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Professional Identity Development:
Anchoring Clinical Students to the Social Work Profession

by

Kristin Lambert Ashton

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

University of Saint Thomas
School of Social Work

May 2020

Abstract

This banded dissertation is an examination of the socialization of clinical social work students into the social work profession. It is comprised of three distinct products. Building on the theoretical and empirical research of other social work scholars, the products are guided by the structural functionalist and symbolic interactionist approaches to professional socialization. Each product explores how educators can assist clinical social work students in developing a professional identity scaffolded on social work's defining characteristics.

Product One is a conceptual paper that demonstrates how theoretical and empirical knowledge of professional identity development can be incorporated into social work education. The author integrates the structural functional and symbolic interactionist theoretical approaches into a person-in-profession framework, modeled after social work's person-in-environment lens. The person-in-profession framework guides clinical students to develop a professional identity rooted in social work. Further, the patchwork text pedagogical method is described as a teaching tool that can be used to incorporate professional identity development into course curriculum. A review of the social work literature on professional socialization is utilized to build patchwork text activities that encourage clinical social work identity development.

Product Two details a qualitative research study that sought to identify characteristics of the social work profession central to professional identity. This study utilized the structural functionalist literature on professional socialization, as well as the literature on professionalization, the process through which an occupation becomes a profession, to create an a-priori codebook describing the core elements needed for a strong professional identity. This codebook was used to identify characteristics of a social work identity within the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work

Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Qualitative thematic content analysis was then applied to the resulting data set. Five themes emerged around which a social work identity can be constructed.

Product Three is a presentation that describes utilizing the patchwork text method to strengthen professional identity. The presentation demonstrates how theoretical and empirical knowledge of professional socialization can be integrated into course curriculum. Presented at the multi-disciplinary Lilly Conference "Innovative Strategies to Advance Learning," this presentation provided educators from diverse professional programs with an understanding of professional socialization and tools to build identity development into classroom activities.

This Banded Dissertation explores how educators can assist clinical students in creating a professional identity grounded in social work. Students, practitioners, and the social work profession benefit from clinical social workers who are deeply connected to the profession. The author's commitment to practicing and teaching clinical social work guided by social work's values, perspectives, and mission directed the search for fundamental characteristics of professional social work identity and methods to nurture such an identity in students.

Keywords: Professional identity development, professional socialization, social work identity, clinical social work

Dedication

For social work students and clinical colleagues who are passionate and dedicated to affecting change in individual lives and in communities, systems, and the world. May we be tireless in our efforts to expand access, challenge oppression, and fight for social justice.

Together, we can fulfill the vision of our matriarchs, Jane Addams and Mary Richmond, and unite our profession in its mission to enact change at every level of society.

Acknowledgments

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Thank you to my parents, Jan and Dale Lambert. Your examples of charity inspired my choice of social work as an undergraduate, and you have supported and celebrated my undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate education.

Ultimately, this was a family effort, and I could not have completed the journey without their support and sacrifice. Thank you to my children, Benjamin Ashton and Clara Ashton. Thank you for your patience, understanding, and love as I wrote and wrote and wrote. Benjamin, your teacher told me that you were so proud as you talked about your mom who was writing her dissertation, working on her doctorate, and going to be a professor. That moment filled my heart to overflowing. Clara, I loved it when you would sneak into the office and give me hugs and kisses or “work” with me. I cannot wait for the two of you to watch me graduate, I wish you could walk across the stage with me.

To my husband, Ken Ashton, my deepest gratitude belongs to you. This would not have been possible without you. Once we committed to this path, you never wavered. You stood by

me and reminded me that this was a family goal. You believed in my abilities when I did not. You never complained that you missed several seasons of skiing and golf to so that I could work every Saturday. You showed me how much you love me again, and again, and again. You are my champion, my partner, and I love you.

Finally, thank you to my God. May I always carry this hymn in my heart:

Because I have been given much,
I too must give;
Because of thy great bounty Lord,
Each day I live;
I shall divide my gifts from thee
With every brother (and sister) that I see
Who has the need of help from me.

Because I have been sheltered, fed
By thy good care;
I cannot see another's lack and I not share;
My glowing fire, my loaf of bread,
my roof's safe shelter overhead
That (s)he too may be comforted.

Because I have been blessed by
thy great love dear Lord;
I'll share thy love again
According to thy word;
I shall give love to those in need,
I'll show that love by word and deed;
Thus shall my thanks be thanks in deed.

Grace Noll Crowell (1936)

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Professional Identity Development: Anchoring Clinical Students to the Social Work Profession

The focus of this banded dissertation is the socialization of clinical social work students into the profession. Professional socialization, the process through which an individual adopts the knowledge, culture, skills, and roles of a profession and integrates them into a professional identity, is considered an important aspect of social work education (Barretti, 2004a; Dent, 2018; Miller, 2010, 2013). In 2015, the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) emphasized professional socialization by requiring students to "demonstrate ethical and professional behavior" (CSWE, 2015a, p.7) as an outcome of social work education. Consequently, as described in EPAS, schools of social work must document students' understanding of the profession's history, mission, values, roles, and responsibilities to meet the requirements of accreditation. Additionally, within the EPAS, a commitment to the social work profession is deemed an "essential quality" for social work practice, and educators are tasked with "shaping the professional character of students" (CSWE, 2015a, p.14). Given that clinical social work is the most widely offered specialization in Master of Social Work (MSW) programs, and that nearly half of all MSW students choose clinical or direct practice as their specialty (CSWE, 2015b), the socialization of clinical students into the social work profession is a relevant undertaking for social work educators.

Clinical social workers face challenges in constructing a professional social work identity. The history of the social work profession is marked by tensions between individual and social change that are still evident today (Gitterman, 2014). Although clinical social work has a well-established presence in the profession, some scholars question whether clinical social work adequately reflects the mission and values of social work and suggest it should be considered a separate profession rather than a subspecialty of social work (Specht & Courtney, 1994; Tosone,

2016). Specifically, the applicability of social justice, a guiding value of social work, in clinical practice is debated. Educators have cited the difficulty of infusing social justice into clinical social work education and practice (Asakura, Strumm, Todd, & Varghese, 2019; Specht & Courtney, 1994). The debate within the profession on the status of clinical social work may create a division between the specialty and the profession.

Scholars note that the social work profession is still seeking a widely accepted description of its mission and purpose. This confusion surrounding the definition of social work leads to a lack of agreement on the core characteristics constituting a social work identity (Gitterman, 2014; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Hill, Fogel, Donaldson, and Erickson, 2017). Clinical social work, as a subspecialty of the social work profession, does not have a clear definition either. Notwithstanding the broad recognition and licensing of clinical social workers, each states' statutory definitions of clinical social work have remained different. Some definitions represent a range of clinical models, methods, and client populations, while others rely on a psychotherapeutically oriented definition (Hill et al., 2017). Additionally, groups representing clinical social work, including the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA), and the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (ABECSW), define the specialty differently (Tosone, 2016). The ABECSW (2017) identifies clinical social work as "a healthcare profession" (para. 1) and directs its members to abide by a professional code of ethics but does not mention the NASW's code nor infer any commitment to social justice, a value deeply held by the social work profession. Diverse definitions and values create ambiguity about the core characteristics of the profession around which clinical social workers can construct a professional identity.

Clinical social workers share client populations and intervention models with other mental and behavioral health professionals, including clinical and counseling psychologists, marriage and family therapists, and professional counselors. This shared jurisdiction can complicate a social worker's concept of professional identity, making it challenging for clinical social workers to maintain a clear, explicit, unique professional identity amongst allied professionals (Wiles, 2013).

Despite the challenges clinical social workers face in developing a social work identity, the individual, professional, and societal benefits of connecting with one's occupation underscore the importance of clinical social workers developing a strong professional social work identity. Research in the field of strategic management establishes that leaders with a strong commitment to a unified occupational identity, including a profession's theories, frameworks, and models, can shape workplace and organizational culture and strategy (Almandoz, 2014; Tilcsik, 2010). A professional identity grounded in social work values and perspectives will allow clinical social workers to influence the ethos of human service organizations and influence the nation's approach to mental, social, and behavioral health.

Robust professional identity and connection to the social work field also have consequences in the lives of individual clinical social workers. Researchers show that a strong professional identity promotes a sense of meaning in the lives of practitioners, is correlated with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions, and positively influences competency and ethical practice (Anteby, Chan, & Dibenigno, 2016; Dent, 2018; Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). However, there is little published research addressing the professional identity development of clinical social workers specifically. This banded dissertation, comprised of three distinct products, seeks to stimulate further conversation and research on the socialization of clinical

social work students. To this end, characteristics around which a social work identity can be built are identified, and a pedagogical method for educators to explicitly engage in identity development with their clinical students is suggested.

Product One, a conceptual manuscript, proposes the patchwork text method as a pedagogical tool to infuse professional identity development into the explicit curriculum of social work education. This article demonstrates how the patchwork text method applies the theoretical understanding of professional identity development as described by the structural functionalist and symbolic interactionist approaches. Empirical and theoretical social work literature on professional socialization is utilized to offer examples of learning activities focused on social work identity development in clinical students.

Product Two reports on a qualitative research study that sought to identify characteristics of the social work profession around which clinical social work students can build an identity. This study utilized the literature on professionalization, the process through which occupations acquire professional status, and applied thematic analysis to identify elements of professional social work identity in the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015) EPAS. Five characteristics emerged from the research that define a social work identity. Product Three is the dissemination of the conceptual model contained in Product One, applied to education in various professional programs, at a peer-reviewed conference on higher education.

Conceptual Framework

The scholarly literature in the fields of medicine, education, and social work identifies two theories that describe professional socialization: structural functionalism and symbolic interaction (Barretti, 2004a; Macdonald, 1995). The conceptual framework for this banded dissertation emphasizes the usefulness of both theoretical approaches.

The Structural Functional Approach

The structural functionalist approach to professional socialization emphasizes formal education as the primary socializing agent in an individual's professional life. Sometimes referred to as the induction approach, the structural functionalist model describes students learning well-defined social roles inclusive of the profession's knowledge, values, skills, and norms. Educators are considered experts who shape students into an "ideal" social worker through explicit teaching and informal interactions and example. This induction into the profession occurs in linear, sequential stages and assumes students are motivated to conform to professional expectations (Barretti, 2004a; Miller, 2010). A structural functionalist approach promotes a unified, homogenous social work identity guided by professional definitions. In this positivist approach, research enquires whether a student has the requisite knowledge, values, and skills to be a social worker.

The structural functional model of professional socialization is related to professionalization, the process through which an occupation becomes a profession. As conceptualized by Greenwood (1957), the knowledge, skills, values, roles, and culture of a profession are refined as an occupational field professionalizes (Abbott, 1995; Greenwood, 1957). According to the structural functional approach, these professional characteristics become the scaffold around which a professional identity is built. Defining characteristics of social work can also be found in documents published by professional bodies such as the NASW and CSWE, as well as state licensure statutes (Hill et al., 2017; Staniforth, Fouché, & O'Brien, 2011). These definitions and statutes define who can be a social worker, what social workers can do, and how the social worker carries out their responsibilities. Thus, these documents communicate the core attributes of the social work profession.

The Symbolic Interactionist Approach

In contrast to structural functionalism, symbolic interaction esteems individual meaning over professional definitions and norms. A professional identity is developed as a social worker adjusts to the demands of the work environment rather than striving for an idealized social work identity comprised of specific values, attitudes, or roles. The symbolic interaction lens emphasizes the informal pathways of socialization. It posits that formal education socializes students to the student role and educational institution rather than to the profession (Barretti, 2004a, 2004b; Miller, 2010). Symbolic interaction assumes that individuals are actively and consciously building a professional identity as they engage in self-reflection and meaning making. Everyone's identity is unique and shaped by individual and family values, experiences, and personal identities. This constructivist approach views socialization as a complex process that includes confusion and conflict (Barretti, 2004a, 2004b; Miller, 2010).

Integrating Structural Functional and Symbolic Interaction Approaches

Two social work scholars, Barretti (2004b) and Miller (2013), studied professional socialization in social work students and offered empirical support for integrating the structural functional approach and symbolic interaction lens. They explained that both theoretical approaches describe different aspects of the socialization process for social work students. Highlighting the importance of the symbolic interaction approach, other social work researchers endorse that professional identity is unique to the individual and that a student's social location significantly influences the development of social work identity. Key elements of social location validated to shape socialization include: motivations for choosing social work and personal values (Barretti, 2004a; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Levy, Shlomo, & Itzhaky, 2014; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011; Wiles, 2013); age, maturity, gender, and previous work

experience of the student (Miller, 2013; Valutis et al., 2012); and ethnicity and experiences of marginalization (Daniel, 2007, 2011). Concurrently, reflecting the structural functional approach, scholars underscore that an enduring connection to the social work profession requires emphasizing core attributes that make social work unique amongst helping professions and that social work educators play a primary role in socialization (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Barretti, 2004b; Bogo & Wayne, 2013; Clare, 2006; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Miller, 2010, 2013; Moorhead, Boetto, & Bell, 2014; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016, Wiles, 2013). While structural functionalism emphasizes conformity to professional norms and assumes that students are motivated to adopt these norms, symbolic interaction emphasizes multiple influences on identity development throughout one's career. Thus, developing a professional identity grounded in social work requires the contribution of both the structural functional and symbolic interaction approaches.

The conceptual framework for this banded dissertation recognizes the need for both approaches to professional socialization. The structural functional model and the symbolic interaction lens are combined by viewing professional identity development through the social work profession's person-in-environment (PIE) orientation. Conceptualizing social work identity development through a person-in-environment framework allows for emphasis on the profession's defining features while also honoring the individual's process of interpreting and conceptualizing these characteristics. This application of PIE to professional identity development is referred to as person-in-profession in this banded dissertation. Rather than measure congruity with an ideal or rely wholly on the individual to establish an identity, a person-in-profession framework seeks to understand the intersection of personal values and experiences with professionally defined roles, values, knowledge, and expectations. This

framework assumes multi-dimensional influence as the student is transformed by social work's knowledge, values, and skills and professional definitions are influenced and changed by social work professionals. The person-in-profession approach can be beneficial to clinical students striving to understand their unique role and perspectives amongst mental and behavioral health service providers. Person-in-profession also accounts for how student's personal motivations and values influence their professional identity development. This framework guides both the conceptual and empirical aspects of this dissertation.

Summary of Banded Dissertation Products

This banded dissertation consists of one conceptual manuscript, one manuscript detailing a qualitatively designed research study, and the author's dissemination of the conceptual manuscript at a national peer-reviewed conference. The first product, a conceptual manuscript titled "Developing Professional Identity in Clinical Students: A Person-in-Profession Approach Utilizing Patchwork Text," addresses explicit inclusion of professional identity development within the MSW curriculum for clinical social work students. The paper describes the conceptual framework of person-in-profession and proposes the patchwork text as a pedagogical method well-suited to guiding clinical students in social work identity development. Utilizing the patchwork text pedagogical method enables educators to integrate the structural functional and symbolic interactionist approaches to professional identity development into course activities.

Described fully in Product One, Richard Winter (Scoggins & Winter, 1999; Winter, 2003) designed the patchwork text method to challenge personal frameworks and emphasize the construction of meaning with course content. The patchwork text method requires students to undertake several assessment tasks, or assignments, throughout a course. Students undergo a formative peer feedback process, reflect on themes and knowledge emerging from the individual

assignments, and complete a final project that results in a product that builds on and unifies each assignment to create a product greater than the sum of its parts (Scoggins & Winter, 1999; Winter, 2003). Students develop their epistemology through continual analysis and synthesis of course materials and personal understanding and identifying patterns, relationships, and unifying themes in their work. In this conceptual manuscript, the author reviews and utilizes social work research on variables influencing professional identity development to develop examples of patchwork text activities. These example activities are designed to require clinical students to reflect on and integrate core social work attributes into their professional identities.

The second product, titled “Identifying Social Work’s Defining Characteristics to Strengthen Clinical Students’ Professional Identity,” addresses the evolving and uncertain nature of social work’s defining characteristics as related to identity development (Gitterman, 2014; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Hill et al., 2017). The person-in-profession framework, which informed this dissertation, emphasizes the importance of accepted core characteristics of social work. Thus, this exploratory study sought to identify characteristics of a social work identity from the widely accepted documents of the profession. The author utilized the structural functionalist literature on professional socialization, as well as the literature on professionalization, the process through which an occupation becomes a profession, to create an a-priori codebook describing the core elements needed for a strong professional identity. This codebook was used to identify the characteristics of professional social work identity found in the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) and CSWE’s EPAS (2015). Themes were extracted from the coded data according to Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012) guidelines of thematic analysis. The findings from this study suggest that a professional social work identity can be organized around the following concepts: the mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum; social workers

integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice; social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities; social workers are committed to social justice; and social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge. Implications for social work education were explored, including the integration of these themes within clinical social work.

The third product, titled “Utilizing a Patchwork Text Approach to Strengthen Students’ Professional Identity,” is a poster presented at the Lilly Conference “Innovative Strategies to Advance Learning” on August 6, 2019. The Lilly Conference Series are international peer-reviewed conferences on evidenced-based teaching for higher learning hosted by the International Teaching Learning Cooperative Network (ITLC). The poster was derived from the conceptual manuscript which proposed using the patchwork text pedagogical method of teaching to strengthen social work identity in clinical students. The Lilly Conferences draw participants from all disciplines; thus, the model was modified to apply to faculty teaching in diverse professional programs. The presentation provided an overview of the structural functionalist and symbolic interactionist approaches to professional socialization. It explained how the patchwork text method provides a framework for integrating these approaches into course learning activities. Examples of patchwork text activities applied to professional identity development were included.

Discussion

An enduring connection to social work and a professional identity grounded in social work values, theories, skills, and norms may help clinical social workers influence and shape the delivery of social services. Addressing the challenges faced by clinical social workers in developing a professional identity requires an understanding of professional socialization, the

application of theoretical and empirical research, and intentional effort on the part of social work students, educators, and professionals. As a whole, this banded dissertation extends the understanding of how to strengthen the social work identity of clinical students. The person-in-profession framework is utilized to emphasize the importance of the defining characteristics of the social work profession and the individual's interpretation and application of these characteristics into a professional social work identity.

The influence of education and faculty on professional socialization has been validated and leads to the recommendation that professional identity development be addressed in the explicit curriculum of social work programs (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Barretti, 2004b; Gitterman, 2014; Miller, 2010; 2013; Osteen, 2011; Roulston, Cleak, & Vreugdenhil, 2018; Wiles, 2013). Scholars recognize the influence of a student's social location on professional socialization, thus establishing the need for teaching methods that require reflection, awareness, and integration of personal identities into the professional identity (Barretti, 2004b; Clare, 2006; Miller, 2013; Moorhead et al., 2014; Osteen, 2011; Roulston et al., 2018; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016). Therefore, educators may benefit from pedagogical methods that view learning as an active construction of knowledge and meaning rather than a transmission of information. The patchwork text pedagogical method satisfies these empirically based recommendations.

Adopting the patchwork text method allows educators to explicitly address identity development in clinical students while attending to continued skill development. The patchwork text method incorporates the person-in-profession framework of identity development by attending to both the structural functional characteristics of the social work profession and students' symbolic interaction with these characteristics. The structure of the patchwork text method provides for the presentation of social work knowledge, theory values, skills,

jurisdiction, and professional directives. It requires students to apply, critique, reflect, justify, synthesize, and deconstruct and reconstruct these elements for their clinical practice. The formative peer-review process embedded in the patchwork text exposes students to alternative applications of social work's characteristics and further encourages reflection and self-awareness (Trevelyan & Wilson, 2012). Through the patchwork text, students synthesize the profession's definitions and mandates with their personal experiences, values, and frameworks and construct a professional identity grounded in social work.

In addition to professional identity development, the patchwork text is well-suited to social work education and offers important benefits to students. The patchwork text mirrors the way adults learn: by applying, reflecting, and constructing meaning with course content (Anastas, 2010; Bain, 2011; Trevelyan & Wilson, 2012; Winter, 2003). The patchwork text mirrors social work's value of diversity and empowerment. Central to Winter's conceptualization of the patchwork text is exposing students to diverse voices, both through varied sources in course content and peer feedback experiences (Scoggins & Winter, 1999). The patchwork text elicits and values students' unique social locations by requiring them to engage with prior personal knowledge, experiences, and values. This process can be empowering for students who may doubt or lack confidence in their voice, as can be the case with students identifying with oppressed groups (Anastas, 2010; Winter, 2003).

Winter (Scoggins & Winter, 1999) designed the patchwork text method to promote learning as a gradual, reflective process that requires not only intellectual labor, but also the development of emotional intelligence, judgment, and evaluation of values. Researchers from multiple disciplines have shown that the patchwork text method enhances students' critical thinking, ability to engage with complexities in theories and practice situations, and increases

self-awareness in multi-cultural teams (McKenzie, 2003; Moen & Brown, 2017; Rees & Preston, 2003; Smith & Winter, 2003). The skills developed by the patchwork text method: reflexivity, valuing different ways of knowing, identifying themes and patterns, critical analysis, giving and receiving feedback, and teamwork are important skills needed in clinical social work practice.

An understanding of the person-in-profession framework of professional socialization proposed in this dissertation can help educators to guide clinical students in the development of professional social work identity. According to the person-in profession framework, an important aspect of social work identity development is the interpretation and application of core social work characteristics. However, scholars note that the confusion surrounding the definition of social work leads to a lack of agreement of core characteristics constituting a social work identity (Gitterman, 2014; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Hill et al., 2017). This unclear conceptualization of social work identity impacts clinical social workers, whose identity is also threatened by their shared practice jurisdiction, varying definitions of clinical social work, and debated position in the profession. Some studies have interviewed or surveyed social work practitioners to identify characteristics of the profession (Clare, 2006; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Wiles, 2013). While these studies identified varying characteristics, there was some agreement across the publications. The shared characteristics of the profession identified in the literature are social justice and advocacy, the person-in-environment approach, ethical practice, and a caring, helping profession (Clare, 2006; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Wiles, 2013).

Rather than seek practitioners' conceptualizations of the social work profession, the research of this banded dissertation sought to identify the core characteristics of the social work profession through an analysis of two key documents: the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) and the

CSWE EPAS (2015). Since these documents are the work of many social work educators, leaders, and practitioners and reflect past iterations of these documents, the findings of this study suggest characteristics that can be broadly applied to all social work specialties, including clinical social work. The themes constructed in the analysis of the Code of Ethics and EPAS reflect some of the findings from the studies described earlier, including an emphasis on social justice and the person-in-environment perspective (Clare, 2006; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Staniforth et al., 2011). However, this study also identified additional themes on which a professional social work identity can be scaffolded: the mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum; social workers integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice; social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities; and social workers scaffold practice on empirical knowledge.

Implications for Social Work Education

Educators engaged in the professional identity development of their clinical students can utilize the central themes derived from the thematic analysis of the NASW Code of Ethics (2017) and the CSWE EPAS (2015) to examine professional identity development with their students. However, to be salient to clinical students, the themes need to be thoughtfully considered and applied to clinical social work. Educators can utilize the patchwork text method, as described in Product One, to engage students in mapping their professional development by applying these themes in clinical practice. Further, educators can assess and design patchwork text course modules to present the themes that their students struggle to integrate into professional identities.

For example, some claim that clinical social workers do not adequately attend to social justice because they focus on individual intervention and change rather than environmental or

macro-level transformation (Asakura et al., 2019; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Swenson, 1998). Although social justice is emphasized strongly in both the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) and EPAS (CSWE, 2015a), in a study by Staniforth et al. (2011), only 20% of respondents acknowledged social justice as a defining attribute of social work. This finding has implicit and explicit curriculum implications for educators of clinical social workers. Assuming that social justice applies to clinical social workers, it falls on educators to encourage students to apply social justice to their clinical practice, thereby strengthening their identification with the social work profession.

Social work scholars have suggested diverse methods to infuse social justice into direct practice. For example, clinicians can evaluate their practice models and select interventions congruent with social justice principles. Working from an empowerment model is considered another way to advance social justice through direct or clinical practice, particularly when working with members of oppressed populations (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007; Swenson, 1998). Using a strengths perspective is another important part of socially just clinical practice (Swenson, 1998) and is also an important part of empowerment models (McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007). Additionally, according to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) Global Statement of Ethical Social Work Principles (2018), practicing respect for diverse populations is a key component of social justice. Attending to oppression, marginalization, and intersectionality are vital skills in socially just clinical practice. Socially just clinical practice requires considering race not only as an issue of cultural competency, but in understanding the power, dominance, and oppression associated with it (Asakura et al., 2019). A clinical social worker can confront institutional oppression by creating a therapeutic relationship in which a client can discuss experiences of structural inequality. Given the multitude of ways to

integrate social justice into direct practice, students will need to engage in the transformative work of selecting and developing pathways to ground their clinical practice in social justice (Asakura et al., 2019). The educator can utilize the patchwork text method to require the student to reflect and evaluate their practice for congruence with social justice.

Implications for Research

The themes identified in the research product present areas worthy of future inquiry for social work theoreticians and researchers. For example, if a collaborative partnership model defines the client-provider relationship in social work (as this study suggests), social work is thus set apart from other helping professions that subscribe to the more traditional “expert-patient” relationship. Social work researchers can expand the empirical knowledge base regarding the efficacy of partnership in service provider-client relationships. Further researchers can continue to evaluate and emphasize strengths-based interventions and theories. As more professions seek to include and empower clients to make informed decisions in treatment, social work can be a leader in describing how to equalize power in the working relationship.

Given the importance of social justice to the social work profession, more research is needed to understand the effectiveness of socially just clinical practice with clients. In particular, a question to address is: if evidenced-based modalities are modified to integrate social justice principles, how do these modifications affect client outcomes? How can clinical social workers communicate their commitment to social justice to clients, and how might this affect the helping relationship?

The socialization of clinical social workers to the profession is relevant and worthy of future inquiry. In reference to the person-in-profession framework informing this dissertation, a next step might be to focus on symbolic interaction to understand how practicing clinical social

workers interpret the characteristics of social work in their role as direct practitioners.

Interviewing clinical social workers who identify strongly with their social work background and those who identify as therapists more than as social workers may give insight into the challenges of maintaining a connection to the social work profession. Identifying challenges to the development of professional social work identity in clinicians may suggest areas for social work to clarify its mission and purpose to be inclusive of all subspecialties.

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Developing Professional Identity in Clinical Students:
A Person-in-Profession Approach Utilizing Patchwork Text

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Abstract

Professional socialization, or developing a professional identity, is considered an essential aspect of social work education. Although a significant corpus of social work literature addresses this topic, the socialization of clinical social workers is infrequently addressed explicitly. This article proposes a “person-in-profession” framework of professional identity development, derived from the person-in-environment lens, that encourages a strong connection to the social work profession. The Patchwork Text (PWT) pedagogical method is recommended to educators of clinical social work students as a way to integrate professional identity development into course activities. Several course activities congruent with the PWT method, empirical research, and theoretical understanding of social work identity development are described.

Keywords: professional identity development, social work identity, professional socialization, clinical social work, patchwork text

Developing Professional Identity in Clinical Students: A Person-in-Profession Approach
Utilizing Patchwork Text

The social work profession has long emphasized professional socialization, the process through which an individual integrates the knowledge, culture, values, skills, and roles of a profession into a professional identity, as an important aspect of social work education (Barretti, 2004b; Dent, 2018; Miller, 2010, 2013). In 2008, the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) explicitly stated that the development of a professional identity as a social worker was a required outcome for schools of social work (CSWE, 2008). Although the most recent EPAS changed the language of the competency to "demonstrate ethical and professional behavior" (CSWE, 2015, p.7), Farmer (2017) points out the revised competency reflects similar aptitudes as the 2008 competency. Similarities include understanding the profession's history, mission, values, roles, and responsibilities. Additionally, within the EPAS description of implicit curriculum, educators are tasked with "shaping the professional character of students," to include a commitment to the social work profession (CSWE, 2015, p.14). Commitment to the profession is deemed an "essential quality" for social work practice (CSWE, 2015, p.14).

A durable professional identity affords a sense of meaning and purpose in the lives of individuals, may significantly impact career satisfaction, professional competency, and ethical decision making, and connects individuals to a larger group of professionals (Dent, 2018; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Miller, 2010; Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). A social work identity grounds the practitioner in the unique perspectives, values, and roles of the profession and therefore may strengthen practitioners' influence in social service agencies and in the national discussion on pressing social issues (Almandoz, 2014; Tilcsik, 2010).

For clinical social workers, maintaining a social work identity is complicated by their shared jurisdiction with other mental and behavioral health professionals (Wiles, 2013). Clinical social workers, particularly those practicing psychotherapy, share a client population and professional jurisdiction with other mental and behavioral health professionals such as clinical and counseling psychologists, marriage and family therapists, and professional counselors. Clinical professionals use many of the same theories and empirically evidenced interventions with clients and are often seen as equivalent practitioners. Thus, it is particularly challenging for clinical social workers to maintain a clear and unique professional identity amongst allied professionals (Wiles, 2013). Despite a longstanding emphasis in the social work field on professional socialization (Miller, 2013), limited published information is available to assist educators in their responsibility to socialize clinical social workers to the profession. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to present the person-in-profession framework, a term derived from person-in-environment (PIE), to professional identity development. It further recommends the patchwork text (PWT) method of teaching and learning as a pedagogical method that can be applied purposely and thoughtfully to engage clinical students in social work identity construction.

This paper will demonstrate how empirically validated theoretical understanding of professional identity development can be synthesized into a person-in-profession framework. This framework encourages clinical students to develop a professional identity rooted in social work. Further, this paper will explain how the PWT can incorporate the theoretical and empirical knowledge about professional social work identity development into classroom learning. First, the social work literature on professional socialization is reviewed with particular attention to the structural functional and symbolic interactionist theoretical approaches. The social work

framework, PIE, is used to construct the person-in-profession approach, which combines the structural functional and symbolic interactionist theoretical approaches. Second, a description of the PWT's structure, purposes, and outcomes provides the reader with a functional understanding of the teaching method, which will later be applied to professional identity development. Third, a review of the social work literature on professional identity development is utilized to build PWT activities that encourage clinical social work identity development.

Professional Social Work Identity Development

Although limited studies address clinical social work identity development specifically, referencing the theoretical and empirical social work literature on professional socialization generally provides a foundation to understand the development of professional social work identity in clinical students. This literature also guides the application of the PWT method in assisting clinical students in developing a robust social work identity. Historically, social work research on professional socialization has relied on two theories to describe professional identity development: the structural functional approach and symbolic interaction (Barretti, 2004a, 2004b; Miller, 2010).

The Structural Functional Approach

The structural functionalist approach to professional socialization emphasizes students acquiring the core attributes (knowledge, values, skills, roles) of the social work profession in linear, sequential stages. These attributes of the profession are defined as an occupational field evolves into a profession (Abbott, 1995; Greenwood, 1957). Additionally, documents published by professional bodies such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and CSWE, as well as state licensure statutes, define who can be a social worker, what social workers can do, and how the social worker carries out their responsibilities (Hill, Fogel, Donaldson, & Erickson,

2017; Staniforth, Fouché, & O'Brien, 2011). These definitions and statutes contribute to understanding the core attributes of the social work profession. Additionally, Gitterman (2014) recommends that an understanding of the historical development and tensions in social work also helps define the profession. A structural functionalist approach to professional socialization promotes an idealized social work identity defined by professional definitions. New students are empty vessels for experts to fill and mold into social workers, and formal education is the primary socializing agent (Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2010). In this positivist approach, inquiry focuses on evaluating and measuring whether a student has the requisite knowledge, values, and skills to be a social worker.

While conducting a systematic literature review, Barretti (2004b) found that the vast majority of scholarly articles in social work journals investigating professional socialization approached professional identity development from the structural functionalist perspective, thereby reducing the acquisition of professional identity to the attainment of a value or attitude. Quantitative studies she reviewed measured the effects of education on attitudes or values deemed important to social work identity. For example, Sharwell (1974) assessed students' orientation to public welfare. Barretti (2004b) surmised that the structural functionalist view of socialization was one-dimensional and narrowly defined the complex process of identity development to the acquisition of attitudes and values. Additionally, the findings of these structural/functional studies often contradicted one another (Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2010). Barretti (2004b) concludes with a call for social work scholars to mirror the field of medicine and nursing, whose research on socialization drew on symbolic interaction to understand the process of socialization. Miller (2010) reviewed the literature from Barretti's (2004b) systematic review and confirmed Barretti's analysis. Neither Barretti (2004b) nor Miller (2010) noted any

studies that looked specifically at clinical social work student's acquisition of social work values or attributes.

The Symbolic Interactionist Approach

In contrast to structural functionalism, symbolic interaction emphasizes that each individual constructs a unique identity. There is not an ideal social work identity requiring the student to adopt specific values, perspectives, or roles. This constructivist approach esteems individual meaning and interpretation over professional definitions or standards. The student is an active participant in crafting their multidimensional identity, which is shaped by individual and family values, experiences, and personal identities. The symbolic interactionist approach views socialization as a complex process that includes confusion and conflict, and although phases may be identified, they are not linear or sequential (Barretti, 2004a, 2004b; Miller, 2010).

Social work research investigating the process, meaning, and influences on professional socialization has increased since CSWE's EPAS defined the development of professional social work identity in 2008. Recent social work research confirms the value of the symbolic interaction approach to professional identity development. Scholarly literature, including empirical research in the medical and nursing fields, has shown that professional identity development starts long before a student enters social work and continues long after graduation (Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011; Valutis et al., 2012; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016).

An important finding in the social work literature is that an individual's social location significantly influences the development of their professional identity. Symbolic interaction recognizes the importance of social location on identity development. Key variables of social location affecting social work identity development include motivations for choosing social work and personal values (Barretti, 2004a; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Levy, Shlomo, & Itzhaky, 2014;

Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011; Wiles, 2013); age, maturity, gender, and previous work experience of a student (Miller, 2013; Valutis et al., 2012); and ethnicity and experiences of marginalization (Daniel, 2007, 2011). Additionally, professional socialization happens within relationships: Faculty, role models, mentors, field supervisors, and classmates have a profound effect on professional identity (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Barretti, 2004a; Bogo & Wayne, 2013; Daniel, 2007; Levy et al., 2014; Miller, 2013; Roulston, Cleak, & Vreugdenhil, 2018; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016).

Integrating Structural Functional and Symbolic Interaction Approaches

Although a professional social work identity is unique to each individual as emphasized by symbolic interaction, many scholars emphasize that an enduring social work identity integrates the core attributes that make social work unique amongst helping professions (Clare, 2006; Gitterman, 2014; Farmer, 2017; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011). Thus, developing a professional identity grounded in social work requires the contributions of both the structural functional and symbolic interaction theoretical approaches. Barretti (2004b) and Miller (2013) explain that these theoretical approaches describe different aspects of socialization and offer empirical support for integrating the structural functional approach and symbolic interaction lens. The structural functional approach of identity development can be beneficial to clinical students striving to understand their unique role and perspectives amongst mental and behavioral health service providers. Symbolic interaction emphasizes multiple influences on identity development. It provides a helpful theoretical framework for educators seeking to understand how the personal motivations, values, and experiences of their clinical students influence their professional identity development. As educators engage clinical students in crafting a social work identity, integrating the structural functional and symbolic interactionist

approaches can be understood through the lens of the person-in environment, or more specifically in this instance, the person-in-profession perspective.

The PIE lens is central to social work practice and is manifested in the profession's dual attention to the individual and the system of which they are a part (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014; Weiss-Gal, 2008) Social work's knowledge base, as defined by CSWE (2015) is built on theories of human behavior and theories describing the social environment. Social work scholars have further defined the PIE lens through work on systems and ecological theories, both of which describe the interaction between an individual and their environment (Kondrat, 2002). Viewing a situation with the PIE lens requires consideration of both the individual and the context as they exert influence on one another. Approaching professional identity development with a PIE, or person-in profession lens, insists that both the profession's definitions and the individual's interpretation are important. A person-in-profession approach to professional socialization emphasizes interaction between a student or practitioner and the social work profession. Rather than measure congruity with an ideal or rely wholly on the individual to establish an identity, a person-in-profession approach seeks to understand the intersection of personal values and experiences with professionally defined roles, definitions, and expectations. Figure 1 combines structural functional and symbolic interactionist approaches into a person-in-profession framework.

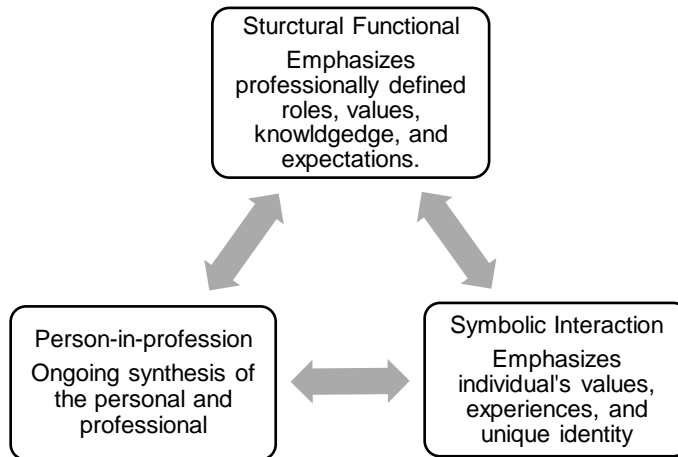


Figure 1. A person-in-profession framework for the professional identity development of clinical social workers.

The Patchwork Text Method

The PWT teaching method, as introduced by Richard Winter (Scoggins & Winter, 1999; Winter, 2003), draws on the metaphor of a patchwork quilt. Students “stitch” several assignments together to create a comprehensive understanding of course material. Trevelyan and Wilson (2012) identified three key elements or phases that define the PWT. First, students complete multiple assignments, or “patches,” in different genres (reflective essay, review of academic writing, oral or visual presentations). Patches require students to evaluate research and expert knowledge while engaging with personal prior knowledge, experiences, and values. Second, formative feedback is given on these assignments to encourage continued self-reflection. Winter (2003) advocates for feedback to occur in peer groups. In addition to formative feedback, students reflect on unifying themes across their patchwork. Third, the final assignment asks students to revisit each patch, selecting and revising patches to compose a final product that builds on and unifies each patch to create a product greater than the sum of its parts. The student may include new reflective work that addresses the student’s state of knowledge and process of

learning within the context of the course (Trevelyan & Wilson, 2012; Winter, 2003; Winter & Scoggins, 1999). Figure 2 details the elements and process of the patchwork text.

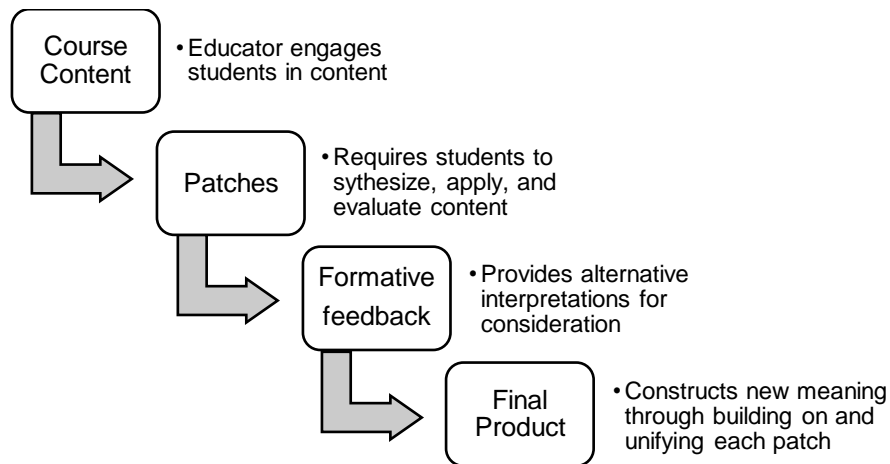


Figure 2. The patchwork text method.

The PWT is used widely in the UK. It has been assessed as a teaching method in nursing, education, pharmacy, business, social work, healthcare leadership, English, and sociology courses. Scholars found that the PWT promotes independent thought and ownership of learning, enhances students' critical thinking and ability to engage with complexities in theories and practice situations, and increases self-awareness in multi-cultural teams (McKenzie, 2003; Moen & Brown, 2017; Rees & Preston, 2003; Smith & Winter, 2003). Central to Winter's conceptualization of the PWT, and particularly important to social work educators, is exposing students to diverse voices, both through the analysis of assigned readings and through peer feedback experiences (Winter, 2003). In addition to emphasizing different views in the learning process, the PWT also recognizes multiple ways for students to communicate their learning. By asking students to produce diverse genres in their patchwork, the PWT accommodates differences in student ability and strengths (Smith & Winter, 2003). The PWT values students' unique voices by asking them to engage with prior personal knowledge, experiences, emotional intelligence, and values. This process can be empowering for students who may doubt or lack

confidence in their voice, such as students identifying with oppressed groups (Anastas, 2010; Winter, 2003).

Social Work Identity and the Patchwork Text

Scholars investigating the professional socialization of students and practicing social workers have noted the influence of education and faculty on professional identity development (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Barretti, 2004a; Gitterman, 2014; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016; Wiles, 2013). They recommend that professional identity development be addressed explicitly in the curriculum. Additionally, educators need a teaching framework that asks students to reflect on and incorporate personal experiences into their social work identity. (Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011). Given that a student's social location plays a primary role in the construction of professional identity (Daniel 2007; Levy et al., 2014; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011), educators may further benefit from a teaching method that views learning as active construction of knowledge and meaning rather than transmission of information. The PWT method provides a framework for clinical social work educators to engage their students in actively constructing an identity that connects them to the social work profession in several ways. First, it integrates the person-in-profession framework of professional socialization by incorporating structural functionalism and symbolic interaction into learning activities. Second, it provides a structure for educators to incorporate current empirical findings about social work identity development into course learning activities. Third, the PWT values students' frameworks and seeks to help students identify their personal and professional viewpoints as they apply, critique, reflect, evaluate, synthesize and create meaning with social work's core attributes.

The PWT approach provides a scaffold for educators to integrate the person-in-profession approach into classroom learning. When it is applied to clinical social work identity development, educators present the structural functional characteristics of the social work profession (knowledge, perspectives, values, skills, theories, history, and jurisdiction) and ask students, through patchwork, to symbolically interact with this content from their social location. Winter designed the PWT method to engage students in critically evaluating research, theories, ideas, and oneself (Scoggins & Winter, 1999; Winter, 2003). The PWT views a student's framework as an integral part of the learning process and mirrors the way adults learn: by applying, reflecting, and constructing meaning with course content (Anastas, 2010; Bain, 2011; Trevelyan & Wilson, 2012; Winter, 2003). Through patchwork, students realize a person-in-profession identity; synthesize the profession's definitions and mandates with their personal experiences, values, and frameworks, and apply them to clinical practice. Figure 3 combines the Person-in-Profession framework shown in Figure 1 and the elements of the PWT method shown in Figure 2.

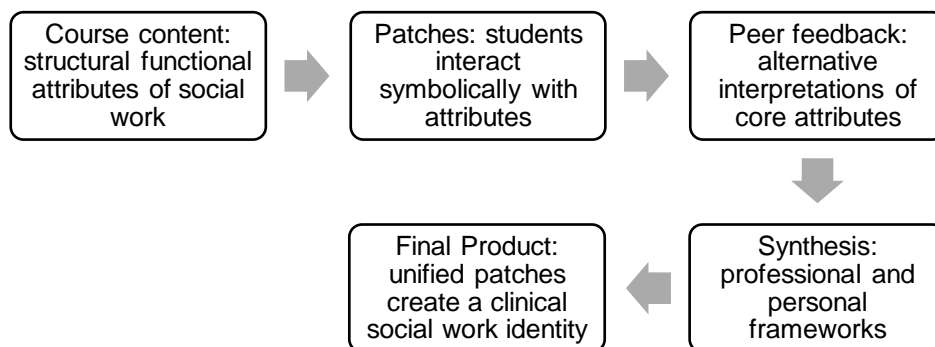


Figure 3. Identity development and the patchwork text method.

The following sections apply each of the core student activities of the PWT—patchwork, peer review, and summative assignment, to clinical social work identity development. The structural functional and symbolic interaction theories and empirical knowledge of processes and

variables affecting professional socialization are used to demonstrate how the PWT can be used to attend to social work identity development in clinical students.

Patchwork

Patches are assessment tasks spaced throughout a course or program that ask students to construct meaning with course content. Patches provide an opportunity for clinical students to engage in a person-in-profession approach to identity development by requiring them to think critically and apply the defining characteristics of social work to clinical practice. Patches also allow educators to incorporate current research findings regarding factors influencing identity development into course activities. The example patches provided in this article are intended to help educators conceptualize how the PWT can be used to develop professional identity. They are based on a literature review of social work identity development but are not exhaustive. Rather, the examples are meant to encourage educators to create patches aligned with the needs of their particular students. In each example, the reader will find a brief synopsis of research findings on social work identity development followed by patches that ask students to engage with defining elements of social work.

Example Patch: Person-In-Environment. Creating a strong, distinct identity as a clinical social worker within a shared jurisdiction of mental and behavioral health professionals requires practitioners to have a sense of uniqueness. Clinical social workers benefit from understanding that their profession has unique perspectives or knowledge to contribute (Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Wiles, 2013). Social work researchers studying identity development identified the PIE perspective as a hallmark of social work identity (Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Clare, 2006). Applying the PIE perspective to direct practice models contributes to a strong social work identity (Clare, 2006).

- Discussion: within your peer feedback group discuss the assumptions that the social work profession makes about the person, their environment, and the person-environment interaction. On your own, think of a recent experience with a client in your field placement. What assumptions did you make about the client, their environment, and the client-environment interaction? Write a 3-4 page paper reflecting on how your assumptions did and did not align with the profession. Include a reflection on how you can incorporate a client's environment and interaction with their environment more fully in your clinical work.
- Identify your (or your field agency's) preferred practice models and theories. Create a visual map of the assumptions these models make about the individual, the environment, and the person-environment interaction. If a practice model does not account for the environment or the person-environment interaction, how can you incorporate these social work perspectives into your clinical practice?

These patches emphasize the PIE framework as a critical structural functional element of social work identity. The PWT can help clinical students apply the PIE perspective to clinical practice by teaching them a process of evaluating a practice model according to the person-in-environment perspective. This skill may benefit clinical social workers as they continue to learn new practice models throughout their careers. Additionally, as students identify their assumptions about the person, the environment, and the interaction between the two, students clarify and understand how their social location affects their social work identity.

Example Patch: Social Justice. Social work researchers studying identity development pinpoint social work's values, specifically social justice, as the keystone of social work identity. (Farmer, 2017; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011). Further the

NASW Code of Ethics (2017) and CSWE EPAS (2015) both emphasize social justice as a foundation of social work practice. Clinicians wishing to practice social work from a social justice perspective evaluate their models, interventions, and theories for congruency with social justice principles (Swenson, 1998).

- What makes a practice model congruent with social justice? Brainstorm the models, interventions, or theories that you use most often in your work with clients in your field placement. Choose one model and deconstruct it with a social justice lens. How does the intervention apply social justice? How is it incongruent with social justice principles? Create a presentation using the visual platform/technology of your choice.
- Return to a past process recording or case write up from your field placement. Using this record, evaluate your work with a client for alignment with social work values, with particular attention to social justice. Be prepared to present this evaluation orally to your peer feedback group and receive peer supervision on your use of social work values in practice.

These patches prompt clinical students to evaluate and orient their practice around social justice, a key structural functional characteristic of social work. According to Lerner and Fulambarker (2018) and Asakura, Strumm, Todd, and Varghese (2019), structuring and delivering a course in an anti-oppressive manner is an important way to model principles of social justice for students. The PWT was designed to incorporate aspects of anti-oppressive teaching, including diverse voices and valuing alternative constructions of ideologies and values. Of note, Miller (2010) found that socialization to the social work profession occurs at the intersection between fieldwork and the classroom. She recommended that experiences influencing identity development in the field be addressed in the classroom.

Example Patch: Motivation. Social work scholars have validated that professional identity development starts long before a student enters social work (Barretti, 2004a; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Miller, 2013; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016). Both anticipatory socialization (experiences with social work before entering an educational program) and motivations to enter the field are influential on one's identification with the profession (Barretti, 2004a; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011).

- Write a 4-5 page reflection on why you chose clinical social work as a profession. What experiences did you have that influenced this decision? Who influenced this decision? Before beginning your social work education, how did you define social work? How is your conceptualization of social work changing? What aspects of the profession resonate most with you? With what parts or roles of the profession do you feel uncomfortable or disinterested?

This patch requires students to evaluate their motivations for choosing social work and reflect on their social location. It also emphasizes the symbolic interaction approach to professional identity development as students reflect on the meanings they have drawn from their experiences and how these meanings affect their interpretation of the social work profession. Reviewing this patch in a peer feedback group will expose students to different motivations and conceptualizations of the profession. This process also makes explicit the influence that peers have on identity development, as described by symbolic interaction. Importantly, students' work on this can help educators understand clinical social work students' motivations and where they feel disconnected from the profession.

Example Patch: Integrating Values. Literature investigating social work identity development consistently cites self-awareness, introspection, and reconciling personal and

professional values as vital to professional identity development (Askeland & Payne, 2006; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016; Valutis et al., 2012; Wiles, 2013). The use of photovoice and other creative mediums in identity development is seen in Mulder & Dull (2014), McCaughan, Anderson, & Jones (2013), and Harrison (2009).

- Create a photovoice presentation describing your guiding values. After presenting to your peer feedback group, discuss how your values align with social work's values. Identify consensus and conflicts.

This patch applies a person-in-profession framework of identity development as it asks students to consider the intersection of personal and professional values. The feedback process may also assist students with understanding how their values are shaped by their social location, thereby strengthening their ability at critical self-reflection.

Example Patch: Clinical Roles Within the Profession. Although clinical social work has a well-established presence in the profession today, there are still those who question whether clinical social work has moved away from the roots of social work and should be a separate profession (Specht & Courtney, 1994, Tosone, 2016). CSWE's EPAS (2015) states that understanding social work's history, mission, and roles is part of professional and ethical behavior. Gitterman (2014) asserts that students developing a social work identity need an understanding of the historical tension between micro and macro practice in order to locate themselves within the dichotomy.

- Working with a partner, identify and evaluate three social work articles critiquing clinical social work. Identify the arguments the author makes about clinical social work.

Together, write a response addressing the authors' concerns.

- According to social work scholars, social work is still searching for a unifying definition (Gitterman, 2014; Miller; 2013; Staniforth et al., 2011). Write a critique of a peer-reviewed journal article that proposes a unifying theme for the social work profession and consider how the proposed definition applies (or not) to clinical social work.
- Stage a mock debate in class between Mary Richmond and Jane Adams about the mission and goals of the social work profession. Discuss how clinical social work plays a role in achieving both the micro and macro goals of social work.

The structural functional approach to professional identity development emphasizes learning well-defined roles. These patches ask students to carefully consider the role of a clinical social worker in light of the broader profession. It is important to note that the goal of patchwork addressing social work's history is not to resolve the tension between individual and environmental change. Instead, the goal is to engage students in the discussion and help them find personal meaning within the debates in order to develop their identity.

Example Patch: Connecting to the Social Work Profession. Social work researchers investigating professional identity development recognize a sense of belonging, or connection, to the broader profession as foundational to developing a strong social work identity (Clare, 2006; Forenza & Eckert, 2018). Thus, patches connecting clinical students to the social work profession are a vital part of developing their professional identity.

- Identify which of the 12 Grand Challenges of Social Work appeal to you. Write a letter to the editor that draws on the "Challenge" of your choice and your clinical practice experience.
- Interview a clinical social worker in a leadership position in the state chapter of the NASW. What issues do they identify as most salient to the profession right now? What

does it mean to them to be a social worker? How are they contributing to the broader profession?

- Reflect on how your social work education has changed you. What are your professional goals and aspirations? How will social work help you reach these goals? What are your unique talents, interests, and values? How can you use these to contribute to the social work profession? How will you change social work? Choose a medium (written, visual, or oral) to present your ideas and goals to your peer feedback group.

These patches ask students to explore their social location further as they reflect on personal interests, values, and talents. Students symbolically interact with important aspects of social work as they determine which of the 12 Grand Challenges they are drawn to and how that challenge applies to their clinical practice.

The example patches presented in this section are designed to incorporate the structural functional aspects of social work and what researchers have learned about professional identity development into course activities. Students symbolically interact with these aspects as they reflect, evaluate, and incorporate the structural functional attributes of social work into their identities. This continual dialogue between professional social work perspectives, values, and definitions, and personal practice experience encourages the careful construction and ownership of a unique social work identity.

Peer Feedback

The symbolic interaction approach to professional socialization emphasizes the affect peers have on identity development. Miller (2013), Valutis et al. (2012), and Barretti (2004a) encouraged group work and peer mentoring to promote professional identity development in social work students. An essential aspect of the PWT is formative feedback, often given in small

peer groups, for each patch completed. In the context of social work identity development, reviewing one another's work in small groups exposes students to alternative ways of conceptualizing social work's defining characteristics. This process exposes students to their classmates' reactions to their interpretation of core social work characteristics and thus helps them continually re-evaluate and construct their social work identity. For example, receiving peer, formative feedback on patches requiring students to evaluate practice models may introduce a student to additional ways of incorporating social justice and the PIE perspective into clinical practice.

Further, social work researchers have identified that a student's social location impacts professional identity development significantly. (Daniel, 2011; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011; Valutis et al., 2012). Thus, assigning students to groups with a range of ages, genders, ethnicities, values, and previous social work experience may serve to increase the viewpoints and analyses to which a student is exposed. The group and peer review phase of the PWT provides the opportunity for clinical students to experiment with their emerging social work identities and be challenged by alternative identity constructions.

Summative Assignment

The final, summative assignment of a PWT has two parts. The first part consists of reviewing, selecting, and editing previous patches to support a unifying theme. Next, the student creates a personal reflection on the growth and learning that occurred during the course. Clare (2006) found that an explicit practice model reflective of social work's theories and values is an essential part of a strong social work professional identity. Further, incorporating a social justice lens into this practice model reinforces the connection to social work (Asakura et al., 2019). An appropriate summative assignment for PWT curriculum focused on a person-in-profession

identity development approach would be to weave individual patches together to construct a practice model that reflects the student's unique social work identity. This practice model can be specific to the MSW program's mission and the student's career goals but includes synthesizing the work the student has done on evaluating personal and professional assumptions, values, theories, and practice models with the day-to-day practice of clinical social work. Thus, the student is creating a person-in-profession social work identity scaffolded on reflection and meanings made from social work's defining attributes.

The reflective portion of the final assignment might include student introspection on their experience of identity development, what influences their conceptualization of social work identity, and how this identity will influence future practice. The goal of the PWT's summative assignment is not to produce a static identity or practice model. Rather, the focus is on the student interacting with the structural functional elements of social work as they re-consider individual patches, search for unifying themes, and synthesize professional definitions and mandates with personal values, preferences, and experiences.

Discussion

Educators can play an important role in helping clinical students navigate the ambiguity and role strain produced by the shared jurisdiction of mental and behavioral health practice with other clinical professions by explicitly including identity development in course curriculum (Miller, 2013). Utilizing the PWT method to approach professional identity development with a person-in-profession approach, educators can integrate social work's defining attributes while honoring the social location of their students. This person-in-profession approach may help clinical social work students ground their professional identity in the social work profession (Clare, 2006; Miller, 2013).

The PWT, as applied to identity development, can be used entirely within one course. This author used some of the recommended patches during an Advanced Clinical Methods course, a capstone course during the last semester of the MSW. The patches could also be utilized during the Human Behavior in the Social Environment sequence or during clinical practice methods courses. Alternatively, the PWT method has been used across an entire program (Moen & Brown, 2017). Multiple courses within an MSW program could employ patchwork congruent with identity development, with the summative project, the personal practice model reflective of a student's social work identity, completed during the final semester of the MSW. Although this author focused on identity development for clinical social work students, the PWT can be applied to identity development in other MSW specialties and in BSW courses as well.

Despite the increased interest in professional identity development since the 2008 CSWE EPAS, limited published information is available to aid educators in addressing the challenges of identity development for clinical students. Additional research is needed to understand what constitutes a clinical social work identity, how this identity is developed, and what challenges the formation of a robust connection to the social work profession. This author recommends an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to investigating clinical social work identity development. Creswell (2007) suggests that phenomenological research is best used when the researcher is interested in understanding how individuals experience and make meaning from a common phenomenon and whether shared experiences can be used to develop practices or policies. IPA places significance on understanding each individual's experience in addition to understanding commonalities, themes, and divergences amongst participants (Hood, 2016; Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2001). The patches and summative

assignment completed within a PWT could be used as data for IPA researchers wishing to explore clinical identity development. The individual patches and the first section of the summative assignment could help scholars understand the composition of the identity, and the reflective portion could offer valuable insights on the process of constructing an identity from a student's perspective. Since IPA values individual narrative as well as collective commonalities and divergences, this research method reflects the synthesis of the personal and professional in identity development and the PWT approach.

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Identifying Social Work's Defining Characteristics to
Strengthen Clinical Students' Professional Identity

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Abstract

Whether clinical social workers develop a social work identity is important to the profession as a whole, as well as to service agencies and individual clinical practitioners. However, the lack of a unified social work definition and characteristics presents challenges for establishing a strong connection to the social work profession. This study sought to identify characteristics of a social work identity through a thematic analysis of the National Association of Social Work (2017) Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work (2015) Education Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. The findings of this study suggest that a professional social work identity can be organized around the concepts: the mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum; social workers integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice; social workers are committed to social justice; social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities; social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge.

Keywords: clinical social work, social work identity, professional socialization, definition of social work

Identifying Social Work's Defining Characteristics to Strengthen Clinical Students' Professional Identity

Clinically trained social workers are positioned to play a vital role in addressing the nation's mental and social health needs as they account for a larger percentage of the mental health workforce than psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric nurses combined (NASW, 2019). A cohesive professional identity and a strong connection to the social work profession may enhance clinical social workers' ability to bring a unique voice, informed by social work frameworks and values, to the national discussion on mental and behavioral health. Research in the field of strategic management (Almandoz, 2014; Tilcsik, 2010) demonstrates that leaders with a strong commitment to a unified occupational identity, including the profession's theories, frameworks, and models, can shape workplace and organizational culture and strategy. Robust professional identity and connection to one's occupational field also promote a sense of meaning in the lives of its practitioners, higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions, and the likelihood of competent, ethical practice (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016; Dent, 2018; Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). Additionally, influential professional and occupational associations impact society's understanding of issues and government regulation and policy (Anteby et al., 2016). According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), clinical social work is the most widely offered specialization in Master of Social Work (MSW) programs; nearly half of all MSW students choose clinical or direct practice as their specialty (CSWE, 2015a). An enduring connection to the social work profession may prompt more clinical social workers to join and lead within the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), strengthening its membership and voice. The individual, professional, and societal benefits of

connection with one's occupation underscores the importance of clinical social workers developing a strong social work identity.

Professional socialization, the process through which an individual adopts the knowledge, culture, skills, and roles of a profession and integrates them into a professional identity, has been emphasized in social work throughout the profession's history. The scholarly social work literature on professional identity development has increased in recent years (Miller, 2013), presenting models of professional socialization (Barretti 2004a; Miller, 2010; Osteen, 2011), exploring the influence of social location variables on professional identity development (Daniel 2007, 2011; Valutis et al., 2012), and finding that faculty in schools of social work are highly influential in their student's developmental process (Barretti 2004a; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016).

However, scholars note that confusion surrounding the definition of social work leads to a lack of agreement of core characteristics constituting a social work identity (Gitterman, 2014; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Hill, Fogel, Donaldson, and Erickson, 2017). This unclear conceptualization of social work identity impacts clinical social workers, whose identity is also threatened by their shared practice jurisdiction and client population with other clinical professionals (Gitterman, 2014; Wiles, 2013). A shared identity built on widely accepted attributes could strengthen clinical social workers' connection to the profession, unify the varied social work specialties, strengthen the profession's voice on the national stage and help mend the dichotomy between micro and macro social work practice. This study seeks to identify the central characteristics of a clinical social work identity through an applied thematic content analysis of the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) 2017 Code of Ethics and the CSWE 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS).

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks of Professional Socialization

The scholarly literature in sociology, medicine, education, and social work identifies two theories that describe the development of professional identity: structural functionalism and symbolic interaction (Barretti, 2004b; Macdonald, 1995; Miller, 2010). The structural functionalist perspective on professional socialization focuses on the individual acquiring the defining characteristics of an occupation in linear, sequential stages; all students and professionals are striving toward one, idealized identity. This positivist approach considers new students to be empty vessels to be filled with defining characteristics of a profession by the experts in the field. Structural functionalism emphasizes formal education as the pathway to identity development (Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2010; O'Connor & Dalgleish, 1986). Professional socialization research with a structural functionalist lens focuses on evaluating and measuring whether a social work student has enough of the requisite knowledge, values, and skills to be a social worker (Barretti, 2004b).

Alternatively, symbolic interaction esteems individual meaning and interpretation over professionally defined attributes. There is not an ideal professional, and each individual crafts a unique identity. The student is an active participant in crafting their multidimensional identity, which is influenced by individual and family values, experiences, and personal identities. Informal pathways of socialization, including peer interaction, are considered paramount in the socializing processes. The symbolic interactionist approach views socialization as a complex process that includes confusion and conflict, and although phases may be identified, they are not linear or sequential (Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2010; O'Connor & Dalgleish, 1986). For example, the recent social work research on professional socialization incorporates a symbolic interactive lens: acknowledging that professional identity is unique to the individual and studying the

process of how professional identity develops. Researchers have identified that professional socialization into social work begins before formal education and continues throughout one's career (Barretti, 2004a; Miller, 2010, 2013; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016). Professional identity is intricately influenced by one's social location including age, maturity, and gender (Miller, 2013; Valutis et al., 2012); personal values (Levy, Shlomo, & Itzhaky, 2014; Osteen, 2011); and ethnicity and experiences of marginalization (Daniel, 2007, 2011).

Although recent research underscores that social work identity is unique to the individual, many researchers emphasize that an enduring social work identity includes the integration of what makes social work unique amongst helping professions (Clare, 2006; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016). Integrating distinct social work characteristics into their professional identity may help practitioners maintain unique social work perspectives, values, roles, and knowledge throughout their careers. Accordingly, both the structural functional and symbolic interaction theories play a role in professional socialization (Barretti, 2004a; Miller, 2010). Symbolic interaction informs our understanding of the process of identity development, and structural functionalism's focus on roles, definitions, expectations and values defined by the profession stabilizes social work's identity amongst the helping professions.

However, since Abraham Flexner (1915/2001) delivered his appraisal of social work in 1915, the field has struggled to define the structural functionalist elements: the knowledge, mission, values and ethics, skills, and jurisdiction that define social work as a unique profession. There is widespread acknowledgment that social work is still seeking a united definition which impacts the development of a cohesive social work identity (Gitterman, 2014; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Hill et al., 2017). Clinical social work, although narrower in its micro-focused practice, echoes the field of social work in its struggle to define itself.

Defining Clinical Social Work

Despite broad recognition and licensing of clinical social workers, there are multiple accepted definitions of clinical social work. While all definitions recognize that clinical social work focuses on direct practice, differing definitions are given by national groups representing clinical social work, including the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Clinical Social Work Association (CSWA), and the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (ABECSW) (ABECSW, 2017; CSWA, 2016; NASW, 2005). While the national clinical organizations (ABECSW, CSWA) focus specifically on the provision of mental health services, the NASW, which represents all fields of social work, describes clinical social work as addressing "psychosocial dysfunction, disability, or impairment" (NASW, 2005, p. 9). This definition suggests that the NASW sees clinical social work more broadly, encompassing work with individuals without mental health diagnoses. The ABESCW (2017) identifies clinical social work as "a healthcare profession" (para. 1), potentially separating clinical social work from the rest of the social work profession. Additionally, the ABESCW (2017) directs its members to abide by a professional code of ethics, but does not mention the NASW's code, nor infer any commitment to social justice, a value deeply held by other social work professionals.

In their analysis of state definitions of social work, Hill et al. (2017) found that each states' statutory definitions of clinical social work are different. Some state definitions represent a broad range of clinical models, methods, and client populations, while others rely on a psychotherapeutically oriented definition. Clinical social work is at the center of the historical debate over whether social work's mission focuses on individual or societal change, with some debating whether clinical social work should be considered a separate profession altogether (Ewalt, 1980; Frank 1980; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Tosone, 2016). Diverse definitions and

values of clinical social work across states and clinical social work organizations may create uncertainty in social work students about clinical social work's commitment to the broader profession, breadth of practice, and core social work values.

Defining Characteristics of Social Work Identity

Not only is the definition of clinical social work nebulous, but so are the defining characteristics of social work generally. Barretti (2004a), in her study of the professional socialization process in students, noted that, above all, students are “preoccupied with the struggle between what the profession is and is not, what practice is and is not, what social workers are and are not, and how to adapt to and accept these realities” (p.23). This statement underlines the need to articulate clear characteristics of the profession from a structural functional lens. Many studies on variables affecting professional socialization refer to the knowledge, values, and skills of social work without further defining these categories. However, some social work research on professional identity development has attempted to ascertain organizing principles around which an identity can be formed. Each of these studies approached the research question differently. Clare (2006) created a model of a robust identity by exploring students' and practitioners' stories of transition from student to professional. Forenza and Eckert (2018) interviewed social work practitioners (n=12) about their perspectives on social work identity based on Wenger's description of healthy social identity. Farmer (2017) identified attributes of identity through the creation and psychometric evaluation of the subscale, “Identify as a Professional Social Worker Subscale.” Mackay & Zufferey (2015) interviewed 12 Australian social work educators (n=12) about how they conceptualize social work identity. Staniforth, Fouché, and O'Brien (2011) analyzed 342 surveys of professional social workers in Aotearoa, New Zealand asking, “what is your definition of social work?” Finally, Wiles (2013)

interviewed students (n=7) about personal and professional identities. Although each study approached defining identity differently, some common findings emerged through the literature review.

Social Justice and Advocacy. With the exception of Clare (2006), the research reviewed found that social justice or social change is an attribute of social work identity. In particular, Forenza and Eckert's (2018) participants all named social justice as the defining characteristic of the social work profession. Several participants in this study relayed that a critical aspect of a social work identity is political awareness. Professionals who became social workers after a significant career in another field (n=3) cited advocacy as what attracted them to social work. Farmer (2017) conceptualized advocating for client access to services as an element of professional identity, and Staniforth et al. (2011) also found discourses of advocacy within professionals' discussion of identity. Mackay and Zufferey's (2015) participants constructed social work as unique amongst helping professionals in part due to the commitment to social change. While the students in Wiles (2013) study did not specifically name social justice, there was an emphasis on helping the disadvantaged. However, not all findings ascribed the same importance to social justice. In Staniforth et al.'s (2011) study, only 27% of participants referred to social change when describing social work identity and only 20% denoted social justice.

Person-in-Environment. Clare's (2006) model identifies that a central aspect of a durable social work identity is a personal practice model that reflects social work frameworks. One example of a social work framework that appeared in research on identity is the person-in-environment perspective or ecological framework. Staniforth et al.'s (2011) study found themes emphasizing an ecological perspective such as "the aim of enhancing the 'person in environment' fit," and "improv[ing] the interaction between people and their environment" (p.

200) within their participants' definitions of social work identity. The person-in-environment perspective is a motivating factor for some in their choice of profession (Forenza & Eckert, 2018). Interestingly, although Mackay and Zufferey's (2015) interviews of social work educators revealed social change discourse, an ecological or person-in-environment perspective was not referenced.

Ethical and Professional Practice. Another common aspect of social work identity amongst the reviewed studies is ethical practice. Participants in one study specifically named their respective social work code of ethics as a document defining the profession (Mackay & Zufferey, 2015). In his evaluation of the "Identify as a Professional Social Worker Subscale," Farmer (2017) validated that "demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication" measures professional identity and further recommended that an item addressing the application of the code of ethics should be added to the subscale. Noteworthy is Wiles' (2013) finding that students talked about social work identity as an ability to make ethical decisions.

A Caring, Helping Profession. The research studies that interviewed students, practitioners, or educators all found themes and discourses that tied social work identity to caring for and helping others. Practitioners chose specialties based on their perception of need and wanting to help specific populations, emphasized empathy (Forenza & Eckert, 2018), and defined the profession as work that helps people reach their goals (Staniforth et al., 2011). Students spoke of altruism and "always wanting to help" (Wiles, 2013, p. 858), and educators echoed these sentiments by describing social workers as "humanitarians" (Mackay & Zufferey, 2015, p. 652). Social workers also communicated to researchers that in addition to caring and

helping, social work values defined their professional identities, and were integrated into their personal characters as well (Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Wiles, 2013).

This review of the literature demonstrates that understanding the defining and organizing characteristics of social work is important to the development of a cohesive, strong professional identity (Clare, 2006; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016). Neither social work as a field nor clinical social work as a specialty offer widely accepted definitions on which to build a professional identity. While the professional identity research distinguishes some defining attributes of social work identity, the authors do not claim generalizability, nor are they comprehensive (Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Staniforth et al., 2011). Widely accepted attributes that root professional identity in social work may unite sub-specialties and strengthen clinical social workers' connection to the profession. The purpose of this study is to identify attributes of a professional social work identity through a thematic analysis of widely known and accepted documents: the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015) EPAS. These attributes can be used to guide clinical social workers in the development of a cohesive professional identity.

Method

Although thematic analysis has been applied differentially, in order to maintain rigor and systematicity, this study utilized Braun and Clarke's guidelines to conduct thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Madill and Gough (2008) state that Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) have developed thematic analysis into a "legitimate and transparent methodology" (p. 441) and Maguire & Delahunt (2017) recognize Braun and Clarke's guidelines as the most influential approach to thematic analysis in the social sciences. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) describe

thematic analysis as a systematic method for identifying patterns and themes relevant to the research question within a data corpus.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher's underlying epistemology for this study is essentialism: an assumption that social work has defining characteristics that set it apart from other helping professions. This essentialist philosophy is echoed in the study's theoretical framework: structural functionalism. The structural functionalist approach to professional identity development is rooted in the functionalist theory of professionalization. An occupation must achieve particular outcomes in order to obtain the status of a profession (Greenwood 1957; Macdonald, 1995). These outcomes mirror the attributes of professional identity and should include: knowledge and a systemic body of theory; skills, which are defined as the application of knowledge; a professional culture consisting of values, beliefs, motivations and attitudes; professional norms; and professional roles reflecting the authority, and sanction of the profession (Barretti, 2004b; Greenwood, 1957; Miller, 2010). The structural functionalist approach to professionalization posits that a profession needs a unique purpose or mission to be differentiated from other professions (Morris, 2008). Thematic analysis can be theory driven and provides for an essentialist view of the research topic and data, thus harmonizing with the structural functional framework and epistemology of the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

Data Collection

The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015) EPAS were selected as data for this study as the researcher sought widely acknowledged documents that described the structural functionalist categories of social work identity. The CSWE EPAS details the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes of a competent social worker. In order for

baccalaureate and master's programs in social work to be accredited, programs must demonstrate how their graduates meet the competencies outlined in EPAS (CSWE, 2015b).

Codes of ethics are meant to establish professional identity, define how society understands the profession, who the professional should be, and communicate the profession's aims or mission (Alexandra & Miller, 2010; Banks 2003, 2012). Codes of ethics transmit professional culture through including explicit statements of values, as well as principles, obligations, and motivations (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). While social workers may refer to various codes of ethics, the CSWE (2015b) mandates social workers be competent in applying the NASW Code of Ethics. Additionally, the NASW Code of Ethics states, "among codes of ethics social workers should consider the NASW Code of Ethics as their primary source" (NASW, 2017, Purpose, para 3). For purposes of this study, the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics was copied from the official NASW website into a word document on June 4, 2019. This document was checked with the website version to ensure accuracy. A PDF of the CSWE (2015) EPAS was downloaded from the official CSWE website on July 29, 2019.

Given that the aim of the study was to identify attributes of professional identity within the data corpus rather than provide an overview of the documents, the researcher developed an a-priori codebook based on the structural functionalist approach to identity development and multiple readings of the data. An a-priori codebook identifies and organizes data deductively, according to research questions and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Schreir, 2012). The categories of the codebook reflected structural functionalist literature and included: purpose of the profession, knowledge, skills, culture, professional roles, and norms (Barretti, 2004b, Greenwood, 1957; Miller, 2010). Each category was defined, and indicators, examples, and decision rules were listed. To reduce the bias and assumptions of the author and

second coder, a semantic approach was used to identify coding units. For example, in coding a unit of text to “purpose of the profession,” language in the document needed to identify the unit as social work’s mission, purpose, definition, or overarching aim.

Since a code of ethics can be viewed in its entirety as a statement of culture and values (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016), additional indicators and decision rules were needed. Bloom’s Taxonomy-Affective describes the development of valuing something, levels of motivation to act, and qualities of character (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964) and was used to further operationalize and sensitize the coding frame to elements of professional culture. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) was used to further operationalize the categories of knowledge and skill. Since professional skills are defined as the application of knowledge and theory (Greenwood, 1957), the levels of ‘Apply,’ ‘Analyze,’ ‘Evaluate,’ and ‘Create’ of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy were used to identify and code text to the category of skills, and the categories of ‘Remember’ and ‘Understand’ were used to code knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

The author and the second coder worked independently utilizing the qualitative research software NVivo 12. The research team approached the data corpus sentence by sentence with the specific question of whether the data item contributed to or defined professional social work identity. If the data item described professional identity, the a-priori codebook was used to code the data item. The codebook was found to be exhaustive: each data item interpreted to define professional identity was coded to one of the categories in the codebook. As the coding progressed, category by category, the research team continued to refine the codebook to provide further guidance for coding. Throughout the research process, notes, annotations, and memos were written to document researcher thoughts, questions, and methodological decisions. Once a

category was complete, the resulting units of coding were compared and discussed to achieve consensus. The author compared the final coding units to the last version of the codebook and gave the results to the second coder for validation and confirmation. The result was a data set organized around structural functional categories defining the professional identity of a social worker.

Data Analysis

Adhering to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2012) guidelines of thematic analysis, the author focused on searching for broader themes within the coded data. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that "a theme captures something important about the data in relationship to the research question and represents some level of patterned response of meaning within the data set" (p.82). This phase involved searching for broad topics and issues within the coded data, compiling and collapsing codes that shared a common idea to communicate what is meaningful in the data. A recursive process compared identified themes to the data set to substantiate the theme and determine its quality, coherence, depth, and boundaries (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes identified were further collapsed and split to develop a distinct and coherent set of five themes. These five themes were compared to the original documents to confirm that they capture important and relevant elements of the documents concerning professional identity. Finally, themes were named and defined.

Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes within the coded data that communicate core characteristics of the social work profession. To be considered a characteristic of social work, data from both the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS needed to

contribute to the understanding of the characteristic. The themes identified from the data that define the core characteristics of the social work profession are:

- The mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum;
- Social workers integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice;
- Social workers are committed to social justice;
- Social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities;
- Social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge.

The Mission of Social Work Requires Practice Across the Micro-Macro Continuum

As nationally recognized organizations that lead the social work profession, NASW and CSWE both use their primary documents (the Code of Ethics and EPAS, respectively) to describe social work's mission. Social work's mission encompasses the dual purpose of enhancing individual well-being and promoting community and societal well-being. Social workers help those in need and address social problems (CSWE, 2015b; NASW, 2017). Additionally, NASW (2017) emphasizes social work's focus on those who are "vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (Preamble, para. 1). While CSWE (2015b) does not repeat these groups of people explicitly as the focus of social work intervention, its emphasis on justice and human rights implicitly suggest that social work is particularly concerned with those whose rights are threatened:

Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons, locally and globally. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 5, para. 1)

Social workers hold the well-being of clients as their primary concern and social work competence, activities, and values are focused on increasing well-being:

Social work competence is the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations in a purposeful, intentional, and professional manner to promote human and community well-being. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 6, para. 2)

Social workers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 1.01)

Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Principles, para. 5)

Given the profession's person-in-environment framework, social workers understand that human well-being is related to well-being at every level. Individual well-being is affected by connection to others (family and group well-being), by access to resources (community well-being) and to opportunity for growth (societal well-being). Thus, to approach social work's purpose requires intervention across the micro-macro scope:

A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living (NASW, 2017, Preamble, para. 1).

The CSWE (2015b) EPAS uses the term "micro, mezzo, and macro levels" five times to describe social work practice within its nine competencies. The competencies described are required to be achieved in the first year of graduate work and include engaging, assessing,

intervening, and evaluating practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Additionally, social work students are prepared to:

...understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings...Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services; (CSWE, 2015b; pg. 8, Competency 5)

The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics lists the range of social work activities as: direct practice (including psychotherapy and counseling), community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. (Preamble, para. 2)

As described within this theme, the Code of Ethics and the EPAS place client well-being front and center in social work practice. Achieving human well-being requires intervention at every level of society. Social workers practicing in various areas of specialty must be interdependent on one another to realize the ambitious mission of social work.

Social Workers Integrate the Mission and Values of the Profession into Practice

The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS explicitly describe an expectation that social work professionals are socialized to the field. Social workers are prepared during their education and are ethically bound throughout their careers to remain committed to the mission, purpose, values, and ethics of the social work profession. Commitment to the field of social work is an essential characteristic of the social work professional. In describing social workers who demonstrate ethical and professional competence, EPAS (2015) states:

Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. (p.7, Competency 1)

Additionally, the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics admonishes:

Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 5.01, para. 2)

The development of professional identity as a social worker is an essential part of social work education and early career development. Acquiring and retaining a commitment to the profession is deemed important enough, that, while graduate social work programs may choose areas of specialized practice on which to focus, all programs must remain rooted in the wider social work profession. Accredited social work programs require that the guiding mission statement and goals of the program reflect the social work profession. A few examples of emphasis on early professional commitment to social work's purpose include:

The (social work) program submits its mission statement and explains how it is consistent with the profession's purpose and values. (CSWE, 2015b, p.10, Accreditation Standard 1.01)

The mission and goals of each social work program address the profession's purpose, are grounded in core professional values, and are informed by program context. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 10, Educational Policy 1.0)

Educational preparation and commitment to the profession are essential qualities in the admission and development of students for professional practice. (CSWE, 2015b, Educational Policy, 3.1)

Note that the above statement suggests that commitment to the profession may be considered a criterion for admission to a graduate social work program.

Additionally, a stated purpose of the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics is:

The Code socializes practitioners new to the field to social work's mission, values, ethical principles and ethical standards. (Purpose of the NASW Code of Ethics, para. 2)

Particularly paramount in a social worker's identity is the adherence to core professional values. These core values are listed identically in both documents as service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (CSWE, 2015b; NASW, 2017). Social work values are an integral part of social workers' practice, guiding professional judgment and treatment of clients. Both the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS outline that values are used in conjunction with knowledge and skills to help clients. CSWE (2015b) defines competent practice as "the ability to integrate and apply social work knowledge, values, and skills to practice situations" (CSWE, 2015b, p. 6, para. 2). CSWE (2015b) describes that although specialized social workers may use multidisciplinary knowledge in practice, the theories and interventions used should be "...consistent with social work values..." (CSWE, 2015b, p. 12, para. 11). Further, social workers participating on interdisciplinary teams should be guided by social work values (NASW, 2017). Thus, social work values not only direct professionals to practice ethically, they inform professional judgment, intervention choices, and daily interaction with clients and colleagues.

Additional examples of the importance and influence of the core social work values include:

These core values, embraced by social workers throughout the profession's history, are the foundation of social work's unique purpose and perspective. (NASW, 2017, Preamble, para. 3)

Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Principles: Integrity)

These values underpin the explicit and implicit curriculum (of social work programs) and frame the profession's commitment to respect for all people and the quest for social and economic justice. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 10, para. 2)

This theme describes that social work's mission and values are vital characteristics of professional social work identity. Social work's mission guides the development of social work education and is a primary socializing agent. Social work's values define the character of a social worker and are an integral part of competent practice.

Social Workers are Committed to Social Justice

The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS give shared attention to social justice as an integral characteristic of professional social work identity. A commitment to social justice echoes social workers' understanding that people and social environments are inextricably connected, and that social change is required to enhance well-being across the micro-macro spectrum. Social justice includes securing human rights, including meeting basic needs and eliminating discrimination and oppression, and promoting economic and environmental justice:

Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 3)

Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. (NASW, 2019, Ethical Principles: Social Justice)

Although a commitment to social justice includes working for broad societal change, it also means advocating for the rights and needs of individual clients within groups, communities, organizations, and society. Securing resources and opportunities for clients and working to expand an agency's ability to empower diverse clients is also promoting social justice (NASW, 2019).

Social justice is one of six core values named by the NASW (2017) and the CSWE (2015b). It follows that commitment to social justice influences social workers' professional values, knowledge base, and skill development. Additionally, CSWE (2015b) explicitly identifies human rights as a social work value, and describes some of the rights social workers attend to:

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. (p. 7, Competency 3)

A social worker's knowledge base is substantial, including theory and strategies applied to engage, assess, and intervene with clients, a working understanding of social and cultural differences, and research and evaluation methods. Additionally, social workers are admonished to learn and gain knowledge that aligns with their commitment to social justice. Social workers enact social change informed by the study of marginalization and oppression, structural barriers to opportunity, and how policy and culture arbitrate human rights.

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. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 2)

Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 3)

Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard, 1.05c)

Social workers are also commissioned to develop a professional skill set to work towards a socially just society. The social work accreditation standards include a competency specifically dedicated to "advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 3). This includes the key social work skill of advocacy, which is enacted at all levels of practice, strategies to enhance public participation and address structural inequality, and policy practice that advances social justice. This competency applies to generalist and specialized practice as specialized practitioners learn to advance each competency according to their focus of practice (CSWE, 2015b).

Social Workers Partner with Clients to Enhance Strengths, Capabilities, and Opportunities

A hallmark of any professional identity is how the working relationship between service provider and client is defined. A professional social work relationship is a collaboration between client and social worker: “Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process” (NASW, 2017, Ethical Principles: Importance of Human Relationships). While social workers provide understanding of theoretical and research-based interventions, social workers encourage client’s self-determination in directing and selecting the goals most important to the client. The helping process is thus a joint effort, led by client values and preferences. The principle of collaboration is reflected in these excerpts from the EPAS and the Code of Ethics:

Social workers respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 1.02)

Social workers...negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of clients and constituencies; (CSWE, 2015b, pg. 9, Competency 8)

Notice the language that specifies that social workers and clients work towards goals that are arrived at through collaborative effort. Additionally, interventive actions are not only done on behalf of clients, but also in partnership with clients.

Working in partnership with clients requires that the social worker honor the worth and dignity of the client through cultural humility and sensitivity, recognize client strengths, and honor the expertise of the client. Social workers learn to deliver culturally sensitive services and to respect and value diversity (CSWE, 2015b), reinforcing the partnership model of practice. Valuing social and cultural diversity also aligns with social work’s emphasis on eliminating discrimination. If all persons are of worth, then all must have strengths. Collaboration requires the recognition of the strengths and abilities that clients have. CSWE (2015b) directs social

workers toward competence in assessing client strengths not only needs and challenges. One strength highlighted by social work is the client's knowledge of their current situation. Social workers seek to understand a client's experience through the client's eyes.

Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 1.05a)

Social workers...engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 2)

Within the professional partnership, the client's well-being is primary and social workers have the responsibility to protect the client. The intent of the Ethical Standards of the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics is to guard a client's rights and protect the client from harm within the social worker-client relationship. These standards advise social workers in matters of confidentiality, professional boundaries, informed consent, client right to records, and respectful treatment of the client. The client's interests are primary when conflicts of interest arise, when another provider could serve the client more fully, and even in the Code's direction that when setting fees, "Consideration should be given to clients' ability to pay" (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 1.13a). The social worker's self-awareness is vital in protecting the client and creating a partnership:

(Social workers) apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 2)

They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. (CSWE, 2015b, p.7, Competency 1)

The purpose of the collaborative relationship between client and social worker is not only to address needs, but to enhance clients' strengths, capabilities, and opportunities:

Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Principles: Dignity and Worth of the Person).

Social workers critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 9, Competency 8)

They (social workers) recognize, support, and build on the strengths and resiliency of all human beings. (CSWE, 2015b, Educational Policy 2.0, para. 1)

Building on client capacity echoes back to the concept that interventive action is often done with a client. Advocating with a client, as opposed to on behalf of the client, strengthens the client's ability to advocate for themselves.

In order to build on the capacities of individual clients, it is important to remember that social work clients include groups, organizations, and communities and that social workers are thus bound to enhance the capacity of these entities. Both NASW (2017) and CSWE (2015b) recognize that social workers play a vital role in increasing organizations' ability to provide efficient and effective services. Social workers engage in research and evaluation to improve the delivery of services as well as advocating for resources to meet client needs. Social workers also enhance communities' ability to meet the needs of its diverse members and educate community members on diversity and oppression:

Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems. (NASW, 2017, Purpose, 5)

Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 6.04c)

Social workers partner with clients. Cultural consciousness, utilization of client strengths, and self-awareness support the creation of a collaborative relationship. This partnership model of practice is meant to increase the client's capacity to meet challenges. Additionally, social work at the macro level focuses on increasing society's ability to recognize and celebrate diversity and meet everyone's basic needs.

Social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge.

Social work's dual purpose of addressing human need and social problems is guided by a person-in-environment (PIE) understanding. Social work practice applies this framework and utilizes empirical knowledge to accomplish social work's mission. The PIE framework emphasizes that people develop and act within their social context; there is an interdependent relationship between individuals and their environment. The PIE lens is both explicitly and implicitly discussed in the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS. Explicitly, both documents state that a person-in-environment framework defines and guides social work. The PIE, supported by theories of human behavior and the social environment, is applied throughout the social work helping process, informing methods of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation (CSWE, 2015b). Implicitly, the documents draw attention to how social and cultural forces shape people's behavior and experience:

Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 1.05a)

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity...Social workers...recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 7, Competency 2)

Empirical knowledge derived from rigorous research helps social workers understand and apply theories of human behavior and the social environment to enhance human well-being. Social work emphasizes both conducting and applying research in practice. CSWE (2015b) names scientific inquiry as a guide and value of social work practice. The social work value of competence includes continual efforts to increase knowledge and improve practice. The importance of research and evidence-informed practice is demonstrated in these examples:

Social workers should critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice. (NASW, 2017, Ethical Standard 5.02c)

They (social workers) also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice. (CSWE, 2015b, p. 8, Competency 4)

It is noteworthy that the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and the CSWE (2015b) EPAS highlight research that is applicable and transferable to social work practice. Along with requiring students to learn to translate research to practice, CSWE also emphasizes that research should be "practice-informed" (2015b, p. 8, Competency 4). Evaluation of programs and implementation is included in NASW's description of research ethics. Thus, social work research

is embedded within the environment in which social workers practice and reflects an applied PIE framework.

Discussion and Limitations

Although a unifying definition of social work is needed to socialize social workers to the profession, social work has struggled to define itself since its formation (Hill et al., 2017; Staniforth et al., 2011). This study sought to identify core characteristics of the social work profession that can shape a clinical social worker's professional identity through an analysis of two key documents in the profession: the NASW Code of Ethics and the CSWE EPAS. The findings of this study suggest that a clinical social work identity can be organized around the following concepts: the mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum; social workers integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice; social workers are committed to social justice; social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities; and social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge.

Implications

The mission of social work requires practice across the micro-macro continuum. In Forenza & Eckert's (2018) study, the breadth of practice was identified as a salient theme defining social work. However, some consider that the diversity of practice in social work creates difficulties in establishing a unified professional identity (Gitterman, 2014). Rather than seeing it as a detriment, the scope of social work practice can be embraced as a strength and vital characteristic of the social work profession. Collaboration amongst specialties is essential to achieving social work's mission and could help unify the profession. This has implications for further research and evaluation exploring collaboration. For example: do those with membership

in a national organization, such as NASW, tend to express a higher level of connection to multiple specialties within the social work field? How can national organizations foster connection and collaboration?

Social workers integrate the mission and values of the profession into practice. This study's findings reinforce Miller's (2013) and Osteen's (2011) findings that professional values are a key characteristic of professional social work identity. This has implications for social work educators who introduce and guide students to practice value-based social work. In order to practice in alignment with social work values, educators teach students to evaluate evidence-based practice methods for consistency with social work values, especially when models are borrowed from other fields. Research is needed to determine the efficacy of theories and interventions that are adjusted to align with the profession's value base. Additionally, social work supervisors have the opportunity to reinforce applying values to practice decisions.

Social workers are committed to social justice. The shared emphasis on social justice between the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2017) and EPAS (CSWE, 2015b) reinforces Mackay and Zufferey's (2015) and Forenza and Eckert's (2018) findings. However, in Staniforth et al.'s (2011) study (n=342), only 20% of respondents identified social justice in their definition of social work. This suggests that social justice may not be a widely shared value amongst all practitioners and thus has implications for social work educators within MSW programs. Emphasizing social justice as an integral part of social work's knowledge base and as a lens for both micro and macro practice is key to maintaining a social work identity. Effective, socially just social work must be practiced at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of intervention.

Clinicians who are socially just practitioners evaluate their models, interventions, and theories for congruency with social justice principles and supplement traditional clinical theories

with knowledge and understanding gained from critical social theories (Asakura, Strumm, Todd, & Varghese, 2019). This underlines the importance of learning various critical social theories, including critical race theory, anti-colonial theory, feminist theory, and social justice theories and principles. Further, clinical social work students need to be competent in applying this knowledge to clinical practice models and adapting interventions to include principles of social justice. Attending to oppression, marginalization, and intersectionality are vital skills in socially just practice and can be practiced both directly with clients and in assessing agency policy. Clinical social workers can be key agents in advocating for just policies within multidisciplinary agencies and encouraging comprehensive training to enhance employees' capacity to serve oppressed populations.

Although clinical social workers' job descriptions may not include macro-level social justice work as part of employment responsibilities, the NASW's injunction to challenge social injustice remains valid (NASW, 2017). Clinical social work students may need assistance to engage in social justice work beyond the responsibilities of direct practice in their field placement. One unique approach documented in the recent social work literature is called "Mapping Social Justice" (Kiesel & Abdill, 2019). The Mapping Social Justice (MSJ) project was initiated at a clinically focused MSW program to engage clinical students in macro level advocacy and policy work and decrease the intimidation felt by clinical students when engaging in social justice work. The MSJ team identified social justice issues consistent with social work values and relevant to students' field placements, clinical methods courses, and personal interests. Students then received information alerts, action alerts, and event alerts tailored to their personal experiences in field and coursework. Information about students' local, state, and federal representatives was also shared. Initial evaluation of the MSJ project showed that more

than half of students took action based on the alerts received (Kiesel & Abdill, 2019). Projects such as MSJ have the potential to increase clinical students' engagement in macro-level social justice work that may persist beyond MSW program.

Social workers partner with clients to enhance strengths, capabilities, and opportunities. Defining the social work relationships as a collaborative partnership as opposed to the more traditional “expert-patient” relationship has important implications for the profession and for individual practitioners. A partnership model may set social work apart from helping professions who subscribe to a medical model of intervention. Also, as more professions seek to include and empower clients to make informed decisions in treatment, social work can be a leader in describing how to equalize power in the working relationship. Social work researchers can also expand the empirical knowledge base regarding the efficacy of partnership in service provider-client relationships and continue to evaluate and emphasize strengths-based interventions and theories. In addition, if, as these findings suggest, partnership and increasing capacity are hallmarks of a social work identity, they also become ways for practitioners to evaluate and improve their social work practice.

Social workers scaffold their practice on the person-in-environment framework and empirical knowledge. The emphasis on PIE in the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics and CSWE's (2015b) EPAS echoes practitioners in Forenza and Eckert's (2018) and Staniforth et al.'s (2011) studies who discussed the PIE perspective as an important aspect of the social work profession. As Clare (2006) emphasized, having a practice model that is grounded in social work frameworks is an important aspect of a robust social work identity. Learning to critically assess theories, models, and frameworks for their assumptions about the individual and the environment

is an important part of developing social work knowledge, particularly in specialties that use knowledge from disciplines that do not traditionally consider the environment.

Social work's emphasis on practice informed research and research-informed practice underlines the importance of scholars partnering with the practice community and asking questions relevant to current practice. Access to research for practitioners without a connection to an academic library is an ethical issue worthy of attention from social work's influential schools and organizations. Schools of social work can emphasize faculty communicating research findings with the broad practice community as a highly valuable scholarly activity or establishing repositories of research that are accessible to the public.

Limitations

While the NASW Code of Ethics and the CSWE EPAS are used widely in the social work profession, they are rooted to a specific time and place in social work's evolution. Thus, the analysis of these documents is reflective of the social location in which these documents were created. Additional historical research could attempt to identify how these documents' depiction of social work identity has changed over time.

Although the structural functionalist framework provided for the identification of core characteristics of the social work profession, it is also a static framework that does not account for the variability and evolving nature of the social work profession. Developing a professional identity based on these characteristics requires that educators and individuals apply the symbolic interactionist perspective of identity development, synthesizing the suggested themes with personal and social work specialty goals. Additional research is needed to understand how social work practitioners further operationalize these characteristics across specialties. For example,

researchers might investigate how clinical social workers understand their role in working for social justice on both a micro and macro level.

As with all qualitative research, the author is the research tool and cannot be separated from the results. This analysis represents one scholar's attempt to analyze these documents for characteristics influencing identity. A different researcher may obtain different results, producing further understanding of the key identity constructs of social work.

Despite the limitations, the themes constructed in the analysis of the Code of Ethics and EPAS are reflective, to varying degrees, of findings across other research studies ascertaining the elements of social work identity (Clare, 2006; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Wiles, 2013). While the individual characteristics of identity constructed in the current study are found in various prior studies, this study is unique in that it suggests core characteristics of a social work identity through analyzing key social work documents. Thus, the five concepts identified can be used as a foundation on which to construct a social work identity, regardless of specialty.

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Utilizing a Patchwork Text Approach to Strengthen Students' Professional Identity

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Abstract

“Utilizing a Patchwork Text Approach to Strengthen Students’ Professional Identity,” is a poster presented at the Lilly Conference “Innovative Strategies to Advance Learning” on August 6, 2019. The International Teaching Learning Cooperative Network hosts the Lilly Conferences Series. The Series consists of international, peer-reviewed conferences focused on evidence-informed teaching in higher education. The Lilly Conferences draw participants from all academic disciplines. This poster presentation provided an overview of the structural functionalist and symbolic interactionist approaches to professional socialization. It explained how the patchwork text pedagogical method offers a framework for integrating these approaches into course learning activities. Examples of patchwork text activities applied to professional identity development in social work students were included.

Keywords: professional identity development, professional socialization, patchwork text method

Utilizing a Patchwork Text Approach to Strengthen Students' Professional Identity

Educators in professional programs are tasked with socializing students to their intended profession. Through professional socialization, an individual adopts the core attributes of a profession and integrates them into their professional identity. Professional identity affords a sense of purpose in the lives of individuals, impacts career satisfaction, professional competency, and ethical decision making, and connects individuals to the broader profession (Dent, 2018; Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Miller, 2010; Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). This poster presentation provided educators with an overview of the theoretical foundations of professional identity development, functional knowledge of the patchwork text (PWT) pedagogical approach, and an understanding of how to use the PWT to integrate theoretical perspectives and empirical research on professional identity development into learning activities. The learning objectives of the presentation were:

1. Summarize the contributions of the structural functional and symbolic interaction approaches to professional socialization.
2. Describe the patchwork text pedagogical method.
3. Create learning activities aligned with the patchwork text method and well-suited to developing professional identity in students.

The scholarly literature in the medical, education, and social work fields identify two theoretical approaches to professional socialization: structural functionalism and symbolic interaction (Barretti, 2004; Macdonald, 1995). Structural functionalism focuses on molding students into an ideal professional through acquiring the attributes that define a profession in linear, sequential stages. Symbolic interaction emphasizes that individuals construct a unique identity, esteeming individual meaning and interpretation over professional definitions or

standards. Scholars investigating professional identity development demonstrated that the intersection of these theories, the interplay of personal values and meaning with professional roles, definitions, and expectations, leads to the formation of a professional identity (Forenza & Eckert, 2018; Mackay & Zufferey, 2015; Miller, 2013; Osteen, 2011; Sansfaçon & Crête, 2016; Wiles, 2013).

The PWT provides a scaffold for integrating structural functional and symbolic interactionist approaches to professional identity development into classroom learning. The presentation introduced the key elements of the PWT as follows: 1) multiple learning/assessment tasks in different genres; 2) formative, peer feedback; 3) summative assignment (Trevelyan & Wilson, 2012). When applying the PWT to professional identity development, educators present the structural functional characteristics of a profession (knowledge, perspectives, values, skills, and jurisdiction) and design learning activities that ask students to reflect, apply, and synthesize the profession's definitions and mandates with their personal experiences, values, and frameworks (symbolic interaction). This presentation offered examples of patches used to engage social work students in professional identity development.

Poster Presentation

Utilizing a Patchwork Text Approach to Strengthen Students' Professional Identity

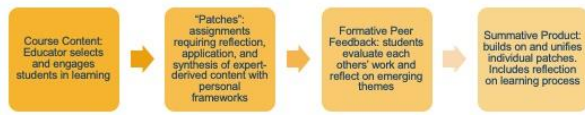
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Abstract

Professional socialization is the process through which an individual adopts the core attributes: the knowledge, culture, values, skills, and roles of a profession and integrates them into a professional identity. A professional identity affords a sense of purpose in the lives of individuals, may impact career satisfaction, professional competency and ethical decision making, and connects individuals to the wider profession. Scholars have noted that education and faculty significantly influence professional identity development. This conceptual paper describes how the Patchwork Text Method of teaching facilitates the integration of current theoretical understanding of professional identity development into classroom activities.

The Patchwork Text Method (PWT)

The PWT method of teaching and learning was designed to engage students in critically evaluating ideas and oneself, is used widely in the UK, and has been assessed as a teaching method in multiple professional education programs. Scholars have found that the PWT promotes independent thought and ownership of learning, enhances students' critical thinking and ability to engage with complexities in theories and in practice situations, and increases self-awareness in multicultural teams. This figure summarizes the key elements of the PWT:

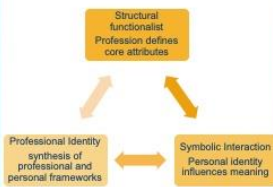


Examples of Patches Applied to Social Work Identity Development

- Reflect and write about why the you chose social work, how your conceptualization of social work is changing, and what aspects of the profession you identify with most.
- Create a photovoice presentation describing personal, guiding values. After presenting to a peer group, discuss how your values align with social work's values, identifying value consensus and conflicts.
- Identify which of the 12 Grand Challenges of Social Work you feel drawn to and write a letter to the editor that draws on the identified challenge and your social work field practicum experience.
- Evaluate your preferred practice models according to social work's person-in-environment framework. If a practice model does not account for the environment or the person-in-environment interaction, how can you incorporate these social work perspectives into your clinical practice?

Theoretical Perspectives

- Structural Functionalist Approach
- Symbolic Interaction Approach
- A Combined Approach



This figure illustrates the role both theories play in a continual process of integrating professional attributes and personal frameworks into a professional identity.

Professional Identity Development and the Patchwork Text Method

Research shows that a robust professional identity reflecting the knowledge, values, and skills of a profession requires both a structural functionalist approach to educating students about the defining features of a profession, and a symbolic interactionist approach that asks students to create personal meaning with these core attributes. The PWT provides a scaffold for educators to integrate both theoretical orientations into classroom learning. This figure applies the PWT to identity development.



Patchwork. Patchwork provides an opportunity for students to synthesize the profession's definitions and mandates with their personal experiences, goals, values, and frameworks. Patches also allow educators to incorporate current research findings regarding factors influencing identity development into course activities (see examples). To utilize the PWT in developing professional identity in students:

1. Identify the core characteristics, including the unique knowledge, perspectives, values, attitudes, and roles, of the profession.
2. Assess which attributes students struggle with most. This differs across student population and program emphasis.
3. Create activities which require students to go beyond learning or memorizing and ask students to apply and interpret core attributes of the profession (see examples).

Peer Feedback. In the context of identity development, reviewing one another's work in small groups exposes students to alternative ways to conceptualize and apply a profession's core attributes, helps students recognize how others see their interpretation of core characteristics, and continually re-evaluate and construct their professional identity.

Summative Assignment. Example: Select and revise your patches to construct a practice model that reflects your unique professional identity. Reflect on how your identity has developed throughout this course.

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