

Using Social Work Values and Ethics to Enhance Social Inclusion in Post-Secondary Education: A Value-Critical Approach

Lauren A. Ricciardelli, Ph.D., LMSW
Troy University
lr Ricciardelli@troy.edu

Carol Britton Laws, Ph.D., MSW
University of Georgia
cblaws@uga.edu

Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, Volume 16, Number1 (2019)
Copyright 2019, ASWB

This text may be freely shared among individuals, but it may not be republished in any medium without express written consent from the authors and advance notification of ASWB.

Abstract

This study views Post-Secondary Education (PSE) programs for students with intellectual disability as a social institution at large that, in its scope and aims, functions similar to a bundle of social services/benefits. The services/benefits offered in combination in the PSE setting exist separately in the public domain and often fall within the scope of professional social work practice. Post-Secondary Education and the social work profession share a mutual interest in assisting persons with intellectual disability to self-determine and work toward achieving goals related to enhanced academic, employment, independent living, and social outcomes. By conceptualizing PSE as a package of social services/benefits, this study lends itself to the value-critical approach established by Chambers and Wedel (2009). The value-critical methodology in this context assumes that social policies and programs are meant to address an underlying social issue or problem (i.e., in this case, social inclusion/exclusion). We achieve value-critical evaluation of PSE in this study by analyzing four criteria designated by Chambers and Wedel (2009) that position the social issue or problem as the subject of analysis. In our responses to each criterion, we invoke specific core values promulgated by the

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as a general framework. Lastly, we conclude with a discussion of findings and implications. Recommendations for ethical standards in direct practice with PSE students, and ethical standards in PSE policy practice/program administration are included in table format along with a succinct summary of findings per criterion, organized by NASW core values.

Keywords: post-secondary education, intellectual disability, social inclusion/exclusion, value-critical, social work, social welfare

Introduction

According to Paul Stuart (2014) in *History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1950 – 1980*, the latter half of the 20th century was paramount to the development of social welfare programs and the professionalization of social work throughout the world. In *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, historian Walter Trattner observed there is a link between the method of public assistance delivery (e.g., institutional, community, and home settings) and the associated, strongly held cultural beliefs and social norms regarding worthiness (1999). Trattner

cites social work as the professionalization of public assistance (1999). To further support the positioning of social welfare provision within the purview of the social work profession, a cursory look at contemporary peer-review journals yields the following results: *Social Work*, the premier journal of the social work profession (“dedicated to improving practice and advancing knowledge in social work and social welfare”); *International Journal of Social Work & Social Welfare* (“publishes original articles in English on social welfare and social work”); *Global Social Welfare* (“This journal brings together research that informs the fields of global social work, social development, and social welfare policy and practice”); and the student-led publication, *Michigan Journal of Social Work and Social Welfare*. As well, a number of highly reputable schools of social welfare in the U.S. confer graduate degrees in social work: School of Social Welfare at University of Albany, School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas, and the School of Social Welfare at the University of California—Berkeley. As a final point of consideration, the connection between social welfare and social work is highlighted by the National Association of Social Workers’ (NASW, 2018a) statement on advocacy: “The social work profession was founded in social change. Throughout the profession’s history, social workers have sought to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources and opportunities that allow them to meet their basic needs.”

To be sure, social workers continue to function in professional roles that are integral to public assistance delivery, hereafter referred to as social service delivery. For example, social workers may work across institutional, community, and home settings to: Provide direct care or clinical services paid for by social programs; make assessments regarding eligibility for social programs and related services and supports; make assessments regarding continued fidelity to social service program eligibility requirements; assist individuals, families, and communities to understand service delivery eligibility requirements, as well as other options, including risk of harm due to non-participation; in

line with ethical considerations, especially those concerning research with human subjects, collect data for the purpose of policy analysis, development, and implementation; and finally, and in line with the professional mandate for social justice, advocate for responsible social policy. The broad range of social worker roles is illustrative of the profession’s dual focus on direct practice with individuals and groups, and on community practice, which includes policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation.

Social work, social welfare, and intellectual disability

In the context of working with people with intellectual disability, social workers may be employed in institutional settings, such as the public education setting, where they participate in individualized education and support planning. In the community and in the home, social workers may also provide direct and indirect assistance with activities of daily living. Direct care may take the form of hand-over-hand assistance in the home, or verbal prompting while completing self-identified goals. Social workers in the community-based setting who function as resource coordinators make case management decisions regarding program and service eligibility (e.g., Social Security programs, and Medicare and Medicaid programs) and help people and families to navigate existing programs and services/benefits. In the same setting, social workers may function as group leaders, facilitating social skills, education-based, or task-oriented groups. Policy practice in social work may involve publishing in peer-review journals or other forums (e.g., electronic newsletter/policy briefs to community agencies or lawmakers), depending on the concern for audience access. Policy practice may also include conducting research and evaluation in the community, such as focus groups, survey research, and participatory action research (Jansson, 2014). For example, social workers and other researchers and professionals may work to evaluate Post-Secondary Education (PSE) programs, as is the aim of the current study. Post-Secondary Education programs are designed to help

youth and young adults with intellectual disability transition into higher education settings in order to enhance academic, employment, independent living, and social outcomes following the student's completion of the two- or four-year program. Although programs widely vary in terms of social inclusion, PSE represents a method by which society can redress a history of social exclusion, negative stereotyping, and stigma, and to further effectuate the intent of the contemporary social inclusion movement.

Post-secondary education programs for persons with intellectual disability

Post-Secondary Education programs, sometimes referred to as Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) programs, for students with intellectual disability are concerned with enhancing academic, employment, independent living, and social outcomes. The social work profession and PSE programs have in common that they both take up the concern for the process by which enhanced outcomes are achieved by, and with, persons with intellectual disability (i.e., a person-centered approach with a strengths-based perspective that respects the dignity and worth, and self-determination of the individual). In the context of social service delivery, social workers may assist people with intellectual disability to identify and work toward academic-related goals across all levels of the public education system and in the community setting (e.g., as a case manager or resource coordinator, assisting an individual to find, make decisions about, and enroll in adult education and training programs). Social workers might also work in vocational rehabilitation agencies, addressing employment-related goals. Regarding the goal of independent or interdependent living, social workers may provide various levels of support to persons with intellectual disability as they perform activities of daily living in their home and in their community. Social workers may also participate in human rights committee work, reviewing behavioral support plans as part of an interdisciplinary team approach to weighing rights-to-safety considerations. And finally, with regard to

social learning outcomes, social workers may model pro-social behaviors and problem-solving skills while facilitating various types of socialization groups. These groups may occur in the institutional and community settings.

Social inclusion/exclusion

Variations between PSE program sites invite concerns that not all programs claiming to be inclusive are functioning as such. This matter is of particular ethical import because persons with intellectual disability have been historically excluded from full and meaningful participation in society. The social work profession's value of social justice (e.g., the National Association of Social Workers and the International Federation of Social Workers) speaks to social exclusion as both problematic to the realization of social equality and as a social norm capable of being differently constructed. Although there is arguably good reason to remain optimistic about the opportunities associated with PSE, issues of program variation remain worthy of consideration from a social justice standpoint. To this end, PSE for students with intellectual disability should be critically evaluated to ensure that programs do not (inadvertently or otherwise) function or come to function as institutionalized care vehicles for continued stigma and other forms of social exclusion, including segregation on the basis of disability. Empirical research shows that individuals with intellectual disability have been excluded from higher learning opportunities and encouraged to join the workforce directly, often in segregated settings offering sub-minimum wages (Folk, Yamamoto & Stodden, 2012). The PSE system should not come to function in any parallel way and still consider itself ethical.

In conclusion, we offer that the social work profession is ethically well suited to address issues of social inclusion/exclusion in PSE. To support this position, we point to the NASW's 2008 official endorsement of "advocacy in collaboration with people with disabilities and their families to reduce discrimination, stigma, and restriction of rights based on inaccurate perceptions of individuals with disabilities in their communities and in society."

With this professional mandate in mind, we offer that it is worth considering if PSE should in any way be held to the ethical standards of the social work profession. The NASW Code of Ethics creates a fluid but bounded system of ethical standards that simultaneously enhances the professionalization of social work practice and addresses the potential for exploitation related to the inherent positioning of power in the helping relationship. Regarding the troubleshooting of ethical dilemmas that may arise in the helping context, we point to the potential for dual relationships to occur in the PSE setting: For example, not only do some social work academic professionals function as PSE program administrators and faculty, but as well, student volunteers/mentors who work with PSE students may be informally functioning in a similar capacity as social work professionals. Therefore, ethical training that includes boundary setting and maintenance, as well as education around the person-centered approach and what it means to place the needs of others before one's own, may prove beneficial to all parties involved.

Purpose

As a recent and evolving innovation, PSE is ripe with the promise of academic, employment, independent living, and social opportunities. With these opportunities in mind, this study views PSE as a bundle of social services/benefits that currently exist separately in the public domain, and are available through various arrangements of social programming, with eligibility determinations based on disability status and at times, income-based requirements. The purpose of this study is to evaluate PSE in its current configuration using a key part of Chamber and Wedel's (2009) value-critical approach, which entails positioning the social issue or problem (i.e., social inclusion/exclusion) as the referent, or subject of analysis. We invoke core values promulgated by the NASW Code of Ethics to inform our analysis and make recommendations with regard to direct practice and policy practice/PSE program administration accordingly.

Methodology

This study views PSE programs as functioning in a parallel way to a bundled package of social services/benefits. These social services/benefits exist separately in the public domain and often fall squarely within the professional scope of social work practice—across settings (i.e., home, community, and institution) and across levels of social work education (i.e., BSW, MSW, and DSW/PhD). Further, this study takes up the concern for ethical policy and practice in the PSE setting from the professional social work vantage point. Because we view PSE through a social work lens, and in this way as a social welfare program that offers social services/benefits, this study lends itself to a value-critical approach. A value-critical approach assumes that social policy reflects an underlying social issue or problem (Chambers & Wedel, 2009). We understand that social issue or problem as being, social inclusion/exclusion.

Value-critical analysis

Chambers and Wedel (2009) adapted Martin Rein's value-critical method of analysis to meet the specific needs of social work and human service practitioners. Chambers and Wedel's (2009) value-critical approach suggests three practical, but diverse types of criteria for evaluating the features of social policy or programs: (1) The fit of the policy or program to the social problem; (2) Criteria that are uniquely useful for a single policy element; and (3) The traditional values of policy analysis developed by economists: Adequacy, equity, and efficiency. We purposefully exclude the economic context from this value-critical analysis, as it falls beyond the scope of our professional training and expertise. While the economic context is not unimportant, it is not germane to value-critical analysis. What makes analysis value-critical is the framing of an underlying social problem as the policy analysis referent (Chambers & Wedel, 2009).

Analysis criteria

In examining the social problem as referent, we ask and then respond to the following questions: (1) Do the entitlement rules direct benefits at the

entire population defined to have the social problem, or do they only reach a subgroup? (2) Do the goals and objectives of the program or policy system fit a social problem as defined? (3) Can this form of benefit produce a significant impact on the causal factors believed to produce the social problem? (4) Does the policy or program recognize or build on the strengths or assets of those affected by the social problem? (Chambers & Wedel, 2009). With regard to analyzing criteria that are uniquely useful for a single policy or program element, we have elected to use the six core values of the social work profession as identified, codified, and promulgated by the NASW.

NASW core ethical principles

The NASW is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with the aim to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies (NASW, 2018c). Regarding social work and disability, the NASW issued the following policy statement, recognizing:

A national policy that ensures the right of people with disabilities to participate fully and equitably in society. This participation includes the freedom, to the fullest extent possible, to live independently, to exercise self-determination, to make decisions about their living conditions and treatment plans, to obtain an education, to be employed and to participate as citizens. [...] The right of individuals with disabilities to have early and continued access to individualized appropriate education and vocational opportunities [...] (2008).

We interpret this NASW statement as supporting our argument that PSE and social work share common professional ground.

The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as a guide to the everyday professional

conduct of social workers and to foresee ethical dilemmas that may arise within the helping relationship (NASW, 2018d). Within the code, the NASW identifies six core values of the social work profession: (1) Service; (2) Social justice; (3) Dignity and worth of the person; (4) Importance of human relationships; (5) Integrity; and, (6) Competence (NASW, 2018b). The social work core value, *service*, is based on the ethical principle: “social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems” including doing work that is, in the spirit of service, *pro bono* (NASW, 2018b). The social work core value, *social justice*, is based on the ethical principle:

Social workers challenge social injustice [...] Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people (NASW, 2018b).

The social work profession often addresses social problems from a systems or structuralist perspective by looking at person-in-environment interactions—a perspective that regularly takes up the concern for the way in which politically dominant groups in society treat others in a non- or less dominant position, and the resultant stigma.

The social work core value, *dignity and worth of the person*, is based on the ethical principle: “social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person” (NASW, 2018b) and assist to promote people’s socially responsible self-determination. The social work core value, *importance of human relationships*, is based on the ethical principle: “social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships” as a therapeutic tool (NASW,

2018b). The social work core value, *integrity*, is based on the ethical principle, “social workers behave in a trustworthy manner” and “act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated” (NASW, 2018b). Lastly, the social work core value, *competence*, is based on the ethical principle that “social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise” (NASW, 2018b). As a value, *competence* speaks to the important role of peer-review research in the development of best practices, programs, and policies.

A Review of the Postsecondary Education Literature

As colleges and universities began to offer PSE programs, they emerged in the absence of established, national guidelines for quality standards (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2011). Even after the establishment of Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID), a review of the literature published from 2001–2010 shows programs varied widely in terms of: (1) Social inclusion, (2) Academic integration, (3) Social supports, and (4) cost (Thoma, Lakin, Carlson, Domzal, Austin, & Boyd, 2011). As well, Grigal, Hart, and Weir (2012) found that PSE programs varied greatly along the dimensions of: (1) Alignment with the institutions of higher education practices for students with disabilities; (2) Level of inclusion of students with intellectual disability in traditional college classes; (3) Types of academic opportunities provided; (4) Focus of the program; and, (5) Funding approaches. These findings highlight what can be considered to be the spectrum of program structures and services. The PSE literature consistently recognizes the following gaps in research: The disjunction between secondary and postsecondary settings, as well as the disjunction between postsecondary program completion and employment outcomes (Folk et al., 2012). Topics in the literature review focus on: (1) Relevant legislation, (2) Barriers to access, (3) Variation between programs on social

inclusion/exclusion, and (4) Employment outcomes.

Relevant legislation

Unlike many other inclusive education practices, access to PSE was not solely created through legislation, but as well, through the grassroots efforts of families and educators (Grigal et al., 2011). Given that federal legislation continues to impact the development and implementation of PSE programs, much of the scholarly literature notes important legislation with regard to K – 12 public education programs in general and PSE programs in particular. Regarding access to education at both the K–12 and post-secondary levels, paramount legislation has centered on institutionalizing full and equal access to services offered by public entities, including institutions of higher education (Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990); free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004); and, financial access to college (Higher Education Opportunities Act, 2008). Although it may be legislated otherwise in the future, PSE programs are currently exempt from the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 because PSE programs by definition involve matriculation beyond the 12th grade. This highlights incongruence between settings regarding institutional accountability to standards of ethical practice.

Comprehensive model programs

Changes in the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) led to the first national network of Model Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs) in 2010 and established a National Coordinating Center (i.e., Think College) for institutions of higher education that offer programs for students with intellectual disability (Mazzoni, 2013). Here forward, TPSIDs are referred to as comprehensive transition programs. Central to the

concept of comprehensive transition programs is the provision of individual supports and services for the inclusion of students with intellectual disability in: Academic courses, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of higher education. However, history shows that legislated access does not necessarily guarantee the realization of access for those intended. For example, while the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 requires that transition services include post-high school goals, only a very small percentage of students with intellectual disability have PSE listed as a goal on their Individualized Education Program, and only 11 % of high school students with intellectual disability go on to attend a two-year or a four-year college (Grigal, Hart, & Migliore, 2011).

Barriers to access

Lack of legislation to mandate the start of early PSE programs meant that minimal state or federal funding was available to support the creation of the programs and the students who attend them (Grigal et al., 2011). However, reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008) provided an opportunity for students with intellectual disability who were enrolled in a comprehensive transition program to receive federal financial aid (Folk et al., 2012; Grigal et al., 2012). Comprehensive transition programs are a type of Title IV program authorized by the Higher Education Opportunities Act (2008) and are considered to be the major source of federal student aid. As a Title IV program, comprehensive transition programs provide a new access point for students with intellectual disability to receive federal financial aid. Grigal and colleagues (2012) cite that comprehensive transition programs can offer Pell grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants and work-study funds to enrolled and eligible students with intellectual disability. As well, some states' vocational rehabilitation agencies offer a tuition waiver (Hart, Grigal, Sax, Martinez, & Will, 2006).

However, the majority of PSE students depend on student and family funds to pay for

the cost of attendance (Grigal et al., 2012). Post-secondary students pay standard tuition rates and fees, and as is the case with traditionally enrolled students, they often incur the additional cost of on- and off-campus housing. With the limited number of comprehensive transition programs, this may have the effect of encouraging students and families who cannot afford the cost of PSE outright to secure loans in the private sector. According to the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in 2014, the following are the primary differences between private student loans and federally available loans: (1) Federal loans often subsidize the interest on the loan while a student is in school; (2) Federal loans have a fixed, or stable, interest rate as opposed to the variable interest rates of private loans; (3) Federal loans qualify for a variety of loan forgiveness programs; (4) Federal loans have options for deferment or forbearance on loans; (5) Federal loans are forgiven upon death of borrower and permanent disability; and, (6) Federal loan payback can be based on earned income. These differences between federal and private student loans invite concerns regarding disparities in access across economic status, as well as in the debt-to-projected earnings differences between PSE students and non-PSE students.

Lastly, lack of person-centered practice and planning may impact access. Folk et al. (2012) found that lack of individualized supports for PSE students with intellectual disability is an important factor impacting successful participation at the PSE site: "The process [...] thus requires students to know the requirements of the process, possess the requisite documentation, and have the self-advocacy skills to request, receive, and use the resulting accommodations and supports" (p. 63). In social work, when only persons are included who are deemed to have the greatest chance of success because they come closest to meeting predetermined outcomes, and when those who are furthest positioned away from desirable outcomes are excluded, this practice is known as creaming or skimming. Such practices may exacerbate disparities and work to undermine the full and

equitable participation in society by those deemed less fit for, or worthy of, inclusion. The concern for social stratification and equality falls within the social work practice scope under the ethical concern for social justice (NASW, 2018b).

Program variance on social inclusion

An early snapshot of PSE programs in the U.S. conducted by Hart, Grigal and Weir (2010) illustrates programmatic variance across three dimensions. In their 2010 national survey, 149 respondents from 37 states demonstrated that there are vast differences across: (1) The PSE program setting, (2) Course access, and (3) Housing (Hart et al., 2010). Respectively: (1) Fifty percent of programs were housed in four-year colleges, 40 percent in two-year institutes, and 10 percent in trade/technical schools, (2) A majority of programs (75 percent) indicated students with intellectual disability participate only with other students with intellectual disability and, (3) Thirty-nine percent offered residential options (Hart et al., 2010). Similarly, a 2008 survey conducted by Papay and Bambara (2012) assessed the characteristics of PSE programs housed at two- and four-year college campuses. They found that 77 percent of respondents described their program as being mixed, and 11.5 percent described their program as either individualized or separate (Papay & Bambara, 2012). A mixed program is defined as offering opportunities for inclusive activities with non-PSE students, as well as life-skills or vocational instruction in a separate setting (Papay & Bambara, 2012). An individualized program carries a focus on traditional college activities that meet the needs of an individual student with no instruction in a separate setting (Papay & Bambara, 2012). And finally, separate programs are those with a focus on life skills instruction in separate settings with students with disabilities only, and no opportunities for inclusive activities with non-PSE students (Papay & Bambara, 2012). Between-program variance on social inclusion has resulted in disparate PSE program goals and outcome measures, as well as variation in the level of inclusion and access to student activities (Grigal et al., 2012). In fact,

while there are currently over 245 post-secondary programs across the country, with many claiming to be inclusive, a review of these programs by Jones and colleagues (2015) revealed an array of what could be termed, segregationist practices. These practices include: (1) Specialized curricula separate from the college offerings, (2) Separate courses, clubs and workshops only for students with intellectual disability, (3) Reverse inclusion options where non-PSE students visit or instruct a PSE class, or (4) Having no affiliation with an accredited institution although the word college is included in the program title (Jones, Boyle, May, Prohn, Updike, & Wheeler, 2015).

Employment outcomes

Like vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs, PSE programs seek to enhance employment and independent living opportunities. Though vocational rehabilitation programs vary by state, the organizing principles of each state agency remain the same: To provide services to individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and integration into the community and the competitive labor market. Postsecondary education programs have ostensibly created an additional channel by which individuals with intellectual disability may come to be included in the formal labor market. While one recent longitudinal study supports the finding that students with intellectual disability who complete a PSE program are 26 percent more likely to leave vocational rehabilitation services with a paid job and make weekly wages that are 73 percent higher than those who did not participate in PSE programs (Migliore, Butterworth, & Hart, 2009), other study findings are more inconclusive and suggest further research is needed (Grigal et al., 2012; Smith, Grigal & Sullivan Sulewski, 2012). In addition to underscoring the need for further research on employment outcomes, Smith, Grigal, and Sullivan Sulewski (2012) point to the relationship between program employment outcomes and program cost efficiency:

Increased access to postsecondary education could then result in more working individuals with disabilities contributing to payroll taxes and fewer people with disabilities participating in poverty prevention programs such as SSI, thus making such programs more cost-effective in the long term (p. 4).

While cost-based arguments may draw a larger base of support from across the political aisle, they may inadvertently undermine the person-centered approach taken up by some PSE programs by giving prescribed outcomes, such as employment, primacy over the self-determined goals of the PSE student, which may or may not include paid labor market contribution.

Value-Critical Analysis

This study views PSE as a social institution at large that functions in a similar way to social welfare programs, and in this way is amenable to Chamber and Wedel's (2009) value-critical approach to policy/program analysis. As social work is largely considered to be the professionalization of social welfare (Stuart, 2014; Trattner, 1999), and to the extent there is agreement that PSE can be viewed as a bundle of social services/benefits, it should be considered as to whether social work ethics should be consulted in the development of PSE practice and policy. For these reasons, our value-critical analysis focuses on four criteria prescribed by Chambers and Wedel (2009) that position the social issue or problem (i.e., social inclusion/exclusion) as the subject of analysis, or referent. In our analysis of the criteria, we invoke the 2018 NASW Code of Ethics to frame our findings and inform our recommendations.

Analysis of social issue or problem as referent

To achieve analysis of the social issue or problem (i.e., social inclusion/exclusion) as referent, we respond to four questions posed by Chambers and Wedel (2009): (1) Do the entitlement

rules direct benefits at the entire population defined to have the social problem, or do they only reach a subgroup? (2) Do the goals and objectives of the program or policy system fit a social problem as defined? (3) Can this form of benefit produce a significant impact on the causal factors believed to produce the social problem? (4) Does the policy or program recognize or build on the strengths or assets of those affected by the social problem? Responses follow in respective order and are organized according to salient NASW core values.

Entitlement rules

The first question addressed is, "Do the entitlement rules direct benefits at the entire population defined to have the social problem, or do they only reach a subgroup?" (Chambers & Wedel, 2009, p. 42). For the purpose of this analysis, we interpret entitlement rules as the equivalent to financial access, as most families pay for PSE out-of-pocket. Currently, PSE student access to government funding and financial aid is the exception, not the rule. It is only when PSE programs qualify as a comprehensive transition program, and therefore as a Title IV program, that they can offer a new access point for students with intellectual disability to receive federal financial aid. Additional possibilities include the Pell grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants, work-study funds, and state vocational rehabilitation agency tuition waivers. Taking entitlement rules as financial access creates dimensionality across which to understand intersectionalities within PSE that may manifest as "subgroup." Namely, so long as most PSE tuition expense is primarily paid through personal income and not subsidized through state and federal social programs, PSE risks excluding students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Depending on where these potential students live, and although they may qualify for social services and benefits, resources may be inaccessible for practical reasons such as transportation, time, stigma, and other indirect costs.

Social justice

It could be argued that students from lower socioeconomic background would benefit the most from participation in a PSE program. Regardless, in its current structure, PSE tends to favor students who come from family positions of greater financial wealth and other means. The exclusion of PSE students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds perpetuates social stratification, and ignores the overarching professional mandate for social justice and equality by making access to higher education a distinction of class, a privilege of the affluent.

Service

To the extent that students from lesser financial means are being excluded from participation in PSE, and insofar as PSE functions similar to a social welfare program, PSE programs and the institutions of higher education that house them, should consider subsidizing the cost of student tuition as pro bono service to the community. This line of argument may be more compelling for land-grant universities that authorize public service and outreach from the level of the institution to the community. In this way, PSE programs can be understood as being one way in which land-grant institutions can fulfill their mission. As such, it should be considered as to whether public institutions (and particularly those with a mission of service) have an ethical responsibility to fund PSE either in whole or in part. In doing so, public institutions of higher education can: (1) Fulfill the goal of service to the community, (2) Serve a direct role in making the PSE program housed within the institution sustainable, and (3) Make PSE financially accessible to students regardless of socioeconomic status.

Goals and objectives

The second question addressed is, “Do the goals and objectives of the program or policy system fit a social problem as defined?” (Chambers & Wedel, 2009, p. 42). We define the overarching goal as being an earned degree or certificate from an accredited PSE program/institution, and the objectives as enhanced academic, employment,

independent living, and social outcomes. We frame our analysis of goals and objectives using the following NASW core values: Integrity, dignity and worth of the person, and the importance of human relationships.

Integrity

Though not all institutions are accredited, some use language that suggests or strongly implies otherwise (e.g., use of the word ‘college’ in the PSE program title). If held to the ethical standard of integrity, it stands to reason that programs administrators should behave in a manner that is trustworthy, and therefore not in a misleading way that is intended to exploit or take advantage of individuals and families. To address the issue of integrity, standards should be created that protect students and families from misleading/false PSE program advertising.

Dignity and worth of the person

In order to be truly person-centered, and to honor the autonomy of the individual, PSE students should self-identify academic, employment, independent living, and social goals. If these goals do not ring internally true for the PSE student, the program is effectively subjugating the interests of the individual to those of the program. In this way, the PSE program cannot be understood as functioning in a person-centered manner. Conversely, when the goals of the student and the program align, students’ self-identified goals can serve as a framework through which to better understand meaningful social inclusion for that specific individual from the emic perspective.

Importance of human relationships

This value underscores the importance of achieving goals related to social inclusion and skills development, for the importance of human interaction is inherent to the process itself. As the promise of funding looms in the distance, and is ostensibly predicated on the achievement of measurable outcomes, social goals should not be shrouded by, for instance, goals and outcomes related to employment. Various types of social

groups should be incorporated into the PSE curriculum that are reflective of the self-identified goals of the individual PSE students.

Significant impact on causal factors

The third question addressed is, “Can this form of benefit produce a significant impact on the causal factors believed to produce the social problem?” (Chambers & Wedel, 2009, p. 42). We define causal factors loosely as being the combined role that social exclusion, public stigma and misperceptions, social invisibility, and negative stereotyping play in the social stratification process. We frame our analysis of the significant impact on causal factors using the following NASW core values: Dignity and worth of the person and social justice.

Dignity and worth of the person and social justice

Post-Secondary Education programs that are person-centered and socially inclusive can help to reconstruct the social narrative regarding what persons with intellectual disability can and cannot do. In turn, a reconstructed social narrative about the strengths, interests, talents, skills, and capabilities of students with intellectual disability can help work against public stigma, social invisibility, and negative stereotyping—and toward a vision of social justice that entails social equality. This connects in social work what is sometimes referred to as micro- and macro- practices.

Strengths and assets of target population

The final question addressed in the analysis of the social context is, “Does the policy or program recognize or build on the strengths or assets of those affected by the social problem?” (Chambers & Wedel, 2009, p. 42). We define the recognition of strengths and assets as requiring knowledge of ethical, evidence-informed policy and practice that is supported by the scholarly literature. We frame our analysis of the strengths and assets of the target population using the following NASW core values: Dignity and worth of the person and competence.

Dignity and worth of the person and competence

A person-centered approach builds on the strengths and interests of individual PSE students, and does not rely on the standards of the stereotype, even when seemingly positive. Heterogeneity among persons with disabilities, including intellectual disability, often point to the challenges of the disability category itself. By treating each PSE student as a unique individual apart from any group membership, PSE can steer the social narrative away from the misperception that all persons with intellectual disability are fundamentally the same or similar in terms of strengths and limitations. Regarding the core value, *competence*, PSE program administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be knowledgeable of best practices that are both ethical and evidence-informed when assessing PSE students for strengths in order to make determinations regarding appropriate levels of support.

Discussion

In this value-critical analysis of PSE as a social institution at large, we attempted to justify the claim that PSE programs are well aligned with the service mission and practice scope of the social work profession, and that applying the six core values of the social work profession as promulgated by the NASW to PSE in the U.S. can meaningfully address the concern for ethical practice at the individual and policy/program levels. In effect, PSE program variation makes salient the factors of geographic location and socioeconomic status in the determination of who will have access to PSE and related opportunities for enhanced outcomes. Although the past 40-years have marked a further attempt to make real the underlying sentiment of social inclusion at the institutional-level, legislated access is but one step in this process. If PSE functions as a bundle of social services/benefits, and within the purview of the social work profession, social work ethics will view disparities in access and social inclusion as being at best problematic, or at worst, as representing a continued and fundamentally

unjust expression of social, economic, and political bias toward a people with disabilities who have long been excluded from participation in society. Table 1 presents recommendations that are informed by the six core values of social work (NASW, 2018b) and that aim to enhance the meaningful social inclusion of PSE students vis-à-vis the enforcement of ethical standards in direct practice and policy practice/program administration. We conclude now with the benefits of holding PSE programs accountable to a professional system of ethics, taking the NASW Code of Ethics as a viable blueprint. A professional system of ethics could result in:

1. The further standardization of PSE across the U.S. in order to decrease disparities in access to quality programming,
2. Increased affordability of PSE program tuition so that prospective students are not precluded from participation on the basis of socioeconomic status,
3. A greater ability to troubleshoot or navigate ethical dilemmas as they develop within the helping relationship (e.g., exploitation, intentional or otherwise, that can result from engaging in dual relationships, as may arise between PSE students and non-PSE students who volunteer/mentor, but who also identify as, 'friend'), and
4. Alignment with person-centered approaches to planning and practice that utilize a strengths-based perspective in order to better understand meaningful social inclusion from the emic, PSE student perspective (e.g., when, how often, for how long, where, with whom, engaging in what activity, and if needed, with what level of support).

Quality standardization, increased affordability, ethical acuity, and alignment with person-centered approaches and the strength-based perspective are all steps toward the realization of social inclusion, and in this way, social justice and equality.

References

- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, § 2, 104 Stat. 328 (1991).
- Chambers, D. E., & Wedel, K. R. (2009). *Social policy and social programs: A method for the practical public policy analyst*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. (2014, September 15). *What are the main differences between federal student loans and private student loans?* Retrieved from <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb/545/what-are-main-differences-between-federal-student-loans-and-private-student-loans.html>
- Folk, E. D., Yamamoto, K. K., & Stodden, R. A. (2012). Implementing inclusion and collaborative teaming in a model program of postsecondary education for young adults with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 9(4), 257–269.
- Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Migliore, A. (2011). Comparing the transition planning, postsecondary education and employment outcomes of students with intellectual and other disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 34(1), 4–17.
- Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C. (2011). *A standards-based conceptual framework for research and practice in inclusive higher education* (Think College Issue Brief No. 10). Retrieved from https://www2.waisman.wisc.edu/cedd/connections/pdfs/Insight10new_D3.pdf
- Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C. (2012). A survey of postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 9(4), 223–233.
- Hart, D., Grigal, M., Sax, C., Martinez, D., & Will, M. (2006). *Postsecondary education options for people with disabilities* (Think College Issue Brief No. 45). Retrieved from https://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178
- Hart, D., Grigal, M., & Weir, C. (2010). *Think*

- College: A snapshot of postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities across the United States* (Think College Issue Brief No. 2). Retrieved from <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/program-descriptions/think-college-a-snapshot-of-postsecondary-education-for-students-with>
- Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110–315 (2008).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §1400 (1990).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. §1400 (2004).
- Jansson, B. (2014). *Becoming an effective policy advocate: From policy practice to social justice*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- Jones, M., Boyle, M., May, C., Prohn, S., Updike, J., & Wheeler, C. (2015). *Building inclusive campus communities: A framework for inclusion* (Think College Issue Brief No. 26). Retrieved from <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/campus-membership-assessment-program-development/building-inclusive-campus-communities-a>
- Mazzoni, M. (2013). *College options for people with intellectual disabilities: Think college!* Retrieved from: <http://lifeafterieps.com/college-options-for-students-with-intellectual-disabilities-think-college/>
- Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., & Hart, D. (2009). *Postsecondary education and employment outcomes for youth with intellectual disabilities* (Think College Issue Brief No. 1). Retrieved from <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/student-outcomes/postsecondary-education-and-employment-outcomes-youth-intellectual>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *People with disabilities*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2018a). *Advocacy*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy.aspx>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2018b). *Ethical Principles*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2018c). *Preamble to the code of ethics*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2018d). *Purpose of the NASW code of ethics*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- Papay, C., & Bambara, L. (2012). *College programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: Results of a national survey* (Issue Brief No. 3). Boston, MA: Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston.
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 93 U.S.C., §§ 8070 (1973).
- Smith, F., Grigal, M., & Sullivan Sulewski, J. (2012). *Postsecondary education and employment outcomes for transition-age youth with and without disabilities: a secondary analysis of American community survey data* (Think College Issue Brief No. 15). Retrieved from <https://thinkcollege.net/resource/student-outcomes/postsecondary-education-and-employment-outcomes-transition-aged-youth-and>
- Stuart, P. H. (2014). *History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1950–1980*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Thoma, C. A., Lakin, K. C., Carlson, D., Domzal, C., Austin, K., & Boyd, K. (2011). Participation in postsecondary education for students with intellectual disabilities: A review of the literature 2001–2010. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 24(3), 175–191.
- Trattner, W. (1999). *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America* (Revised/Expanded ed.). New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

APPENDIX

Table 1
Value-Critical Analysis Findings and Respective Recommendations for PSE Practice

Criterion	Applied Social Work Ethical Principle/s	Respective Recommendation/s
<p>Entitlement Rules <i>(Financial access to a certificate or degree granting post-secondary education program)</i></p>	<p><u>Social justice</u> – when access to higher education is precluded by lack of financial means, this mirrors system-wide disparities on the basis of socioeconomic class membership, and undermines the realization of social equality in society</p> <p><u>Service</u> – insofar as PSE functions as a social welfare program, programs should consider covering (part of) the cost of student tuition as part of <i>pro bono</i> service</p>	<p><u>Policy practice</u> – program administrators should strive to apply for and generate funding to cover the cost of tuition for prospective students who wish to, but cannot afford to, attend</p> <p><u>Direct practice</u> – in terms of face-to-face recruitment, program administrators, staff, and volunteers should secure funding for students who cannot afford to attend the PSE program, and recruit in schools accordingly, seeking a diversity of students from a variety of schools</p>
<p>Goals and Objectives <i>(Earned degree or certificate from an accredited institution; enhanced academic, employment, independent living, and social outcomes)</i></p>	<p><u>Integrity</u> – not all institutions are accredited, though they use language suggesting otherwise</p> <p><u>Dignity and worth of the person</u> – to be truly person-centered, and to honor the autonomy of the individual, students should self-identify academic, employment, independent living, and social goals</p> <p><u>Importance of human relationships</u> – this value suggests that the importance of achieving goals related to social inclusion and skills learning should not be shrouded by, for instance, goals and outcomes related to employment</p>	<p><u>Policy practice</u> – standards should be created that protect students and families from misleading/ false PSE program advertising; person-centered goal identification and program/ activity planning</p> <p><u>Direct practice</u> – a person-centered approach should be used to assist PSE students with self-identifying goals related to academic, employment, independent living, and social outcomes; in turn, these goals can serve as a framework through which to better understand social inclusion for that specific individual; various types of social groups should be incorporated into curriculum, as per the self-identified goals of the individual PSE students</p>
<p>Impact on Causal Factors <i>(Social exclusion, public stigma and misperceptions, social invisibility, and negative stereotypes)</i></p>	<p><u>Dignity and worth of the person</u> – PSE programs that are person-centered and socially inclusive can help to reconstruct the social narrative regarding what persons with intellectual disability can and cannot do</p> <p><u>Social justice</u> – a reconstructed social narrative about what persons with intellectual disability can and cannot do is a step toward social equality</p>	<p><u>Policy practice</u> – a person-centered approach makes it more likely that socially inclusive practices and policies are meaningful to students</p> <p><u>Direct practice</u> – a person-centered approach provides space for individual talents that when demonstrated, may work to defy the standards of the stereotype held by non-PSE students about intellectual (and developmental) disability; direct practice should not perpetuate stigma/ stereotypes</p>
<p>Strengths and Assets <i>(Evidence-informed practice)</i></p>	<p><u>Dignity and worth of the person</u> – a person-centered approach builds on the strengths and interests of PSE students</p> <p><u>Competence</u> – PSE program administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be knowledgeable of best practices that are both ethical and evidence-informed</p>	<p><u>Policy practice</u> – policy should reflect knowledge and understanding of evidence-informed, best practices that are both ethical and supported by the scholarly literature, and that uphold a strengths-based perspective that is antithetical to the philosophy of social exclusion</p> <p><u>Direct practice</u> – use strengths-based perspective</p>