

# Grounding MSW Students in Social Work Values and Ethics: An Innovative Approach

Kathy Lay, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>  
Khadija Khaja, Ph.D.  
Lisa McGuire, Ph.D.  
Sherry Gass, MSW, LCSW  
Clinical Faculty Indiana University School of Social Work

*Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, Volume 5, Number 2 (2008)  
Copyright © 2008, White Hat Communications

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 White Hat Communications.

## Abstract

Teaching social work values and ethics is considered a primary task for social work education. A curriculum innovation is presented as a best practice in socializing students to social work values and ethics as well as graduate education. This article will present the development and rationale for the curriculum transformation, as well as an initial evaluation of the course impact from the students' voice.

*Key Words:* Curriculum Innovation, Social Work Values and Ethics

## Introduction

Social work students are faced with challenges to master a growing body of knowledge for professional practice. In addition to the acquisition of knowledge, students are concurrently becoming socialized to the profession during graduate education. This socialization includes the integration of the professional purpose, values, and ethics with their daily functioning as a student and future practitioner. This challenge brought graduate faculty together to develop an MSW curriculum that would facilitate the socialization process to the social work profession and graduate school. The purpose of this curriculum innovation was to provide graduate students “with a foundation to understand the profession and mission, knowledge, values, and skills of social

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to acknowledge the work of Professors Emeriti, Val Chang and Marion Wagner for their contribution to the development of Immersion. A paper entitled *Immersion: Introduction to Social Work* (Lay, McGuire, Wagner, & Chang, 2005) was presented at the Annual Program Meeting, Council on Social Work Education.

work and to begin socializing students to the demands and expectations of graduate education and professional practice” (Lay, McGuire, Wagner, & Chang, 2005, np).

The development of this curriculum innovation, the Immersion course, is presented as a best practice in modeling and implementing a purposeful *beginning* for the ongoing process of acculturating social work students to social work values and ethics. This is critical to socialization to the profession which is a key function of social work education (Landau, 1999; Reamer, 2001). In this article, information is provided about the a) development and rationale for curriculum transformation; b) literature review on socialization to the social work profession; c) description of the model; d) pedagogical process; e) analysis of course activities using social work values and ethics; and f) evidence of impact of the model from the students’ perspective.

### **Rationale for Course Transformation**

When the MSW faculty began a curriculum renewal process for the MSW program, they came together to create an innovative and responsive curriculum to move the school forward into the new millennium. Faculty challenged one another to be creative and not constrained by traditional boundaries of past curricula or even the semester structure itself. A core concern identified was that all students, regardless of undergraduate major or years of practice experience, should begin their graduate studies with a basic understanding of professional social work. A review of the school’s admission statistics revealed that over 80% of admitted master’s students did not have an undergraduate degree in social work. The largest number of students came from the disciplines of psychology and sociology, however 52% came from disciplines as diverse as English, general studies, philosophy, wildlife management, art history, accounting, business, and engineering. Faculty members were aware that students come to the MSW program with a fundamental desire to help others by providing services in mental health, child welfare, and a variety of treatment settings with specific populations. However, they often come from a variety of disciplines that do not provide an understanding of the ethics and values associated with professional social work practice.

Students are attracted to the MSW degree because it is portable to a variety of regions and practice settings. Many students are aware that social work practice is regulated from state to state. However, they are unaware that the Council on Social Work Education maintains standards for accreditation of graduate education. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has

paved the way for this recognition of professional social work practice through the enduring commitment to the *NASW Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1999) as a standard for practice. The acceptance of these regulatory practices and accreditation standards have led to the reality that more than 60% of all mental health services are provided by social workers ([www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)). The desire to help others and the reality of portability draw students to social work as a career without a full understanding of the foundation of the profession.

Although many students have an awareness of social injustice on behalf of a specific population, they do not always grasp the general purpose of the profession as stated in the *NASW Code of Ethics* (1999): “Social workers promote social and economic justice and social change with and on behalf of clients” (p. 1). For example, a student may say, “I want to be a therapist in a mental health clinic, why do I need to understand social policy or research?” Students’ lack of awareness of how work at the macro level impact individuals could indeed and that they would be expected to study and perform in a multi-level practice environment. This one-dimensional perspective is inconsistent with the core values of professional social work practice.

Knowing that the vast majority of our incoming graduate students did not possess an undergraduate degree in social work, faculty identified a need to socialize students to the profession from the beginning of their MSW. We also identified that many of our students, particularly those recently receiving a bachelor’s degree, did not clearly realize the demands for scholarship in graduate education. In addition, a number of students were changing careers and had been outside of the academic environment for many years. Due to these factors, faculty identified that students also needed socialization to the expectations of graduate school. Each of these factors may limit the impact of the MSW coursework provided at both the foundation and concentration levels. Our challenge became to develop a means to socialize these students to the profession of social work and to the process of graduate education in a way that would maximize their learning of the content of foundation coursework and beyond to the concentration level.

### **Socialization to the Graduate Education and the Profession**

Social work education historically has embraced the role of facilitating professional socialization (Baretti, 2004). Socialization is a learning process that involves the internalization of values, beliefs, skills, and knowledge (Schriver, 2004). There are many conflicting studies on how social work students become socialized to the profession and whether social work education is

truly effective in changing student attitudes around the basic values of the profession itself (Baretti, 2004). However, it is clear that a major focus of socialization in social work must include professional values and ethics (Reamer, 2001). “Values are regarded as essential aspects of the professional socialization of social workers” (Pike, 1996, p. 337). As part of students’ socialization, social work education should address these key issues:

- (a) What are the profession’s core values, and how have they evolved over time?
- (b) What professional activities can social workers engage in to reflect these values?
- (c) How do social workers’ values influence their relationships with clients, colleagues, and members of the broader society? and
- (d) In what ways do social workers encounter conflicts involving the profession’s values? (Reamer, 2001, p. 25).

There is some evidence that role modeling and interaction with faculty, field instructors and peers help students acquire professional values and a sense of a professional identity or self (Baretti, 2004). Students who have been socialized to social work values and ethics may be more likely to comprehend “the complexity of the situations and the dilemmas that social workers encounter, than those who have not yet started their professional training” (Landau, 1999, p. 71). Social work education is challenged to pay increased attention to the socialization process of students in a more formal and systematic manner, ensuring that their values are consistent with the profession (Landau, 1999),

In addition to values and ethics, the faculty considered a variety of issues that are related to the socialization of students to the profession. These included critical thinking skills and the history of the profession. Both of these topics are required foundation content for accredited master’s level social work programs as articulated in the Educational Policy Accreditation Statement (CSWE, 2001). These topics, as well as an initial presentation of social work values and ethics, had previously been included in a basic policy course that had been offered in the first semester of the MSW program.

The faculty also identified concerns about the professional writing skills of social work students. This has been identified as a struggle for many social work students (Alter & Adkins, 2001; 2006). Additionally, advances in technology for communication (e-mail, course platforms, etc.) as well as for library research (electronic course reserves, databases and search engines) may be overwhelming. Concerns were also verbalized about students coming from diverse disciplines that may not have utilized American Psychological Association (APA) (APA, 2001) style for *Journal of Social Work Values & Ethics*, Fall 2008, Volume 5, Number 2 -page 45

writing assignments or understand what constitutes plagiarism. As social work educators, we discerned an ethical responsibility to inform students about expectations and facilitate their competence by orienting them to the tools necessary for success in a graduate program.

Faculty conceptualized a course which would facilitate socialization to graduate school and the profession which would be taken prior to the delivery of the traditional MSW foundation content. This innovative course, the Immersion Model, would provide an opportunity for students to develop peer relationships within their cohort as well as nurture student/faculty rapport. At the same time, faculty desired that Immersion be the beginning step in an ongoing process for students to build a lens for social and economic justice through understanding the professional purpose as well as social values and ethics (Lay, McGuire, Wagner, & Chang, 2005). Hence the intensive course—the Immersion Model—was developed. Immersion is defined as “instruction based on extensive exposure to surroundings or conditions that are native or pertinent to the object of study” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/immersion>). The course content was carefully constructed to create the intense experience—immersion.

### **Pedagogical Process**

In designing the Immersion course, faculty considered which strategies would encourage an inclusive climate to promote an optimal teaching and learning environment. Faculty also sought to provide inclusive knowledge about gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and other differences that are a source of identity for clients as well as social workers. This included knowledge about institutionalized oppression based on these identities (Gil, 1998). A diverse teaching pedagogy was seen as one way to meet the challenge. Faculty wanted students to learn that social work practice is not stagnant, that clients experience different issues and that effective social work practice calls for viewing client issues and problems from differing viewpoints in a non-judgmental manner (Sheets, 2005).

The vision for this course included a team approach, inclusive of potential faculty who would represent differing social work expertise in areas such as: clinical practice, community development, policy formation, advocacy, leadership, and cultural sensitivity. The design needed to allow instructors and students to view social issues from a variety of perspectives, a transformative process for both the teacher and the learner (Ramirez de Langer, 2006).

The desire to provide social work students with an accurate intellectual view of reality that would prepare them to function in a multicultural society demanded the utilization of a diverse pedagogy (Kitano, 1997). The literature regarding a diverse teaching pedagogy illustrates that when students learn in a flexible teaching and learning environment, they experience less stress and conflicts in student-teacher interactions, and this in turn builds an atmosphere conducive for learning (Ramirez de Langer, 2006). Faculty also wanted to create a teaching and learning environment that was nurturing, open and safe for the exploration of experiences and ideas that led to a dynamic understanding social work values and ethics.

In any classroom, there is an invisible culture that may affect student behavior and learning (Sheets, 2005) and students are constantly interpreting the invisible culture of their classrooms. A course taught by four instructors had the potential to intimidate students, inadvertently leading to students feeling powerless. Therefore, the course had to be designed with care given to power differentials because it could lead to student-teacher “misunderstandings, misperceptions, and misjudgments” (Sheets, 2005, p. 85) creating discomfort and anxiety for instructors and students. Designing a course that valued multiple viewpoints and used diverse teaching strategies were seen as critical to creating an inclusive and safe climate that privileged diverse ways of learning and knowing (Ramirez de Langer, 2006). In addition, having four social work faculty agree to one syllabus, identical assignments, and readings may have posed a serious challenge. Instructors needed to set aside personal ego and work as a team to foster a collaborative teaching environment. Despite different practice experiences, cultures, and academic ranks, instructors modeled a commitment to social work values and ethics which bound us together. The backbone and integrity of our profession is based on our professional values and ethics no matter how diverse our voices – this was perhaps the single and most powerful message in conceptualizing and design of the Immersion course.

### **Course Description**

Given the rationale discussed above, the Immersion course was designed to be conducted in eight, 8-hour days, over the first three weeks of the semester. The other four first semester foundation courses begin at the third week and continue through the semester, with extended clock hours to meet academic requirements for a three-semester hour course. The course description for *Professional Social Work at the Graduate Level: An Immersion* is:

*This foundation course provides an overview of social work including the definition, scope, history, ethics, and values of the profession. This course will provide basic orientation to the available resources and expectations of graduate education in general, and the MSW program, in particular, all within the framework of the adult learner model. Students will develop basic communication, self-assessment, and reflection skills necessary for success in the MSW program. Students will have an opportunity to survey various fields of practice and will begin to identify personal learning goals for their MSW education as well as develop a commitment to lifelong learning as a part of professional practice (see Appendix A for course objectives).*

Because of the limited time available for students to complete assignments for this course, a pre-course paper was assigned. Students were introduced to this assignment as well as a model for structured critical reflection (McGuire & Lay, 2007) during the mandatory student orientations for the MSW program and the paper was due on the first day of class. The paper was based upon two books from popular literature--*The Glass Castle* (Walls, 2005) and *Nickel and Dimed* (Ehrenreich, 2001). The themes of these books introduced issues of poverty, income inequality, and family challenges that continue to be important topics for discussion during the course. The pre-course assignment also gave faculty the opportunity to assess student writing and give feedback so that students may access resources to support them in the successful completion of the MSW program.

In-class sessions were a mix of small group sessions with an individual instructor and combined large lecture/video sessions with all four instructors taking turns teaching content. Students were provided a number of learning experiences, based upon a variety of pedagogies, which served to introduce and emphasize the professional commitment to values and ethics requisite for professional practice at the master's level. The following section will highlight those learning activities, categorized around the core values of the profession in the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1999).

### **Analysis of Course Activities Using Social Work Values and Ethics**

Teaching MSW students the importance of upholding the National Association of Social Work (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (1999) was a unifying theme of the course, helping students to understand their ethical responsibility to “clients...colleagues...practice settings...as professionals... to the social work profession...and... society” (p. 7) in every aspect of their future practice. It is critical for students, as future practitioners, to have a framework for ethical practice and the NASW *Code of Ethics* has a historical role in providing a unifying lens for social work *Journal of Social Work Values & Ethics*, Fall 2008, Volume 5, Number 2 -page 48

practitioners (Spano & Koenig, 2007). “Preparing social work students for ethical practice begins in the classroom” (Swindell & Watson, 2007, ¶ 4).

Students were asked to read Congress (2000) as well as the NASW *Code of Ethics* (1999) in preparation for a course session where the video produced by NASW “*Professional Choices: Ethics at Work*” (Shapiro & Kenton, 1995) was shown and discussed. This session set the stage for continued discussion of professional values and ethics throughout the course. In addition, students were asked to complete a reflection paper about values and ethics as one of their written assignments in the course.

These activities reinforced the core values of the profession as stated in the NASW *Code of Ethics* (1999) which includes “service,” “social justice,” “dignity and worth of person,” “importance of human relationships,” “integrity,” and “competence” (p. 1). These core values were discussed in one specific session; however, they were continuously highlighted throughout the course by the use of integrative assignments. This helped students grasp early on in their graduate learning that the NASW *Code of Ethics* (1999) offers standards for practice. Ethical standards and guidelines do not provide a list of automatic responses to issues. Students needed to understand that application of the NASW *Code of Ethics* is complex. It serves to inform sound decisions and guides responsible judgments (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2003; Meacham, 2007; Spano & Koenig, 2007). Students realized that the NASW *Code of Ethics* may be difficult to interpret; that opinions could vary based on how the NASW *Code of Ethics* is applied to different situations; that it is critical to consult with colleagues and or supervisors; that their own values may be in conflict with the *Code* or particular agency policies, and that ethics must be understood in a cultural context (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2003).

Although values and ethics are infused throughout the course; a specific session on ethical dilemmas utilizing the Ethic Model for Decision Making (Congress, 2000) was presented. The Congress (2000) model served as guidance for students in making ethical decisions with clients. Students were asked to use this model to frame challenging situations and identify ethical dilemmas, where two specific dictates of the *Code of Ethics* may conflict. Common risk factors that may impact sound ethical decision making were illustrated to students (e.g., high caseloads, boundaries, fatigue, burnout, lack of sleep, fear of asking for help, not consulting supervisors, and feeling rushed). Class discussions in both small groups and lectures focused on student reflections

regarding the following themes: What is my value and ethical position on the issue? Where did I develop my views? Are my values and ethics open to modification? Am I open to being challenged by others? Am I so committed to my values and ethical beliefs that I will not accept other values? How can I communicate my values and ethical beliefs without imposing them? How are my values and ethics reflected in the way I work with diverse people?

In addition to specific material on values and ethics, other course activities underscored the School's commitment to social work education's role in acculturating students to the values and ethics of the profession. Assignments and activities for the Immersion course were purposely built around the core values of the social work profession: "service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence" (NASW *Code of Ethics*, 1999, pp. 5-6). Course activities and assignments are analyzed below using the core values of the profession (NASW, 1999).

### **The value of SERVICE**

Students, in groups of two or three, were asked to research an assigned social work luminary, a historic figure from the Progressive era, who was instrumental in creating social change. Names for luminaries were drawn from the Biographies section of the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (Edwards & Hopps, 1995). Working together, students created poster presentations which were displayed on the final day of class in a "Celebration of Social Work History." The MSW Student Association provided a pizza lunch and gave awards for outstanding posters, as well as welcomed the new students to the School and encouraged them to participate in Student Association activities. Students then returned to their individual instructor sessions where they made a brief presentation about their assigned luminary, who literally changed the world with their service.

### **The value of SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The need for commitment to social justice was addressed by providing multiple understandings of oppression through lecture and videos. After a lecture that provides an introduction to the academic understanding of oppression, students viewed a series of videos that highlight sexism, racism, ageism, heterosexism, and ableism that provided a historical look at the impact of these multiple oppressions in the lives of many of clients with which they will be working as social workers. Many of these videos were shown in one very long and intense day to

immerse students in the everyday reality of these issues. The intensity was specifically designed for affective as well as cognitive impact, thus allowing students to feel, as well as think about, the necessity of an ecological approach that addresses client problems on multiple levels. These experiences served to broaden their limited perspective on multiple oppressions and their understanding of social justice. Students were then assigned a reflection paper on this topic to focus and expand their learning, often in the form of self-awareness, on this important value.

### **The value of DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON**

One pedagogical strategy that highlights our commitment to this value was the utilization of reflective writing assignments, where students not only are expected to master course content, but they are also encouraged to explore their personal reactions and areas of values conflict in learning to be an MSW social worker. Personalized instructor feedback on these papers assisted students in identifying critical thinking errors in assumptions or challenged them to explore other viewpoints as they consider the material being discussed in courses. If students were articulating major values conflicts between their personal values and those of the profession, action was taken to discuss these issues in a confidential manner that respects the student's right to hold personal values but questions whether social work is the right profession for them to achieve their personal and career goals.

### **The value of IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

The course was designed for a mix of small group interaction with faculty and fellow students as well as large lecture sessions with multiple professors sharing personal experiences. In small group sessions, and often through lunch time as well, students worked together on small group projects for the course. These projects allowed a beginning for students to get to know one another and work together in short-term assignments. During lecture sessions, faculty modeled positive relationships with one another, demonstrating that colleagues may have different experiences and opinions, but that we shared the commitment to professional values and ethics. In that we have varying viewpoints, we sought to model respectful disagreement and debate with one another during class discussions and yet maintained positive collegial relationships.

### **The value of INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity has been identified as a major issue for higher education. For example, a majority (84%) of undergraduate students admit to cheating on written assignments

(www.plagiarism.org). The importance of academic integrity was demonstrated by faculty identifying expectations for writing and professional behavior in the academic as well as the practice setting. A copy of the university's policy on plagiarism was highlighted for students and clarification of the APA style of writing and citing resources were explained. This was framed as an ethical issue and tied to the NASW *Code of Ethics* (1999) and state licensure for social workers. Failure to practice academic integrity including plagiarism was emphasized as not in keeping with the value of integrity. Students who struggled with academic writing were encouraged to utilize the campus writing center for additional assistance.

### **The value of COMPETENCE**

A core value for any academic institution to consider, an expectation of competence, was highlighted throughout the course. This began with an emphasis on critical thinking and continued through expectations for life-long learning. Students were provided with an overview of the basic social service delivery systems to emphasize that regardless of their future practice focus, it is vital for them to understand diverse delivery systems in order to serve clients. In addition, students were introduced to basic policy analysis as a means to understanding how service delivery systems are created and why competent social workers must be concerned with policy practice. A panel of experienced social work professionals practicing at the macro level provided information about leadership roles in multiple delivery systems.

A model for understanding research and best practices from a social work perspective (Petr & Walter, 2005) was discussed, which identifies the importance the professions' values and ethics have in the decision-making process. This too, was reinforced as an ethical responsibility for all social work practitioners.

Although empowerment is not identified as a core value of the profession, it is mentioned in the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1999) and was infused in the course, including a lecture/discussion and reading (Simon, 1990). The major course topics were integrated into the final assigned paper (Historical Context Paper). This paper required students to identify a social problem, trace its history, identify the oppressed populations which are particularly impacted by it, and summarize the social work professional response using NASW policies from *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2006) and the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1999). They were required to use at least one entry from

the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (Edwards & Hopps, 1995) as well as other social work journals in writing this paper, which was due two weeks after the conclusion of class sessions.

### **Impact of the Course**

The Immersion course has been taught using the eight-day format for the past five years. There have only been a small number of students who have dropped out of the program during/after the Immersion course, but we see this as a significant impact. We have not always been able to obtain information about why a student dropped out of the program. Anecdotally, we are aware that some of these students did NOT have a full understanding of the profession and/or the expectations for graduate study prior to their Immersion experience.

The faculty members who teach the subsequent foundation courses have articulated that the students seem well-prepared to begin their courses, knowing that important content has been covered in this course, particularly around expectations for critical thinking, a basic understanding of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 1997), professional writing using APA format, and plagiarism policies. Despite the challenges of a condensed semester for the subsequent foundation courses, and the administrative challenges at the campus level, the MSW committee continues to endorse Immersion as a vital component of the existing master's curriculum.

In order to identify basic themes from the student perspective of the Immersion experience, an Institutional Review Board approval was secured to examine course evaluations from the 2007 full-time and part-time day cohorts participating in Immersion. Ninety-five students were enrolled in the four sections and evaluations were received from 79 students (N=79). A content analysis was conducted by one instructor on the written feedback from student course evaluations and results were reviewed by the other course instructors. School course evaluations include a series of quantitative items, followed by three open-ended items: "What aspects of the course facilitated your achievement of the course objectives?"; "What aspects of the course made your learning more challenging?"; and "Please, offer your comments about the quality of the course and how it might be improved."

Themes identified in the content analysis are listed below and include: Preparation for Graduate School; Diversity of Perspectives for Social Work Practice; Personal Reflection and Critical Thinking; and Values and Ethics of the Profession. Quotes from students are provided that support each theme.

### **Preparation for Graduate School**

- *I feel better informed of what the program entails and look forward to future classes.*
- *I loved it! I feel much more prepared to enter in the program and confident about being a social worker.*
- *This is an awesome Immersion course to set the tone for the remainder of the program.*
- *I think Immersion is a great idea. I feel better prepared to begin graduate school.*
- *The use of APA was a challenge for me. In addition, it was a challenge initially for me to use critical thinking. However, I am more comfortable with both issues now.*

### **Diversity of Perspectives for Social Work Practice**

- *Having four different professors was great because it gave us so many different perspectives.*
- *Small class discussions taught me a lot because I learned from my classmates.*
- *Having the benefit to have instruction from all the professors with their fields of discipline.*
- *Having open discussions in class where all opinions were valued.*

### **Personal Reflection and Critical Thinking**

- *The reflection papers challenged me to examine what I was learning.*
- *Forcing myself to look inward was difficult. To have to identify one's own prejudices is not easy. But it must be done to ensure efficacy.*
- *Critical thinking – being challenged so much to do so really expanded my ability to see “depth” and “breadth” in my understanding.*
- *The critical thinking forced me to push beyond my normal barriers in a positive manner.*

### **Values and Ethics of the Profession**

- *I like the information about ethics & what professionals who are in the field brought. It was helpful to hear how they would handle ethical issues.*
- *Learning about the history of social work and the Code of Ethics.*
- *All of them, especially diversity, oppression, ethics, & the values of social work.*

These statements are a small sample of the students' commentary and provide a snapshot of student feedback. Further evaluation is needed to generalize the findings of this evaluation to other cohorts of students within our program or to other programs regarding the efficacy of the Immersion model. Plans for further evaluation of the Immersion model include obtaining systematic data, either surveys or focus groups, from faculty who teach students immediately

AFTER the Immersion experience as well as a more formalized pre/post evaluation of students' preparation for graduate school and knowledge about the profession.

## **Conclusion**

Given the authors' experience in teaching Immersion and the students' perspective, the authors posit that Immersion facilitates students' socialization to the profession of social work as well as graduate school. The course provides a focused learning experience that engages students both cognitively and affectively. A key strength of the course is that several faculty have participated in the collaborative development and delivery of Immersion since the first offering in 2003. With each iteration of the course, the Immersion team refines content and assignments to maintain a contemporary and consistent delivery. The diversity of the faculty, as well as the diverse pedagogical practices, has provided a safe and inclusive atmosphere for students to understand the profession of social work.

The dual focus of socialization to graduate education and also to the profession then becomes preparation, a plowing of the field so to speak, for the seeds of knowledge that will follow in courses on practice, policy, human behavior in the social environment and research. This learning process builds a lens for social justice as students begin their journey of becoming a professional social worker. Subsequent course content will be filtered through this lens as students continue to develop their professional identity. The Immersion course provides consistent emphasis and modeling the core values of the social work profession (NASW, 1999), preparing students for success in their graduate education, practicums, future practice, and life-long learning.

## **References**

- Alter, C., & Adkins, C. (2001). Improving the writing skills of social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education, 37*(3), pp. 493-505.
- Alter, C., & Adkins, C. (2006). Assessing student writing proficiency in graduate schools of social work. *Journal of Social Work Education, 42*(2), pp. 337-353.
- American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Barretti, M. (2004). What do we know about the professional socialization of our students? *Journal of social work education, 40*(2), 255-283.
- Congress, E. P. (2000). What social workers should know about ethics: Understanding and resolving ethical dilemmas. *Advances in Social Work, 1*(1), 1-26.
- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Callanan, P. (2003). *Issues & Ethics in the Helping Professions 6th Edition*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Council on Social Work Education. (2001). *Education policy and accreditation standards*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

- Edwards, R. L., & Hopps, J. G. (Eds.). (1995). *Encyclopedia of social work* (Vols. 1-3). Washington, DC: NASW.
- Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Gil, D. G. (1998). *Confronting injustice and oppression: Concepts and strategies for social workers*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kitano, M. K. (1997). A rationale for multicultural course change: A framework for curricular change. In A.I. Morey & M.K. Kitano (Eds.), *Multicultural course transformation in higher education: A broader truth* (pp. 1-17). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Landau, R. (1999). Professional socialization, ethical judgment and decision-making orientation in social work. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 25(4), 57-75.
- Lay, K., McGuire, L., Wagner, M., & Chang, V. (2005, February). *Immersion: Introduction to Social Work*. Paper presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, New York.
- McGuire, L., & Lay, K. (2007, October). *Fostering critical thinking through reflective writing: The DEAL model in social work*. A skills workshop presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, San Francisco.
- Meacham, M. G. (2007). Ethics and decision making for social workers. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 4(3). Retrieved February 6, 2008, from [http://www.socialworker/index2.php?Option=com\\_content&task=view&id=70&po=1&page=0&Itemid=54](http://www.socialworker/index2.php?Option=com_content&task=view&id=70&po=1&page=0&Itemid=54)
- NASW. (1999). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC: Author.\
- NASW. (2006). *Social work speaks: NASW policy statements, 2006-2009*. Author.
- Petr, C. G., & Walter, U. M. (2005). Best practices inquiry: A multidimensional, value-critical framework. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(2), 251-267.
- Pike, C. K. (1996). Development and initial validation of the social work values inventory. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 6, 337-352.
- Ramirez de Langer, L. (2006). *Voices of Diversity: Stories, Activities, and Resources for the Multicultural Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.
- Reamer, F. G. (2001). *Ethics education in social work*. Alexandria, VA: CSWE. Schriver, J. (2004). *Human behavior and the social environment: Shifting paradigms in essential knowledge for social work practice*, (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Shapiro, A. & Kenton, K, (Producers/Directors). (1995). *Professional choices: Ethics at work* [Video]. United States: NASW.
- Sheets, R.H. (2005). *Diversity Pedagogy: Examining the role of culture in the teaching- learning process*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc
- Simon, B. (1990). Rethinking empowerment. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*. 1(1), 27-39.
- Spano, R., & Koenig, T. (2007). What is sacred when personal and professional values collide? *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 4(3). Retrieved February 6, 2008, from [http://www.socialworker.com/jswve/index2.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=69&](http://www.socialworker.com/jswve/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=69&)
- Swindell, M. L., & Watson, J. C. (2007). Ethical delegates in the social work classroom: A creative pedagogical approach. *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics*, 4(1). Retrieved February 6, 2008, from <http://www.socialworker.com/jswve/content/view/47/50/>.

Walls, J. (2005). *The glass castle*. New York: Scribner.

## **Appendix A**

### **Professional Social Work at the Graduate Level: An Immersion**

Through active participation in the learning experiences and completion of the readings, assignments, and learning projects offered throughout this seminar, learners are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

1. Understand the history, mission, roles, and basic values and ethics of the social work profession as well as the profession's relationship to the development of social welfare systems.
2. Recognize the effect of social policy on social work practice across all system sizes.
3. Identify the forms and mechanisms of discrimination, economic deprivation, and oppression particularly as they relate to the client's age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
4. Identify fields of social work practice, social service delivery systems, and their impact on the life of people from a social and economic justice perspective.
5. Understand the legal responsibilities and current regulation of social work practice nationally and in the state of Indiana.
6. Understand the role of advocacy and the historical impact of an empowerment perspective may play in advancing social and economic justice.
7. Identify critical thinking skills, including the analysis of paradigms, and their role in achieving competence in professional social work practice.
8. Develop a beginning self-awareness and commitment to ongoing reflection and assessment of professional practice.
9. Develop and enhance the basics of professional and scholarly writing by enhancing the critically analyzing information.
10. Obtain an understanding of the IUSSW curriculum, the norms for graduate social work education and campus-wide resources available for students.