

SPECIAL SECTION: INNOVATIONS IN
GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

GUEST EDITORIAL

**AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK TEXTBOOKS FOR AGING CONTENT:
HOW WELL DO SOCIAL WORK FOUNDATION TEXTS PREPARE
STUDENTS FOR OUR AGING SOCIETY?**

Catherine J. Tompkins

George Mason University

Heather Larkin

Catholic University

Anita L. Rosen

Council on Social Work Education

In an effort to strengthen the basic aging competency of social work students, the authors assessed the general quantity and quality of aging content in a sample of foundation social work textbooks. Of nearly 10,000 pages reviewed, only about 3% (309 pages) included aging content. A foundation cultural diversity text included the most aging content (6%), with only 5% aging-related content identified in HBSE texts, 2% across practice books reviewed, 4% within policy texts, 2% in research texts, and less than 1 page in the 1 field education text. A textbook analysis framework and a review of findings are provided.

TEXTBOOKS SERVE A CRITICAL ROLE in social work and other fields of professional practice in the development of curriculum and the education of students. The pervasiveness, accuracy, and quantity of subject matter in any textbook influence students' knowledge and competencies (Kramer, Hovland-Scafe, & Pacourek, 2003). The choices textbook authors make in including or excluding material or choosing certain case studies and examples are often reflected in what is actually taught. Faculty members may revise course syllabi to "match" the chapters and content of textbooks and supplement parts of the text to address gaps in content and their interest areas or to be congruent with a department's mission. Faculty members may also eliminate

some chapters because of time constraints or the need to focus on specific content.

The overall objective in social work education is to prepare students for effective practice within the parameters of the Council on Social Work Education's (2001) *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS). EPAS provides general guidance about curriculum content for baccalaureate (BSW) generalist education and foundation curriculum for the 1st year of the master of social work (MSW). Given their centrality to professional social work education, foundation textbooks should provide the knowledge and skill needed by the next generation of social work practitioners. Because of the dra-

matic growth of the population age 65 and older, gerontological preparation is one such critical area of competency needed.

Literature Review

There have not been other published reviews of social work textbooks for aging content; however, other authors have assessed texts for various topics defined as important for student learning. In contrast to social work, textbooks from different academic disciplines have been reviewed to determine the presence and accuracy of aging content. For example, Kalab (1985) examined the terminology used to refer to the population aged 65 and older in 20 introductory sociology and social gerontology textbooks; he found that the terms "old people" and "elderly" were most commonly used. The preferred term for social gerontology texts was "senior citizen," although few sociology texts used this term. Whitbourne and Hulicka (1990) reviewed 139 psychology texts used in undergraduate education and published across a 40-year span (the 1960s and earlier, 1970s, and 1980s) for content reflecting "ageism." Aging content was found to be presented in a more positive light over time, but was often over-shadowed by the negative messages inherent in the choice of language used by textbook authors.

Stolley and Hill (1996) conducted a content analysis of 27 marriage and family textbooks published between 1988 and 1993 to identify how older adults were portrayed. They found that the coverage of older adults was often separated from other family issues and events and are focused on topics solely related to older adults rather than the family system as a whole. Photographs tended to depict older persons engaging in a range of activities but did not capture diversity relative to race, class, and gender. In a review of

two lifespan-development textbooks, McGuire (1996) found that content on late adulthood had the least coverage across the lifespan. Important topics, such as sexuality, friends, religion, leisure, caregiving, and the distinction between normal and pathological aging, were not addressed.

The major review of social work texts indirectly relevant to aging was conducted by Kramer et al., (2003), who completed a qualitative analysis of 50 social work textbooks for end-of-life content based on 10 content domains considered essential for competent social work practice relative to end-of-life care. Only 3% of 19,377 social work textbook pages reviewed were found relevant to end-of-life content. The end-of-life content could have been enhanced, however, by relatively minor changes, such as adding a case study or providing more current information and references.

The Need for Aging Content

A review of aging content in social work foundation textbooks is particularly important and timely, given the rapid aging of the population in the United States and worldwide. Of even greater importance, social workers will continue to be called on for knowledge, skill, and practice information in the provision of quality of care to older adults and their families.

Advanced medical technology and a "Baby Boom" that is approaching older middle age are structural factors underlying the dramatic demographic changes. According to the U.S. Administration on Aging (2005), approximately 13% of the current U.S. population is age 65 or older, and this percentage is projected to rise to about 20% or about 70 million older persons by 2030. Elders of color are projected to represent approximately 25% of the older population in 2030, up from 16% in 2000. The fastest grow-

ing segment of this aging population are the old-old or those older than age 85, who often have higher rates of disability and require more services and interventions than those age 65–84. With increased life expectancy, old age now represents 25%–30% of the life span.

This demographic imperative challenges all health and mental health professions, including social work, which lack specialists in aging and have limited success in preparing students with foundation aging competence (Blanchette & Flynn, 2001; Fulmer, Flaherty, & Medley, 2001; Gibleman & Schervish, 1996; Lennon, 2005; Rosen & Zlotnik, 2001b; Teare & Sheafor, 1995). Social workers in health care, housing, and community mental health frequently work with older adults, their caregivers and family members, and those in child welfare, juvenile, and adolescent services increasingly interact with grandparents and great-grandparents involved in kinship care (Berkman, Damron-Rodriguez, Dobrof, & Harry, 1996; Scharlach, Damron-Rodriguez, Robinson, & Feldman, 2000). In fact, in a national survey of a sample of licensed social workers, the National Association of Social Workers (2005) found that 75% of social workers have older adults in their caseload. With the projected dramatic growth of the older population, it is likely that all social workers will work in some way with older adults and their families, regardless of practice setting. Given this pattern, the John A. Hartford Geriatric Social Work Initiative contends that all social work students need to gain gerontological knowledge and skills (National Association of Social Workers, 2005; Peterson & Wendt, 1990; Rosen & Zlotnik, 2001a). Until recently, social work education has largely failed to prepare all social work students with basic aging competence (Rosen, Zlotnik, & Singer, 2002).

Preparing All Students With Basic Aging Competence

Currently, there is a shortage of gerontologically-trained social workers, inadequate gerontological social work curriculum, limited gerontological expertise among faculty, and a genuine need for social workers to work with a growing aging population (Scharlach et al., 2000). In 1998, the John A. Hartford Foundation began funding a major initiative to strengthen the capacity of the social work profession to meet such needs. The first of several grants of the Geriatric Social Work Initiative (GSWI) was awarded to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) for the Strengthening Aging and Gerontology Education for Social Work (SAGE-SW) project (Rosen & Zlotnik, 2001a). During Phase I of the CSWE/SAGE-SW project, a national survey to determine the aging competencies needed by all students, was developed and implemented as a way to inform curricular infusion activities. A national sample of 2,400 social work practitioners and academics, both with and without aging interests, was asked to provide their opinion on which of 65 gerontological social work competencies are needed by all social workers and which are required only by advanced practitioners or specialists (Rosen, Zlotnik, Curl, & Green, 2000). The gerontological social work knowledge, skills, and practice competencies for all social workers (BSW and MSW) have been used as a basis for the study described in this article and in a variety of curriculum development activities. The competencies are presented in Appendix A.

In 2001, Phase II of the SAGE-SW project aimed to alter the way in which social work students were prepared for practice by providing resources, strategies, and training to

help social work faculty infuse aging content into the foundation social work curriculum. Foundation courses were targeted so that all social work students—BSW and MSW—might gain basic gerontology competence to meet demographic and professional demands (CSWE/SAGE-SW, 2001; Rosen et al., 2002). The CSWE/SAGE-SW project adopted the concept of infusion rather than specialization. Restructuring curricula through infusion—permeating foundation curriculum with aging content that would be taken by all students—was seen as a way to address such issues as limited resources (including stipends in social work and aging), minimal opportunity for students to specialize, and a lack of faculty gerontological knowledge (Rosen et al., 2002; Scharlach et al., 2000). The Geriatric Enrichment Project (GeroRich), a 2001–2004 Hartford grant, also implemented an infusion model in social work programs. Strategies for curricular and organizational change were fostered to ensure that gerontology pervades students' learning experiences and to create sustainable transformative changes within social work curricula. Both SAGE-SW and GeroRich have effectively prepared gerontologically competent faculty and students. An assessment of aging content within the most widely used social work foundation practice textbooks is seen as central to strengthening the gerontological preparation of social work students by examining whether the content in foundation texts supports gerontological infusion in foundation courses initiated by more than 800 faculty nationwide (CSWE/SAGE-SW, 2001; Hooyman & St Peter, in press; Scharlach et al., 2000).

General Analysis Project Questions

Given this context, the CSWE/SAGE-SW textbook analysis project sought to answer several broad questions:

- Whether the most commonly used foundation textbooks for BSW and 1st-year MSW students address aging within the context of practice, policy, research, diversity, and human behavior.
- Whether content about aging in these foundation texts is accurate, comprehensive, and current.
- Whether foundation textbooks use nationally recognized aging competencies to provide social work students with basic skills and knowledge to work with a growing older population, their families, and caregivers.

By answering these questions, the social work and aging textbook analysis project aims to be a resource for assisting publishers and authors of foundation texts along with faculty members who teach BSW and MSW foundation courses.

Method

The CSWE/SAGE-SW national program database of more than 400 social work faculty members, field instructors, and doctoral students interested in gerontology was used to identify the most frequently used textbooks. Each social work faculty member, with a current, active e-mail address from the database, was e-mailed and asked to submit the titles of textbooks used in their program for foundation-level courses (both BSW and 1st-year MSW). From the 214 textbook names submitted, the

most commonly used books from six foundation areas were chosen for analysis. The texts chosen for review and analysis represented frequency of use as well as a range of the publishers for foundation practice texts. Based on the survey, the targeted textbook publishers were: Allyn & Bacon/Longman, Brooks Cole/Thomson Learning, Columbia University Press, F.E. Peacock, Sage, and Wadsworth. The most recent textbook editions were chosen for each of the 19 texts analyzed. One book was published in 1997, one in 1998; the others were published between 2000 and 2004.

The CSWE Commission on Accreditation expects that all social work programs provide foundation content in the following areas: Values and Ethics; Diversity; Populations-at-Risk and Social and Economic Justice; Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE); Social Welfare Policy and Services; Social Work Practice; Research; and Field Education, although content areas may be combined. The texts chosen for analysis encompassed these foundation areas. Separate textbooks focusing on content relevant to Values and Ethics, Populations-at-Risk and Social and Economic Justice were not included in this study because it was assumed that those topics would be covered throughout the selected foundation texts. In addition, other textbook analysis projects recommended limiting the review of the textbooks to two or three books per foundation area (Kramer et al., 2003).

Based on the survey ratings, the most commonly used textbooks in each foundation area for the undergraduate, graduate, and both undergraduate and graduate program levels were reviewed. However, the authors' reviews covered only one frequently used

text for field education and only one text that specifically covered diversity; these were the only commonly used books reported on the survey that represented the foundation areas of field education and diversity. Eight texts were reviewed in the practice foundation area (five undergraduate texts, two graduate, and one book used in both undergraduate and graduate education) so that direct, macro, and group practice were all covered.

Framework for Analysis

The development of the evaluation form used to assess each textbook was conducted in consultation with Betty Kramer and her colleagues (Kramer et al., 2003), who had reviewed social work textbooks for end-of-life content. Kramer's process was adapted from a similar nursing textbook analysis project (Ferrell, Virani, & Grant, 1999). Rather than develop another tool for this textbook analysis project, the authors chose to adapt the tools and analysis method that had been tested by two other studies. Both studies relied on the use of critical content areas for expert assessment. The CSWE/SAGE-SW national competencies study described above was the basis for choosing the critical content areas. The 24 CSWE/SAGE-SW aging competencies (see Appendix A) of knowledge, skills, and professional practice areas for all social workers were then refined to eight "Critical Areas of Aging Content" to be identified throughout the textbooks (Appendix B). These eight critical areas are:

- Realities and myths associated with aging;
- Comprehensive gerontological assessment;
- Family, intergenerational relationships, and caregiver assessment and support;

- Development and implementation of appropriate service plans and interventions to support older clients at multiple systems levels;
- Cultural competence and aging;
- Policy and advocacy issues related to older adults and their families;
- Foundation-level skills for working with older adults; and
- Interdisciplinary collaboration.

For each critical area, the authors developed a list of examples, words, and concepts relative to the substantive issues that were considered to be important to identify. In addition to the CSWE/SAGE-SW competencies, other resources, such as AARP's Ageline database and consultation with five of the CSWE/SAGE-SW expert trainers, were instrumental in fine-tuning and completing the eight critical areas. The latter resources provided examples to help determine when content was present for the analysis, which modeled that used by Kramer et al. (2003).

A grid-like evaluation form was prepared. The first page of the form included specific information for each text, including book title, author, courses in which the book is used, publisher, and copyright date. Other information on the first page of the form encompassed two major categories: (1) whether identified aging content was accurate, current, and comprehensive (three separate categories rated on a 5-point Likert scale where 0=poor and 5=excellent), and (2) the quantity of information, such as the total number of pages in the text, number of pages devoted to aging content (determined by the reviewers), total number of chapters in the text, and whether entire chapters were devoted to aging content.

Each substantive issue (labeled as desirable content) within the critical areas was rated based on the following scale that was used in prior reviews of end-of-life content in medicine, nursing, and social work texts: 0=content is absent, 1=content is present, and 2=content is present and helpful (Carron, Lynn, & Keaney, 1999; Ferrell et al., 1999; Kramer et al., 2003; Quill & Billings, 1998; Rabow, Hardie, Fair, & McPhee, 2000). Helpful in this context meant useful or constructive in furthering understanding of aging-related concepts, terms, or issues. As in the textbook reviews mentioned above, the content was assessed as liberally as possible. A rating of 1 was given if the wording provided in "examples of desirable content" for a critical area was even mentioned. For example, under the critical area Realities and Myths Associated with Aging, being aware of one's own values and attitudes toward older adults was identified as an example of desirable content. Therefore, a rating of one (1) was given to wording such as: "Importance of self-awareness regarding values, stereotypes, and biases associated with aging, death, or dying." If the text also included a case vignette illustrating the importance of being aware of one's own values and attitudes relative to working with older people, then a rating of 2 was given, as a constructive or useful illustration of the term was used to further student learning. After the rating was given, another column indicated whether or not the content reflected the strengths-based perspective important to social work education, and a final column within the grid structure was used to provide examples of the aging content identified. A complete copy of the evaluation instrument is available from the first author. Appendix B shows the critical areas of content

and the respective examples of desirable content as appears on the evaluation instrument.

Textbook Review Process

Similar to Kramer et al. (2003), a structured process was in place for reviewing the textbooks. The evaluation form was reviewed together by each of the authors so each had a clear understanding of how to use the form and to discuss the process for identifying, categorizing, and rating the aging content. A sample text was reviewed by each reviewer and then the ratings were discussed among the three reviewers. There were no major changes made by any of the reviewers during this process. In fact, the only substantive area where differences occurred was in the number of pages identified as having aging content. The reviewers discussed a process of how to “count the content” so that the number of aging pages could be calculated (for example, an average-sized paragraph on a single column page discussing aging content counted as a quarter of a page). The review of the evaluation form and of the sample text by the three reviewers served to standardize the reading and rating of texts for subsequent reviews. Each subsequent textbook was reviewed by two of the three authors of this article, and then quantitative content from the grid was entered into an Access database.

Each book was reviewed by reading the complete index, table of contents, and all lines of text. The overall aging content of the text was then rated relative to its being accurate, current, and comprehensive. This was judged based on whether the content captured current demographics and issues within society. Following is a summary of the process of identifying and evaluating aging content for each textbook.

1. Record textbook identifying information on the first page of the evaluation form.
2. Read textbook index and highlight aging content.
3. Read table of contents and highlight aging content.
4. Read complete text, highlighting aging content.
5. Match aging content to Critical Content areas.
6. Rate the example of desirable content (0=none; 1=present; 2=helpful).
7. Check column if example of desirable content is strengths-based.
8. Provide the desirable content from the text (copy and paste text or write concepts and words on the grid); include page numbers where content was found.
9. Go back to the first page of the evaluation form and rate overall aging content as accurate, current, and comprehensive. Indicate the desired information under the quantity of information section.
10. Add up pages of aging content (by generally counting lines of aging-related content and then determining page equivalency).
11. Enter quantitative information into the Access database.
12. Evaluate the quantitative data.
13. Provide examples of aging content from qualitative data.

To illustrate, if it were stated that an increasing percentage of grandparents are raising their grandchildren in the United States in 2004, this content would have received a high rating relative to the content being current and accurate. If within the same text, discussion of families did not include grandparents raising

grandchildren, the content would have received a low rating relative to comprehensiveness.

Results

Out of a total of 9,828 pages reviewed, about 3% or 309 of those pages included aging content. Table 1 indicates the average rating of the aging content within each foundation practice area textbook. Most of the textbooks in each of the foundation areas scored high on accuracy of the aging content. The social work practice textbooks, on average, scored lower (3.5) for aging content being current compared to the other foundation areas. The assessment of the comprehensiveness of the aging content received the lowest ratings across all areas rated. Excluding the diversity textbook (with a rating of 5) and the average of the Human Behavior and the Social Environment textbooks (with a comprehensiveness rating of 3.7), the remaining generalist and foundation area social work textbooks scored below a 2.8 average for comprehensiveness.

Frequencies of aging content throughout the 19 textbooks as well as within each foundation practice area were calculated and recorded in Table 2. Table 2 lists the foundation practice

areas, the level of education where the text was most often used (as determined by faculty that submitted text titles for this study), the number of texts reviewed in each area, the number of pages reviewed overall, and the quantity (number of pages) of aging content. Although the approach of the Hartford curriculum development projects is on infusion and not specialization, the number of separate chapters on aging was also noted. Out of the 9,828 pages and 298 chapters reviewed, 4 chapters were designated specifically for aging content, and 3 out of these 4 chapters were contained within one HBSE textbook. Therefore, two of the textbooks had specific chapters in aging. Separate chapters on aging—in addition to infusion throughout the book—seem most appropriate for lifespan content in HBSE texts, as aging now represents a growing proportion of the lifespan. Following is a discussion of the specific results by foundation practice area.

Diversity

One cultural diversity text was reviewed. Out of 598 pages, 38 pages (6%) are identified as representing aging content. Twenty-six or 68% of those pages are in a chapter focusing

TABLE 1. Rating of Aging Content in Foundation Curriculum Areas in 19 Social Work Textbooks

Foundation Area	Pgs. With Aging Content	Accurate Mean	Current Mean	Comprehensive Mean
Diversity	38	5.0	5.0	5.0
Human Behavior and the Social Environment	91	4.3	4.7	3.7
Social Welfare Policy and Services	53	5.0	4.0	2.7
Social Work Practice	101	4.3	3.5	2.4
Research	25	4.3	4.3	2.0
Field Education	1	4.0	4.0	0.0

Note. Aging content comprised 309 pages out of 9,928 pages reviewed. Each area (accurate, current, comprehensive) was based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent).

on social work practice with older people. The “elderly” was among five groups considered as oppressed and in need of special attention. United States demographics of aging, including poverty rates and the increased risk for disability, are briefly described. Values and ethics, and health and mental health issues are discussed. The book describes a social worker’s role relative to community services and long-term care (e.g., a social worker’s role in a nursing home).

HBSE

Out of 1,747 pages in three of the most commonly used HBSE textbooks, 91 pages (5%) were identified as including aging content. Examples of such content are a chart that depicts the myths about aging; a discussion of various aging theories such as disengagement, life course, and life stage development; biopsy-

chosocial issues associated with aging (such as the effects of aging on depression); and the use of oral histories and family relationships with older adults. One of the textbooks had three separate chapters devoted to aging content: biological, psychological, and social systems.

Social Welfare Policy and Services

Of the 1,421 pages from three policy texts, 4% of those pages were classified as including aging content. Content was most often represented through use of single words or phrases, such as “older persons,” “Social Security,” “Medicare,” “Medicaid,” and “Older Americans Act.” More substantive content was present in a policy text that discussed Reagan-era Social Security and Medicare policies, in another text with a discussion of social insurance and older adults, and in several texts that included histories of the development of Medicare. The

TABLE 2. Summary of Aging Content by Foundation Practice Area in 19 Social Work Textbooks

Foundation Practice Areas	Total Pgs. Reviewed	Total Aging Content Pgs.	% Total Aging Pgs.
Diversity 1 undergraduate text	598	38	6.0
Human Behavior and the Social Environment 1 undergraduate text; 1 graduate text; 1 undergraduate/graduate text	1,747	91	5.0
Social Welfare Policy and Services 1 undergraduate/graduate text; 2 graduate texts	1,421	53	4.0
Social Work Practice 5 undergraduate texts; 2 graduate texts; 1 undergraduate/graduate text	4,519	101	2.0
Research 1 undergraduate text; 1 graduate text; 1 undergraduate/graduate text	1,237	25	2.0
Field Education 1 undergraduate text	306	1	0.3

policy text with the least amount of aging content nevertheless contained two case examples that included older adults. The policy textbook with the most aging content covered such topics as ageism, low-income elders, congregate meal programs, and international aging. Content areas related to housing and older persons and aging prisoners were typically excluded, perhaps because of limited interest or knowledge about these subjects.

Social Work Practice

Of the 4,519 pages reviewed in eight social work practice texts, 2% of the content addressed aging. The textbook with the most gerontological content included a chapter on social work practice with older adults, which comprised 65% of that text's aging content. Another text contained a case study with an older person that formed 73% of all aging content. Typically, content consisted of individual case examples, such as an older person in a brief illustration or case vignette of a practice issue (e.g., giving advice, illustrating human capacity for change, measuring the effectiveness of a program such as home care, interviewing a rural elder, identifying client issues, and a caregivers support group to illustrate treatment groups). Older people in some examples conveyed a non-aging related practice issue (e.g., a group in a Veterans Administration hospital was used to illustrate the issue of scapegoating), while others were explicitly related to older people, such as methods of empowerment. Other content was indirectly relevant to older adults, but did not specifically mention them or aging issues (e.g., working with dying clients, assessing independent living and adult protective services). Only one text contained specific assessment tools for

older persons. The topics of aging and sexuality, depression and older adults, and kinship care were rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Research

Out of 1,237 pages reviewed in three research texts, 25 pages (2%) were considered aging content. One text with a Commission on Aging Survey as an appendix accounted for 18 pages. The research texts referred to studies conducted in nursing homes and those related to caregiver burden, but did not include sufficient explanation for students to understand what evidence the data served to provide (e.g., the need for better quality of care or a different type of service provision). One text included photographs of older people two different times on the cover page of two different chapters, but with no caption, discussion, or particular emphasis on older adults within that chapter.

Field Education

One text used by students in their field practicum was reviewed. Out of 306 pages, less than 1 page was designated as aging content, which mentioned kinship care, caring for a spouse with Alzheimer's disease, and a caregivers' support group.

Analysis of Critical Areas of Content

Of the 9,828 pages reviewed for this study, only 309 (3%) contained any critical areas of aging content. Table 3 depicts each critical area and whether or not it was absent, present, or present and useful, as explained earlier.

Of the eight critical areas, three were assessed as including about 16% of aging content considered to be present and useful. The other five areas contained substantially less present

and useful content. The three areas with most content assessed as present and useful were: Realities and Myths Associated with Aging, Cultural Competence and Aging, and Policy and Advocacy Issues Related to Older Adults and Their Families. Each critical area is discussed separately.

Realities and myths associated with aging critical content area. Each of the foundation areas had content related to the realities and myths associated with aging, although not necessarily each textbook within that area. Several topics were used to search for content relative to the critical area of realities and myths. Topics included demographic trends in the United States and implications for social work/social welfare; biological, psychological, and social content and consequences of aging; importance of self-awareness regarding values stereotypes and biases associated with aging, death or dying; and demonstrating respect and

positive regard for older adults at all levels of capacity. This content was found to be “most useful” in two of the practice books, one of the policy texts, the diversity text and three of the human behavior textbooks. One of the HBSE texts gives an effective historical portrayal of the older adults in our society, the diversity text highlights women as constituting the majority of older Americans, and one of the policy textbooks briefly discusses the “graying of U.S. farms.”

Comprehensive gerontological assessment. Both the demographic demands and the CSWE/SAGE-SW national competencies study point to the importance of all social work students acquiring foundation knowledge and skills in assessing the needs of older adults. Foundation textbooks in this area, however, were found to have the lowest number of pages rated (3%) as present and useful aging content. The specific information searched for included the domains

TABLE 3. Presence and Usefulness of Content in Critical Areas Across All 19 Textbooks by Percent of Total Content Pages

Critical Area	Absent	Present	Present and Useful
Realities and myths associated with aging	55	29	16
Comprehensive gerontological assessment	81	16	3
Family, intergenerational relationships, and caregiver assessment and support	64	23	13
Development and implementation of appropriate service plans and interventions to support older clients at multiple systems levels	82	9	9
Cultural competence and aging	60	24	16
Policy and advocacy issues related to older adults and their families	63	20	17
Foundation-level skills for working with older adults	72	19	9
Interdisciplinary collaboration	68	27	5

Note. Total pages with aging content=309. Percentages were calculated by summing the individual ratings from all the texts for each critical area and dividing by the total number of ratings in that area.

to consider for gerontological assessment, assessment of memory loss or cognitive change, mental health assessment, substance abuse assessment and treatment options, and roles and functions of interdisciplinary assessment teams. Within its chapter on older adults, only the diversity text presented content on interdisciplinary teams and gerontological assessment.

Minimal content was related to assessment of memory loss (one practice book and two human behavior texts), mental health and substance abuse assessment (one practice book, the diversity text, and one human behavior book). Three of the textbooks reviewed (practice, diversity, and research) have present and useful content related to the domains to be considered for gerontological assessment. For example, in one of the practice books, this material is represented under a section called, Generalist Practice, Empowerment, and the Elderly. Depression and suicide rates among older persons are critical substantive issues for assessment of elders, yet these topics appear to be largely ignored. The term "depression" is generally found in these texts without any discussion or elaboration of context in relation to older persons or their caregivers.

Family, intergenerational relationships, and caregiver assessment and support. Of the aging content reviewed and found to be useful, 13% addressed the area of family caregiving. When analyzing content, the reviewers looked for information pertaining to how social problems and the problems associated with aging may influence family roles and relationships, outcomes associated with various forms of family caregiving, assessment of family caregivers, and interventions and supports for family

caregivers, including grandparent caregivers. Despite the growing role of grandparents as primary caregivers for grandchildren, content on grandparents was identified as present (but not found to be helpful) in only one practice book, one research text, and two human behavior textbooks. The substantive contributions of older adults to volunteering and mentoring were neglected, even though these are important intergenerational activities. Most often, definitions and discussion of "family" excluded the central role or impact of older persons within families, such as multigenerational households, grandparent and great-grandparent roles, and cross-generational exchange of assets and resources.

Development and implementation of appropriate service plans and interventions to support older clients at multiple systems levels. Information relative to this content area was found to be present and useful within 9% of the total aging content in the texts. The reviewers considered content such as setting realistic and measurable objectives based on the comprehensive assessment, interventions relevant to gerontological social work (e.g., life review, reminiscence, and validation), skills in case management and collaboration, and skills for working on interdisciplinary teams. In one group work practice text, a discussion was included regarding a highly structured, multi-component group treatment program that was found to be more effective than a less structured program for helping older people increase their social skills.

Cultural competence and aging. Sixteen percent of the aging content reflected cultural competence in working with older adults. Issues discussed included cultural variation in attitudes toward help, successful adaptations,

spirituality and ethnic needs and beliefs, strengths and resources and the aging process itself; historical experiences of various cultural groups that may affect support seeking in later life; the impact of aging policy and services on populations at risk; and the use of a multicultural perspective with older clients. At a time when the number of older people of color is increasing, it is of concern that three out of the eight practice books and the field education book had no mention of cultural competency and aging. One of the human behavior books had a section called "Culturally Competent Practice," but older adults were not mentioned. A chapter on later adulthood at the end of this same text mentioned cultural competency and included a photograph of an older Hispanic man campaigning for senior citizens' rights with the caption "older adults in America are politically organized and influential." That same page however, contained the following statement: "Early retirement programs and the stereotypic expectations of the elderly often result in the elderly being unproductive, inactive, dependent and unfulfilled," which is not a positive depiction of the older citizens. It is noteworthy that issues pertaining to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender elders were not discussed in any of the texts.

Policy and advocacy issues related to older adults and their families. Seventeen percent of the overall aging content was depicted through policy and advocacy issues related to older adults and their families. This material was presented in the most useful way throughout the policy textbooks but also was found in five of the practice textbooks, the diversity text and two of the human behavior books. The specific content sought by the reviewers rela-

tive to policy and advocacy issues included the following: current health and long-term care policies and programs to serve the older adult population, the availability of resources and resource systems for elders and their families, the impact of policies, regulations and programs on organizational effectiveness, and direct practice with older adults. Many of the texts contain references to terms related to aging, such as Medicare and Social Security, but often there is little or no context or explication, such as a case study, examples of the importance of social insurance or discussion of the stigmatization of mental health in Medicare. Content on housing for elders, a significant policy issue for older adults and their families, was not found in any texts.

Foundation-level skills for working with older adults. This critical area comprised 9% of the aging content. The practice textbooks generally presented the most helpful content relative to this area, including material on essential communication skills for working with older adults; skills for engaging later-life families; social work roles and functions in different settings (home, community-based settings, and institutions), and ethical and professional boundary issues in work with older adults and their caregivers (e.g., client self-determination, end-of-life decisions, family conflicts, and guardianship).

Interdisciplinary collaboration. This critical area was made operational through content such as: gerontological social work and the continuum of services for older adults and their family members; streamlining services through collaboration and case management skills; linking with other health, mental health, and allied health professionals in delivering

services to older adults and their families; using interdisciplinary teams; organizational ethical and boundary issues involved in collaborative service delivery; and, evaluation of current service delivery systems and innovations in service delivery. Only 5% of the aging content was related to interdisciplinary collaboration. This is of concern, as collaborative relationships among agencies (such as the formation of alliances and coalitions) and interdisciplinary teamwork are imperative in the delivery of services to older adults and their families. Organizational, ethical, and boundary issues involved in collaborative service delivery were only presented in the diversity textbook and in one human behavior text.

Study Limitations

Given the lack of prior analysis of aging content in foundation social work texts, the authors contend that this first analysis process and findings provide information useful to foundation textbook publishers, authors, and social work educators. Nevertheless, the relatively small number of textbooks analyzed is a limitation resulting from constraints on staff resources and time. The model on which this study was based (Kramer et al., 2003), however, suggests that the number of texts chosen was adequate, given the project scope on only foundation courses. In addition, the authors' intention was not to assess a large universe of social work textbooks, but rather to analyze a fairly representative and manageable sample of the most frequently used foundation texts. This approach is also conceptualized as a model for social work faculty members and textbook publishers to evaluate the aging content in their own frequently used texts. Therefore, the

authors define this process as a critical strategy for strengthening the preparation of social work students with foundation gerontological competencies.

The database used for soliciting titles of textbooks to analyze is another limitation. Input was sought from faculty in the CSWE/SAGE-SW database. Although that database is representative of a substantial portion of all social work education programs, the respondents were faculty members with some interest in or knowledge of aging. Respondents were, however, asked to provide the names of textbooks used in their program's foundation courses, not their own individual courses, as a way to reduce bias in the books selected. Nevertheless, this approach may not have captured some other highly used textbooks in social work education. Another limitation is that two of the most highly used textbooks, which represent 21% of the texts analyzed, were published prior to the year 2000, which would affect the accuracy and usefulness of the results. Another potential limitation is that this project relied on ratings by experts. The assignment to content areas may have been interpreted differently by other raters, though this issue holds true no matter who the raters are. The use of subject experts for analysis was not seen as problematic in the two previous textbook projects on which this project was based, however. Because social work texts, and particularly foundation textbooks, incorporate a strength-based approach, it is not surprising that nearly all the identified aging content is strength-based. Therefore, little time was spent on analysis with this part of the framework, although examples where this was not the case were cited. Another limitation is that new editions of some of these texts have

subsequently been published (or are about to be), which may include more aging content, given the heightened awareness in the field.

Discussion and Implications

This study to assess the quantity and quality of aging content in a sample of frequently used foundation textbooks demonstrates an overall dearth of substantive material on aging. Three hundred nine (309) pages of generally less than comprehensive aging content out of the 9,828 pages reviewed is clearly inadequate for preparing social work graduates to work effectively with older adults and their families. Even when content was identified, older adults and aging tended to be discussed in a context separate from other family issues and life events, a pattern found in texts from other professional disciplines as well (McGuire, 2004; Stolley & Hill, 1996). Content such as sexuality, friends, religion, leisure, caregiving, kinship care housing and the distinction between normal and pathological aging were not identified in any of the texts in this analysis. The critical content areas (Table 3), which are based on the national CSWE/SAGE-SW gerontological social work competencies for all social workers, were infrequently deemed present and useful.

However, this study also suggests that some textbook authors have already infused some aging content into their writing—and others are currently doing so in their latest editions. It is not realistic to expect that textbooks in all of the foundation areas contain comprehensive, current, and helpful information relative to each of the eight content areas described in this article, particularly because the purpose of foundation textbooks differs from specialty and advanced textbooks. Given

the demographic imperative of aging, however, it is reasonable that all social work foundation texts could provide some accurate, current, and comprehensive material in each of the content areas discussed in this study.

Publishers, editors, and authors could make changes that are not onerous, yet would result in more useful and helpful content on aging. Editors could encourage foundation textbook authors to draw upon the national gerontological social work competencies as a framework for infusing aging throughout the next edition of their book. For example, most often the reviewers of the 19 textbooks found that single words or phrases represented aging issues (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, Alzheimer's, and Older Americans Act). Often, these words and phrases were presented without elaboration, explanation, discussion, or simple case illustrations, and rarely examined intergenerational issues. Other aging references deemed not to be comprehensive included discussion questions or appendices without any supporting content as well as visual images without explanation or discussion. Discussion of communication skills, depression, assessment tools, or case management with little mention of older adults negates a lifespan approach to social work education and practice

This study does not seek to answer the question: "How much aging content is enough and how should aging content be represented throughout a given textbook?" The authors do suggest, however, that publishers and editors have the opportunity to meet the challenges of a growing aging population and to help enhance the quality of social work education. With Hartford's support since 1998, more than 800 social work faculty members and more than

140 programs nationwide have implemented an infusion model of aging in the social work foundation curriculum. This study indicates that these and other faculty members lack foundation course textbooks with embedded aging content that can support their infused course syllabi.

Infusion does not mean adding more new content, pages, and costs, but rather allowing aging content to be embedded within existing text content. To illustrate, an example of an older person or a multigenerational family could be substituted in a family case vignette to illustrate a practice concept; an intergenerational case example or one on kinship care could be embedded when discussing child welfare issues. Or the health and economic inequities faced by older women of color—the poorest group in our society—could be substituted for case examples on poverty among younger women within a cultural diversity course. In this way, students will learn about aging across the lifespan and in the broad context of foundation knowledge, skills, and values. In fact, the authors do not advocate adding specific chapters on aging content, as whole chapters can be eliminated from a course syllabus; an infusion approach is viewed as more conducive to effective preparation for foundation practice in a wide range of settings and with diverse populations.

The authors hope that social work foundation text authors and social work educators will translate the outcomes of this textbook analysis project to their own teaching. Because a review of a fairly representative and manageable sample of foundation textbooks was more feasible than assessing a larger universe of books, social work faculty members could make use of the framework for evaluating ag-

ing content in social work textbooks used in this study for selecting other foundation texts and teaching materials for their courses. The framework can be used to assess the foundation textbooks they use for accurate, current, and comprehensive aging content. When they identify gaps, faculty members could locate teaching resources to supplement their textbooks, which are readily available through Web sites, such as www.Gero-EdCenter.org or www.GSWI.org. Faculty members can then work collaboratively with textbook authors and editors to suggest feasible ways to enhance students' gerontological learning within the existing text content. This study can also serve as a basis for the CSWE Gero-Ed Center staff and its National Advisory Board members to develop a strategic plan to work with editors and authors, identify mutual interests, and provide curricular and teaching resources that can be infused into foundation texts. Through relatively minor changes in foundation texts, the preparation of aging-competent social work practitioners—needed today and in the future—would be enhanced.

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Catherine J. Tompkins is undergraduate social work program director, George Mason University. **Anita L. Rosen** is senior projects advisor, Council on Social Work Education. **Heather Larkin** is a doctoral candidate, Catholic University of America.

This article was written with support of the John A. Hartford Foundation. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Nancy Hooyma in manuscript preparation.

Address correspondence to Catherine J. Tompkins, George Mason University, Department of Social Work, Robinson Hall, Room B378C, 4400 University Drive, MS 1F8, Fairfax, VA 22030. E-mail: ctompkins@gmu.edu.

APPENDIX A. Gerontological Competencies for All Social Workers From the CSWE SAGE-SW National Competencies Study

Knowledge

- Normal physical, psychological, and social changes in later life
 - The diversity of attitudes toward aging, mental illness, and family roles
 - The influences of aging on family dynamics
 - The diversity of elders' attitudes toward the acceptance of help
 - The diversity of successful adaptations to life transitions of aging
 - The availability of resources and resource systems for the elderly and their families
 - Theoretical models of biological and social aging
 - The relation of diversity to variations in the aging process (e.g., gender, race, culture, economic status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation)
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Skill

- Use social work case management skills (such as brokering, advocacy, monitoring, and discharge planning) to link elders and their families to resources and services.
 - Gather information regarding social history such as: social functioning, primary and secondary social supports, social activity level, social skills, financial status, cultural background, and social involvement.
 - Collaborate with other health, mental health, and allied health professionals in delivering services to older adults.
 - Engage family caregivers in maintaining their own mental and physical health.
 - Assist individuals and families in recognizing and dealing with issues of grief, loss and mourning.
 - Assist families that are in crisis situations regarding older adult family members.
 - Recognize and identify family, agency, community, and societal factors that contribute to and support the greatest possible independence of the older client.
 - Enhance the coping capacities of older persons.
 - Incorporate knowledge of elder abuse (physical, sexual, emotional and financial) in conducting assessments and intervention with clients and their families.
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APPENDIX A. Gerontological Competencies for All Social Workers From the CSWE/SAGE-SW National Competencies Study (cont.)

Professional Practice

- Assess one's own values and biases regarding aging, death, and dying.
 - Educate self to dispel the major myths about aging.
 - Accept, respect, and recognize the right and need of older adults to make their own choices and decisions about their lives within the context of the law and safety concerns.
 - Respect and address cultural, spiritual, and ethnic needs and beliefs of older adults and family members.
 - Identify ethical and professional boundary issues that commonly arise in work with older adults and their caregivers, such as client self-determination, end-of-life decisions, family conflicts, and guardianship.
 - Evaluate safety issues and degree of risk for self and older clients.
 - Apply knowledge of outreach techniques with older adults and their families.
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APPENDIX B. Critical Content Areas and Examples of Desirable Content From the Framework for Evaluating Aging Content in Social Work Textbooks

Critical Areas of Content	Examples of Desirable Content
1. Realities and myths associated with aging	<p>A. Demographic trends in the United States and implications for social work/social welfare</p> <p>B. Social, biological, and psychological context and consequences of aging</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social theories of aging and the role of social support, relationships, and interactions in later life 2. Love, intimacy, and sexuality among older persons 3. Normal physical changes and common health problems, and conditions associated with aging 4. Cognitive changes associated with normal aging and common mental health problems and conditions associated with aging <p>C. Importance of self-awareness regarding values, stereotypes, and biases associated with aging, death, or dying</p> <p>D. Demonstrating respect and positive regard for older adults at all levels of capacity</p>
2. Comprehensive gerontological assessment	<p>A. Domains to consider for gerontological assessment: functional status (activities of daily living, instrumental ADLs, mobility), physical, medications, nutrition, social functioning and support, socioeconomic and financial supports and resources, grief and loss, spiritual needs and resources, environmental safety, and person-in-environment fit</p> <p>B. Assessment of memory loss or cognitive changes: distinguishing between dementia, depression, and delirium and alcohol/drug abuse or other common causes of memory impairment and cognitive changes</p> <p>C. Mental health assessment and treatment options, substance abuse assessment and treatment options</p> <p>D. Roles and functions of interdisciplinary assessment</p>

APPENDIX B. Critical Content Areas and Examples of Desirable Content From the Framework for Evaluating Aging Content in Social Work Textbooks (cont.)

Critical Areas of Content	Examples of Desirable Content
3. Family, intergenerational relationships, and caregiver assessment and support	A. How social problems and the problems associated with aging may impact family roles and relationships B. Outcomes associated with various forms of family caregiving C. Assessment of family caregivers D. Interventions and supports for grandparent caregivers E. Interventions and supports for family caregivers (e.g., community resource utilization, information and referral, grief or supportive counseling, support groups, enhancement of self-care strategies)
4. Development and implementation of appropriate service plans and treatment and interventions to address mental health concerns, substance abuse concerns and support older clients at multiple systems levels	A. Setting realistic and measurable objectives based on the comprehensive assessment B. Interventions relevant to gerontological social work (e.g., life review, reminiscence, validation) C. Treatment and interventions to address mental health concerns, substance abuse issues, and grief/loss issues D. Skills in case management and collaboration and skills for working on interdisciplinary teams
5. Cultural competence and aging	A. Cultural variation in attitudes toward help, successful adaptations, spirituality, and ethnic needs and beliefs, strengths and resources, and the aging process itself (diversity issues should include gender, race, culture, economic status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) B. Historical experiences of various cultural groups that may affect support seeking in later life C. The impact of aging policy and services on populations at risk (e.g., persons of color; persons who are poor; persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; and women). D. Use of a multicultural perspective with older clients
6. Policy and advocacy issues related to older adults and their families	A. Current health and long-term care policies available to serve the older adult B. The availability of resources and resource systems for the elderly and their families C. The impact of policies, regulations, and programs on practice with older adults D. Strategies to advocate for later life services and needs (e.g., education for the public, agency and professional awareness to combat the myths of aging, address age discrimination, and highlight the needs of a growing aging population)

APPENDIX B. Critical Content Areas and Examples of Desirable Content From the Framework for Evaluating Aging Content in Social Work Textbooks (cont.)

Critical Areas of Content	Examples of Desirable Content
7. Foundation level skills for working with older adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Essential communication skills for working with older adults B. Skills for engaging later life families C. Social work roles and functions in different settings (home, community-based settings, institutions) D. Ethical dilemmas associated with work with older adults and their caregivers (examples might relate to client self-determination, end-of-life decisions, family conflicts, and guardianship) E. Professional boundaries and self-awareness
8. Interdisciplinary collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The context of gerontological social work and the continuum of services for older adults and their family members (e.g., community-based programs, assisted living, hospital care, nursing homes, etc.). B. Case management and care coordination C. Organizational ethical and boundary issues involved in collaborative service delivery D. Evaluation of current service delivery systems and innovations in service delivery

Note. Format of evaluation instrument is adapted from Ferrell et al. (1999) and Kramer, Hovland-Scafe, & Pacourek (2003). A copy of the full instrument is available from the first author.

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