Simulation as Pedagogy: An Experiential Teaching Strategy for Social Work Education

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Simulation as Pedagogy: An Experiential Teaching Strategy for Social Work Education

by

C. Jean Roberson

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

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

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Abstract

This banded dissertation is an examination of simulation as a pedagogy for social work education. While the Council of Social Work Education recognizes simulation as an accepted pedagogy, there remains little research on its use in social work education. To effectively utilize and structure simulation within the curriculum, more needs to be understood about its influences on social work student development and its fit within the social work educational context.

The first product of this dissertation, a conceptual paper, presents a framework for the use of simulation in social work education. The framework consists of three elements: holistic competency as the aim of social work education, a model of curriculum as engagement for the vehicle through which programmatic culture is established, and experiential learning theory as a foundational learning theory. The author demonstrates alignment between the pedagogy of simulation with the aims, culture, and theory which inform social work education.

The second product is a research study, examining the influence of participation in repeated simulations on social work student development in clinical skills. Addressing a gap in the literature, this study utilized a nine-month qualitative design to explore student experiences with three simulations over the course of two semesters. Based on the findings, the author proposes a conceptual model for student growth in metacognition and self-regulation, utilizing multiple simulation experiences.

The third product is an interactive epaper presentation given at the Council on Social Work Education 2018 Annual Program Meeting. This epaper summarizes research findings from the second banded dissertation product and incorporates practice experience in simulations for interprofessional education. Conclusions address the need for alignment between simulation learning objectives and simulation frequency.
Simulation is a strong pedagogy for social work education, allowing for holistic engagement in learning. A better understanding of its influence on social work students allows educators to leverage the benefits of the pedagogy to align with identified learning objectives. Further research can build on the proposed conceptual model in Product Two as well as explore the use of simulation in an online environment.

*Keywords:* simulation, social work education, experiential learning theory, thematic analysis, holistic competency
Dedications

This banded dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my mother, who taught me that learning is a lifelong process. I will wear your regalia, knowing that a love for learning is something that will always bind us together. I miss you. To my father and Pat, who never tired of asking me when I would pursue my doctoral education. You two are my truest examples of perseverance and commitment. To Darin, who sacrificed and extended so I could accomplish my dream. While you literally fought for your life and health, you never once let me consider stepping away or quitting. Look how far we have come! To Drayton and Kassidi, for your love and encouragement. You two remain the best investments I have ever made with my life.

To God be the glory.
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Simulation as Pedagogy: An Experiential Teaching Strategy for Social Work Education

In 2015, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) released the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) which newly recognized simulation as a means for social work students to complete field education hours (CSWE, 2015). This addition of simulation legitimized the pedagogy, indicating its parity with field education in creating opportunities for students to learn and practice the application of course content in real situations. However, within social work there is a dearth of research published on how educators utilize the strategy (Jones & Phillips, 2016; Logie, Bogo, Regehr & Regehr, 2013). Additionally, simulation demands time and resources. Thus, the relevant questions for the social work profession are not only what simulation is and how it can be utilized in social work education, but also what best practices for social work student development are.

Simulation is a teaching strategy in which faculty create practice scenarios using realistic practice settings and standardized clients, allowing students to interact uninterrupted and to apply intellectual knowledge and skills spontaneously (Gaba, 2007). Standardized clients are nonprofessionals trained to imitate a situation or diagnosis and who are unfamiliar to the student (Badger & MacNeil, 2002). Similar to role-plays, simulations incorporate realistic settings, standardized clients, and faculty expectations for students to engage as professional social workers, adding to the validity and intensity of simulation, and can be more efficacious in teaching professional skills (Badger & MacNeil, 2002, Carter et al., 2018, Tufford, Asakura, & Bogo, 2018). They are observed either in-person, remotely, or through video-recording, thus providing an opportunity for immediate feedback from standardized clients, observers, and
educators, as well as opportunities for student self-reflection (Bandali, Craig, & Ziv, 2012; Mooradian, 2008).

Simulation is a core pedagogy for many disciplines, such as the healthcare professions, aviation, law, and military and has been used for over 20 years (Gaba, 2007). Research in other disciplines has demonstrated that simulations raise student self-awareness, which can be used in refining professional skills (Bolesta & Chmil, 2008; Potter & Allen, 2013). The low-stakes nature of simulation provides developing professionals an opportunity to refine professional skills with little to no risk for clients (Gaba, 2007). The fact that these professions continue to rely on simulation as a core pedagogy validates its effectiveness (Bandali et al., 2012; Hayden, Smiley, Alexander, Kardong-Edgren, & Jeffries, 2014). Simulation is increasingly visible due to its use as a teaching strategy for interprofessional education. Findings from studies of its use in interprofessional education consistently supported the receptiveness of students to the medium and its effectiveness in facilitating skill development (Campbell, Themessl-Huber, & Mole, 2007; Murphy & Nimmagadda, 2015; Thompson et al., 2016).

Most recent simulation studies involving social work focused on interprofessional education and the healthcare context (Nimmagadda & Murphy, 2014; Olsen, Lewis, & Hartley, 2015; Thompson et al., 2016). In looking at studies focused specifically on social work skill development and scopes of practice, research was generally cross-sectional (Bogo et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2018; Forgey, Badger, Gilbert, & Hansen, 2013; Logie et al., 2013; Mooradian, 2008; Rogers & Welch, 2009). The resulting gap in literature presents a need for research that explores social work student development through the repeated use of simulation over time, utilizing social work contexts and scopes of practice.
To embrace simulation as a pedagogy in social work education, it must not only be effective, but it must also fit within the context, scope, and competencies of social work education. Thus, the purpose of this banded dissertation is to examine simulation as a pedagogy in the context of social work education. Product One is a conceptual framework, demonstrating how simulation as a pedagogy aligns with the multi-dimensional scope of social work education and its signature pedagogy, field education. Product Two explores the influence of repeated simulations on social work student development over time, using a qualitative approach. In this work, the author proposes a conceptual framework for the structuring of simulation frequency to align with the complexity of specific learning objectives. Product Three is the dissemination of the findings in Product Two, applying the findings to field education, the social work classroom, and interprofessional education.

**Conceptual Framework**

In the exploration of simulation within social work education, the author approached the work from a conceptual framework informed by constructivism and experiential learning theory. Constructivism served as the paradigm for the inquiry while experiential learning theory informed the understanding of pedagogy and, more specifically, simulation as a pedagogy. The two are complimentary as experiential learning theory developed from the early work of Piaget and Dewey, also drawing from a constructivist framework (Kolb, 2015).

Constructivism emphasizes the primary role the student plays in the learning process and, thus, the subjective nature of learning (Krahenbuhl, 2016). Setting the student in the center of learning, a constructivist paradigm recognizes that learning is a process which requires the student to engage in the creation of meaning from experiences (Davis & Sumara, 2002). It is an internal process and, therefore, necessitates more the engagement of the student than that of the
instructor. Furthermore, learning is subjective. In this perspective, each student brings past learning to the present. This past learning exerts influence on how students perceive and understand the present. Learning occurs when past knowledge and new experiences interact, creating new meaning and understanding (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The synthesis of the new learning with past experiences serves to either modify or reinforce understanding (Garrison, 2013).

Experiential learning theory draws from a constructivist paradigm as it seeks to explain the process by which individuals transform experiences into learning (Kolb, 2015). According to this theory, learning occurs through two means: grasping and transforming. Grasping is how a person perceives the experience, creating a continuum between the actual physical sensations of an experience and the internal cognitions and conceptualizations about the experience. Kolb (2015) refers to these as experiencing and thinking. The other process, transforming, refers to how a person understands the experience, creating a continuum between interacting with the experience and reflecting on it. Kolb (2015) refers to these as acting and reflecting. Experiential learning theory argues that these four stages comprise the learning cycle and that for deep and lasting learning to occur, a person must transition through all four stages: experiencing, acting, thinking, and reflecting.

Highlighting the role of constructivist assumptions within the theory, the centrality of the learner to the learning cycle becomes evident. The learning cycle is centered within the internal processes and perceptions of the student. While the instructor may create the experience, it is the learner who engages in the cycle and, thus, plays the primary role in the learning process. Additionally, the learning cycle illustrates the points of intersection between old and new learning. As the student experiences something novel, old knowledge serves as the filter through
which the student understands the experience both through cognitions and reflections. Acting on the old understanding, the new experience either conflicts with or refines the old understanding, presenting new responses and new learning.

Experiential learning theory is a foundational theory for social work education, informing the development of field education (Hendricks, Rinch, & Franks, 2013). Simulation, too, is a form of experiential learning. An understanding of experiential learning theory assists in recognizing how simulation can be effective in the learning process, moving students through the entire learning cycle and leading to deeper, lasting learning.

**Summary of Banded Dissertation Products**

This banded dissertation contains three distinct products. Product One is a conceptual paper, presenting a framework for understanding simulation as a useful pedagogy in social work education. Product Two is a nine-month qualitative study, resulting in a proposed conceptual framework for the use of repeated simulations with social work students. The third product is an interactive poster, presented at the Council of Social Work 2018 Annual Program Meeting, which summarizes the research of Product Two, expanding to address simulation in interprofessional education.

The 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) recognize simulation as one means by which students can complete field education hours, suggesting that simulation provides similar learning opportunities as field experiences, yet little has been published about simulation in social work education (CSWE, 2015). Product One explored the fit between simulation as a pedagogy and social work education, creating a conceptual framework within social work education using the concept of holistic competence, a model of curriculum as engagement, and experiential learning theory. Also, within the 2015 EPAS, the Council on
Social Work Education charges social work education with a broadened scope, holistic competence, which builds on the previous definition of competency as the integration of knowledge, skills, and values and adds the internal cognitive and affective processes of students. A model of curriculum as engagement, as articulated by Barnett and Coate (2005), provides a context for achieving this broadened scope, addressing both external and internal learning aspects of students. Experiential learning theory provides a theoretical foundation for the classroom by guiding faculty in structuring classroom experiences for holistic engagement. Simulation is a form of experiential learning, and the author argued that simulation is a useful pedagogy for social work education given the alignment between simulation and holistic competence.

To date, much of the research on simulation in social work education has been cross-sectional, examining single uses of simulation. Building on past research, Product Two is an exploratory study on the influence of repeated simulations on twelve first-year MSW students in practice classes over the course of nine months. Students participated in three simulations: an individual assessment, a group therapy session, and a family counseling assessment. Students then completed semi-structured reflections after reviewing the video recordings of the simulations. Using the students’ reflections, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis to identify relationships between themes over time. These included an awareness of key learning elements, skill-based performance to the inclusion of theoretical concepts, and self-awareness to goal-orientation. The author proposes a conceptual model for the development of student metacognition from the use of multiple simulations.

Product Three is an interactive eposter presented at the Council on Social Work 2018 Annual Program Meeting at Orlando, Florida in November 2018. The topic is the use of
simulation to accomplish both social work education and interprofessional education competencies. The eposter provides an overview of the research conducted for Product Two, highlighting the research design and findings. Professional experiences with simulation for interprofessional education were included. The implications from research findings are applied to the use of simulation both in social work education and in interprofessional education, including the importance of aligning the frequency of simulation experiences with the complexity of identified learning objectives.

**Discussion**

Social work education utilizes a number of effective pedagogies, from in-class role plays, to critical dialogue, to field education. The move by the Council on Social Work Education to name simulation as an acceptable pedagogy positions social work education well by adding another intriguing and effective teaching strategy (CSWE, 2015). As a pedagogy, simulation engages both the internal and external aspects of student learning. The application of knowledge and the use of social work skills are external and explicit, readily observable in simulation. In addition, reviewing the recording and reflecting on the experiences allows students to recognize internal processes and thus, make those internal processes more explicit. Once those are made explicit, both the students and instructor can shape the internal processes: values, cognitive and affective processes, and metacognitive learning. It is a holistic experience that results in holistic engagement.

It is precisely this holistic engagement that recommends simulation as an effective pedagogy for social work education. The aim of social work education is holistic competency (CSWE, 2015). This broadened scope asserts that social work education must not only engage with the knowledge, values, and skills of students but also the internal cognitive and affective
processes. Therefore, social work education programs must consider pedagogical choices that allow for such holistic engagement. The holistic engagement offered through simulation aligns with the aim and scope of holistic competency, creating continuity between program intent and classroom experience.

Simulation, as a form of experiential learning, can best be understood by deconstructing the experience within experiential learning theory. Drawing on the learning cycle articulated in experiential learning theory, simulation leads the student through all four processes of the learning cycle: experience, thinking, acting, and reflecting (Kolb, 2015). It is both physically and psychologically immersive, thus increasing the intensity of the experience and adding to the realism (Carter et al., 2018; Gaba, 2007). By creating this immersive, holistically engaging experience, educators can use simulations as a creative way to integrate the knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes of the student, thereby creating opportunity for the student to synthesize learning from the curriculum (Dodds, Heslop, & Meredith, 2018). The student applies and practices new learning while interacting with the standardized client.

While simulation is an effective pedagogy, it may be presumptuous to assume the same kind of learning occurs each time simulation is used. Research supports the use of simulation for skill development (Carter et al., 2018; Hayden et al., 2014; Singer, 2018). The question is how the strengths of simulation as a pedagogy can be leveraged to focus on deeper, metacognitive learning. Product Two explores the use of multiple simulations in social work students. The author proposes a conceptual framework for precisely this, suggesting that as students engage in multiple simulations, the learning expands from skill-based learning to self-regulated, metacognitive learning. The implications for this are that the strengths of simulation can best be leveraged by aligning the frequency of simulation with the complexity of the learning objectives.
This may guide social work programs and educators as they structure courses, make choices on pedagogy in relation to course objectives, and determine resource allocation.

**Implications for Social Work Education**

The 2015 EPAS recognize simulation in conjunction with field education, but the uses for simulation within social work education extend beyond the field education program. Some have used simulation as an assessment tool for practice skills (Bogo, Rawlings, Katz, & Logie, 2014). Drawing on the proposed conceptual model of this dissertation, classroom instructors can develop simulations that align with the learning objectives of their courses. For example, objectives that focus on the application of skill or on developing self-awareness of professional self can be utilized in a single event. However, learning objectives that focus on the integration of course content or self-regulated practice may need to be offered in succession. This sequencing can be significant, for the course instructor can observe the student in practice and draw alongside the student in professional development. Such opportunities are rare in social work education.

An application of this idea is for interprofessional education. Often, interprofessional education utilizes single simulation experiences. This structure may work well to provide students with an awareness of other disciplines’ roles, such as dieticians or nurses. This may also be successful for practicing interprofessional communication. However, to address more complex issues such as teamwork, interprofessional conflict, and values, multiple simulations may be more effective. Therefore, the strengths of simulation can also be leveraged by the number of times it is offered around learning objectives.

As a tool for field education, simulation can be very effective in exposing students to challenging populations or providing opportunities for students to practice specific modalities in
low-risk situations. Students who struggle with bias, countertransference, or concern with specific issues may find simulations helpful. More specifically, the timing of field education differs between programs and, often, students are learning skills and concepts without an opportunity to practice in real settings. Simulation affords these opportunities and can serve as a bridge between the classroom and field practice (Bandali et al., 2012).

**Implications for Future Research**

The work of this dissertation was to explore simulation in the social work education context and examine its use with social work students. While the proposed conceptual model in Product Two is intriguing, there is further work to be done. Replication of the study with a larger sample is warranted. The qualitative study of Product Two can serve as the first arm of a mixed methods study. Additionally, further research can address the limitations of Product Two such as addressing maturation and the small sample size.

At the same time, applying the conceptual model to metacognitive development may lead to interesting results. For example, drawing on the use of simulation to make student bias more explicit, one can look at simulation as an effective pedagogy around issues of intersectionality and discrimination in social workers. Another application may be the use of simulation to address the integration of spirituality, both on the part of the social worker and the development of spiritually integrated treatment. Further research on the use of simulation as a teaching strategy in these situations can benefit not only social work education but also other disciplines.

As healthcare transitions to online interaction and telehealth, further research is needed to examine how simulations can prepare students for online interactions. For example, one question may be whether simulations are as effective in online situations given online simulations are less
immersive. Simulations also may be informative in identifying the challenges of telehealth services and may serve a formative function in curriculum development.

**Conclusion**

While this banded dissertation explores simulation within social work education, there is still more to discover. No one pedagogy is ideal for all circumstances. However, as the profession continues to examine simulation both in the classroom and in field education, the use of simulation can become increasingly targeted and intentional. The further development and use of simulation will only enrich the tools that social work educators can utilize as they seek to develop holistic competence in social work students.

The goal of holistic competence is challenging and, potentially, overwhelming. Both social work programs and educators must evaluate teaching strategies, ensuring these strategies engage and develop students in a holistic manner. Simulation provides a unique opportunity to do just this, allowing instructors and students to partner together to engage knowledge, skills, and meta-cognitive development as students grow in their professional self. Furthermore, the flexibility to sculpt simulation scenarios targeting specific professional challenges, skill sets, and practice scenarios allows the use of the pedagogy across the social work curriculum.
Comprehensive Reference List


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Understanding Simulation in Social Work Education: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

With the adoption of the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, the Council on Social Work Education accepted simulation as a means for students to accumulate field practice hours. However, little research exists addressing the use of simulation for social work student development. To effectively utilize simulation to develop social work competencies, more must be known about simulation and its integration into curriculum. This article presents a conceptual framework for simulation: holistic competence in social work education, curriculum as engagement, and experiential learning theory. The author integrates the framework with research on the efficacy of simulation as pedagogy in other disciplines and provides strategies for simulation within social work curriculum and field education programs.

*Keywords*: simulation, social work education, curriculum, experiential learning theory
Understanding Simulation in Social Work Education: A Conceptual Framework

With the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accepted simulation as a means for students to accumulate field practice hours (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Such affirmation signals the legitimacy of simulation in creating opportunities for students to apply didactic content in real-time practice. However, little research exists addressing the use of simulation for social work student development (Jones & Phillips, 2016; Logie, Bogo, Regehr & Regehr, 2013). To effectively utilize simulation to develop social work competencies more must be known about simulation as a teaching method and its integration into curriculum.

Simulation is a teaching strategy where educators create learning experiences using realistic scenarios and standardized clients to allow students to practice skills, connecting intellectual knowledge to spontaneous application of professional skills (Gaba, 2007). Standardized clients are trained nonprofessionals who replicate a set of symptoms and are unknown to the student (Badger & MacNeil, 2002). Realistic settings move the students out of the classroom and into settings that mirror practice settings, such as rooms designed as hospital rooms, counseling offices, and board rooms. While similar in nature to role-plays, the realistic settings, standardized clients, and faculty expectations of students increase the validity of simulation and are more efficacious in teaching professional skills (Badger & MacNeil, 2002). Standardized clients, educators, or classmates can provide feedback based on observations or recordings, and the viewing of recordings allows students the opportunity for self-reflection (Bandali, Craig, & Ziv, 2012; Mooradian, 2008). Such simulations raise the student’s awareness of learning needs and the value of skill development (Bolesta & Chmil, 2008; Potter & Allen,
Once the student has developed this self-awareness, the realistic setting of simulation can be leveraged to refine professional skills.

Simulation is a common pedagogy for many disciplines, including healthcare professions, aviation, law, and the military (Gaba, 2007). Healthcare professions have utilized simulation as a pedagogy for over 20 years, allowing students to develop and refine skills with minimal risk (Gaba, 2007). The continued use of simulation in professional training reinforces its efficacy as a teaching method (Bandali et al., 2012). With the rise of interprofessional education, increased focus has been placed on simulation as a teaching strategy, and findings consistently support the receptivity of students to the medium and their resulting skill development (Campbell, Themessl-Huber, & Mole, 2007; Olsen, Lewis, & Hartley, 2015; Thompson et al., 2016).

At the same time, simulation can be both resource and time intensive (Bogo, Rawlings, Katz, & Logie, 2014). Some social work departments exist in contexts where simulation labs and assistance are readily available; however, for many, access to formal and informal resources is an on-going struggle. Programs strive to use resources wisely. Therefore, there is a need to understand simulation and establish best practices in its use. To better understand simulation and its place in social work education, the author presents a conceptual framework for the use of simulation, integrating CSWE’s understanding of holistic competence, Barnett and Coate’s (2005) framework of curriculum as engagement, and experiential learning theory. The framework is grounded in a constructivist perspective, recognizing the subjective nature of learning and, thus, the centrality of the student to the learning process (Garrison, 2013). In this conceptual paper, the author examines a proposed framework in order to place simulation within the aims and scope of social work education, allowing educators to utilize this teaching pedagogy with efficacy.
Constructivism

To better understand the proposed conceptual framework, it is important to recognize the constructivist paradigm which informs it. Constructivism is a dominant paradigm in contemporary education. This paradigm asserts the principal role of the student to the learning process, the subjective nature of learning, and the role of interaction to the learning process (Krahenbuhl, 2016).

Stemming from the work of Piaget, constructivism places the student in the center of the learning process as the one responsible for the action of learning (Davis & Sumara, 2002). Foundational to understanding constructivism is the assertion that individuals learn by creating meaning from experiences, integrating new experiences into old and generating new understanding (Garrison, 2013). Thus, learning is active and process-oriented, requiring the student to engage in the building of knowledge and understanding. The student is the primary actor, as opposed to the instructor. Learning is subjective in that the student begins with a foundational, personal level of knowledge (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Students engage based on their current understanding and the meanings they have created from past experiences. These past experiences illicit some measure of influence over the new experiences as the student struggles to synthesize. Given the subjective influence on learning, teaching strategies must begin where the student is and end with some customization of feedback.

Drawing heavily from John Dewey’s emphasis on experiential learning and Lev Vygotsky’s social development theory, constructivism accepts the key role of social interaction in the learning process (McPhail, 2016). It is in the environment where a student can experiment with new understanding and engage in the application of this new knowledge and skills. The resulting social interaction engages, modifies, and reinforces learning (Garrison, 2013). While
this does not necessitate the use of physical activities in the classroom, it does reinforce the need to develop learning experiences that allow for experimentation and interaction with the environment.

This recognition of the student being central in the learning process, of learning as a subjective experience, and of the role of interactive experience in shaping learning becomes fundamental to a conceptual framework for simulation. Making these foundational assumptions explicit deepens the understanding of the elements of the proposed conceptual framework. Holistic competence, as an aim of social work education, requires the acknowledgment that learning is a subjective experience for each student, with each student integrating new learning into past learning based on unique, past experiences. Similarly, curriculum becomes the avenue through which the student is engaged holistically, placing the student in the center of the educational process. Finally, experiential learning theory operationalizes the role of interaction with the environment in developing learning.

**Conceptual Framework**

The proposed conceptual framework consists of three components: holistic competence, an engagement model of curriculum, and experiential learning theory. Each component speaks to the unique scope and culture of social work education which informs pedagogical selection. While social work education utilizes a number of effective pedagogies, simulation is unique in both the depth of experience provided and its alignment with the purposes of social work education and holistic focus.

**Holistic Competence**

Competence is the ability to execute and accomplish a task well (Drisko, 2014). Within professional education, specific competencies serve to guide both curriculum development and
assessment. Educators often deconstruct the competency into specific pieces of learning. As a student attains these pieces, the student can then integrate them into specific, effective action which demonstrates mastery (Drisko, 2014).

Social work education moved to a competency-based framework in 2008; however, competence within social work education appeared as early as the 1970s, specifically relating to practice with special populations (Bogo et al., 2014). The renewed focus on assessment and educational outcomes was spurred by the report of the Department of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education. This national focus on educational outcomes and the academic emphasis on evidenced-based practice served to stimulate the growth of competency-based education, placing an emphasis on student performance (Drisko, 2014). The 2008 EPAS make this emphasis explicit: “Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008, p. 3).

The understanding of competency at that time concentrated on the collection of knowledge, values, and skills (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). However, in the 2015 EPAS, CSWE expanded this, calling for holistic competence: the collection of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes which incorporates professional judgement and critical thinking (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). This shift creates a broader scope for social work education. The implications of this enlarged focus oblige social work educators to have a clear understanding of holistic competence.

Bogo et al. (2014) introduced a model for understanding holistic competence within social work education. Their model distinguished between procedural competence and meta-competence. Procedural competence refers to that which is observable, the application of knowledge and skills in a professional context. It is the performance aspect of competence. This
is reflective of the 2008 EPAS. Meta-competence captures the critical thinking and self-regulation of the student, the internal processes of the student. They contended that because meta-competence influences procedural competence, both must be included in the larger understanding of competence. This compilation, then, becomes holistic competence with implications for curriculum development and pedagogy (Bogo et al., 2014).

Poulin and Matis (2015) also examined holistic competence in social work education. They differentiated between cognitive competence, performance competence, and holistic competence, occurring successively in student development. Cognitive competence captures the knowledge aspect of competence and a student’s ability to comprehend professional content. The next level of competence is performance competence, the student’s ability to effectively apply knowledge and skills to professional situations. This level of competence is again reflective of the 2008 EPAS. Holistic competence, they argued, builds on both cognitive and performance competence and extends to the student’s ability to engage in critical thinking, emotions, and self-awareness to inform professional decisions. For one to develop holistic competence, both cognitive and performance competence must be mastered (Poulin & Matis, 2015). Therefore, to achieve holistic competence, curriculum must not only increase knowledge and develop skills but also engage the internal processes of the student.

Both models present common elements which are critical to understanding holistic competence. First, both demonstrate the movement from solely emphasizing the external implementation of knowledge and skills to a valuing of the internal processes of the student. This is illustrated in the 2015 EPAS in references to the use of self-regulation and critical thinking (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Thus, the expansion to holistic competence represents a shift within social work education to a focus on developing students’ internal
processes as well as the external performances (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Secondly, both frameworks emphasize the interaction between the cognitive and affective processes and the knowledge, values, and skills of the student. These internal processes of critical thinking and affective responses are the filters through which students interpret professional situations, leading to professional judgement and action. The 2015 EPAS reflect this by asserting such processes “inform” behaviors (Council on Social Work Education, 2015, p. 7). Acknowledging the influence of this interaction, social work education must employ pedagogies that expose this interaction. Exposure makes the interaction more overt for students and, thus, more malleable.

CSWE identifies holistic competence as the aim of social work education and, thus, establishes a new context and scope for social work curriculum. To achieve the new scope, there must be congruence between the aim and the means through which it is accomplished, congruence with both curricular emphasis and pedagogy. Holistic competence calls for holistic engagement in curriculum, comprised of performance and reflective aspects. To rely on teaching methods which target the development of students in only one of these areas is to compromise holistic competence. For this reason, pedagogies such as simulation must be explored and integrated alongside already existing pedagogies ensuring a focus on holistic competence.

**Curriculum as Engagement**

One cannot discuss holistic competence in higher education without extending the conversation to curriculum as the vehicle through which holistic competence is developed. Yet, there is no one understanding of curriculum and its purpose (Barnett & Coate, 2005). For example, some see the purpose of curriculum as the transmission of knowledge to students, resulting in great emphasis on didactic teaching and knowledge assessment. Others view
curriculum as performance, emphasizing the need for students to perform skills as the mark of successful education. Still others view the purpose of curriculum as consumption. In this economic model, students are consumers and courses are market products, a view which is seen in current conversations about higher education (Duderstadt, 2009; Lakes & Carter, 2011). These models inform the development of programs and syllabi and often influence the emphasis of the educational process. Furthermore, the model of curriculum a program uses sets the culture and tone of the classroom, shaping the overall student experience. Recognizing the aim of social work education as holistic competence, it becomes clear these models are reductionist and fail to provide the context needed to guide the development of social work programs. A different understanding of curriculum is necessary, one which is holistic and leads to alternative pedagogies such as simulation.

In the book *Engaging the Curriculum in Higher Education*, Barnett and Coate (2005) created a standard for curriculum and identify its purpose: *engagement*. Educators have long recognized engagement as critical to learning, with multiple models of engagement utilized in higher education: behavioral, psychological, socio-cultural, and holistic (Kahu, 2013). Barnett and Coate (2005) presented a framework of curriculum consistent with the psychological model of student engagement. This model identifies four elements of engagement, including “behavioral, cognition, emotion and conation” (Kahu, 2013, p. 761). The behavioral element refers to the external involvement and participation of the student. The cognitive element captures knowledge, while the emotion element captures both the feelings and motivation of the student. Conation refers to the student commitment and desire to be successful. These four elements present a fuller picture of the engaged student, and a strength of the psychological model of engagement is that it highlights the key interaction between knowledge and feelings as
an internal and integrated process (Kahu, 2013). The assertion is that learning increases as students are engaged in all elements. The resulting question is how to provide this engagement within the context of curriculum.

Operationalizing the model of engagement within curriculum, Barnett and Coate (2005) presented curriculum as “knowing, acting, and being” (p. 2). Knowing, they argued, consists of content knowledge and experiential knowledge, as well as the ability to learn throughout the lifespan as knowledge changes. This dimension reinforces the presence of factual and professional content so present in education currently. The second aspect of the framework is acting, which encompasses learning outcomes, skills, and implicit expectations within the hidden curriculum. This element is common within the competency frameworks prevalent in modern education, leading educators to utilize methods and assessments focused on skill development and performance. The third element of the framework is being. Barnett and Coate (2005) argued that curriculum shapes being, the internal affective and cognitive processes which shape interpretations and viewpoints. This involves developing critical thinking and self-awareness. It is critical to recognize how knowledge and acting lead to changes in being. The being element of this framework brings the psychological model of engagement to life. This element often incorporates activities that allow for observation and self-reflection, developing an avenue for students to overtly converse about and examine internal processes. This curricular framework of knowing, acting, and being sets the standard for educators to engage students by intentionally addressing all three elements within the larger curriculum. By considering these aspects in curriculum development, educators can set the whole person of the student in the center of the process, not merely presenting knowledge to the student and emphasizing external skill development but also engaging the student on an inner level, shaping the influential, internal
processes. While this can be accomplished by addressing the three elements independently in the overall program curriculum, educators can also utilize pedagogies that address the three elements collectively, such as in simulation.

Barnett and Coate (2005) posited a curricular framework consistent with social work education’s understanding of holistic competency: knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Knowledge is captured within the knowing dimension. Skills are captured within the acting dimension, and cognitive and affective processes are captured within the being dimension. One can argue that values fit within all three dimensions. Recognizing the congruence of this curricular model with the new scope of social work education, social work programs can develop curriculum focused on engagement. This focus influences the culture of the program and the classroom, leading to the selection of pedagogies with a similar focus on engagement. Simulation fits within the engagement focus, addressing student knowing, acting, and being.

**Experiential Learning Theory**

With holistic competence as the new context of social work education, operationalized within a curricular framework and culture emphasizing engagement, the focus narrows to pedagogies that are congruent with the program context and curricular emphasis. Experiential learning theory (ELT) is a familiar theory for higher education, guiding educators in the selection of pedagogy. Social work field education is one form of experiential learning (Hendricks, Rinch, & Franks, 2013). Experiential learning theory is built on the premise that learning is both holistic and process-oriented, the collection of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Because of the focus on holistic learning, ELT stands as an appropriate expression of Barnett and Coate’s (2005) curricular framework and the expectations of the 2015 EPAS for
holistic competence (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Furthermore, simulation is a form of experiential learning, and insight into experiential learning theory helps one understand both the process and the components of simulation.

**Learning cycle.** As evidenced by the name, the theory identifies the pivotal role of experience in an individual’s learning process. This is not to say that ETL focuses on the necessity of a concrete experience for each piece of learning. Instead, the theory seeks to address how individuals translate experiences into learning and meaning. Kolb (2015) defined learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Key points related to this concept include that learning is a process rather than an outcome and that it is developed through the cyclical process of understanding, testing, and assimilating experiences into new understanding (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). For this to occur, two key forces operate on a continuum within the student: grasping and transforming. The grasping continuum encompasses how the student perceives the experience through concrete experience (CE) or “experiencing,” such as through the use of senses, and abstract conceptualization (AC) or “thinking,” using logic and abstract thought (Kolb, 2015, p. 51). The transforming continuum relates to how the student makes meaning and responds in the experience through active experimentation (AE) or “acting” and reflective observation (RO) or “reflecting” (Kolb, 2015, p. 51). Active experimentation refers to the actual doing of a task, and reflective observation references the role of observing followed by reflection (Cheung & Delavega, 2014). Together, these four learning processes comprise the learning cycle: experiencing (CE), thinking (AC), reflecting (RO), acting (AE) (Almeida & Mendes, 2010). For enduring learning, then, pedagogy needs to allow opportunities for students to engage in the full cycle.
Learning styles. Every person does not enter the learning cycle at the same point. ELT posits the concept of learning styles, the preferred ways an individual interacts with new experiences and learning. Recognition of a student’s preferred learning style informs the instructor of where that student begins in the learning cycle (Kolb, 2015). It is important to note that these are not static characteristics of an individual but are fluid in their development and application across the lifespan (Kolb, 2015). For example, one learning style is accommodation, the gathering of information concretely and the processing of it via active experimentation. This style enjoys the actual doing of the tasks. A second style is diverging, gathering information concretely and processing it through the use of reflection. Those with this predominant style enjoy brainstorming and are creative (Almeida & Mendes, 2010). Another learning style is assimilating, characterized by gathering information through abstract thinking and then processing through reflection. This style values thinking and the integration of knowledge. A fourth style is converging which encompasses gathering information abstractly but dealing with the information through active experimentation. Those with this style utilize deductive thinking and can draw conclusions quickly (Almeida & Mendes, 2010). Each style represents an interaction between the processes within the learning cycle: CE, AC, RO, and AE, and reveals the point at which a student engages in the learning cycle (Kolb, 2015). By utilizing teaching strategies that allow for multiple learning style preferences, educators can engage multiple students simultaneously in their preferred learning styles.

Pedagogy. According to ELT, learning is cyclical (Almeida & Mendes, 2010). Where each learner enters the learning cycle may be characteristic of the individual, but regardless of where one enters the cycle, that individual follows the cycle in a linear fashion (Hendricks et al., 2013). If a learner encounters a concrete experience, then the learner can utilize reflection as a
means of processing the experience. Once this occurs, the learner can then develop abstract concepts based on those reflections to be actively tested through experimentation. This has implications for pedagogy. An educator can employ teaching strategies that engage multiple learning styles and, thereby, engage multiple students. However, to produce deep learning as articulated in the learning cycle, educators need to employ teaching strategies that move students through the learning cycle with each new piece of learning, concept, and skill. To do this in an independent study or in supervision where educators relate individually with a student is easier; to do this with a classroom of students is challenging and overwhelming. This leads one to explore specific classroom strategies that afford opportunities to lead students through the learning cycle, such as simulation.

Simulation. As an approved pedagogy from CSWE, it is important to understand how simulation fits within the proposed conceptual framework. This includes understanding its process and structure. Simulation is a form of experiential learning which allows for the holistic engagement and growth of students. Unlike frequently used strategies such as didactic teaching and role-playing, simulation engages the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions of students, incorporating all four stages of the learning cycle. These are engaged through concrete experience in the simulation setting, scenario, and standardized clients, abstract conceptualization in the on-going assessment throughout the scenario, active experimentation in the interaction with standardized clients, reflective observation based on feedback from standardized clients and review of the video recording of the simulation. Multiple learning styles are also addressed. Immersion occurs through the realistic settings, scenarios, and use of standardized clients, forcing the student to fully function in the professional role without risk to clients (Gaba, 2007). Because simulations are recorded or observed, students are able to review
and reflect on their experiences, as well as receive feedback from the standardized clients, the instructor, and other observers such as fellow students. The use of scenarios and settings common to the profession create the opportunity for application of didactic content, allowing students to connect theory to practice situations, and because simulation is not actual practice but are low risk scenarios, students are free to experiment and “try on” both professional roles and skills. This may be key to understanding the efficacy of simulation as a teaching method (Badger & MacNeil, 2002; Bogo et al., 2014; Forgey, Badger, Gilbert, & Hansen, 2013).

**Discussion**

This article posits a conceptual model for simulation as a pedagogy in social work education, addressing holistic competence as the scope of social work education, a curricular model of engagement as the structure for achieving holistic competence, and experiential learning theory as the theoretical foundation for selection of classroom instruction. What is unique in this conceptual framework is the structure of simulation, as an experiential learning pedagogy, is aligned with both holistic competence and curriculum as engagement. Therefore, the pedagogy itself is in alignment with both the social work program standard and the curricular emphasis. It is this aspect of simulation that makes it unique, congruent in content and process with social work education.

With the move in 2008 to a competency-based framework for the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, CSWE became increasingly explicit with a defined scope for social work education, the content to be addressed and the extent to which that content is covered. The 2015 EPAS broadened this and, thereby, defined a new scope for social work programs. This new scope is *holistic competence*. Social work programs have to address both the external and
internal processes of a student in order to effectively achieve the scope of social work education. Thus, holistic competence is the new standard for all accredited social work education programs.

As with all educational objectives, instructional alignment is imperative for teaching and assessment (Abrams, Varier, & Jackson, 2016). The very comprehensive nature of holistic competence necessitates alignment encompassing more than instructional and assessment strategies but extending to the establishing of culture and larger educational emphasis of the social work program. This is the purpose of curriculum as engagement in the conceptual framework for simulation. By adopting a curricular framework of engagement, social work programs establish a culture intent on involving the student in both a personal and professional developmental journey, bringing the curricular emphasis in alignment with the standard for holistic competence. This results in a singular focus of engagement, conveying the same emphasis to students, faculty, and staff in the development of program ethos and priorities.

Alignment flows from competencies to curriculum to classroom pedagogy. Experiential learning theory operationalizes the idea of curriculum as engagement: knowing, acting, being, and provides the theoretical foundation for accomplishing this. It articulates a holistic learning cycle that educators can employ within the classroom. Simulation, as pedagogy, fits within experiential learning theory, guiding students through the learning cycle for deep learning and accessing both internal and external processes. Simulation experiences can be manipulated to address a specifically identified competency and, thus, be aligned in subject matter while simultaneously reinforcing the program standard and curricular emphasis through its method.

In exploring simulation as a pedagogy for social work education, it is important to recognize its efficacy in other fields. The use of simulation as a teaching pedagogy in other disciplines continues to grow (Gaba, 2007). Hayden et al. (2014) conducted a randomized
controlled study of over 600 nursing students to explore the clinical readiness of nursing students who utilized simulation in their nursing education. The study found no significant differences between students who spent all of their clinical hours in traditional clinical settings with the students who replaced up to 50% of their clinical hours with simulation. The authors recommended the continued use of high-quality simulation experiences for nursing students for up to half of the required clinical hours. Simulation is also regularly utilized in physical therapy and speech pathology (Potter & Allen, 2013, Sabus & Macauley, 2016). More recently, simulation has been heavily utilized in disciplines such as pharmacy and dentistry as a tool for teaching interprofessional competencies, including teamwork and communication skills (Bolesta & Chmil, 2014; Wamsley et al., 2012).

Professional organizations have developed around simulation. Specifically supporting the role of standardized patients in simulation, the Association of Standardized Patient Educators formed in 2001 (ASPE, 2016). The Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) began in 2004 (SSH, 2018). Predating the movement in the United States, The Society in Europe for Simulation Applied to Medicine (SESAM) was established around 1994 (SESAM, n.d.). Many of these organizations require memberships, conduct conferences, and publish journals, such as Simulation in Healthcare, the journal for the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH, 2018).

The question remains how simulation fits within the social work curriculum. Simulation can be utilized effectively as a classroom activity, specifically in the development of practice skills. Once students have had exposure to didactic content through reading, lecture, and role-play, students can participate in simulations which require greater independence. These simulations may be observed and recorded to allow for feedback and student self-reflection. Follow-up assignments may be utilized to further learning such as the development of treatment
plans and succinct documentation. Looking at studies focused on social work skill development and scopes of practice, some educators have utilized simulation to develop assessment skills, listening skills, and intervention strategies (Forgey et al., 2013; Logie et al., 2013; Mooradian, 2008). Recent social work simulation studies focused on the development of interprofessional skills (Murphy & Nimmagadda, 2015; Nimmagadda & Murphy, 2014; Olsen et al., 2015).

Simulation can also be utilized as a classroom assessment strategy (Bogo et al., 2014). Field education may not suffice as the sole measure of practice skills for program assessment. Educators may choose to utilize simulation to allow for the observation of spontaneous critical thinking and expression of skill. Bogo et al. (2014) suggested employing simulation as a student assessment measure using specific instruments such as the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), adapted for social work.

Field education is a vehicle for experiential learning. This is achieved through the application of knowledge in a practice setting, allowing for reflection and conceptualization through written assignments, supervision, and classroom debriefing. However, the timing of field education varies between programs, with students learning skills and concepts in the classroom with no immediate opportunity to apply or practice them. Simulation affords these opportunities, with students practicing skills which can then be discussed, reflected on, and reviewed by faculty and observers. In this way, simulation can stand as a bridge between didactic education and field practice (Bandali et al., 2012).

As indicated in the 2015 EPAS, simulation hours can count for hours in field education (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Thus, a program may construct simulation experiences that focus on work with specific populations or that target specific skill sets. Given that field sites can be limited in their ability to offer a full spectrum of learning experiences,
social work programs can develop simulations that provide students exposure to a broader range of issues. Additionally, field sites may be limited in the number of hours they can provide to students. Simulation allows students to use these sites for field placements while still completing the required field hours. Such simulation experiences can be scheduled concurrently with field experiences so that learning is augmented.

**Conclusion**

While commonly utilized in other disciplines, simulation is not a universally practiced pedagogy in social work (Bogo et al., 2014). CSWE’s recent acceptance of simulation experiences for field placement hours serves as a catalyst for social work education to learn more about the teaching tool in order to integrate it into the overall learning experience. However, such knowledge goes beyond the logistics of conducting a simulation experience. To utilize simulation in a way that effectively develops social work students according to the identified professional competencies and values, the profession requires a conceptual framework which places simulation within the larger context of social work education. Its alignment with the purposes of social work education and holistic focus recommend it as a pedagogy that can be interwoven into social work programs. As programs utilize the pedagogy, further research can explore the repeated use of simulation in social work student development and its effectiveness with students who are enrolled in field education as compared to students who have yet to enroll in field education.
References


Simulation in Social Work Education: A Qualitative Study of MSW Student Development

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Abstract

The 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) recognizes simulation as a means for students to gain skills, technical proficiency, and even field practicum hours. Research on its use in social work education has been largely cross-sectional. The purpose of this nine-month qualitative study was to explore the influence of three simulations on twelve MSW students in practice classes, using students’ semi-structured reflections. A thematic analysis identified three key themes: awareness of key learning elements, development from skill-based performance to the inclusion of theoretical concepts, and growth from self-awareness to goal-orientation. A conceptual model for the development of student metacognition from the use of repeated simulations is proposed.

*Keywords:* simulation, social work education, experiential learning theory, thematic analysis, metacognition
Simulation in Social Work Education: A Qualitative Study of MSW Student Development

In the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, the Council on Social Work Accreditation (CSWE) includes simulation as a way for students to gain field education hours, thereby setting it on par with field practice (CSWE, 2015). Simulation is a teaching strategy where students engage in practice scenarios set in realistic professional settings, requiring the student to fully engage in the professional role through the application of knowledge and skills (Gaba, 2007). Standardized clients are nonprofessionals who undergo training to portray clients with predetermined symptoms and circumstances, and these nonprofessionals are unknown to the students (Badger & MacNeil, 2002). The simulations are observed by faculty and classmates and can be recorded, both allowing for feedback to the student and opportunity for self-reflection (Bandali, Craig, & Ziv, 2012; Mooradian, 2008)

While simulation is commonly used in other disciplines, little published research exists examining simulation as a pedagogy in social work education (Bogo, Rawlings, Katz, & Logie, 2014; Gaba, 2007). The research that does exist has been largely limited to cross-sectional and interprofessional studies, utilizing one simulation session (Forgey, Badger, Gilbert, & Hansen, 2013; Logie, Bogo, Regehr, & Regehr, 2013; Murphy & Nimmagadda, 2014). To embrace simulation as a pedagogy for the social work discipline, more must be known about its influence on student development over time. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence of repeated simulations on MSW student development in practice classes over an academic year, fall to spring. Findings have implications for how social work educators utilize simulation in the classroom and in field education. These include leveraging its strengths as a pedagogy in ways specific to the aims of social work education, the development of holistic
competency, defined as the collection of knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes which includes critical thinking and judgement (CSWE, 2015).

**Literature Review**

**Simulation as Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning theory (ELT) is a familiar theoretical base for social work education given that field education is a form of experiential learning. Simulation is also a form of experiential learning, and ELT provides a context for understanding simulation by emphasizing how individuals create knowledge from experiences (Kolb, 2015). Asserting that learning is a process rather than an outcome, ELT focuses on two key tasks for the student: grasping the experience and transforming the experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Grasping refers to how the student perceives the experience and involves both the physical sensations of, as well as the more abstract cognitions regarding the experience. Kolb (2015) refers to these as concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC). Transforming represents how the student understands the experience, and it is accomplished both through responses to and reflection on the experience. Kolb (2015) refers to these as active experimentation (AE) and reflective observation (RO). Both grasping and transforming occur on a continuum between these processes, and by activating all four processes, the student engages in the full learning cycle: experiencing, thinking, acting, and reflecting (Almeida & Mendes, 2010).

Simulation incorporates all four processes and, thus, engages the student in the full learning cycle. Simulation is unique in that it creates a realistic setting for the student to experience. The practice backdrop and use of standardized clients immerses the student in the physical environment, while the scenario demands the student function in a professional role (Gaba, 2007). This demand creates the emotional environment in which expectations are placed
on the student to fully engage as the practitioner. Because the expectation is for the student to fulfill the role of the practitioner, the student must engage in ongoing thinking and assessment, using course content to interpret and guide actions. These resulting actions illustrate the student’s experimentation with course content and acting in relation to the scenario and the standardized clients. Such experimentation is inherently encouraged because simulations utilize standardized clients and are, thus, low-risk (Bogo, Rawlings, Katz, & Logie, 2014). Simulations can be observed and recorded and, therefore, allow the student to engage in reflection when receiving feedback from observers, faculty, and the standardized clients, as well as when viewing the recordings. Reflection is also used as the student accesses past experiences in order to participate in the simulation (Kolb, 2015). Students develop new learning by integrating knowledge gained through past experiences with the new experience of the simulation.

**Simulation in Education**

Healthcare fields, such as medicine and nursing, have utilized simulation in education for over 20 years, expanding into fields such as speech pathology, physical therapy, and pharmacy (Gaba, 2007; Potter & Allen, 2013; Sabus & Macauley, 2016). In addition, disciplines such as law and aviation continue to engage in simulation as part of their educational preparation (Gaba, 2007). Extending beyond the classroom, professional organizations dedicated to simulation in education developed both in the United States and Europe, including the Association of Standardized Patient Educators (ASPE), the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH), and the Society in Europe for Simulation Applied to Medicine (SESAM) (ASPE, 2016; SESAM, n.d.; SSH, 2018). The consistency and prevalence of simulation throughout these fields points to its educational effectiveness (Bandali et al., 2012).
Research supports the value of simulation in developing professional skills. In noted research of over 600 nursing students in a randomized controlled study, investigators assessed the clinical preparation of students who engaged in simulation for 50% of their clinical rotations with the clinical preparation of students who served all clinical rotations in a clinic setting. The authors recommended nursing students engage in simulations for up to half of their required clinical hours (Hayden, Smiley, Alexander, Kardong-Edgren, & Jeffries, 2014). Such research is in keeping with other studies examining the effectiveness of simulation in preparing students for clinical readiness (Badger & MacNeil, 2002; Bandali et al., 2012).

More recently, as interprofessional education (IPE) has developed in colleges and universities, simulation has increasingly been identified as an IPE strategy. The increased focus on simulation in IPE has led to research that supported the students’ receptiveness to simulation and the resulting skill development (Campbell, Themessl-Huber, & Mole, 2007; Olsen et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2016). Furthermore, programs used simulation as a strategy for teaching interprofessional competencies (Bolesta & Chmil, 2014; Wamsley et al., 2012). Notably, programs are moving beyond simulations focused on teaching skills to simulations addressing issues of personal awareness and interpersonal processes such as communication, conflict management, and teamwork.

Research has also examined student metacognition and self-regulated learning via simulation. Simulation elements such as the student’s independent decision-making and reflection allowed for the development of self-awareness of learning needs (Bolesta & Chmil, 2008; Potter & Allen, 2013). Additionally, repeated simulations, feedback, and reflection allowed for the continued development of aspects of metacognition within the students and self-regulated learning (Khaled, Gulikers, Biemans, & Mulder, 2016). Thus, the efficacy of
simulation extends beyond skill development and interpersonal processes to the development of student metacognition.

**Simulation in Social Work Education**

Although common in other disciplines, simulation has not been as widely used in social work education (Bogo et al., 2014). In a critical analysis conducted by Logie, Bogo, Regehr, and Regehr (2013), the authors identified 17 social work studies and one dissertation using simulations with standardized clients. These studies assessed for student satisfaction and efficacy of the teaching strategy. Increasingly, social work educators are utilizing simulation to train students to work with specific populations or to assess practice skills, and many recent simulation studies involving social work focus on interprofessional education (Bogo et al., 2014; Forgey et al., 2013; Murphy & Nimmagadda, 2015; Olsen et al., 2015). In congruence with studies on simulation in other disciplines, social work research supports its use for skill development (Badger & MacNeil, 2002; Bogo et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2018; Forgey et al., 2013).

While simulation shares some characteristics with role-playing, another form of experiential learning, it remains qualitatively different. Role-plays frequently involve students interacting with peers in the classroom setting and, therefore, do not exhibit the same level of realism as simulation (Carter et al., 2018). It is precisely the immersive nature of simulation that shapes and intensifies the experiencing aspect of the learning cycle. Research has demonstrated that students experience simulations as more realistic, effective, and intensive (Badger & MacNeil, 2002; Mooradian, 2008; Olson et al., 2015).

In the 2015 EPAS, CSWE presented social work education with an expanded scope, defining the aim of social work education as holistic competency (CSWE, 2015). This expansion
moved social work education from a focus on knowledge, values, and skills to the inclusion of internal aspects: cognitive and affective processes. Recently, social work researchers have started examining simulation’s impact on these internal processes, identifying the development of self-efficacy and meta-competence. These studies utilized single and multiple simulations while employing post-test designs (Bogo et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2018; Singer, 2018).

Also, within the 2015 EPAS, CSWE affirmed simulation as a method for accruing field practice hours, denoting that similar learning can occur in simulation and field practice (CSWE, 2015). While limited research exists that supports the use of simulation in social work education, the acceptance of simulation as a substitute for field education hours may raise concerns. Simulation requires time and resources and can, therefore, be challenging for programs with limited time and resources (Bogo et al., 2014). As both an instructor and director of field education, this researcher identified the need for a more thorough understanding of simulation, allowing programs to make informed decisions about the pedagogy, field education programming, and resource allocation. Part of a thorough understanding is exploring the student experience with the pedagogy. Building on previous cross-sectional studies, it is important to identify the influence of repeated simulations on social work student development, tracking differences over time, anticipating programs would utilize repeated simulations if subsidizing for field hours. The purpose of this research was to examine the use of simulation across time, using a nine-month time frame with participant follow-up.

**Methods**

In order to better understand the influence of multiple simulations over time on student development, the researcher employed a constructivist conceptual framework. This framework asserts the student is the center of the learning experience and, as a result, learning is a
subjective, personal experience (Davis & Sumara, 2002; Garrison, 2013). This perspective also informs experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Building on this conceptual framework, this research sought to give primacy to student voice, using an exploratory, qualitative approach to track student experience, allowing for a more organic emergence of phenomena than if a quantitative approach was employed (Engle & Schutt, 2017).

**Setting**

The setting was a private university that utilizes a cohort model for its MSW program. Thus, the same first-year MSW students were registered for both the Practice with Individuals course in the fall semester and the Practice with Groups and Families course in the spring semester. The social work department exists within a larger College of Health Sciences which includes disciplines such as nursing, pharmacy, and physical therapy. The college houses and utilizes a 22,000 square foot simulation center. This includes dedicated simulation staff that operate the simulation center, including the recording software, the standardized client recruitment, and training program. This study utilized the facilities, staff, and processes of the simulation center.

**Sample**

The sample for this study was a purposive sample of first-year MSW students in the foundation year practice classes in which the researcher served as the instructor. There were 13 students who began the program with one student withdrawing from the program after the first semester. One student did not submit a reflection for the second simulation; therefore, the sample sizes for the point in time data collections were as follows: $n=13$, $n=11$, and $n=12$. Twelve of the 13 students were female with one male student. Four of the students were African-American, and
9 were White. Eight students were ages 20-29; three students were ages 30-39, and two were ages 40-49.

**Data Collection**

Participants were recruited during an earlier Practice with Individuals class period within the first few weeks of the MSW program. The researcher introduced and described the study, and written informed consent was obtained. All students consented.

These classes provided the context for the study because all first-year MSW students enrolled in Practice with Individuals in the fall and Practice with Groups and Families in the spring. This pairing allowed an opportunity to study the effects of simulation over nine months, almost half of the MSW program length. Students spent five to six weeks learning concepts, theories, and skills applicable to the focus of practice. Students also engaged in role-plays in preparation for the simulation. Students then participated in a 25-minute simulation that connected with the course content. In the first semester, the class focused on practice with individuals, followed by a simulated assessment with an individual. In the second semester, students participated in two simulations: a group therapy session focused on anxiety and a family assessment interview. After focusing on group practice content, participants engaged in a simulated group therapy session, and following content on practice with families, participants completed a simulated family assessment interview. The simulations were video recorded. All recording equipment was unobtrusive, and the recording was streamed onto a laptop computer. Thus, the student was able to conduct the assessment alone and uninterrupted. Following the simulations, students had one week to review their individual recording and complete a reflection. No instructor feedback was given until after the reflections were submitted.
Semi-structured personal reflections were used (see Table 1). Students were provided with nine prompts to respond to in a written, personal reflection following each simulation experience. The prompts were developed based on a survey of studies on simulation that utilized student responses and were vetted with colleagues in an effort to ensure questions were not leading. It was important for the fidelity of the study that these remain as simple and open as possible.

After receiving the first set of completed reflections, the researcher chose to enlarge one question on the semi-structured reflection. Initially the students were asked to respond to the following prompt: “Discuss your anxiety level during the simulation.” After reading the responses, this question seemed leading, limiting participants in their description of their emotional experiences. Thus, for the remaining two simulations, the following two prompts were utilized: “Discuss your emotional response prior to the simulation” and “Discuss your emotional response during the simulation.” Completed reflections ranged from one to four pages in length.

Table 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Self-Reflection Prompts</th>
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<tr>
<td>How competent did you feel to engage in the simulation?</td>
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<td>Discuss your emotional response prior to the simulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss your emotional response during the simulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss your confidence level with filling the role of the social worker in this scenario.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss your strengths in the simulation.</td>
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<td>Discuss your challenges in the simulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>After reviewing the video, what did you learn about yourself?</td>
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<td>What do you need to learn and develop?</td>
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Data Analysis

For the data analysis, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis using Atlas.ti. The researcher engaged the data both inductively and deductively. Examining reflections per time period, open coding was used to determine initial codes per time period. Once these were identified, the same reflections were revisited for more deductive, selective coding. Categories and themes were determined per time period. After completing coding on one set of reflections, the researcher made code notes and theory notes to assist in the final stage of examining the relationship between themes per time period (Padgett, 2008). Additionally, the researcher maintained a “reflective commentary” to ensure that the researcher’s impressions were set apart from the student data (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). Recording impressions and questions separately allowed the researcher to approach the data more objectively throughout the coding process. The same iterative process was utilized on the reflections for the remaining two time periods. Having identified unique themes for all three time periods, the themes were then examined in relation to each other to determine change over time.

Following the data analysis, the researcher conducted a follow-up member checking session, inviting participants to attend and respond to the findings. This was done in an effort to enhance the trustworthiness and representativeness of the study and findings (Padgett, 2008; Shenton, 2004). This session was held four months after the final data collection and was scheduled for one evening following classes. At this point, the researcher no longer had the students in any classes, and all participants attended. All participants stated that the findings were representative of their experiences and credible.
Protection of Human Participants

This project was approved by the university IRB in an expedited review, and written informed consent was obtained from the participants in an earlier class. Specific concerns for student protection included the freedom of participants to withdraw from the study or decline to participate. Because they were current students and the instructor served as the principal investigator, participants had to be assured their grades would not be affected by participation or lack of participation. To help address this concern, the simulations were included as normal course activities, and the simulations and reflections were not graded activities. Students turned in printed copies of reflections at the beginning of class, compiled in a stack on a table in the classroom. The students were required to provide an identifier at the beginning of each data collection process which ensured student anonymity. Additionally, while the initial reflections were reviewed during the fall semester to gauge the adequacy of the questions, reflections were not analyzed until the completion of the spring semester course. All participants received a $5 Amazon gift card for their participation.

Findings

This research sought to explore the influence of multiple simulations on MSW student development. Three themes emerged from the data: awareness of key learning elements, development from skill-based performance to the inclusion of theoretical concepts, and growth from self-awareness to goal-orientation. Setting these themes in relationship with each other, one can see the development and use of metacognition as students engage in simulation over time (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Conceptual Model from the Data

**Awareness of Key Learning Elements**

Participants displayed a compelling awareness of those features of the simulations that contributed to their learning: when simulation occurred within the course, viewing of the recording, standardized clients as real people, and learning through repetition. The recording and standardized clients are elements of simulation, while when simulation occurred and repetition related to how simulation was structured in the course. Drawing on the time frame of the study, the features identified by participants as significant to learning changed over time, moving from the parts of the experience that generated awareness to the elements that created challenges and led to growth. The shifting sense of why certain elements were important to their learning is noteworthy, suggesting student growth beyond a preoccupation with performance.

**Structuring simulation within the course.** Consistent throughout all three time periods, participants spoke of when simulations occurred in the course. Learning concepts and theories
and in-class role play seemed important to participants as preparation for the more intensive simulation experiences. One participant remarked:

I felt I was prepared to participate with a level of understanding gained from the survey of concepts and theories offered this semester.

Another stated:

The role playing that we performed as a class, though different, did provide some foundation for starting out.

The reference to time with content and an ability to practice in a less intense and immersive environment indicate that these served as preparation, allowing for a stronger level of engagement in the simulation experience. This theme was stated succinctly by another participant:

The opportunities we had in class to prepare for the simulation made me feel more confident walking in.

The timing of simulation within any course depends on the course instructor, as do the learning activities that lead up to simulation. It is important to note the participants consistently connected a sense of preparation through classroom activities as important for strong engagement with simulation and did so across all three time periods, which has implications for the scheduling of simulations within courses.

**Viewing of the recording.** A key part of the simulation experience is recording. Simulations are recorded so students can review them as a source of reflection and self-assessment. The participants commented on the recording element in regard to developing self-awareness:

The video of the simulation, in particular, allows me to recognize my strengths and weaknesses and pinpoint areas of needed growth.
It’s hard going back and watching your video. The main reason is I know myself so well, I know what I look like with I get nervous, scared, happy, excited, or said something I should not have. So, when I see it on myself, it’s recognizable to me.

Comments indicated that review of the video confronted the students with concrete evidence of their performances in simulation. Such evidence forces students to deal explicitly and honestly with their strengths and weaknesses, increasing self-awareness. Participants also used the recording as a way to test their internalized assessment of the simulation experience:

After reviewing the video, I realize that my nerves didn’t seem to show which was very encouraging to me. I can also see that my demeanor might have been a little too calm and laid back.

I learned that I looked a lot calmer on the outside than I was on the inside, and I could see myself visibly relax as the session continued.

Reviewing the recordings allowed participants to assess themselves beyond how they internally interpreted the experience in the moment. Many found a disconnect between their impressions of their work in simulation and what actually occurred. This awareness established the baseline from which the participants focused on growth over the remaining simulations.

**Standardized clients as real people.** Because simulation uses actors as clients, rather than classmates, the participants did not know the individuals who presented as clients. Additionally, because the standardized clients were unaware of the learning objectives for the participants, they were free to focus on portraying their role, responding as they felt appropriate instead of responding in an effort to assist the participants. Participants commented that this element created unique challenges for them:

I felt uncomfortable being quite younger than the group members.

I also felt a little panicked when the group did not seem to respond the way I thought they would to the questions I asked or the activity we did.
Because the standardized clients were real people and responded as real people, their reactions were genuine and authentic, introducing a level of realism that created unanticipated, uncomfortable situations for the participants. At the same time, participants embraced this challenge, recognizing how this contributed to learning:

> Working with people we don’t see outside anywhere else makes it easier to take it seriously.

> I think a change in population age between the individual’s simulation last semester and the group simulation this semester could be beneficial. It could teach us how to work with a variety of ages.

The recognition of the realism standardized clients brings and the effectiveness of how this can expand the student experience with other age groups indicates an awareness of the learning that can take place from using standardized clients.

**Learning through repetition.** In total, students engaged in three simulations over nine months. In the third reflection, participants demonstrated an awareness of how the repetition of simulation contributed to their learning and growth:

> It has been made obvious through simulation that we grow through practice, so I would love more practice next year!

> I felt this simulation was the most successful. I had more knowledge and experience going in, and at the end had achieved a great amount of growth.

> I entered and left this simulation more confident than I had ever been for simulation. I think more practice helps in preparedness.

Comments recognized that repeated simulation experiences resulted in growth. What is more, the comparative nature of the comments illustrates that students developed a sense of baseline of their skills and abilities, allowing students to use previous simulations as points of comparison and creating a sense of trajectory and movement.
Assimilating scheduling of simulation in the course, reviewing the recording, standardized clients as real people, and learning through repetition, the participants were able to demonstrate self-awareness of those parts of the simulation experiences that were integral to their learning. More notably, over the course of the study, participants moved from those elements that led to self-awareness, such as the recording, to those elements that resulted in growth: standardized clients and repetition. Thus, over time, what the students valued in the simulation transitioned to a focus on development. Such insight required, first, an awareness of growth and, second, the ability to identify how one learns and what is helpful in learning, suggesting the development and use of metacognition.

**Skill-Based Performance to the Inclusion of Theoretical Concepts**

A second key theme evident in the data was participant development over time from a focus on skill-based performance to the integration of theoretical concepts and therapeutic processes. Initially, participants focused primarily on the skills utilized during the simulation. This is evident in the following reflections from the first simulation:

I really wanted to listen to her, but at the same time I was trying to think of how to help her. I can see how a social worker’s mind can get distracted so easily.

I need to let my client lead the conversation more because I will learn more about them this way. I feel like if I can just slow down, relax, listen better, and talk less, the next session will go much better.

Notice comments centered on practice skills. Other participants commented:

I could see my body language change to being more submissive.

Another challenge I have is uncomfortable silences. I need to learn to be able to sit in silence with my clients at times because I would probably learn more about my client this way.

As participants engaged in the additional two simulations, their comments expanded from this skill-based focus to a consideration of therapeutic processes and theoretical concepts:
I asked the group to give suggestions and feedback on each other’s stressor and how we could overcome it. This allowed the group members to share and be a part of each other’s anxiety. Once we got stared, the group ‘led’ itself and even created ‘aha’ moments.

I was armed with the knowledge of Bowenian and structural theory. I had these theories in my mind while I was in the simulation to help me properly assess what I needed to assess within the family.

I tried to be aware of the family dynamics and rules so that I would not get caught up in them.

The awareness and discussion of communication processes and theoretical concepts gave evidence of growth, incorporating more cognitive processes and integration of course content.

With the repeated simulations, participants were able to expand beyond a preoccupation with self-performance to an ability to evaluate their interactions based on concepts and theory. Over time, the criteria by which they assessed themselves grew to include more knowledge-based criteria, indicating growth from a more behavioral, external perspective to a more cognitive application of course content. This also indicates that as they progressed through the three simulations, they not only held themselves to behavioral standards but to knowledge-based standards as well.

**Self-Awareness to Goal-Orientation**

The final prominent theme from the data was growth from general self-awareness in the first simulation to a goal-orientation in the final simulation. Initially, students developed self-awareness by becoming cognizant of how they interacted with standardized clients. Participants’ comments included the following:

I sounded scripted. . ..

I would normally think one of my strengths is asking good leading questions, but I asked several ‘Why?’ questions and there were some pauses that were more for my benefit than his.
When everyone started telling their stories, the challenge was keeping up with each person’s issues. Honestly, I forgot what was said.

Participants were able to recognize and assess their work in the simulation. With the repeated simulations, however, this orientation grew to indicate participants’ ownership of their professional growth with unprompted expectations for improvement. Participants wrote:

I found myself still saying um and like more than I would prefer to.

This writer was confident but also unsure if old habits would begin to show themselves during the simulation.

In the final simulation, participants expressed an almost summative evaluation of themselves:

My presence in the video had more confidence than ever before. I am honestly super proud of myself for that.

I’ve grown in my awareness of when to talk and when to allow clients appropriate space for speaking among themselves.

Reflection responses, referencing “old habits” and growth and “ever before,” took a more comparative nature, suggesting a response to an internalized baseline performance established in earlier simulations.

As participants engaged in multiple simulations, they moved from an awareness of their interactions to a sense of responsibility for their own growth. As participants grew in their self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses based on earlier simulations, their comments indicated a sense of goal-orientation in the remaining simulations. This development highlights an emerging sense of ownership for professional development and a shifting locus of control, both necessary for developing metacognition.

Discussion

In examining the influence of repeated simulations as a teaching strategy in support of MSW student development over a nine-month period, three prominent themes emerged:
awareness of key learning elements, development from skill-based performance to the inclusion of theoretical concepts, and growth from self-awareness to goal-orientation. Because the study was conducted over time, a unique element emerged that is not apparent in research using a single simulation: the movement and evolution of growth within the students over time. The evolution is characterized by expanded knowledge and expectation of self. This important feature provides the foundation for a conceptual model of how learning and self-awareness develops into metacognition across time via the use of repeated simulations (see Figure 1). In this model students move from developing skills, to increasing knowledge, to incorporating goal orientation, the process of developing metacognition in their skills as social workers.

Akyol (2013) discusses metacognition as more than knowledge specific to a domain, but includes the ability to assess that knowledge and to direct one’s progress in applying that knowledge. Looking at the model, the first time period focused significantly on participant awareness. Participants identified key learning elements in the simulation that contributed to their self-awareness, and observations from recordings were skill-based and behavioral. The participants learned about themselves in the first simulation. Such self-awareness is critical, for metacognition begins with an understanding of self, and this self-awareness is the baseline from which growth occurs.

In the second time period, participants maintained this initial self-awareness and performance-orientation, while adding elements of theory and new knowledge of therapeutic processes. Thus, the second time period illustrated a broadening of participant interaction in simulation: skill and knowledge. Participants assessed themselves in light of recent readings and class content, not just in terms of behavior, while identifying elements of the simulation that created a challenge. This shift in focus illustrated not only a self-awareness but also an added
sense of expectation of self, informed by additional knowledge and sense of efficacy in the application of such knowledge. One might say participants were assessing themselves in the simulation in light of a new understanding of professional self.

The final time period integrated this self-awareness and continued application of knowledge while introducing an unprompted, activated effort towards growth and change. Participants independently evaluated the final simulation through the lens of change, focusing on repetition as key to development and change. The focus was no longer simply on behavior in the moment or the application of knowledge but on growth and maturity. This expectation of growth was realized in a goal-orientation as participants took responsibility for themselves in light of their self-awareness and new learning. Taken in relation to one another, one can see an arc of participant development as they engaged in multiple simulations over the nine months.

This confirms research on simulation in other fields which asserts that the timing of simulation, the use of reflection and feedback, and the required independence of students in simulation can encourage metacognitive development (Khaled et al., 2016). Findings in this research extend current research on simulation in social work. For example, Bogo and Kourgiantakis (In Singer, 2018) similarly found that students could identify key learning elements in their simulation studies. Using single simulations, Bogo and colleagues (2013) identified what they termed as student meta-competence, defined as the internal cognitive and affective elements of decision making. Building on these, this study suggests that to fully integrate these pieces and encourage metacognitive growth in social work students, simulation should be utilized multiple times.

Moving forward it will be important for educators who utilize simulation to align the frequency of simulation with the learning objectives. The more sophisticated the learning
objective, the more simulations need to be offered. Simulations designed to stimulate student self-awareness or awareness of a field of practice can be offered once. However, simulations that seek to address the application of knowledge or to result in self-corrective practice need to be offered repetitively. This is an important point for social work education given that simulation is now recognized as a method for completing field practicum hours (CSWE, 2015). If the goal is growth in practice, simulations must be repetitive, fully utilizing the reflective and feedback elements. Using simulation in this way can be especially helpful and unique given that experiences in field often lack direct observation and feedback (Bogo et al., 2014).

These findings may have implications for interprofessional education (IPE), as well. If the goal is awareness of self or of other professions, a single simulation may be sufficient. If, however, the goal is to address the ability to work interprofessionally and develop the IPE competencies, multiple simulations may be necessary. This is an area for future research as is simulation research that focuses on other areas of social work practice.

Given this was a small qualitative study, future research will need to address the limitations. This study utilized a single cohort of students, resulting in a small convenience sample. Future research will need to include larger sample sizes and use of control groups. Additionally, this study was conducted over an academic year, fall through spring, with students participating in other foundation level courses including Diversity and Policy. While the context of the simulations addressed practice content, the growth from the other points of the curriculum and field education may be a contributing factor and must be considered. Another limitation is that during the analysis, the researcher served as the sole analyzer, which could allow for bias. Multiple analyzers and multiple data points will also be important to include in future research to address this. A point of concern for this study design is the researcher’s position to the
participants. While steps were taken to de-identify data, the researcher was the course instructor. Future research may seek to build upon this.

As social work education moves towards embracing simulation as a pedagogy, programs may discover ways simulation and field education can interact for student development. Simulation can be very effective in exposing students to challenging populations or providing opportunities for students to practice specific modalities in low-risk situations. Students who struggle with bias, countertransference, or concern with specific issues may find simulations helpful. More specifically, the timing of field education differs between programs and, often, students are learning skills and concepts without an opportunity to practice in real settings.

Simulation affords these opportunities and can serve as a bridge between the classroom and field practice (Bandali et al., 2012). Additionally, it may be that simulation provides something field education does not consistently provide, the opportunity for metacognitive growth. In this way, simulation may spur the development of metacognition, resulting in refined and self-directed practice in field education.

Social work programs utilize a number of effective pedagogies that lead to holistic competence, each with their own strengths and limitations. Incorporating simulation in that list of pedagogies will only enrich social work education and field practicum. Having approached this study with some degree of concern over the equating of simulation for field education, this researcher has confidence in the pedagogy, noting, however, that to fully leverage the strengths of simulation, one must align learning objectives with both the frequency and focus of the simulations. This research suggests that social work programs have the potential to empower students to achieve not only skill development, but also metacognitive growth by engaging them in multiple simulations throughout their courses of study. As the discipline continues to examine
simulation, it is important to note that research consistently supports the use of simulation both in other disciplines and in social work education. However, more research is needed as social work education continues to deal with the role of simulation and the extent to which simulation can be utilized in conjunction with field education.
References


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Simulation in field: A strategy for developing social work and interprofessional competencies

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Author Note

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Abstract
Simulation is recognized in the 2015 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) as a means to accumulate field education hours, suggesting that simulation offers similar learning opportunities as field experiences (CSWE, 2015). This eposter presents an overview of exploratory research on the influence of multiple simulations on Master of Social Work (MSW) students in MSW practice classes. Based on the findings, the author proposes a conceptual model for student development from the use of repeated simulations. The author draws implications for the use of simulation as pedagogy both in the development of social work competencies and interprofessional competencies, asserting that learning objectives requiring knowledge integration and self-regulation require the use of multiple simulation experiences.

*Keywords:* simulation, interprofessional education, metacognition, social work education, qualitative, thematic analysis
Introduction

This eposter was presented at the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 64th Annual Program Meeting in Orlando, Florida. The conference was held at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort on November 8-11, 2018, and the conference theme was “Expanding Interprofessional Education to Achieve Social Justice.” The author presented the eposter on Sunday, November 11, from 7:30-8:30 am.

The eposter provided an overview of qualitative research conducted for the completion of the second banded dissertation product on the influence of repeated simulations on Master of Social Work (MSW) student development. Additionally, the author drew from professional experience with interprofessional simulations in higher education. Implications included the structuring of simulation frequency in both social work education and interprofessional education for alignment with learning outcomes.
**Background:** Simulation can be used as a method to accumulate field practicum hours and is frequently used for interprofessional education (IPE). However, research on simulation in social work is limited.

**Question:** What is the influence of repeated simulation experiences on social work student development?

**Method:** A longitudinal qualitative study of 3 simulations over 9 months, using semi-structured reflections

**Results:** A proposed conceptual model for structuring simulation into social work curriculum, field education, and IPE.
SIMULATION AS PEDAGOGY

**Abstract**

**Introduction**

**Methods**

**Results**

**IPE Simulations**

**Conclusion**

**SIMULATION IN FIELD EDUCATION**

**DEVELOPING SOCIAL WORK AND IPE COMPETENCIES**

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**DESIGN**

- 25-minute Individual Simulation
  - Semi-structured Reflection
- 25-minute Group Simulation
  - Semi-structured Reflection
- 25-minute Family Simulation
  - Semi-structured Reflection

**METHODOLOGY**

- Qualitative thematic analysis using Atlas Ti
- Assess change across time
- Member check to affirm findings

**SAMPLE**

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**Conceptual Model Developed from the Data**

- Skill
- Practice
- Realization

**Metacognition via Simulation over Time**

(Roberson, 2010)

**Awareness of key learning elements**

“Working with people we don’t see outside anywhere else makes it easier to take it seriously.”

**Developing from skill performance to include theory/process**

“When one was only engaging with me in discussion, I turned the conversation to the group.”

**Growing to goal-oriented learning**

“I’ve grown in my awareness of when to talk and when to allow clients appropriate space for speaking among themselves.”

Please use the headings above to navigate through the different sections of the poster.
INTERPROFESSIONAL SIMULATIONS
Scenarios – Single simulations up to 4 hours long
• Disaster Simulations (fire, earthquake, active shooter)
• Home health simulations
• End of life simulations
• Acute care simulations
Focus on Interprofessional Competencies
• Roles/Responsibilities
• Values/Ethics
• Interprofessional Communication
• Teamwork
Multiple Disciplines
• Nursing
• Pharmacy
• Social Work
• Physical Therapy
• Communication Sciences
• Emergency Responders

While single IPE simulations are beneficial for raising general awareness, the conceptual model developed in this study suggests simulations targeting awareness and growth in IPE competencies must be delivered repeatedly over time, utilizing recording and reflection to support student growth.

Conclusions
Participation in multiple simulations allows students to develop and activate metacognition.

The more sophisticated the learning objective, the more simulations need to be offered.

A single simulation experience raises student awareness of self and practice.

Simulations focused on knowledge application need to occur in succession.

Multiple simulations allow students to own their internal processes and self-correct their behavior.

A printed reference sheet is available.
References


