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# The Experiences of Social Workers in Corporate America

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# The Experiences of Social Workers in Corporate America

by

Brianna O. Lorenz

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Social Work  
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Social Work

Committee Members  
Catherine L. Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D. LICSW (Chair)  
Mary Pederson, MSW  
Sharon I. Radd, Ed. D.

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

# SOCIAL WORKERS IN CORPORATE AMERICA

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of social workers in Corporate America, including their role in corporate social responsibility (CSR). The data collected was from four semi-structured interviews that lasted between 20 to 45 minutes each. Each participant was employed by or consulted for a large corporation and had roles in a variety of departments, including government affairs, internal consulting, talent and change management and leadership development. None of the participants had direct CSR responsibilities, however, each participant had experience with their CSR programs and valued them in their organizations. The study explored the participants' responsibilities in their organization, and how their social work practice and skills were incorporated in their work. Themes from the data indicated that social workers are most valued in their organizations for their abilities to build relationships, effectively implement change and see things in a different perspective from their co-workers. Participants reported that they used their social work skills in their daily work even within their business roles, and believed that corporations could benefit from having more individuals with the social work perspective in their organizations. The findings in this study fill a gap in the current literature and may have implications for social work in corporate settings, in social work education, and in future social work research.

*Keywords:* corporate social responsibility, macro social work, corporate setting, employee assistance program, volunteerism, corporate donations

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To my participants, this study was not possible without you. For that, I say thank you to each one of you. I had many doubts throughout the process, with no idea of what kind of information I was even looking for, let alone, what information I was going to get. Each of you gave me a wealth of insight, invaluable content and unexpected encouragement through your interviews. But most of all, you inspired me. You reminded me of why I was interested in this topic in the first place. You showed me the value in it. And you strengthened my passion for it. All of which contributed to the success of this study, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

## SOCIAL WORKERS IN CORPORATE AMERICA

To my family and friends, thank you for your never-ending support. Thank you for listening to my struggles, being patient when I didn't have time, and letting me share the things that I learned. Your love and encouragement kept me going.

Lastly, to the individuals I have worked with in the last four years, past and present, I am who I am today because of you. My interest in organizational dynamics, change management, leadership development, and my belief that I have the skills and vision to do those things came from you. Thank you for listening to all my many, many, many ideas on how to make changes to the systems that we work in. Thank you for trusting in those ideas and encouraging me to implement them. Your confidence in me has given me confidence in myself, and confidence that I can make a difference in a big way. Many of you have become friends more than colleagues, and I am grateful to have met you. You unleashed the change agent and leader in me, and with your encouragement, I have learned to embrace it rather than hide from it. For that, I say thank you.

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” (Williamson, 1992, p. 190-191)*

# SOCIAL WORKERS IN CORPORATE AMERICA

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### The Experiences of Social Workers in Corporate America

In 2012, the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP) conducted a survey about corporate giving with over 240 companies in the United States, including 60 of the top 100 companies on the Forbes Fortune 500 list. The survey reported that over \$20 billion were given in cash or in-kind giving, which was a 42% increase from the previous survey done in 2007. The CECP also reported that although cash donations remained the primary means of corporate giving at 47%, there is a rise in other areas such as giving employees paid time off to volunteer. Since 2007, the number of organizations that offer this type of corporate giving increased from 53% to 70% (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice [CECP], "Giving in numbers," 2013). In their study about the relationship between corporations and society, Deswal and Raghav (2014) believed that the growth of corporate giving is a result of the increased desire and even an expectation that organizations implement policies and build corporate culture around giving back to society or corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The value of this report is critical to understanding the overall trend and corporate thinking in the United States, in large part because of the members involved in the CECP. The CECP describes itself as a "coalition of CEOs united in the belief that societal improvement is an essential measure of business performance" (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice [CECP], "About CECP," 2014, para. 1). The fact that so many key decision-makers of major U.S. corporations are united in this cause raises the awareness and continued impact of CSR efforts. CSR is derived from the belief that all organizations, profit or non-profit, government or private, has a responsibility to society (Deswal & Raghav, 2014).

The social work profession has similar values and principles. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) state their mission in the following code of ethics preamble:

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and the empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on the individual well being in a social context and the well being of society. Fundamental to social work is the attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living (NASW, "Code of Ethics," para. 1).

The social work profession and corporations that have CSR goals believe in the same principle –it is everyone's responsibility, both individual and group alike, to support and help society. Because of this shared value, it is important for social workers to become active participants in the corporate CSR decision-making process.

In the 2012 Giving in Numbers report (CECP), corporate contributions were divided into nine categories and reported what percentage of the \$20 billion each category received: 28% to health and social services, 17% to K-12 education, 14% to other, 13% to community and economic development, 12% to higher education, 5% to civic and public affairs, 5% to culture and art, 3% to disaster relief and 3% to environment (CECP, "Giving in numbers," 2013). Historically, social workers worked with health and social services, the educational system and economic development, yet



limited knowledge is available regarding the role of social workers in relation to CSR in corporate settings.

The CECP was founded in 1999, making corporate giving a newer endeavor for these corporations and their CEOs (CECP, “About CECP,” 2014). On the other hand, the NASW (i.e., which was the merging of multiple social work associations) was established in 1955, making social workers more experienced in this field and a valuable resource for corporations (NASW, 2014). This study explored the role of social workers in Corporate America, in particular the benefits and advantages of having social workers involved in CSR. The researcher used the term Corporate America to mean corporations that are either on the Forbes Fortune 500 company list (past or present) or an organization that serves multiple companies on that is on that list.

### **Literature Review**

There is limited research on either the role of social workers in CSR or the relationship between corporations and social work in general. Therefore, this researcher has focused this literature review on two areas: a) the definition of CSR, and b) the ways that CSR is targeted towards employees and society. This literature review will lay the foundation for why it is important to explore the current role of social workers in Corporate America.

### **Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility**

The philosophy behind CSR is that corporations are in a relationship with the world that they live in, and therefore it should be purposeful and committed (Deswal & Raghav, 2014). This relationship includes the behaviors and interactions that an organization engages in, and how it impacts society. It also includes the thoughts,

emotions and beliefs that drive the organization in its principles, code of ethics, and decision-making (D'Aprile & Talo, 2003; Deswal & Raghav, 2014).

Members of society also see their interaction with corporations as a relationship, and therefore have expectations as well. These members believe that organizations should strategically develop CSR practices to not only meet, but also exceed those expectations and improve quality of life for society as a whole (McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011; D'Aprile & Talo, 2003; Jain & Jain, 2013). Jain and Jain (2013) state, "the goal of CSR is to embrace responsibility for the company's actions and encourage a positive impact" (p. 24). Organizations view society as all stakeholders (i.e., consumers, shareholders, investors, environment, legal systems, other organizations, employees, media, global citizens, and future generations) that can *impact* the organization or *be affected by* the organization (Deswal & Raghav, 2014; González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, Pawlak, & Simonetti, 2013; Jain & Jain, 2013).

The CSR philosophy is similar to that of the social work profession. Miley, O'Melia, and DuBois (2011) believe that the goal of social workers is to empower individuals to contribute to society and to promote change in social institutions and systems to provide more opportunities for individuals. "The trademark of the social work profession is this simultaneous focus on persons and their impinging social and physical environments" (Miley et al., 2011, p. 6). Just as CSR focuses on the relationship between individuals and corporations, social work focuses on the relationship between individuals and institutions such as corporations.

CSR can also be defined by the approaches that corporations use. One of the most common approaches is called the "Triple Bottom Line" principle by Elkington (1997),

which divides CSR into three groups – economic or profit, environmental or planet, and society or people (D’Aprile & Talo, 2003; González-Rodríguez et al., 2013). Based on the results of a National Consumer League survey where consumers were asked about their perceptions of CSR, Curtis C. Verschoor (2006) wrote the following statement:

The most common responses consumers give to what corporate social responsibility means are: corporations need to be committed to their employees (26%), corporations need to be committed to the public and communities and overall society (23%), corporations have a responsibility to provide quality products (16%) and responsibility to the environment (12%) (p. 20).

The results of this report aligns with the Triple Bottom Line principle – people, economic (product) and environment. The study also supports the philosophy that society believes that they are in a relationship with corporations, and therefore expect a certain level of commitment.

Although CSR incorporates responsibility to the environment and the delivery of quality goods and services, this next section of the literature review will focus specifically on the group *people* as this is where CSR and social work intersect. Corporations implement CSR strategies in a variety of ways when it comes to *people*. For the purposes of this literature review, this researcher has divided *people* in two different ways, employees and society.

### **People: Commitment to Employees**

One of the ways that corporations carry out CSR to *people* is through their employees. Organizational executives see employees as a part of the greater community;

therefore they must be incorporated into their overall CSR plans (Jain & Jain, 2013). One of the ways that organizations commit to their employees is through employee assistance programs (EAP). National surveys have reported that in 2009, about 75% of organizations in the United States have some form of EAP (Attridge, 2010; Jacobson, Pastoor, & Sharar, 2013; Kurzman, 2013). It is also important for organizations to promote the use of EAP in order to remove any repercussions from using their services. As Kurzman (2013) reports, “it is the *healthy* worker who seeks help and the wholesome workplace that provides it without stigma” (p. 389). Historically, EAP is the one area where social workers have been involved when it comes with corporations. Therefore, this is a good place to start laying a foundation for why there is a need to further explore what role social workers have in Corporate America.

**Employee assistance programs.** EAP originally started in the 1950’s as occupational social work that focused on helping employees who had alcohol abuse issues (Attridge, 2010; Frauenholtz, 2014). It is a free service that employers offer internally or through an external contractor (Kurzman, 2013). EAP eventually added on services such as crisis management, employee counseling, training or educating on mental health and problems with daily life (Prottas, Diamante, & Sandys, 2011). More recent services include referral services for elder and child care concerns, wellness programs (Prottas et al., 2011), assessments for behavioral issues (Azzone et al., 2009), short-term counseling (Jacobson & Jones, 2010), and case management (Kurzman, 2013). Prottas et al. (2011) states the following:

The philosophy of EAP practice is based in part on the belief that employees who are emotionally and mentally healthy are more productive

than those who are not. The business proposition is embracing the *shared value* that human and financial health are inextricably linked (p. 298).

In order to have a financially healthy organization, corporations must also have a healthy workforce. Maintaining a healthy workforce can be a challenge for organizations. Employees not only have work stressors, but they also have outside or personal stressors that contribute to poor mental and behavioral health (Jacobson & Jones, 2010). The goal of EAP is centered on helping employees identify and address problems or stressors in an employee's life (Frauenholtz, 2014), in order to help employees remain "healthy, well, and productive" (Attridge, 2010, p. 40). Stress factors might influence job performance (Whitehouse, 2005), such as cost of health care (Jacobson & Jones, 2010), poor work-life balance, mental health, substance abuse, family problems, financial problems, depression (Attridge, 2010), aging-parent issues, phobias, and grief (Kurzman, 2013).

As in most situations, employees often have multiple stressors at the same time, therefore it is imperative to look at an employee as a whole and help them in all elements that are affecting them (Kurzman, 2013). Any one or combination of issues can result in negative employment or work performance such as "poor customer relations, absenteeism, diminished work quality, and performance on the job accidents, disability claims, workgroup morale issues and turnover" (Attridge, 2010, p. 40).

The key to the success of EAP is to foster an environment where employees are able to receive assistance before stressors actually affect their job performance (Kurzman, 2013). Some of the practitioner's methods include office or phone visits, internet resources and wellness or educational events at the worksite (Attridge, 2010).

**Practitioner.** EAP practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds including substance abuse counselors, professional therapists, marriage and family therapists, psychologists, nurses, and social workers (Jacobson et al., 2013). Social workers are most often preferred “because of their person-in-environment perspective, ability to intervene at micro, mezzo, macro levels, and commitment to employee advocacy” (Frauenholtz, 2014, p. 154), which aligns with the Employee Assistance Professionals Association, Inc. (2011) Core Technology or tenets. These tenets includes consulting with individuals, providing access to resources, implementing interventions, enforcing confidentiality, assessments, referring individuals for diagnoses or treatment, improving relationships between individuals and evaluating effectiveness of programs. Social workers are trained in these areas and also have similar core principles.

Another reason why social workers and psychologists are preferred is because employee assistant practitioners are regulated in only two states, while social workers and psychologists are licensed in all 50 states (Kurzman, 2013). This remains to be a hurdle in the improvement of employee assistance education and programs, as social workers do not always have the needed skills or coursework to be as effective as desired as an employee assistance practitioner (Jacobson et al., 2013).

**Benefits and results.** Several research studies have shown that EAP are effective and cost-efficient as employees are able to return to or remain productive in their positions and reduce the amount of absenteeism and turnover within an organization (Attridge, 2010; Csiernik, 2011). There is also evidence that employees who use EAP had improvement in areas of anxiety, depression and daily life (Csiernik, 2011). Dickerson, Murphy, and Clavelle (2012) studied the effectiveness of EAP programs, and

found that 86% of those surveyed showed an improvement of their depression. Even short-term EAP interventions can “improve employees adjustment and functioning on the job, even if it focuses on non-work related issues such as marital conflict or grief” (Dickerson et al., 2012, p. 224). Research about the history of EAP has also shown a relationship between the amounts of time an employee contacts EAP with the length of their employment. The more often an employee would work with EAP, the longer they would be employed at the organization (Csiernik, 2011).

Corporations continue to implement EAP within their organizations as part of their CSR strategies. This also continues to be the one area where social workers not only interact with corporations but also have a strong presence and have earned respect in.

### **People: Commitment to Society**

The second way that corporations carry out CSR to *people* is by their commitment to society, for both the local communities that they reside in and the society as a whole (Verschoor, 2006). Despite the fact that there is no specific laws or regulations on how to implement CSR practices, most organizations do not see this as an option, but instead an inherent relationship where stakeholders expect organizations to be conscientious of giving back to the community (Redding & Witt, 2012).

Organizations give back to the communities in two ways: corporate volunteerism and corporate collaboration (Smith, 2013). As stated in the introduction, corporations have given over \$20 billion in both cash donations and in-kind services, which would include volunteerism and collaboration. Eighty-four percent of those funds went to social services, education, and community development (CECP, “Giving in numbers,” 2013). In each of those areas, social workers are prevalent and regarded as experts in empowering

marginalized individuals, and understanding how to best implement programs and services to help society. Despite their expertise, social workers are not often employed by corporations to coordinate CSR initiatives in giving back to society (Boehm, 2009).

**Employee volunteerism.** In general, the definition of volunteerism is the “act of giving of time, energies, talents, monies or materials, on a regular or sporadic basis, to any individual or group for which the individual was not paid” (McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011, p. 197). However, corporate volunteerism narrows this definition down to volunteer programs that are sponsored or approved by the employee’s organization. For some organizations, this may only mean the activities or events that the organization has picked or sponsored as a part of their CSR initiatives (Caligiuri, Mencia, & Jiang, 2013). Corporate volunteerism can also encompass the actual organizing of these activities - planning the activity, collaborating with a non-profit organization or specific cause, recruiting employees of all levels to participate, and promoting it both internally and externally (Kotler and Lee, 2005; do Paco & Nave, 2013).

The main reason that individuals volunteer is due to their own personal values (do Paco & Nave, 2013). In 2011, McGlone, McGlone and Spain (2011) conducted a study about Millennials and their attitudes toward volunteering. Millennials were described as those born between 1979 and 2001, and whose ages at the time of the study ranged from 14 to 36. Findings indicated that Millennials volunteered more often than those of other generations. The main reason was the desire to make the world a better place, as well as influences from their family and friends, “pressures from social organization, seeking extra credit for courses, and wanting to pad resumes” (McGlone, et al., 2011, p. 199).



Another reason why employees volunteer is due to employer support. Not all organizations have volunteering programs, however studies have shown that if an employee feels supported by their employer to do volunteer work, they are more likely to not only volunteer, but also volunteer more often (Glac, Meijs, & Van der Voort, 2009; MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). Organizations provide this support in a variety of ways. First, they may create volunteer programs as part of their CSR initiative, which allows employees to have volunteer opportunities close by and easily accessible (Glac et al., 2009). Second, organizations may create policies that encourage volunteerism. Employees may be able to take paid time off or have flexible schedules in order to volunteer (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). Third, organizations may invest in volunteerism by hiring an employee whose job is to coordinate, promote, monitor and report on the organization and employees' volunteer efforts (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). Lastly, employees feel supported by their employers if they acknowledge the volunteerism through prizes, awards or other types of recognition through out the organization or beyond (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009).

Corporate volunteerism can give increase employee satisfaction and engagement, can help solve social problems and can improve corporate images (do Paco & Nave, 2013). As the desire for corporate volunteerism increases for both the corporation and their employees, the involvement of social workers in CSR becomes that more important. Social workers can identify the needs of the community, and connect those needs with values of a corporation and their employees.

**Corporate collaboration.** Another way that organizations follow through on their commitment to society is through the collaboration with non-profit or non-

government organizations (Makaros, 2011; Smith, 2013). Decreases in government spending in the area of social services has created a gap in services, where non-profits have had to do more with less. One of the ways to combat this gap is the development of alliances between non-profits or charities and corporations (Boehm, 2009). Organizations commit financial contributions, offer the use of facilities or equipment (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009), donate goods or services (Glac et al., 2009) and build alliances with other organizations to create innovative solutions to social problems (Germak & Singh, 2009), such as donating employees' times through volunteerism (Makaros, 2011; do Paco & Nave, 2013). In 2009, Glac, Meijs and Van der Voon conducted a survey about how corporations were involved in the community. Findings indicated that 88% of the surveyed corporations had foundations specifically designed for corporate collaboration and community involvement (Glac et al., 2009). While some organizations start foundations, other organizations such as Google, form a division within their company specifically created to invest in social entrepreneurship (Germak & Singh, 2009). The ability to bring corporate employees into social service agencies through collaborative efforts is a distinctive element of CSR and allows agencies and charities to be work with individuals with vast knowledge in other fields other than social services (Makaros, 2011).

**Benefits.** Not only does volunteerism and collaboration bring CSR out into the community, but it also helps to build relationships with important stakeholders, whether that is the employee themselves or with the general public (do Paco & Nave, 2013). Satisfying the interests and expectations of stakeholders, such as employees and customers, is a central element of CSR (D'Aprile & Talo, 2003). Activities such as

corporate volunteering and collaboration can help to build a more balanced society and benefit society, the individual, and the corporation that connects the two (do Paco & Nave, 2013). Social workers are instrumental in connecting individuals to resources and bringing balance to society; and having social workers in business settings can bring that specific set of skills to an organization's CSR division or foundation.

***General public or society benefit.*** According to Makaros (2011), the ability to bring volunteers into a non-profit organization or social service agency brings a newfound sense of energy, excitement and creativity that may be missing. This can encourage and refresh employees of those agencies, and increase positivity in the organization. Volunteer programs also introduce employees to new organizations that need support. This increases awareness and at times can help volunteers find a non-profit or social service agencies that align with their individual values (Smith, 2013).

Not only that, but clients of the non-profit agency can also benefit from having volunteers from corporations come in and work with them. Volunteers can bring enthusiasm and new perspectives and “expose clients to a new, different world” (Makaros, 2011, p. 355). Non-profit and charity organizations often work with marginalized or vulnerable groups of people, and bringing in volunteers with specialized skills can give clients the opportunity to build relationships that they may not have had the chance to build before (Makaros, 2011).

***Employee benefit.*** There is value for both the community and business, when employees volunteer or contribute in some way to society or their community (Caligiuri et al., 2013). According to Smith (2013), all organizations should ensure that employees are involved in the community and volunteering. The advantages for organizations to

encourage their employees to volunteer out in the communities outweigh the cost (Hatstrup, Lin-Hi, Mueller, & Spiess, 2012). Studies have shown that volunteering has numerous benefits and positive influences such as, decreased depression (Musick & Wilson, 2003; do Paco & Nave, 2013), loneliness (Musick & Wilson, 2003), and anxiety (do Paco & Nave, 2013); and increased happiness (do Paco & Nave, 2013), self-confidence (Musick & Wilson, 2003), and satisfaction in life (do Paco & Nave, 2013).

***Organizational benefit.*** Corporations see employee volunteerism and collaboration as a strategic plan to build relationships and further their social responsibility agenda (Caligiuri et al., 2013; do Paco & Nave, 2013; MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). One of the benefits for organizations is that volunteerism helps to increase employee engagement. Employees perceive volunteerism as a positive activity and then associate those positive feelings with their own organizations' values and ethics (Caligiuri et al., 2013). By getting employees more involved in the CSR aspect of their organization, they become more engaged, making them more productive, efficient and more likely to develop more leadership skills (Caligiuri et al., 2013; Deswal & Raghav, 2014). If the values of an organization are consistent with the values of an employee, the employment is shown to increase not only engagement, but also emotional commitment to the organization, which improves the retention and effort of the employee (Hatstrup et al., 2012).

Another great benefit for the organization is that when they commit to society through volunteerism and collaboration with non-profit community agencies, the organization can develop a positive reputation from the perspective of the media, community leaders and members (Caligiuri et al., 2013; do Paco & Nave, 2013; Smith,

2013). They can also earn respect with current and potential future employees and other organizations (Deswal & Raghav, 2014). On the other hand, failing to give back to the community can have the opposite effect and give an organization a bad reputation. Some community members may refuse to then engage with them, either as consumers or potential employees (McGlone et al., 2011). In a study by McGlone et al. (2011), Millennials form opinions on whether or not they would want to work for an organization based on how enthusiastic the speaker was about their organization's CSR efforts. Eighty-nine percent of the Millennials wanted to work for an organization that cared and contributed to society, while 69% would refuse to work for them (McGlone et al., 2011).

As stated before, organizations that engage in CSR reap the benefit of a positive public image, which is why organization often make corporate volunteering and collaboration a part of their CSR plan (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). However, organizations can also benefit financially, despite the amount of funds they contribute to the community. Investors may look at corporate giving and take that into account on what organizations they invest in (Cheng, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2004). Positive CSR efforts can also help organizations profit by increasing their consumer base as consumers have a strong desire to purchase goods and services from organizations whose values matched their own personal values (Boehm, 2009; Verschoor, 2006). Therefore, organizations that do not contribute in socially responsible ways forgo many benefits that are available to them (Cheng et al., 2014).

Corporate volunteerism and collaboration are just two ways that corporations are bringing CSR into the community, and affecting change in society. Social workers must

understand the impact that corporations make in order to not only respond to it but also to stay involved in it.

### **Social Workers and Corporate Social Responsibility**

It is important for social workers to think about CSR, the impact that they make on non-profit or social service agencies and how to stay involved. Corporations are becoming more involved in areas that social workers are traditionally responsible for, and because corporations often have the financial and structural backing of investors and employees, social workers could become less relevant and lose ground on being part of the decision-making process. Corporate executives are taking on community planning and decision-making. Corporate executives decide what social, educational and community-based programs are being created and how they are being managed (Boehm, 2013). Social workers are already involved with these distressed populations and have the experience and understanding of what the needs in a community are and how best to deliver the services to meet those needs. Therefore, corporations could benefit from having social workers involved in their organization and as a part of their corporate structure. Up until now, social workers have primarily only been involved in EAP, but little is known beyond that. This researcher will explore what roles social workers play in CSR with corporations throughout the United States and what their experiences are like within those roles. The social work profession share in the values that CSR attempts to address, and therefore the relationship between the two disciplines is worth exploring.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used for this study was the applied systems theory. According to Forte (2007), the environment, the person and the social worker are all part

of a system and are in relation to each other for good and for bad. Systems are compared to the concept of the human body or a machine. There are many parts to each. Each part works independently and has their own function, however each part also works in relation to other parts. If one part is healthy, it helps to keep the whole system healthy. But if one part is unhealthy, it not only does not work the way it is suppose to but it also affects the ability for all of the other parts to work as well (Forte, 2007).

According to the systems theory, corporations or businesses is one part of society or the environment, along with individuals and governments. The basic premise for CSR is that the “corporate system” influences society through the consumption and depletion of their own natural resources, and therefore must take proactive efforts to not only minimize their affects, but also to replenish, rebuild and rejuvenate society (do Paco & Nave, 2013).

Although, the systems theory is derived from a sociological and social work perspective, Ludescher, Mahsud and Prussia (2012) argue in their article “We Are the Corporation: Dispersive CSR” that businesses must also apply this theory to themselves and re-evaluate the foundation of CSR. Ludescher, Mahsud and Prussia (2012) believe that CSR has been implemented in corporations as a response to society’s (individuals, government and non-profit organizations) accusations that many social problems, such as the recent economic crisis, are caused by big corporations. They assert that although corporations are part of a system and therefore are just as much to blame, but also no more to blame, than any other “part” of the system. Individuals, small businesses, non-profits, governments, and associations are all responsible to each other. The systems

theory is a new perspective for corporations and for individuals, but it is not new for social work professions.

Social workers not only understand the concept of the systems theory, but they also understand that, unlike machines or even a human body for the most part, a society and all of its parts continuously change. The ever-changing nature of society, individuals and organizations, create a more complex system and problems, by which social workers are more equipped to be able to predict and resolve. Social workers are skilled in understanding how small changes in one part of the system, can affect other parts for better or for worse.

## **Methods**

### **Research Design**

This research focused on exploring the type of roles and experiences that social workers have in corporate settings. Since this research was exploratory in nature, this researcher conducted an inductive qualitative study. Inductive qualitative study includes questions of “how” and attempts to understand process (Hood, 2007). This researcher attempted to find out what social workers do in their positions in corporations and how their social work background affects their work.

Using an inductive qualitative study also allowed the researcher to have an existing theory in order to develop the interview questions (Hood, 2007). Based on the current literature review, this researcher developed the interview questions on the theory that there are a limited number of social workers involved in CSR in corporations. If corporations do employ social workers, they primarily are hired to administer EAP services rather than making CSR decisions.



This researcher wrote memos and notes throughout the interview and data collection process, and looked for themes when it came to coding. Both of these elements are important to inductive qualitative theory (Hood, 2007), and were important elements to this study.

This qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews of social workers that either currently or previously worked in large corporations where CSR was implemented. The researcher used open-ended questions due to the exploratory nature of this study and in order to allow for themes to emerge from the interviews (Monette et al., 2011). The following research question was examined: What is the role of social workers in Corporate America, in particular the benefits and advantages of having social workers involved in CSR?

### **Sample**

The researcher interviewed four individuals. All four were women with a Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree who currently or previously worked or consulted for large corporations. One individual had a dual degree of a MSW with a Masters in Business Administration (MBA). The researcher did not ask for the age of the participants, however the interviews revealed that the individuals had between six to 30 years of work experience. Each individual reported that the organizations they currently work for or have worked for in the past had CSR components to their organization, including having foundations or departments with the sole focus on implementing CSR programs. The participants came from metropolitan areas in different areas of the U.S., including the Southwest, East Coast and the Midwest.

Based on the literature review, the researcher expected it to be difficult to find social workers working in corporate settings (i.e., non-government, non-social service type of agencies), therefore she collected the sample through convenience sampling or based on availability (Berg, 2009). The researcher initially attempted to use convenience sampling in three ways.

First, the researcher identified key companies throughout the U.S. by way of a website research. The researcher pulled the latest Forbes Fortune 500 list and identified two groups. The first group was all the Minnesota based companies on the list. The second group was the top 100 companies that had CSR reports or information on their corporate websites that were not Minnesota based. The researcher focused efforts on first finding Minnesota based companies in order to attempt to conduct in person interviews. However, because the researcher expected a low response rate, the researcher also attempted to contact the top 100 non-Minnesota based companies as well. For those companies that report CSR efforts on their website, the researcher contacted them by whatever public method the company allowed, whether that was submitting a comment/question on their website or contacting them through an email address that they provided. The researcher sent an email (see Appendix A). The email described the study, asked if they had a social worker on staff, and if so, whether or not they would be willing to participate in the study. The researcher did not receive any responses back through this method.

Second, the researcher contacted social workers by obtaining the list of social workers through the State of Minnesota Board of Social Work (BOSW). The researcher purchased a list that included 999 licensed social workers in Minnesota. The BOSW was

not able to narrow the search to the specific target audience, therefore, the list was generic in nature, including social workers from all different settings. The researcher then sent an email to each of the social workers on the list (see Appendix B). The email described the study, asked if they work at a corporation with a CSR statement, and if so, whether or not they would be willing to participate in the study. The researcher received several responses through this method. Many potential participants were interested in the study, but the researcher did not feel that they met the criteria needed for the study. They did not work in a corporate setting with a CSR component; or they did not have non-clinical social work responsibilities in their organization.

Third, the researcher reached out to personal and professional contacts to see if they knew of any social workers that worked in corporate settings. The researcher found one participant through this method. She sent an email to this participant to give more information about the study (see Appendix B).

The researcher's recruitment efforts through these three methods did not produce enough results. The goal was to conduct eight interviews, and at this point, the researcher had identified only one participant. The researcher then submitted an addendum to the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to expand her recruitment efforts which was approved.

The fourth method of recruitment included reaching out to MSW faculty and staff at various MSW programs throughout the U.S. The researcher identified various MSW programs in the U.S. by website search. She focused on MSW programs that had dual degrees with MBA's or had an MSW with concentrations in areas such as organizational leadership, macro-specialization, or business or community development. The researcher

identified ten different MSW programs that met these criteria. She emailed each faculty and staff member who had email addresses on their public website (see Appendix C). The researcher was contacted by three of the four participants through this last method. Faculty from different universities forwarded the email to former students of theirs who worked within corporate settings.

For each of the four participants, the researcher sent an appreciation gift of \$25 after the interviews were completed.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

All attempts were made for the protection of human subjects who were interviewed. The St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the proposal and approved it. As reported in the previous section, the researcher did make a revision to the recruitment method and resubmitted the proposal, which was subsequently approved by the IRB.

Participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview (see Appendix D), which explained the purpose and procedure of the study, why the participants were chosen, risks and benefits associated with the study, and confidentiality information. The consent form included the fact that participation was voluntary, and that the participants could withdraw their participation at any point in time. The participant could also request a copy of their consent form. The participants received the list of interview questions prior to the interview for them to review, and were allowed to ask questions about the interview prior to the actual interview. The interviews were conducted over the phone where the researcher was in a private space.

The interviews were audio recorded, and then transcribed by the researcher. The recordings were deleted at the conclusion of the research, prior to May 31, 2015. No identifiable information was used in the final paper.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

Data was collected by semi-structured interviews. All four interviews were conducted via phone due to the location of the interviewees. They were all audio-recorded and lasted between 20 to 45 minutes each. The researcher transcribed the interviews and documented notes, ideas or thoughts that came to the researcher as the transcript was reviewed.

The data for this study was analyzed through open coding, as there was no pre-set hypothesis of what type of responses or themes the researcher would receive from the participants. Content analysis and open coding allowed the researcher to better identify themes throughout the interviews (Berg, 2009).

### **Validity and Reliability of Data**

The researcher ensured validity by taking notes during each interview and writing a memo right after the interview in order to document the context, mood and general impressions of the interview, the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher ensured the reliability of the interviews through the process of content analysis and being able to find themes. Reliability refers to the consistency of the results (Monette et al., 2011).

### **Strengths and Limitations of Study**

There are strengths and limitations to this study. Corporate giving has increased significantly in the last decade and continues to be an important part of corporate culture and missions (CECP, 2014; Broehm, 2009), and yet there is limited research on whether or not corporations are involving social workers in their CSR plans. Therefore, the main

strength of this study is that it adds to the social work body of knowledge on a topic that has limited research. This researcher was able to gather more information on the experiences of social workers in corporate settings, which can help future social workers enter that field.

One of the main limitations of this study was sample size. The researcher expected that the number of social workers employed in corporate settings would be limited which was why the sample was a convenience sample, and why the researcher reached out to social workers and organizations throughout the U.S., rather than in one specific region. Because of the lack of research on social workers in corporate settings, it was difficult to predict what type of roles and settings each participant was in. Having pre-set questions gave the researcher a starting point, but because each participant worked in different settings and had different responsibilities, many of the responses was specific to their individual roles.

Both the strengths and the limitations of this research study were based on the lack of current research on this subject. Despite any limitations to the study, the findings will be important additions to the current literature in the area of social workers in a non-traditional setting such as Corporate America.

### **Findings**

This research study explored the various experiences of social workers in a corporate context, including those who worked in the area of CSR. Individual qualitative interviews were conducted to gather information about their experiences. The researcher originally attempted to find participants with a position in an organization's CSR department, however the researcher was not able to find these types of participants

through the recruitment effort. The researcher did find individuals who worked within a corporate context and had experience with CSR, even though CSR was not one of their primary responsibilities in their positions. This section of the study will discuss the pre-interview information that the participants filled out as well as the themes that came out of the interviews.

### **Demographics**

The first section of the findings will review the responses to the questionnaire (Appendix E) that the participants filled out as well as the general demographics of the participants.

The researcher conducted four interviews that lasted between 20 – 45 minutes. Each participant was female and worked in various corporate settings throughout the U.S. Of the four participants in the study, three had MSW degrees, and one had a dual MSW/MBA. The fourth participant did not complete the pre-interview questionnaire. The four participants were in what they called traditional business roles, such as government affairs, management and talent consultant, and project management. The participants have worked within a corporate setting for between one and a half to 20 years. Some of the participants had different positions or roles within their time in the corporate setting. The participants indicated that they work or have worked for organizations that are currently or have been listed as a Fortune 500 company.

The following section of the findings will discuss the various themes and subthemes that were seen in the interviews that were conducted with all four participants.

### **Desire to Impact Systems**

The first theme found in this study was the desire to make an impact on a macro level. All participants expressed a strong desire to make a difference by looking at the systems and changing it on a macro level. Most participants went into their MSW program with an interest in the macro setting, versus clinical social work.

**Interest in macro setting.** Most of the participants interviewed went into their graduate program with the knowledge that they wanted to work in more of a macro setting, rather than a clinical setting. One participant said, “I did take the administrative track so I never intended to actually be a therapist or a clinician.” Another participant said, “I was really looking for doing some sort of, ah, social work leadership kind of position.” For both of these participants, they picked the MSW program because of the opportunities and type of training that the social work degree would give them. As one participant stated:

I knew that that degree had a wide level of applicability. You can go clinical. You could go admin. Um, and I really liked that about the degree, that there was a lot of different paths you could take after, um, getting it.

While these participants went into their graduate programs with this knowledge of wanting to work in the macro setting, one participant discovered this same desire during an internship. She said, “I realize instead of doing individual therapy with people over individual services with people, I wanted to be able to change the system, impact the system from within.”

**Impetus for career change.** Because most of the participants had a desire to work in a macro setting, they started their careers in non-profit or government settings.



Two participants started in the education system. One participant did consulting work for a non-profit.

Their experiences in these settings were the motivating factors for them to switch to working in a corporate setting. One participant stated that her work with the non-profit helped connect her with a corporation, which opened a door for her and a new career path. She stated the following:

I started working for a very small firm that did consulting for non-profits, um, which was nothing I ever intended to do, didn't even really know that it existed to be honest with you . . . I got exposed to [the corporation] and kind of what more, um, corporate consulting looked like; and it was at that point that I decided that, you know, I think, um, that would be a good path for me.

Another participant had a different type of experience, but was still motivated to make a change in her career path. She worked in the education system and said, "I also had been tired of working in the government world, non-profit world. It had really started to drag me down." She continued by saying the following:

I worked for the school district for [metropolitan area] for four and half years and saw a lot of brokenness and damage. And didn't feel like I had the ability to contribute anymore until I could make positive changes, because I didn't know how and so I was thinking, you know, corporations run really efficiently and well, they don't allow for some of this stuff to happen that the governments do.

Although each participant had slightly different paths to their current or more recent positions in a corporations, each of them had the desire to contribute on a macro

level. They started where most social workers start in non-profit and government settings, but realized that they could also affect change in a different type of setting as well.

### **Leveraging of Skills and Experience Over Degree**

The second theme found in this study was the fact that the participants had to leverage their skills and experience over their social work degree. For each of the participants, they had or were hired for what they thought to be traditionally business type positions. Most of individuals on their teams were marketing professionals, lawyers, or MBA graduates.

For each of the participants, their employers had varying degree of interest in their social work credentials. One participant was hired as a marketing researcher, where the employer had very little interest. She said, “I initially, ah, got hired into the phone company as a market researcher; and, ah, there was no real, um, designated requirement as a social worker to go in there.” Another participant stated that, “they like to hire people with advanced degrees.” Other employers had slightly more interest in the participant’s social work degrees of which one participant said, “I don’t think either of them was necessarily looking for a social worker, but I think they were intrigued by the MBA/MSW combo.” Another participant reported, “MSW is not a requirement but I think it was part of what was attractive, um, about me . . . they wanted somebody that was new and a little bit different. They were very interested in my background in social work.”

All the participants expressed the importance of their skills and experiences, and how important it was to leverage in order to get hired. The skills and experiences that helped one participant be hired were “some understanding of human behavior, there

understanding of conflict resolution. And, ah, there needed to be some understanding of organizational development work.” One participant reported the following about what their employer was looking for:

Someone who really sort of had a dedication to process improvement, um, had some project management experience, um, and I had both of those things . . . they were really looking for people who worked well with a team, were collaborative, were very strong communicators, who were good at building trust and building relationships.

Another participant leaned on her own very specific skill set. She said, “so they were really interested in kind of the skills I had gained in that job in terms of research and then story telling and narrative building.” Another participant stated that because she did not have an MBA like her colleagues, it was good that she had consulting experience. She stated:

If you know you don't have that MBA experience, they want to see some prior consulting experience. Um, in particular, they wanted people with health care experience . . . I had the health care experience; and I had prior consulting experience so I think that's what helped me as well as knowing some people in the organization.

Despite the fact that the participants in this study were not sought after because of their social work degrees, they were able to leverage their skills and experiences to obtain positions in corporate settings.

### **Job Responsibilities**

The third theme found in this study was the type of work or responsibilities that the participants had in their positions in the corporate context. Although they all worked in different types of corporations, the type of responsibilities they had, can be divided into three main categories – communication, training, and change management.

**Communication.** Communication was a common theme in all of the participants' positions. They had responsibilities of communicating information to various stakeholders or helping the corporation improve their communication as a whole. For one participant, she “worked with executive leaders, giving them feedback on their communication with their peers, and with their subordinates, and with their organization.” She also said, “I would write speeches for him [the vice-president], so he could express himself in a language that was much more appreciative.” While she helped with communication within the organization, another participant helped with communication to external stakeholders. She reported that she turns “data into essentially words or graphic displays to help draw in conversations about what [corporation] is doing positively for communities . . . it’s mostly focused on telling that story for elected officials and third party organizations.”

**Training.** Another job responsibility that several of the participants had was training others. They were responsible to train external stakeholders on what the organization does to better the community. They were responsible for cultural diversity and leadership development training. One of the participants stated, “I did diversity training with them, at that time; and that was, you know, merging culture with culture. To try to help people understand each other.” She explained this further by saying the following in regards to cultural diversity training:

I worked with their management people, to um, to develop understanding between different cultures like between ah, [people of Jewish heritage] and [people of German heritage], as well as differences between, ah, short and tall, color. Um, the advantages and disadvantages of white privilege versus, ah, minority understandings of the system.

Another common concept with the theme of training was leadership development. One participant said, “I would say that’s another big part of what I do is . . . usually leadership coaching around people.” Another participant used the word “talent management” when it came to helping develop leaders and changing corporate culture.

**Change management.** The participants used a variety of terms around the concept of change management, including project management, strategic planning, business process improvement, and organizational design. Each one was focusing on how to make the organization function better as a team either by improving communication, creating cohesion within a team or recommending systemic changes. One participant did consulting work within her organization to different departments and units. She reported the following about her work:

It’s an internal consulting, more generalist group, so we do work that ranges from um business, a lot of business process improvement, a lot of project management, also a lot of change management, um, organizational design and things like that.

Even though the business environments were different for the participants in this study, there was a common theme to the type of responsibilities they held including communication, training, and change management.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility Involvement**

The fourth theme found in this study was the participants' views in regards to CSR, including their participation in CSR programs, their influence on CSR planning, and their believe that social workers should be leading CSR departments. It is important to note that despite the fact that all the participants discussed CSR within their organizations, they did not have direct CSR responsibilities in their positions.

Each participant described the different CSR programs that their organizations had during their interviews. Participants described feeling proud of the way their organizations gave back to the community. One of the participants said, "one of the reasons that I was really drawn to [this corporation] was that they have, like, a huge CSR component. They have a really great corporate citizenship area." Another participant had the same sentiment, as stated in the following:

I am still very connected to the non-profit community and that's a very strong part of who I am, is supporting non-profit and volunteering my time and my money, donating my money. And I wanted to work for a corporation that also, you know, held that as a value.

Some of the corporations that the participants were involved in had foundations or departments with up to 100 people with the role of implementing CSR programs for the whole organization.

**Participation in CSR.** Each participant was able to name many CSR programs within their organization. Those included corporate giving, digital and financial literacy programs, matching gifts to universities, donating a significant amount of volunteer hours, scholarships, awarding grants, and doing pro bono projects for non-profit

organizations. Each participant could not only name the different programs, but also described how they had been directly involved.

One participant reported that she “received the first President’s award . . . for bridging the corporate moneys with non profit agencies in the community.” Another participant shared her most significant experience with her company’s CSR program with the following statement:

My biggest experience with it was, for a lack of a better word, kind of capstone or elite CSR opportunity. At [the corporation] there is this sabbatical program where one employee gets chosen every year to do a six month sabbatical at a community organization and you get paid. Yeah, it’s really amazing. You get paid by [the corporation] your salary for six months and you’re off and you do a project. So you apply with a specific project in mind and then go. So I was last year’s recipient, um, which was awesome . . . I did that work for 6 months, which was like, that was a straight CSR, and um, I’ve done that and lots of other people from the corporation. It’s really you know, 6 months of just one person, you know. You could figure, if they had to paid for it, it would have been over 300 thousand dollars in consulting resources that would have gone to that.

While one participant talked about an individual CSR experience, another participant explained how her organizations make giving back to the community a company wide effort. In the following statement, she explained how her organization sets aside a day where every employee volunteers together:

It’s a day nationally where all of our employees is, um, volunteer to contribute in some way to their local communities. So we have sign ups for different volunteer

opportunities where you might be painting school walls, cleaning up a park, building a house, tearing down walls, you know doing all kinds of things. So last year, I was at [the] gardens which is in um [metropolitan area] and it was just like planting and pulling weeds, doing those type of things to make the gardens look more beautiful.

Participating in CSR programs was important to each of the participants.

**Informal influence on CSR.** Not only were the participants of this study proud of the work that they have done with their organizations' CSR programs, they were also proud to talk about the influence they had in CSR decisions that were made. As was mentioned before, none of the participants had direct CSR responsibilities in their job descriptions; however, most of them believed they had informal influence on how their organization carried out their CSR efforts. One participant described her influence with this statement:

I'm really close to the folks that run the CSR department, so they come to me at various points for, um, for help with things. I mean, I help them work through some adjustments that they can make to the sabbatical program . . . when they were launching a new technology for, for corporate volunteerism, our internal corporate volunteerism, and I helped them sort of trouble shoot that and think about advanced features on that.

Another participant talked about her position within the organization and that it was tied closely to CSR. She said, "I just find this interesting, on our org chart internally, we have community investment sitting right next to and within government affairs so that we're so tied together that um, we kinda feed off of each other and build off of each other's work."



She continued to say, “In terms of where we roll out certain programs and offer certain free things to different organizations, and what not, I definitely have an impact there.”

Even though the participants did not have formal responsibilities with CSR, they enjoyed the informal influence that they had and believed it was valued in their organizations.

**Social workers in CSR.** Not only did the participants believe that they had influence in their organizations’ CSR programs, they also felt that CSR programs, theirs and others, should have social workers more involved. One participant said, “I think social workers can really, um, bridge that gap between, you know, the large companies and the non-profits.” Another participants said, “I think that we bring that inherent dedication to the idea of CSR . . . provide a built in crew of folks to participate in it and really be active in that way.” She further stated, “I think that we can be really significant champions for it within the organization, help other people understand why, um, CSR is so important.”

Perspective was a common word used throughout the interviews including the benefit of having social workers in CSR departments. Two of the participants believed that not having social workers involved in CSR could be a detriment to the organization and the community or non-profit that the organization is trying to help. One participant spoke about how having a social worker lead her organization’s CSR department was a benefit to them unlike other organizations. She made the following statement:

Our CSR internal program, I really do think there, the people who lead it are extremely dedicated toward, um, really thoughtful giving and also thoughtful volunteerism, um, so I would say the people who run it are like that. I don’t think

that's always true from the leadership; and they don't think the way that leadership decisions are made are always . . . they are more sort of, are less altruistic . . . And that's why I think its so well run by the person who actually runs the actual CSR program who is a social worker. Really make sure that the perspective on why the CSR is being done is in service of the community and not just in the service of the corporation.

Another participant reiterates the same thought by saying, "corporations really need that perspective, especially in their corporate responsibility world because the bottom line is not always money." One participant described a specific example of how having her and her social work perspective involved in a CSR program helped a non profit. She stated:

I think that is where my experience in the nonprofit world really came into play because you know people were, you know, were coming at it from a corporate lens. It was kind of very interesting, I was like okay, you know, they were kind of trying to come up with these fundraising plans; and it was kind of outrageous. I was, like, there's no way that this nonprofit, you know, who doesn't even have like a development staff right now because you know, launch a signature event, and make a hundred thousand dollars, you know. I was like let me level that with you guys, like this is what I've seen in my experience so that definitely was a great experience and I think I was able to bring a lot of um of my experience to help shape a more realistic plan that we turned over to the non-profit.

The participants in this study believed that having social workers directly involved in CSR was important in order to provide a different and what they considered, a better perspective on how best to support and help communities.

### **The Social Work Advantage**

The fifth theme found in this study was the concept of the social work advantage. The participants did not only bring up the social work perspective in regards to CSR, but also in regards to all aspects of the corporate setting. All the participants believed that corporations would benefit from having social workers in their organizations in order to bring a new perspective, and different types of skills to the table.

**Perspective.** Perspective was a common word used by all the participants throughout their interview. When it came to cultural diversity training, one participant said, “I had a clinical perspective of the individual work, so I could ah help with doing the ah, the culture to culture kind of things.” Participants believe that social workers can have the perspective of both the individual or small group and the big picture at the same time. One participant reported, “I also think that the systems thinking perspective that you learn in social work is really valuable, like you’re looking, I can look at a piece of the big picture, but I always have the big picture in mind.” Social workers can also see problems in an organization in a different way, according to one of the participants when she said, “In asking questions, and trying to understand the root of any issue, my perspective is different.”

Another participant said it simply as, “I can tell right away that the perspective of a social worker is different than the perspective of somebody who is very much more

profit driven . . . I think perspective, um, is one of the biggest things.” She continued to say the following:

I think there are certain perspectives that social workers take that others don't have. Because we've been trained to see things from um, like a holistic perspective to understand the full ecosystem of a problem not just um the individual that it's impacting and not just the um you know the community that's impacted but broad you know more broad strokes, from policy all the way down to the individual.

**Social work skills.** Not only was perspective a common word through out the interviews, but social work skills were also considered an advantage to the interview participants in their positions that they held. This included the concepts of systems, relationship building, group work and having a clinical framework.

**Systems Theory.** The participants believed that social workers hold a systems theory perspective, which helps when working with different stakeholders in an organization. One participant said, “I can see it where there are more systemic issues and where there are very micro issues.” She also continued to say the following:

Social workers are working in environments like this, we have the ability to um to see not just the policy, and the individual but how they all work together um to either help the individual get out of a situation or further drive poverty or further drive digital illiteracy or illiteracy in general.

**Relationship building.** Another social work skill that was mentioned was the importance of building relationships and trust with others. The participants believe that

one of the best ways to build relationships is by having good listening skills, as stated by this participant:

It's [social work] not just for therapy so it's good, really good in the business world especially as a consultant because you have to listen to the client and understand what they're asking for . . . I think the listening skills and the clinical skills that we learn are really helpful.

Another participant states that knowing how to build good relationships has advantages in business. She reports the following:

I think we learn how to get people to do things and say difficult things to people in a way that doesn't piss them off or allows us to maintain a relationship with them, and um, I can't tell you how many times I've gotten things done because I had a relationship with someone versus you know they don't want to do things I'm asking them to do but it's that ability to get things done without pissing people off that allows me to do my work on a daily basis.

Social workers not only have the skills to build relationships with customers and internal stakeholders, but they also see the importance of reaching out to stakeholders that one might have even thought about. One participant retells the following story:

I brought in 8 people that got hired directly because one of the things, that they use to say, we can't find Hispanic people that can come straight off the street and be managers and I said well, you just give me a week, and I will go to 5 colleges in the southwest and I will find some for you. And I got 8 people hired.

**Group work.** Participants were also grateful for their training on groups and the fact that they have developed skills to work with groups. One participant said, "I feel like

social work training really prepared me very well to manage the varying dynamics of groups and make sure that people's perspectives get heard and we achieve what we are trying to achieve." She further explains by stating the following:

I think that in social work, a lot of my social work training was done learning how to do group work and um the corporate context with consulting is kind of like one big ongoing set of group work issues right, because so many times I'm facilitating sessions, um with various groups of folks and having to manage those stakeholder dynamics.

***Clinical framework.*** Most of the participants referred being a clinician or having a clinical lens in their work. One participants said, "you know as a clinician, you're trained to dive deeper, to understand the cause of a problem or the root of the problem." Although one of the participants obtained her social work degree with an administrative track, she states the following about having a clinical lens:

I still had a clinical placement and a few clinical courses and just that kind of training of learning how to listen and relate to people and really you know listen and diagnose, it does help when you're working pretty much with anybody.

One of the participants is in the health care field and often works with medical professionals. She says, "if you can sort of talk the clinical talk more um, there's a credibility and a trust that comes from that that I think that you aren't necessarily earning but um, but it's just inherently there which just helps relationship building."

According to the participants, social workers have many advantages and value within a business context. They can bring new perspectives and different kind of skills to benefit the organization.

### **Tensions Between Social Work and Business**

The sixth theme found in this study is the tension that may or may not arise from being a social worker in a corporate setting. The participants were divided on whether or not there was tension in their jobs. When it comes to the specific setting, one participant said, "I feel like I felt more tension in non-profit and probably in government than I have in the corporate level." Another participant said that she felt "positive about the way our firm carries itself in terms of ethical behaviors," however some decisions that the company makes can cause some tension for her. She gives the following example:

I know that a lot of the people in the [metropolitan] office who do kind of manage the partnership um are more like in the marketing department. You know, so in some ways corporate responsibility is really viewed as more like, optically, how do we as a firm look to others, how do we are giving back, but it's not so much about changing society, as it is about aren't we great? And so that's where sometimes, I come into conflict because from my background it is like okay how is this support that we are giving, how is it making a difference and sometimes, when we do these one off things its like well you know it looks nice and it sounds nice but its not really making a deep change and I think for most people without a social work background like, you know the surface level is fine for them. So they don't do that deeper thinking or deeper analysis about how you know how it impacts, how it impacts society, it's just like okay you know, I donated, I feel good about myself. I'm making the firm look good kind of thing.

Another participant discussed the tension between prioritizing the individual over the process and vice versa. She reports the following:

Early on in my career I think that I tended to always prioritize, I mean I still tend toward the direction of always prioritizing the people over the process or always prioritizing the people over the work that has to get done, and I think that sometimes, sometimes, process you know, sometimes process improvement is the way to go and that means that some individual people are not going to like the outcomes of that. Um, then I think that sometimes my focus on the individual people and the outcomes for that can, there can be a tension there with what's actually like best for the company, um, you know. I think when we are thinking bottom line and the bottom line means good things for people that has, you know, coincides with good things for people that works for me. When we're thinking bottom line in a way that doesn't have good outcomes for certain people in the end, I think that that is a place where I feel a lot of tension.

Even though the participants reported some tension, they spoke about their organization and the work they do in mostly positive terms. One participant says, "I'm working for this major corporation and they are suppose to be doing good for the public but you know, they might be some ways which they do business that I don't 100% agree with but on the whole I don't feel the tension very much." For them, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

### **The Future of Social Work in Corporate America**

The seventh and final theme found in this study was the future of social workers working in corporate settings. The participants mentioned several things that they hope to see change.



First of all, one of the participant says she would like see social workers help to develop more partnerships between organizations. She reports the following:

I think there's some really, really innovative ways that non-profits can partner with for profit organizations. Um and that's really an area that's a little bit fostered more . . . more partnerships to opposed to now kind of like oh we're you know the corporate people and we're going to donate our time and our money to you but it's not really like an equal relationship where it could be I think more um more equal in the future, more you know more give and take across sectors.

Second, participants would like to see social workers involved in more than just corporate social responsibility. One participant describes the following:

Maybe not just the community investment, um, groups, because I love community investment, but also expand social work into every single every type of department. So, where are we in terms of our product planning? Are we planning products that are really meeting the needs of our people? Are we planning products that are meeting the diverse needs of people? So you know our disabled people, our whether that's visually impaired, or whether that's um, you know, ah, loss of limbs, things like that . . . so in terms of our marketing, are we marketing in the right way? Are we marketing right people? Are we making sure that we are marketing in every language that we possibly think of? A population in certain areas? Are we working closer with our communities, in terms of um, understanding all the needs of our communities?

Lastly, some of the participants believe that in order for more social workers to enter the corporate workforce, both the corporation and the social workers have to

broaden their view of each other. One participant stated that “Corporate America, I don’t think has a good view of social work if you just go in as a social worker” and “if they go in as a social worker, they get too boxed in. I think, if you don’t go in as a social worker, I think you are much freer to do what you need to do.” Another participant believes that corporations are missing out if they do not see the value of having social workers in their organizations. She says, “[corporations] could benefit from having people internally who can shake things up and make a little bit of a change.”

On the opposite side, some participants believe that social workers need to broaden their view of corporations. One participant made the following statement:

I also think that social workers need to be a little bit less rigid in general about their perspective on Corporate America and Corporate America kind of like being the devil um because I think there’s a lot of companies out there that are either the companies themselves are trying to do good in the world but they happen to be corporate context

Participants not only believe that social workers need to be more open to working within corporations, but social workers should also value their skills better. One participant stated the following in regards to her experience:

I think that one of the things that I really had to work on over the course of the past six years is sort of saying, overtly, because we aren’t very good as social workers, right, of like telling what our skills are, is saying no, those are actual skills that I have built up and honed over the course of my entire career and um, and those are what make me successful in my day to day job and they aren’t just kind of a side, they are actual skills. They are just as valuable and sometimes

more valuable than being able to put together an excel doc . . . Frankly, this is just a little bit of a thing but we're used to getting like massively underpaid for our talents and I think that its kind of a badge of honor that social workers wear around that we get massively underpaid for our talents. And we do not need to get paid incredibly high but like there's environments where you can get paid a really decent salary and do a lot of important things with the skills that you have and if that's of interest to people, I sort of say why not pursue that, you know.

If social workers would value their skills more, the participants believe that they can make a big impact on society, including within a corporate setting. One participant said, "I think that you know, trying to change things from the inside of a corporation can have really important outcomes for lots of different stakeholder groups."

The findings in this study support previous literature in regards to CSR. The participants reported the similar types of CSR programs in their organizations such as monetary donations, volunteerism, and in-kind donations, such as pro bono projects or a sabbatical for one of and organization's employee. The rest of the data that was collected in this study is new and have not been examined in previous research, which fills a gap in the research. The following discussion section examines this further.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study support previous literature in relation to the definition of CSR and how corporations implement programs using CSR. However, the most significant findings in this study are the themes that are not present in previous literature when it comes to the roles and experiences of social workers in Corporate America. Those themes will be further discussed, as well as how this study may impact social

worker practice, policy and research in the future. Strengths and limitations of this study will also be discussed.

### **Findings Compared to Previous Literature**

**Corporate social responsibility.** The participants in this study reported that their organization's CSR programs included volunteerism, monetary donations and partnerships with non-profits, all in efforts to make an impact or give back to the community. Although none of the participants had direct responsibility for the implementation of CSR programs within their position, all of them had knowledge of what their organization's CSR programs were. This supports previous findings of studies in the literature on what type of activities is included in CSR programs within corporations (McGlone et al., 2011; Caligiuri et al., 2013; Kotler & Lee, 2005; do Paco & Nave, 2013). Previous studies also discussed ways that corporations encourage their employees to participate in CSR programs such as sponsoring events or contributing to programs that the employee cares about (Caligiuri et al., 2013; Kotler & Lee, 2005; do Paco & Nave, 2013). Participants in this study gave examples of this phenomena, such as matching donations to their universities, organizing company wide volunteer events, and awarding sabbaticals to individuals to work in the community.

Three of the participants reported that their organizations had specific departments or foundations that was in charge of the CSR programs for the entire organization. This was also stated in previous findings, where 88% of surveyed corporations had foundations specifically designed for corporate collaboration and community involvement (Glac et al., 2009). Other corporations had departments or divisions for this type of work (Germak & Singh, 2009).

The participants also discussed how they each had personally been involved in CSR programs as employees. These programs were part of why they wanted to become employees. This finding was also included in previous literature. Employees were more likely to stay engaged in their position and be more inclined to work for an organization that shared their values (Glac et al., 2009; MacPhail & Bowles, 2009; do Paco & Nave, 2013).

**Employee assistance programs.** Previous findings in studies addressed that the most common role that social workers had in business was through their employee assistance programs (Frauenholtz, 2014; Kurzman, 2013; Jacobson et al., 2013). The four participants in this study were not involved in employee assistance programs. They actually all had more of what one of them called “business roles.” They were not hired specifically for their social work degree or social work expertise. It is important to note that one limitation in the study, (i.e., small sample size) and it is difficult to determine how many social workers are in Corporate America or what role they most often have. This leads to the discussion of the findings in this study that are missing in previous research.

**Impact in other business roles.** The goal of this study was to better understand the experiences of social workers in Corporate America. When recruiting, the researcher was expecting to interview social workers that worked in EAP or CSR. Instead, the participants of this study worked in government affairs, internal consulting, talent management, project management, and leadership development with responsibilities to improve communication, train both internal and external stakeholder, and implement change. The participants’ experiences in this study gave rich data to the topic of social

workers in Corporate America, data beyond what was expected, and data that has not been explored before. These findings showed a tremendous gap in the research. Not only is there limited information regarding social workers who are involved in EAP and CSR, however, there also is a sector of business that social workers are making an influence in that has not been researched before.

**Social work perspective.** The findings in this study not only showed that social workers are involved in more areas of business than expected, however, it also showed that the social work perspective and skills can be an advantage to those positions and benefit a business. Employers may not have been specifically interested in hiring a social worker, but they were interested in their different way of thinking and their experiences in non-profit and government entities. The participants' abilities to build relationships, work with groups, identify problems, implement cultural change, improve leadership skills in management, and navigate through conflict within an organization brought them credibility within their organization. The skills that they naturally had or developed through their social education opened doors for them into the corporate world and allowed them to make a difference from within a large corporation.

The findings in this study both supported and added to previous literature about CSR and social workers working in a macro setting. Although these findings add to the literature, it is important to also note the strengths and limitations of this study.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Study**

There were both strengths and limitations to this study. The main strength to this study was the fact that it was able to add to the current literature and fill a gap in the research. Corporate giving has increased significantly in the last decade and continues to be an important part of corporate culture and missions (CECP, 2014; Broehm, 2009), and

yet there is limited research on whether or not corporations are involving social workers in their CSR plans. Most of the previous literature focused on social workers involved in employee assistance programs, and not beyond that. This study has been able to give some insight into the social work body of knowledge on a topic that has limited research. This researcher has been able to gather more information on the experiences of social workers in corporate settings, which will help future social workers enter that field. This study interviewed four social workers that worked in the corporate setting without a CSR role, showing that there are social workers with experiences beyond CSR.

Another unplanned strength was the geographical variety of the participants. The four participants came from different places throughout the United States, including the Southwest, Midwest, and East Coast. All four were from metropolitan areas where larger corporations are generally located. Reporting the experiences of these social workers in corporate settings fills a gap in the research as well.

Although the main strength of this research was that it added to the research, it also meant that the limited research on the topic created several limitations to this study. One of the primary limitations of this study was sample size, which was anticipated by the researcher. The researcher expected that the number of social workers employed in corporate settings would be limited which is why the researcher used a convenience sample and reached out to social workers and organizations through the U.S. rather than in one specific region. Only interviewing four individuals reduced the amount of experiences that was explored and limits the ability to make any meaningful generalizations about the subject.

The second limitation was the population. All four participants were women so the study was not able to gather the experiences of social workers that are men. The study also did not ask other demographic questions such as race or age, so it is unknown if that plays a role in the experiences of social workers in a corporate setting.

The third limitation was the interview questions. They were designed for social workers that worked with CSR responsibilities. Because none of the participants had that role, some of the questions such as “How does your social work background come into play here?” and “What social work practices, knowledge, and skills do you currently use in your job and how does that compare to others that you work with?” were answered by the participants in the context of their positions, not CSR. Although the questions were phrased in a way that the participants could still answer them, the answers were not in reference to CSR, and therefore the researcher was not able to expand the research in that area. Because of the lack of research on social workers in corporate settings, it was difficult to predict what type of roles and settings of each participant, and therefore what the interview questions would mean to each individual.

The fourth limitation was the fact that no social workers with CSR responsibilities were interviewed. It was a challenge to recruit social workers that worked in corporate settings, let alone social workers with a CSR role. During the interviews, two participants mentioned that they knew social workers in their organization’s CSR department and stated that the researcher should talk to them. Due to the time limitations, the researcher was not able to include them in the study.

Both the strengths and the limitations of this research study are based on the lack of current research on this subject. As more corporations increase their CSR



contributions, and as social workers are more involved in corporations, social workers will likely become contributors to the implementation of corporate CSR and urge the inclusion of the social work code of ethics within the business world.

Although there were limitations of this study, the findings bring about several implications for practice, policy and research, which will be discussed in the next sections.

### **Implications for Practice**

The first implication for practice is that social workers can work in business in a variety of roles and still use their clinical practice skills. The participants in this study were all examples of social workers that looked beyond traditional social work settings to find a positive and productive career for themselves. It is important for social workers to be more open to working in large business settings. Each of the participants had to leverage their skills that they learned in social work, rather than their degree. Other social workers must do the same in order to help improve the credibility of social workers to the business world.

A second implication for practice is that working in macro settings such as a large corporation still allows a social worker to practice their clinical skills and impact the community. The participants in the study all commented on how the simple skill of listening and building relationships gave them an advantage over other employees and made them attractive as a potential employee. Although each of the participants did not have direct CSR responsibilities, each of them was still able to make an impact in the community and be a voice for those who are disadvantaged or marginalized.

### **Implications for Policy**

The findings for this study also have a couple of implications for policy, in particular the future of education in social work. One of the participants in this study received a dual masters degree in social work and business administration. Many universities have implemented this model in their programs. Not only do these dual programs impact social work students, but it also impacts business students. Students exploring either a MBA or MSW at a university with a dual degree will be exposed to the idea that you can do both. These two disciplines do not need to be in competition with each other. As one participant stated, “corporations really need that [social work] perspective, especially in their corporate responsibility world, because the bottom line is not always money.”

Another implication for policy is the need for social work educators to develop more curriculums on macro social work, specifically on how to work within corporate settings. As more organizations implement CSR programs, and are making a bigger impact on community development and societal change, it is an important area for social work to receive additional education. It can expose students to this area of social work, giving them more avenues for advancement and opportunities to make an impact in new ways. This researcher would also propose that opening up the social work profession to educating students on how to practice within a corporate context can open doors for not only social workers but also students who are thinking of pursuing other disciplines. One of the requirements for obtaining a social worker degree, both undergraduate and graduate, is the participation in a field practicum. Schools of social work should develop relationships with area businesses and could offer students the opportunity to complete

their field placements in local businesses and corporations in the areas of training, change management, and CSR.

### **Implications for Research**

The main implication from these findings is that more research is needed. The findings in this study add important information to the current literature around social work in macro settings. Although there has been previous research conducted in regards to CSR, most of the research has actually been conducted for business journals rather than social work journals. The findings show that the perspective between business and social work are very different. Where business may only focus on achieving a designated goal such as profit, social workers focus on the entire system and process. More research on CSR and the role that social workers have also needs further exploration.

The participants in this study also show that there is a whole segment of social work professionals who are not represented in social work research at all. The researcher had to use multiple ways to find social workers that worked in corporations throughout the U.S., and was fortunate to find four individuals who worked in multiple settings and had a wealth of knowledge and information to give. The work that these social work professionals do in government affairs, change management, and training is not being documented and reviewed, showing a significant gap in the social work research. The findings in this study show that these social workers in Corporate America are making a difference within their corporations and affecting how they relate and influence the communities around them. Corporate social work is an area that needs to be studied further.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was for the researcher to explore the experiences that social workers had in Corporate America, especially with CSR. The goal was to recruit social workers where CSR was part of their job responsibilities. However, the researcher had a difficult time finding social workers with those types of positions. After using multiple methods of recruitment, the researcher was able to interview four social workers that gave a breadth of information on their experiences working in large corporations.

The data collected was from four semi-structure interviews that lasted between 20 to 45 minutes each. Each participant was employed by or consulted for a large corporation but had roles in a variety of departments, none of which was CSR or EAP related. Despite the fact that they did not have direct CSR responsibilities in their job descriptions, they each contributed to their organizations' CSR programs in many ways. Each participant valued that part of her organization. Participants reported that they used their social work skills in their daily work even within their business roles, and believed that corporations could benefit from having more individuals with the social work perspective in their organizations. They were valued for their experience in working with non-profit organizations, their skills in building relationships and their social work perspective that was different from other team members.

The findings in this study have been able to fill a small part of the big gap in the literature about social workers in corporate settings and CSR programs. The implications of this study include changing the way that the business and social work fields view each other, changing the social work education to include work in corporate settings, and the importance of exploring this subject more in social work research.

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## Appendix A

## Recruitment Message or Script to Corporations

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Brianna Lorenz and I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D. LICSW at St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas School of Social Work. I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of social workers that work for corporations that have corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

I am interested in learning what roles and responsibilities social workers have within their organization regarding CSR and what their general impressions are about their experience. I hope that what I learn from this study will help social workers and businesses have a better idea of how social work can impact corporations.

In order to conduct this research, I am inquiring if you have any social worker(s) that work within your organization. If you do, would you be willing to allow me to interview your employee(s) for this study? If you say yes, there are two options:

1. Reply with a letter or message of cooperation. Along with that letter of cooperation, you would be able to give me the names and contact information of your employee(s) that you would give me permission to recruit for the study.
2. Reply with a message saying that you are interested in participating, however, you would prefer to forward a recruitment message to your employee(s). This would provide you the opportunity to keep their information confidential unless they volunteer to participate and contact me directly. I would then send you a recruitment email that you can forward to your employee(s).

Participants in this research study would participate in an in-depth 60-90 minute interview either in person or over the phone. All participation is voluntary and participants would be free to withdraw at any time. Additional information would be provided to the participant prior to the interview including a consent form, information regards to confidentiality, and the list of interview questions. The name of your corporation would remain confidential and would not be included in the research results. Each participant that completes an interview will receive compensation in the amount of \$25 in the form of a VISA gift card

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you are interested or willing to participate in this research study.

Sincerely,  
Brianna Lorenz  
Contact info: xxxx

## Appendix B

## Recruitment Email to Social Workers

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Brianna Lorenz and I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D. LICSW at St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas School of Social Work. I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of social workers that work for corporations that have corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

I am interested in learning what roles and responsibilities social workers have within their organization regarding CSR and what their general impressions are about their experience. I hope that what I learn from this study will help social workers and businesses have a better idea of how social work can impact corporations.

I am looking for social workers that currently work for a major corporation in the U.S. and are willing to participate in my research study. If you fit this description, please contact me at the below information. If you know of anyone else that fits this description, please forward this message to him or her so that they too can have the opportunity to participate in this research study. The name of the corporation that you work with will remain confidential and will not be included in the research results. Each participant that complete an interview will receive compensation in the amount of \$25 in the form of a VISA gift card

Participants in this research study would participate in an in-depth 60-90-minute interview either in person or over the phone. All participation is voluntary and participants would be free to withdraw at any time. Additional information will be provided to any social worker that is interested, including a consent form, information regards to confidentiality, and the list of the interview questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you are interested in participating in this research study.

Sincerely,  
Brianna Lorenz  
Contact Info: xxxx

## Appendix C

## Recruitment Email to MSW Faculty and Staff

Greetings,

My name is Brianna Lorenz and I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, Ph.D. LICSW at St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas School of Social Work. I am conducting a research study to explore the experiences of social workers that work for corporations that have corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

I am interested in learning what roles and responsibilities social workers have within their organization regarding CSR and what their general impressions are about their experience. I hope that what I learn from this study will help social workers and businesses have a better idea of how social work can impact corporations.

I am looking for social workers that currently or previously work for a major corporation in the U.S. and are willing to participate in my research study. If you fit this description, please contact me at the below information. If you know of anyone else that fits this description, please forward this message to him or her so that they too can have the opportunity to participate in this research study. If you are a faculty member or department head of an university, please forward this email to any alumni from your school. The name of the corporation that you work with will remain confidential and will not be included in the research results. Each participant that complete an interview will receive compensation in the amount of \$25 in the form of a VISA gift card

Participants in this research study would participate in an in-depth 60-90-minute interview either in person or over the phone. All participation is voluntary and participants would be free to withdraw at any time. Additional information will be provided to any social worker that is interested, including a consent form, information regards to confidentiality, and the list of the interview questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you are interested in participating in this research study.

Sincerely,  
Brianna Lorenz  
Contact Info: xxxx

## Appendix D

### Information and Consent Form

**Introduction:**

This study is being conducted by Brianna Lorenz, a graduate student at St. Catherine University and University of St. Thomas under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Marrs Fuchsel, PhD., LICSW, a faculty member in the School of Social Work. I am conducting a research study exploring the experiences of social workers that work for corporations that have corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

**Background information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles and experiences of social workers that work for corporations that have CSR initiatives. Approximately 8-10 people are expected to participate in this research.

**Procedures:**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete either a face-to-face or phone audio taped interview. For in-person interviews, the interview can be taken place in whatever location the participant feels most comfortable. If preferred, the interview can take place at a local library in a private meeting or conference room. For over the phone interviews, the participant can be at home or any other location where they feel comfortable. The interview will last for approximately 60 - 90 minutes. The researcher will give you the list of interview questions prior to the interview.

**Risks and benefits of being in the study:**

The study has minimal risks.

**Compensation**

All participants that complete an interview will receive compensation in the amount of \$25 in the form of a VISA gift card. Although the participant must complete the interview to receive the compensation, the participant is not required to answer all the interview questions.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. Quotes will be used in the written report or publication; however, no one will be identified or identifiable, including the name of the organization you work with. The data will be secured in a password-protected computer and only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed by May 31, 2015

**Voluntary nature of the study:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with St. Catherine University in any way.

If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships. You are also free to decline to answer any of the interview questions. You are free to withdraw from the study after that interview has been completed.

**Contacts and questions:**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher, Brianna Lorenz at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Dr. Catherine Marrs Fuchsel (xxx) xxx-xxxx will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study, I agreed to be audio recorded.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E

## Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions prior to the interview.

1. What is your educational background (include any social work credentials and any non-social work education)?

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2. What organization do you currently work for (if you are a consultant what organization do you consult for)?

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3. What is your job title/position and what department is this job in?

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4. How long have you been working in this position?

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## Appendix F

## Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your professional path and what brought you to this position.
2. Tell me about your job and what the requirements or credentials were needed to obtain this position.
3. What is your experience with CSR?
4. What is your role in the decision-making process in your organization's CSR?
5. What are the benefits and advantages of having social workers involved in CSR?
6. How does your social work background come into play here?
7. What social work practices, knowledge, and skills do you currently use in your job and how does that compare to others that you work with?
8. What tensions arise between social work ethics and your work here?
9. Where does the relationship between social work and corporate America need to go from here?