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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

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Volume 9  
Issue 1 *March*

Article 14

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March 1982

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### Recommended Citation

Baskind, Frank R. (1982) "Definitional Dilemmas and the Baccalaureate Generalist," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol9/iss1/14>

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DEFINITIONAL DILEMMAS AND THE BACCALAUREATE GENERALIST

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ABSTRACT

This paper serves as a guide to understanding the rationale for present day baccalaureate practice and those factors which may contribute to the difficulty in defining the term "generalist". It reviews the significant actions taken by our professional organizations and the curriculum building activities which led to the current view of the BSW as a generalist practitioner. The definitional dilemma is related to the situational qualities of BSW practice which stem from the nature of who is involved in the defining process. This dilemma seems to be a symptom of a larger professional concern, the need to differentiate between practice behaviors for the BSW and MSW education levels.

Generalist social work practice requires a social worker to be skilled in order to perform a range of social work roles instead of specializing in only one role. Although this approach to practice has been common in the profession for the past fifty years, it was during the 1960s that it became used as a way to describe practice for the human service worker, the college graduate without formal educational preparation in social work, who was hired to fill professional personnel shortages. It provided an alternative to the specialized practice of master social workers in the 1960s.

Within the last decade generalist social work practice has become associated with the baccalaureate social worker, a graduate of an accredited undergraduate professional program. Because accreditation of undergraduate social work education did not take place until 1974, few studies are reported in the literature which consider the BSW as a subject of investigation. The BSW's acceptance as a generalist by the practice community has not been wholly favorable. Most social work practitioners cited in the literature suggest limited professional activities for the BSW.<sup>1</sup> These restrictions appear to be the outgrowth of two factors: differing views between the supporters of undergraduate social work education and graduate educators regarding the practice competencies required for each level of professional practice; and a lack of clarity or agreement about the term "generalist". In order to strengthen the ties between social work educators and practitioners within and across education levels, this article reviews the significant actions taken by our professional organizations and the related research activities which contributed to the preparation of the baccalaureate social worker as a generalist. This paper will serve as a guide to understanding the rationale for present day baccalaureate practice and those factors which may contribute to the difficulty in defining the generalist.

By identifying the differences in the purposes and the data gathering techniques used in the projects which attempted to define the nature of baccalaureate social work practice, this paper also sheds light on the emerging public issue about the need to clearly articulate practice differences between social workers from undergraduate and graduate education programs.

#### GENERALIST PRACTICE

The focus on present day generalist practice as a basis for the educational preparation of the baccalaureate social worker stems from the Syracuse University Undergraduate Curriculum Building Study which reviewed field investigations which identified the functions and abilities of human services workers who were inducted into the profession through agency staff training.<sup>2</sup> Conducted during the period 1962 to 1970, these efforts considered the feasibility of using human service workers to fill the existing and predicted shortages of master level social work professionals. They did not address questions about academic preparation for individuals in undergraduate social work programs. However, the original investigators, several years after they completed their work, were requested to review their raw data and extract information which might be useful for the preparation of baccalaureate social workers. The data were forwarded to members of a manpower task force who were preparing a model for a graduate of a baccalaureate social work education program. From these post hoc findings, likened to public opinion surveys,<sup>3</sup> a model for the baccalaureate social worker emerged. The model stated:

The graduate of the ideal undergraduate social work program is prepared to function in direct service on his own initiative, not merely as an auxiliary, associate, or technician. He is capable of assuming complete and ultimate responsibility for his own working behavior. His competence is not limited to a single field for which he has been specifically prepared but is transferable either in an established social service delivery system or in the development of new systems of needed services . . . In practice the BSW will be working with people directly, in the field and in the agency; with individuals, families, groups of task-oriented community representatives. He will work in the community reaching out to the client group as well as working directly with other agency and community representatives in community efforts toward social system change.<sup>4</sup>

The model for the baccalaureate social worker identified a range and diversity of practice behaviors which were once the domain of the master level practitioner. The model was recommended for use in undergraduate social work curriculum building and manpower utilization by social work agency directors. However, in offering this model to social work educators and agency directors, the compilers of the research studies cautioned that agency directors had the ultimate responsibility to determine work assignments for the social work staff.

During this same period, efforts by the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) produced a framework for the study of social worker roles.<sup>5</sup> Supported by a grant from the Social and Rehabilitative Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, SREB sought to upgrade the utilization

and training of human service workers in the South. Their primary objective was to define the social work practice behaviors expected of the human service worker.

SREB task force members, educators, practitioners, and consumers of social services, recognized two trends in the delivery of social work services. These were the use of human service workers as assistants or "sub-specialists" to MSWs,<sup>6</sup> and an approach to practice which focused on one method of intervention - either social casework, social groupwork, or community organization. The limitation to the one method approach is best illustrated by Kaplan's "law of the instrument". He stated:

Give a small boy a hammer, and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding. It comes as no particular surprise to discover that a scientist formulates problems in a way which requires for their solution just those techniques in which he himself is especially skilled.<sup>7</sup>

SREB suggested that specialization in one method of intervention limited the practitioner's range of helping.

They focused on developing a unique purpose for the human service worker. With consultation from Dr. Sidney Fine, a specialist in job analysis with the W. E. Upjohn Institute on Employment Research, SREB selected a problems approach to manpower development. This approach required the worker to: examine the basic human needs and problems of individuals, families, and communities; identify the obstacles and constraints which prevent the client's optimal social functioning; and select the tasks required to help the client population meet their needs.

This problem approach, which came to be known as the generalist framework, presents a holistic perspective of the client, their needs, and the obstacles to personal growth. It requires the social worker to identify those variables which contribute to the problem situation and suggests use of alternative activities for intervention. The generalist worker shapes practice activities, rather than rely on one method of practice which may try to "force a problem into the method".<sup>8</sup> The generalist practitioner was characterized as follows:

The single personal agent . . . plays whatever roles and does whatever activities are necessary for the person or family when the person or family needs them. His concern is the person in need -- not specific tasks or techniques or professional prerogatives. He is an aide to the individual or family -- not an aide to an agency or to a profession.<sup>9</sup>

The following twelve roles formed the foundation for SREB's generalist social work practice: outreach worker, broker, advocate, evaluator, mobilizer, teacher, behavior changer, consultant, community planner, data manager, administrator, and care giver. These are the activities which the human service worker uses to develop helping strategies.

SREB's generalist concept of worker roles became the practice behaviors identified for the human service worker and was recommended for use in undergraduate social work curriculum development. The concept was neither tested by field observations nor by validation of agency directors in the field, but the twelve roles appeared to be reflective of the total range of

activities that may occur in any agency setting. Educators today use this concept to prepare students for practice because it serves as an alternative to the specialization associated with graduate education and offers a temporary solution to the difficult task of differentiating between the BSW and MSW levels of practice.

#### ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTIONS

Several actions by social work organizations provided the impetus for identifying the practice behaviors appropriate for BSW level practice. The National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education responded to the increase of social work practice by college graduates without professional social work preparation. In 1969, NASW changed its eligibility requirements for regular membership and recommended for membership persons with baccalaureate degrees from CSWE approved undergraduate social work programs. A membership referendum in 1970 ratified this recommendation. The action was labelled "revolutionary"<sup>10</sup> because NASW traditionally was associated with supporting master social work education as the entry for professional practice. At the same time, CSWE developed criteria for constituent membership in its organization. Undergraduate programs which included, as a curriculum objective, the preparation of students for social work practice were eligible for membership.<sup>11</sup>

In 1973, CSWE established two task forces; one on the structure and quality of social work education and another task force on the relationship between social work education and practice.<sup>12</sup> Each was charged with making recommendations for future social work education and practice. The initial task force reports issued in 1974 recommended the following: the baccalaureate degree in social work should represent the basic practitioner in the profession and graduate social work education should focus on specialization and build upon the generalist content of the undergraduate level.<sup>13</sup>

Another action by CSWE served to reinforce their previous activities and those of NASW. In July, 1974, CSWE was sanctioned by the U.S. Office of Education and the National Accrediting Commission to accredit undergraduate social work education programs. CSWE accreditation standards established criteria for professional undergraduate social work education. Criteria were set for program objectives and administrative auspices; student advisement and student rights; and faculty resources. According to the standards, the primary educational objective had to be preparation for beginning professional social work practice. The educational program also "needed to provide a breadth of learning opportunities designed to familiarize the student with a variety of interventive modes."<sup>14</sup> This indicated a generalist practice focus and provided for baccalaureate educators another rationale for preparing a generalist practitioner. CSWE accreditation legitimated the baccalaureate degree as the entry level for professional practice and appears to have strengthened the belief that they should be prepared for a career as a generalist practitioner.

#### CURRICULUM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

During this same period there were several workshops, a colloquium, and field studies which identified the practice behaviors expected of the BSW. A

brief review of the findings from the Allenberry Colloquium, the Social Work Education Planning Project, the Undergraduate Social Work Curriculum Development Project, and the New England Survey will serve to strengthen the rationale for preparing the BSW for generalist practice and provide a comparative presentation of the different types of practice behaviors identified for the BSW.

ALLENBERRY COLLOQUIUM. Differences about what the BSW was expected to do were articulated shortly after the model for the baccalaureate social worker was identified in the findings of the Syracuse University Undergraduate Curriculum Building Study in 1971.<sup>15</sup> In May, 1971, the Council on Social Work Education convened a group of fifteen prominent educators in Allenberry, Pennsylvania. Their task was to consider the baccalaureate social worker as a professional and determine the subject matter required for BSW entry into practice.

The educators believed that the baccalaureate degree should represent the first level of professional practice, but had difficulty agreeing on the practice behaviors expected of the BSW. For a minimal recommendation, they were able to agree on the tasks identified in the Syracuse Study on the BSW. These include the ability to:

1. Establish a rapport with clients from various cultures, with varying needs, dispositions, levels of emotional stability, and intellectual levels.
2. Communicate with people in a way that will enable them to begin to identify their needs and alternatives of behavior available to them.
3. Facilitate clients and community groups to mobilize their own resources.
4. Impart information and instruct in certain areas, especially those having to do with the provision of concrete services, use of resources and means of negotiating complicated systems.<sup>16</sup>

The participants at the Allenberry Colloquium added to the Syracuse recommendations the expectations for a BSW to be able to use advocacy techniques and create change in community institutions. All of these tasks suggest a problem solving approach and require the baccalaureate social worker to be educationally prepared to perform the roles of behavior changer, mobilizer, teacher and advocate.

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION PLANNING PROJECT. Michael Austin and Philip Smith, co-directors of the Social Work Education Project, sponsored by the Florida Board of Regents, developed a paradigm for manpower planning and staff utilization.<sup>17</sup>

They introduced the model of an educational continuum which included the worker levels of: aide, a high school graduate; technician, a two-year community college graduate; the baccalaureate social worker; the master social worker; and the Ph.D. social worker. Upon this continuum, Austin and Smith clustered social work roles according to different levels of education. They postulated that workers at each of these levels would be required to learn all twelve social work roles identified by SREB, but would need to become competent in only a cluster of roles. Role clusters represented the job functions for each

level of worker. Role overlap represented the similar knowledge and skill base. The social work aide was expected to perform the roles of caregiver and outreach worker. The social work technician was to perform as a broker and behavior changer. The baccalaureate social worker was to be primarily a mobilizer, advocate, evaluator, and data manager, while overlapping the roles performed by the social work aide and social work technician. The master social worker was to act as an administrator, community planner, teacher, and consultant while possessing the knowledge and skill base of the roles played by lower level workers. The authors recognized that the paradigm was an initial attempt to identify how roles may be clustered according to educational level. The model identified specific BSW roles and reinforced generalist expectations for the baccalaureate social worker.

THE UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK CURRICULUM PROJECT. This project was conducted during the period July 1975 to July 1977, and relied on consultation with leading social work educators and special workshops with educators, practitioners, and agency representatives. Existing research and curriculum studies were reviewed and the project participants developed materials which were used to test new objectives and curriculum content for undergraduate social work education. From these efforts ten general competencies necessary for the beginning baccalaureate professional were identified for validation in practice. They are:

1. Identify and assess situations where the relationship between people and social institutions need to be initiated, enhanced, restored, protected, or terminated.
2. Develop and implement a plan for improving the well-being of people based on problem assessment and the exploration of obtainable goals and available options.
3. Enhance the problem-solving, coping, and developmental capacities of people.
4. Link people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities.
5. Intervene effectively on behalf of populations most vulnerable and discriminated against.
6. Promote the effective and humane operation of the systems that provide people with services, resources, and opportunities.
7. Actively participate with others to increase new, modified, or improved service, resource, and opportunity systems that are more equitable, just and responsive to consumers of services, and work with others to eliminate those systems that are unjust.
8. Evaluate the extent to which the objectives of the intervention plan were achieved.
9. Continually evaluate one's own professional growth and development through assessment of practice behaviors and skills.
10. Contribute to the improvement of service delivery by adding to the knowledge base of the profession as appropriate and by supporting and upholding the standards of ethics of the profession.<sup>18</sup>

The presentation of each competency was followed by a description of specific competencies required to reach the general competency. The ten general competencies and their related specific competencies represent the social work

roles of behavior changer, broker, advocate, data manager, community planner, outreach, care-giver, and evaluator and suggest generalist practice for the BSW. Today undergraduate social work educators use these competencies as the educational outcomes of their programs and as criteria for the selection of program objectives, content, and the development of learning frameworks and evaluation.

THE NEW ENGLAND SURVEY. This survey identified the social work roles which agency directors in six New England states expect the BSW to perform in their agency settings.<sup>19</sup> It also attempted to determine if variables such as the nature of the agency setting, the agency director's educational background, the community, and the presence of a BSW in an agency influence the agency director's role expectations of the BSW and therefore, their view of generalist social work practice. A total of 480 agency directors were forwarded the data gathering instrument, the Baccalaureate Social Work Competency Questionnaire. There were 314 usable responses.

The roles which clearly defined generalist social work practice for the BSW in New England were advocate, broker, care-giver, community planner, data manager, and counselor. Statistical analysis of the data on the survey instrument found that several variables influenced the directors' role expectations and their view of generalist social work practice. For example, the variables of agency setting and educational background each had a significant influence on the directors' responses to the role of administrator. Non-MSW agency directors in primary and host settings had higher expectations for the BSW to perform administrative behaviors than MSW agency directors. BSWs were also more likely to perform the role of administrator in host agency settings. Several variables influenced agency directors' responses to the role of advocate, care-giver, community planner, and counselor. Non-MSW agency directors were more inclined to expect the BSW to perform these roles than MSW agency directors. The presence of a BSW in a non-MSW director's agency positively influenced the director's expectations for additional BSWs to perform the roles of care-giver, community planner, and counselor. These findings were more evident when the variable urban community was considered.

#### DEFINITIONAL DIFFICULTY

Findings and recommendations from a national curriculum building project, a colloquium, a review of field studies, and a regional survey have identified a range and diversity of behaviors suggestive of generalist practice for the beginning professional social worker, the BSW. Figure 1 summarizes the practice activities expected of the BSW according to the curriculum building activities that were reviewed.

The figure reveals one source of difficulty to finding a common definition for the term "generalist". Six curriculum building activities which attempted to define baccalaureate level practice recommended different practice expectations for the BSW. These expectations reflect differences in the purpose and the manner in which each curriculum related activity was created, as well as differences in the orientation of the individuals who participated in the activities. All of these differences need to be discussed in more detail in



order to identify those factors which may influence BSW practice expectations and to further explain the reasons for the situational quality which is characteristic of generalist practice.

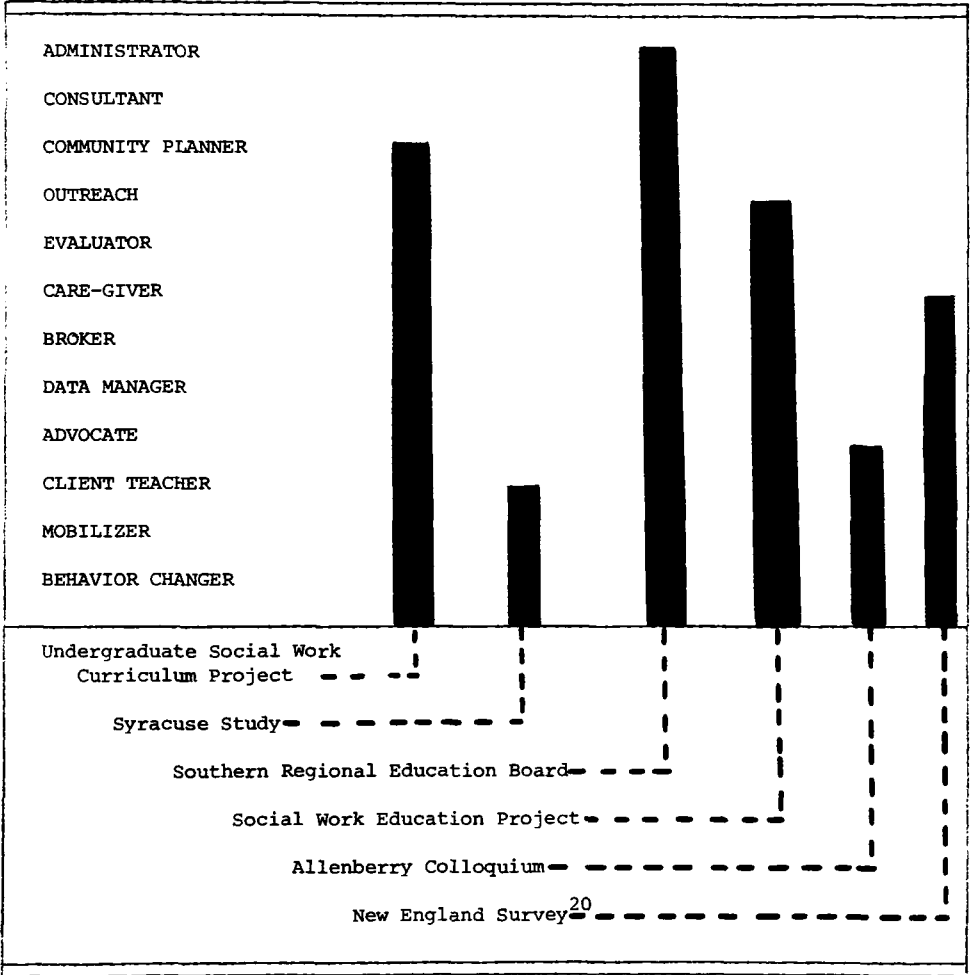


Figure 1. EXPECTATIONS FOR BSW PRACTICE TRANSLATED INTO SOCIAL WORK ROLES. The length of the vertical bar represents the roles recommended for the BSW by the activities indicated.

The Syracuse University Undergraduate Social Work Curriculum Building Project was conducted as a result of the lack of trained personnel available to respond to the influx of federal funds during the Kennedy-Johnson era. The following comments at a 1967 NASW workshop on manpower attest to the need for personnel:

We have reached a strange paradox in social welfare: "Too much money and not enough people." The painful realities of personnel shortages have now reached every section of our welfare system. It is not uncommon to meet an agency administrator whose main complaint is not that of obtaining adequate financing but where to find the staff to make use of the program money he has.<sup>21</sup>

Social service manpower utilization studies were conducted during this period in an effort to respond to personnel shortages. Most of these investigations considered the feasibility of using college graduates who did not possess formal educational preparation in social work, to fill the existing and projected shortages of master level social work professionals. These studies suggested that professional social work could be practiced by non-master level social workers. For example, some studies focused on demonstration projects in Veterans Administration settings which employed college graduates to receive on-the-job training and become assistants to master social workers.<sup>22</sup> Several functions appropriate for the social work assistant were identified. These included performing psychosocial histories, planning patient discharges, and follow-up social services. As a result of these findings, a new job category, social work assistant, was established in 1965 for the Veterans Administration health care system. Employment as a social work assistant did not require formal educational preparation in social work.

A more widely published manpower utilization study conducted by the National Association of Social Workers identified additional beginning professional responsibilities for human service workers.<sup>23</sup> The purpose of this investigation was to find more efficient ways of using personnel to increase the quality and quantity of social services and to respond to personnel shortages in the mental health field. This work had several components: an extensive literature review a survey of over 200 social work departments in mental hospitals; a task analysis of social work responsibilities at one state psychiatric hospital; and a field demonstration project at another state psychiatric hospital. The field project sought to determine the impact of in-service staff training on the differential deployment of human service workers. The major findings of their total investigation determined that master social workers and human service workers were used interchangeably. The human service worker performed adequately a range of tasks once identified exclusively for the master social worker. They were perceived as relieving manpower shortages while simultaneously increasing client services. These studies and others have demonstrated a range of significant responsibilities for non-master social workers.<sup>24</sup> These efforts, however, never were intended to be used in curriculum development activities related to the articulation of practice expectations for the BSW. Several graduate social work educators associated with the Syracuse Study reviewed the findings from the available human services manpower studies in an attempt to extract data to hypothesize a model for undergraduate social work education. There was no mandate from

the practice community regarding these expectations and, as a result, the profession as a whole never participated in the foundational work for the BSW.

The Allenberry Colloquium was sponsored by the Council on Social Work Education and directed by graduate educators. The work at Allenberry might be described as an "armchair attempt" to identify BSW practice expectations. Although the recommendations did not move significantly beyond those from the Syracuse Study, CSWE's intent, to bring prominent educators together to create a forum for the exchange of ideas about a new practice degree, was achieved. The major topics of concern focused on the nature of the core content, similarities and differences in programs, and the liberal arts base. The lack of input by practitioners and the fact that no BSWs (graduates of accredited programs) were in existence during the early 1970s made it difficult to predict with accuracy what the BSW ought to be able to do. These factors, as well as the reality that the forecasting was made by senior graduate educators who were unable to agree on many practice expectations, contributed to limited expectations for the future BSW. A trend towards increased practice expectations developed when agency practitioners and administrators had an opportunity to contribute ideas. This is seen in the following four works.

The purpose of the Southern Regional Education Board's Social Welfare Manpower Project was to identify the appropriate roles of the beginning social worker in order to improve the quality and use of undergraduate workers in Kentucky, Maryland, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Through data gathered by reviews of the literature, conferences, consultations, reactions to monographs, and meetings between project staff, a core group of educators, consumers and practitioners, twelve social work roles were identified. The term "generalist" was presented to describe a problems approach to practice, as opposed to the specialist's reliance on a methods approach. As a result of SREB's publications on this work in the early 1970s, undergraduate social work educators had a much needed framework to use to plan the BSW curriculum. The manpower needs of the southern region, and the participation of consumers and practitioners in the definitional process, contributed to an expanded view of BSW practice.

The Social Work Education Project also was conducted prior to the formal recognition of the undergraduate social work degree by CSWE in 1974. It included participation by educators, practitioners, administrators, and planners from a variety of social service settings throughout Florida; the project focused on improving service delivery by specifying the skills of future employees to educators. The BSW practice activities were developed through information developed in small group workshops, conferences, and in a field placement experiment in which a small group of students, from a two-year community college human service program, a four year baccalaureate social welfare program, and a two-year graduate social work program, participated as a team in creating a delinquency prevention program. The project's focus on the delivery of services and the active participation by community personnel appears to have contributed to a wider range of practice expectations.

The work of the Undergraduate Social Work Curriculum Development Project was under the leadership of two undergraduate social work educators and aimed to identify the objectives and basic content for beginning social work practice. It used a curriculum development strategy which placed primary emphasis on input from practitioners. Special workshops were held with each of the following:

BSW practitioners from each of the ten HEW regions; members of the American Public Welfare Association, who represented all the practice levels within the public welfare sector; representatives of NASW, national voluntary and federal agencies, and educators who were in leadership positions at CSWE. The data which developed from the suggestions and reactions of the 125 participants resulted in the articulation of ten practice competence areas for the BSW.

The findings of the New England Survey support the recommendations for multiple competency preparation by identifying six complex social work roles which agency directors in six New England states expect the BSW to be prepared to perform. The purpose of this study was to validate the generalist concept of social work practice as a basis for the educational preparation of the BSW. A data gathering instrument, the Baccalaureate Social Work Competency Questionnaire (BSWCQ), was developed by the principal investigator, who was an undergraduate social work educator, to identify the social work roles which agency directors expect the BSW to perform in their agency. The population from which the final sample was randomly selected consisted of directors of agency settings in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, and stratified according to the type of agency setting (primary or host) and the community (rural or urban). A total of 480 agency directors were forwarded the BSWCQ and an explanatory letter.

The data from 314 directors on the final BSWCQ were evaluated by a principal components factor analysis with an orthogonal rotation. Seven social work roles were identified. Their alpha internal consistency reliabilities ranged from .66 to .84 with a mean reliability rating of .74. The roles were administrator, advocate, broker, care-giver, community planner, counselor, and data manager. The mean scores for each of the roles reflected a range of behaviors which agency directors expect the BSW to perform. Agency directors' responses then were subjected to a four-way analysis of variance. The independent variables were: the type of agency setting (primary or host), the educational background of the agency director (MSW or non-MSW), community (rural or urban), and the presence or absence of a BSW in an agency. The dependent variables were the mean scale scores for each of the roles identified on the BSWCQ. The range and intensity of BSW practice expectations identified by agency directors in this study support the trend for practitioners to have greater expectations than educators; it also suggests that MSWs have lower practice expectations than non-MSWs.

#### IMPLICATIONS

This comparative review of the curriculum building works identified in figure 1 indicates there are discrepancies between the education and practice communities and between professional social workers and other helping individuals regarding BSW practice expectations. The lack of meaningful participation by practitioners with educators may be one reason for the discrepancy in our profession. Educators' and MSW agency directors' knowledge about, and "practice wisdom" regarding, the sophisticated nature of the complexity of the tasks associated with social work practice may explain their limited recommendations. A lack of practice understanding, therefore, may explain why some non-MSW agency directors would use BSWs in administrative roles and have stronger expectations

to engage them in counselor, care-giver, and community planner activities. For example, in the New England Survey, the practice behaviors which comprised the BSWCQ required a high level of skill and knowledge. To "change behaviors in a small group member", to "mobilize community resources", and to "perform family counseling" are examples of items which appeared on the questionnaire and are skills which traditionally have been associated with senior MSW practitioners and educators. In this work, as well as in the Syracuse Study and Allenberry Colloquium, social work practitioners or educators appear cautious, most likely because of their recognition of the level of expertise required to become successful in the use of these practice skills.

Regional differences, in the form of the rural and urban influence on directors' expectations on the BSWCQ, imply that the BSW will be expected to perform more social work behaviors when employed in an urban environment. This seems realistic when one considers that the definition of "rural" and "urban" in the New England Survey was based on the criteria for a standard metropolitan statistical area identified by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.<sup>25</sup> An urban community consisted of a town, or group of towns, containing at least one town having 50,000 or more citizens, plus neighboring towns which are metropolitan in character and economically and socially integrated with the central city. A rural community was a town or village, non-metropolitan in character and not identified as located in a SMSA. Lower expectations for the rural BSW may result from the less complex character of the community and/or citizen's reliance on informal networks for helping services, which is reflective of the interdependence of rural people and their community.<sup>26</sup> It is also interesting to note that the items which comprised the roles of advocate, community planner, and counselor on the BSWCQ may not be as relevant for the needs of rural citizens. Most of the social work educators and practitioners on the panel which validated the content of the items that comprised the BSWCQ represented urban areas. If there were items on this survey instrument which pertained to rural practice, such as "working with natural helping networks," then one may expect higher expectations for the BSW in rural communities.

A range of practice activities are expected of the BSW, yet the BSW's practice as a generalist may be defined differently. The BSW is in the middle of two struggles: they are between the curriculum expectations identified by the education and practice communities, as well as between the practice expectations identified by MSW and non-MSW agency directors. The review of curriculum defining activities which contributed to the development of contemporary professional baccalaureate practice, and the analysis of the New England Survey which attempted to delineate this practice, still indicate that the BSW is expected to function as a generalist. However, a definitional dilemma exists because generalist practice is situational and related to who does the defining, the reason why the defining is taking place, and the manner in which this task is accomplished.

Although the dilemma contributes to the uncertainty about the utilization of BSWs in practice, it should encourage social work educators and practitioners to respond. Educators can strengthen their problem solving practice focus in practice classes and ensure that it becomes a salient feature of the undergraduate curriculum. Preparing future BSWs in all phases of a problem solving

practice model may serve as one response to the definitional difficulty because this practitioner would have a set of knowledge and skills which cut across practice roles and behaviors. Social work educators also might design community needs assessment instruments to collect data which will permit them to improve their curriculums by keeping the subject matter and skills congruent with the demands and realities of practice. They also may develop ongoing formal means of feedback from program graduates in order to determine if they are expected to perform practice behaviors for which they have not been prepared. The recognition of the situational characteristics of generalist practice also places responsibilities on agency administrators to provide continuing education opportunities for BSWs, either through separate settings or agency consortium arrangements. Regardless of its form, the primary response ought to be a partnership in preparing the baccalaureate social worker.

Attempts to strengthen the preparation of the BSW to make more certain that they can respond to the unknown demands of practice do not fully address the potential practice abuse of BSWs and their clients, which the New England Survey indicates may develop as a result of the practice expectations of non-MSW agency directors. Outreach and information to non-MSW agency directors appears to be essential. Non-MSW agency directors are hiring BSWs and expect the BSW to perform many social work functions. However, they have not been expected to participate in curriculum development. A working draft of CSWE Standards for Accreditation responds to this limitation. It recommends "an ongoing relationship between practice community and the social work program" and "the student... to be helped to see professional identity and competence as resulting from a continuous interchange with others, including a wide range of professionals and members of other diverse groups."<sup>27</sup> The proposed standards and the findings of the New England Survey require the undergraduate curriculum to be congruent with both the MSW and the non-MSW demands of practice.

All of these responses still fail to take into consideration a larger professional issue, one which appears to be at the core of the definitional dilemma. The BSW practice expectations identified through curriculum building projects, workshops, and national studies are the same practice behaviors which have been, and continue to be, practiced by MSWs. The issues associated with differentiating between MSW and BSW education and practice levels, although vital for the survival and growth of the profession, were not addressed when the non-specialist focus for the BSW was being developed. This oversight strengthened the argument that the BSW should be prepared as a generalist while avoiding the fact that generalist practice also exists at the master's level. Today the symptoms of avoiding this task appear to be the added confusion about the meaning of the term generalist and the on-going schism between and within educational and practice communities. Only recently formal efforts to find ways to confront the task have begun, with the formation of the Committee on Articulation of Graduate and Undergraduate Social Work Education, composed of four graduate deans who each have responsibility for an undergraduate program.<sup>28</sup>

The activities which contributed to the emergence of the present day baccalaureate generalist and those factors which contribute to the definitional dilemma indicate that any attempt by the profession to articulate practice for the two levels must consider both the situational qualities and variables which are part of the definitional task. Conjoint and local research, by graduate and undergraduate program faculty and community practitioners, which differentiate social work activities across practice and education levels, may be one way to resolve a major dilemma associated with social work practice and the growth of

the profession. Finally, the review of the curriculum projects suggest that it is time to go beyond attempting to identify what BSWs ought to be prepared to do, and begin to identify what they are capable of and are now doing in practice. Practitioners would have to play a significant role in this process.

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