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Identity and the Academy: Social Work and 21st Century Liberal Education

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Identity and the Academy:

Social Work and 21st Century Liberal Education

by

Britt E. Rhodes

A Banded Dissertation in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Social Work

Saint Catherine University | University of Saint Thomas
School of Social Work

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Abstract

Grounded by Arthur Chickering’s Student Development Theory, this banded dissertation uses an ecological framework to examine trends in higher education and the importance of intercultural development, trauma-informed care, and contemplative pedagogy to promote a holistic approach to higher education. While exploring student development, the goal was to develop a conceptual framework that utilizes contemplative practice to foster intercultural development and attend to students’ personal experiences with trauma by using contemplative practices.

The first article, *Social Work Education and Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy*, bridges the literature on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices and introduces trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy as a model for social work education. Noted to improve self-awareness, mediate practice and content related stress, and have positive implications for metacognitive and critical thinking skills, contemplative practices are particularly relevant in social work education.

As students prepare to work in an increasingly global context, the necessity of intercultural competence is more urgent than ever. This is a call to action for faculty in preprofessional programs like social work where intercultural development and competence is essential to effective and ethical practice. The second article, *Intercultural Development and Social Work Education in a Liberal Arts Context*, examined pre and post test results for an intercultural development inventory among students enrolled in an undergraduate social work program.

Finally, the presentation *Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy*, highlighted the importance of disciplinary focus, institutional context, and student
demographics. This presentation invited a multidisciplinary audience to consider the ways in which educators can integrate contemplative practices to create trauma-informed teaching environments that attend to the ways in which students’ personal histories intersect with course content. Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy was presented as a method of teaching relevant to a range of disciplines.

Social work has a long tradition of drawing on ecological theory and knowledge from many fields of study in building the unique person-in-environment perspective. Grounded by well developed theories of practice and emerging research on contemplative practices, intercultural development and trauma-informed care, social worker educators are keenly positioned to be leaders in twenty-first century liberal education.
Dedication/Acknowledgements

With gratitude to my advisor, Dr. David Roseborough, for your consistent feedback, constructive criticism, and enthusiasm for my work. Your steady and compassionate presence made all the difference.

To my children, Margaret, Andrew, and Nathan for their willingness to sacrifice some of our time together for this individual pursuit. May you always know that we will support you in achieving your goals while remaining united through the strong bonds of family.

To my husband, Mark, for your consistent love throughout the process. May the next 20 years of marriage have a little slower pace than the first 20.
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Introduction

Alfred North Whitehead once said, “The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and change amid order”. This is true in our individual lives and the institutions with which faculty engage our time, energy and efforts. The heart of social work rests on the investigation of the relationship between people and their physical and social environments. In both practice and research, social workers use a multidisciplinary lens in order to understand adaptation and resiliency and the need for both individual and system changes. This ability to attend to the needs of the individual within their environment by assessing the most appropriate target of change is unique to the narrative of social work practice. In her seminal work in 1951, Gordon Hamilton wrote, “a social case is not determined by the kind of client, nor can it be determined by the kind of problem. A social case is a ‘living event’ within which there are always economic, physical, mental, emotional and social factors in varying proportions” (p. 2-3). Hamilton, who was mentored by Mary Richmond, placed human behavior and personal problems in the larger landscape of the social, political and economic context recognizing that “the individual and society are interdependent; social forces influence behavior and attitudes, affording opportunity and self development and contribution to the world in which we live…” (p.21). As educators, we must similarly understand the ways in which our teaching occurs within the larger sociopolitical context of higher education broadly, and our students lives specifically.

This dual-focus of social work has significant relevance for understanding the current climate of higher education. The importance of understanding adaptation and social context are reflected in Dencev and Collister’s ideas about transformative education when they write,
“learning is inherently transformative but it is the context within which that learning occurs that determines whether the transformation is positive or negative” (2010, p.181). A systems perspective that takes into account the social, political, economic and cultural climate can lead us to new ways of understanding the contemporary challenges faced by both institutions and individuals in higher education today.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the academy has struggled to articulate a clear vision and purpose of higher education. The current economic climate has illuminated this challenge and public discourse has wedged a divide between the goals of professional training and liberal education. Although this is always a question faced by institutions of higher education, it is particularly salient right now as parents and students examine the growing costs of higher education and try to make decisions about “what it’s worth”. A proliferation of books on this topic has illuminated the rising costs of higher education, the changing demographics of incoming students, the importance of assessing outcomes, the role of the academy in moral education and the place for spirituality and faith in communities of learning (Chickering & Dalton, 2006; Delbanco, 2012; Kronman, 2007; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Selingo, 2013). However, since the inception of social work education, social work professionals and academics have grappled with these questions and are well suited to bridge the twin goals liberal education and professional preparation.

Whether it is a small liberal arts college or a large public university, higher education in the 21st century must attend to public goals (education for citizenship and democracy) and private needs (self-knowledge and integration of the self). In his essay, The Loss of the University, Wendell Berry (1987) states, “The thing being made in a university is humanity…The common denominator has to be larger than either career preparation or
preparation for citizenship. Underlying the idea of university—the bringing together, the combining into one, of all the disciplines—is the idea that good work and good citizenship are the inevitable by-products of the making of a good—that is a fully developed—human being.” If Wendell Berry is right then, indeed, liberal education is a solid model for integrating the academic, spiritual, social and civic dimensions of the self for the common good. Teachers and those in positions of leadership will need to consider this in light of the increasing costs of higher education, changing demographics of the student population, and the infiltration of technology into all domains of our and our students’ lives. All of these create possibilities for creativity in higher education but passivity will lead to further disintegration. Twenty-first educators and leaders must attend to several external challenges pressing on higher education with a keen ability to foster academic, social, political, spiritual and civic development among students.

**Conceptual Framework**

Social work has a long tradition of robust philosophical debate about the causes of human need and the implementation of pragmatic strategies to address social ills. Historically, this tension has been embodied in both the work of the practitioner and that of the scholar. The social, economic, cultural and intellectual milieu over time has undoubtedly shaped how problems have been defined and the emergence of specialized methods of investigation and relief. The ecological paradigm emerged from a number of variables in the latter part of the 19th century into the 20th century. The Settlement House Movement and the Charity Organization Society represent the emergence of distinctive attributes of the social work profession: the dual focus on the person in the environment. Settlements embraced methods of group work and community organizing while the charities skillfully applied scientific methods for the assessment
of needs and distribution of resources. Meanwhile, the National Conference on Charities and Corrections established a forum for the intellectual discussion and debate about social problems and methods to ameliorate human and community suffering. As social work struggled to specify a unique professional identity, the ecological paradigm grounded social work’s focus on the reciprocal relationship between people and their physical and social environments distinguishing it from related disciplines that operate from linear assumptions and models. Early models of service delivery balanced what continue to be the most important social work aims: addressing social factors and psychological functioning. Today, the ecological model serves as comprehensive framework for the assessment and treatment of individual problems within the social context.

**Ecological Model**

Theoretical frameworks and models for practice are based on key assumptions which emerge from the process of both inductive and deductive theory construction. The ecological model, emerging from the central aims of addressing both social factors and psychological functioning, has two core assumptions about the relationship between people and their environment: 1) transactions take place between people and their physical and social environments and 2) Human development occurs through interaction with the environment (Gitterman and Germain, 2008). This theory also posits that humans have an innate ability to adapt but need proper environmental conditions in order to do so and that development occurs throughout the life span (Gitterman and Germain, 2008; Van Wormer, 2007). Rapid shifts in societal and community values combined with tremendous environmental diversity impacts a human being’s functioning and development (VanWormer, 2007; Gitterman and Germain, 2008).
Ecological theory emphasizes several concepts critical to understanding ecological thinking. These include, but are not limited to: adaptation, niche and habitat (Gitterman & Germain, 2008; Johnson & Rhodes, 2015). The person-environment fit has infinite relevance as the unifying concept that illuminates the goodness of fit between an individual’s or groups’ “needs, rights, goals and capacities and the qualities of their physical and social environments” (Johnson & Rhodes, 2015, p.10). Adaptation fosters an explanation of the ways in which there is constant transaction and adaption between people and environments in order to achieve a better level of fit (Johnson & Rhodes, 2015). Germain and Gitterman also extend this concept to related ideas of adaptiveness highlighting concepts of resilience and unique personal differences (Germain and Gitterman, 2008). The concepts of “niche” and “habitat” describe where organisms can be found (habitat) and the position of organisms in a “community’s web of life” (niche) (Gitterman &Germain, p.56). The concept of niche is central to social work’s historic mission of social justice in that it attends to issues of power and social structures and variables such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

**Student Development Theory**

Student development theories emerge from psychosocial, cognitive, typology, and person-environment interaction theories (Chickering and Reisser, 1993) and build on other developmental theorists such as Erikson and faith development theorists such as Fowler, Wilber, Kohlberg and Gilligan (Chickering and Associates, 1986). Chickering’s seminal work on this topic was developed in 1969 and revised in 1993 in response to changing demographics (race, gender, age) of students between 1970-1990. While many theories of cognitive, social and moral development have traction today, Arthur Chickering’s student development theory complements
and extends from ecological theory by emphasizing the importance the interaction between student development and institutional variables.

A key assumption of Chickering’s work is that the college environment is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential (Garfield & David, 1986). Like Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Chickering’s student development theory has an epigenetic basis, which assumes that students have certain qualities, traits, and strengths that can be amplified or diminished by way of the institutional context. After identifying the seven vectors of student development, Chickering and Reisser situate these variables in the context the college experience: institution size, institutional objectives, curriculum, student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services.

Since the person in environment perspective is the basis for his theory, several key assumptions support this reciprocal relationship. First, Chickering’s theory assumes that “emotional, interpersonal and ethical development deserves equal billing with intellectual development” (Chickering and Reisser, 1993, p.39). Second, his theory is based on an optimistic view of human development that assumes a nurturing, challenging college environment will help students grow in “stature and substance” (p.40). Third, in order for students to develop all the gifts of human potential, we need to be able to see them whole and to believe in their essential worth (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Arthur Chickering’s student development provides a strong foundation for examining student development in light of the changing landscape of higher education.

**Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

This banded dissertation seeks to examine the role of student development in 21st century liberal education. Driven by ecological principles including adaptation and goodness of fit, each
of the three products seeks to more acutely understand how environmental conditions and context impact student learning and student development. Chickering’s student development theory reminds scholars that student growth occurs in not just the academic domain but in other social, emotional, spiritual and cultural arenas during the college years. Grounded by the principles of ecological theory, the three products examine the role of institutional and classroom context in student learning and development. Furthermore, the banded dissertation emphasizes the role of contemplative practices to improve self-awareness, mediate practice and content related stress in social work, and encourage metacognitive growth and critical thinking skills.

The three scholarly products in this banded dissertation use an ecological perspective to examine holistic student development with attention to: intercultural development, the role of contemplative practices, and the impact of trauma-informed pedagogy.

Social Work Education and Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

For almost two decades, scholars have been examining the impact of contemplative practices in higher education. Recently, the impact of meditation on academic performance, mental health and development of whole persons has received considerable attention (Shapiro et al, 2008). Wong (2013) suggests that contemplative pedagogy incorporates specific practices which are designed to “quiet the mind and foster a calm centeredness that cultivates a personal capacity for deep concentration, wise discernment and insight” as well as “shaking up one’s belief system and fostering a social justice consciousness” (p. 217). Dencev and Collister (2010) present contemplative pedagogy as a way for students to explore “whom they are, how they exist in the world and the effects of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors on the relationships and contexts within which they are situated” (p.179). This paper examines the ways in contemplative
practices and trauma-informed principles can mediate the impact of content related stress in social work education.

**Intercultural Development and Social Work Education in Liberal Arts Context**

One of the many domains in which students develop during the college years is by way of intercultural empathy and competence. The AAC&U’s “Essential Learning Outcomes” for liberal education emphasizes four key learning outcomes which include personal and social responsibility cultivated, in part, through intercultural knowledge and understanding (AACU, 2008). Similarly, the Council on Social Work Education acknowledges the importance of intercultural competence in EPAS 2: *Engaging Diversity and Difference* by stating “Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity (CSWE, 2015).” This paper analyzes three years of cohort data from 2013-2016 for 36 students majoring in social work who have completed the Intercultural Development Inventory. Utilizing pre and post-test measures, this paper describes changes in intercultural development over a two-year span.

**Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy**

This presentation bridges the literature on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices for a multidisciplinary audience with special attention to ecological variables including sociopolitical climate and institutional context. In a climate where increasing numbers of students are attending college with mental health diagnoses, educators in general, and social work educators in particular, cannot ignore the ways in which students’ past experiences with trauma impact their learning and psychosocial development in college. For some students, course related (content) stress can trigger past traumas that may have been otherwise avoided by the safety and security of their home environment. In order to develop best practices to serve
students on college campuses, those in higher education can learn from the work in community based social work practice ways to build trauma-informed care into teaching on college campus. The purpose of this presentation at the Academy for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education was to apply social work’s person in environment perspective and principles of trauma-informed care to address foster healthy student development.

Discussion

**Implications for Social Work Education**

Sage practitioners know that a single theory cannot fully explain the human experience. For this reason, social workers have long leveraged the benefits of the ecological perspective to illustrate the complex interrelationship between people and their environments. Once the unity of variables is apparent, social workers further examine component pieces by applying domain specific theories that provide greater clarity about potential interventions and outcomes. The best social work research and practice will advance through this ability to understand the unity of the whole and the unique dimensions of component parts. Implementing contemplative practices in the classroom can foster self-awareness, critical thinking and metacognitive skills all which are essential to effective and ethical practice.

Social Work education in the 21st century must be grounded by the ecological perspective and educators must be keenly attuned to the changes in both students and the environment. One of the many domains in which students develop during their time in college is by way of intercultural empathy and competence. The AAC&U’s “Essential Learning Outcomes” for liberal education emphasizes four key learning outcomes which include personal and social responsibility cultivated, in part, through intercultural knowledge and understanding (AACU, 2008). The goals for student learning at many universities, including my own, emphasize this as
one of the key learning goals for students. Similarly, at a national level, the Council on Social Work Education acknowledges the importance of intercultural competence in EPAS 2: *Engaging Diversity and Difference* by stating “Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity (CSWE, 2015).” It is clear that the larger scope of liberal education and the social work profession are all in agreement that intercultural development constitutes a critical area of knowledge and skill for undergraduate social work students. This manuscript invites social work educators to consider intercultural development as essential to both 21st century liberal education and social work practice.

We are at a pivotal moment in higher education and social work education has extraordinary potential to lead in terms of both rigorous academic study and professional preparation. With students and parents increasingly aware of the cost of higher education, social work must remain a vibrant and vital program on college campus and those in social work education are some of the best equipped to bridge the goals of rigorous academic study and professional preparation in higher education.

**Implications for Future Research**

Former President of Wellesley College, Diana Chapman Walsh, poses a provocative question in her 2006 book, *Trustworthy Leadership: Can we be the leaders we need our students to become?* Leaders in 21st century liberal education must forge a way forward that meets the demands for real world skills while emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge and cultivation of broad intellectual curiosity that are hallmarks of liberal education. British scholars Ronald Barnett and Kelly Coate pose two important questions to leaders in higher education:

“How does one articulate the importance of self-knowledge, orientation and relation to the world
to a future employer? How might a human being be developed so that it is adequate to a changing and uncertain world? ” (p. 108). As we think about ways in which we bridge the intellectual and professional goals of higher education, we must also think about the intersection between leadership development and adult development (Frizzell, Hoon & Banner, 2016). Considered in this way, Chapman Walsh’s question probes educators to consider not only knowledge and skills but also larger developmental questions about how one becomes a leader.

A college education serves many purposes, some of which are more salient than others in the minds of students and their parents. One of the purposes of liberal education affirmed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities is to promote intellectual and personal development for informed citizenship and success in a global economy. To this end, social work educators should continue to conduct empirical research using a mixed methods approach to more carefully examine the impact of contemplative practices on student learning and development. With nearly one-third of undergraduate college students arriving on campus with symptoms of a mental health challenge (Lipson, Gaddis, Heinze, Bech & Eisentberg, 2015) social worker educators cannot afford to ignore the impact of student mental health on learning and personal growth. Systematic implementation of contemplative practices in social work courses will allow for evaluation of successful models of teaching that foster academic, personal and social growth across the college years.
Comprehensive Reference List


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Social Work Education and Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

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Abstract

Trauma-informed care (TIC) has garnered considerable attention over the last two decades as neuroscientists and scholars have examined the implications of early childhood trauma across the lifespan. While social work students are preparing to work in trauma-informed environments, the principles of trauma-informed care have not been applied to the classroom environment. Contemplative practices are particularly relevant in social work education where students grapple with complex issues related to trauma. Contemplative practices have been noted to improve self-awareness, mediate practice and content related stress in social work, and have positive implications for metacognitive and critical thinking skills. This conceptual paper bridges the literature on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices and introduces trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy as a model for social work education.

*Keywords:* trauma-informed care, contemplative practices
Social Work Education and Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

Social work educators cannot avoid teaching about trauma: human suffering as a result of personal trauma, political or natural disasters is a common theme in our work. Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy (TICP) is a way of conceptualizing our teaching in social work that attends to our knowledge of student development, the potential for vicarious trauma among social work students, our knowledge of trauma-informed care, and the implications of contemplative practices on metacognition, self-awareness and mental health. Instructors embracing TICP intentionally utilize contemplative practices, such as mindfulness, mediation and contemplative introspection, to foster critical thinking, help bridge knowledge and experience, and encourage emotional regulation. It has always been imperative for social workers to cultivate self-reflection and self-knowledge for ethical practice. Social work educators know the importance of slow and reflective thinking and the importance of introspection and self-awareness for sound judgment and ethical practice.

While contemplative practices in higher education have received considerable attention over the last two decades, the early philosophy and principles undergirding the relevance for higher education dates back to at least 1890 and William James’ publication Principles of Psychology. It was here that James predicted the importance of contemplative practices in higher education when he wrote,

The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will…. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical direction for bringing it about (p. 185 as cited in Bush, 2011).
Contemplative practices are particularly relevant in social work education where students grapple with complex issues related to human suffering and trauma. For instance, trauma-informed care (TIC) and vicarious (or secondary) trauma continue to receive considerable attention in social work education and practice (Bloom, 2003; Carello & Butler, 2015; Bober & Regher, 2006; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Pearlman & McLan, 1995). While social work students are preparing to work in trauma-informed environments, it is imperative that social work educators also consider the ways in which these practices can be a part of a larger schema of trauma-informed teaching (Carello & Butler, 2015). Contemplative practices have been documented to improve self-awareness (Birnbaum, 2008; McGarrigle & Walsh; Napoli & Bonifas; Shier & Graham Wong, 2013), mediate practice and content related stress in social work (Birnbaum, 2008; McGarrigle & Walsh; Napoli & Bonifas, 2011; Shier & Graham, 2011; Wong, 2011) and have positive implications for metacognitive and critical thinking skills (Grace, 2011; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011; Shapiro, 2008; Wong, 2013). Still, only three studies have explored the implications of trauma-informed practices in higher education (Carello & Butler, 2014; Carello & Butler, 2015; McGavock & Spratt, 2014). Tricia Shalka (2015) argues trauma is the “elephant in the room” and that our “ability to be attuned to the impact of trauma is critical in creating trauma-informed spaces that better support students learning and development” (p. 23). Social work educators embracing and practicing trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy will be well positioned to provide leadership across the disciplines at institutions of higher education.

**Literature Review**

Social workers are on the frontlines providing services to individuals who have experienced trauma ranging from interpersonal violence to political warfare. Vicarious trauma
describes the cumulative impact on practitioners who are working with traumatized clients taking into account the interplay between the practitioner, client and workplace setting (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). While we are well aware of the impact of working with traumatized clients in social work practice, little attention has been given to the impact of traumatic course content on social work students (Cunningham, 2004). Meanwhile, in the field of social work practice, trauma-informed care has dominated the discourse on effective social work practice with both children and adults. While social work students are preparing to work in trauma-informed practice settings, the principles for creating such contexts have not yet been applied to the educational environment in social work education (Carello & Butler, 2014).

Student Development Theory

Arthur Chickering’s Student Development Theory provides the most comprehensive view of student development written in the second half of the 20th century. Chickering and Reisser (1993) argue that student development occurs across seven vectors: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. A key assumption of Chickering’s work is that the college environment is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential (Garfield & David, 1986). Like Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Chickering’s student development theory has an epigenetic basis, which assumes that students have certain qualities, traits, and strengths that can be amplified or diminished by way of the institutional context. As a result, Chickering suggests that seven institutional variables influence student development and growth: institution size, institutional objectives, curriculum, student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services.
Vicarious Trauma

From interpersonal violence to natural disaster and political warfare, it is commonly accepted that social work takes place in contexts in which trauma is pervasive. While the curriculum makes this apparent to students, little is known about the effect that exposure to traumatic material in social work courses has on students. In order to be resilient and avoid burnout in both the classroom and practice contexts, social work education must prepare students to engage in necessary strategies for self-care. Research suggests that risk factors for vicarious traumatization in the classroom include: being new to the field with little experience with traumatized clients (Aglilias, 2012; Cunningham, 2004; Pearlman & McIan, 1995), exposure to intrusive imagery and client experiences with trauma (Aglilias, 2012; Cunningham, 2004), personal history of trauma (Aglilias, 2012; Cunningham, 2004; Killian, 2008) and a low level of self-awareness (Aglilias, 2012; Killian, 2008). Several studies illuminate the importance of teaching about how to work with trauma survivors (Breckenridge & James, 2010; Aglilias, 2012), the psychological effects of working with survivors (Grasso, Cohen, Moser, Hajcak, Foa & Simons, 2011; McCann & Pearlman, 1990), and strategies for self-care and resiliency (Aglilias, 2012; Cunningham, 2004). The potential implications for vicarious trauma, particularly for undergraduate students with little to no professional experience, highlights the importance of TICP.

Addressing vicarious trauma in the classroom requires a systems perspective that attends to the personal characteristics of students and the classroom environment through both course content and pedagogical methods. Cunningham (2004) makes a compelling argument that rather than avoiding distressful emotional reactions to client trauma, educators should focus on the empathic relationship as a way to understand vulnerability in order to reduce rather than
eliminate risk. Still, building resilience by educating about self-care and vicarious trauma, developing a safe and supportive classroom environment, providing opportunities for debriefing and reflection and using trauma theory to move from an emotional focus to a cognitive focus (Agllias, 2012; Cunningham, 2004) are critical elements of teaching about trauma in social work education. Understanding vicarious trauma is essential to TICP as instructors consider the implications of past experiences when studying trauma in order to facilitate understanding and empathy while not minimizing or diluting the academic integrity of the course material.

**Contemplative Practices**

For nearly two decades, scholars have examined the impact of contemplative practices on academic performance, mental health and development of whole persons (Shapiro et al, 2008). Several authors articulate the importance of a holistic approach to higher education, which emphasizes a range of pedagogical and institutional strategies to improve both student learning, and social-emotional-spiritual wellness (Grace, 2001; McGribble & Walsh, 2011; Sherman & Siporin, 2008; Trammel, 2015; Wong, 2013). Denceve and Collister (2010) present contemplative pedagogy as a way for students to explore “whom they are, how they exist in the world and the effects of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors on the relationships and contexts within which they are situated” (p. 179).

Contemplative introspection, meditation, and mindfulness are three methods for incorporating contemplative practices in the classroom (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Lynn, 2010). The use of contemplative introspection, for example, changes the students’ relationship to the material allowing them to have a deeper understanding of both the material and themselves in the process (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Mindfulness exercises and meditation encourages deeper
learning by emphasizing attention and fostering non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and feelings (Birnbaum, 2008; Lynn, 2010).

**Self-awareness.** Birnbaum and Birnbaum (2008) suggest that self-awareness changes through mindfulness practices as a result of an enhanced ability to transcend consciousness and gain insights into oneself, letting go of varied defenses, and trusting one’s ability to be “in” an experience. Similarly, students in an 8-week mindfulness training group reported increased ability to understand and observe the self and explore relationship with others (Birnbaum, 2008). Wong’s narrative account of two students who participated in a mindfulness course highlighted the ways in which contemplative practices allowed students to see the wholeness in one’s self and the ability to see that wholeness in clients (2013). These results with students mirror findings with social work practitioners who note that mindfulness based interventions increase internal and external awareness of the self (McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011; Shier & Graham, 2011). England (1986) suggests that “social work is a matter of intuitive understanding that is “unusually sound, unusually fluent, and accessible and subject to unusually careful evaluation” (p.108 as cited in Reupert, 2006). Ongoing introspection, self-awareness and self-care are strategies for careful evaluation that is central to both self-understanding and effective practice. Furthermore, a deeply rooted sense of self (cultivated through contemplative introspection, mindfulness and meditation) is critical for effective social work practice.

**Mental health and practice related stress.** A second major theme across the literature was the impact of contemplative practices in addressing issues of work and academic related stress, burnout and resilience (Birnbaum, 2008; McGarrigle & Walsh; Napoli & Bonifas, 2011; Shier & Graham, 2011; Wong, 2013). From an initial sample of 646 Canadian social workers, Shier and Graham (2011) reported that five practices and attitudes impacted overall well-being
among social work practitioners: an ability to reflect on the developing self, a sense of control and openness with one’s life, an internal and external awareness of self, reflection on pivotal moments in one’s life, and maintaining an individually determined work-life balance (Graham and Shier, 2011). Likewise, McGarrible and Walsh (2011) suggest that workplace context contributes to one’s attunement to the importance of self-care practices and the importance of taking time for contemplative practices. Birnbaum (2008) notes that mindfulness is critical for social work education in preparing students for the work of a reflective practitioner and helping them mediate the content related stress through the regulation of emotions in social work education.

Metacognition and critical thinking. The importance of assessing student learning and evaluating academic performance has led to renewed interest in the study of metacognitive skills in higher education (Akyol, 2013). Although specific definitions vary, most authors agree that metacognition consists of knowledge of one’s own knowledge and patterns of thinking and ability to monitor and regulate one’s processes of acquiring knowledge and the corresponding cognitive and affective states of being (Hacker, 1998 as cited in Akyol, 2013). McGarrigle and Walsh (2011) suggest that contemplative practices engage these metacognitive skills by promoting “thinking, questioning, reflection and concentrating on the self” (p. 214). Mindfulness practices in education foster awareness of the intersection between being and doing (Wong, 2013) as well as the ability to orient attention, process information quickly and accurately and enhance academic achievement (Shapiro, 2008). Finally, Grace (2011) articulates the importance of self-knowledge and reflection for enhancing critical thinking when she poetically writes “critical thinking without truthful self-knowledge is like a blindfolded archer shooting arrows” (p. 115).
Trauma-Informed Care and Trauma-Informed Teaching

For over two decades, scholars and practitioners in both social work and public health have examined the relationship between early childhood experiences and risky behaviors that can contribute to disease and disability in adulthood (ACES 360, 2012). A decade after the first research was conducted in California (Felitti & Anda, 2009), Fallot and Harris (2009) coined the phrase “trauma-informed care” to prompt a paradigm shift in clinical practice. Carello and Butler (2015) define “trauma-informed” as a service context that operates from an understanding of “the ways in which violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they can accommodate trauma survivors’ needs and are consonant with health and recovery” (p.264). Trauma-informed organizations demonstrate their commitment by adhering to five foundational principles of trauma-informed care: safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and choice (Wolf, Green, Nochajski, Mendel & Kusmaul, 2014; Bath, 2008). These principles are infused into the trauma-informed organization and experienced by both clients and staff. The result of this paradigm shift is that rather than asking, “What is wrong with you?” practitioners in trauma-informed environments ask, “What happened to you?” (Wolf et al., 2014)

This paradigm shift in social work practice requires social work educators to teach about trauma-informed care in social work courses. In 2012, the Council on Social Work Education published Advanced Social Work Practice in Trauma to assist social work programs in aligning the principles of trauma-informed care with the educational and policy standards. This leadership by CSWE reinforces the significance of this paradigm shift in social work practice and the imperative to prepare students to work and lead trauma-informed organizations. The
principles of trauma-informed care easily align with social work values, empowerment, empathy and strengths based interventions. However, Carello and Butler (2015) rightly argue that teaching about trauma-informed care is not the same as teaching from a stance of trauma-informed care. While some social work courses are beginning to teach about trauma-informed care, little to no research has been conducted on the use of trauma-informed pedagogy in teaching social work. As social work educators, we must also consider the ways in which our teaching is grounded by these same principles of trauma-informed care

Carello and Butler’s (2015) seminal exploratory study in this area outlines domains for creating learning environments that promote predictability and safety without compromising intellectual and academic rigor. These domains include consideration of student characteristics, course content, instructor delivery, assignment policies, classroom characteristics and the teaching and modeling of self-care (Carello & Butler, 2015). The authors report that students were receptive to the incorporation of trauma-informed principles and noted that developing a self-care plan, late day policies for assignments and non-judgmental feedback on drafts was most valuable (Carello & Butler, 2015).

**Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy**

TICP acknowledges the impact of students’ past experiences, particularly those related to trauma, abuse and neglect, in their ability to engage empathically with clients, care for the self and develop the capacity for critical thinking in social work. TICP attends to three domains of student development—managing emotions, critical thinking and bridging knowledge and experience—through the intentional use of contemplative practices aligned with best practices in trauma-informed care. Like trauma-informed practice, TICP is a paradigm for thinking about teaching in a way that fosters safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and choice.
In addition to these core principles, SAMHSA (n.d) also includes peer support as a key tenet of trauma-informed practice. TICP undergirds an instructor’s teaching practices by applying the principles of trauma-informed care to the classroom in order to foster holistic student development through contemplative practices.

**Case Example: TICP and Crisis Intervention**

Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy was the foundation for implementing a month-long seminar on Crisis Intervention and Interpersonal Violence for first year students at a small liberal arts college. The class met for seventeen consecutive weekdays for three to six hours. Six of the seventeen days were dedicated to a domestic violence and sexual assault volunteer training facilitated by local organizations. Although the course had been taught by this instructor on seven previous occasions, the selection of texts, design of the course, and course delivery were informed by trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy. As such, when designing the course, the instructor was mindful of student development, trauma related content, trauma-informed principles and contemplative practices.

Focusing on classroom climate was a critical component when re-designing the course. Two key changes were implemented in order to build a sense of safety, trustworthiness, and peer support in the community. First, each class session started with a mindfulness based exercise. This ranged from reflective reading to reflective introspection. After the first three class sessions, the instructor invited the students to lead the group in a mindfulness based exercise at the beginning of class. Second, each student was assigned to a small “home group” comprised of five students. The purpose of the home group was to create space for more focused, intimate and reflective conversations about the course material outside of class. Occasionally, the instructor gave the home groups a small task or assignment but the group was mostly designated...
as a student-led space for conversation about the course. These home groups gave students an opportunity to process emotions, expand critical thinking, build empathy, and bridge knowledge and experience.

A second key change was in the selection of texts. While many of the readings for the course focused on domestic violence and sexual assault, two key texts anchored the course: *Trauma and Recovery* (1997) by Judith Herman and *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* (2009) by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky. Herman’s classic book provided a framework for understanding the scope of trauma and the evolution of trauma theory while studying a specific area of trauma: domestic violence and sexual assault. *Trauma Stewardship* emphasized the importance of self care allowing the instructor to reinforce the importance of managing emotions, critical thinking and focused attention to bridging knowledge and experience. *Trauma Stewardship* (2009) also emphasized the importance of micro cultures in fostering both encouragement and accountability—principles the instructor was able to reinforce in the classroom norms and practices.

**Instructor Reflections:**

When implementing this course, the author identified the similarities and differences between the previous and current iterations of the course. First, the course was designed and taught to first year students primarily between the ages of 18-20 each time. Second, the course description was unchanged. Third, each iteration of the course included the domestic violence and sexual assault volunteer training component. Finally, the course consistently included a daily reflective academic journaling assignment.

The introduction of home groups, selection of alternative texts, and implementation of mindfulness based methods at the start of class were some of the most notable changes.
Students embraced the idea of home groups and utilized these outside of class for smaller group discussions frequently. Students came up with creative names for their home groups and often reflected in their daily journals about the conversations and relationships they were developing that fostered deep learning. Finally, beginning each class with reflective reading, attention to breathing or focused attention gave students an opportunity to center themselves and prepare for class. The predictable course structure provided a sense of safety even when the course content focused on issues of interpersonal trauma.

Student comments on course evaluations echoed these observations. Most notable in the comments was a sense of safety, trustworthiness and peer support in the classroom. These include comments about the participation of classmates and the facilitation of the course that was inclusive of all students. Several students also note the significance of the mindfulness exercises at the beginning of class to help with centering and focus. Several students noted the emphasis on self care and emotional regulation. One student wrote, “an important part of this course is that students are encouraged to take care of themselves which is essential when dealing with issues like domestic violence”. A final theme in the student comments focused on the classroom climate, texts and guest speakers who helped foster a depth of understanding. As one student wrote, “not just to know something but to fully understand it”.

**Implications**

This paper bridges the literature on trauma-informed care and contemplative practices in social work education in order to build a stronger practice model for purposively integrating contemplative practices to enhance student development in social work education. The use of contemplative practices compliments and enhances students’ ability to engage in the learning process by enhancing self-awareness, alleviating work and academic related stress, improving
subjective well-being and providing conditions for metacognitive development and critical thinking. While there are many studies on contemplative practices, none link these findings with the broader bank of literature on student development theory and trauma-informed care. Based on practice experiences with trauma-informed care, social work educators are well positioned to create a model of education that will proactively respond to the growing mental health crisis on college campuses by attending to the social, emotional and intellectual growth of students.

**Mental Health and College Campuses**

Ko, Ford, Kassam-Adam, Berkowitz, Wilson & Wong (2008) argue that a key challenge in k-12 education is balancing the primary mission of education with the reality that many students are dealing with traumatic stress that impacts their ability to engage in the learning process. The growing mental health crisis on college campuses is a clear statement of similar challenges in higher education. A comprehensive review of the data on college mental health demonstrates that nearly one-third of undergraduate college students exhibit symptoms of a mental health problem such as depression, generalized anxiety or suicidality (Lipson, Gaddis, Heinze, Bech & Eisentberg, 2015). While the genesis of these symptoms is not clear, it is apparent that faculty must consider ways to balance the primary mission of education with the emotional and mental health needs of the students entering their classrooms. TICP is one way that social work educators can attend to the past experiences of students without compromising the academic rigor or content of the course.

**Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) 2015**

While this paper introduces a conceptual framework there is a need for further research on the relationship between TICP and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS 2015). While TICP has the potential to
enhance teaching for each of the nine competencies, TICP as described in this paper is most
closely aligned with the goals of Competency 1 (Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior)
and Competency 4 (Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice)
(CSWE, 2015). Certainly the integration of mindfulness, meditation and contemplative
introspection also helps establish a “way of being” that enhances a social worker’s ability to
engage, assess, intervene and evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations
and communities (EPAS 6, 7, 8, and 9) (CSWE, 2015). Educators embracing TICP should
conduct research to articulate more specifically how contemplative pedagogies align with the
EPAS standards established by the Council on Social Work Education.

**Bridging Knowledge and Experience (theory and practice)**

Finally, social work education has both academic and experiential goals that are
advanced and achieved through the marriage of the community and the academy. Building on
this legacy, social work educators and scholars should continue to refine the goals and strategies
for trauma-informed care as they apply to both the classroom and practice setting. This may
include, but is not limited to, qualitative research with practitioners in trauma-informed
organizations and students who complete their practicums in trauma-informed organizations.
These students and professionals are well positioned to provide insight and recommendations for
the integration of trauma-informed practices in social work education.

**Conclusion**

The heart of social work rests on the investigation of the relationship between people and
their physical and social environments. In both practice and research, social workers use a
multidisciplinary lens in order to understand adaptation and resiliency and the need for both
individual and system changes. This ability to attend to the needs of the individual within their
environment by assessing the most appropriate target of change is unique to the historical narrative of social work practice. This holistic perspective should compel our work as social work educators to attend to not only the knowledge and skills but also the social and emotional dimensions of our teaching that promote self-reflection and self-knowledge for ethical practice.

If higher education has multiple goals, perhaps Steven Glazer is accurate when he writes that “education can serve as the core of a lifelong journey towards wholeness, rather than merely an accumulation of facts, figures or skill” (Glazer, 1999). While knowledge and skills respond to external pressures to prepare students for jobs, Ronald Barnett and Kelly Coate ask us to consider “how one articulates the importance of self-knowledge, orientation and relation to the world to a future employer? How might a human being be developed so that it is adequate to a changing and uncertain world” (2005, p.108). These questions about student identity formation are critical if higher education is to provide them with a rich context for intellectual, spiritual, social and civic growth.
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Intercultural Development and Social Work Education in a Liberal Arts Context

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Abstract

As students prepare to work in an increasingly global context, the necessity of intercultural competence is more urgent than ever for those in higher education. This is a call to all those in higher education but especially faculty in preprofessional programs like social work where intercultural development and competence is essential to effective and ethical practice. This research examined pre and post test results of 36 students enrolled in an undergraduate social work program at a residential, liberal arts college of the church. Seventy-five percent of students increased their intercultural development between their sophomore and senior years while enrolled in both liberal arts and social work education courses. One hundred percent of those who lived out of the country for a month or more increased their scores. This research presents one empirical measure that can be used to assess intercultural development in social work education and beyond.

Keywords: intercultural development, social work
As students prepare to work in an increasingly global context, the necessity of intercultural competence is more urgent than ever for those in higher education. In her June 2016 statement, former President of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Carol Geary Schneider stated, “Diversity remains an essential component of educational excellence and of liberal education in the 21st century.” The AAC&U’s “Essential Learning Outcomes” for liberal education emphasizes four key learning outcomes which include personal and social responsibility cultivated, in part, through intercultural knowledge and understanding (AACU, 2008). This charge translates into goals for student learning at many universities which emphasize cultural awareness and understanding as essential to student learning. Similarly, at a national level, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) acknowledges the importance of intercultural competence in EPAS Competency 2: Engaging Diversity and Difference by stating “Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity (CSWE, 2015).” It is clear that leaders in higher education, and social work education in particular, agree that intercultural development and competence constitutes a critical area of knowledge and skill for undergraduate students.

While social work espouses the importance of cultural competency (CSWE, 2015; NASW, 2015) few empirical studies have been conducted utilizing intercultural development as a measure of students’ growth in undergraduate social work education. Current typically measures changes in cultural competence before and after taking a course on cultural diversity (Blocker et al, 2016), multicultural competence (Pivorienė & Ūselytė, 2013), immersion or study abroad experiences (Quinn-Lee & Olson-MacBride, 2012) or attitudes toward a specific
population. The purpose of this research was to explore student intercultural development between the second and fourth year in an undergraduate social work education program.

This paper presents the findings from three cohorts of students between 2013-2016. All 36 students were enrolled in an accredited social work program at a small faith-based liberal arts college in the Midwest and took the Intercultural Development Inventory® at the beginning and end of their involvement in the social work program. Social work educators must continue to grow our body of knowledge by engaging in empirical research to better understand the ways in which the social work curriculum impacts student intercultural development. Furthermore, social work educators should continue to note the ways in which additional learning experiences (study abroad, domestic study, engagement with diverse populations) impacts student intercultural development at the undergraduate level.

In his book *Healing the Heart of Democracy* (2011) Parker Palmer eloquently describes the importance of growth-producing tensions when he writes,

“...we regard tension as a condition to be relieved, not an energy to hold in our hearts. Tension creates stress, which leads to ill health, so we must reduce or eliminate these enemies of well-being. That is good advice if our stress comes from a toxic workplace, an abusive relationship, or some other assault on body or soul. But the stress that comes from being stretched by alien ideas, values and experiences is a different sort. .....refuse to hold stress of this sort, and our society as well as our souls will suffer from shrinkage and stagnation.” (p.13)

As social work educators, we must help students live into this tension. Shenaar-Golan and Gutman (2013) argue that curiosity is evoked by “unfamiliarity, novelty, complexity, ambiguity and conflict [between new and previous knowledge]” (p.351). As students move toward this normative disequilibrium it is essential to have a way of measuring intercultural growth and identify specific strategies that will facilitate this growth as a student and practitioner. As faculty prepare students for global social work practice, we can improve student learning and
competence by implementing specific pedagogical strategies designed to enhance intercultural development. If a goal of social work education is to help students engage diversity and difference (CSWE, 2015) then educators should document intercultural development and competence by way of empirical measures.

**Literature Review**

Over the last decade there has been no shortage of research across disciplines highlighting the importance of diversity, cultural understanding, and cultural competence to prepare students to interact in an increasingly global context. While “cultural competence” seems to have much traction, the notion that one can arrive at a place in which they are fully competent with a range of diverse populations seems to be an unrealistic assumption and goal. Rather, cultural competence is a lifelong journey in which students, practitioners and educators become increasingly self-aware through direct and indirect experiences that help us see the limits of our knowledge, abilities and understanding of cultural differences. Saunders, Haskins and Vasquez (2013) reference the early work of Cross (1988) in describing cultural competence along a developmental continuum from cultural destructiveness to cultural competence and highlight the importance of considering growth not only for students but also for faculty. As a result, Saunders et al. (2013) suggest that cultural competence is an “elusive goal.” Instead, social work educators can utilize a developmental framework for understanding intercultural competence as one domain of student development to improve social work education. Such a model helps beginning social workers understand their level of development and make intentional choices about how they may improve their intercultural knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. In turn, undergraduate social work education can produce more culturally sensitive and aware practitioners who strive to cultivate competency throughout their careers as they engage with
diverse populations. Building on the foundation of student development theories, higher education can address intercultural development as a domain of holistic student development rather than an isolated skill.

**Student Development Theories**

Student development theories emerge from psychosocial, cognitive, typology, and person-environment interaction theories (Chickering and Reisser, 1993) and build on other developmental theorists such as Erikson and faith development theorists such as Fowler, Wilber, Kohlberg and Gilligan (Chickering & Associates, 1986). Arthur Chickering (1986, 1993) presents a theory of student development that highlights the relationship between student development and institutional characteristics. While many theories of cognitive, social and moral development have traction today, Arthur Chickering’s student development theory is one of the most oft-cited in the literature in student affairs and provides the most comprehensive overview of the interaction between student development and institutional variables.

Chickering argues that student development occurs across seven vectors: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. A key assumption of Chickering’s work is that the college environment is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential (Garfield & David, 1986). Like Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Chickering’s student development theory has an epigenetic basis, which assumes that students have certain qualities, traits, and strengths that can be amplified or diminished by way of the institutional context. As a result, Chickering suggests that seven institutional variables influence student development and growth: institution size, institutional
objectives, curriculum, student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services.

Liberal arts colleges are aptly suited to utilize the institutional context and broad educational goals to encourage and promote intercultural development among students. Inherent to a liberal arts education is the focus on a holistic approach to student growth and development. While much has been written about high-impact practices in the liberal arts (Chickering & Gamson, 1999; Kuh, 2008) much less is known about the relationship between these practices and intercultural development (Salisbury & Goodman, 2009). Over a decade ago, King & Magolda (2005) argued that a holistic approach to human development must be the foundation for integrating intercultural development with collegiate learning outcomes. Salisbury and Goodman (2009) suggest that diverse experiences, integrative learning experiences and clear and integrated instruction can help students advance intercultural competence.

Social Work Education and Practice

Social work education and practice have a rich and deep appreciation for diversity and cultural competence (National Association of Social Workers, 2015b). The National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics (1996) section 1.05 illuminates the importance of cultural competence and social diversity in social work practice. This directive emphasizes the importance of awareness and knowledge of the ways in which diversity impacts a client’s experience and full inclusion in a community. In a 2015 publication Standards and Indicators of Cultural Competence the NASW defines cultural competence as “a heightened consciousness of how culturally diverse populations experience their uniqueness and deal with their differences and similarities within a larger social context” (p.10) The NASW (2015b) further suggests that the cultivation of cultural competence requires social workers to “examine
their own cultural backgrounds and identities while seeking out the necessary knowledge, skills and values that can enhance the delivery of services to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, relation, age or disability” (p.65).

Similarly, the Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) 2015 Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (EPAS) explicitly state the importance of diversity in understanding identity formation. This understanding of diversity, discrimination, and mechanisms of oppression is explicitly found in three key areas according to EPAS 2015: social worker’s ability to apply and communicate an understanding, an ability to learn from clients’ experiences, and self-awareness and self-regulation to avoid bias (CSWE, 2015). Both the educational (CSWE) and practice (NASW) domains of social work emphasize the importance of ongoing professional growth related to intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills which support the focus on developmental and process goals rather than presuming a cultural competence is a fixed state at which one arrives.

**Intercultural Development**

One of the emerging debates in the literature on intercultural development is the degree to which various models assess not only knowledge and attitudes but also *competence* in practice skills to engage diverse populations (Matveev & Merz, 2014). For example, in Landerman’s review of the literature on intercultural competence, she argued that definitions are inconsistent and that the literature rarely addressed one’s ability to apply a specific set of skills to demonstrate this competence (as cited in King & Magolda, 2005). This research suggests that while intercultural competence may be difficult to empirically measure among 20-year-old undergraduate students, intercultural *development* is essential to building *competency*. 
**Definitions.**

Authors use a variety of terms to address diversity education and questions about cultural competency, multicultural competence and intercultural development in higher education. Deardorf (2006) argues that intercultural competence is a complex construct that includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This is consistent with what Cournoyer (2011) refers to as “inclusive cultural empathy” consisting of three components: affective acceptance *(attitudes)*, intellectual understanding *(knowledge)*, and appropriate interaction *(skills)*. There does, however, appear to be consensus around the idea that cultural competence is a lifelong process that is cultivated through increased knowledge, personal experience and self-awareness and self-regulation to avoid bias. Thus a developmental growth model is embraced by many authors examining cultural competency (Deardorf, 2006; Saunders, Haskins & Vasquez, 2013; Fisher-Borne, Caine & Martin, 2015). Borne, Caine and Martin (2015) offer a critique of cultural competence and instead prefer cultural humility to reflect the essential lifelong learning and reflection necessary in this area of personal development.

Deardorf (2006) suggests that once intercultural competence is defined broadly, each discipline must engage in a series of questions that help direct the educational goals based on the knowledge and skills necessary to work in that field and a method for assessment. For social work education, the purpose and relevance of cultural competency is explicitly stated in both the CSWE EPAS 2015 and the NASW Code of Ethics. Questions about assessment, however, remain elusive in the social work curriculum as we continue to grapple with ways of measuring knowledge, values and skills related to intercultural competency. Revisiting cultural competence as a journey rather than a destination directs us to use measures that assess developmental growth rather than a specific set of skills. Driven by the developmental imperative that is explicit
in the CSWE EPAS 2015 standards, social work educators should adopt tools that illuminate students’ developmental growth in the area of intercultural development.

**Measures of Intercultural Development**

Matveev and Merz (2014) conducted an analysis of intercultural competency assessment tools and identified ten tools that measure intercultural competency among one or more domains: cognitive, affective or behavioral. Matveev and Merz (2014) identified cognitive dimensions to include people’s thoughts, attitudes, and interpretations including their level of open-mindedness and flexibility. Affective measures included feelings, moods, and emotions while behavioral indicators included action and social exchange with a particular emphasis on experiences with a foreign culture (Matveev & Merz, 2014).

**Intercultural Development Inventory.**

Over nearly three decades, Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) have developed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)® to reliably measure the stages of development based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993). The DMIS proposes six developmental positions moving from ethnocentrism (denial, defense, minimization) to ethno relativism (acceptance, adaptation, integration) (Hammer et al, 2003). In the analysis by Matveev and Merz (2014) the IDI® was noted to emphasize primarily cognitive dimensions of intercultural competence. The IDI has been used in a range of contexts from educational to corporate settings and has been noted to measure both intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity.

**Method**

This research utilized a secondary data analysis method to review pre and post test scores on the IDI between 2013 to 2016. Between 2013 to 2016, 92 students completed the pretest. Of
these 92 students, 36 completed the post-test. There were three reasons that only 36 of 92 participants completed the post-test: (1) attrition, (2) incomplete data collection and (3) not yet reaching point in time survey. Seventeen students either transferred schools or changed majors (attrition). Fifteen students were in a cohort in which the post-test was inadvertently missed (incomplete data collection). Twenty-four students completed the pre-test but have not yet reached the practicum when they will take the post-test.

Sample

All students were enrolled in an undergraduate social work program at a residential liberal arts college in the Midwest. The majority (n=34) were between the age of 18-21 at the time of pretest. Two students were between the ages of 22-30. At the time of post-test, all students were between the ages of 22-30. Students completed the IDI pre and post test as a requirement of the social work program. The social work program has adopted a developmental approach to understanding intercultural development and competency to adhere to requirements of the Council on Social Work Education.

Setting

The data were gathered over a three-year period at a small, residential liberal arts college in the Midwest. Students took the pretest IDI in a Social Work Practice I course (Fundamentals of Social Work Practice) after completing either Introduction to Social Work and Social Welfare or Social Work Field Experience. While the majority of students were in their second year, some were first-year students and a few were juniors. While this is typically the first course students take after selecting social work as a college major, some students change their major after taking this course.
The liberal arts curriculum of this college requires students to take two-thirds of their total credits outside of the major. The social work program at this college has been accredited since 1978. Diversity education and cultural competency have been an essential component of the Council on Social Work Education’s last two iterations of the Educational and Policy Accreditation Standards (2008, 2015). While students follow a predictable pattern of courses in the social work major, students select a range of courses to fulfill the all-college requirements for the degree. Also, approximately 75% of students at this institution study abroad for a month, semester or year during the four years. While the majority of students come from Minnesota (34%), Iowa (31%) and Wisconsin (13%), 9% of students are American Multicultural and 6% are international students.

**Data Collection**

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a 50 item questionnaire that tracks a number of variables related to an individual’s intercultural development. For this study, the researcher was most interested in the perceived orientation, developmental orientation, orientation gap, and the level of cultural disengagement. In addition to this information, the research tracked time spent living outside the country (range zero to 10+ years) at the time of pre-test and post-test. The IDI reports scores on a developmental continuum that has five points between monocultural mindset and intercultural mindset (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003). These five points include: denial, polarization (defense or reversal), minimization, acceptance, and adaptation.

Individual reports identify the individual’s position on this developmental continuum. The perceived orientation indicates where the individual places oneself along the developmental continuum. The developmental orientation is the individual’s primary orientation toward
diversity and difference as assessed by the IDI. The orientation gap is the difference in score between the perceived and developmental orientations. A perceived orientation score of seven points higher than the developmental orientation suggests an overestimation of one’s developmental cultural competency. A perceived orientation of seven points lower than the developmental orientation suggests an underestimation of intercultural competence. Cultural disengagement describes the individual’s level of connection to one’s cultural group.

Data Analysis

The researcher used exclusively descriptive statistics in SPSS to identify changes from pre to post-test. Measures of central tendency including mean, median, and mode for both pre and post tests were calculated and compared. The researcher was primarily interested in changes in developmental orientation from pre to post test (growth) and narrowing of the gap between the perceived and developmental orientations at post test. The higher developmental orientation score indicates growth in intercultural development and the narrowing of the orientation gap suggests that a student’s self-awareness about intercultural competence increased. In addition to these changes, the researcher also noted the relationship between time living outside the country and growth in intercultural development.

Protection of Human Participants.

The original IDI data were collected as part of assessment requirements for accredited social work programs. The researcher requested institutional IRB approval to use the secondary data analysis method for more broadly understanding and student intercultural development in a social work program at a liberal arts college. While student names were attached to the IDI reports at both pre-test and post-test, once pre and post-test data were aligned data were de-identified by replacing student names with a participant number.
Results

Between Fall 2013 and Spring 2016 (three full academic years), thirty-six students completed the IDI pre and post test. Each of the thirty-six students completed the IDI pretest while enrolled in Social Work Practice I and the post test when enrolled in the Field Seminar in the final semester. These two courses anchor the social work program as Practice I marks the entrance into the major and Field Seminar marks completion of the social work major. An additional twenty-four students have completed the pre-test and are expected to complete the post-test in seminar spring 2017 or spring 2018.

Demographics

At the time of pre-test, thirty-three of the students were between the ages of 18-21; two students were between the ages of 22-30 and one student was between 31-40. At the time of post test, 28 students were between the ages of 22-30 while seven were between 18-21 and one was 31-40. Student gender was representative of the social work major. Just over eighty percent (n=29) of the students were women. At the time of pretest 26 of the students had never lived outside the country while four had lived outside the country less than six months, two had lived outside the country 7-11 months, and four had lived outside the county more than six years. Seven students identified as a minority population in the United States and three hold a passport from a country other than the United States.

Developmental Orientation, Perceived Orientation and Orientation Gap

The IDI is a validated instrument that measures intercultural development based on the DMIS developmental continuum originally developed by Bennett in 1993 (Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003). While the IDI includes some measures, for the purpose of understanding growth in intercultural development among social work students between the second and fourth
years, the researcher was most interested in changes in the developmental orientation, perceived orientation, and the orientation gap. The developmental orientation is the individual’s primary orientation toward diversity and difference as assessed by the IDI. The perceived orientation indicates where the individual places oneself along the developmental continuum. The orientation gap marks the difference between the perceived and developmental orientations. A score of more than 7 points is considered significant and is most likely to the participant being surprised by his or her developmental orientation score because he or she has overestimated his or her intercultural development.

**Changes in Developmental Orientation and Perceived Orientation**

Table 2.1 represents mean scores at the time of pretest and post test for the full cohort of students (N=36) and two sub groups within the sample. The first subgroup represents the seventy-five percent (n=27) of students who had a higher developmental orientation score at post test. The second subgroup consists of 25% of the students (n=9) who reported living outside the country between the time of pre to post test.

In the full cohort of students (N=36) the average developmental orientation score increased by 10.09 points from 97.56 at the time of pretest to 107.65 at post-test. The mean score for perceived orientation also increased by 4.9 points and the orientation gap decreased by 4.94 points. Among the seventy-five percent of students (n=27) who did see an increase in developmental orientation, the mean increase was 15.98 points. This group of students also had an increase of perceived orientation averaging 6.51 points and a decrease in the orientation gap of 8.88 points. The sample also included nine students who reported that they lived outside of the country between the time of pretest and post test. Among these students, 100% experienced an increase in the developmental orientation and the average increase was 17.1 points. The
perceived orientation also increased on average by 18.68 points and the orientation gap
decreased by 9.48 points.

**Table 2.1: Perceived orientation, developmental orientation and orientation gap changes from pretest to post test**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students (N=36)</td>
<td>119.20</td>
<td>97.56</td>
<td>24.74</td>
<td>124.1</td>
<td>107.65</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase DO (n=27)</td>
<td>117.69</td>
<td>95.24</td>
<td>26.16</td>
<td>124.2</td>
<td>111.22</td>
<td>17.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lived outside country (n=9)</td>
<td>111.42</td>
<td>98.74</td>
<td>23.78</td>
<td>130.1</td>
<td>115.84</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from this study indicate that at the time of pre-test, most participants were in the stage of “minimization” (n=23). Three students were at the stage of “denial”, four students were in “polarization”, six were in “acceptance” and none had reached the developmental level of “adaptation”. The range of scores at pretest was 58.32 (denial) to 120.57 (acceptance). At the time of post-test, the majority of students were still at the stage of minimization (n=20). None of the students were in the stage of denial, four were at polarization, eight were at acceptance and four were at adaptation. The range of scores at post-test was 75.78 (polarization) to 137.82 (adaptation). At the time of post test, the lowest score in the range had increased by nearly 20 points and the top end of the range similarly increased by nearly 17 points. These results are illustrated in Table 2.2.
Table 2.3 Changes in Developmental Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Developmental Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
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<td>Minimization2</td>
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<td>Minimization 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polarization</td>
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<td>Denial</td>
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Discussion

For over four decades the Council on Social Work Education has charged social work programs with attending to students’ abilities to work with diverse populations in the accreditation standards for social work education. Also, the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics (1996) illuminates the importance of cultural competence and social diversity in social work practice. As social workers work in an increasingly global context, this will be more critical than ever. The findings from this small case study sample of students at a residential, liberal arts, faith-based college can be instructive for thinking about 21st century social work education and the future of residential liberal arts colleges.

Student Development and the Liberal Arts

A key assumption of Chickering’s work is that the college environment is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential and most certainly this is true at residential liberal arts colleges of the church where questions about optimal institution size, institutional
objectives, curriculum along with student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services are at the heart of college wide discussions about institutional effectiveness. While intercultural development is just one area of student growth liberal arts colleges are aptly suited to utilize the institutional context to promote intercultural development among students. Liberal arts colleges have had the twin goals of supporting the development of the individual while cultivating the common good. Historically, this has been represented in the liberal arts emphasis on critical thinking, the cultivation of a moral and civic character and using knowledge and virtue to imperative the world. The specific liberal arts college that was the setting for this study emphasizes both breadth and depth of knowledge, skills in communication, reasoning, and inquiry all grounded by core values of faith and learning and ability to respond to ethical challenges facing the world.

**Developing mature interpersonal relationships.** Arthur Chickering’s student development theory has long held that one of the key areas (vectors) of student development is developing mature relationships (1993). This specific domain of development includes both appreciation of difference and the capacity for intimacy (1993). Chickering argues that this appreciation for difference must transcend an intellectual understanding in ways that help students develop sensitivity to differences, cultivate skills for communication and build courage to challenge prejudice and bias (1993). While Chickering’s theory suggests ways in which development across this domain can be enhanced through the college experience, the Council on Social Work Education’s EPAS insists that undergraduate social work students develop capacities in this area. The IDI, when administered at the beginning and conclusion of the undergraduate social work experience, is one tool that can empirically measure this growth.
What is most notable about these findings in light of Chickering’s student development theory is that it often a constellation of institutional variables that prompt student growth. Although this particular group of students was all social work majors one can not infer that it was the social work major that prompted this growth. Rather, we must explore the cumulative effect of the institutional context that created an environment ripe for that growth. That may include considering the residential, liberal arts, faith-based impact on student development in addition to their choice of major.

**Study abroad.** One observation in this study, which has been documented in other studies, is the impact of study abroad on student intercultural awareness and development. For example, Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton and Hubbard (2008) used the intercultural development inventory in a longitudinal study examining the impact of study abroad. While their study supported the idea that study abroad had a favorable impact on intercultural development immediately, the long-term impact was inconclusive (2008). While many studies have been conducted (using both the IDI and other measures) to assess the impact of study abroad, the findings from this study suggest that this may have important implications for undergraduate social work students. Nine of the thirty-six students reported living out of the country for a month or longer between the time of pre and post test. One hundred percent of these students had an increase in developmental orientation. While this is an interesting finding, it prompts us to wonder whether students who have greater intercultural development are more likely to study abroad than their less culturally sensitive counterparts. The difference between mean developmental orientations the full cohort (N=36) and the subgroup who studied abroad (n=9) was nominal: 97.56 and 98.74 respectively, just over one-point difference. The post-test scores painted a different picture. The mean developmental orientation of the full cohort was 107.65
and the mean developmental orientation of the cohort that lived abroad was 115.84, over an eleven-point difference. This finding supports other research that suggests that study abroad experiences are likely to have at least an immediate positive impact on intercultural development.

**Social Work Education and Practice**

The Council of Social Work Education requires social work programs to attend to the ways in which “social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity” (CSWE, 2015) and that “Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim” (CSWE, 2015). While this is an explicit competency in EPAS 2015, few measures have been identified that can support social work programs in their empirical assessment of this competency.

In this study, the mean developmental orientation score increased from 97.56 to 107.65 for the full cohort (N=36) and from 98.74 to 115.84 for those who lived outside the country between the time of pre to post text (n=9). In the full cohort this the change in developmental orientation represents movement within the developmental stage of minimization from solidly at minimization to the “cusp of acceptance”. For the second cohort who lived outside the country, the change in score represents a movement from minimization to acceptance. Perhaps most notable is the change in the orientation gap for six students in the cohort. The orientation gap is the difference between perceived and developmental orientations. A difference of more than seven points is considered a meaningful difference and is most likely to result in the participant being surprised by their developmental orientation score (IDI, 2015). At the time of pretest,
100% of the participants had an orientation gap of more than seven points. At the time of post-test six students had an orientation gap of less than seven points. One explanation for this is that some students are becoming increasingly self-aware of their limitations and biases related to intercultural experience and development and are more able to assess their own level of development more accurately. What is it that led to these few students developing heightened self-awareness related to intercultural development?

According to the IDI the developmental stage of minimization marks the midway point between monocultural mindsets and global or multicultural mindsets. Individuals at the stage of minimization are more likely to emphasize commonalities among diverse groups and focus on universal principles or ideas as a way of minimizing the impact of cultural differences. Those at the stage of acceptance have moved from the monocultural mindsets to a multicultural mindset and can see both patterns of commonality and patterns of difference between their own cultural group and other cultural groups.

In social work education this shift from a monocultural mindset to a global or multicultural mindset is critical in achieving the EPAS competency related to understanding diversity and difference. The EPAS competency 2 suggests that a multicultural mindset is essential for social work practice. One point to note is that even though 75% of students had an increase in developmental orientation between pre and post test, only 38% of students (n=14) scored higher than 115 points which is the point that marks the shift from monocultural to multicultural mindset. In addition to the growth in developmental orientation, social work educators should also be concerned about the number of students who fail to move from a monocultural to multicultural mindset by the time of graduation.

**Intercultural Development and Cultural Humility**
The concept of cultural humility seems aptly suited to social work education and liberal arts education because of its emphasis on knowledge, values and skills (Ross, 2015). Borne, Caine and Martin (2015) argue that the term cultural humility more appropriately reflects the importance of lifelong learning and reflection necessary to recognize, appreciate and be able to work across cultural differences. Ross (2010) argues that cultural humility is essential in community development work and macro social work practice largely because “Cultural humility is more dynamic than cultural competence in that it requires commitment to ongoing self-reflection and self-critique, particularly identifying and examining one’s own patterns of unintentional and intentional racism” (p. 316). Ross suggests that community-based participatory research is one way in which cultural humility can be enhanced. While the Intercultural Development Inventory does not explicitly measure cultural humility, the developmental model of assessment combined with a focus on knowledge, skills and experiences is consistent with the concept of cultural humility.

**Strengths and Limitations**

While this study presents the findings from three cohorts of students, little is known about what facilitated the change in developmental orientation from pre to post-test. Since all but one student was between the ages of 18-21 at pretest, one could argue that the maturation that takes place during college, especially considering this includes exposure to ideas, people and contexts different from one’s one, the change in developmental orientation has little to do with the social work curriculum in particular and more to do with the maturation of the sample (and the context in which that maturation takes place). One finding that does stand out is that although 75% of the full sample had an increase in developmental orientation from pre to post-test, 100% of those who reported living abroad between pre and post test had a higher
developmental orientation at post test. Furthermore, the orientation gap (the difference between perceived orientation and developmental orientation) was considerably smaller among those who had lived in another country between pre and post test (14.3 for this group compared to 19.8 overall). This suggests that those who studied abroad had a heightened awareness of their intercultural development and therefore rated themselves closer to their actual developmental orientation than peers who had not lived abroad between pre and post test. While the impact of study abroad has been thoroughly examined using the IDI, few studies have examined the specific impacts on social work students. This would be one area of exploration in future research.

Conclusion

Social workers, like other professionals, will be working in an increasingly diverse global environment in which intercultural knowledge, skills and affect will be essential to compassionate and ethical practice. Residential liberal arts colleges are aptly suited to support students in this development as a result of their holistic approach to student development and the focus on living and learning in community. Faith-based institutions are similarly compelled to educate students in accordance with their mission driven by faith based principles. Social work programs situated in such institutions have exceptional resources and opportunities that can support the competency-based curriculum and, especially, the goals of engaging diversity and difference in practice.
References

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Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

Presented at
Academy for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education
October 7-9, 2016

Britt Rhodes

University of St. Thomas/ St. Catherine University
Abstract

This presentation uses the literature on student development, trauma-informed care, and contemplative practices to introduce trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy as a model for teaching beginning social work practice skills. Contemplative practices are particularly relevant in disciplines where students grapple with complex issues related to human trauma. The Adverse Childhood Experiences study brought light to the impact of early childhood trauma and implications across the lifespan. Our students are not immune to these experiences and, therefore, educators can integrate contemplative practices to create trauma-informed teaching environments that attend to the ways in which students’ personal histories intersect with course content. Social Work Education embraces contemplative practices to improve self-awareness, mediate practice and content related stress in social work, and positively impact metacognitive and critical thinking skills. This presentation introduces trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy as a model for multiple disciplines in higher education.

*Keywords:* trauma-informed care, contemplative practices
Introduction

The presentation, *Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy* was presented at the eighth annual Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) Conference October 8, 2016 at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst (Appendix A). This presentation was delivered in a 60-minute interactive session. The annual theme was “Transforming Higher Education: Fostering Contemplative Inquiry, Community and Social Action.” This interdisciplinary context provides a unique forum to explore the intersections of scholarship, research, and practice around contemplative practices in higher education. Proposals that addressed one or more of the following questions were accepted for inclusion in the conference:

- How do we develop the tools for inner and outer transformation? How do we foster an ability to be more alive, awake, mindful and engaged with our inner struggles and global collective challenges?
- How are contemplative methods affecting how we teach, learn and understand across and in our various disciplines?
- How are contemplative practices supporting and sustaining communities within and beyond academia that reflect compelling visions of a more just, peaceful, sustainable, and compassionate world?
- How can contemplative practices affect our understanding of systemic forces that shape institutions of higher education and of society at large? (Academy for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, 2016)

Presentation

This presentation (Appendix B) emerged from the ongoing study of student identity development (Rhodes, 2016a), trauma-informed care, and contemplative practices in higher education (Rhodes, 2016b). In a climate where nearly one-third of undergraduate college students exhibit symptoms of a mental health problem such as depression, generalized anxiety or suicidality (Lipson, Gaddis, Heinze, Bech & Eisentberg, 2015), educators in general, and social work educators in particular, cannot ignore the ways in which students’ past experiences impact
their learning and psychosocial development in college. For many students attending small residential liberal arts colleges, this is their first experience living independently and learning how to manage not only their physical health but also mental health. For some students, course related (content) stress can trigger past traumas. The purpose of this presentation was to integrate principles of trauma-informed care, contemplative practices, and student development to develop a pedagogy that attends to the academic and social-emotional learning needs of college-aged students. This presentation included three parts: overview of intersecting points of research, development of a practice model, and reflection/discussion of teaching practices.

**Summary of feedback**

The interdisciplinary nature of this conference made participation both exhilarating and challenging in the preparation, delivery, and evaluation. The purpose of the organization, and especially the theme for this year’s conference, was to move scholars, practitioners and researchers beyond their customary modes of delivery and evaluation into new ways of thinking and experiencing our scholarship in order to transform higher education. In light of this focus, the conference organizers did not have a formal evaluation for the sessions and presenters were strongly encouraged to consider alternatives to the traditional PowerPoint mode of delivery.

In preparation for the presentation, I considered the kinds of feedback I hoped to gather from participants. This feedback fell into two broad categories: delivery of content and relevance of content to various areas of practice. In order to gather this feedback, I prepared a two-part evaluation. After spending nearly a full day at the conference, it was apparent to me that a formal evaluation at the conclusion of the presentation would be inconsistent with the larger theme and purpose that was the aim of the organization and conference planners. Rather
than distributing the evaluation, I used the last 10 minutes for open-ended dialogue with the approximately 35 participants around the open-ended questions:

1. What was the most significant point you will take away from this presentation?
2. How do you see trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy relating to your area of work?
3. What additional suggestions would you offer the presenter?

Participant feedback included both strengths and areas for continued research. One of the dominant strengths that emerged was the importance of thinking about our work in the classroom from a systems perspective. Although this was an interdisciplinary group that included both staff and faculty in higher education, the few social work colleagues in the room picked up on this salient point immediately. In this context, thinking about how both the student and instructor engage with one another around the content should require focused attention beyond assessment. This includes thinking about social and emotional well-being of both instructor and student and points to the capacity for contemplative practices to be a valuable part of instruction, learning, and classroom context.

A second emerging theme and area for future research emphasized the significance of the sociopolitical and cultural context beyond the institution and how that impacts student learning. This was particularly present in the weeks leading up to the 2016 presidential election in the United States. This energy on college campus around issues of social justice should also be taken into consideration as we think about how we teach and how students learn in our respective disciplines. This may, in fact, shape the questions raised within our discipline and the content that we chose to engage with students in the classroom. What role do contemplative practices have in social action and social justice activities on campus?
Beyond these two emerging themes, participants indicated that it was helpful to think about their encounters with students and colleagues occurring within a particular context. This led to some discussions of empathy and the ways in which contemplative practices can foster a mindset that allows us to be present and remain curious. These questions about context moved the group to think about the larger institutional context to consider the ways in which we engaged with one another as faculty and staff around problem solving and larger questions about institutional vision and planning. Thus, another opportunity for further research would focus on contemplative leadership and the ways in which that shapes the institutional context.

Reflection on Learning

Social work has a long tradition of robust philosophical debate about the causes of human need and the implementation of pragmatic strategies to address social ills. Historically, this tension has been embodied in both the work of the practitioner and that of the scholar. Today, the heart of social work rests on the investigation of the relationship between people and their physical and social environments. In both practice and research, social workers use a multidisciplinary lens in order to understand adaptation and resiliency within individuals, families and communities. Undoubtedly, this necessary connection between theory and practice (ideas and implementation) was a driving force in my desire to present about trauma-informed contemplative pedagogy at the Academy for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. This context allowed my thinking to be reinforced, refined, challenged, and expanded by individuals from a range of disciplines in higher education.

The conceptualization of Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy emerges from nearly two decades of social work research and practice. After nearly a decade of teaching, this presentation symbolizes another pivotal moment in the integration between theory and practice.
My teaching philosophy is grounded in a constructivist approach and therefore emphasizes the *interaction* between learner and teacher that allows for the simultaneous exchange of information and dialogue in which both parties can cultivate the intellect through investigation rather than instruction. Learners, in this context, are required to be *active participants in their learning*, as opposed to passive receptacles for information and ideas. The engagement between teacher and learner emphasizes maturation of emotional and intellectual curiosity rather than the rote memorization of facts. Central to my role as an instructor is to provide an environment that is ripe for learning. This approach is also holistic in nature and emphasizes not only students’ intellectual development but also their social and emotional development for effective practice.

Contemplative teaching methods such as contemplative reading, reflective writing, mindfulness, cultivating compassion, suspending judgment and authentic spontaneity (Barbezat & Bush, 2014) can all be used to help students cultivate self-awareness, enhance metacognitive and critical thinking skills and mediate content related stress (Birnbaum, 2008; Grace, 2011; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011). These skills are particularly critical at the beginning of an undergraduate social work student’s education and logically connected to the goals and learning outcomes for social work education. This method is also well suited to an undergraduate, residential, liberal arts, college of the church that believes in a holistic education that integrates the academic, social, civic and spiritual parts of the self. Finally, a teaching method that incorporates contemplative practices is a logical extension of my belief that education is about *formation* rather than *information* by attending to intellectual, social, spiritual and emotional development.

Finally, the feedback from participants moved me to examine a salient question for further research: How does the institutional context – especially institutional leadership— shape
the ecology of a particular college? One of the larger goals of this project was to move beyond
thinking only about student-faculty interactions to also consider the ways in which non-student
interactions on college campus establish a context for student development. Chickering and
Reisser (1993) identify several institutional variables that go beyond direct student engagement:
institution size, institutional objectives, curriculum. I would add to this list institutional
leadership. In her book, Trustworthy Leadership (2006), Diana Chapman Walsh poses a vexing
question: “Can we be the leaders we want our students to become”. As educators think think
about student engagement and assessment of student learning, leaders in higher education must
also consider the leadership styles that foster and promote contemplative and ethical leadership
across campuses as an example for students.
References


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DOI: 10.1080/15426430802202179.

Annotated Presentation References


This book emerges from over a decade of work through the Center for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education. The authors explore the theoretical and practical foundations for contemplative practices in higher education. The second half of the book identifies specific strategies that can be used to foster contemplative practices in a number of classroom contexts. This text was the foundation of my foray into contemplative practices and grounded the more discipline specific question that emerged later. As a text designed for the beginning interdisciplinary reader, specific strategies were incorporated into my classes in order to strengthen the goals of contemplative practices through both new and refreshed classroom activities.


This author conducted an 8-week mediation group to identify the ways in which self observation and attention to inner guidance influence one’s professional self-concept. The group focused on creating a safe space, observing the self, emotional regulation, exploring interpersonal relationships, and exploring ambivalence. This study aligns with Chickering’s identification of seven vectors of student identity development and the importance of institutional context in facilitating growth.

The reciprocal relationship between people and their physical and social environment provides the basis for Chickering’s Student Development theory. Chickering and Reisser divide their book into two sections: overview of the seven vectors and key influences on student development. After outlining the seven vectors and their relationship with one another, Chickering and Reisser situate these variables in the context the college experience: institution size, institutional objectives, curriculum, student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services. Like Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Chickering’s student development theory has a epigenetic basis, which assumes that students have certain qualities, traits, and strengths that can be amplified or diminished by way of the institutional context. The focus on self-awareness, metacognitive skills, critical thinking and interpersonal relationships aligns closely with the goals of contemplative practices.


The second of two papers by these authors, this paper identifies pedagogical frameworks that the authors consider to be trauma-informed. These include attending to: student characteristics, course content and delivery, assignment policies, classroom characteristics, and modeling self-care. This is the only paper that I have found that attempts to utilize the larger principles of trauma-informed into a practice model for teaching. These areas that relate primarily to the student-instructor-classroom environment were useful in the larger conceptualization

This introductory textbook for social work students provides a useful framework for understanding systems theory and the intersection of multiple value contexts in social work practice. This model was adapted for use in conceptualizing a systems map for thinking about the interaction between student, instructor, context, classroom, institution and the larger sociopolitical landscape of higher education. Combined with Carello and Butler’s classroom and teaching strategies, DuBois and Miley’s model provided shape to the macro context in which teaching and learning occur.


This paper presents findings from mixed methods study of the impact of mediation and group work at a non profit. Researchers used the Perceived Stress Scale and a self reflection journal to assess the impact of the group on participant well being and perceived stress. Findings indicate that contemplative practices support metacognitive activities (thinking, discussing, questioning, reflecting, concentrating) and cultivate a deeper level of self-awareness.


In this peer-reviewed article, the authors articulate the foundational principles of trauma-informed care: Safety, Trustworthiness, Collaboration, Empowerment, Choice. This qualitative study operationalized each of these variables and conducted 10 focus groups and six individual interviews to examine social service agencies usage of these five principles. As we move to thinking about incorporating these principles in our teaching, this study provides a method for
assessing present current practices that would then inform areas that need to be strengthened to create a trauma-informed classroom in higher education.
Appendix A
Documentation of Acceptance

Dear Britt,

We are delighted to accept your proposal to present “Healing in Higher Education: Cultivating A Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy,” as a 60-Minute Interactive at the eighth annual Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) Conference, “Transforming Higher Education: Fostering Contemplative Inquiry, Community, and Social Action,” October 7-9, 2016 at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst MA.

We received over 200 proposals this year, all of which were very strong. This has been a very challenging process and we thank you for your patience.

In order for us to provide the appropriate number of spaces and finalize the program, please send your confirmation to attend the conference as well as register by Monday, August 1st. If that date poses a problem, please let us know. You may email your confirmation to maya@contemplativemind.org.

**Important registration information:***
To register for the conference, please visit the registration website (http://www.acmheconference.org/register/). Please note that all presenters and co-presenters must register for the conference and be a member of the ACMHE in order to be included in the program. If you are not a current ACMHE member, please renew or complete your membership when registering online. If you would like to be considered for a partial scholarship and have not yet applied, please apply online (http://www.acmheconference.org/accessgrants/) by August 30th.

Thank you for your interest in sharing your work with our community. We look forward to your response, and to seeing you in Amherst this October.

Kind regards,
Maya Elievelsky
Cultivating a Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

Britt Rhodes
Associate Professor of Social Work
Luther College
Decorah, IA
October 7, 2016

Mindfulness: “a concentrated attention on the present moment, with mind and body open, receptive and free from biases, reinterpretation, and pre judgment...a fundamental unit of body and mind (Sherman and Siporin, p.261)

Mindfulness and social work:

“The contemplative approach represents a relation to reality, to nature and to human beings that includes, yet goes beyond, the instrumental way of life and offers a way of living and being that fosters mind and body unity as well as individual and social development. This is quite consistent with social work values of self-determination and self-fulfillment, social and society well-being and social justice (Sherman and Siporin, p. 271)
Grise-Owens, Owens and Miller (2016) articulate the importance of situating our reflections on teaching in the larger scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) movement. As such, I also must situate my teaching within the ethos of the college. Luther College is highly committed to teaching and learning which is represented in faculty development workshops, teaching partnerships and involvement in large scale assessment groups such as the Wabash Study. All of my teaching has been at this small, residential, undergraduate, liberal arts college of the church which serves primarily 18-22 year-old students in rural Iowa. This context creates unique conditions: geographic isolation, living in community, small class sizes (1:11 faculty-student ratio) and integration of faith as an essential element of learning about oneself and the world. Emphasizing formation is supported by our college mission statement as is the goal of supporting students in developing an integrated self that weaves together academic, civic, and spiritual dimensions of the self. The classroom, then, is just one piece of the puzzle. While I fully recognize that future social workers must have a solid grounding of theory and skills I also know that these are only useful to students if they have cultivated solid critical thinking skills and a social and moral conscience from which to make compassionate decisions from an intellectually reasoned posture.
Wonder and curiosity.....

- How do I teach about interpersonal violence (domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse specifically) to a students who have experienced these forms of violence?
- How do I help students acknowledge their points of vulnerability and help them become more self-aware about how their experiences may impact their practice?
- How do I help students acknowledge the ways in which their personal experiences may impact how they view a client’s experience?
- How do I do all of this without turning the classroom into a counseling group?

Over the last thirteen years teaching about interpersonal violence and social work, several questions seem to continue to emerge. What I propose is not a substitute for professional counseling services for students who really need that additional support. Instead, it is an acknowledgement that some of the material we study as social workers can be difficult, particularly when students bring their own life challenges to the classroom. This work requires thinking and feeling---engaging both the emotional and the intellectual capacities of our students.
Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy emerges from a two-year study of three areas of scholarship in social work education and practice:

This presentation will first define each of these areas and then move toward thinking about a conceptual framework that helps us think about the context of student learning and the ways in which contemplative practices may be used to facilitate self-awareness, metacognition, and critical thinking.

Student Development Theory
Trauma-Informed Care (Trauma-Informed Education)

Contemplative Practices
How might mindfulness exercises—contemplative reading, reflective writing, and deep listening—help students cultivate compassion, suspend judgment, enhance self-awareness, sharpen critical thinking and mediate content related stress in social work courses?

The central question guiding this exploratory study is: How might mindfulness exercises—contemplative reading, reflective writing, and deep listening—help students cultivate compassion, suspend judgment, enhance self-awareness, sharpen critical thinking and mediate content related stress in social work courses?

This is exploratory and I hope that you might be able to think about your own classroom context as I describe how this fits with social work education at a small, residential, liberal arts college of the ELCA.
The reciprocal relationship between people and their physical and social environment provides the basis for Chickering’s Student Development theory. In their book Education and Identity, Chickering and Reisser (1993) identify seven vectors of student development and seven institutional variables that impact that development. The seven vectors of development include: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose and developing integrity. The seven institutional variables include: institution size, institutional objectives, curriculum, student-faculty relationships, teaching, student communities and student services. A key assumption of Chickering’s work is that the college environment is uniquely suited to promote the development of human potential (Garfield & David, 1986). Like Erikson’s psychosocial theory, Chickering’s student development theory has an epigenetic basis, which assumes that students have certain qualities, traits, and strengths that can be amplified or diminished by way of the institutional context.

Since the person in environment perspective is the basis for his theory, several key assumptions support this reciprocal relationship. First, Chickering’s theory assumes that “emotional, interpersonal and ethical development deserve equal billing with intellectual development” (Chickering and Reisser, 1993, p.39). Second, his theory is based on an optimistic view of human development that assumes a nurturing, challenging college environment will help students grow in “stature and substance” (p.40). Third, in order for students to develop all the gifts of human potential, we need to be able to see them whole and to believe in their essential worth (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Finally, unlike previous sequential models, Chickering’s student development theory suggests that attending to the “seven vectors” provides a good foundation for student development rather than a lock-step process.
For over two decades, scholars and practitioners in both social science and public health have examined the relationship between early childhood experiences and risky behaviors that can contribute to disease and disability in adulthood (www.aces360.org). A decade after the first research was conducted in California, Fallot and Harris (2009) coined the phrase “trauma-informed care” to prompt a paradigm shift in clinical practice. Carello and Butler define “trauma-informed” as a service context that operates from an understanding of “the ways in which violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they can accommodate trauma survivors’ needs and are consonant with health and recovery” (2015, p.264).
Trauma informed organizations

5 foundational principles:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness
3. Collaboration
4. Empowerment
5. Choice

(Wolf, Green, Nochański, Mendel & Kusmał, 2014)

What is wrong with you? What happened to you?

Trauma-informed organizations demonstrate their commitment by adhering to five foundational principles of trauma-informed care: safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, empowerment, and choice (Wolf, Green, Nochański, Mendel & Kusmał, 2014; Bath, 2008). These principles are infused into the organization and experienced by both clients and staff. The result of this paradigm shift is that rather than asking, “What is wrong with you?” practitioners in trauma-informed environments ask “What happened to you?” (Wolf et al., 2014)

In social work, this paradigm shift moves us to teach about trauma-informed care in social work courses. The principles of trauma-informed care easily align with social work values, and principles and best practices grounded on empowerment, empathy and strengths based interventions. However, Carello and Butler rightly argue, teaching about trauma-informed care is not the same as teaching from a stance of trauma-informed care (2015). While some courses are beginning to teach about trauma-informed care, little to no research has been conducted on the use of trauma-informed pedagogy. If social work education embodies what it teaches, more attention must be given to trauma-informed educational practices.
Trauma Informed Education

How do we create learning environments that promote predictability and safety without compromising intellectual and academic rigor?

- Student Characteristics
- Course Content & Delivery
- Assignment Policies
- Classroom Characteristics
- Teaching and Modeling of Self-Care

(Carello & Butler, 2015)

Carello and Butler’s (2015) seminal exploratory study in this area outlines domains for creating learning environments that promote predictability and safety without compromising intellectual and academic rigor. These domains include student characteristics, course content and delivery, instructor delivery, assignment policies, classroom characteristics and the teaching and modeling of self-care (Carello & Butler, 2015). The authors report that students were receptive to the incorporation of trauma-informed principles and noted that developing a self-care plan, late day policies for assignments and non-judgmental feedback on drafts were the most valuable (Carello & Butler, 2015).
Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

Bridging what we know about trauma-informed care with what we know about the social, emotional and metacognitive benefits of contemplative practices to create a pedagogy that acknowledges the ways in which personal experience of trauma intersects with related course content.
The ecological model, emerging from the central aims of addressing both social factors and psychological functioning, has two core assumptions about the relationship between people and their environment: 1) transactions take place between people and their physical and social environments and 2) Human development occurs through interaction with the environment (Gitterman and Germain, 2008). This theory also posits that humans have an innate ability to adapt but need proper environmental conditions in order to do so and that development occurs throughout the life span (Gitterman and Germain, 2008; Van Wormer, 2007). Assumptions about the environment are equally relevant in this model and, for that reason, the model acknowledges that there are rapid shifts in societal and community values and that there is tremendous environmental diversity that impacts a human being’s functioning and development (VanWormer, 2007; Gitterman and Germain, 2008).

In Social Work: An Empowering Profession (2014) authors DuBois and Miley identify the intersecting values in social work practice. They suggest that in every interaction between a social worker and a client, there are at least six levels of values. These include: worker values, client values, problem related values, organizational context, professional values, and sociopolitical and cultural values (DuBois and Miley, 2014). When thinking about social work education, I would argue that a similar person in environment conceptualization is necessary when thinking about our teaching.

Each teaching encounter bridges a number of variables into the classroom. Using DuBois and Miley’s (2014) framework, these could be described as: content, student variables, instructor variables, disciplinary context, institutional context and the sociopolitical context. Although the specific encounter of teaching includes an instructor, students and specific content, each of these is shaped by the specific disciplinary context, institutional context and the sociopolitical and cultural context. For example, Carello and Butler (2015) argue that trauma-informed educational practices include attention to student characteristic, course content and delivery, assignment policies, classroom characteristics, teaching strategies and the modeling of self care. I would argue that these are also
situated in a larger disciplinary context, the institutional context, and the larger sociopolitical environment in which the institution exists.
What institutional variables impact how and what you teach?

Mission

History

Curriculum

Infrastructure (residential/ non-residential)

Geographic Location

Personal Reflection:

For just a few minutes, using the sheet of paper distributed, think about your own institutional context. We often think about our teaching methods, our students, desired learning outcomes, and the content we intended to deliver to achieve those outcomes. Less often, though, do we think about the larger institutional context that shapes how we do what we do in the classroom. For a few minutes, think about these variables as they relate to your institution. How does the mission, history, infrastructure, curriculum, geographic location impact your work? What other variables (beyond the content, pedagogical styles, and student variables) impact your work?
Reminder of some of these reflections from my own work:

Residential, rural, ELCA Lutheran (500-year commemoration of the Reformation in 2017), liberal arts, founded Norwegian immigrants, social resistance of pastors leaving the Missouri Lutheran Synod.
What is the disciplinary context

How does someone in your discipline ask questions?
What are the methods of investigation?
How are findings presented and interpreted?
What relevance does the discipline have for a student’s life?
Where does the student’s experience intersect with the course content?

Within the larger sociopolitical and cultural landscape in which our particular institution lies, we are trained as faculty members through a particular disciplinary lens. Although this is continually evolving and many of us find ourselves working in inter, intra or multidisciplinary teaching teams, I want you to consider, for a moment, the disciplinary context in which you do your teaching. What are some of the key assumptions, guiding theories, fundamental principles that are central to your discipline? What are some of the operative definitions that are critical to how your discipline approaches a topic. More specifically, consider the following questions:

1. How does someone in your discipline ask questions?
2. What are the methods of investigation?
3. How are findings presented and interpreted?
4. What relevance does the discipline have for a student’s life?
5. Where does the student’s experience intersect with the course content?
Instructor Variables/ Student Variables

- Strengths and resiliency
- Life histories
- Past experiences
- Present stressors
- Mental and physical health and wellness
Content & Teaching

How might this content be distressing to students?
What kind of distress is necessary for academic growth?
How do we create space for visceral and experiential learning while not turning the classroom into a therapy session?
Trauma-Informed Contemplative Pedagogy

Bridging what we know about trauma-informed care with what we know about the social, emotional and metacognitive benefits of contemplative practices to create a pedagogy that acknowledges the ways in which personal experience of trauma intersects with related course content.
What this looks like in a social work classroom

1. Living Gently—an exercise in centering and preparing
   1. Contemplative reading and writing
   2. Loving kindness meditations
   3. Deep listening
2. Learning to listen with the third ear—*evocative empathy* (Martin, 2011) and *becoming an appreciative ally* (Madsen, 2007)
   1. Case studies
   2. Role Plays (worker, client, observer)
   3. Ethical deliberation
3. Trauma-Informed Student/Faculty Relationships
   1. Managing emotions through self care plans
   2. Critical thinking and social work competency
   3. Bridging experiential and empirical knowing

This teaching method was applied to a first social work practice course focusing on basic counseling and interpersonal communication skills. The course goals emphasized the importance of self-awareness, critical thinking and skill development for beginning social work students.

One of the texts for the course emphasized the importance of developing a relational stance with clients (Madsen, 2007). William Madsen (2007) argues that our relational stance (how we are with clients) is the foundation for our conceptual models (how we think about our clients) and our clinical practices (what we do with our clients). Madsen (2007) uses the term ‘appreciative ally’ to describe the importance of working in collaboration with our clients and finding something, however small, to appreciate in each of our clients.

While this course uses a number of strategies to teach interpersonal communication and counseling skills the overarching question for the course is, “how do we develop a relational stance as an appreciative ally with our clients?”. As a result, teaching methods must emphasize knowledge and skills but also ways of being that enhance clinical effectiveness. One way to do this is through the use of contemplative practices designed to improve critical thinking, decrease stress, and enhance self-awareness as a way to enhance client outcomes. In this model, contemplative practices are utilized as a way to reduce stress and enhance subjective well-being in order to improve clinical effectiveness and cultivate a relational stance as an appreciate ally with clients (Madsen, 2007).

Contemplative teaching methods such as mindfulness exercises, contemplative reading, reflective writing, and deep listening as introduced as strategies to cultivate compassion, suspend judgment, cultivate self-awareness, enhance critical thinking skills and mediate content related stress (Birnbaum, 2008; Grace, 2011; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011). Each class session begins with a mindfulness exercise
(including breath exercises) to foster deep listening in order to help students “pay full attention to the sound of the words while abandoning such habits as planning their next statement or interrupting the speaker” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014, p. 138). Barbezat and Bush (2014) suggest that this deep listening can be cultivated through mindfulness of sound, listening practices in the classroom, listening to music, and listening to each other. Listening skills are foundational to effective social work practice and essential in the first social work practice course. Each class session will include an in-class listening exercise that may include listening in silence, listening to music, or a brief meditation or breathing exercise. After learning about the clinical effects of mindfulness based practices in social work students are encouraged to cultivate deep listening outside of the classroom in their own practice. Furthermore, students reminded throughout the course to utilize these practices during times of heightened stress in class. These may include, but are not limited to: reading a case study, role playing in class, recording role plays for instructor and peer feedback, receiving feedback (both oral and written) from classmates and instructor.
Conclusion

“...education can serve as the core of a lifelong journey towards wholeness, rather than merely an accumulation of facts, figures or skills” (Glazer, 1999)

“...how can one articulate the importance of self-knowledge, orientation and relation to the world to a future employer? How might a human be developed so that it is adequate to a changing and uncertain world” (Barnett and Coate, 2005, p. 108)

Contemplative teaching methods such as contemplative reading, reflective writing, mindfulness, cultivating compassion, suspending judgment and authentic spontaneity can all be used to help students cultivate self-awareness, enhance metacognitive and critical thinking skills and mediate content related stress (Birnbaum, 2008; Grace, 2011; McGarrigle & Walsh, 2011). These skills are particularly critical at the beginning of an undergraduate social work student’s education and logically connected to the goals and learning outcomes in a practice I course. This method is also well suited to an undergraduate, residential, liberal arts, college of the church that believes in a holistic education that integrates the academic, social, civic and spiritual parts of the self. Finally, a teaching method that incorporates contemplative practices is a logical extension of my belief that education is about formation rather than information by attending to intellectual, social, spiritual and emotional development.

If higher education has multiple goals, perhaps Steven Glazer is accurate when he writes that “education can serve as the core of a lifelong journey towards wholeness, rather than merely an accumulation of facts, figures or skill” (Glazer, 1999). While knowledge and skills respond to external pressures to prepare students for jobs, Ronald Barnett and Kelly Coate ask us to consider “how one articulates the importance of self-knowledge, orientation and relation to the world to a future employer? How might a human being be developed so that it is adequate to a changing and uncertain world” (2005, p.108). These questions about student identity formation are critical if higher education is to provide them with a rich context for intellectual, spiritual, social and civic growth. Higher education cannot afford to teach about trauma-informed care; we must embrace trauma-informed educational practices that promote holistic student development.
References


References, cont.


