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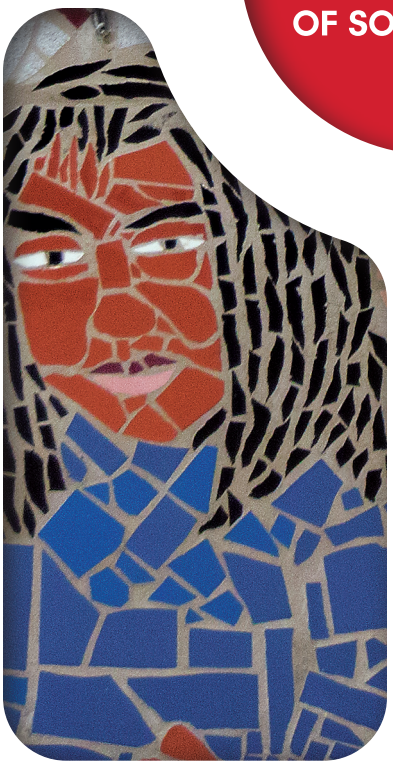

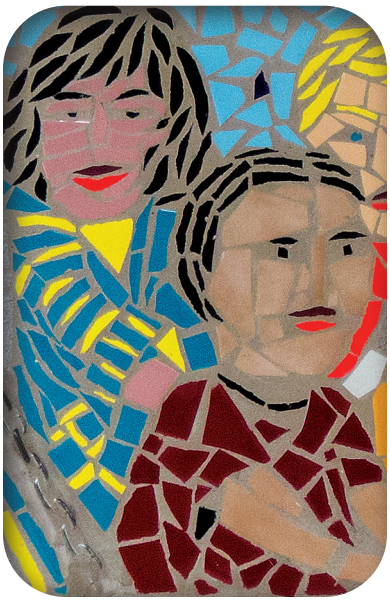

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EDITORIAL – Implications for Social Work Education and Practice in *Perspectives on Social Work*

Social work is a dynamic field that many are drawn to because of its flexibility and the diversity that allows one to explore various roles. From micro to macro practice, social workers effect change on various levels by supporting individuals, groups, communities, and organizations to improve their capacity for social functioning. No matter the role, social workers operate under a code of ethics that guides social work practice. One ethical responsibility that social workers hold is the importance of conducting and promoting social work research and using it to guide their practice. *Perspectives on Social Work* aims to uphold this responsibility by offering social work doctoral students an opportunity to strengthen their academic writing and peer reviewing skills and by publishing research relevant to social work education and practice.

The extent to which social work practitioners effectively execute their societal roles is dependent on the preparation they receive in their education and training, and the continued effort to ground their practice in scientific evidence. As new technologies develop, new social problems rise, and humanity becomes more diverse, **social work education** must evolve to ensure that students are being trained to competently engage with this ever-changing world. Effective social work education practices should be research informed. One way that social work researchers inform education practices is by offering implications constructed from their research findings. The implementation of education practices that are informed by research ensures that students are developing skills necessary to effectively practice in the current state of society. Evidence-based **social work practice** is also necessary as practitioners who ground their practice in scientific evidence aim to provide the most efficient care in their helping relationships. *Perspectives on Social Work* operates with a goal to contribute to the social work field by requiring authors to present social work implications that can be used to inform and guide future social work education and practice.

This issue presents three different articles that offer social work implications to guide future social work education and practice. Otachi & Benner (2020) focuses on social work education, and how when MSW students experience anxiety and negative perceptions towards a research methods course, their learning and ability to master research concepts and skills may be interrupted. They suggest that social work educators should strive to better understand social work students' anxiety related to research, so that teaching methods can be designed in a way that reduces students' anxieties towards research and facilitates learning core competencies for effective practice. Childs (2020) reviews "Children of the Great Depression" to urge social workers to use the person-in-environment approach in their practice and research to better examine how lived adverse experiences may impact client outcomes. Childs (2020) also suggests that understanding client's lived experiences may better inform treatment approaches. Lastly, focusing on practice with Baby boomers, Viverette & Baldwin-Clark (2020) explore substance use and misuse patterns, recovery, and relapse. They suggest that social workers address topics of treatment efficacy, psychosocial stressors, and issues related to women and minority Baby Boomers in future research and practice.

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Editor

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Understanding and Addressing Research Anxiety in MSW Students

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Abstract

Accredited social work programs expect students to understand and apply research methods knowledge and skills to provide efficacious intervention through evidence-based practice. Despite this requirement, evidence suggests that MSW social work students feel stressed, anxious and overwhelmed about taking a graduate level research methods course. Students' anxiety and negative perceptions towards a research methods course may significantly affect learning and influence their ability to master research concepts and skills. Understanding social work students' anxiety related to research will guide development of tailored teaching methods to reduce students' anxieties towards research, facilitate learning, and translate research into practice. We conducted a qualitative assessment of 16 MSW students enrolled in a graduate level research methods foundational course to examine their anxiety towards research. Our findings showed that despite recognizing the relevance of research methods in enhancing evidence-based practice in social work, students still had anxiety towards a graduate level research methods course.

Keywords: Research, Social Work, Anxiety, Evidence-based practice

Introduction

Social Work Student Perspectives on Understanding and Addressing Research Anxiety

Social work students and professionals are not only required to have research methods knowledge and skills, but are also expected to integrate research methods into their professional social work practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2016). According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requirements, under competency 4, social workers are required to engage in practice-informed research and research informed practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2016). This involves social work students understanding the role of both quantitative and qualitative research in advancing the science in social work and in enhancing evidence-based practice. Additionally, competency 9 requires social workers to evaluate their practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (Council on Social Work Education, 2016). This competency highlights the importance of social workers evaluating their practice constantly as an on-going process in order to enhance their practice, policy and service-delivery outcomes. Evaluation of social work practice also ensures that social

work practitioners adhere to the required ethical professional responsibility. As a result, it is important for all students pursuing an MSW degree to take a research methods class. Such a course is critical in providing the research concepts, knowledge, skills and practices requisite in any MSW degree program. Teaching research methods to MSW students enables them as future practitioners to evaluate their own practice and contribute knowledge to the social work discipline, hence enhancing evidence-based social work practice (Royse, 2017).

Evidence suggests that social work students are excited and eager about learning to engage individuals, families and communities in creating change, but when it comes to learning research methods, they are reluctant and may hold beliefs that research is not relevant to social work practice (Erbay, 2017; Harder, 2010; Kwong, 2017). Additionally, MSW students enrolled in a research methods course are unaware of what a graduate level research methods course entails and are subsequently anxious that the course might be overwhelming (Einbinder, 2014; Maschi, Wells, Slater, MacMillan, & Ristow, 2012). Evidence also suggests that MSW students may struggle with linking social work research and practice (Bolin, Lee, GlenMaye, & Yoon, 2012). Having anxiety and negative perceptions may significantly affect student learning and influence their ability to master research concepts and skills (Einbinder, 2014; Gredig and Bartelsen-Raemy, 2018; Maschi et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important for social work educators to effectively teach research methods and skills to MSW students to enhance their students' engagement in evidence-based practice as future practitioners.

Research Anxiety and Research Self-Efficacy

Studies have highlighted the reluctance of social work students in engaging in research due to research anxiety (Harder, 2010; Green, Bretzin, Leininger & Stauffer 2001). In fact, compared to other related disciplines such as psychology, Green et al. (2001) found higher anxiety among social work students. Studies have also linked research anxiety with fear of mathematics and statistics (Baird, 2016; Einbinder, 2014; Maschi et al., 2012; Paechter, Macher, Martskvishvili, Wimmer, & Papousek, 2017), and social work students having low interest in research (Cameron & Este, 2008). Other factors are instructor related including social work instructors' attitudes and their mode of course delivery (Fish, 2014; MacIntyre & Paul, 2012; Newman & McNamara, 2016). Harder (2010) suggested that social work instructors should be enthusiastic about research methods course content and should have the ability to enhance their students' research through working collaboratively on research projects. Additionally, Harder (2010) highlighted the importance of social work educators using a strengths-based approach in teaching a research methods course to encourage their students to build on successes and milestones no matter how small. This will enable social work students to build on their areas of strengths, reduce research anxiety and enhance their self-efficacy in research.

Research anxiety has been shown to influence students' self-efficacy in research and practice (Love, Bahner, Jones, & Nilsson, 2007; Maschi et al., 2013; Razavi, Shahrabi, & Siamian, 2017). Holden, Barker, Meeneghan and Rosenberg (2009) define self-efficacy as the confidence in students' abilities to effectively engage in social work practice, which includes having self-efficacy in research (Maschi et al., 2013). Having research anxiety and low self-efficacy in research may create barriers in understanding research concepts and skills, and in translating them to evidence-based social work practice (Norton & Robinson, 2010; Maschi et al., 2013). Social work educators should therefore seek to develop ways to reduce their students' research anxiety and enhance their self-efficacy in research.

Teaching social work research methods can be challenging because students may bring apprehension and anxiety into the course (Fish, 2014; MacIntyre & Paul, 2012; Newman & McNamara, 2016). Therefore, understanding students' anxiety related to self-efficacy in the research methods course(s) will enable social work educators to tailor their teaching methods to reduce their students' anxieties towards research, facilitate learning, and allow students to translate research knowledge and skills into practice. In an effort to identify how to reduce the anxiety related to research, we engaged 16 MSW students enrolled in a foundation level graduate research methods course. This 8-week graduate level course was designed to help the students acquire skills of conducting research to inform and evaluate their practice and was offered in a hybrid format (including both face-to-face in-class meetings and online engagement). The course introduced the students to systematic approaches to scientific thinking needed for building knowledge and evaluation of one's own practice. Additionally, the course aimed to demonstrate how issues social workers handle in their day to day practice may be developed to research questions in an ethical manner. As a course deliverable, the students were required to develop a research proposal on a topic of their choice.

Methods

The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the evaluation of first year MSW students enrolled in a three-credit hour, required research methods course in a research-intensive university in the Southeast region. We utilized a qualitative approach to collect descriptive data through an investigator developed open-ended survey to assess students' perceptions on their anxiety before and after taking a graduate level research methods course. The survey was administered at baseline prior to the course (pretest) and after course completion (posttest). At posttest, students were also asked to assess if their research anxiety had changed after the course and if so, how. The 16 students enrolled in the class responded to both the pre-test and post-test survey. The survey included the following questions:

1. What makes me anxious, nervous or uneasy about graduate level research methods course is…?
2. What I find most useful about a research course is…?
3. My advice for other students considering taking this course is…
4. What I am hoping to get from this class besides good grades include…?
5. The knowledge I obtain from this course will be useful in…

Student responses were analyzed and reported in aggregate form to ensure anonymity. The initial analysis involved reading and re-reading students' survey responses to identify patterns of data and initial themes via open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2009). Key points from the initial analysis were summarized and the codes were arranged by similarities and differences. Similar codes that were grouped together were carefully analyzed for relationships, patterns and themes. Inter-rater reliability checks were conducted by the researchers and reached 100% agreement for classification of codes and categories.

It is noted that the respondents spoke overwhelmingly about their anxiety in a research course and in research methods overall and provided strategies to address anxiety. The major themes that emerged included students':

1. Anxiety and low self-efficacy in understanding research concepts
2. Identified strategies to cope with anxiety and enhance self-efficacy in research
3. Perceptions on relevance of research in social work practice.

Results

Theme 1: Research Anxiety and Low Self-Efficacy in Understanding Research Concepts

Our findings highlighted that social work students recognize the importance of research in enhancing evidence-based practice, "*I believe in evidence-based practice to enhance therapeutic outcomes. I know that this cannot happen without research."* However, there was considerable anxiety regarding research, particularly the research process. Some of the students highlighted having research anxiety due to low confidence in their ability to understand research concepts and in connecting them to practice. "*I do not feel confident that I can implement all that I have learned to effectively convey my research findings… I find myself struggling with putting down research concepts on paper and applying them to practice…."* Though the students appreciated the foundational research knowledge and skills the course provided, they expressed low confidence in applying this knowledge in the field to better serve their clients and enhance evidence-based practice.

Having no prior experience or limited research practice experience increased anxiety in some students and affected their confidence in understanding the research concepts and methods from problem identification to implementation of a study. "*I hope to apply research skills from this class to give my clients the best care possible, but identifying a research topic and doing it accurately is difficult and makes me nervous… I have not had enough practice in research."* Students also reported lesser efficacy in research due to statistical anxiety. "*I don't enjoy research because of the analysis …I suppose most of the anxiety comes from analyzing the numbers and the different types of math involved."*

Students hoped that through taking the course, they would be able to reduce or overcome their research anxiety, enhance their confidence in conducting research and translate the knowledge learned into practice. "*I hope to get fundamental knowledge and understanding of research, be less anxious and more confident about it…I hope to be more excited about doing research and the course will take away my uneasy feeling about it…."*

Our analysis of post-test surveys highlighted that most of the students had some change in their anxiety after the course, which they indicated was largely due to the understanding that they could apply research methods and design studies in subject areas they were passionate about. *"…I will apply the research skills from this class to clients I care about…knowing that I could conduct research into what fits my clients' needs and in areas of practice I am passionate about makes me less anxious about research…."*

Some students expressed that research concepts made more sense after the course and that they felt more confident in their ability to engage in research. "*I feel more capable to conduct research in the future because of this class…my anxieties have changed toward research. I now understand that research is essential to serving our clients with the best practices…."* Students also felt more capable of applying the research concepts learned in class in their future practice. "*I feel more confident about doing research now and would like to participate in designing and implementing a research study….*"

Theme 2: Students' Identified Strategies to Cope with Anxiety and Enhance Self-Efficacy in Research

One of the strategies highlighted by the students to reduce anxiety included researching a topic one was passionate about and conducting a literature review to get more information about the topic. " *Choose a topic you are interested in…this will make the research process a whole lot easier…do all the reading you can in the literature and learn as much as you can about your topic…."* Students also emphasized the importance of class attendance and participation, *"Show up in class and ask lots of clarifying questions."* In addition, students felt that though reading the class text was important, to reduce anxiety students needed to read widely, "*READ the book and study outside of the textbook and find lots of examples from other similar studies and research articles…."* Most importantly, students felt that having discipline to get tasks completed on time was also crucial, "…*complete the tasks on time to the best of your ability…."*

Students suggested that social work educators would be better served to move beyond focusing on information transfer and tailor teaching strategies to enhance experiential learning and meet the varying needs of their students.

> *It is just a lot to learn and it is very hard to understand…and remembering all the concepts is difficult for me… the class has de-mystified many concepts and things that I vaguely knew about research, but I just wish it was offered over a longer timeframe so more could sink in….My learning style requires rote repetition and practice in order to feel confident… Doing a hands on research project instead of writing a proposal paper would be very helpful in seeing how research is implemented in the social work arena.*

Students also highlighted the importance of social work educators being aware that students' conceptualization of research may differ from theirs. "…*I feel that instructors think that graduate students are proficient in research, but we are not….they should recognize that we are not proficient in research*…."

The students also recognized the importance of the instructor's attributes and qualities in reducing students' research anxiety. "*This subject was difficult however, the instructor was available to talk about any confusing topics and provided great feedback, and additional resources…this reduced my anxiety towards the course."* In addition, the students highlighted the importance of instructors' creating an engaging classroom environment to enhance students' research methods skills and learning. *" Research methods is a difficult subject, but if the instructor creates time to meet with students and is available to answer any questions, that reduces a lot of anxiety."* Other key elements identified by students that helped create an engaging and supportive classroom included: the flexibility of the course in accommodating students' work schedules, the ease of accessing course materials online and the ability for students to self-pace the assignments and complete the quizzes in their own time. *" I work full-time like most of my classmates, the way this course is structured has worked well with my schedule. I pace my own study and assignments… however, this requires a lot of discipline."*

Theme 3: Students' Perceptions on Relevance of Research in Social Work Practice

Our findings suggested that most students felt that research is applicable to current problems that social workers deal with and that understanding research is important in enhancing evidence-based social work

practice. "*I find the actual research skills and the critical thinking required in research courses very useful in evidence-based practice… I hope to apply research skills in my future career and possibly in my personal life…I hope through research I will become an effective social worker, provide adequate support to my clients and evaluate programs for their effectiveness."*

Overall, the students felt that the knowledge they acquired from the course would significantly facilitate their understanding of scientific literature and enhance their critical thinking. Even if they do not engage in research practice in the future, they would still be able to read and understand scientific literature. "*The knowledge I have acquired in this course will enable me to think critically about existing research and develop new and innovative ways to ask more questions… though I may not actively conduct research, I will continue to read other people's research so having some foundational knowledge and basic understanding about research is helpful."*

In addition, some students appreciated new knowledge and skills acquired from a deep dive into some of the research literature and topics. "*It is good to see that studies can work towards improving and meeting clients' needs…It was interesting to learn new information…I appreciated the challenge involved in learning research concepts…the challenge to dig deeper and define and operationalize variables…this enhances critical thinking! I also appreciate the challenge of being specific and concise in scientific writing…."*

The outcomes anticipated from the course by the students included more understanding of research methods and knowledge, reduced research anxiety, and an ability to translate knowledge and skills acquired in the course to social work practice. *"I want to read and understand research and not find it upsetting and anxiety inducing. I hope to translate research into practice. I want to learn about research as it applies to my everyday life and to social work settings. I would like to apply research during micro-level social work interactions. I hope to acquire skills to make an impact to my clients."*

Additionally, students highlighted that the knowledge acquired from the class would be critical in their career and would make them better social work practitioners. "*We have to engage in research if we want to expand the knowledge in our area of work and to be real change agents…knowledge gained from this class will be useful in guiding my interactions with clients and in providing them with the best care possible through evidence-based practice…it is important to stress how research is very relevant in social work!"*

Discussion

Understanding students' anxiety related to learning and applying research methods is critical to social work educators in designing teaching strategies that will help reduce their students' anxieties towards research and facilitate mastery of research concepts and skills. The ability of social workers to ensure research informed practice and subsequently use practice to inform research is a core competency for professional practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2016; Kwong, 2017). Therefore, as social work educators, we should be committed to enabling our students to develop this core competency to enable them to evaluate their practice and engage in evidence-based practice. This ensures adherence to the ethical principles and values of the discipline.

Evidence suggests that research anxiety may impact student's self-efficacy in research skills and practice and their academic performance in a research methods course (Maschi et al., 2013). Student's low self-efficacy in their ability to understand research concepts and in connecting them to practice may compromise their learning and subsequent ability to engage in research and contribute new knowledge that advances the field as a practitioner (Love et al., 2007; Razavi et al., 2017). Additionally, anxiety related to statistics or mathematics may also increase student's research anxiety and lessen their self-efficacy in research. Research methods courses typically have statistical methods incorporated and some students may have statistics anxiety, which may impact their learning and academic performance (Baird, 2016; Einbinder, 2014; Maschi et al., 2012; Paechter et al., 2017).

Some of the student-suggested strategies for overcoming research anxiety included choosing a topic one was passionate about, reading widely to expand knowledge about one's topic of interest and having discipline to finish tasks on time. Instructors' attributes and teaching strategies that encouraged experiential learning and considered varying student needs were also highlighted as key factors in enhancing student's self-efficacy in research. Some students highlighted the importance of social work educators being aware that the way students conceptualize research and its relation to social work may differ from theirs. Most research instructors may have advanced degrees and have conducted some measure of research so they are likely to see the connection between research and social work practice, but this may not be the case with the students (Walsh et al., 2019). The students who grasp the relation between research and practice are likely to be the ones highly motivated about research and with low research anxiety (Bolin et al., 2012).

When considering implementing these strategies, a final suggestion for engaging students in research could be to ensure the course is concurrent with a field practicum, allowing students to connect their methodology learning with the practice environment, thus connecting their passion to the content. Thus, it is important for social work educators to find opportunities for engaging students in research practice to enhance their self-efficacy and skills in research through direct experiences that facilitate experiential learning (Freymond et al., 2014; Walsh, Gulbrandsen & Lorenzetti, 2019).

These are all important strategies for reducing students' research anxiety and for facilitating learning and evidence-based practice in social work. As one student stated, "*Of all academic endeavors, research requires the most effort, focus, persistence, diligence, and critical thinking."* Indeed, given this, perhaps we should de-normalize anxiety related to engaging in research in social work education by implementing some of the student identified strategies to reduce anxiety. Thus, to enhance efficacy and confidence in research methods, social work educators must tailor teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students, to create an enabling classroom environment, and to develop skills for engaging students, as strategies for reducing students' research anxiety. This will facilitate learning and evidence-based practice in social work. More so, social work educators need to provide academic support, coaching and mentoring to help MSW students overcome their fears and anxiety towards a research methods course, develop their confidence or self-efficacy in mastery of research concepts and techniques, and increase their chances of translating what they learned in class into practice (Einbinder, 2014; Harder, 2010). Though most studies have highlighted research anxiety among social work students, social work educators may come into a course with their own attitudes, perceptions and anxieties that may affect how they design the course (e.g. the content, mode of delivery, assignments and grading); how they engage

and connect with their students; and how they deliver their instruction (Fish, 2014; MacIntyre & Paul, 2012; Newman & McNamara, 2016). Social work educators need to not only be mindful of their students' anxiety but also how their own anxiety may impact learning. Additionally, social work educators need to be aware that the way students conceptualize research and its relation to social work may differ from theirs (Walsh et al., 2019). Most research instructors may have practiced research professionally and already see the connection between social work research and practice, but this may not be the case with the students. The students who grasp the relation between research and practice are likely to be the ones highly motivated about research and with low research anxiety (Bolin et al., 2012).

It is critical for social work research instructors to move beyond the traditional teaching approaches of information transfer and to focus more on engaging their MSW students in experiential learning of research methods and practice (Walsh et al., 2019). Various teaching approaches can be utilized to enable the students see the connection between social work research and practice. For example, social work educators may need to effectively communicate to their students how research is connected to practice and begin where the students are (Bolin et al., 2012; Einbinder, 2014). More so, research can be taught in such a way that shows students how to solve real world social problems related to direct practice (Kwong, 2017; Walsh et al., 2019).

Social work educators may use the reflective teaching approach to evaluate their own pedagogy and to identify their strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement (Brookfield, 2017). This will facilitate self-awareness of personal attitudes, perceptions and anxiety that may contribute to their students' anxiety, impact their learning and reduce their self-efficacy in research (Brookfield, 2017; Royse, 2001). Reflective teaching will also guide the development of tailored teaching strategies for students that target reducing their research anxiety and enhancing their self-efficacy in research practice. A variety of tools for reflective teaching may include a reflection journal, the development of teaching inventories and portfolios, recording teaching practices, and through external assessments, such as student evaluation or peer observation and feedback (Brookfield, 2017; Royse, 2001).

Limitations

The open-ended survey provided rich information about student anxiety towards research methods and identified strategies to overcome these anxieties. However, the findings do not aim to answer questions regarding frequency, intensity and degree to which students' research anxiety affects learning outcomes and social work practice; therefore, causality cannot be established. We recommend future studies to examine the levels of anxiety, its effects on students' performance and mental health outcomes. In addition, the sample size is small and was collected in one university; therefore, it cannot be transferable to other MSW students in the study region and across the US. The students took the course over summer and their views may not reflect the views of other students taking the course in a traditional 16-week semester. Evidence suggests that engaging students in research methods courses over long duration may enhance their self-efficacy in research (Unrau & Beck, 2004; Unrau & Grinnell, 2005). Therefore, responses from students who take a research methods over 16-week semester duration may differ from our sample who enrolled for an 8-week summer research methods course. Our survey results may also be subject to bias due to collection of subjective statements about research anxiety. There may be risks of either under or overstating research anxiety. Despite these limitations, our findings indicate MSW students do have some anxieties towards research.

Implications

Our findings will enhance skills among social work educators to assist students in reducing their anxiety levels towards research through tailoring teaching methods and strategies to better meet the needs of students, increasing their potential for learning, and facilitating translation of research skills and knowledge learned in class into evidence-based social-work practice. Our findings will also inform future research that may use more robust measures to examine the relationship between anxiety, student performance and mental health outcomes.

Conclusions

Despite the reluctance of social work students to learn and apply research in social work practice, the mandate of research in social work education creates a challenge to effectively teach and enhance student self-efficacy in research methods knowledge and skills. Our commitment as social work educators is in equipping our students with systematic approaches to scientific thinking to enhance their learning and to enhance their skills in evaluating their practice. In addition, emphasis on strategies that enhance experiential learning and are not overly focused on transferring research knowledge will help aid in self-efficacy (Bolin et al., 2012), allowing students to see the connection between social work research and direct practice, and apply the knowledge and skills acquired in class to better serve the needs of their clients.

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Substance Use and Misuse in Baby Boomers: A Social Work Review

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Abstract

Baby boomers are more likely to use illicit drugs and alcohol compared to different cohorts. Although substance use in this generation is well-documented, it can be challenging to diagnose, often due to a lack of awareness on the part of the health care professional, the client's denial of a problem, and a history of co-occurring concerns, such as mental and chronic health issues. The objective of this paper is to present existing knowledge of substance use and misuse in the baby boomer cohort, using a life course perspective. A collection of articles, written between 2011 and 2020, were reviewed using keyword-based searches on three databases: Google Scholar, WorldCat, and PubMed. Findings yield opportunities for future literature to address topics of treatment efficacy, psychosocial stressors, and issues related to women and minority baby boomers. It is imperative that social workers recognize baby boomer substance use and misuse patterns, including the impact on recovery and relapse.

Keywords: Substance use, Substance misuse, Baby boomers, Social work, Life course

Introduction

Baby boomers is a well-known term, used to describe a cohort of people born during the second quarter of 1946 through 1964 (Colby & Ortman, 2014). This generation consists of a massive number of births that arose following World War II. A differentiation of this cohort from others is the size of the group and the sustainability of higher levels of fertility rates and births for a longer period than most other cohorts (Colby & Ortman, 2014). At present, baby boomers are ages 55 to 74 years old and are more likely to use illicit drugs and alcohol. Compared to earlier cohorts, this cohort is suggested to have an increase in diagnosis of substance use disorders as they continue to age into the older adult generation (Choi, DiNitto, & Marti, 2015).

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an annual survey of data collected from a random sampling of the U.S. population from all 50 states, found that substance use and misuse remain a pervasive problem among baby boomers. According to the 2017 NSDUH, alcohol is the most misused of all substances. Sixty-seven percent of adults, aged 55-64 years, report past year use of alcohol; 42.1%

report binge use in the past month of being surveyed, while 11.5% report heavy use in the past month (SAMHSA, 2018). Second most misused are psychotherapeutic prescription drugs, such as opioids, sedatives, and tranquilizers (SAMHSA, 2018). Of illicit substances, marijuana is the second most used, followed by cocaine, then hallucinogens (SAMHSA, 2018). Although the problem of addictions across age groups is well-documented, the baby boomer population has received limited attention in the social work literature (Choi, DiNitto, & Marti, 2015).

Similar to the results from the 2017 survey, the most recent available data of the NSDUH, the 2018 survey, indicated there is greater alcohol use than illicit drug use among baby boomers (SAMHSA, 2019). The lifetime usage of illicit drugs in adults, aged 50-64, was 57.6% (SAMHSA, 2019). Past year illicit drug use was noted at 14.4% and past month use was found to be 8.3% (SAMHSA, 2019). For alcohol use, 87.7% of survey participants reported lifetime use of alcohol. Past year alcohol use was reported to be 68.8%, followed by past month use, reported as 55.3% (SAMHSA, 2019). Binge use was found to be 24.2% in the past year and 9.2% were found to be heavy alcohol users.

Substance Use, Misuse, and Addiction in Baby Boomers

In 2013, the American Psychological Association updated the DSM and replaced substance abuse and substance dependence as spectrum diagnoses, referred to as Substance Use Disorders (NIDA, n.d.). Substance use, often referred to as illicit drug use, has been well-studied by researchers across multiple behavioral health disciplines. Substance misuse considers misuse of legal drugs including prescriptions, such as opioids (NIDA, n.d.). Substance misuse impacts many aspects of the physical health of this population, in addition to mental health (Satre, 2015). As adults age, they tend to be more sensitive to alcohol secondary to the body's tolerance, which can lead to a higher risk for falls, motor vehicle accidents, and other unintentional injuries that could result from drinking (NIAAA, n.d.).

Research yields that drug use amongst baby boomers is rising (NIDA, 2015; Satre, 2015). NIDA's explanation is that this is a result of the aging of the baby boomer cohort, and their rates of illicit drug use tended to have historically been higher than those of other generations (NIDA, 2015). This phenomenon has been referred to as the "Woodstock Mentality." Woodstock was an enormous rock festival that occurred in 1969 and is described as a harmonious gathering and experience where many participants used drugs (Reynolds, 2011). Participants in the Woodstock rock festival were often the parents of baby boomers. Aging baby boomers were adolescents and teenagers during this period and may have been affected by exposure to the drug using experiences of their parents which are described as binging drug habits. The drug culture and attitudes about substance use during the 1960s and 1970s was different than present day (Elinson, 2015; Kuerbis, Sacco, Blazer, & Moore, 2014; Moore et al., 2009). There was a wave of drug use during this time period which propelled the United States Congress to respond with legislation to make penalties for the manufacturing and possession of drugs—the Comprehensive Drug Abuse and Control Act of 1970 (Institute of Medicine, 1996).

The aging baby boomer cohort's use of marijuana and misuse of over-the-counter medications has raised concerns about the effects of their drug-using behaviors and may increase the need for individuals to have alcohol and drug treatment in the near future (Satre, 2015). This justifies the need for continuing clinical research to address treatment and recovery with this group.

As baby boomers grow older, they are often treated for multiple chronic health conditions, like hypertension and diabetes (Ryan et. al, 2013). Substance misuse can negatively influence the effective management of such conditions, which is an important consideration due to the tendency for the use of substances to be underreported. With these chronic health conditions comes the concern of an adverse interaction of chronic condition medications and alcohol misuse and substance use (NIAAA, n.d.; Kuerbis, Sacco, Blazer, & Moore, 2014), which explains a need for an exploration into this social problem.

Theoretical Framework

Theory for Practice

Social work practice is guided by theories that lend due diligence when adhering to selected evidence-based approaches. There are three different types of theories: a theory for practice, a theory of practice, and a theory of caring (Appleby, Colon, & Hamilton, 2011). Appleby, Colon, and Hamilton (2011) define a theory *for* practice as "a system of ideas or statements that explain social work practice" (p. 5). A theory *of* practice is described "as consisting of a body of principles, more or less systematically developed and anchored in scientific knowledge, that seeks to guide and direct practitioner action" (Appleby, Colon, & Hamilton, 2011, p. 5). Lastly, a theory *of* caring refers to "the value base for practice with diverse and oppressed populations and is based on values of justice, independence and freedom, the importance of community life, client self-determination, and social change" (Appleby, Colon, & Hamilton, 2011, p. 10). This review employs a theory *for* practice to better understand how clinicians work with baby boomers with addictions. Differing theoretical perspectives are ideal in considering practice with the baby boomer population. As they are a heterogeneous group, several theories may apply to them. Given historical factors related to this cohort, such as the "Woodstock Mentality," the life course perspective (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018) fits well within the framework of substance use and misuse issues.

Life Course Perspective

The lifespan or life course perspectives are often employed in research focused on older adults. Life course concentrates on transitions over periods of time in one's life, focusing on the interactions between age, cohort, and period effects (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018). Throughout one's life, a person will experience several significant events, personally and societally (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018). Baby boomers may have witnessed, first-hand, events like the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and 9/11. Currently, COVID-19 is another major event that they must navigate.

A life course perspective examines the various transitions or changes that may have led to a baby boomer's substance use. With this framework, individuals construct their own narratives to make meaning out of their own lives (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018). Substance use could serve to mask whatever pain they may have experienced. Once individuals progress in age, it becomes more difficult to change behaviors; however, while it may be more challenging, the motivation to change is possible. With substance use, it is no different, except that one must be more careful at an advanced age and have regular, consistent, formal healthcare interventions to implement such changes.

Using a life course perspective, which acknowledges the significance of historical factors, the present literature review aimed to provide insight into baby boomers' substance use and misuse behaviors, while presenting implications for social work practice. The findings from this review provide the rationale for updated qualitative and quantitative research to inform social work clinical training and practice with this generation. The literature documents a projected increase in the need for effectively identifying and interviewing with alcohol and substance treatment (Satre, 2015; Kuerbis, Sacco, Blazer, & Moore, 2014; Gfroerer, Penne, Pemberton, & Folsom, 2003), yet there is no known recent research examining topics of treatment efficacy, including efficacy related to work with baby boomer women and ethnic minorities (Kuerbis, Sacco, Blazer, & Moore, 2014). Although the problem of substance use and misuse across populations is well-researched, the baby boomer generation has received less attention than younger age groups despite their massive group size, aging into the older adult group, and documented projected increase in treatment needs that will increase substance system treatment demands (Kuerbis, Sacco, Blazer, & Moore, 2014; Gfroerer, Penne, Pemberton, & Folsom, 2003).

Methods

Search Strategies

This literature review was conducted using Google Scholar, WorldCat, and PubMed, and general and advanced keyword search terms of the following words: "addiction" and "baby boomers, "substance abuse" and "baby boomers," and "substance use" and "baby boomers" (Appendix A). Search terms were chosen, according to a life course perspective, which considers early and historical factors, such as the "Woodstock Mentality." Use of general and advanced search options were utilized to locate articles that included the selected search terms. General search options included a search of the aforementioned terms, whereas advanced searches allowed for specific inclusion of all the selected aforementioned word phrases to appear in each article. There were limited results, specific to recency of peer-reviewed articles. As a result, refinements were made to WorldCat and PubMed search engines, such as selecting peer-reviewed articles and full text articles where available, as per the search engines' search options. Previously, the term "substance use" had not been used or recognized as a way to diagnose or label until the DSM-5 became available in 2013. Search years varied from 2011-2020 for all search terms except for "substance use and baby boomers" to capture articles that were time credible, reliable, and up to date, in regard to the additional 2015 DSM-5 updates. All other search terms involved a 10-year search with total search results across all 3 search words and phrases from Google Scholar yielding 14,529 articles. WorldCat yielded 106 articles, while PubMed yielded 33. More information on the search strategies can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Literature Search Information

Resource	Search Type	Search Terms	Search Years	Refinements	Results
Google Scholar	General	Substance abuse & baby boomers	2011 – 2020	Sort by relevance	4930
Google Scholar	General	Addictions & baby boomers	2011 – 2020	Sort by relevance	6780

Google Scholar	General	Substance use & baby boomers	2015 – 2020	Sort by relevance	2810
WorldCat	Advanced Key words	Substance abuse & baby boomers	2011 – 2020	Full text peer-reviewed journals	47
WorldCat	Advanced key words	Addictions & baby boomers	2011-2020	Full text peer-reviewed journals	50
WorldCat	Advanced Key words	Substance use & baby boomers	2013-2020	Full text peer-reviewed journals	9
PubMed	Advanced text words	Substance abuse & baby boomers	2011-2020	All text available	20
PubMed	Advanced text words	Addictions & baby boomers	2011-2020	All text available	0
PubMed	Advanced text words	Substance use & baby boomers	2013-2020	All text available	13

Inclusion and Exclusion

Articles were selected for inclusion in the review based on relevance to social work and baby boomers. Studies selected go beyond mere mention of baby boomers by providing an acceptable focus and content on the specific baby boomer cohort. Excluded articles often mention the terms "baby boomers" yet do not provide detailed information and analysis that thoroughly informs existing knowledge, according to these researchers' viewpoints and interests. Eligible articles also had to be published as peer reviewed journal articles. All articles were reviewed and evaluated independently by two researchers; relevant data was extracted using a data extraction protocol created by the authors prior to the literature search process. The data extraction form ensured a systematic process to extract study components, study findings and limitations, and other study characteristics relevant to the review.

Results

A total of nine articles were included in this review (see Table 2). Core themes that emerged from this review were: 1) cohort mentality and 2) treatment of the specific cohort of baby boomers centered in this study.

Table 2: Literature Review Articles

Author	Year	Title	Purpose	Sample	Research Design	Findings	Limitations
Rosen, D., Engel, R. J., Beaugard, C., Davis, N., & Cochran, G.	2019	Baby boomer's substance abuse and researcher indifference	To build on previous limited substance use focused older adult research	Older Adults	Literature review	Of 17,604 articles reviewed, 112 were focused on older adults and substance use; articles related to the intersection of older adults and opioid abuse were limited in availability. Federal funding for this research topic was found to be limited.	Researchers focused only on top social work, gerontology, substance use, and leading practice journals, limiting their ability to fully examine all possibilities to review articles related to substance use and older adults.
Buche, J., Singer, P.M., Grazier, K., King, E., Maniere, E., & Beck, A.J.	2017	Primary care and behavioral health workforce integration: Barriers and best practices	To understand integrating care in terms of barriers and challenges	Diverse integrated care personnel in 7 states	Qualitative	Five themes emerged as barriers of integration and three themes emerged as best practices. This study supports integrated care as having a positive impact on patient health outcomes.	This study does not clearly address rigor in the methods.
Choi, N., DiNitto, D., & Marti, C.	2015	Alcohol and other substance use, mental health treatment use, and perceived unmet treatment need: Comparison between baby boomers and older adults:	To examine the impact of substance use amongst baby boomer and the associations of mental health treatment use and unmet treatment need	Adults aged 50-64 and 65+	Quantitative Secondary analysis Logistic regression	Substance use and heavy misuse increased the odds of a mental health problem	Use of secondary data, which has limitations on verification of self-report data and use of cross-sectional data. The data set uses the same cut offs for heavy alcohol drinkers and for binge drinkers.

		Substance use, mental health treatment, and age cohort comparison					
Satre, D. D.	2015	Alcohol and drug use problems among older adults	To review the epidemiological literature on substance use patterns and approaches	Older adults ages 65 and older	Literature review	Psychologists in primary care settings are in a prime position to intervene with older adults who are in need of substance use services. There is a need for more research focused on older adults in general and also minority older adult substance use research, as well as specific illicit drug and prescription drug misuse.	Researchers did not provide information about methods of epidemiological studies that were included or excluded.
Kuerbis, A., Sacco, P., Blazer, D. G., & Moore, A. A.	2014	Substance abuse among older adults	The purpose is to effectively identify and treat substance abuse among older adults due to the aging of baby boomers	Older adults	Literature Review	Findings dispel any myths that older adults do not use or misuse substances. Their symptoms may be difficult to identify and there are limited interventions tailored to work with this age population.	This review only includes a review on brief intervention-s. More intense, higher level intervention-s were excluded.

Kuerbis, A., & Sacco, P.	2013	A review of existing treatments for substance abuse among older adults and recommendations for future directions	The purpose was to evaluate studies over the past 30 years that focused on substance abuse treatment with older adults	Older Adults	Literature Review	Expansion of research is urgently needed.	Many studies reviewed had small sample sizes.
Ryan, M., Merrick, E. L., Hodgkin, D., Horgan, C. M., Garnick, D. W., Panas, L., … Saitz, R.	2013	Drinking patterns of older adults with chronic medical conditions	To examine the prevalence of older adult alcohol use, including at risk drinking and alcohol consumption patterns	Older adults	Quantitative Descriptive study	7% of older adults with chronic illness who drink alcohol drink in excess	This is a descriptive study of self-reported drinking patterns of adults with chronic conditions; rates of alcohol use disorder are not represented.
Moore, A. A., Karno, M. P., Grella, C. E., Lin, J. C., Warda, U., Liao, D. H., & Hu, P.	2009	Alcohol, tobacco, and nonmedical drug use in older U.S. Adults: Data from the 2001/02 National Epidemiologic Survey of Alcohol and	To review the prevalence, sociodemographic, and health-related correlates of substance use	Older adults	Cross-sectional retrospective study	Most adults used substances over their lifetimes.	There is a small sample size of non-medical drug users, rates of use may be not be as high as noted due to premature mortality of heavy users, and the cross-sectional design.

		Related Conditions					
Gfroerer, J., Penne, M., Pembert-on, M., & Folsom, R.	2003	Substance abuse treatment need among older adults in 2020: The impact of the aging baby-boom cohort	To address the anticipation that as baby boomer's age into the older adult cohort they will have substance treatment needs, this study sought to project those needs	Older adults aged 50 and older	Quantitative Secondary analysis of The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse	The number of older adults in need of substance treatment will increase from 1.4 million in the year 2000 to 4.4 million in year 2020.	Study results are based on several assumptions – that the demographics of older adults in the model used in 2000 will be the same in 2020; authors assumed Census projections at the time of the study are accurate; and, there's no differential for mortality calculation.

Cohort Mentality

Baby boomers' cohort mentality toward substances is noted as part of the "Woodstock Mentality" (Reynolds, 2011). Boomers' should be examined according to their individual narratives, which includes an understanding of their life course in terms of the transition of time and their substance using and misusing behaviors (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018). Due to this generation's transitions from various age groups, many now struggle with maintenance of previously identified issues (Satre, 2015). Consideration for the likelihood of relapse instead of first use or misuse is important. Thorough exploration of previous substance use history, that includes adolescence, is ideal, despite this having occurred many decades ago.

Additional findings include a need for additional research focused on this cohort, including baby boomer minorities (Satre, 2015). There are no known studies of best treatments in working with baby boomers with substance use disorders. Baby boomer research is needed on topics of treatment efficacy and psychosocial stressors that lead to misuse and relapse (Rosen, Engel, Beaugard, Davis, & Cochran, 2019).

Treatment

Also, peer-reviewed research studies about baby boomer substance treatments and their recovery needs and experiences are needed (Rosen et al., 2019; Satre, 2015). Women and minorities need to be further explored, as well. Although the problem of substance use and misuse across populations is well-researched, the baby boomer population has received less attention than younger age groups (Rosen et al., 2019; Satre, 2015); as this age group ages into the older adult group, research will need to be updated to incorporate the peculiarities of the "Woodstock Mentality."

In comparing substances misused, alcohol has garnered the most focus in government programming (Moore, 2018). This has been rightfully so, since alcohol is the most misused substance. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Quality Improvement Network-Quality Improvement Organization program's 11th Statement of Work provided a tangible example of a focus on alcohol use disorder in the Medicare aged 65 and older population (The American Health Care Quality Association, 2018). As the baby boomers age into the older adult group, a clear understanding of their needs is necessary for competency in providing quality assessment, intervention, and follow up to support sobriety (Choi, DiNitto, & Marti, 2015; Satre, 2015).

Identification of substance use and misuse problems with evidence-based screening tools in primary care is widespread, as there is a continued push to integrate primary care with behavioral health. (Buche et al., 2017; American Psychological Association, 2016). Although these tools are effective for identification of a substance problem, treatment efficacy for those baby boomers identified as needing treatment and recovery needs increased research (Choi, DiNitto, & Marti, 2015).

Discussion

As discussed, substance use and misuse are a widespread problem within the baby boomer cohort. Current literature suggests that more attention is needed to address the diverse needs of this group. Much of the research around the use of substances tends to focus on younger adults, while those in the baby boomer cohort with substance use and misuse issues may go undetected, underdiagnosed, and/or undertreated (Frances, 2011; Rao & Roche, 2017; Thornton, 2018). This literature review uses the life

course perspective to present the existing knowledge base of substance use and misuse among the baby boomer cohort. Beginning with an introduction to the problem within this cohort, this literature review also summarizes the effects of substance use and misuse within this population and addresses life stressors, physical impacts, and recovery resources. A discussion about trends of use is included, in addition to implications for practice. Sensitivity to this information is essential to inform practice for comprehensive screening, assessment, and diagnosis of this cohort.

This literature review had some limitations. Firstly, there was a lack of longitudinal studies found that had been conducted on this cohort. Secondly, correlation was indicated in several of the articles, but determining the causation behind different baby boomers' substance use and misuse was outside the scope of this study. Thirdly, there were a limited number of peer-reviewed journal articles included in this review. Lastly, many of the studies found relied mainly on self-report to determine the level of severity of a respondent's use or misuse of substances.

Despite the limitations, there are research gaps that inform implications for social work and other helping professions. Given the limited knowledge of substance use and misuse in the baby boomer population, it is important to examine those individuals who not only live in their own homes, but also those who are homeless, incarcerated, in nursing homes, and in assisted living facilities. Additionally, researching the interaction of various baby boomer sociodemographic identities, such as physical and mental ability, culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and nationality, may help to paint a more in-depth picture of the issues that may have influenced the use of substances.

Implications for Social Work

It is imperative that social workers seek to incorporate peer-reviewed literature into their professional knowledge base, while working with their clients to recognize and understand the distinct factors among the baby boomer population. Substance use and misuse will continue to impact the lives of these individuals, as addictions involve a cycle of recovery and relapse. Social workers must be culturally competent, allowing individuals to tell their own stories in order to offer and provide the best possible services to meet each client's needs. While providing a space for clients to narrate their own life histories, clinicians may also utilize the following tools to determine an individual's level of severity and need for treatment: the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST), the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), the CAGE questionnaire, the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), or the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test - Geriatric Version (MAST-G), which are some of the best known screening instruments (Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018). Furthermore, the client's substance of choice drives the determination for which evidence-based treatment would be most appropriate for the older adult. One may subscribe to a different type of treatment for marijuana, for instance, motivational interviewing, which requires a more intensive approach. An interdisciplinary team approach to treatment would be best for those looking to start a life of sobriety, with physicians, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists collaborating through networking and completing client case conferences to provide their clients with the resources they need to start their journey of recovery.

Such services should include technology to increase access for clients in rural areas. Telehealth services are offered more frequently as a cost-effective method to grant access to treatment that would otherwise be a barrier due to transportation challenges, a lack of health centers, and now even natural disasters and pandemics. Utilizing various ways to connect with clients—be it going out into the community and

conducting home visits, posting flyers where there is a high number of older adults, such as in primary care physician offices, working with churches and food banks for outreach purposes, or even connecting with some on social media platforms and through teleconferencing—will be pertinent.

As substance use and misuse takes many forms, so should interventions to prevent and treat these addictions. Innovative ideas in outreach will also assist in client engagement in the outreach process as well as promote clients remaining active in the recovery stage. It is vital that the use of substances is viewed and defined through the lens of the clients with whom we work. Once aware of their backgrounds, we can then educate them on selecting the best treatment options for themselves and their families who are affected. Additional funding should be earmarked and awarded to recovery efforts of the baby boomer cohort, as their treatment modalities may differ due to their age, diversity within the group, and chronic health conditions. Also, more academic programs in social work should focus on addictions in the baby boomer population, with incentives for specializing in working with this population, as the graying of America becomes more apparent.

Conclusions

This review promoted a recent assessment of substance use and misuse in the baby boomer generation. The group's "Woodstock Mentality" has been explored in relation to substance use and misuse and gaps in existing knowledge and research have been identified. Despite the DSM-5 publication in 2013, there continues to be limited research using keywords "substance use," "substance misuse," and "baby boomers." Social workers are in positions to contribute in research and practice to address the needs of this cohort as they transition to the older adult group.

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Importance of Social Workers Understanding Impacts of Historical Events on Family and Individual Outcomes: A Book Review

Review of Elder, G.H., Jr. (2018). *Children of the Great Depression:* 25th Anniversary Edition. New York: Routledge

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Introduction

The following book review aims to inform social workers of how person-in-environment may be used in practice and research to examine extreme historical, economic, and social events and their impact on client outcomes and treatment approaches. The Great Depression was an economic disaster in the United States from 1929-1941. Glen Elder, the author of *Children of the Great Depression,* was born during this time (Elder, 2019). Dr. Elder is a professor of sociology whose research began with this initial historical analysis of how Great Depression economic and social changes impacted children across their lifetime. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of childhood and life experiences on personality, values, and decision-making in adulthood. Children of this time lived through the Great Depression and transitioned into adulthood during World War II, experiencing two monumental events in a single lifetime. Today, children and families face similar economic and social strains in times of political unrest, economic downturns, and the Coronavirus pandemic. The exploration of childhood and life experiences mirror social work practice, which aims to understand the impact of social and economic events on clients beyond the events themselves.

Theoretical Arguments and Methods

Overall, the book overviews prior studies on the Great Depression, which identifies a gap in lifetime research studies, and shares outcomes of people who were children during the Great Depression. An analysis of 175 Oakland, California youth and families are explored in relation to the direct impact of the Great Depression on their lifetime outcomes. All of the participants were white and the majority were Protestant. In contrast to similar works, surveys and interviews were conducted at three time-points: at the start (1932), in the middle (1934), and at the end (1936) of the Great Depression, providing longitudinal data. The book uses a person-in-environment framework to understand the role of a historical

event on families and children. Person-in-environment or the ecological model views the person inside of a series of inclusive levels of relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The historical perspectives of children and families were divided into two cohorts, those economically deprived and non-deprived, based on an economic loss of greater than 35 percent of their family income. Rich data of both children and families in the form of interviews and surveys allowed insight to the process of development based on indicators such as social status, income, and family composition. Rather than making assumptions predicated on negative associations of economic distress, this study took a non-judgmental approach that allowed understanding of the relationships to emerge organically.

Important Findings and Considerations

Families in the Great Depression adapted in response to the conditions of economic and social status loss. Several familial, marriage, and childhood outcomes differed based on the family status before and after the Great Depression. As economic roles shifted, social and traditional roles of family and children reflected new priorities to sustain livelihood. Following these shifts, the author explored whether the environment facilitated changes in family responsibilities, shifted economic expectations, and impacted roles within the community and larger social structures. The following paragraphs detail the youth and adult outcomes— those who were youth in the study are the same participants examined in the adult outcomes.

Youth Experiences

Economic loss had lasting impacts on youth and their families for generations. Although several indicators, such as education and employment prior, were thought to be indicative of the amount of loss the family would face, jobs were impacted differentially based on occupation and citizenship status. Instead of past education and employment, the type of work and citizenship of the father impacted family income loss, due to a greater number who were self-employed. For example, families who were self-employed immigrants felt greater losses than other demographic groups. Families feared loss of social status which led to isolation from the larger community to shield themselves. Generally, children of both sexes were expected to support the household, but more often boys were expected to work outside of the home. The experiences of children directly supporting the economic status of the family had lasting impact on the child's view of family and financial decision making. Children who worked outside of the family or supported the family in domestic needs developed a greater sense of independence and value of economic resources.

Gender norms led to social independence in boys, whereas girls relied more heavily on peer supports. Although all children held new roles and responsibilities, gender norms led boys to be praised whereas girls were seen as contributing in expected ways. For example, boys supported their fathers at work, which was valued over the income girls provided by babysitting or doing chores for other families. These experiences influenced the types of interactions they would have as children and their desired lifestyle in adulthood. As a result of gender norms, in adulthood, girls were influenced to begin careers that most closely resembled their childhood responsibilities. Youth survey results showed that as mothers' roles shifted to leading the household in decision making and economic stability, there was a slight shift in children's opinion of their family and adulthood desires (Elder, 1974). As mothers entered the workforce, children saw them as a vital economic support to the family. In adulthood, participants describe desiring partners who could contribute to the family economically in their own marriages due to this shift in

parental roles. Gender norms continued to impact women long-term, as women from deprived families did not attend college and fell into domestic or marital roles instead (Elder, 1974).

Adult Outcomes

The effect of childhood experiences through adulthood were examined using both the child's and parent's perceptions retrospectively. Unlike the frequently discussed significant impact of the Great Depression, the author argues most families did not feel extreme effects if prior to the event their family already experienced economic stresses. The roles held in adulthood for the deprived youth showed an emphasis on gaining and maintaining social status through a career or marriage. For men, there was a prioritization on monetary gain, utilization of higher education, and a close connection to traditional family values. One theory the author offers was that children from a family with great economic deprivation may have limited access to education. However, this study found that, in contrast, these 69 men who completed at least 1 follow-up found alternative sources of income and avenues to support educational attainment. Traditional gender norms and discrimination in higher education and workforce opportunities greatly shaped the experiences of women who were children during the Great Depression.

Women who were children in the Great Depression were reluctant to follow career interests due to experiencing a childhood tasked with domestic responsibilities and undervalued in comparison to their male counterparts (Elder, 1974). As a result of systematic barriers such as sexism and classism, childhood data indicated strong preferences for domestic lifestyles and roles in adulthood. Relationships with family and parents impacted partner choice, family satisfaction and emotional connections. These outcomes in adulthood related to economic and social status are often the issue of concern for those served by social workers. Results of the study showed those from deprived families had greater levels of unhappiness and emotional distress. Similar to children and families today, the economic demands of childhood led to resilience and economic stability in adulthood for some. For others, adulthood outcomes included facing fear of economic loss and pressures on partners to provide emotional and economic support.

Strengths of *Children of the Great Depression*

The historical longitudinal approach is difficult to carry out and maintain a large sample with several follow-ups, however, the author details the story clearly. The scale of the study and ability to understand all the perspectives is an asset to social workers serving children and families. The range of child and adult experiences, including their peer and family relations, concepts of marriage, and pressures of economic success provide a broad account of experiences which contribute to choices in adulthood. Experiences children and families faced remain relevant today in explaining the relationship between economic loss, family relationships, and systematic barriers such as traditional gender norms and sexism in workplaces.

Weaknesses of *Children of the Great Depression*

Economic and historical disasters such as the Great Depression are extreme events. Although the book provided a detailed description of hardships and responses, one weakness may be the generalizability to future events as social workers serve children and families. Another major limitation was the inability to add questions or gather specific data from children and families. In contrast to other studies of this period, the book did not focus on the most economically deprived. Instead the study focused in on the experience of those who were middle to high class before the Great Depression. Additionally, all of the participants

were white providing no insight to the experiences of minority youth and families during this time period. Therefore, comparisons could not be drawn between all children across socio-economic statuses or racial/ethnic groups. Finally, the retrospective data collection is limited by the participants ability to recollect experiences of their childhood and family dynamics clearly.

Implications for Social Work

The economic loss impacted decisions in adulthood, including changes to external and internal motivators, increasing economic priorities and lowering interest in leisurely activities. These findings align with fundamental social work values and knowledge, while also providing insight to how social workers may respond in time of economic crisis. For example, resiliency of children and families is discussed in a strength-based perspective. Additionally, social workers are trained to approach social issues by recognizing person-in-environment conceptualization and considering risks in the context of individual, family, community, and system level factors (NASW, 2009). For example, as social workers conduct biopsychosocial assessments and support long-term growth, it may be necessary to consider the impact of any historical or economic disasters in their clients' lifetimes. The experiences of economic and social events throughout childhood have significant impacts on adult mental and physical health. Therefore, it is crucial social workers understand the life experiences of the individual and family to provide holistic support.

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