



Textbook Analysis Project 2004, 2009 Executive Summary

The CSWE Gero-Ed Center, funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation, promotes the gerontological (gero) competency of social work students through curriculum and faculty development, educational policy and accreditation, and dissemination of state-of-the-art teaching resources. To ensure that the majority of social work students are prepared to work with older adults and their families, the Gero-Ed Center's curricular change model aims to infuse gero competencies in required BSW and MSW courses at the generalist practice level. To date, gero content is rarely embedded in generalist social work textbooks to support the gero curricular infusion innovations implemented in class and field by faculty nationwide.

A textbook analysis project in 2004 and 2009 aimed to assess the quantity and quality of aging content in a sample of generalist social work textbooks used in BSW and first year MSW programs. This document summarizes the major findings from these two reviews.

2004 Review

Methodology

A team of three gerontological social work leaders reviewed 9,828 pages to identify aging content from 19 of the most frequently used textbooks for required courses at the generalist level of practice. Each book was assessed by two raters using a detailed framework for analysis of the quantity of content on aging (e.g., number of pages and chapters that included aging content), and whether the identified gero content was helpful, comprehensive, accurate, current, and strengths-based.

Findings

Only 309 pages or approximately 3% of the total pages included any aging content. Of the books reviewed, a cultural diversity text included the most gero content (6%), with only 5% gero content identified in 3 HBSE texts, 2% across 8 practice books, 4% within 3 policy texts, 2% in research texts, and less than one page in the field education text. Out of the 298 chapters reviewed, 4 chapters were focused specifically on issues of aging and older adults, 3 of which were contained within one HBSE text.

The three critical content areas most frequently assessed as present and useful were: realities and myths of aging, cultural competence, and policy and advocacy related to older adults and their families. The least amount of useful content was in the area of assessment.

2009 Review

Methodology

A second detailed analysis of 7 books, which were a subset of those reviewed in 2004, was conducted in 2009. Its primary focus was to evaluate whether gero content in these texts had increased overall, as well as specifically in the books of authors who had consulted with Center staff on ways to expand such content in their latest editions. Each text was evaluated by two raters from the 2004 review. Based upon their experience with

the prior review process, several changes were made to the rating framework. These included determining the number of:

- Case studies or other practical applications that include older adults or intergenerational interactions
- Photos that contain images of older adults or intergenerational interactions.
- Citations related to aging in each book's index.
- Reviewing number of chapters with any aging content, rather than only chapters devoted to aging and older adults.

For each area, ratings were assigned and examples were selected from the text to justify the rating. In the few instances of discrepancy, the two reviewers were able to reach consensus.

Findings

For each textbook, the total number of case studies, practical applications, images, and chapters were counted and analyzed for gero content. Across all textbooks:

- 11.4% of case studies involved older adults
- 8.2% of practical applications were on older adults
- 11.5% of images represented older adults
- 4.9% of chapters were devoted primarily to aging issues
- 57.4% of chapters had some aging content

Of the 3298 pages reviewed, 197 pages or 5.5% included some aging content. While this represents an increase over 3% found in the 2004 analysis, gero content is still not widely embedded in textbooks at the generalist level. The practice textbook that contained the most aging content (e.g., number of pages, case studies, photos, index and an accompanying video) was one where the authors had received Gero-Ed Center resources for their revision, although causation cannot be attributed to this relationship.

Limitations of Analyses

The limitations of both reviews include: the relatively small number of texts analyzed; the possibility of rater error, the non-random nature in which books were selected, and the fact that the modest increase cannot necessarily be attributed to the Gero-Ed Center initiative.

Despite these limitations, these systematic reviews of aging content in texts at the generalist level of social work practice point to the ongoing need to embed gero content, a change needed to ensure that all graduates have a beginning level of competence to work effectively with older adults and their families. Gero-Ed Center staff is available to provide gero resources to authors and editors of required generalist textbooks who seek to embed more aging content into future editions.

References

Tompkins, C.J., Rosen, A.L., & Larkin, H. (2006). Guest Editorial: An Analysis of Social Work Textbooks for Aging Content: How Well Do Social Work Foundation Texts Prepare Students for Our Aging Society? *Journal of Social Work Education*, 42(1), 3-23.