

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:  
AN EXAMINATION THROUGH THE SOCIAL  
JUSTICE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) develops and oversees curriculum standards of social work education programs which sets the tone for what is disseminated in these programs. As a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, CSWE is tasked with ensuring the education disseminated in social work education programs is of quality. Furthermore, CSWE must evaluate and assess social work education programs' curricula to ensure the set criteria is met. CSWE uses its Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to disseminate and evaluate social work education program's curricula. Although, much is included in the curriculum of social work education, this study focuses on its approach to the construct of social justice. It is important to note that in 1979, social justice was officially recognized as a core value in social work practice by the National Association of Social Workers; however, it is unclear how this construct is addressed in social work education. This exploratory study attempts to add to this limited knowledge using accreditation manuals from CSWE at two distinct time periods to explore whether the historical and current approach of social work education toward social justice supports the Social Justice Education Perspective.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my aunt Rochelle, whose last words to me were to stay focused. She encouraged me to pursue my dream of obtaining a PhD while I worked on my undergraduate degree. In like manner, this dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who picked up the mantle and encouraged me to make that dream a reality. Specifically, I dedicate this study to my maternal and paternal grandmothers, Barbara and Juanita for their prayers through every step of this process and because they continually reminded me that I was born an overcomer. Last, but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my nephew, Zion for being a ray of sunshine throughout this entire tedious process.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

AASSW	American Association of Schools of Social Work
AACU	Association of American Colleges and Universities
BACW	Black Administrators in Child Welfare
COS	charity organization societies
COA	Commission on Accreditation
CSWE	Council on Social Work Education
EPAS	educational policies and accreditation standards
MSW	Masters in Social Work
NABSW	National Association of Black Social Workers
NASSA	National Association of Schools of Social Administration
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NCSW	National Conference on Social Welfare
NCSWE	National Council on Social Work Education
SJEP	Social Justice Education Perspective
The USA	United States of America
USSC	United States Sanitary Commission

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Social justice is embedded in modern-day social work (Pelton, 2001; Thompson, 2002) and has roots in the origin of the profession (Leighninger, 2012; Stuart, 2014). Specifically, the earliest forms of social work which evolved from the practices and administration of charity and related organizations were heavily influenced by religious ideology which stressed the importance of justice. An early mention of justice in the field that became known as social work occurred in 1909, during the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections when Rabbi Stephen S. Wise argued that “charity can never substitute justice” and “social servants” must address social problems as a matter of justice (Wise, 1909). Furthermore, justice is a core aspect of social movements which influenced the incorporation of many values, including social justice into social work.

To put it another way, the historical and socio-political context of the United States of America (The USA) greatly impacts the inclusion of social justice as a standard in the social work profession and education of the nation. In early social work practice, social justice, particularly as it is viewed today was not stressed (Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010) as important.

Many groups were excluded from receiving social services in the early years because of the societal beliefs regarding them. Given that social work was on the forefront of addressing social problems faced by many disenfranchised groups from diverse backgrounds (Rose, 2001) and the concerns of social work and progressivism are similar (Murdach, 2010), social justice, inevitably, became important to the profession.

In fact, during the original Progressive Era (1890 – 1920) grassroots efforts were made to align the nation with the values touted in its Constitution: liberty, equality, and opportunity for all (Halpin & Cook, 2010). Specifically, social movements focused on reforms that addressed social injustice, inequality, and corruption (Halpin & Cook, 2010). Various social movements, including, but not limited to movements that focused on women’s suffrage, rights of underrepresented groups, and antiwar protests, all impacted the political world and furthermore the policies and practices of social work. Social movements, changing demographics and the formalization of the profession through education eventually led to professional attention being given to social justice.

The accrediting body of social work education, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is responsible for developing and overseeing the approved standards of social work education programs. CSWE allows programs to decide how the set standards are carried out in their curricula. Social work education “shapes the future of the profession through the education of competent professionals” (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5). Social justice is accepted as an important aspect of modern-day social work practice and education (Garran, Kang, & Fraser, 2014); however, there is little knowledge of how the educational policies and accreditation standards (EPAS) of CSWE address this concept. This paper presents a study that adds to the limited knowledge through an examination of the construct of social justice and its use in the EPAS of CSWE through a social justice education framework.

## Statement of the Problem

The explicit use of the construct, *social justice* appeared in the National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics in 1979 and remains one of the formal ethics of the profession (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 1979, 1990, 1996, 1999; National Association of Social Workers, 1993); however, it is unclear how and to what extent social justice is emphasized in social work education. As a helping profession, social work is shaped by the context in which it exists; for this reason, national events and policies may influence the emphasis of the profession on various aspects of it, including on social justice. Social work professionals address individual and systemic problems through the services they provide to clients at all levels. To become a social worker, one must graduate from an accredited social work education program and undergo various licensing exams; therefore, the role of social work education is important in influencing how practitioners, from micro through macro practice, define, and conceptualize social justice. Furthermore, since social work practice emphasizes social justice, it is important to explore how these concepts are emphasized in accreditation standards and consequently, social work education programs. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the examination on social justice and accreditation standards in social work education through the lens of a social justice education perspective. The research question for this study is: Does the EPAS of CSWE address social justice in a way that supports the Social Justice Education Perspective?

## Organization of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of the study. Chapter II provides a review of literature pertaining to social work, higher education and social justice. An examination of the how the

histories of social work practice and education and postsecondary education influenced the incorporation of social justice into social work education is included in the literature review. Chapter II concludes with an overview of the Social Justice Education Perspective, the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter III contains a detailed explanation of the data sources and the methodology utilized to address the research question. Chapter IV is a presentation of the results of the study with limitations. Lastly, Chapter V concludes the study with a discussion of the results of the study, implications for social work education and potential future research.



## CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### History of Social Work Practice and Education: The Parallels

The profession and discipline of social work grew simultaneously, therefore complicating the history of the education component of the field. To put it another way, social work education stemmed from individuals in the field desiring to teach others how to provide social services in the most effective ways. Providing an adequate description of the history of social work is challenging, however, scholars highlight individual casework, social administration and poverty relief, and social action as three major categories that fit most of the historical approaches to social work (Bruno & Towley, 1964; Reid, 2012). In this study, instead of separating the history into these categories a chronological narrative is provided for clarity purposes. Given that elements of individual casework, social administration and poverty relief, and social action are evident and nuanced in the history of social work, the researcher chose to provide a chronological narrative as opposed to a categorical narrative. The section that follows is an overview of the history of social work practice and education, curriculum development in social work and the conceptualization of social justice. The section a summative review of the Social Justice Education Perspective.

### History of Social Work Practice

During the late 1800s many European immigrants came to the USA without the resources to support themselves and needed assistance. In response to the influx of immigrants needing

assistance, social service providers during this time invested personal resources in the habilitation of these individuals. Specifically, social service providers placed special interest on assimilating European immigrants by teaching these individuals how to live and behave in their new country (Kogut, 1970). In other words, social service providers responded to the profusion of destitute European immigrants during the late 1800s by supplying necessary resources. The concept of responding to societal conditions is a part of the foundation of modern-day social work (Hurlbutt, 1934, Rose, 2001). Moreover, modern-day social work developed out of response to the inadequate relief services provided by the State and a commitment to improve the human condition.

To provide social services to individuals in need during the late 1800s, it was necessary for the providers to have available resources to use. Furthermore, it must be remembered that due to the hierarchical structure surrounding race in pre-Civil War America the individuals with surplus resources were primarily Whites (Kogut, 1970). Additionally, the task of helping individuals was primarily done by men due to the social structure of the time (Hurlbutt, 1934; Rose, 2001). Under these circumstances, many of the social service providers during this period were middle-class White men with considerable financial resources. These men who provided services during the late 1800s are now known as “the friendly visitors” (Reid, 2012). The friendly visitors used their resources to help the poor and the distressed European immigrants by funding orphanages and almshouses. During the 1800s, social services were also provided by various religious and secular groups that organized efforts to create social betterment by addressing poverty, urbanization, and immigration (Bruno & Towley, 1964; Leiby, 1978; Rich, 1965). An example of an early social service organization is the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, which started in 1843 and assisted impoverished

individuals while emphasizing perceived moral failings of the poor. Another example is the Children's Aid Society which started in 1853 and helped disadvantaged children in New York City through the emphasis of work, education and family (Reid, 2012).

As has been noted, the development of the social work profession was and is heavily impacted by the unique culture and context of the nation. To that end, major national events throughout history influenced the disbursement of social services. One such major event is the Civil War which expanded the populations receiving social services beyond European immigrants and led to the development of several humanitarian organizations. For instance, initiatives such as the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) and the American Red Cross developed during and in response to the Civil War. USSC, a relief agency for infirmed Civil War soldiers was founded in 1861, developed hospitals and other treatment centers to address the needs of its target population. In addition to setting up hospitals and treatment centers for wounded soldiers, USSC provided food and shelter services to soldiers (Bruno & Towley, 1964; Reid, 2012). Like USSC, the American Red Cross was founded to provide relief services to soldiers. However, unlike USSC, this agency provided assistance to civilians who were victims of natural disasters (Jones, 2013). Moreover, organizations like the American Red Cross expanded the type of individuals receiving social services in that many organizations that developed during the Civil War were only for soldiers. While some may not view the services provided by USSC and the American Red Cross as relative to the modern-day social work profession, notably these organizations directly impacted the development of social welfare policies which heavily influenced the profession's development both historically and contemporarily (Jones, 2013).

Once the Civil War ended, the community needs, and furthermore social services were impacted by the gradual transition of the USA from an agrarian society to an industrial society. Changes in the nation, such as the increased population and dense living areas, disease outbreak and the industrialization of the labor market resulted in the development of new types of social services. Specifically, settlement houses and charity organization societies (COS) were developed in the late 1800s. More specifically, COS started in the 1870s and provided job training to the poor while studying the causes of poverty. The Buffalo Charity Organization in Buffalo, NY was one of the first and most influential COS in the country. The settlement house movement began in 1880s and emphasized the reform of the social and economic conditions to address poverty. The Hull House is one of America's most famous settlement houses (Bowles & Hopps, 2014; Bruno & Towley, 1964; Hopps & Morris, 2000). COS and settlement houses are often thought of as part of the foundation of modern-day social work, yet varying levels of emphasis was placed on social justice and many of the services were provided to a diverse group of White immigrants (Bruno & Towley, 1964). In many ways COS and settlement houses stressed the importance of assimilation for European immigrants. Specifically, these organizations taught European immigrants to absorb the values of White middle-class Americans in order to succeed in the labor force and to a greater extent, in the nation (Bowles & Hopps, 2014).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, by and large, the settlement house movement and COS placed little emphasis or interest in individuals other than European immigrant populations; however, some settlement house leaders played important roles in the creation of national organizations that addressed the needs of racial minorities and women (Hopps & Morris, 2000). For example, leaders of the settlement house movements were instrumental in forming the

following organizations: Women's Trade Union League, National Consumers' League, the Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Federal Children's Bureau. The formation of these social welfare and betterment agencies by settlement house leaders and individuals from disenfranchised backgrounds, played a pivotal role in expanding service delivery and providing a voice to groups who were previously excluded. Largely as a result of these early social welfare and betterment agencies, social justice became a core concept of the social work profession (Bowie, Hall, & Johnson, 2011).

Equally important during the post-Civil War period is the involvement of Black social service providers in shaping how diversity became a core concept in the profession. Due to the discriminatory nature of the USA in the late 1800s, during the earliest developmental days of the social work profession, Blacks were often not given access to many of the social services mentioned thus far (Gary & Gary, 2015). Despite this fact, Blacks often provided social services to and within their own communities like what their White counterparts would provide. Unlike their White counterparts, early Black social service providers were often women (Gary & Gary, 2015). The services dispensed by Black social service providers during the late 1800s addressed the poverty plaguing the Black community and workforce development. In this community, social services were also provided by churches, women's groups, colleges, and other religious and secular groups in the Black community (Gary & Gary, 2015). Though it was primarily Black individuals providing social services in their communities, some White individuals contributed to early social services in the Black community (Gary & Gary, 2015). For instance, as mentioned earlier, several White individuals in the settlement house movement assisted in the development of many social welfare and betterment organizations that addressed needs of the Black community.

Like all social services, the social services offered in Black communities were greatly influenced by the societal context. Specifically, once slavery ended, the needs and challenges of Black communities were unique. More specifically, to support the newly freed slaves, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau was created in 1865. The Freedmen's Bureau provided newly freed slaves with workforce development and social services needed during their transition (Gary & Gary, 2015).

During the Reconstruction Era (1863 – 1877) the Freedmen's Bureau ended. Specifically, in 1872, Congress did not reauthorize legislation to support the continuance of the Freedmen's Bureau which ended formal governmental support and protection for former slaves (Fleischman, Tyson, & Oldroyd, 2014); however, the needs and challenges of the Black community continued to be unique. At the same time, the Jim Crow laws (1870s – 1965), state and national legislation that enforced segregation in the USA Southern states (Fleischman et al., 2014), made segregation the norm in the nation. Additionally, peonage, sharecropping, Jim Crow Laws, and the Ku Klux Klan served to maintain the pre-Civil War southern economic structure to provide cheap labor to agriculture and other industries like forestry and mining (Fleischman et al., 2014). Furthermore, Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) enforced the separation of African Americans from White society legitimizing the unequal and inadequate access to resources for Black Americans. These circumstances remained consistent until the 1950s and the growth of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement, which started in the 1950s brought several changes to the USA social service delivery, particularly pertaining to certain communities (Bowles & Hopps, 2014; Glick, 2011). Ultimately the Civil Rights Movement led to the 1964 Civil Rights Act which made discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin illegal; however, prior to this, an affirmative action was placed in an executive order by President

Kennedy in 1961. Affirmative action was a collection of policies and initiatives developed to correct the past discriminations and end future ones based on race, color, creed or national origin (Glicker, 2011). Consequently, the Civil Rights Movement played a significant role in how social justice became a core concept of the social work profession.

In fact, during this time several organizations were developed and strengthened with a mission to improve the lives of Blacks (Sanders, 1970). For instance, the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) was created on May 8, 1968 in San Francisco, California at the National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW) (Sanders, 1970). From 1874 to 1985, NCSW was an annual meeting of the minds for all individuals, including social workers interested in social welfare and betterment issues of the United States. During one of the May 1968 general sessions of the meeting, social workers of African descent organized and openly expressed dissatisfaction with how the mainstream social service organizations represented at the conference addressed the issues of the Black community. Specifically, these Black social workers organized to advocate for the needs of the Black community which were inadequately addressed by the conference or mainstream organizations, like NASW (Bell, 2012). NABSW continues to advocate for changes to the Eurocentric focus of human services delivery (National Association of Black Social Workers, 2018). As shown in these historical events, our societal context has greatly influenced the amount of emphasis placed on social justice in social work education and its profession.

#### National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

In 1955, to promote professional development and establish professional standards in social work, the following seven social work organizations consolidated to form NASW:

- American Association of Social Workers
- American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers
- American Association of Group Workers
- Association of the Study of Community Organization
- American Association of Medical Social Workers
- National Association of School Social Workers
- Social Work Research Group

Since its origin, the purpose of NASW was to provide professional ethics and values for the social work community at large. NASW is currently the largest membership organization of professional social workers, - besting 55 organizational chapters and over 130,000 members. Participation in NASW is voluntary for social workers and has no ties to licensure as some professional organizations; but its influence on social work practice and education goes beyond its large membership. NASW severed its formal relationship with CSWE in 1971, however the two organizations continued to work together on issues of mutual interest (Beless, 1989). Additionally, the code of ethics of NASW is used as the standard professional code of ethics and can be found in the curriculum materials distributed by CSWE. The code of ethics from NASW has been amended several times since the original version; however, it continues to serve as the code of ethics for the social work profession. It is noteworthy to explore the role of NASW in influencing how social justice became a core concept of the social work profession.

Advocacy, an avenue for addressing social injustice, is a hallmark of the social work profession and social work education programs often include courses that emphasize this construct as part of the social workers' toolkit (Beimers, 2015). NASW actively engages in



legislative advocacy days and uses its platform to highlight social injustices that directly impact human rights.

### History of Social Work Education

Social work education developed from the social service providers' desire to deliver social services efficiently and effectively. As a matter of fact, in the 1800s, social work training programs were developed specifically for individuals who provided social betterment and self-help services. Notably, the Charity Organization Society of New York founded the Summer School of Philanthropy in 1898. This training program inspired many similar programs throughout Charity Organization Societies (Dybicz, 2012). Equally important to social work education and its emphasis on social justice is the research and curricula of social science programs at universities and colleges which shaped the foundation of the discipline. For instance, much of the work social science curricula and research concentrated on the origins of social issues that were prevalent during the 1800s. As a result, many social scientists in the late 1800s studied the origins of poverty, pauperism and crime. Specifically, early social scientists attempted to determine if social problems resulted from something within individuals or from external factors such as social and economic forces (Austin, 1997). These early inquiries into social problems by social scientists continue to shape social work education (Austin, 1997). It is important to note, early disagreements among social scientist about the origination of social problems presently impacts service delivery among social service providers.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many groups, including charity workers and social service providers sought professional status and this development impacted the growth of social work education. Specifically, to obtain professional status, groups had to have skills and knowledge

from higher education, a group identity, and shared values among its members (Trattner, 1999). In 1874, members of boards of charities developed the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (eventually known as National Conference of Social Work/National Conference on Social Welfare) with the primary objective of gathering to discuss societal and charity work problems and possible solutions. The impetus behind this annual conference influenced the inclusion of concepts such as evidence-based practice in modern-day social work education and practice because of the value placed on scientific inquiry and investigation (Trattner, 1999).

During this same time, social work training programs and schools grew across the nation and by the early 1900s there was an attempt to streamline these programs. Consequently, in 1919 the Association of Training Schools of Professional Social Workers was formed to oversee these training schools (Reid, 2012). Furthermore, to continually improve the growing social work profession and formalize the training provided at the various training schools, accrediting procedures were developed in 1923. Like social work practice, social work education was heavily influenced by World War II (1939 – 1945). Specifically, many social workers provided aid relief during wartime and the need for education to provide effective, efficient services grew rapidly. In response to this growing need there were many social work education organizations to guide the training programs and schools that social workers attended, which ultimately led to the formation of the Council on Social Work Education.

#### Council on Social Work Education

Several social work education organizations existed prior to CSWE, including the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW) and National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA). To address the issues among the social work

education organizations the National Council on Social Work Education (NCSWE) was created. Based on a recommendation from a 1946 research study conducted by NCSWE which studied issues in social work education, CSWE was founded in 1952 and became the sole education organization for social work while AASSW and NASSA and the other organizations disbanded (CSWE, 2017).

CSWE was established with the primary purpose of providing social work education in the United States with direction and focus (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). Throughout the years the authority of CSWE changed; however, since its formation it provided standards and evaluation for social work education. The initial standards and evaluation procedures CSWE set were modeled after the now-defunct social work schools' membership organization, the American Association of Schools of Social Work which was responsible for creating standards prior to surrendering this authority to CSWE (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). Due to legislation and the professionalization of social work practice that occurred throughout its history, social work education curriculum continues to develop as does the authority of CSWE.

### Curriculum and Accreditation Practices of CSWE

Training protocols and social work education programs existed prior to the organization of CSWE; however, CSWE marked the beginning of unified and systematic social work education (Kendall, 2003). Specifically, CSWE was a fusion of the scholarly and professional practice organizations involved in early social services training programs and became the sole organization responsible for social work education curriculum development. Additionally, in 1952, the initial curriculum known as the Curriculum Policy Statement for Graduate Programs

were developed using the 1932 AASSW curriculum (Robbins, 2014). At first social work education programs viewed these policy statements as mere suggestions since CSWE held no legal authority; however, after 1952, CSWE gained recognition and the curriculum standards gained legal status through federal and state legislation, rules, and regulations as the sole organization to evaluate and approve social work education programs (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). CSWE's initial curriculum standards and its successors continue to serve as the educational foundation for social work education curriculum.

In part, the curriculum standards reflect the changes to the broader higher education system. Specifically, the interest in outcome measure increased in higher education so in the 2001 CSWE EPAS emphasis was on evaluating program objectives (Holloway, 2001). Furthermore, in 2008, CSWE switched from a content-based curriculum to a competency-based curriculum because this was the preferred approach in higher education (Holloway, 2001). The 2008 EPAS focused on behaviors instead of attitudes because the behaviors can be measured more concisely than attitudes. Additionally, in 2008 CSWE included information about the implicit and explicit curriculum. For instance, the explicit curriculum includes information that is supposed to be taught in the classroom, whereas the implicit curriculum focuses on the environment in which information is taught (Holloway, 2012). The implicit curriculum includes elements such commitment to diversity, admission policies and procedures and students' role in governance. The inclusion of implicit curriculum is thought to reflect CSWE's improved understanding of curriculum (Holloway, 2012). Specifically, the 2008 EPAS recognizes that students' learning is impacted by more than classroom instruction.

CSWE is made of many committees, including the Commission on Accreditation (COA) which is responsible for developing standards and policies for accreditation. COA has the

authority to accredit and reaffirm social work education programs based on the standards of evaluation that it adopts. Additionally, COA develops the accreditation manuals that includes curriculum standards and methods of evaluation to be used by social work education programs seeking initially accreditation and reaffirmation (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). The changes to curriculum standards not only result from changes in higher education, but also to address issues expressed by stakeholders of social work education (Holloway, 2012). For instance, when using the 2001 EPAS it was more difficult to evaluate programs due to lack of simplification; so COA changed the curriculum format to meet the needs of its constituents (Holloway, 2012).

Accreditation is often viewed as an insurance policy, individuals who attend accredited institutions and degree programs have a sense of security unlike individuals at other institutions. More specifically, accreditation provides value to the institutions and degree programs that may translate into greater potential job access and financial assistance for attendees (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2010). To become accredited or reaffirmed there is a process to follow and the educational policies serve as standardization. Specifically, all accredited social work programs will have similar elements because of the requirements of CSWE.

Once a program receives initial accreditation, reaffirmation occurs every eight years (Council on Social Work Education, 2012). Prior to accreditation and reaffirmation, social work education programs' faculty members prepare information for CSWE pertaining to the standards. During the multi-step process, CSWE sends representatives (known as site visitors) to talk with the education program's stakeholders (students and community partners of the program). Since social work education stresses the importance of field education, the community partners play a vastly important role in the accreditation, reaffirmation process (Council on Social Work

Education, 2012). Accreditation, reaffirmation is a detailed process that impacts social work education's composition, including, but not limited to how social justice is emphasized in the profession and discipline.

### CSWE Shift from Content-Based to Competency-Based Curriculum

Social justice is a formal ethic of the profession and the EPAS are used to incorporate professional ethics into social work education. Throughout the history of CSWE, the EPAS were changed, updated to reflect changes, including incorporation of social justice, in the profession. Furthermore, the major changes in EPAS reflect the changing structure of higher education, particularly the interest in outcome measures (Holloway, 2013; Holloway, Black, Hoffman, & Pierce, 2009). This interest in outcome measures was evident in the 2001 EPAS because these focused on evaluating program objectives. Then there was a shift to competency-based education in higher education and it is noted in the way CSWE updated the 2001 EPAS in 2008. For instance, in the 2008 EPAS program objectives became practice competencies (Holloway, 2013). The shift to practice competencies shows how CSWE as the governing body of social work education attempts to improve the connection between education and practice through the educational policy and accreditation standards.

The 2008 EPAS focuses heavily on behaviors instead of attitudes because the behaviors can be measured more concisely than attitudes. Additionally, in 2008 CSWE included information about the implicit and explicit curriculum. For instance, the explicit curriculum includes information that is supposed to be taught in the classroom, whereas the implicit curriculum focuses on the environment in which information is taught (Holloway et al., 2009). The implicit curriculum includes elements such as commitment to diversity, admission

policies and procedures and students' role in governance. The inclusion of implicit curriculum is thought to reflect CSWE's improved understanding of curriculum (Holloway, 2013).

Specifically, the 2008 EPAS recognizes that students' learning is impacted by more than classroom instruction. Until 2008 CSWE did not directly recognize the external influences on student learning. Per Holloway (2013) CSWE's Council of Accreditation members were not only responding to the changes in higher education with the changes in 2008 EPAS but were also responding to the needs expressed by social work programs. More specifically, several social work programs expressed the challenges of program assessment and outcome measures using the 2001 program objectives so CSWE responded to this need with the 2008 EPAS.

Furthermore, under the 2001 EPAS program assessment was seemingly more difficult because the program objectives provided by CSWE were not as explanatory as the practice behaviors used in 2008. CSWE believes that the practice behaviors in the 2008 EPAS are more concrete and provides greater guidance during assessment (Holloway, 2012). For example, using the 2001 EPAS model a program could write unclear program objectives and ultimately have a harder time fulfilling these objectives. The inability to fulfill murky objectives as set out by CSWE in 2001 meant more schools faced the possibility of losing accreditation; however, with the change from program objectives to practice behaviors in 2008, programs have a better chance at fulfilling the competencies and maintaining accreditation (Holloway, 2013).

In its earlier years, the Council on Social Work Education approached curriculum using a content perspective (Holloway et al., 2009). One of the reasons for this change of perspective is because of the changing of professional social work. Holloway et al (2013) suggests that the prior EPAS were attempting to constantly revise the policies and standards but found it difficult to remove any old standards which decreased the amount of flexibility, innovation programs had

to meet the program objectives. The 2008 EPAS change from program objectives to practice standards restored program's ability to innovatively create ways to meet the new practice behaviors as opposed to the stringent program objectives (Holloway et al., 2009).

There was a need to change the perspective on curriculum to not only give programs' flexibility to meet the goals outlined but also help CSWE fulfill its mission of improving the profession of social work through education. Specifically, CSWE knows that programs have differing interests and with that in mind CSWE provides flexibility, so the programs can meet the mandated objectives or core competencies. Location plays a major role in the needs and interests of a program, for instance, a program in rural United States serves a program in an inner-city area. Although these programs would teach the same ethics and values, the techniques utilized may differ. More specifically, CSWE realizes that a social work education program in rural Mississippi and one in upstate New York should be required to teach the core competencies of social work education, but because of the location may have different innovative ideas to achieve these competencies. Additionally, higher education is thought to have more flexibility than elementary and secondary education, so CSWE wanted to make sure that social work education was no different with this. It is important to note, that starting with the 2008 EPAS, CSWE no longer mandates academic content and loosened the expectations about curriculum of social work education programs (Holloway, 2013; Holloway et al., 2009). In 2008, CSWE implemented the concept of competencies to enhance student learning in social work education. At the time, competency-based education was common in higher education, but new to social work education. For instance, this approach is historically common in teacher education programs (Holloway et al., 2009). The switch from content-based to competency-based was



logical for social work education because like teacher education programs; social work is thought to be a program that trains future professional as opposed to a liberal arts program.

Notably, social work education arrived at the use of competency-based curriculum late in comparison to other professional programs, many of which have used this curriculum structure since 1970 (Holloway et al., 2009). The change from content-based curriculum to competency-based curriculum is a part of the ongoing attempt to improve, not only social work education, but the social work profession in general. Prior to 2008, the curriculum structures used by CSWE were like those used in liberal arts programs. Since 2008, CSWE uses a competency-based curriculum structure like those used in pre-professional and professional programs, which like historical and socio-political events may influence its approach to social justice.

#### Relevant Historical Events and Movements Impacting Social Justice

Social movements began as grassroots initiatives and become tools of change. The Civil Rights Movement may be one of the most recognized movements in the United States, but there are several others especially during the Progressive Era. The Progressive Era marked a time when people fought against the excessiveness of the American industrialism and expansionism (Murdach, 2010). The people did not wait on the government to address the issues and concerns that were plaguing the communities, but instead let their voice be heard. Issues of poverty, political corruption, and imperialism were addressed during this time. These movements led to changes in policies and the overall national context.

Within the social movements, individuals fought for equality and individual rights for many people, particularly for groups who faced discrimination and social injustices. Most, if not all these social movements had shared values of liberty, justice and equality, a commitment to

the common good, and pragmatic reform. These social movements and subsequent reforms changed the political landscape and education systems in the country. Additionally, these social movements directly impacted social work education and its inclusion of social justice (Deepak, Rountree, & Scott, 2015; Murdach, 2010).

## Social Justice

Social justice was popularized by an Italian priest in the 1800s who wrote a book about addressing the problems surrounding the changing virtues in communities. The priest was unclear about what he meant by the concept, but the term continued to be used in early forms of literature (Novak, 2009). Social justice is recognized as a core value of social work; yet there is no consensus on what social justice means and how it is applied. A commitment to social justice, the idea that individuals deserve equal access to basic rights and opportunities, is evident in the foundation of modern-day social work; however, it is unclear how these concepts are implemented in social work education programs. Well-known and lesser-known pioneers of what is now known as social work displayed various levels of commitment to what is now social justice (Murdach, 2010; Platt & Cooreman, 2001). Like today, the broader societal context greatly impacted the pioneers' commitment to social justice. Furthermore, social work's own complicated history influences its approach to social justice. Specifically, the debate on whether social work is a profession, or a discipline impacts the educational standards. Social work is unique in that the educational components of the discipline were founded by individuals who actively provided social services and many of those components still exist in the curriculum of social work programs in the United States (Bruno & Towley, 1964; Kayser, 2005).

There is no alternative route to becoming a social work practitioner, one must complete a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work from an accredited program to even be considered for licensing. What makes a social worker different from others who provide social services is the education and training that everyone who is considered a social worker must undergo. Social work has its own identity although there are elements of it which are assumed to be understood and therefore not well defined. It is important to know unpack the ideas to better understand social work education.

The concept of social justice and justice-oriented practice is evident in early social work (Bruno & Towley, 1964; Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman, 2015; Reid, 2012); however, even then there was disagreement about how to apply the concept in practice and in social work research. Due in part to the continued disagreement surrounding social justice, researchers and educators, suggest that social justice is simply a buzzword that is tossed around in the literature (Mathuews, 2016; Thompson, 2002; Vincent, 2012). This suggestion has not deterred scholars from attempting to apply the concepts of the Social Justice Education Perspective in elementary and secondary education (Hackman, 2005), and postsecondary education .

#### Conceptual Frameworks: Social Justice and Education

Elements of many theories are associated with social justice in education, such as critical theories, postmodern theories, social transmission theories, and feminist theories. These theories are used to cover a broad range of topics from teaching tolerance to advocating against oppressive structures (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). One conceptual framework used in educational settings is the Social Justice Education Perspective (SJEP).

## Social Justice Theories in Education

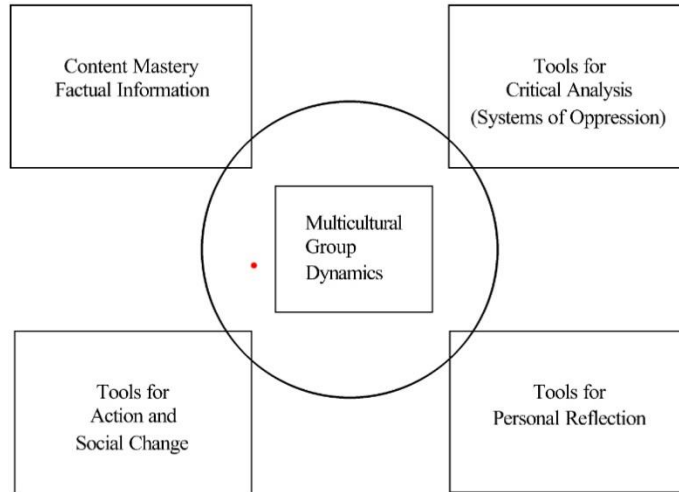
There are many theories related to social justice education, such as social transmission theory, critical theory, and multicultural education theories. This provides a discussion and justification of the usage of the SJEP, the conceptual model used in this study.

### The Social Justice Education Perspective

The SJEP is a product of social transmission theory (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). Social transmission theories suggests that for society to survive the socio-political and economical order must be replicated and maintained through the transmission of the dominant group's traditions and beliefs (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). Social transmission theories suggest that inequities are inherent due to the persistence of replicating and maintaining the dominant group's cultural structures. SJEP is related to social transmission theories because it accepts that inequities are transmitted through education, particularly in school's curriculum structures and pedagogies (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). Specifically, this perspective actively examines diversity and the systems that lead to inequality (Hackman, 2005). Additionally, SJEP encourages students to be active participants in their education through critical examinations of all levels of oppression while discovering ways to create social change. SJEP suggests that unless schools actively examine education, they perpetuate social inequalities and prejudices because schools are transmitters of the dominant culture. Furthermore, social justice education theorists contend that social justice is a goal and a process that require action (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014). Although, SJEP scholars have mostly focused on elementary and secondary schools' curriculum design the perspective can be applied to higher education degree programs' curriculums guided by the CSWE educational policies and accreditation standards (Morrow, 2011).

Based on the work of other social justice theorists, Hackman (2005) suggested that there are five essential components in the SJEP: content mastery, tools for critical analysis, tools for social change, tools for personal reflection, and an awareness of multicultural group dynamics.

Figure 1 shows how these components are interrelated.



*Figure 1: Five Essential Components in Social Justice Education Perspective (Hackman, 2005)*

### Content Mastery

This component is made up of three principles: factual information, historical contextualization, and a macro-to-micro content analysis (Hackman, 2005). According to the SJEP, content mastery includes the call for implementing historical contextualization and facts into curriculum; while simultaneously calling for an understanding of the historical, political, social and economic forces that create oppression.

### 1. Factual Information

This first principle suggests that information sources in the curriculum do not “reproduce dominant, hegemonic ideologies” and includes a variety of sources to encourage a social justice educational environment (Hackman, 2005).

### 2. Historical Contextualization

This second principle of content mastery emphasizes the importance of understanding content through a historical lens (Hackman, 2005) to effectively encourage social justice among students.

### 3. Macro-to-micro Content Analysis

This final principle suggests that curriculum provides students with information that connects to their lives and helps them understand the micro-level implications of macro issues.

### Tools for Critical Analysis

This component suggests that all content be subject to debate and that sources of information are from multiple, non-dominant perspectives which are viewed as valid and not simply supplemental to the dominant, hegemonic perspective. Additionally, tools for critical analysis include exposing students to varied experiences to open their minds. Lastly, this component requires that power and oppression are analyzed and alternatives are recognized (Hackman, 2005).

### Tools for Action and Social Change

This component intentionally encourages students to use all the information they learn and the critical thinking skills they have acquired to work toward action and social change. Further, this component suggests that educators provide students with examples of how social change was generated historically and empower students to use the content provided to create change (Hackman, 2005).

### Tools for Personal Reflection

This component requires critical reflection on social identities in relation to power and privilege. It is necessary to continually engage in self-reflection to critique currently used practices and expose self to ways to improve content areas. Personal reflection suggests that educators engage in self-reflection and use reflection exercises in the classroom with students.

### An Awareness of Multicultural Group Dynamics

This component suggests understanding how socially constructed identities and group dynamics impact educational experiences (Hackman, 2005). Educators should be aware that group dynamics potentially influence delivery of content; but not change the content.

This dissertation study uses SJEP to guide the data analysis and interpretation. Specifically, the standards, guidelines, and EPAS will be examined within the context of the five essential components of social justice education as identified in the SJEP. More specifically, the researcher will use the five components of SJEP to examine how the construct of social justice is addressed in the curriculum standards at two different points in the history of social work education.

## CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

In the literature review and conceptual framework sections, the researcher discussed the histories of social work education and practice; the importance of social justice in social work education; the Social Justice Education Perspective (SJEP); and the limited availability of empirical knowledge about the implementation of social justice into social work education's curriculum. This study has been designed to examine the accreditation standards in the field of social work education to better understand how the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has implemented social justice into the curriculum. Findings in this study may strengthen our understanding of CSWE's past and current approach to social justice through curriculum standards. This section outlines the methodology the researcher used to accomplish this goal.

### Design and Sample

In this exploratory study, the researcher used content analysis as methodology of choice. Qualitative content analysis was selected because it is the study of recorded communications, including but not limited to documents, speeches, web pages, newspapers, magazines, reports, or any combination of these (Babbie, 2007, 2010). Content analysis has proven useful in social work research about curriculum (Seipel, 1986) and is used often in other fields of social science (Krippendorff, 2018). In this study, guided by the tenets of the SJEP, the researcher deductively approached the data to develop conclusions. The units of analysis in this study are records of



CSWE's accreditation manuals. Since its inception, CSWE has released several accreditation manuals. The population of this study is the former and current CSWE accreditation manuals from 1952 to 2015 located in the University of Minnesota's Social Welfare History Archives. The archives are a vast collection of documents from private sector social services and social reform organizations, including CSWE (University of Minnesota, 2018). The vast collection about CSWE includes information from CSWE's predecessors, the American Association of Social Work and the National Association of Schools of Social Administration; administration records; accreditation manuals; and program records (University of Minnesota, 2018). The researcher contacted the Archives staff to inquire about CSWE related materials and requested an access to them. After the inquiry, the researcher was informed that several documents, including multiple accreditation manuals were readily available for scholarly purposes.

This sample of this study consisted of two CSWE accreditation manuals; the 1971 *Manual of Accrediting Standards for Graduate Professional Schools of Social Work* and the 2015 *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate and Masters' Social Work Programs*. The criteria for inclusion in study were that the accreditation manuals markedly included components of the SJEP. Specifically, the 1971 manual was selected as the first-time period to examine CSWE because that year marked the beginning of required diversity content in the curriculum of social work education (Bowie et al., 2011). At the time of the study, 2015 was the latest released standards, therefore it was selected to show social work education's current approach to social justice. The selection of the years 1971 and 2015 provided a 44-year time span.

## Content Analysis

Content analysis is a qualitative research method that started as a primarily quantitative analytical technique (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). There are many ways to define content analysis and scholars disagree on how to define it (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Julien, 2012); however, the qualitative version of this method is often defined as a research method “for the subjective interpretation of content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). This method was originally used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to analyze hymns, newspaper and magazine articles and political speeches (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Several academic disciplines use content analysis as a research method, although it is most often used in communication, journalism, sociology, psychology, business, nursing, and public health (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Some of the earliest forms of content analysis centered around a quantitative approach, focusing on counting the occurrences of words, phrases to convert these instances into numerical data (Krippendorff, 2018); however, now content analysis is often grouped with other qualitative research methods.

Content analysis is useful when analyzing written, audio, or visual communications. This method allows for the examination of what is included and excluded in the communications. The ability to account for the unspoken, unwritten in communication is important when exploring complex phenomena (Carey, 2012). Content analysis allows researchers to organize large amounts of information into related categories (Bowen, 2009). The categories are created through coding. Coding is a process of changing data into a standardized form or manageable chunks (Babbie, 2007). Coding in content analysis involves refining the conceptual framework to utilize it in addressing the research question (Babbie, 2010). This process requires the researcher

to clearly define the terms being used in coding or conceptualize. Conceptualization is important to content analysis because it is the mental process in which the concepts are more clearly defined. This process results in the definitions and indicators that the researcher will use in their research to categorize the data (Alston & Bowles, 2003).

### Coding for Manifest and Latent Content

Content analysis allows the researcher to choose which type of content will be analyzed or coded. Specifically, there is a choice to code the manifest content or the latent content using this method. Manifest content is the concrete terms, and in coding this would appear as coding for the number of times a word appears. Latent content is the underlying meaning of content.

When coding for latent content, researchers would read longer passages of documents and make an assessment about the underlying context of the data (Babbie, 2010; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Coding for manifest content increases the reliability of a study because it provides for greater specificity and replicability. Coding for latent content provides a greater depth of the understanding but decreases reliability (Babbie, 2010; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008).

Researchers noted three distinct approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, and summative (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). These approaches use a naturalistic paradigm, however employ different coding schemes, origins of codes and threats to trustworthiness (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

### Approaches to Content Analysis

Conventional content analysis is used when the researcher aims to describe a phenomenon that there is limited existing or available theory or research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Using this approach, researchers immerse themselves in the data, do not use preconceived

categories and allow the names of the categories to flow from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis is often used when the available theory or research could be expanded or refined. This approach is more structured than conventional content analysis and researchers use existing theory or prior research to determine the categories for the initial coding of the data obtained (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Furthermore, when using directed content analysis, researchers operationalize definitions for the categories using existing theory. Finally, summative content analysis starts with the researcher identifying certain words or content in text to understand the context of the data. This approach does not attempt to infer meaning; however, it attempts to explore how certain words or content were used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). More specifically, summative content analysis goes beyond the frequency counts of words (manifest content) to interpret the underlying contexts (latent content). This study uses directed and summative content analysis approaches to address the research question: Does the EPAS of CSWE address social justice in a way that supports the SJEP? Specifically, the researcher uses the directed approach to content analysis because SJEP is used as a conceptual framework and provides pre-existing categories (the essential components) and the summative approach to content analysis is used because the researcher counts the frequencies of the words provided by the essential components of SJEP and expands the words with other keywords used to infer the meaning behind the components of SJEP to interpret the context of the data which is different than the original context of the conceptual framework (elementary and secondary education classroom teaching).

Directed and summative content analysis approaches are well suited for this study because the researcher starts with the preconceived categories of SJEP and attempts to extend this conceptual framework to higher education setting, specifically to social work education. The

directed content analysis approach allows the researcher to use the essential components of SJEP and categorize all instances of the phenomenon in the data. This study also uses summative content analysis approach because the researcher quantifies the instances of the essential components of SJEP and the explicit use of the concept, social justice in the data. Through the quantification the researcher can explore how social justice and the essential components are used in the data and interpret the usage. Through this approach the researcher counts the frequency of specific words or content (manifest analysis) and interprets the content (latent analysis). Both manifest and latent analysis are necessary for this study because the SJEP encompasses more than the explicit usage of the *social justice* in the data. The following section will expound on the procedures, including the conceptualization of social justice used in this study.

## Procedures

The data were organized using Microsoft Word and stored in a Dropbox account that is password protected. First, based on the conceptual framework and the state of the literature surrounding the construct, the researcher did not attempt to operationalize the construct and only examine the data for the explicit use of *social justice*, although this deviated from directed content analysis. Next, the data were arranged into topical categories based on the chief categories required for federal accreditation (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2002) then coded. This was necessary because the language of the manuals varied; therefore, as part of data processing the following topical categories were utilized to organize the data: a) introductory and supplemental materials; b) fiscal matters and operations; c) accreditation and assessment; and d) core curriculum standards. Accordingly, the category of introductory and

supplemental materials included sections of the manuals that helped readers understand how to use the manuals, sections that outlined the contents of the manual, and sections that provided general information about social work education and/or social work practice. The category of fiscal matters and operations included sections of the manuals that focused on the resources and learning environment of social work education programs. The category of accreditation procedures includes sections of the manuals about the processes social work education programs use to prepare for accreditation and assess outcomes of students. The core curriculum standards category includes sections of the manual that include the educational requirements of social work education programs.

When organizing the content of the accreditation manuals into topical categories, several judgment calls were made after the initial examination of the data. For instance, appendices are often thought of as supplemental materials, however, in this study, the 1971 appendices were included in the core curriculum standards topical category and not the introductory and supplemental materials topical category because it includes information that social work education programs would have used to develop curricula. Also, the 2015 implicit curriculum section was included in the fiscal matters and operations topical category and not the core curriculum standards topical category because it is about the external elements of a social work education program, including governance, resources and administrative details. Table 1 shows the contents of manuals included in the topical categories used in this study for analysis.

Table 1: Topical Categories and Content of 1971 and 2015 Accreditation Manuals

Topical Categories for Study	Content of Each Manual Included in Topical Categories	
	1971	2015
Introductory and Supplemental Materials	I. Use of Manual II. Preface III. Contents	I. Contents II. Introduction III. Purpose: Social Work Practice Education, and Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards IV. Competency-based Education V. Appendix
Fiscal Matters and Operations	I. Program II. Organization and Administration III. Facilities	I. Program Mission and Goals II. Implicit Curriculum
Accreditation and Assessment	I. General Standards for Accrediting Schools of Social Work II. Self-study and Outcomes III. Procedures for Accreditation of a School of Social Work	I. Assessment
Core Curriculum Standards	I. Objectives II. Appendices	I. Social Work Competencies II. Explicit Curriculum

### Coding Process

Once the accreditation manuals were organized into topical categories, the coding process began using the SJEP components as predetermined coding categories; 1) content mastery; 2) critical thinking and the analysis of oppression; 3) action and social change; 4) personal reflection; and 5) awareness of multicultural group dynamics. The construct of social justice is

complex; however, the SJEP embodies these intricacies by providing five components essential for social justice in education. These predefined components were used as predetermined categories for coding the data. In its original application, Hackman (2005) provided the five components to “clarify what constitutes a social justice educational approach” (p. 103) in elementary and secondary classrooms; this study, however, applies the components to a postsecondary education discipline to examine how it implements social justice into its curriculum standards and may not only validate the framework and its components but also expand or refine them. More specifically, the perspective was designed to equip K-12 teachers with the information necessary to assess whether the students’ learning environments constituted a social justice educational approach and this study aims to apply this framework to an organizational, instead of individual level.

Using the five essential components of the SJEP as coding categories, contents of the accreditation manuals were systematically analyzed. First, the accreditation manuals were skimmed or superficially examined (Bowen, 2009). After this step, the manuals were separated into the four topical categories. Then the content of four topical categories was thoroughly read and coded using the five essential components. After this step, the manuals were read again using the same topical categories before the interpreting the results. Bowen (2009) suggests that skimming the documents is important in identifying pertinent information and separating it from the less important information contained in the document. The 1971 table of contents and the 2015 table of contents and glossary in the introductory and supplemental materials sections were excluded from the final analysis because the information included in these sections were found in the other sections. In other words, these sections were excluded because although they provided outlines of each manual and defined some jargon, this information was readily available in other



parts of the manual, so these sections were excluded. The second reading of the documents is a thorough examination and it allows for the discovery of patterns and emerging themes. Data were coded during the second reading of the accreditation manuals to uncover explicit use of social justice and the essential components of the SJEP. After coding the data during the second read, the documents were read and coded again to ensure a thorough examination of the data. The researcher sent the coding scheme to one of the committee co-chairs for review. The committee co-chair identified issues in the coding scheme and met with the researcher to refine the coding scheme. Following this consensus meeting, the researcher recoded the data and sent the findings to the committee co-chair for review. The committee co-chair approved of the findings based on the revised coding scheme. The rigor and reliability of this study was improved because of the feedback on the coding scheme from the committee co-chair and the consensus meeting to revise the coding scheme between the researcher and the committee co-chair which led to coding data on two distinct occasions.

When examining the documents for the five interconnected essential components of the SJEP, the researcher searched for keywords and phrases related to the descriptions of each component. Notably, the keywords and phrases were derived directly from the definitions and constructions of the components provided by the SJEP. Additionally, researcher searched for the explicit use of the construct, *social justice*, in the data. Specifically, when searching for *content mastery* in the data, the researcher searched for the following keywords or phrases: history, context, multiple sources of information, understanding information in context, systems theory, policy analysis and understanding implications of policy on individuals. To extract the component, *tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression*, from the data, the researcher searched for the following keywords or phrases: discrimination, scientific inquiry,

oppression, critical thinking, and expansion of personal perspective. When reviewing the data for *tools for action and social change*, the researcher searched for the following keywords or phrases: action, empower, social action, working together, civil participation, advocacy, and activism. The code for the fourth component, *tools for personal reflection*, the researcher searched for the following keywords or phrases: reflection, self-awareness, assessment, use of self, and critical examination, For the fifth component, *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics*, the researcher searched for the following keywords or phrases: group dynamics, social construction, identity, student-centered, and flexibility in content. These interconnected components should all be included in curriculum standards to effectively practice social justice in education. Table 2 shows the definitions and keywords of the essential components used in this study.

Table 2: Definitions and Keywords or Phrases for Essential Components

Component	Definition	Keywords/ Phrases
Content Mastery	The call for implementing historical contextualization and facts into curriculum; while simultaneously calling for an understanding of the historical, political, social and economic forces that create oppression.	History, systems theory, context, multiple sources of information, understanding information, policy analysis, understanding policy,
Tools for Critical Analysis	All content should be subject to debate and sources of information from multiple, non-dominant perspectives are viewed as valid and not simply supplemental to the dominant, hegemonic perspective.	discrimination, scientific inquiry, oppression, critical thinking, expansion of personal perspective
Tools for Action and Social Change	Intentionally encouraging students to actively use information and critical thinking skills one acquired in the classroom for social change.	empower, social action, civil participation, advocacy, action, activism, working together
Tools for Personal Reflection	Requires critical reflection on social identities in relation to power and privilege.	reflection, self-awareness, use of self, critical examination
Awareness of Multicultural Group Dynamics	An understanding of how socially constructed identities and group dynamics impact educational experiences.	group dynamics, social construction, identity, student-centered, flexibility in content

As has been noted the analysis involved the following steps: 1) initial examination or skimming of accreditation manuals, 2) accreditation manuals' content organized into topical categories for analysis, 3) thorough examination of accreditation manuals for explicit use of social justice, 4) thorough examination of topical categories of accreditation manuals for the SJEP's essential components. This analysis uncovers the emphasis on social justice in social work education as evidenced by its inclusion in accreditation standards.

## CHAPTER IV RESULTS

This research study examines whether the EPAS of CSWE addresses social justice in a way that supports the SJEP using accreditation manual from two distinct times as data. The methodology used followed what was described in Chapter 3. The research results are reported in this chapter, which begins with the frequencies of the explicit use of *social justice* in the data, followed by a summary of the frequencies of all the essential components in the data, the frequencies and themes of each essential component, and the frequencies of all the essential components by topical category and year. This chapter concludes with all the themes of social justice and the essential components in the data.

### Explicit Use of Social Justice in the Accreditation Manuals

*Social Justice* was not explicitly used in the 1971 manual but appeared in three topical categories of the 2015 manual. The following were the four themes surrounding the explicit use of *social justice* in the data: 1) Social justice and the purpose of social work, 2) Social justice and social work values, 3) Social justice and its understanding among social workers, and 4) Social justice and its application in practice. Table 3 provides the frequency that the explicit use of the construct, *social justice* occurred in the data followed by the four themes of social justice and all occurrences of the construct in the data.

Table 3: Frequencies of Social Justice by Topical Category and Year

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	0	1
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	0	1
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	0	0
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	0	5
<b>Total</b>	0	7

The four themes of *social justice* and all examples for each of the themes from the data are presented below:

*Theme 1: Social Justice and the Purpose of Social Work*

In the data, *social justice* was emphasized when describing the purpose of social work:

...the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for *social and economic justice*...(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5).

*Theme 2: Social Justice and Social Work Values*

In the data, *social justice* was highlighted as a part of social work values:

Service, *social justice*, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relations, integrity, competence, human rights, and scientific inquiry are among the core values of social work (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 10).

*Theme 3: Social Justice and the Understanding of Social Workers*

In the data, *social justice* was emphasized as a construct that social worker should understand:

Social workers understand...and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and *social justice* and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 7).

Social workers understand human rights and *social justice* as well as social welfare and services are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

#### *Theme 4: Social Justice and its Application in Practice*

In the data, *social justice* and its application in practice was highlighted:

Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and *social and economic justice* (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 11).

Social workers apply their understand of *social, economic and environmental justice* to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels...(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

Social workers apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and *social, economic, and environmental justice*(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

## Essential Components of the Social Justice Education Perspective

This section includes Table 4 which provides the frequencies of the five essential components: 1) *content mastery*, 2) *tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression*, 3) *tools for action and social change*, 4) *tools for personal reflection*, and 5) *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* by year.

Table 4: *Frequencies of the Essential Components by Year*

	<b>1971</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Content Mastery</b>	22	8
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	15	2
<b>Action and Social Change</b>	7	2
<b>Personal Reflection</b>	4	9
<b>Awareness of Group</b>	6	3

### Essential Component: Content Mastery

This section starts with Table 5 which provides the frequencies of the essential component, *content mastery* by topical category and year in the data. There were six themes surrounding the content mastery component of SJEP in the data: 1) Emphasis on the role of CSWE COA, 2) Use of different methods; 3) Emphasis and understanding of broader context, 4) Need for multiple sources of information, 5) Emphasis on historical context, and 6) an Emphasis on understanding social work.

Table 5: Frequencies of Content Mastery by Topical Category and Year

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	3	3
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	4	0
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	3	0
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	12	5
<b>Total</b>	22	8

The six themes of *content mastery* and one example for each theme from each manual, if applicable, is presented below:

*Theme 1: Emphasis on the Role of CSWE COA*

In the data, *content mastery* was emphasized when describing the role of CSWE COA:

Important functions of the Council included the formulation of standards for social work education and the evaluation of professional schools in light of these standards (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. v).

The COA is responsible for formulating, promulgating, and implementing the accreditation standards for baccalaureate and master's degree programs in social work, for assuring the standards define competent preparation..(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 4).

*Theme 2: Use of Different Methods*

Another tenet of *content mastery* highlighted that social work education programs should use different instructional and assessment methods:



Understanding social work practice is complex and multi-dimensional, the assessment methods [of students' competence] used by programs and the data collected may vary by context (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 6).

The methods of instruction selected and developed by a school shall reflect the principle that the educational process in social work makes both intellectual and emotional learning demands that well-chosen instructional methods stimulate both the students' capacity and involvement in professional learning. Instructional methods will vary in relation to the nature of educational objectives (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 6).

### *Theme 3: Emphasis and Understanding of Broader Context*

In the data, *content mastery* was emphasized when the importance of understanding the broader contexts of the community, discipline, and profession of social work during curriculum design was highlighted:

A school shall define its particular or individual objectives and make its unique contributions in the light of social factors as the particular characteristic of the educational institution of which the school is a part, the resources attainable, and the needs of the social and professional environments (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 10).

Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge...(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

#### *Theme 4: Need for Multiple Sources of Information*

The importance for social work education programs to have multiple sources of information available was highlighted as a tenet of *content mastery*:

The book, periodical, and reference collection [of the library] shall support – by quality, size, nature, and appropriate duplication of holdings – the instructional and research programs of the school and be assembled in such a way as to be readily accessible for student use (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 30).

Curriculum objectives define with the student is expected to learn. Learning experiences such as those provided through classroom courses, the practicum, laboratory experiences, tutorial conferences, and research projects offer the student the means to achieve the goals of social work education (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 60).

#### *Theme 5: Emphasis on Understanding Historical Context*

Another tenet of *content mastery* highlighted the importance of understanding the historical context of social policies and structures influencing social services:

Attention should be given to the historical as well as current forces which generate social policies and contribute to social problems (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 57).

Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8)

#### *Theme 6: Emphasis on Understanding Social Work*

Another tenet of *content mastery* highlighted an emphasis on understanding of social work:

Study should be giving to the characteristics and structures of social work as a profession, with particular attention to the roles its members have served, historically and currently, in the development and implementation of social welfare policies and programs (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 57).

[Social workers] understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 7).

#### Essential Component: Tools for Critical Thinking and Analysis of Oppression

This section starts with Table 6 which provides the frequencies of the essential component, *tools for critical thinking and analysis of oppression* by topical category and year in the data. There were four themes surrounding the *critical thinking* component of SJEP in the data: 1) Improvement of curriculum, 2) Commitment to antidiscrimination and diversity, 3) Essential part of social work education, and 4) an Emphasis on critical evaluation.

*Table 6: Frequencies of Critical Thinking by Topical Category and Year*

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	2	2
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	3	0
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	3	0
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	7	0
<b>Total</b>	15	2

The four themes of *tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression* and one example for each theme from each manual, if applicable is presented below:

*Theme 1: Improvement of Curriculum*

A tenet of *critical thinking* highlighted was a call for social work education programs to continually improve curriculum:

The Commission will continue to revise standards, develop criteria, and improve, procedures of accrediting on the basis of findings from educational research, new knowledge, changing needs, and experience (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. vi).

EPAS recognizes a holistic view of competence; that is, the demonstration of competency is informed by knowledge, values, skills and cognitive and affective processes that include social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique practice situations (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 6).

*Theme 2: Commitment to antidiscrimination and diversity*

Another tenet of *critical thinking* highlighted was a commitment to antidiscrimination and diversity of social work education programs:

A school is expected to demonstrate the specific efforts undertaken to provide special opportunities for full and educationally sound preparation for educationally able student whose access to quality education has been blocked, limited, or distorted (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 15).

A school is expected to demonstrate the special efforts it is making to enrich its programs by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty, and staff (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 6).

*Theme 3: Essential part of social work education*

In the data, *critical thinking* was highlighted as an essential part of social work education:

Equal in importance to the mastery of relevant content for the social work student is the development of the capacity to assess critically the state of this theory and knowledge...(Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 58).

Social work education at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels shapes the profession's future through the education of competent professionals, the generation of knowledge, the promotional of evidence-informed practice through scientific inquiry, and the exercise of leadership within the professional community (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5).

*Theme 4: Emphasis on Critical Evaluation*

Another tenet of *critical thinking* highlighted was an emphasis on critical evaluation by social workers:

Provisions should be made for helping students to acquire an ability for critical analysis of the problems and conditions in society and its major institutions which have warranted or now require the intervention of social work (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 57).

[Social workers] apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic and environmental justice (Council on

Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

Essential Component: Tools for Action and Social Change

This section starts with Table 7 which provides the frequencies of the essential component, *tools for action and social change* by topical category and year in the data. There were three themes surrounding the *action and social change* component of SJEP in the data: 1) Promotion of change and empowerment, 2) Encouragement to assist broader community, and 3) Preparation with tools for professional practice.

Table 7: Frequencies of Action and Social Change by Category and Year

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	2	1
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	1	0
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	0	0
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	4	1
<b>Total</b>	7	2

The three themes of *tools for action and social change* and one example for each theme from each manual, if applicable is presented below:

*Theme 1: Promotion of change and empowerment*

A tenet of *action and social change* highlighted was a promotion of change and empowerment in social work education programs:

A school shall share responsibility with the social work community for working with the public at large to assess social welfare needs, to help evaluate and develop appropriate services, to contribute to positive social change, and to take measures to insure an adequate pool of qualified professional personnel (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 11).

The essential purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a professional judgment of the quality of the program offered and to encourage continual improvement (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 4).

*Theme 2: Encouragement to assist broader community*

Another tenet of *action and social change* highlighted was encouraging social work education programs to assist the broader community:

Within the limits of available resources, schools are encouraged to assist the social work community in raising the level of practice by providing special institutes, seminars, and short courses, and by participating in in-service training programs sponsored by agencies (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 18)

Social work as a profession deals with problems and conditions which limit social functioning through the promotion of social and institutional change and the provision of opportunities with enhance social functioning of individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and nations (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 55).

### *Theme 3: Preparation with tools for professional practice*

Another tenet of *action and social change* highlighted was role of social work education preparing students with tools for professional practice:

[Social welfare policy content in curriculum should] Prepare professionals to act as informed and competent practitioners in providing services, and as participants or leaders in efforts to achieve desirable change (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 57).

[Social workers] engage in practices, that advance social, economic, and environmental justice (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 8).

#### Essential Component: Tools for Personal Reflection

This section starts with Table 8 which provides the frequencies in the essential component, *tools for personal reflection* by topical category and year in the data. There were four themes surrounding the *personal reflection* component of SJEP in the data: 1) Self-evaluation for programs, 2) Assessment of educational outcomes, 3) Self-reflection as a tool, and 4) an Understanding human rights and oppression.



Table 8: Frequencies of Personal Reflection by Topical Category and Year

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	1	3
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	0	0
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	3	2
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	0	4
<b>Total</b>	4	9

The four themes of *tools for personal reflection* and one example for each theme from each manual, if applicable is presented below:

*Theme 1: Self-evaluation for programs*

A tenet of *personal reflection* highlighted was the importance of self-evaluation for social work education programs:

...accreditation of programs of professional education for social work should also serve...to foster continuing self-analysis and self-improvement of schools so as to encourage imaginative educational development (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 4).

The systematic examination of compliance with established standards supports public confidence in the quality of professional social work education and in the competence of social work practice (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 4).

### *Theme 2: Assessment of educational outcomes*

Another tenet of *personal reflection* highlighted was the assessment of students by social work education programs:

A school shall show evidence that it engages in systematic self-study and evaluation of the outcomes of educational experiences for students (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 34).

Assessment of student learning outcomes is an essential component of competency-based education. Assessment provides evidence that students have demonstrated the level of competence necessary to enter professional practice, which in turns shows programs are successful in achieving their goals (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 6).

### *Theme 3: Self-reflection as a tool*

Another tenet of *personal reflection* highlighted was self-reflection as a tool of social work:

[Each student should] develop the self-awareness and self-discipline requisite for responsible performance as a social worker (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 59).

[Social workers] use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 7)

### *Theme 4: Understanding human rights and oppression*

Another tenet of *personal reflection* highlighted was an understanding of human rights and oppression:

Generalist practitioners engage diversity in their practice and advocate for human rights and social and economic justice (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 11)

Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political and cultural many oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 7).

#### Essential Component: An Awareness of Multicultural Group Dynamics

This section starts with Table 9 which provides the frequencies of the essential component, *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* by topical category and year in the data. There were four themes surrounding the *multicultural group dynamics* component of SJEP in the data: 1) Inclusion of diverse curricula, 2) Awareness of diversity, 3) Self-awareness and intersectionality, and 4) Interprofessional collaboration.

*Table 9: Frequencies of Multicultural Group Dynamics by Topical Category and Year*

	1971	2015
<b>Introductory and Supplemental Materials</b>	1	1
<b>Fiscal Matters and Operations</b>	0	0
<b>Accreditation and Assessment</b>	2	0
<b>Core Curriculum Standards</b>	3	2
<b>Total</b>	6	3

The four themes of *awareness of multicultural group dynamics* and one example for each theme from each manual, if applicable is presented below:

*Theme 1: Inclusion of diverse curricula*

A tenet of *multicultural group dynamics* highlighted was the inclusion of diverse curricula:

Major emphasis [in curriculum policy] is placed on qualitative, not quantitative standards and on the achievement of high standards rather than standardization of educational programs (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. v).

[EPAS] permits programs to use traditional and emerging models and methods of curriculum design...(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5).

*Theme 2: Awareness of diversity*

A tenet of *multicultural group dynamics* highlighted was an awareness of the diversity of the student body by social work education programs:

The curriculum should be structured in a manner that permits recognition and response to the fact that students enter graduate schools of social work with varied socio-cultural, educational, and work experience (Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 55).

*Theme 3: Self-awareness and intersectionality*

A tenet of *multicultural group dynamics* highlighted was an emphasis on self-awareness and intersectionality:

[Curriculum helps students to] understand his own role in a society and contribute responsibly to the development of the profession...(Council on Social Work Education, 1971, p. 56)

Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations...(Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 7).

#### *Theme 4: Interprofessional Collaboration*

In the data, a tenet of *multicultural group dynamics* highlighted was interprofessional collaboration:

[Social workers] use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 9).

#### Summary of Results

This section starts with Table 10 which provides the total frequencies of the essential components, Followed by Table 11 which provides the frequencies of the essential components by topical category and year. This section concludes with Table 12 which provides the themes of *social justice*, and the essential components – *content mastery, tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression, tools for action and social change, tools for personal reflection, and an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* found in the data.

Table 10: Total Frequencies of the Essential Components

Essential Components	Totals
Content Mastery	30
Critical Thinking	17
Action and Social Change	9
Personal Reflection	13
Awareness of Group Dynamics	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>78</b>

Table 11: Frequencies of Essential Components by Topical Category and Year

	1971					2015				
	Introductory and Supplemental Materials	Fiscal Matters and Operations	Accreditation and Assessment	Core Curriculum Standards	Totals	Introductory and Supplemental Materials	Fiscal Matters	Accreditation and Assessment	Core Curriculum Standards	Totals
Content Mastery	3	4	3	12	22	3	0	0	5	8
Critical Thinking	2	3	3	7	15	2	0	0	0	2
Action and Social Change	2	1	0	4	7	1	0	0	1	2
Personal Reflection	1	0	3	0	4	3	0	2	4	9
Awareness of Group Dynamics	1	0	2	3	6	1	0	0	2	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>

Table 12: Themes of Social Justice and Essential Components

Construct/Component	Themes
Social Justice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social justice and the purpose of social work</li> <li>2. Social justice and social work values</li> <li>3. Social justice and its understanding among social workers</li> <li>4. Social justice and its application in practice</li> </ol>
Content Mastery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasis on the role of CSWE COA</li> <li>2. Use of different methods in social work education</li> <li>3. Emphasis and understanding of broader context</li> <li>4. Need for multiple sources of information</li> <li>5. Emphasis on the historical context</li> <li>6. Emphasis on understanding social work</li> </ol>
Tools for Critical Thinking and the Analysis of Oppression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improvement of curricula</li> <li>2. Commitment to antidiscrimination and diversity</li> <li>3. Essential part of social work education</li> <li>4. Emphasis on critical evaluation</li> </ol>
Tools for Action and Social Change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotion of change and empowerment</li> <li>2. Encouragement to assist broader community</li> <li>3. Preparation with tools for professional practice</li> </ol>
Tools for Personal Reflection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-evaluation for programs</li> <li>2. Assessment of educational outcomes</li> <li>3. Self-reflection as a tool</li> <li>4. Understanding human rights and oppression</li> </ol>
An Awareness of Multicultural Group Dynamics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inclusion of diverse curriculum</li> <li>2. Awareness of diversity</li> <li>3. Self-awareness and intersectionality</li> <li>4. Interprofessional collaboration</li> </ol>

## CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

The purpose of this exploratory, directed and summative content analysis study was to examine whether the educational policies and accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education addressed social justice in a way that supports the Social Justice Education Perspective. This chapter starts with a discussion of the importance of this study and the major findings as related to the SJEP conceptual framework. Additionally, this chapter includes the implications of this study as related to social work education, research and practice. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and areas for future research.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research question:

Does the educational policies and accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education address social justice in a way that supports the Social Justice Education Perspective?

According to CSWE, the purpose of the social work profession is “to promote human and community wellbeing” (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5) which makes it a great field to implement the Social Justice Education Perspective. The SJEP posits that unless education curricula and practices are actively examined they perpetuate social inequalities and prejudices because educational institutions are transmitters of the dominant culture, status quo (Hackman, 2005).

This study enhances the SJEP conceptual framework by utilizing it outside of the elementary and



secondary education classrooms and applying it to the postsecondary educational policies and curriculum standards of social work education. Specifically, the researcher innovatively used a conceptual framework designed to assist elementary and secondary educators with practicing social justice education – education that actively examines the curricula and challenges the acceptance of the status quo – and applied it to accreditation standards which is not often used as data of the postsecondary, postbaccalaureate academic discipline that is social work education.

### Interpretation of the Findings

The data used in this study represents over 40 years of developmental changes in social work education; therefore, unsurprisingly some things changed. Particularly, the presentation of the accreditation manuals of 1971 and 2015 are drastically different. In 1971, there was more content included for social work education programs to use. Specifically, the 1971 accreditation manual has more information and therefore it is longer than the 2015 accreditation manual. More specifically, the length of the 1971 accreditation manual increased the number of occurrences of many of the essential components for that year. For instance, a cursory review of the frequency tables would suggest that CSWE stressed four of the essential components more in 1971 than in 2015; however, the differences in frequencies are likely due to the changes in the amount of information CSWE provided to social work education programs in each accreditation manuals. CSWE was more prescriptive in its earlier days; however, the changes in higher education in general and the profession of social work specifically, social work education experienced a multitude of developmental changes during the multi-decade period represented by the data.

## Developmental Changes in Social Work Education

As mentioned, in the span of 40 years represented by the data, CSWE underwent several developmental changes. For instance, in April 1971, CSWE released the *Manual of Accrediting Standards for Graduate Professional Schools of Social Work*. At that time, CSWE was based in New York, NY and only accredited master's degree social work education programs. The manual included all approved revisions of the previous editions released by CSWE in years prior. Moreover, the 1971 version marked a developmental change in how accreditation standards were numbered. This change was important enough to mention in the introductory pages of the manual (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). Furthermore, the 1971 layout of the accreditation manual was completely different than the layout used by CSWE in the 2015 EPAS manual. This is notable because it further highlights the developmental changes that occurred during the span of the data used in this study. An example of the layout differences is that the 1971 manual includes an instructional guide on how social work education programs should use the manual, this portion of the manual also includes the purposes of the manual.

Furthermore, The legal status of CSWE was mentioned because at the time of publishing the 1971 manual, the accrediting body of social work education and its authority over social work education programs as provided by legislation was still new (Leighninger, 2012). Given the expanding nature of CSWE and social work education in general at the time of publishing the 1971 manual, it is unsurprising that the manual placed great emphasis on where the social work education programs were housed and the composition of their governance (Council on Social Work Education, 1971). It is important to reiterate that the formalization of social work education was relatively new at this time and CSWE were tasked with continually improving the

education, in order to directly improve the profession of social work so like many developing organizations they provided a detailed roadmap for social work education programs to use to meet these goals (Glicken, 2011). These developmental changes were influenced by the overall context of the nation and impacted the findings.

### Notable Findings

The findings relied on the information in the accreditation manuals and with a cursory view of the numbers it would be easily to mistakenly believe that the approach of CSWE once supported the SJEP in its approach to social justice; however, like most things in social work, its more complicated than the number of occurrences of the essential components. In contrast, if one only looks at the number of occurrences of the explicit use of social justice in the data, one could conclude that in 1971 CSWE did not support the SJEP in its approach to social justice; however, that is also not supported by the data and has more to do with the historical and contemporary context of social work. The findings of this study suggest that the 1971 and 2015 EPAS of CSWE support the SJEP in its approach to social justice.

The 1971 accreditation manual contained zero occurrences of the explicit use of the construct, *social justice*. Notably, the construct did not appear in the profession's code of ethics until 1979 (National Association of Social Workers (NASW), 1979) so perhaps CSWE adopted the explicit use of the construct in response to its use in the professional code of ethics. Furthermore, the 2015 accreditation manual contains the explicit use of the construct seven times. Since the professional ethics explicitly used the construct for over 30 years prior to the release of the 2015 accreditation manual and CSWE and NASW continue to work together on issues of mutual interests (Beless, 1989) since their formal relations were severed in 1971; it is

foreseeable that *social justice* would be explicitly used in the 2015 manual. Markedly, the themes surrounding the explicit use of *social justice* in the data - 1) social justice and the purpose of social work, 2) social justice and social work values, 3) social justice and its understanding among social workers, and 4) social justice and its application in practice - highlighted the relation between the professional practice and the education of social workers. These four themes which were all from the 2015 manual reflect the contemporary context of social work, including, the relation between the social work professional and social work education.

The explicit use of *social justice* is only a small portion of the picture when examining the data for whether the EPAS of CSWE supports the SJEP in its approach to social justice. The conceptual framework does not operationalize social justice, however it suggests that the essential components – 1) *content mastery*, 2) *tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression*, 3) *tools for action and social change*, 4) *tools for personal reflection*, and 5) *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* – are interrelated and must be included to promote social equality. Promoting social equality falls under the description CSWE provides as an explanation of the purpose of the social work profession, which is “to promote human and community wellbeing” (Council on Social Work Education Commission on Accreditation Commission on Educational Policy, 2015, p. 5).

The essential component of *content mastery* was found a total of 30 times in the data, including 22 times in the 1971 accreditation manual and 8 times in the 2015 manual. Content mastery includes three principles – factual information, historical contextualization, and macro-to-micro content analysis. In the 1971 accreditation manual, approximately 13 of the 22 occurrences of content mastery were related to the factual information principle of this component. This principle of content mastery suggests that educational institutions include a

variety of sources for curricula to promote a social justice in the educational environment (Hackman, 2005).

The findings for this component were not separated by its principles because the themes of the findings represent the principles. Specifically, the themes of content mastery uncovered in the data were the 1) emphasis on the role of the Council on Social Work Education Commission of Accreditation, the 2) use of different methods in social work education, the 3) emphasis and understanding of broader context, the 4) need for multiple sources of information, an 5) emphasis on the historical context, and an 6) emphasis on understanding social work. The principle of factual information was highlighted and can be seen in the themes uncovered in the data provides a plausible explanation of the difference between the number of occurrences of content mastery in the 1971 and 2015 accreditation manuals.

The changes to how CSWE presented the accreditation standards, the developmental changes from content-based to competency-based curriculum structures of CSWE is believed to have played the most significant role in the findings related to the essential component, content mastery. Furthermore, this component focuses on heavily on the type of materials educational programs use and since at in 1971 CSWE still used a content-based curriculum there was a high likelihood that content mastery would have more occurrences in 1971 than in 2015.

Nonetheless, content mastery was instilled throughout the 2015 accreditation manual. The EPAS mandated the use of theories and content about human behavior and the social environment; stressed the importance of understanding the profession and the unique context on which social work education programs are built, and the importance of understanding how policies impact the lives of individuals. This study examined accreditation manuals and a focus

of accreditation standards is content which is a major tenet of content mastery and why the frequency of occurrences of this component is higher than the other four essential components.

Of course, content alone is insufficient to support the SJEP and the other four components are just as important to prepare students to become “active agents of change and social justice” (Hackman, 2005, p. 105). The *tools for critical thinking and the analysis of oppression component* was found 17 times in the data, the 1971 manual accounted for 15 of these times. The phrase critical thinking was used more than two times in the 2015 manual; however, this component goes beyond simply suggesting that students use critical thinking skills and stresses the importance of analyzing the impact of power and oppression and using multiple perspectives in curriculum to encourage students to open their minds to the global world. Like many of the components, critical thinking shared many similarities to the other four essential components; however, the themes of this component uncovered in the data are: 1) improvement of curricula, 2) a commitment to antidiscrimination and diversity, 3) an essential part of social work education, and 4) an emphasis on critical evaluation. This component requires individuals to expand their personal perspectives and for social work education programs to incorporate alternatives to the dominant ideology and for this reason the researcher looked for more than the mere mention of critical thinking in the data.

Historically and contemporarily, social work has concerned itself with helping to enhance the lives of others and championing human rights; therefore, *the tools for action and social change component* was bound to be in the EPAS of 1971 and 2015. This component was found nine times in the data. Once again there were more instances of this component in the 1971 EPAS than in the 2015 EPAS. The length of the 1971 data plays a role in this difference as it did in the differences between the other components by year. Additionally, 1971 marked the first

year that CSWE formally input antidiscrimination into its educational policies which impacted the calls for social action in the data. The themes uncovered related to this component were: 1) promotion of change and empowerment, 2) encouragement to assist the broader community, and 3) preparation with tools for professional practice.

The only essential component of the SJEP with a higher frequency in 2015 than in 1971 was *tools for personal reflection*. Respectively, this component appeared four times in the 1971 manual and nine times in the 2015 manual with the following themes: 1) Self-evaluation for programs, 2) assessment of educational outcomes of students, 3) self-reflection as a tool of social work practitioners, and 4) an understanding of human rights and oppression. Although personal reflection includes self-reflection of both educators and students, it also calls for the critical reflection on social identities in relation to power and privilege (Hackman, 2005). Self-reflection is a major tenet of multicultural education (Walker & Staton, 2000) and cultural competency (Teasley, 2005) which are adopted aspects of social work education and practice and likely contributes to the greater emphasis on personal reflection in the 2015 accreditation manual than in the 1971 accreditation manual.

Lastly, the essential component, *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* was found in the data a total of nine times. Figure 1 on page 27 of this document shows how this component is uniquely related to the other four components and this was evident when the researcher examined the data for the occurrences of this essential component in the manual. The themes for this essential component included: 1) the inclusion of diverse curriculum, 2) awareness of diversity, 3) self-awareness and intersectionality, and 4) interprofessional collaboration. Many of these themes echo the themes uncovered in the other essential

components because the essential component, *an awareness of multicultural group dynamics* is the one component that incorporates all the others into its definition.

### Implications of this Study

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, projected employment of social workers will grow faster than the national average for other careers by 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017) and for social work education programs to produce social work professionals who are in sync with the profession's core concepts, particularly the commitment to social justice these concepts should hold a significant place in the curriculum. One of the core values of social work is social justice, therefore it is important that this construct is emphasized in social work education. This study found that CSWE has improved the emphasis of social justice in the curriculum standards. The curriculum of social work education has changed drastically since the inception of CSWE and these changes reflect not only the overall changes of higher education, but also the changes to the relation between social work education and social work practice.

The composition of higher education in the United States continues to change as the country changes which requires social work education to change. For instance, the language used in the accreditation manuals and the amount of information included in the manuals changed to provide social work education programs with more tools for success. Furthermore, CSWE recognizes the importance of reviewing its curriculum standards on an ongoing basis to ensure the policies are aligned with the everchanging demands of the profession. To put it differently, CSWE is the guiding light of social work education and social work practice. The incorporation of Social Justice Education into the curriculum standards encourages the use of social justice in the daily practices of social work educators, students and professionals.



## Limitations of the Study

This study was carefully prepared, however, there were limitations which potentially impacted the findings. For instance, the sample was small and included archival data. The 1971 copy of the accreditation manual that the researcher used had to be accepted in good faith that it was a complete and accurate representation of the original document. Additionally, there were attempts made to improve the rigor and reliability of this study, but the use of directed and summative content analysis may have limited the findings. Documents are used as data; however, it is rare for accreditation manuals to be used as data for research study. Therefore, many content analysis textbooks mentioned documents as a form of communication that can be studied but focused mostly on the content analysis of interviews. Furthermore, a limitation of this study is the lack of agreement among scholars about the meaning of the construct, social justice. Lastly, the conceptual framework was originally designed to provide a framework for elementary and secondary classroom teachers on how to implement social justice education into their teaching. Some may view this as a limitation while others may view the utilization of this conceptual framework as novel.

## Potential Future Research

The developmental changes of CSWE were unanticipated when selecting the sample for this study; however, it provides a new avenue to research. It would be particularly interesting to examine all the available accreditation manuals through the Social Justice Education Perspective to map the developmental changes of CSWE. Since there is so much disagreement surrounding the definition of the construct, social justice, a useful study would be a meta-analysis of how social justice is used in social work education journals. Lastly, another potential for future

research is the examination of the self-studies of social work education programs corresponding with the 1971 and 2015 accreditation manuals to compare the differences.

## Conclusion

CSWE is charged with ensuring that all social work values and ethics are included in the educational policies and accreditation standards and implemented into all accredited social work education programs. The findings of this study suggest that the approach to social justice by CSWE supports the SJEP which actively promotes social equality; however, the question remains as to whether social work education is steadily making progress toward adopting social justice educational environments in its programs.

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