



Transforming the Field
Education Landscape

INTEGRATING PRACTICE RESEARCH INTO SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

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CASWE-ACFTS CONFERENCE
03 JUNE 2021

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize and honour the many Indigenous Nations and Peoples in the territories of the conference, the presenters, and the presentation attendees.

The conference is hosted in Edmonton, which lies in Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place, travelling route, and home for many Indigenous Peoples including the Nehiyawak/Cree, Tsuut'ina, Niitsitapi/ Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Haudenosaunee/Iroquois, Dene Suliné, Anishinaabe/Ojibway/Saulteaux, and the Inuk/Inuit.

Jill works at McGill University in Montreal, on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, and traditional meeting place of many First Nations including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg.

Sheri works at Memorial University in St John's, on the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk. The island of Newfoundland is the traditional territory of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq, and Labrador is the ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut.

INTEGRATING PRACTICE RESEARCH INTO SOCIAL WORK FIELD EDUCATION

- Introduction
- Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL)
- Methodology
- Challenges in data collection and analysis
- Defining research and research activities
- Brief review of the literature
- Findings and discussion
- Recommendations for integrating research and research activities into field education

TRANSFORMING THE FIELD EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

TFEL is a partnership project that aims to better prepare the next generation of social workers in Canada by creating training and mentoring opportunities for students, developing and mobilizing innovative and promising field education practices, and improving the integration of research and practice in field education. The project provides the opportunity, through a large scale educational and practice collaboration, to explore new ways of bringing together field education and research efforts to solve the current challenges in field education and in integrating research into practice.

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The *Transforming the Field Education Landscape (TFEL)* project is supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

CRSH  SSHRC

METHODOLOGY

Do Canadian social work programs support and encourage BSW and MSW students in engaging in research projects and/or research activities during field practica?

Do learning contracts (through learning objectives and activities) support the integration of research into social work field education?

Two student researchers – Melissa Noble (Memorial) and Vanessa Finley-Roy (McGill):

- Reviewed the websites of CASWE-ACFTS accredited programs – 30 BSW programs and 23 MSW programs at 32 angophone universities – and 11 BSW programs and 10 MSW programs at 11 francophone universities
- Concurrent review of French and English literature

CHALLENGES IN DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Not all university websites provide comprehensive or complete information about their social work programs nor about field education. Further, the data collected does not provide a complete picture of how research is integrated into field practice.

Inconsistent language around research and research activities:

- Conflation of 'research' and 'review'. For example, students may be expected to “research potential field placements” or “identify, research, and, where possible, visit agencies/organizations relevant to the client population.”
- Lack of clarity as to what constitutes research in field placements – research per se versus research activities. Often activities are not identified as research (e.g., evaluation, needs assessment).

RESEARCH / RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

WHAT DO WE MEAN?

Research activities include (and are not limited to):

- ❑ research planning: research design, planning, proposal writing, ethics proposals/reviews, design of research forms and data collection tools, creation of databases, literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, resource gathering, policy reviews;
- ❑ research implementation: data collection (e.g., administering surveys, interviews, focus groups, community meetings), interview transcription, data entry, data analysis, document analysis;
- ❑ research reporting: preparing and presenting reports, articles, presentations, workshops and trainings, and other means of knowledge dissemination.

Practice research may involve needs assessments, community consultations, policy reviews, program evaluations, and more. Research and research activities may involve qualitative, quantitative, mixed, or action methods, and can be grounded in a multitude of theoretical orientations. Research As Daily Practice – Sally St. George and Daniel Wulff.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- ❑ Social work student attitudes towards research - ambivalence, anxiety, discomfort, disinterest
- ❑ Social workers - uncomfortable/inadequately prepared to understand/engage in research
- ❑ Field instructors - reticent to integrate research into field education learning opportunities
- ❑ Important to provide students a wide range of opportunities to engage in practice research
- ❑ Need adequate preparation; good fit between practicum and research project; material and professional support; collaborative knowledge production; regular supervision and evaluation
- ❑ Integrate research activities into direct practice/community-based practica or provide research-focused placements
- ❑ Students develop confidence/competence in research skills - link research and practice
- ❑ Research not integrated into field - if not included in manuals/learning contracts/evaluation forms

FINDINGS: BSW OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT / ENGAGE IN RESEARCH

CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation (2014) - Core Learning Objective for BSW students - ***Engage in Research*** (3.1; #6)

- ❑ research skills in the BSW program objectives - 40% anglophone - 45% francophone
- ❑ mandatory research course - 87% anglophone - 100% francophone
- ❑ research skills in field outcomes - 67% anglophone - 10% francophone
- ❑ research skills in field learning objectives - 91% anglophone - 55% francophone

FINDINGS: MSW OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT / ENGAGE IN RESEARCH

CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation (2014) - Core Learning Objective for MSW students, ***Engage in Research*** (3.1; #6):

- ❑ mandatory research course - 100% anglophone - 100% francophone
- ❑ non-thesis complete research internship/project - 48% anglophone - 100% francophone
- ❑ research skills in field learning objectives - 90% anglophone - 43% francophone

DISCUSSION

- Prospective and current students draw information from websites. What is visible or not visible influences where students apply/choices students make about programs of study and practice.
- When research activities are not visible as field learning opportunities, students are not aware of or encouraged to engage in research.
- There are few opportunities for engaging in research (field practice, research internships, research projects) – especially in BSW programs (more opportunities in MSW programs).
- Research opportunities can be enhanced, better supported, more visible, better marketed.
- We need consistent/clear language – shared understanding of what constitutes research - how research can be integrated as practice opportunities in social work education.

RECOMMENDATIONS (I)

Social work programs and field educators need to develop, enhance, support, make visible opportunities to engage in research activities/projects in BSW and MSW field practica:

- ❑ integrate research activities/projects into BSW and MSW field practica
- ❑ include research activities/skills in learning objectives (manuals, learning contracts, evaluations)
- ❑ partner with field agencies - design research activities/projects – at level consistent with student learning - develop/enhance student research values, knowledge, skills - benefit field agencies
- ❑ develop/use consistent/clear language to describe practice research
- ❑ develop/integrate a shared understanding of what constitutes research

RECOMMENDATIONS (II)

Social work programs and field educators need to develop, enhance, support, make visible opportunities to engage in research activities/projects in BSW and MSW field practica:

- clearly/consistently communicate (field websites/seminars/manuals/forms) the value of practice research - and availability of applied research learning opportunities in practica
- encourage, support, mentor field instructors to integrate research into practica – nurture the development/application of research values, knowledge, skills
- develop, implement, support a range of opportunities to apply research (direct practice/ community field practica, research-focused field practica, research internships, research projects, experiential learning, community engagement)



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**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.
WE WELCOME YOUR THOUGHTS
AND QUESTIONS.**



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