004) found there is a problem in groups where members (students) do not complete their fair share of the work. Learning is a task that requires risk-taking because of the need to be open to new things (Pleasanton Unified School District, n.d.). This risk-taking necessitates appropriate levels of stress that can be complicated in instances where uneven contributions from group members can create additional group tension (University of Waterloo, n.d.). For students, stress can heighten senses, so some stress is helpful as it has been found to promote student success (Pleasanton Unified School District, n.d.).

Conner (2004) discusses the importance of the "teacher as group facilitator" when offering students the opportunity to practice problem-solving and decision-making skills while exploring scenarios that determine ethical dilemma value analysis. With this teaching style students have the option to work in small groups and are encouraged to examine their own areas of interest within the group. Not surprisingly, some students found the independent mode of learning desirable while others felt the teacher should be more directive (Conner, 2004, p. 74). Active group participation while exploring

ethical issues encouraged group members to examine and develop their own values (Conner, 2004).

### **Ethical Decision-making**

Examining and developing values is noted to occur as group work participants explore ethical issues (Connor, 2004). Some researchers have found college students working in groups scored higher on exams than working alone; however students also demonstrated an increase in confidence for groups' wrong answers on the exam (Puncochar & Fox 2004). In the aforementioned study, individual and group accuracy and confidence in responses were examined using several quizzes throughout one semester. The results suggest that group work can "produce the undesirable by product of being highly confident when wrong" (p. 590). Often people become overly confident and groupthink can contribute to student's feelings of accuracy since many other group members provide positive encouragement (Janis, 1982).

Edwards and Addae (2015) suggest using ethical dilemmas from students' field placements to practice ethical decision-making. Furthermore, they propose that this relevant ethical decision-making about client systems and environments assists students in seeing the real life effects of these decisions. According to Walker (2011), ethics classes can encourage students to accept others' perspectives and strengthen existing belief systems and values.

Research has demonstrated that working in small groups to address value dilemmas within the classroom is beneficial for decision-making (Brandler, 2008). Within the small group setting withdrawn students participate and group members actively engage in discussion, sharing and confronting as part of the normal group process (Corey, Corey, & Corey, 2014). Brandler (2008) suggests "the process of tackling the difficult value dilemmas is learned by doing" (p. 94). In other words, social work students' active participation in solving ethical dilemmas develops a better understanding of social work values and improved skills related to social work values.

### **Group Dynamics**

Baldwin (2000) found that different types of student-labeled groups (happy, difficult) impact the type of self-assessment students gain as a learning tool in small groups. For example, students participating in a "difficult" group reported and self-assessed with de-skilling remarks (noting what they did not know), whereas "happy" group participants acknowledged what they had learned (reading, writing skills). The impact of the group dynamics was apparent from members' self-assessment (Baldwin, 2000); interactions impact students' self-assessment skills.

### **Baylor College of Medicine Value Teams Survey**

During the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic years, Baylor College of Medicine administered the Value Teams Survey to a cohort of students during their psychiatry clerkship, both before and after engaging in a team learning experience (Levine et al., 2004). The scores from each cohort were compared to one another. The concept was to examine students' perceptions of the value of team learning in the education process. This instructional strategy known as team learning encourages small group education. Teams were disseminated problematic cases with attached manufactured problem-solving solutions (Levine et al., 2004). The findings demonstrated a selection and a defense of the solution; creating a small group learning environment of interactions that strengthened team-based decision-making and stimulated high levels of student cohesiveness. In addition, for large classes, the student-professor ratio learning benefits were not reduced (Levine et al., 2004).

The authors of "Transforming a Clinical Clerkship with Team Learning" note that team learning is worthy of more research and studying in disciplines other than psychiatry (Levine et al., 2004). In the Baylor College of Medicine study, team learning was highly appreciated as an instructional method (Levine et al., 2004). The psychiatric medical science study results showed that team learning is perfect for problem-solving,

communication, and class engagement, as well as providing clinical information (Levine et al., 2004). Social work is an ethical social science that combines researched interventions with clinical experiences (Social Work Policy Institute, 2010). As disciplines that engage and examine population concerns, and communicate their needs through the development of responsive legislative policies (Social Work Policy Institute, 2010), the social work and psychiatry curriculums have like domains with clinical behavioral assessments, communication competence, and integrity proficiencies.

In group exercises, many educators use the terms “small groups” and “team learning” interchangeably due to their very close and assimilated roles. It should also be apparent that the similarities of the two processes are often obvious in classroom assignments.

## **Methodology**

The literature discusses the examination and existence of group members’ values exposed as a result of the exploration of ethical group participation issues. Social work students are educated with the core values and ethics of the social work profession as a part of the learning curriculum. Appropriately, social work students are also engaged in group work which is researched to deliver positive outcomes (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2008) and aid students in developing their own values (Conner, 2004). This research seeks to explore what students report or perceive is valuable from group work participation. This study examines the emerging value themes students perceive with group work participation.

During the spring semester, April 2015, an amended Value Team Survey (VTS) was administered to twenty graduate level social work students on the last day of semester instruction during a social work policy course. All students in the course volunteered to participate and were informed there would no consequences for not participating. Each student participated in two different small group assignments during the course. The use of the term small group is intentionally favored

over team learning as a direct correlation to the absence of manufactured solutions accompanying the assignments.

The amended social work VTS has 13 Likert scale questions and one descriptive statement, as compared to the Baylor School of Medicine original VTS, which had nine Likert scale questions. The additional Likert items were included to examine: 1) the strongly referenced small group researched area of stress; 2) the contributions of work by group members (equal vs. unequal); 3) the importance of leadership determined through volunteerism, confidence, and decision-making; and 4) the reported influence of group work on future individual performance. Additionally, the descriptive statement addressed the communication that the Baylor VTS results showed, and this element permitted students to report using their own words to describe their group experience.

Research by Naslund (2013) indicates that student group member satisfaction is related to the respectful exchange of behaviors between group members (as cited in Chiriac, 2014). Furthermore, Peterson and Miller (2004) found sharing equivalent work among group members is preferred and appreciated, and without it adversity results. These findings generated the need to address group member contributions/work distribution and the impact of stress to group members using the amended VTS.

Research by Janis (1982) and Brandler (2008) reveals that group work leads to feelings of confidence, and addressing value dilemmas in this type of setting is positive for decision-making. Confidence and decision-making are variables of leadership (Dao, 2008) which are not covered in the Baylor VTS, therefore these issues were presented in the amended VTS as respondents considered the value in volunteering to lead groups.

In a group setting, it has been found that students gain practical skills, knowledge, and behavioral coping techniques (Adams & Riggs, 2008; Humphrey, 2014). Since these areas were not included in the Baylor VTS, they were incorporated in the amended VTS by asking respondents if the process encouraged them to improve: 1-behavioral

coping—"The group process is distressing," 2-practice skills—"It is important to volunteer to lead groups," 3-knowledge of practical practice—"Other group members usually put in more effort than I do," and 4-promotion of the opportunity to excel—"Group participation encourages me to excel."

While Levine et al, (2004) are clear that other disciplines outside of psychiatry should engage in additional research, their results indicated small group learning was good for communication. The Baylor VTS (see Table 1) did not permit open-ended comments by students, possibly because the value of this communication was not realized prior to the completion of the study. The opportunity to provide original thought was incorporated in the

amended VTS by asking respondents to provide comments that described their group experience.

### Results and Analysis

The original questions on the amended Value Team Survey demonstrate high levels of agreement and many common themes amongst the social work respondents. When students were asked about their *ability to collaborate with their peers as a necessary component to student success*, all students responded with affirmation and agreement. This question was the only item that elicited complete agreement from respondents. Most students (13 respondents) *strongly agreed* and the remaining seven *agreed*. Essentially students reported they were aware that their individual success was reliant upon their ability to work with other students.

The largest number of students with parallel answers included eight who *disagreed* that *working in groups was a waste of time*-while four *strongly disagreed*; only four felt that it was a waste of time, but notably there were also four that did not agree or disagree. When analyzing this response reflectively in conjunction with the preceding response above; *essentially students reported they were aware that their individual success was reliant upon their ability to work with other students*, students may be equating their individual success with a letter grade achievement for the course. Although professors grade content mastery from assignments and exams, they may also consider the ability of students to demonstrate the integration of content into the group setting as a part of the measure. It is also possible that professors may evaluate the levels of student individual growth and surmise those levels of improvement to equate student success.

Some results demonstrate students' acknowledgement of the benefits of group participation. A total of 18 student respondents support the benefit of problem solving in groups. Ten students *strongly agree* that

Table 1

Please circle the number under the phrase that best describes the extent to which you agree with the following statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The ability to collaborate with my peers will be necessary if I am to be successful as a student.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is a waste of my time to work in groups.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The ability to work with my peers is a valuable skill.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Collaborating with my peers will help me be a better student.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Solving problems in a group is an effective practice that I have learned.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Solving problems in a group is an effective way to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Working in teams in class is productive and efficient.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Group decisions are often better than individual decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Solving problems in groups leads to better decisions than solving problems alone.	1	2	3	4	5
10. It is important to volunteer to lead groups.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The group process is distressing.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Group participation encourages me to excel.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Other group members usually put in more effort than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Words to describe my group experiences are:					

\*Amended Values Teams Survey

they have *learned to effectively solve problems in a group* while eight students *agree* they learned effective problem-solving. Similarly, nine respondents *agree* and seven respondents *strongly agree* that *solving those problems in a group is an effective way to learn*. Levine et al. (2004) remark that problem-solving is an area of development and growth in small groups similar to areas of team learning.

Ten respondents *agree* that *working in teams in class is productive and efficient*, while nine *agree* that *solving problems in groups leads to better decisions than solving problems alone*. It is also important to note that ten of the students neither agree nor disagree that *group decisions are often better than individual decisions*. In other words half the student respondents reported group decisions may or may not be better than those decisions made individually but those group decisions may not necessarily be problematic; when the decision becomes an issue of problem-solving then this decision is best made in a group versus alone.

There were five supplemental questions, four with Likert scales and one question providing descriptive narrative data. From the Likert responses, a majority of students responded neutrally, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, when asked whether *the group process was distressing* and whether *they were encouraged to excel as a result of group participation*. The remaining two Likert questions have majority responses at opposing spectrums. When students considered whether volunteering to lead groups is important five respondents *agree* and six respondents *strongly agree*. As students reflected on whether *other group members put in more effort than themselves*, the results showed that nine *disagree* and seven *strongly disagree*. This demonstrates that the respondents believe that they themselves are working hard.

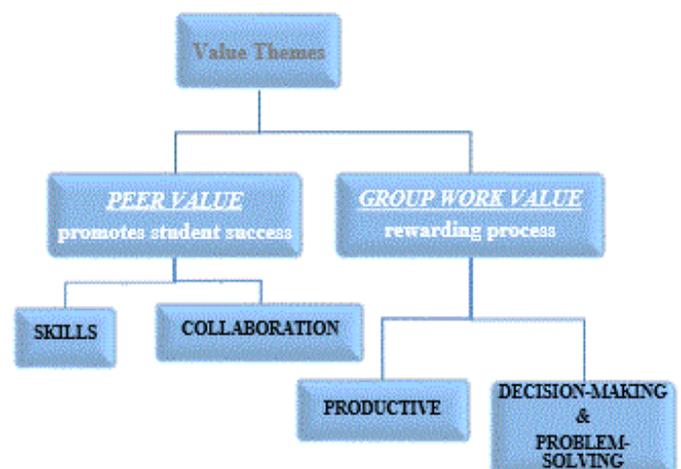
When asked to *provide a descriptive response regarding the small group experience* a variety of themes emerged. This qualitative research question asked the students to provide words that describe the group experience for them. Respondents utilized both isolated words as well as complete sentence descriptors, and five of 20 respondents did

not provide a response. It is important to note that the single most utilized term was *stressful*, with five respondents using this descriptor. However, nine individual responses included terminology categorizing an emerging theme of positive/rewarding in their inclusion of words/descriptions such as *valuable* and *productive*. This supports the literature findings that “Positive changes in individual behavior, particularly in confidence, attitude, and the willingness to speak and express themselves in front of others, were witnessed in the majority of students” (Crites & McKenna, n.d.). This is the largest numerical agreement amongst the respondents for the descriptive question. Therefore, the majority of respondents recognized their participation in the group project as rewarding and positive.

Other positive descriptions from the respondents about the group experience include; “it is a growing experience,” “it uses the experience of others to improve content understanding,” “it requires hard work,” “it uses teamwork,” “communication is needed,” “it is time restrictive,” “individuals host different work ethics,” “there is some discomfort with grades dependent upon the contribution of others,” and “group work requires like-minds and each person to contribute.”

Evaluating the respondents’ results supports the emergence of two value themes, “*peer value*” and “*group work value*,” appropriately referred to as the Emerging Values Model (EV) (see Figure I). “*Peer value*” themes reflect relationships,

Figure I. Emerging Peer and Group Work Value Themes



behaviors that are directly affected by peers, and outcomes related to peer influences and their level of importance. “*Group work value*” themes reflect the worthiness, success, or failure of the active engagement process of teamwork.

### **Emerging Values Model (EV)**

In the “*peer value*” theme of student success two categories emerged to support the theme. Students overwhelmingly confirm category *1-Collaboration* is valuable because it is necessary for student success, as revealed in results from the Likert scale research questions 1, 4 and 13; and that category *2-Skills* is important to help students initiate self-control for individual success as revealed in question numbers 3 and 10.

In the “*peer value*” theme, category *1-Collaboration* reflects questions 1, 4 and 13. Question number 1, reflects how the individual student is impacted. Students were asked about their *ability to collaborate with peers as a necessity to be a successful student*. All students responded in agreement; thirteen *strongly agreed* and seven *agreed*. In question number 4, 80% of students recognized the necessity to *collaborate with peers*; nine students *agree* that *collaboration with their peers will aid them in becoming a better student* and an additional seven students selected *strongly agree*, while no students disagreed. Question 13 reflects a similar percentage with nine students *disagreeing* and seven students *strongly disagreeing* whether *other group members put in more effort than themselves*. This demonstrates that the respondents believe that they themselves are working hard.

Also supporting the “*peer value*” theme is category *2-Skills*; questions 3 and 10 create this category. Question 3 responses show that 95% of the respondents acknowledged that their *ability to work with peers is a valuable skill*; ten *strongly agreed* while an additional nine respondents *agreed* with the statement. Category *2-Skills* is an area where individual initiative is required, and on question 10 students confirm that *it is important to volunteer for group leadership*; five selected *agree* and six *strongly agree*.

In the “*group work value*” theme (see Figure 1) of rewarding processes, two categories emerged, category *3-Productive* and category *4-Decision-making and Problem-solving*. In category *3-Productive*, for question 2, *it is a waste of time to work in groups*, students were clear in their responses with eight *disagreeing* and four *strongly disagreeing*. According to the responses for question 7, *working in teams in class is productive and efficient*, 50% of students agree.

In category *4-Problem-solving and Decision-making*, the responses to question 5, *solving problems in a group is an effective practice that the student has learned*, overwhelmingly support the statement with ten students *strongly agreeing* and eight *agreeing*. Similar support and agreement is demonstrated in the responses to question 6, *solving problems in a group is an effective way to learn*, where nine students *agree* and seven students *strongly agree*. On question 9, *solving problems in groups leads to better decisions than solving problems alone*, 50% of the students are in agreement.

### **Limitations**

Although student respondents seem to have an overall consensus about their values surrounding the small group process, there is also the possibility that other factors influenced students’ responses. The survey was administered on the last course day and at the conclusion of an exhaustive and major group presentation that was a significant part of the course grade. Although these students had recent experiences working in groups, the circumstances may have resulted in some students wanting to complete the survey as hurriedly as possible.

The students in this study were at different levels in their graduate program and those who were approaching graduation in one week may have had a different outlook than those who anticipated returning to the classroom the next semester. Graduating and continuing students may have had different experiences entering the graduate program. Some of the students majored in social work as undergraduates and other students were from different disciplines, resulting in a degree of exposure that

was different. The same is true for their current program status, as some students were at the conclusion of their practicum placement and others were just beginning this hands-on experience.

The group work hands-on exposure differences extend into what type of placement students had worked, some of the field placements being more clinical than others. Some working students as well as those with internship placements might have actually facilitated client group work. At this level some students may have participated in small group work with a sense of expectancy based on their expertise.

With the completion of the survey and the analysis of the results, it was concluded that some of the responses were directly related to the students' own interpretation as a result of their outside experiences. During the verbal instructions, prior to the completion of the survey, students were not instructed to limit their answers to their current graduate class group work experiences. Therefore, students may have drawn their conclusions from any group work, including those that were not in the collegiate environment. It is important to acknowledge, in the group work value themes, the questions do not specify if the individual has been transformed as a result of the group work process experience in the class.

## **Discussion**

"Peer value" and "group work value" themes contain categories that can be dissected and analyzed from varying entry points and re-categorized into adjoining areas. This simply means that there is a high probability that there is an interdependence amongst the values of group work. The data is clear on the benefits of student group work. It promotes student success and is a rewarding process. The student responses from this value group assessment indicate that students agree that group work promotes student success and is a rewarding process, as evidenced by student statements such as "it is a growing experience."

The "group work value" theme connotes a rewarding experience as a result of participating in

the group work process. The "peer value" theme contributes to student success which is an individual accomplishment. The "peer value" theme responses show that students recognize what is required for successful group work in the classroom. Students' acknowledgments support the notion that exercising collaborative skills will aid the student as a professional with their ability to develop and maintain effective relationships (D'Agostino, 2013). Students overwhelmingly articulated value and aligned the importance of collaboration as a necessary skill for success. In the "group work value" theme, students strongly endorse the idea that group work is worthwhile. Students *disagreed* that it was a waste of time to work in groups. Furthermore, students acknowledged that working in teams in class was productive; that solving problems is an effective way to learn; and that solving problems in groups leads to better decisions.

Knowing that students recognize the value and importance of group work supports the concept that it is an advantage for instruction in higher education. This group work value study assures professors that students will reap benefits from group work that exceed the articulation of the assignment. Students report an improvement in student development.

The results of this group work value research will also provide assistance to student organizations within the campus environment. Students acknowledged in their responses that *decisions made in the group work process were better than individual decisions*. This further supports the value of participation in student organizations. The results of this study are also relevant to the many schools of social work scholastic academies. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) provides educational standards to accredit social work programs (CSWE, 2008). The CSWE educational competencies for curriculum include two policy areas that this study supports: Educational Policy 2.1.3—Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments, and Educational Policy 2.1.10(a)–(d)—Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (CSWE, 2008).

The application of critical thinking in Educational Policy 2.1.3 can be served through this study because the skills required for critical thinking necessitate problem-solving (“*group work*” value theme category 4-*Problem-solving and Decision-making*). Students indicate that they have learned problem-solving through the group process. The application of engagement in Educational Policy 2.1.10 (a) can also be served through this study since engagement requires the use of interpersonal skills, as addressed by “*peer value*” theme category 1-*Collaboration* and category 2-*Skills*. Students reported that working in a group improves their achievement and working with their peers is an important skill. The student-acknowledged value themes can be incorporated into course learning goals in order to successfully meet the CSWE guidelines.

### **Implications**

Social Work educators should prepare students for effective group work assignments by emphasizing the *values* reported as gains from group involvement. This parallels the recommendation provided by participants, to inform students about the benefits of group work to encourage their participation (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2008).

Although some students complain that group assignments are distressing, the overwhelming emerging values specifically related to peers and group work demonstrate the benefits of group assignments. The larger implications for gains in employment skills are also apparent. Decision-making and problem-solving skills are critical. The professional skills students gained from involvement (as measured by participants) can be used to promote active student participation, and collaboration (*peer value*) can be incorporated within the group assignment to enhance understanding and skill development.

The *peer value* and *group work value* themes that emerged from the assessment, have presented an entirely new vision to process the values inherent in academic group work. With this new categorization, shown in the EV model, instructors have

the opportunity to prepare students for their practicum field placements and their career placements in social work with a more strategic and encouraging understanding. The forethought and sharing of the process by students lends worth to how the actual work of the group will benefit the students’ self-growth.

The peer value themes demonstrate that students will not only fulfill the requirements of their course, but will also improve their ability to be successful and valuable group members through collaboration and peer leadership. Students should be intentionally informed about these benefits to gain their positive, proactive participation in the group process and group assignments.

The emerging values model (EV) corresponds with the curriculum and necessary skills for professional social workers. The themes in the EV suggests participants are making gains in *peer value* and *group work value* skills. As social networking increases and continues to influence generations, this *peer value* theme will contribute an essential element to the group assignment. Professional social workers are expected to be effective, competent group facilitators (CSWE, 2008) and the results of this study suggest that group assignments enhance these abilities as well as encourage better appreciation (*value*) in participating students.

The small group assignment process is *productive* and *rewarding* through an *effective learning environment* that *enhances student decision-making and problem-solving abilities*. These areas, along with the necessary *stress* for productivity, encompass the *group value theme*. Students need to be informed of the benefits beyond the course requirements, because their informed approach to the process may be welcoming and anticipatory of the extensive rewards received from the group work.

### **Future Research**

The experience of small group work was found to be both rewarding and stressful according to the respondents. The most utilized term reported for the exploratory research question regarding group experience was “stressful.” The exploratory

question was asked to gain a descriptive insight from students that was not provided in the original VTS. An interesting follow-up question for future research would investigate whether the respondents believed that in order for the experience to be valuable, it also needs to be stressful. With comparisons to life or academic rewards it is logical to surmise that certain amounts of stress are required for successful gains.

Another succeeding study could advance from graduate students to undergraduates; this small group research could measure the interdependency of the *peer value* theme, and its relationship to student success, with the *group work value* theme, and its relationship to rewarding progress.

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