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**BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVIDENCE-BASED  
PRACTICE CURRICULUM CHANGE IN FIELDWORK AND  
CLASSROOM IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

by

**ANWAR NAJOR-DURACK**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2011

**MAJOR: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND  
POLICY STUDIES**

Approved by:

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Advisor

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Hermiz Najor,  
who gave my sisters and brothers and myself  
the love and freedom to pursue higher education  
by giving up all he knew and moving us to America;

to my father-in-law, Daniel Francis Patrick,  
who always encouraged me to pursue education and  
celebrated my accomplishments; and

to Cecille Yvonne Dumbrigue,  
affectionately known as “Cece,”  
for her love and support through graduate school  
and my transition to professional practice  
and for always believing in me.

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I am grateful to all the social work faculty members at MSU, U of M, and WSU and the affiliated field instructors who responded to my survey and made this research possible. I received many email messages supporting and encouraging my work.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background**

Whether required by law, funding sources or institutional mandates, evidence-based practice (EBP) is the new framework cited as helping to promote adoption of best practices informed by research. Proponents of this new framework state that mandating the use of EBP ensures that the best available practices are utilized. Indeed, who would argue against the use of EBP in any field of study. Many in education feel that it is by far easier to advocate for than to utilize EBP. Barriers that have been identified as hampering use of EBP include lack of rigorous and relevant studies, difficulty in locating and applying existing research, and in some cases a distrust of research (Gambrill, 2006; Thyer, 2004). While most agree that using EBP is important (Chwalisz, 2003; Thyer, 2004), there is much less agreement on the definition of EBP or more specifically what constitutes evidence. The No Child Left Behind law mandates that teachers use evidence based teaching practices to ensure that their students receive the highest quality instruction. Leaders in education, in both K-12 and postsecondary education are exploring methods to incorporate EBP into the curriculum. Literature on EBP continues to increase and more and more educational institutions as well as community based agencies are embracing evidence based practices (Proctor, 2007 and 2004; Springer, 2006; Gilgun, 2005).

Leaders in higher education, as well as in community based agencies, are considering what infrastructure is necessary to incorporate EBP into the curriculum and professional practice (Springer, 2006; Gilgun, 2005; Thyer, 2004; Gambrill, 2001). While

accrediting bodies or funding sources may mandate use of EBP, administrative leaders have to consider the levels of change that must take place to advance EBP within those settings (Manuel, Mullen, Fang, Bellamy & Bledsoe, 2009; Thyer, 2004; Glisson, 1992 and 2002). Access to technology with appropriate databases, quality training to learn EBP process, and continued support to learn and incorporate EBP are a few of the necessary steps that administrators must attend to in order to achieve success in the adoption of EBP. The most challenging issue that many administrative leaders may encounter however is moving staff to embrace EBP in their teaching and work. Effective leadership is key in assisting staff to move toward accepting a new idea, especially one that comes with conflicting reports.

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **EBP in Social Work Curriculum**

The social work professional and academic communities are in the midst of critiquing evidence based practice as an important paradigm to incorporate into social work practice and teaching curriculum. Designed to prepare social work practitioners, EBP is offered as an alternative to “authority-based practice,” or practice based solely on the expertise and experience of practitioners (Edmond, McGivern, Williams, Rochman & Howard, 2006; Gambrill, 1999, 2006; Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002; Upshur & Tracy, 2004). EBP is viewed as the successor to evidence based medicine (Witken & Harrison, 2001) and is proposed as an improved alternative to authority-based practice (Gambrill, 1999). Gambrill (1999) believes that EBP notes the value of evidence on a continuum embracing empirical research as well as clinical proficiency.

There are many definitions of EBP, each with a different emphasis. In this study, the author uses the conceptualization provided by Sackett, Richardson, Rosenberg and Haynes (1997) who defined it as the “conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual clients/patients.”

The purpose of this study was to consider perceptions held by social work faculty and agency-based field instructors to incorporate EBP into social work student classroom and field placement experiences.

The EBP movement, viewed by most as an ideology, was first introduced in medicine and allied health professions, and began in efforts to identify "treatments that work" using the results of research evidence, and to identify and end treatments that have done harm. It is thought that EBP would supplement professional decision making with the latest research knowledge, though some critics argue that EBP “replaces” professional decision making (Wampold & Bhati, 2004). Using the EBP framework, it is assumed that a practitioner appraises evidence for effectiveness prior to implementing intervention with clients and evaluating the outcome. The goal of EBP is thought to enhance the scientific base of professional practice in several disciplines including medicine, nursing, psychology, and social work. In turn, educational efforts in these disciplines could be oriented to provide beginning professionals with effective tools and a model for the continuing improvement and renewal of their professional practices (Corcoran & Vandiver, 2004; Gambrill, 2006). Some advocates for EBP argue that to treat anyone using interventions without known efficacy is unethical (Epstein, 1999). For example, if we know a given medicine or prisoner re-entry program or treatment for depression

works better than another treatment; proponents of EBP assert that it is an ethical obligation to use it in order to best serve clients or patients.

While this is a difficult argument to challenge, agency-based seasoned practitioners feel that EBP does not value practitioner expertise and they cite barriers that prevent implementation and utilization (Wampold & Bhati, 2004). Lack of resources to support EBP, lack of fit or relevance of available evidence, and lack of knowledge, skills, and supervision/monitoring to use EBP are a few of the barriers cited (Manuel et al, 2009). Many practitioners in agency based organizations report that staff are overburdened, lack time to use/learn/implement EBP and often do not have access to online resources or subscription sites (Field Education Advisory Committee, personal communication, 2009; Manuel et al., 2009).

Schools of social work may have to consider the incorporation of EBP into the curriculum, including both classroom and field education. Field education, also referred to as field practicum or field work, is the component of social work education where students learn to deliver social work services in agency and community settings (Bogo, 2005). Field education in social work is an integral component of professional education. It is critical because the setting and the skills acquired directly reflect the real world of practice for which the student is being prepared. Field education provides a setting where students are able to integrate course work with practice. Students can experience a great deal of anxiety, as well as excitement, as they prepare to put into practice what they learn in theory. Students must successfully complete field work in order to meet social work degree requirements. The combination of these factors makes the application of EBP

concepts paramount. Incorporating EBP while students begin to work in the field can assist in setting a pattern of behaviors that will impact future professional careers.

Departments of field education within schools of social work are continually striving to cultivate strong field placement sites as they work with students, agency-based field instructors (FI) and other agency personnel to ensure a good learning experience for student, field instructor and agency. It is important to note that field instructors play a vital role in the placement process and in the preparation of students to be competent social work practitioners.

Schools of social work and agency administrators recognize that in order to successfully incorporate EBP into the curriculum and practice, leadership among teaching faculty in addition to agency supervisors must be cultivated and strengthened. It is the leadership from faculty and supervisors that will drive use and acceptance of EBP in teaching and agency work. Manuel et al (2009) suggest that efforts to implement EBP into practice need to take into account the specifics of agency context and culture. They suggest that a “multilevel approach – one that targets practitioner attitudes and motivations, agency climate and context, and university-agency partnerships – has the greatest potential to support implementation of EBP in social agencies” (p. 626).

To successfully incorporate EBP into the curriculum, faculty and agency-based field instructors must “buy” into this new paradigm and agree to receive education and training in an effort to help students incorporate content learned in class into their field placement experiences. This study:

- 1) Identified perceptions of social work faculty and field instructors about EBP;

- 2) Determined the extent to which social work faculty and field instructors incorporate and use EBP; and
- 3) Determined what organizational leadership and/or technology supports influence adoption and utilization of EBP

### **Evidence-Based Practice in the Classroom and in Field Placement**

Schools of social work planning to change to an EBP based curriculum will have to be prepared for significant changes within traditional instructional methods. Schools of social work may need to invest in extensive training and retraining of faculty (Jenson, 2005). While EBP is receiving much attention in various academic circles, the number of studies examining teaching strategies utilizing EBP is still small (Howard, Allen-Meares, & Ruffolo, 2007; Howard, McMillen, & Pollio, 2003; Woody, D'Souza, & Dartman, 2006). Faculty and higher education administrators across the country continue to debate the definition of EBP and thus may argue that incorporating EBP into the curriculum is not likely since consensus as to its definition does not exist. While EBP may not be incorporated in the entire curriculum, there are faculty members within programs who are incorporating concepts within their individual classrooms. Empirically supported interventions such as cognitive treatment approaches (in both substance abuse and mental health services) have been adopted and manualized. Thyer (2002) pointed out that clinical social workers comprise the largest discipline (in numbers) providing mental health services in North America and that "EBP can affect the daily services of these clinicians, the care of patients and their outcomes can potentially be markedly improved" (p. 6). In a response paper, Springer (2006) stated that it is important for faculty to model and facilitate in class concepts of EBP including "modeling and encouraging



transparency and honesty in decision-making; using critical thinking and appraisal; implementing an active learning pedagogy; the use of Socratic questioning; the challenging of assumptions; and the application of knowledge to practice and policy decisions” (p. 5).

In April 2008, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) issued new guidelines for Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The new EPAS shifts the assessment focus from program outcomes to process assessment concentrating on student achievement of practice competencies (Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010). Schools of social work are now faced with major accreditation challenges as a result of the new EPAS 2008 since they are now required to develop sound and useful instruments to assess student competencies in both classroom instruction and field placements. EBP is one of the major concepts identified in the new EPAS. The new CSWE Education Standard 2.1.6 states “Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.” Social work programs are now all required to demonstrate how this concept will be incorporated into the curriculum as well as how students will demonstrate competence utilizing it both in the classroom and in the field. While some schools have embraced EBP and have incorporated it into the entire curriculum (i.e., University of Tennessee and others), others continue to debate its use if not continuing to struggle with its definition and precisely how and where to include it in social work education. Deans and other leaders in social work education are evaluating the best format within their specific schools to infuse this framework as they recognize that the CSWE will incorporate adherence to this standard when programs are evaluated for reaffirmation of accreditation.

Although social work students report that they value the approaches learned in EBP, they also indicate that they have difficulty implementing these approaches in the field placement setting citing agency barriers such as lack of time and resources within the agency (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). Other survey data show that field instructors are supportive of EBP and value the ideal of providing quality services that have proved to be effective to their clients. However, they also cited barriers that keep them from using EBP (Carrilio, 2007; Edmond et al, 2006; Mullen & Bacon, 2006). Bellamy, Bledsoe, and Traube (2006) found that training agency-based field instructors to use EBP was very difficult due to various barriers, including limited time, agency cultures, and infrastructure. The latter included access to internet and research databases, high staff turnover, and limited resources that support using EBP.

If schools of social work begin incorporating EBP into the curriculum to prepare social work practitioners and yet ignore the need to train field instructors to use this model, students will experience a dissonance between course content and practice with client systems. In order for students to fully embrace EBP as a viable model of practice, agency field instructors and administrators must be active partners. Proctor (2004) wrote that adoption of EBP by the social work profession will come about as a result of actions at multiple levels focused on producing more agency-based and practice-relevant research, improved organizational infrastructures, and relevant class and field education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There were multiple purposes of this study related to EBP as a new framework for social work practice and education. Leaders of foundations and other funding sources, educational accrediting bodies, schools of social work programs, and community based

organizations are all identifying the need to incorporate and utilize EBP in social work education and practice. However, this underscores the importance of social work faculty members and agency based field instructors who provide the bulk of education and training for social work students preparing to enter into professional practice. Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions of social work faculty members and agency based field instructors' view and utilization of EBP in teaching and application to direct practice. In this study, the factors that contribute to social work faculty members and agency-based field instructors' perceptions about incorporating EBP into the classroom and field placement were investigated. Implications for social work curriculum and training in field placements were also considered.

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are the opportunities to use EBP in the classroom and in practice/field instruction?
2. What are the barriers to use of EBP in the classroom and in practice/field instruction?
3. How do attitudes, openness and support (leadership/technology) about EBP influence adoption of EBP among faculty members and field instructors?

In addition to faculty and field instructor perceptions, this study also examined agency support in utilization of EBP, including:

- Providing technology to use EBP;
- Allowing time to utilize EBP;
- Cultivating leadership to support the use of EBP
- Incorporating EBP into supervision of social work student interns; and

- Working with universities to teach and support the use of EBP

### **Significance of the Study**

As schools of social work move to consider the merits of EBP, the role of field instructors in helping students to integrate theory and practice is paramount to the success of incorporating this framework. While the debate among the social work academic community about the use of EBP continues, little attention is given to supporting field instructors and agencies in anticipation of utilizing EBP. Because of the constraints of managed care, agencies are now more than ever strapped for time and resources. In addition, social work practitioners are held accountable for their time; fees for services are related to time spent with clients/patients.

Those social workers who agree to work with student interns are finding it more difficult to provide the time needed for preparing students for competent practice and some are declining to assume the role of field instructor. These stressors add to the limitations that exist for utilization of EBP including access to electronic resources, support from agencies to embrace EBP to allow time necessary for its implementation.

This study assisted in determining the extent of field instructors' knowledge of EBP, attitude and openness to EBP, and feedback on how the university can assist with utilization of EBP. Additionally, this study identified the extent to which social work faculty members are utilizing EBP in their classes and determine their views of incorporating this framework into the social work curriculum. Findings may allow schools of social work to anticipate and prepare methods to ensure that field education is incorporated in any changes to the curriculum. In turn, this will help to prepare students

by strengthening the university/agency relationship that ensures that the work students engage in the classroom is also integrated with learning in field settings.

Findings from this study may also help to shape policy related to mandating the utilization of EBP in social work education and practice within social work and social service agencies. It is critical that no inherent contradictions exist between what is being taught in the classroom and what student learns in the field. Leaders of accrediting bodies, public or private funding sources as well as leaders of social work higher education would benefit from understanding how EBP is viewed by faculty members and practitioners. This knowledge can impact policy shaping how EBP is viewed and incorporated in education and practice.

### **Methodology**

A web-based survey was used as the primary source of data allowing for both quantitative, as well as qualitative components to be studied. While a survey method relies on self reported data, a great deal of information can be obtained using this method. Separate sections of brief questions for faculty members and field instructors with four point likert item responses were used. Open-ended questions were used to capture participants' views on multiple factors that impact perception and use of EBP in instruction and practice.

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice.

**H<sub>2</sub>**: There is an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited in its generalizability as it was focused on full time social work faculty and agency based MSW practitioners who volunteer to be field instructors for social work students attending three large public universities in Michigan. Results may not be generalized to other faculty at other institutions or other MSW level practitioners in Michigan, other states or other countries.

Limitations related to methodology are noteworthy since the questionnaire was administered electronically via email with addresses obtained from each of the three universities. Response rate may have been impacted by comfort and ease with which participants use technology and email. Second, because surveys are self-reporting measures, participants may have consistently given high or low ratings. These may have biased results and served as sources of error and affect variance.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of a commonly accepted definition of EBP by the social work community. While literature differentiates between EBP as a process and specific effective practices that are based on research evidence, there may have been individuals who viewed the utilization of a practice or approach that had been identified as effective based on research to be EBP. Finally, this study examined perceptions of faculty and field instructors which may not have necessarily translated into behavior. Thus what respondents say they will do may not always be consistent with what they actually did in teaching and practice.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The remainder of this study consists of four additional chapters. Chapter two considers EBP in the field of social work, a review of literature related to social work education in the classroom and fieldwork. Chapter three, research methodology, describes the sample, the procedures for data collection and the procedures for data analysis. Results of how social work faculty members and field instructors perceive and utilize EBP and the relationship to access to resources and leadership support are presented in chapter four. Chapter five presents summary, conclusions and recommendations and implications for leadership in higher and social work education.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of literature on EBP in social work education, particularly in relation to the impact on faculty members and agency-based field instructors.

The social work academic community is in the midst of critiquing evidence-based practice (EBP) as an important paradigm to incorporate in the social work curriculum. Designed to prepare social work practitioners, EBP is offered as an alternative to “authority-based practice,” or practice based solely on the expertise and experience of practitioners (Edmond et al, 2006; Gambrill, 1999, 2001; Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002; Upshur & Tracy, 2004). EBP is viewed as the successor to evidence based medicine (Witken & Harrison, 2001) and is proposed as an improved alternative to authority based practice (Gambrill, 1999). Gambrill believed that EBP presents the value of evidence on a continuum embracing empirical research along with clinical proficiency. There are many definitions of EBP with differing emphases. Sackett et al (1997) define it as the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual clients/patients. It is clear from the literature that various definitions of EBP exist (Jenson, 2005; Proctor, 2007) and finding agreement on a specific definition has been a challenge among both faculty members as well as agency based field instructors (Rubin & Parrish, 2007).

The EBP movement, viewed as an ideology, was first introduced in medicine and allied health professions, and began in efforts to identify "treatments that work" using the



results of research evidence, and to identify and end treatments that have done harm. It is thought that EBP would supplement professional decision making with the latest research knowledge, though some critics argue that EBP “replaces” professional decision making (Wampold & Bhati, 2004). Using the EBP framework, it is assumed that a practitioner appraises evidence for effectiveness prior to implementing intervention with clients and evaluating the outcome. The goal of EBP is thought to enhance the scientific base of professional practice in several disciplines including medicine, nursing, psychology, and social work. In turn, educational efforts in these disciplines could be oriented to provide beginning professionals with effective tools and a model for the continuing improvement and renewal of their professional practices (Gambrill, 2006).

Some advocates argue that to treat anyone using interventions without known efficacy is unethical (Epstein, 1999). For example, if we know a given medicine or prisoner re-entry program or treatment for depression works better than another treatment, than it is an ethical obligation to use it in order to best serve clients or patients. While this is a difficult argument to challenge, agency based seasoned practitioners feel that EBP does not value practitioner expertise and they site barriers that prevent implementation and utilization (Wampold & Bhati, 2004).

Schools of social work must consider the incorporation of EBP into the curriculum, which includes field education. Field education, also referred to as field practicum or field work, is the component of social work education where students learn to deliver social work services in agency and community settings (Bogo, 2005). Field education in social work is an integral component of professional education. It is critical because the setting and the skills acquired directly reflect the real world of practice for

which the student is being prepared. Field practice also is the place where students are able to integrate course work with practice. It engenders a great deal of anxiety as well as excitement as students prepare to put into practice what they learn in theory. Students must successfully complete field work in order to meet social work degree requirements.

Departments of Field Education within schools of social work are continually striving to cultivate strong field placement sites as they work with students, agency-based field instructors (FI) and other agency personnel to ensure a good experience for student, field instructor and agency. Field instructors play a vital role in the placement process and in the preparation of students to be competent social work practitioners.

To successfully incorporate EBP into the curriculum, agency-based field instructors must “buy” into this new paradigm and agree to receive training and help students incorporate content learned in class into their field placement experiences. Schools of social work must consider the role of agency-based field instructors in helping social work students to incorporate EBP into the field placement experience. Educational programs must:

- 1) Determine what field instructors know about EBP;
- 2) Determine if field instructors use EBP;
- 3) Determine how the school can help field instructors utilize EBP; and
- 4) Provide support in accessing resources to enable utilization of EBP

This literature review considered EBP in the context of social work field education, a major component of social work education curriculum which will be described, and will include the important role that field instructors play in helping to train social work students. The changes in social services, impacted by managed care and poor

economic conditions, will also be covered and their impact on social workers' motivation for accepting the role of field instructor. Finally, the barriers and criticisms of EBP are discussed demonstrating the current controversies taking place among academics which will impact how EBP can be incorporated in the social work curriculum, particularly in field education.

To better understand and follow the remaining portion of this literature review, it is beneficial to define some of the terms that are used. Below is a list of terms with identified definition.

### **Definitions of Terms**

- *Authority based practice* – a practice whereby decision making is based on criteria such as consensus, anecdotal experience, or tradition (Gambrill, 2006).
- *Council on Social Work Education*- The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) is a national association that is responsible for accrediting bachelor's and master's degree programs in social work, promoting research and faculty development, and advocating for social work education
- *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* - A manual, published by the American Psychiatric Association, that provides standardized criteria for the diagnosis of psychiatric conditions, including alcohol and drug use disorders.
- *Evidence based practice*- The conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in decision making. It customizes worker experience with the various forms of evidence to the specific problem/situation under investigation (Sackett, et al, 1997).
- *Explicit knowledge* – knowledge that is relatively easy to capture and store in databases and documents. It is shared with a high degree of accuracy. It can be either structured

or unstructured: Structured - Individual elements are organized in a particular way or schema for future retrieval. It includes documents, databases, and spreadsheets.

Unstructured - The information contained is not referenced for retrieval. Examples include e-mail messages, images, training courses, and audio and video selections (Gambrill, 2006).

- *Field instructor*- A social worker who meets the field instructor selection criteria and who has primary responsibility for field assignments, educational supervision and evaluation of the student and who must be available to coordinate and oversee the student's total field experience. This individual may be an employee of a field placement agency or a member of faculty of the School of Social Work.
- *Field placement*- A setting, usually an agency that meets the agency affiliation criteria, in which the student takes the field instruction courses: field practice and educational supervision. The setting provides supervised field practice opportunities for the student.
- *Faculty liaison/advisor*- The faculty member appointed to mentor and guide a student through the completion of a graduate degree.
- *Managed care*- The provision of health services through a single point of entry and formal enrollment where patient care is managed to ensure an emphasis on quality, preventive and primary care, a reduction in inappropriate use of services, control of costs, and management of risk. This concept has been applied to managed care organizations, which integrate the finance and delivery functions of health care.
- *Meta-analysis*- A study of studies, or collection and integration of experimental studies a particular treatment or program where a statistical formula is used to measure the effect, size and impact of the different treatment programs. Also known as a systematic

literature review that utilizes quantitative methods to summarize the findings (Roberts & Yeager, 2004).

- *RCT* - A randomized controlled trial (RCT) is a type of research design, also called experimental design, in which participants (subjects) are randomly assigned to a control (no treatment or treatment as usual) condition or to an experimental condition. The purpose of an RCT is to minimize biases, which may compromise, confound, or obscure the results of research contrasting the treatment with the control condition. The purpose of random assignment is to test the counter-factual, i.e. what would the outcome be for the treatment group if they had not participated in the treatment (Roberts & Yeager, 2004).
- *Tacit Knowledge* - knowledge that people carry in their minds and is, therefore, difficult to access. Often, people are not aware of the knowledge they possess or how it can be valuable to others. Tacit knowledge is considered more valuable because it provides context for people, places, ideas, and experiences. Effective transfer of tacit knowledge generally requires extensive personal contact and trust (Gambrell, 2006).

### **Leadership and Policy in EBP**

The topic of leadership attracts a great deal of interest as management strives to maximize the contributions of employees to meet the goals of their employing organizations (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). Much has been written on various approaches to managing people at work. These include the use of technology and work design, developing strategies to motivate staff to high performance, encouraging more effective social relationships, or re-engineering work processes (Daft & Marcic, 1998). Some of these approaches have been widely adopted while others attract little notice.

Like EBP, leadership has many definitions (DuBrin, 2001) and like EBP the social work community has not agreed on a specific definition. Researchers and business people alike continue to debate as to whether leadership is an attribute of the organization or the individual (Stogdill, 1970, reproduced in Grint, 1997). One definition cited in many publications is given by Bennis and Nanus (1986) and describes leadership as “like the abominable snowman, whose footprints are everywhere but who is nowhere to be seen.” The idea of leadership is valued as it is often associated with organizational and staff performance (Glisson & Durick, 1988). Aarons (2006) points out that leadership is important to consider in relation to acceptance of innovations and to work attitudes, perceptions, behavior, service, quality and client outcomes. Aarons goes on to suggest that adoption of EBP is influenced by both transformational (charismatic or visionary leadership) and transactional (based on “exchanges” between the leader and follower) leadership styles.

Aarons (2006), in a study, found that positive transformational leadership was associated with positive attitudes toward implementing evidence-based practices and that transactional leadership was associated with more positive attitudes toward adopting evidence-based practice. He found that those social service providers who rated their supervisor higher on transformational and transactional leadership were more open to adopting evidence-based practices. Aarons goes on to say, “it is likely that supervisors who exhibit more positive transformational leadership behaviors engender attitudes in subordinates that would lead subordinates to greater openness to adopting new technologies or practices. This finding is clearly in keeping with the definition of

transformational leadership as inspiring commitment to and enthusiasm for the leader and willingness to follow the leader's vision.”

### **Education Theory**

The concepts of EBP are not new to practitioners or to educators. In his book, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Schon (1988) describes a model based on the integration or linkage of thought and action with reflection. Schon's work has an historical theoretical foundation built in a tradition of learning supported by learning theorists Dewey, Lewin and Piaget (Imel, 1992). These theorists advocated that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection and of theory with practice. Each stressed that learning cannot take place without reflection; though they also point out that experience is the basis for learning. Schon (1983) points out that the stage is set for reflection when “knowing-in-action,” which he describes as knowledge that professionals come to depend on to perform their work spontaneously, produces an unexpected outcome or surprise. Schon describes two types of reflection that may develop out of the unexpected outcome: “reflection on action” which occurs either following or by interrupting the activity, or “reflection in action” which takes place during the activity by thinking about how to reshape the activity while it is underway. Schon says that when “reflecting in action”, a professional becomes a researcher in the context of practice, freed from established theory and techniques and able to construct a new theory to fit the unique situation.

Learning theorist David Kolb describes experiential learning as a four-stage process: (a) concrete experience, (b) observations and reflections, (c) formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and (d) testing applications of concepts in new

situations (Kolb, 1984). He developed a learning style inventory based on his theory of learning which assesses how one learns.

Reflecting on learning as well as understanding learning styles may be seen as precursors to utilizing EBP. Each step of the EBP process requires that practitioners consider each client or patient they work with and reflect on specific treatment options or modalities. For instance, step four of EBP which requires a critical appraisal of information and the consideration of own expertise and client's wishes and this requires that practitioners reflect on what is happening during their treatment of the client as well as reflecting on the outcome and feedback from client. Consideration of client's learning style may be crucial in determining the best treatment modality to use. Similarly, the last two steps involve auditing the intervention used to verify fidelity, evaluating the findings and finally sharing results and working toward improving the quality of available evidence. The content of each step demonstrates the use of reflection and tuning into client learning and needs. Indeed, the focus of EBP is that reflection on practice is ongoing. Using Schon's terms, one may say that practitioners utilizing EBP are continually "reflecting in practice" as well as "reflecting on practice".

### **Evidence-based Practice in Field Education**

#### **Students and Field Instructors**

While social work students report that they value the approaches learned in EBP, they also indicate that they have difficulty implementing these approaches in the field placement setting citing agency barriers such as lack of time and resources within the agency (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). Other survey data show that field instructors also indicate that they are supportive of EBP and value the ideal of providing quality services



that are proven to be effective to their clients/patients but they also cite barriers that keep them from using EBP (Edmond, Megivern, Williams, Rochman, & Howard, 2006; Mullen & Bacon, 2006). Bellamy, Bledsoe, & Traube (2006) found that training agency based field instructors on the use of EBP was very difficult due to various barriers including limited time; agency culture and infrastructure; access to internet and research databases; high staff turnover; as well as limited resources that support using EBP.

If schools of social work begin incorporating EBP into the curriculum to prepare social work practitioners and yet ignore the need to train field instructors to use this model, students will experience a lack of connection between course content and practice with client systems. In order for students to fully embrace EBP as a viable model of practice, agency field instructors and administrators must be active partners. Proctor (2004) in her paper points out that adoption of EBP by the social work profession will come about as a result of actions at multiple levels that focus on producing more agency based practice relevant research, improved organizational infrastructures, and relevant class and field education.

### **Steps of EBP**

There are five to seven steps, depending on the article or book one reads, in doing EBP for persons who are newly introduced to this approach. The seven steps as identified below:

- Step one is to become motivated to do EBP whether one is mandated or encouraged to do so. When shown the utility of EBP to real world practice, professionals and students would begin with a positive orientation and

motives. On the other hand being forced to do EBP by managed care could create considerable resentment.

- Step two focuses on developing a clear and answerable question derived from the client's problem or need. Such questions may be about diagnosis, treatment, side effects, prognosis as well as costs and overall benefits or efficiency of care.
- Step three instructs one to search the literature for relevant research that could help answer this question. The EBP model places greatest credibility in results of randomized controlled trials [RCTs] or meta-analyses of experimental studies.
- Step four involves conducting a critical appraisal of this information and ranking the evidence for its validity and applicability to the client's need and situation. The client's wishes along with the professional's expertise and competence must also be considered.
- Step five guides one to formulate and apply an intervention based on the most relevant and applicable findings which we can call the "best available evidence." The assumption is that the evidence will clearly point to a best intervention. While some situations may point to a "best intervention," other situations may show that the evidence will be lacking, of variable quality or irrelevant, making the yield of this step a bit more ambiguous than the model suggests.
- Step six allows the auditing of the intervention to verify it was done appropriately and evaluate the findings.

- Step seven directs one to share results with others and work toward improving the quality of available evidence (Gambrill 2001; Gibbs, 2003; Sacket, Richardson, Rosenberg & Haynes, 1997).

It is important to note that all steps are meant to be transparent and replicable by others. That is, the steps should be so clear another person could re-do them given enough time and access to information (Gibbs, 2003). It also means many things are accepted at face value such as definitions of mental and social disorders (usually defined via the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) though these categories do change over time (Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002). Measures of treatments are assumed to be adequate, valid, reliable and complete. Treatments, though often only broadly described, are assumed to be replicable by others in different settings, with different training and with different backgrounds (McCall & Green, 2004).

Evidence-based practice focuses on the outcome of treatment, not the processes by which change occurs. Understanding both outcome and change process is said to be the cornerstone of science. Evidence based practice is viewed as one approach to improving the impact of practice in medicine, psychology, social work, nursing and allied fields (Gibbs, 2003). While all professions have directed attention to "evidence" for many years, EBP puts the emphasis on the results of experiential comparisons to document the efficacy of treatments against untreated control groups, against other treatments, or both (Henggeler, 2004).

### **Barriers to EBP**

Two common barriers to the implementation of EBP include the perceived emphasis on randomized controlled trails (RCT's) and rigid treatment principles. While

RCT's are the "gold standard" of evidence for answering questions about the efficacy of a treatment, EBP principles also emphasize the importance of consumer values and choice in the selection and implementation of a therapeutic approach (Gambrill, 2006). An RCT is an experiment in which participants are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). Ideally, neither participant nor treating clinician knows which group is which. After a course of treatment (or control), improvement is determined by comparing pre-treatment status with post-treatment status. If the treated group improves significantly more than the controls, one can say the treatment caused the change and that the treatment works or is better than no treatment. In another form of RCT, the best known treatment is compared to a new treatment using random assignment. If the new treatment produces better results than does the standard treatment, it is viewed as empirically supported and "more efficacious". Some practitioners argue that the RCTs don't always reflect "real world" conditions well, so the results of such studies may not be the same as what is found in real clinics (Miles, Bentley, Polychronis, Grey & Melchiorri, 2001; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Opponents of EBP say the concern is that RCTs often use carefully assessed participants that have only a single disorder and often have relatively strong social supports. Real world clinics are rarely able to undertake similarly detailed assessments and, even if they could, would often have to treat people with co-existing (co-morbid) conditions, less persistence, perhaps fewer social supports and perhaps lower motivation to be in treatment (Norcross, Beutler, & Levant, 2005). Thus carefully run RCTs reflect laboratory conditions rather than real world conditions.

The distinction between laboratory and real world conditions is known as "effectiveness" versus "efficacy." Laboratory RCTs produce knowledge about the "efficacy" of a treatment - that it works under ideal conditions. Experimental studies done under less carefully defined conditions reflecting the variation in real world clinics are known as "effectiveness" studies (Chaffin and Friedrich, 2004; Norcross, Beutler, & Levant, 2005).

In psychology, the initial unveiling of "empirically validated treatments" by an American Psychological Association Task Force brought forth interest and criticism. It also brought out differences regarding interpretations of the existing research literature and regarding the merits of certain research methods. One key concern was the over-reliance on randomized control trials (RCTs) (Wampold & Bhati, 2004).

### **Rigid Treatment Principles**

Another barrier to implementation has been the view that EBP is "cookbook" care in which rigid principles are applied regardless of fit with the patient. Gambrill (2004) posits that while the temptation to use evidence as a "cookbook" may be present, clinical decisions still need to be made informed by all the clinician's knowledge, experience, and skills (Gambrill, 2004). Clients rarely present as "textbook" cases, but usually have complicating factors that also must be taken into account. The temptation to use a "cookbook" may be strongest among new clinicians; however, if the EBP initiative includes manuals and specific guidelines, it will provide more structure for the new clinician who has little practical experience to accompany his/her knowledge. In addition, all EBP initiatives must embrace compassion, cultural sensitivity, and respect for peers

and families if they are to achieve the ultimate goal of providing safe, effective, holistic care (Gambrill, 2006; Thyer, 2004).

### **Facilitating EBP**

To overcome the barriers to implementing EBP, there must be champions and mechanisms to support this cause as well as a variety of effective evidence-based models for the advancement of this type of care (Melnik & Fineout-Overholt, 2005). Solberg et al. (2000, p. 529) report in the *Joint Commission Journal on Quality Improvement* that there are several conditions that can facilitate the use of EBP guidelines in an organization:

- Organizational capacity for change (support by leadership at all levels)
- An implementation infrastructure (adequate resources and time)
- Practitioner group characteristics (a shared vision and mission)
- Guideline characteristics (credibility, relative importance to clinicians)

The concern among many social work educators and practitioners is how evidence-based practice will be identified as this may determine therapies that are conducted as well as what will be taught and researched and ultimately required by insurance companies for reimbursement.

### **Research and EBP**

#### **Funding**

In social work and psychology, advocates of EBP have argued that only interventions with demonstrated efficacy should be supported financially. Such an argument links demonstrations of efficacy with the funding structure of the current managed care environment. It may be seen as either a way to best use limited dollars

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006) or yet another method to curtail funding for costly services (Israel, Schulz, Parker & Becker, 1998). Without provision of adequate funds to do thorough research on the great variety of treatments in use, the requirement of proven efficacy may be used as a tool to limit treatment services.

Social workers adopt a world view that suggests problems are best understood by viewing "persons in situations." That is, external environmental and social factors as well as internal health and psychological factors will be important in understanding the whole person. This perspective is partially incorporated in the DSM's Axes IV and V diagnoses structure, but only in a summary form. EBP generally applies operational definitions of problems in RCT reviews of treatment effects. This is consistent with the medical model of research and general use in psychology and social work research. The potential limitation is that such definitions of target problems locate the problem within the individual and often ignore social circumstances, supportive and/or oppressive. This may represent a limited definition of the target problem or a flaw in conceptualization.

In much organic medical treatment, causes or etiologies may be more clearly identified than is possible in the world of mental health and social problems. Thus applying an outcome model that assumes a single, clearly identified "cause" and problems that reflect symptoms may, or may not, be optimal (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). Further, different "doses" of treatment may be identifiable for organic medical conditions, but may be less clear cut in the functional, mental health and social world. Both conceptual and operational diagnoses in mental health pose some challenges and multiple, co-morbid disorders are commonplace, making real world

practice quite different from tightly controlled and extensively tested experimental studies (Rosenthal, 2004).

Some argue that treatment effects are due more to "common factors" shared by therapies than they are due to specific treatment techniques (DeAngelis, 2005). The level of client motivation, the strength and quality of the therapeutic relationship, a shared vision of what treatment will include a shared sense of hope or expectancy of improvement and even placebo effects are elements of treatment common across differences in theory and technique, especially in psychotherapy and social services (Bilsker & Goldner, 2004). RCTs are often designed to test differences of technique, but ignore or limit the role of common factors (Wampold & Bhati, 2004). Several meta-analytic studies of psychotherapy for adults demonstrate empirically that several types of therapy for depression and anxiety are effective (DeAngelis, 2005). This indicates that common factors, rather than different treatment techniques, generate roughly equivalent change, at least for some disorders.

On the other hand, Reid (1997) did a meta-analysis of social work interventions for several quite different problems (mental retardation, smoking cessation, substance abuse. etc.). He found many types of treatments were helpful but behavioral and cognitive approaches appeared to work better than did the other techniques. It is important to note, however, that his study compares "apples and oranges" since dissimilar problems were aggregated. There is not a consensus among researchers and educators as to how common factors are viewed; thus, some take them into consideration and others ignore them creating yet more controversy in evaluating evidence.



### **Client Differences, Practitioners and Interventions Used**

Since most quantitative experimental studies are based on group means, the literature shows that "on average" treatments generate a certain effect (Norman & Schmidt, 2000). This is valuable information, yet it does not help the clinician distinguish which specific client is like the mean responder and who may differ. With medication some people respond to a smaller than average dose, others need more than the average to be helped. We might assume the same is true in mental health, in that some people respond with less effort as they are able to better use opportunities and resources, while others need more help since they are less able to use their resources and opportunities to improve. Thus the clinician is left to think critically and fit aggregate treatment results to the specific, unique reality of a given client. It can also be assumed that clinicians vary in ability to deliver any given treatment. Referral may be indicated where a treatment in which one is not fully trained is indicated as the best practice. In addition, there is variation in effectiveness even among well trained clinicians. Unlike pills, mental health issues appear heavily influenced by relationship factors and expectancy factors. In a profession that supports autonomous decision making by the client or client system, clinical social workers must ask the client about their views of what EBP suggests is the most likely effective treatment. If the client has concerns about the treatment, these views must be honored (Gambrill, 2006).

### **Racial, Ethnic, and Social Diversity**

Critical thinking and efforts to find knowledge are needed, along with efforts to individualize treatment to the person and environment, including culture of the client. Many scholars note that there is very little research on services and treatments to

populations of color, immigrant populations who often have culturally different ideas about mental health and its treatment, class differences in treatment effectiveness, differences in sexual orientation, and sometimes gender differences (Nelson, Steele, & Mize, 2006). Research on children, teens and the elderly is also often minimal. EBP, as much of medicine, assumes people are more similar than unique; therefore, treatments are universally effective (Dulcan, 2005). This may often be so for organic disorders, but is less certain for socially complex concerns such as mental disorders. Research on the effectiveness of many treatments on diverse populations is lacking. Consequently, many view this as a major shortcoming of EBP at this time (Bilsker & Goldner, 2004; Roberts & Yeager, 2004).

### **Factors Impacting Field Instruction**

#### **Field Instruction**

Schools of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education require that students complete a field placement as part of their degree curriculum. This field experience must be supervised by a master level social worker who provides weekly supervision to help students integrate theory learned in class to the practice experience they get in the field. These supervisors are known as “field instructors” and in many states, including Michigan, they must hold a license to practice and to serve in the role of field instructor.

When curriculum changes occur, schools work to ensure that changes impacting field education are implemented, keeping in mind how they affect the agencies and agency based field instructors. While EBP is not a new paradigm, the notion of incorporating it into the curriculum is still in the beginning stages for many schools of

social work; thus, involving agencies and field instructors has not been actively pursued. Consequently, when and if schools choose to embrace EBP, they will find that not having agencies and field instructors “on board” will severely delay implementation; student learning that incorporates EBP without field support will be limited if not void of application and confuse students.

### **Field Instructor Motivation.**

While agencies must provide the infrastructure to support EBP, it is the field instructors who must be willing to work with students and to provide opportunities to use EBP. Field instructors are motivated by professional and personal factors when they choose to work with students (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Bennett & Coe, 1998). Professional factors include the responsibility to contribute and reciprocally educate and train others as well as realize the professional growth that results from instructing students who are challenging and energizing. Personal factors include enjoyment derived from teaching and mentoring as well as being affiliated with university faculty and staff. Agency commitment to education and professional development also has impact on field instructor decisions to work with students. Studies show that field instructors are stimulated to further analyze and reflect upon their own practice, to develop deeper self-awareness, and to gain new insights and perceptions about their student experiences (Globerman & Bogo, 2003; Urdang 1999). Providing supervision helped many field instructors appreciate their own professional competence and value (Bogo, 2005).

Changes in the field have affected field instructor availability to provide student training. During the past decade, massive changes within social and health services have been greatly affected. These include funding for welfare and human services, downsizing

and restructuring services, more privatization and, of course, the proliferation of managed care.

Only a few studies shed light on the motivations of social workers to serve as field instructors, and all studies were conducted in an era of greater public support for social and health services (Raskin & Blome, 1998; Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2006). These studies found that intrinsic factors, such as enjoying teaching, contributing to the profession, and professional development and challenge through teaching, were primary motivators. Extrinsic factors, such as support, expectation, and recognition by the university and the agency, although significant, were less important to the social workers studied in the 1980s (Globerman & Bogo, 2003).

### **Managed Care**

The 1980s and 1990s marked the decline of resources within agencies impacting opportunities for student learning (Frumkin & Loyd, 1995). Changes to organizations offering field education stem from the impact of managed care on field instruction. Field instruction has been less well supported by agencies since managed care resulted in an emphasis on maximizing revenues. Staff cannot bill for the time they spend in student supervision and often have larger caseloads and less time to supervise (Bocage, Homonoff, & Riley, 1995; Bogo, 2005; Bogo, Raskin & Wayne, 2002). In a national survey of 70 responding field directors, similar reasons were found for a loss of placements: reduced resources, increased caseloads, and lack of billable hours for field instruction, especially on the East Coast and in urban centers (Raskin & Blome, 1998). It is important to investigate the impact these changes have had on field instructors' view of working with students, including their motivation for working with students. It is also

worth noting that rarely do organizations formalize the role of field instructor for social work practitioners. Instead, social workers volunteer to take on this role and receive permission from their agencies to affiliate with the university. These social workers provide field instruction while maintaining their regular workload. Two studies reported that in one-third of the field agencies surveyed social workers received no workload credit for student field placement education (Bocage, Homonoff, & Riley, 1995; Bogo & Globerman, 1999).

### **Field Instruction Seminars**

Schools have created field seminars, incorporated pre-placement interviews and developed various faculty liaison models to aid field instructors and students as they make their transition into field placements, all in an effort to ensure a successful and productive placement. It has been recognized that providing training designed for the new agency-based field instructor results in improved placement experiences for both student and field instructor (Abramson & Fortune, 1990; Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2006). This training, often identified as Seminar In Field Instruction (SIFI), is designed to help the field instructor understand the school curriculum and program objectives and the dynamics of supervision. Content areas suggested for training new field instructors include:

- orientation of students,
- relationships between school and agency,
- phases of field instruction,
- structure of supervision,
- adult learning concepts,

- assessment of learning needs,
- instructional methods,
- theories of learning styles,
- cultural issues,
- creating a climate for learning,
- communicating expectations,
- integrating theory and practice,
- professional socialization,
- giving and receiving feedback,
- assessment of student performance,
- working with challenging students,
- termination, and
- legal aspects of field education (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Glassman, 1995).

It is hoped that the seminars assist the field instructor in creating field placement opportunities for students such that they can integrate course curriculum into placement experiences. These seminars provide curriculum and supervisory knowledge to field instructors who, when matched with a student intern, help that student achieve competence in field. Literature suggests that the seminar may be an appropriate vehicle to introduce EBP as well as courses in practice methods and research.

Despite efforts to ensure good matches, both students and field instructors experience situations when the placement is deemed unsuccessful. As a result, the placement may prematurely end or if it continues, both the student and field instructors struggle as they work to improve the situation. While schools may encourage agencies to

interview prospective student interns to determine if there is a good fit, there is little training from schools that help field instructors identify those factors that would help them in this endeavor. Additionally, some field instructors may be pressured by their agency directors to accept students, and thus they neglect the consideration of fit.

Most social work academics would agree that EBP is here to stay and that schools of social work must begin to put in place mechanisms to incorporate it in the curriculum. Controversies around how to define EBP and what constitutes evidence, along with the development of an infrastructure to support its use must be used to encourage movement toward incorporating EBP rather than serve as barriers.

As schools of social work move to consider the merits of EBP, the role of field instructor in helping students to integrate theory and practice is paramount to the success of incorporating this framework. While the debate among the social work academic community about the use of EBP continues, little attention is given to supporting field instructors and agencies in anticipation of utilizing EBP. With constraints brought about by the proliferation of managed care, agencies are now more than ever strapped for time and resources. In addition, social work practitioners must be accountable for their time as compensation occurs when they demonstrate time with clients/patients.

Those social workers who agree to work with student interns are finding it more difficult to find the time to provide the quality supervision necessary for preparing students for competent practice and some are declining to assume the role of field instructor. These stressors add to the limitations that exist for utilization of EBP including access to electronic resources, support from agencies to embrace EBP to allow time necessary for its implementation.

Schools must anticipate and prepare methods to ensure that field education is incorporated in any changes to the curriculum. Schools of social work must begin and sustain dialogue with field instructors and agency administrators to ensure that interest and movement of EBP continues. This dialogue will ensure that both academics and agency personnel, especially field instructors, are “on the same page” when discussions of implementations of EBP takes place. This in turn will help to prepare students by better linking university and agency to ensure that the work students engage in the classroom is not counteracted by methods in the field.

### **Openness to Technology**

#### **Institutions of Higher Education**

As many of today’s students come to class armed with smart phones, laptops and iPods, institutions of higher education must accept that the era of pervasive technology has significant implications for the delivery of instruction and the retention of technologically savvy students (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008). Adopting and effectively utilizing technology that meaningfully contributes to the learning environment can be challenging given the variety of technologies used in higher education as well as their pace of development. Faculty members work in colleges and universities that have adopted, implemented and routinized technologies that require use in order to function in one’s role. Indeed, many universities mandate that faculty utilize software that allow class material to be available only on line. While some faculty members may still resist this movement, preferring traditional face to face instruction as they may not be willing to invest the time to learn new methods or in some cases lack the budget for the needed support, many other faculty members have embraced these technologies and have



incorporated them into their teaching. The many forms of on line course offerings continue to grow and open new opportunities for students globally. As new faculty members enter academia, they come in prepared and often expect advanced technology to assist with instruction and research (Fitch, 2005). Colleges and universities wishing to remain competitive both locally and globally are investing in technology support and training to attract and retain both faculty and students.

### **Community-Based Agencies and Organizations**

Unlike large private corporations that are often at the forefront of new technologies, public and nonprofit social service agencies often struggle with resources to purchase new hardware and software as well as to fund training for workers to use such technology (Reisch and Jarman-Rohde, 2000). While computers have been in general use for various purposes in social service settings since the 1980's (Monnickendam & Eaglestein, 1993), the use of informational systems for reflective management and direct practice lags much behind (Carrillio, 2007; Fitch, 2005).

It is accepted that agencies feel the ever-increasing pressure for effectiveness and accountability (Carrillio, 2007) especially in the face of the evidence based practice movement (Proctor, 2004; Webb, 2001). Several factors impact utilization and acceptance of technology by social workers in agency based organizations. These include perceived usefulness of the technological system, training and skills of user and organizational support (Monnickendam, 1999); perceived importance of the system and its products (Despont-Gros, Mueller, & Lovis, 2005); and distrust of technology or fear of how the data may be used (Dorsey, 2002; Sluyter, 1998).

Carrillio (2007) found in surveying social workers (who also served as field instructors) that they are more likely to utilize computerized information systems if they have skill and experience using computers, the system is easy to use, and the information system provides useful data. These findings support other research with similar findings (Monnickendam, 1999). As agencies are made to be more accountable by funding sources (Bogo, 2005), social workers will need to be more open and accepting of new technologies, whether they are comfortable with them or not.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This section describes the research methodology of this study including design, population and sample, data collection, conceptual model and analysis.

#### **Research Design**

This study was a non-experimental, descriptive and explanatory study that investigated the factors contributing to social work faculty members and agency based field instructors' perceptions about adopting EBP into the classroom and field placement. Additionally, the study identified perceptions of social work faculty members and field instructors about EBP, if social work faculty members and field instructors use EBP in their work, and how educational and agency based institutions can support social work faculty and field instructors to develop effective leadership practices.

#### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study included all full-time social work faculty members employed by three large public research universities in southeast Michigan (Michigan State University [MSU], University of Michigan [UM], and Wayne State University [WSU]), as well as the agency-based master-level social workers who serve in the role of field instructors for students enrolled in the social work programs at these institutions. All three social work programs at these institutions are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

The three universities are large state public universities with enrollment sizes ranging from 30,000 for WSU and over 40,000 for both MSU and U of M. The social

work programs at Michigan State and Wayne State Universities offer a BSW, MSW and PhD degree programs, while the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor offers MSW and PhD degree programs. Each of the three schools also has a large number of social work students as demonstrated in the Fall 2009 student enrollment count: MSU – 547, U of M – 535, and WSU – 825. The current number of full-time faculty at each of the three schools is: MSU – 50, U of M – 49 and WSU – 24.

The agency-based social work field instructors who provide supervision for social work student interns represent a wide variety of agencies and organizations ranging from large medical facilities to small non-profit and grass roots agencies serving local communities. While each school may affiliate with over 500 agencies and organizations, the number of agencies/organizations taking student(s) for a particular academic year varies, but tends to range between 200 and 350. Some agencies/organizations may be affiliated with more than one school; thus, a few agencies may accept students from all three universities while others may only accept students from one school.

The sample for the study included all full-time faculty members at each of the three universities as well as the agency-based field instructors who supervised at least one social work student during the 2009 – 2010 academic year. Each of the schools has between 200 and 300 field instructors who serve as field instructors for social work student interns during an academic year. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Human Investigation Committee at Wayne State University. Letters of support from the Deans of the Schools of Social Work from Michigan State University and University of Michigan were obtained to allow distribution of the survey.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

A survey was developed to assess the participants' age, gender, educational level, years of experience as an MSW, knowledge of EBP, type of position held at the agency/organization employed, access to internet and databases to conduct searches/research, and the level of support (leadership and technological) provided by agency/organization. In addition, questions were developed allowing for some open ended responses to determine faculty and field instructors' view of how the university can provide support to assist with adoption and utilization of EBP within the agencies/organizations for student interns. The closed-ended questions included a combination of dichotomous responses (i.e., yes/no) and Likert-type scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree; see Appendices A and B). A focus group composed of the Field Education Advisory Committee (FEAC) members at Wayne State University School of Social Work provided feedback about the survey. Using this information, adjustments to the survey included details on barriers to use of EBP and methods of incorporating EBP into student's curriculum and field practice. This committee convened for a meeting, reviewed the constructs giving feedback and recommendations on the examples of barriers and opportunities to use of EBP. FEAC members include field instructors from diverse agencies, part-time and full-time faculty members and academic staff within the school of social work at WSU.

The survey instruments identified three subscales of utilization of EBP including: Attitude and Openness to use of EBP as well as Support (leadership and technology) provided by the university/agency. Table 1 outlines these subscales.

Table 1: *Survey Subscales*

<p><b>Openness to adopting EBP into teaching/practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EBP should be incorporated into curriculum of all schools of social work.</li> <li>• Students should be taught the process for conducting EBP.</li> <li>• The EBP movement will positively impact social work education.</li> <li>• The EBP movement will positively impact social work practice.</li> <li>• I discuss the importance of EBP for practice with my students.</li> <li>• My student(s) are familiar with EBP.</li> <li>• It is important that students accept EBP.</li> <li>• It is important that students understand EBP.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall attitude about EBP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EBP movement in social work is here to stay</li> <li>• There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for teaching.</li> <li>• There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for practice.</li> <li>• EBP is a new word for practices that are already in place.</li> <li>• EBP is more suited for medical practice rather than behavioral/clinical practice.</li> <li>• The lack of research using minority subjects in clinical trials makes it difficult to apply EBP to methods to practice with minority populations.</li> <li>• EBP is not helpful for the students that I supervise/instruct in field.</li> <li>• EBP is not going to change social work education.</li> <li>• My colleagues tend to be open to adopting EBP in their practice.</li> <li>• Seasoned social workers are less likely to adopt EBP into their practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>University/agency support of EBP</b></p> <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have the time that is needed to be able to use EBP in my field instruction.</li> <li>• My employer supports use of EBP.</li> <li>• The leadership in the organization where I am employed provides support for use of EBP.</li> <li>• I am encouraged by my supervisor/director to take a leadership role in using EBP within my work.</li> </ul> <p>Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have the technology at work to access information for EBP.</li> <li>• The resources available to use EBP at my place of employment are inadequate.</li> <li>• I would be more open to using EBP if I had access to advanced technology.</li> <li>• I am unable to access information that would help me to use EBP in my work</li> </ul>

The *openness to adopting EBP into teaching/practice* dimension may be influenced by the appeal of certain practices that are supported by evidence including the information source (Frambach & Schillewaert, 2002). Openness is not the same as compliance with requirements since openness is seen as a willingness to try new experiences or consider new ways of doing things (McCrae & Costa, 2003) in that it

denotes how employees respond to organizational rules and regulations. For example, a faculty member may be very open to new innovations but may resist authority mandates to incorporate a certain model or framework. *Overall attitude about EBP* will gauge where respondents are in their view of EBP as a framework shaping practice and teaching. Many social work faculty members as well as practitioners are wary of EBP and cite numerous concerns such as (a) it denigrates clinical expertise, (b) it ignores patients' values and preferences, (c) it promotes a "cookbook" approach to practice, (d) it is merely a cost-cutting tool, and (e) it leads to therapeutic nihilism (Rubin & Parrish, 2007). These characteristics are viewed as misperceptions by many others (Gambril, 2006; Mullen & Streiner, 2004) who argue that EBP draws heavily on both practitioner expertise and client feedback. The third factor, *University/agency support of EBP*, looks at support coming from both individuals in leadership positions within the organization or university as well as support that is technical in nature. Support from organizational leadership pertains to how well administration of schools of social work and community based agencies embrace the notion and use of EBP. How much administrators value EBP may be exemplified by the encouragement and support that is provided to employees who take the initiative to develop and expand ways of using and infusing EBP into their work/teaching. Technical support refers to the use of computer-based tools for gathering evidence including availability of high speed internet and databases to conduct searches. These supports are often exemplified by the amount of resources designated for training employees on use of EBP as well as purchasing material (i.e. software or access to databases) to assist employees' use of EBP.

## **Validity and Reliability**

### **Validity**

The items used in the survey instrument for this study emerged from various sources including a comprehensive literature search, expert opinions and feedback from social work faculty and staff as well as feedback from current field instructors. Various research articles from well established and regarded journals supported the use of specific examples of barriers and opportunities to use of EBP (Aarons, 2004; Nelson et.al, 2006; Shlonsky & Gibbs, 2004; Wampold & Bhati, 2004). Feedback from the Field Education Advisory Committee provided information regarding these two constructs and confirmed that the items identified were valid.

The survey instrument measured three underlying dimensions of use/adoption of EBP. The research evaluated participants' attitude and openness to use of EBP as well as support (leadership and technology) provided by the university/agency.

In addition to the survey instrument, a modified job satisfaction scale was used from a survey developed by Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly (1992) to quantify attitudes about workplace allowing for the difference to emerge in attitudes about EBP and the work place. The scale included six questions to which participants responded using a scale from 1 ("very satisfied") to 7 ("not satisfied"). These questions were added at the end of the survey instrument for participants to answer.

### **Reliability**

The survey was piloted with the full-time faculty members at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio and their affiliated agency based field instructors. Feedback from these groups assisted in identifying areas of concern and need for changes



within the survey tool. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to determine the internal consistency for the three dimensions (Attitudes, Openness and Support) measured on the survey. The alpha coefficients for attitudes (.71), openness (.91), and support (.70) indicated adequate internal consistency.

### **Open-ended Questions**

The survey allowed for 25 separate questions for both full-time faculty members and agency based field instructors to use a seven point, Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, open-ended questions were used to gather qualitative data. Open-ended questions were used to capture detailed thoughts including ideas on how to assist students to incorporate EBP into field work as well as some detail on how EBP is being utilized in teaching and practice. The open-ended questions were categorized by common themes using content analysis procedures, with responses classified by faculty members and field instructors. Each open-ended response was read by two researchers, which allowed for the calculation of inter-rater reliability. Moreover, this research tracked the number of non-responses for each of the open ended questions.

The participants' close-ended responses were divided into subscales identifying three dimensions: 1) openness to adopting EBP into teaching/practice, 2) overall attitude about EBP, 3) University/organizational support of EBP -identified as either leadership support or technological support. The subscales with corresponding questions are listed in Table 1.

## **Operationalization of the Variables**

### **Dependent Variables.**

Faculty members and field instructor adoption and utilization of EBP into teaching/instruction was the primary dependent variable for this study. The adoption of EBP into teaching/instruction was measured by using an additive composite variable for each of the three constructs considered: Attitude, Openness and, Leadership (support and technology). Each of these three constructs has specific associated questions on the survey, including 8 questions for Openness, 10 for Attitude and 8 for Support.

### **Control Variables.**

Demographic characteristics, including gender, age, highest degree achieved, Michigan licensure status, were used as control variables. Additionally, those respondents who have received exposure to EBP in the form of trainings and workshops were considered and differences in responses are noted with those who have had no or little exposure to EBP.

### **Independent Variables.**

The independent variable in this study was group membership: faculty members and field instructors.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The questionnaire was administered electronically using Zoomerang software. The Wayne State University School of Social Work uses a field instructor list serve as well as a list serve for faculty which was used to administer the survey. Email addresses of field instructors and faculty list serves at the other institutions were obtained from their departments and used to administer the survey.

Descriptive statistics summarize the participants' demographic characteristics including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. Pearson product moment correlations and chi-square tests for independence were used to determine the nature of the relationship between these variables. The determination for which of the statistical procedures would be used was based on the scaling of the variables. If both variables in an analysis were continuous, Pearson product moment correlations were used. However, if both variables were categorical, chi-square tests for independence were used. One-way multivariate analysis of variance procedures were used to test for differences between faculty and field instructors on openness, attitudes, and support. This type of procedure is used when comparing multiple dependent variables with a single independent variable.

Table 2 outlines the research questions, survey instrument data, and data analysis tools for the descriptive analysis. For each research question, the following analytic techniques are used:

1. Is there an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom and in practice?

Crosstabulations and chi-square tests for independent samples

2. Is there an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom and in practice?

Crosstabulations and chi-square tests for independence

3. Is there a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice?

One-way multivariate analysis of variance.

Table 2 presents the research questions/hypotheses and the statistical analyses that was used to address them. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made using a criterion alpha level of .05.

Table 2

*Statistical Analysis*

Research Question/Hypothesis	Variables	Statistical Analysis
<p>1. Is there an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice?</p> <p>H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice.</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u> Opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice</p> <p><u>Independent Variables</u> Type of respondent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Field Instructors</li> </ul>	<p>Crosstabulations and chi-square tests for independence were used to determine if an association exists between responses to the items measuring opportunities to use EBP and type of respondent (faculty or field instructors)</p>
<p>2. Is there an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice?</p> <p>H<sub>2</sub>: There is an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/ practice.</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u> Barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice</p> <p><u>Independent Variables</u> Type of respondent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Field Instructors</li> </ul>	<p>Crosstabulations and chi-square tests for independence were used to determine if an association exists between responses to the items measuring barriers to the use of EBP and type of respondent (faculty or field instructors)</p>
<p>3. Is there a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/ practice?</p> <p>H<sub>3</sub>: There is a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/ practice.</p>	<p><u>Dependent Variables</u> Attitudes Openness Support (leadership/technology)</p> <p><u>Independent Variables</u> Type of respondent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Field Instructors</li> </ul>	<p>A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if a difference in attitudes, openness, and support for EBP existed between faculty and field instructors.</p> <p>If a statistically significant difference was found on the omnibus F, the between subjects analyses were used to determine which of the constructs (openness, attitudes, and support) were contributing to the statistically significant difference.</p> <p>The mean scores for the faculty and field instructors were examined to determine the direction of the constructs that were differing significantly.</p>

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents results of the statistical analyses that were used to provide a description of the sample, characteristics of evidence-based practice (EBP), and addresses the research questions and associated hypotheses developed for the study. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section uses frequency distributions and crosstabulations to provide a profile of the participants. The second section will use crosstabulations to present information on the characteristics of EBP. Inferential statistical analyses, including chi-square tests for independence, analysis of variance, and Pearson product moment correlations are used to address the research questions.

The purpose of the study is to consider perceptions held by social work faculty and agency-based field instructors to incorporate EBP into social work student classroom and field placement experiences. This study identifies perceptions of social work faculty and field instructors about EBP, determines the extent to which social work faculty and field instructors incorporate and use EBP; and considers how organizational leadership and/or technology supports influence adoption and utilization of EBP.

A total of 123 faculty members and 1,027 field instructors in schools of social work at three state-supported universities were asked to participate in the study. Surveys were completed and returned by 56 faculty members and 327 field instructors for an overall response rate of 33.3%. The response rates for each group are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Distribution and Return of the Completed Surveys*

Group	<u>Distributed</u>		<u>Returned</u>		Response Rates
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Faculty	123	10.7	56	14.6	45.5
Field Instructors	1,027	89.3	327	85.4	31.8
Total	1,150	100.0	383	100.0	33.3

**Description of the Sample**

The participants were asked to provide their personal characteristics on the survey. Their responses were crosstabulated by group for presentation in Table 4.

Table 4

*Crosstabulations: Personal Characteristics of the Sample by Group Membership*

Personal Characteristics	<u>Group</u>					
	<u>Faculty (n = 56)</u>		<u>Field Instructors (n = 327)</u>		<u>Total (N = 383)</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age						
Under 30	0	0.0	11	3.5	11	3.1
30 to 39	7	15.6	66	21.0	73	20.3
40 to 49	8	17.8	71	22.5	79	21.9
50 to 59	15	33.3	116	36.8	131	36.4
60 and over	15	33.3	51	16.2	66	18.3
Missing	11		12		23	
Gender						
Female	33	70.2	253	81.6	286	80.1
Male	14	29.8	57	18.4	71	19.9
Missing	9		17		26	
Educational Level						
MSW	12	25.5	276	87.9	288	79.8
PhD	34	72.4	12	3.8	46	12.7
EdD	1	2.1	0	0.0	1	0.3
PsyD	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.3
Other	0	0.0	25	8.0	25	6.9
Missing	9		13		22	

The largest group of participants ( $n = 131$ , 36.4%) were between 50 and 59 years of age. Of this number, 15 (33.3%) were faculty and 116 (36.8%) were field instructors. None of the faculty and 11 (3.5%) of the field instructors were under 30 years of age. Eleven faculty and 12 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The majority of participants ( $n = 286$ , 80.1%), including 33 (70.2%) faculty and 253 (81.6%) field instructors reported their gender as female. Nine faculty and 17 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

Twelve (25.5%) faculty and 276 (87.9%) field instructors reported their highest level of completed education was master of social work. Of the 46 (12.7%) participants who reported completion of a PhD, 34 (72.4%) were faculty and 12 (3.8%) were field instructors. Nine faculty and 13 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The participants were asked about their licensure in the state of Michigan and membership in National Association of Social Workers. Their responses were summarized using crosstabulations. Table 5 presents results of these analyses.



Table 5

*Crosstabulations: Professional Characteristics by Group Memberships*

Professional Characteristics	<u>Group</u>					
	<u>Faculty (n = 56)</u>		<u>Field Instructors (n = 327)</u>		<u>Total (N = 383)</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Licensed in Michigan						
Yes	32	68.1	278	85.3	310	83.1
No	15	31.9	48	14.7	63	16.9
Missing	9		1		10	
Member of NASW						
Yes	30	63.8	156	48.0	186	50.0
No	17	36.2	169	52.0	186	50.0
Missing	9		2		11	

The majority of participants (n = 310, 83.1%) reported that they were licensed in the state of Michigan. This number included 32 (68.1%) faculty and 278 (85.3%) field instructors. Nine faculty and 1 field instructor did not provide a response to this question.

When asked if they were members of NASW, 30 (63.8%) faculty and 156 (48.0%) field instructors indicated they were members of this organization. Nine faculty and 2 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

Faculty were asked if they had adopted evidence-based practice (EBP) into their classes and field instructors were asked if they had adopted EBP in their work with students. In addition to this question, the faculty and field instructors also were asked if they had high-speed internet connections at home and at their place of employment. Their responses to these questions were summarized using crosstabulations for presentation in Table 6.

Table 6

*Crosstabulations: Evidence-based Practice by Group Membership*

Evidence-based Practice	Group					
	Faculty (n = 56)		Field Instructors (n = 327)		Total (N = 383)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Adopted EBP into Courses/Practice						
Yes	49	87.5	231	70.6	280	73.1
No	7	12.5	96	29.4	103	26.9
Have high-speed internet at place of employment	47	100.0	316	96.6	363	97.1
Yes	0	0.0	11	3.4	11	2.9
No	9				9	
Missing						
Have high-speed internet at home						
Yes	46	97.9	305	93.6	351	94.1
No	1	2.1	21	6.4	22	5.9
Missing	9		1		10	

The majority of participants (n = 280, 73.1%) indicated they had adopted EBP into their courses and practice. This number included 49 (87.5%) faculty and 231 (70.6%) field instructors.

All of the faculty (n = 47, 100.0%) and 316 (96.6%) of the field instructors had high-speed internet at their places of employment. Nine faculty did not provide a response to this question.

Forty-six (97.9%) faculty and 306 (93.6%) field instructors reported that they had high speed internet access at home. Nine faculty and 1 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The participants were asked to indicate the number of years of post-MSW teaching experience for faculty and practice experience for field instructors. Their

responses were summarized using descriptive statistics. Table 7 presents results of this analysis.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics – Post MSW – Teaching and Practice Experience*

Group	Number	Mean	SD	Median	Range	
					Minimum	Maximum
Faculty	46	15.52	10.67	12.50	1	40
Field Instructors	319	16.67	9.62	15.00	1	43
Missing	Faculty	10				
	Field Instructors	8				

The faculty had a mean of 15.52 (sd = 10.67) years of post-MSW teaching experience, with a median of 12.50 years. The range of teaching experience was from 1 to 40 years. Ten faculty did not provide a response to this question.

The mean number of years of post-MSW practice experience for field instructors was 16.67 (sd = 9.62) years. The range of actual experience was from 1 to 43 years, with a median of 15 years. Eight field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The participants were asked questions regarding professional development for adopting and implementing EBP in their teaching and field practice. Their responses were crosstabulated by group for presentation in Table 8.

Table 8

*Crosstabulations – Professional Development for EBP by Group Membership*

Professional Development for EBP	Group					
	Faculty (n = 56)		Field Instructors (n = 327)		Total (N = 383)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Internal/External Training						
International	13	23.2	16	4.9	29	7.6
Conferences/Trainings						
National	26	46.4	84	25.7	110	28.7
Conferences/Trainings						
State/Local	NA	NA	205	62.7	NA	NA
Conferences/Trainings						
University-Affiliated	NA	NA	175	53.5	NA	NA
Trainings						
Trainings by Paid	25	54.3	171	52.3	196	51.2
Outside Consults at						
Agency	8	14.3	30	9.2	38	9.9
Other						
Amount of Training in last two years that employer has provided to use EBP						
A lot	3	6.4	44	13.7	47	12.8
Moderate	16	34.0	90	28.0	106	28.7
Minimal	17	36.2	87	27.1	104	28.3
None	11	23.4	100	31.2	111	30.2
Total	47	100.0	321	100.0	368	100.0
Missing	9		6		15	
Employer support for use of EBP						
Technology	43	76.8	241	73.7	284	86.9
Staff support	19	33.9	135	41.3	154	47.1
Computer lab for	19	33.9	189	57.8	208	54.3
students	17	30.3	97	29.7	114	29.8
Funds for tools to use	16	28.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
EBP						
Consultants to support	1	1.8	16	4.9	17	4.4
training						
Other						
Attendance at nonwork training sessions for EBP						
Yes	14	31.1	110	34.8	124	34.3
No	31	68.9	206	65.2	237	65.7
Total	45	100.0	316	100.0	361	100.0
Missing	11		11		22	

The participants were asked where they received internal/external training for EBP. They were asked to indicate all that applied to them from a list of several possible options. As a result, the number of responses was greater than the number of participants.

The largest group of participants ( $n = 196$ , 51.2%) reported they had received training by paid outside consultants at their agency. Included in this number were 25 (54.3%) faculty and 171 (52.3%) field instructors. While faculty did not provide a response regarding state/local conferences/training, 205 (62.7%) of the field instructors indicated they had received training for EBP at these meetings. University-affiliated trainings were indicated by 175 (53.5%) of the field instructors, although this option was not provided to the faculty.

The participants were asked to indicate the amount of training in the last two years that their employers had provided for EBP. The largest group of participants ( $n = 111$ , 30.2%), including 11 (23.4%) faculty and 100 (31.2%) field instructors, indicated their employers had not provided training for EBP. Of the 47 (12.8%) participants who indicated their employers had provided a lot of training for EBP, 3 (6.4%) were faculty and 44 (13.7%) were field instructors. Nine faculty and 6 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The responses to the question of employer support for the use of EBP were related to tangible types of support. A list of possible types of support was given, with the participants asked to report all that applied. As a result, the number of responses exceeded the number of participants. The largest group of participants ( $n = 284$ , 86.9%) indicated that their employers provided technology to support EBP. This number included 43 (76.8%) faculty and 241 (73.7%) field instructors. Nineteen (33.9%) faculty and 189 (57.8%) field instructors indicated their employers provided a computer lab for students to support the use of EBP. Staff support was reported by 19 (33.9%) faculty and 135 (41.3%) field instructors.

The majority of the participants ( $n = 237$ , 65.7%) indicated that they had not attended any nonwork training sessions for using EPB in practice. Included in this number were 31 (68.9%) faculty and 206 (65.2%) field instructors. Eleven faculty and 11 field instructors did not provide a response to this question.

The participants were asked to indicate specific leadership practices that were needed to facilitate the implementation of EBP in social work. The participants were given a list of possible leadership practices and asked to indicate all that apply. The positive responses were crosstabulated by group (faculty or field instructors) for presentation in Table 9.

Table 9

*Crosstabulations – Leadership Practices Needed to Facilitate Implementation of EBP by Group*

Leadership Practices	<u>Group</u>					
	<u>Faculty (n = 56)</u>		<u>Field Instructors (n = 327)</u>		<u>Total (N = 383)</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mentoring of staff and supervisors	32	57.1	255	78.0	287	74.9
Investment of funds to build an infrastructure for EBP	25	44.6	209	63.9	234	61.1
Consistent and quality training for all staff to use EBP	32	57.1	263	80.4	295	77.0
Promoting and facilitating partnerships with other institutions/organizations to share information and training	29	51.8	235	71.9	264	68.9
Involving staff in trainings to build leadership skills and opportunities	23	41.1	241	73.7	264	68.9
Supporting research ideas	30	53.6	225	68.9	255	66.6
Supporting publication and collaboration with others to promote EBP	26	46.4	186	56.9	212	55.4
None	1	1.8	5	1.5	6	1.6
Other	4	7.1	9	2.8	13	3.4

The majority of faculty (n = 32, 57.1%) and field instructors (n = 255, 78.0%) reported that mentoring of staff and supervisors was a leadership practice that was needed to facilitate implementation of EBP. Of the 234 (61.1%) participants who reported that investment of funds was a leadership practice that was needed to build an infrastructure for EBP, 25 (44.6%) were faculty and 209 (63.9%) were field instructors. Thirty-two (57.1%) faculty and 263 (80.4%) field instructors reported that consistent and quality training for all staff to use EBP was a leadership practice needed to facilitate implementation of EBP. A total of 264 (58.9%) participants, including 29 (51.8%) faculty

and 235 (71.9%) indicated that promoting and facilitating partnerships with other institutions/organizations to share information and training was a leadership practice needed to facilitate implementation. Of the 264 (68.9%) participants who indicated that involving staff in trainings to build leadership skills and opportunities was a leadership practice needed to facilitate implementation of EBP, 23 (41.1%) were faculty and 241 (73.7%) were field instructors. Thirty (53.6%) faculty and 225 (68.9%) field instructors thought that supporting research ideas was a leadership practice needed to facilitate implementation of EBP. A total of 212 (55.4%) participants, including 26 (46.4%) faculty and 186 (56.9%) field instructors, reported that supporting publication and collaboration with others to promote EBP was a leadership practice that was needed to facilitate EBP in practice.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Three research questions were developed for the study. Each of these questions was addressed using inferential statistical analyses. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made using a criterion alpha level of .05.

*Research Question 1:* Is there an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice?

H<sub>1</sub>: There is an association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice.

The association between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom was tested using crosstabulations and chi-square tests for independence. The positive answers are presented in Table 10.



Table 10

*Crosstabulations – Opportunities to Use EBP in the Classroom*

Perceptions of Opportunities for Use of EBP	Group					
	Faculty (n = 56)		Field Instructors (n = 327)		Total (N = 383)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Will have more quality and well-trained staff $\chi^2 (1) = 14.57, p < .001$	25	44.6	235	71.9	260	67.9
Will encourage continuous training, supervision, and monitoring $\chi^2 (1) = 4.45, p = .035$	31	55.4	234	71.6	265	69.2
Will motivate staff and management $\chi^2 (1) = 13.30, p < .001$	11	19.6	153	46.8	164	42.8
Increase staff retention $\chi^2 (1) = 4.87, p = .027$	6	10.7	81	24.8	87	22.7
Will have more funding to support the use of EBP $\chi^2 (1) = .45, p = .504$	14	25.0	100	30.6	114	29.8
Will have more protected time to use EBP $\chi^2 (1) = .64, p = .425$	7	12.5	57	17.4	64	16.7
Will engage in innovations and access to research items $\chi^2 (1) = 3.69, p = .055$	30	53.6	225	68.8	255	66.6
Will have technical assistance and access to research items $\chi^2 (1) = 2.16, p = .142$	17	30.4	138	42.2	155	40.5

Four of the eight items on this analysis were statistically significant. Twenty-five (44.6%) faculty and 235 (71.9%) of the faculty perceived that EBP would provide opportunities to have more quality and well-trained staff. The results of the chi-square test for independence was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 (1) = 14.57, p < .001$ ), indicating that an association existed between this item and group membership. Field instructors were more likely to perceive that opportunities for the use of EBP would provide more quality and well-trained staff than faculty.

Thirty-one (55.4%) faculty and 234 (71.6%) field instructors agreed that opportunities for the use of EBP would encourage continuous training, supervision, and monitoring. The chi-square test for independence that was used to test the association between this question and group membership was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 4.45$ ,  $p = .035$ . This result indicated that field instructors were more likely to perceive that the use of EBP would encourage continuous training, supervision, and monitoring.

Eleven (19.6%) faculty and 153 (46.8%) field instructors indicated that the use of EBP would motivate staff and management. The results of the chi-square test for independence used to test the association between the use of EBP to motivate staff and management and group membership was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 14.57$ ,  $p < .001$ . Based on this finding, field instructors appear to be more positive about the use of EBP would motivate staff and management.

When asked if using EBP would increase staff retention, 6 (10.7%) and 81 (24.8%) field instructors agreed. The results of the chi-square test for independence used to test the association between the use of EBP would increase staff retention and group membership was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 4.87$ ,  $p = .027$ . This result provided evidence that an association existed between type of respondent (faculty or field instructors) and their agreement with the use of EBP to increase staff retention.

The chi-square tests for independent on the remaining four items in this section were not statistically significant, indicating that group membership was not independent of the responses to these items.

A second set of analyses were used to test this hypothesis. Faculty and field instructors were asked to indicate what they perceived were opportunities for the

adoption of EBP. Table 11 presents the positive responses to the eight items included in this section.

Table 11

*Crosstabulations – Opportunities for Adoption of EBP in the Classroom*

Perceptions of Opportunities for Adoption of EBP	Group					
	Faculty (n = 56)		Field Instructors (n = 327)		Total (N = 383)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Will have more quality and well-trained staff $\chi^2 (1) = 7.39, p = .006$	25	44.6	214	65.4	239	62.4
Will encourage continuous training, supervision, and monitoring $\chi^2 (1) = 2.34, p = .126$	30	53.6	217	66.4	247	64.5
Will motivate staff and management $\chi^2 (1) = 2.91, p = .088$	18	32.1	150	45.9	168	43.9
Increase staff retention $\chi^2 (1) = 4.43, p = .035$	7	12.5	86	26.3	93	24.3
Will have more funding to support the use of EBP $\chi^2 (1) = .12, p = .730$	15	26.8	99	30.3	114	29.8
Will have more protected time to use EBP $\chi^2 (1) = 1.01, p = .316$	8	14.3	68	20.8	76	19.8
Will engage in innovations and access to research items $\chi^2 (1) = 2.79, p = .095$	27	48.2	203	62.1	230	60.1
Will have technical assistance and access to research items $\chi^2 (1) = .02, p = .893$	20	35.7	125	38.2	145	37.9

Two of the eight items in this analysis were statistically significant. Twenty-five (44.6%) faculty and 214 (65.4%) field instructors indicated that adoption of EBP would provide more quality and well-trained staff. The results of the chi-square test for independence used to test the association between this item and group membership was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 7.39, p = .006$ . This finding provides support that an

association exists between group membership and perceptions that adoption of EBP would provide more quality and well-trained staff.

Seven (12.5%) faculty and 86 (26.3%) field instructors indicated that adoption of EBP would increase staff retention. The chi-square test for independence used to test the association between group membership and the adoption of EBP to increase staff retention was statistically significant,  $\chi^2 (1) = 4.43$ ,  $p = .035$ . This finding indicated that an association existed between group and the adoption of EBP to increase staff retention.

The remaining six items on this analysis were not statistically significant, indicating that the responses were not independent of group membership. Based on the mixed findings on these analyses, no decision can be made to reject or retain the null hypothesis.

*Research Question 2: Is there an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice?*

H<sub>2</sub>: There is an association between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice.

Nine items on the survey were used to determine perceptions of faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice. Of the 383 participants, 6 faculty and 107 field instructors had not adopted EBP in their classrooms/practice. The positive responses on these questions were crosstabulated by group membership. Table 12 presents results of this analysis.

Table 12

*Crosstabulations – Barriers to Use of EBP in the Classroom*

If you have not adopted EBP into your courses/work is it because:	<u>Group</u>					
	<u>Faculty (n = 6)</u>		<u>Field Instructors (n = 107)</u>		<u>Total (N = 113)</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Of a lack of a clear definition for EBP in the social work field	3	50.0	55	51.4	58	51.3
You view EBP as being more work	0	0.0	29	27.1	29	25.7
You believe research minimizes the need for practice wisdom	2	33.3	3	2.8	5	4.4
Due to lack of protected time available for the use of EBP	0	0.0	49	45.8	49	43.4
Due to lack of access to online resources to use EBP	0	0.0	43	40.2	43	38.1
Due to a lack of funding to support the use of EBP	0	0.0	54	50.5	54	47.8
Due to a lack of consistent and well-trained staff	0	0.0	66	61.7	66	58.4
Research is too limited and does not fit the client population	4	66.7	34	31.8	38	33.6

Three (50.0%) faculty and 55 (51.4%) field instructors indicated they had not adopted EBP because of a lack of a clear definition for EBP in the social work field. None of the faculty and 29 (27.1%) field instructors indicated that they viewed EBP as being more work. According to 2 (33.3%) faculty and 3 (2.8%) field instructors, EBP was not adopted because they believed research minimized the need for practice wisdom. Forty-nine (45.8%) field instructors indicated that they had not adopted EBP due to a lack of protected time available for the use of EBP. Forty-three (40.2%) field instructors reported that they had not adopted EBP because of the lack of access to online resources to use EBP. Fifty-four (50.5%) field instructors had not adopted EBP due to a lack of

funding to support EBP. According to 66 (61.7%) field instructors, EBP was not adopted due to the lack of a consistent and well-trained staff. Four faculty and 34 (31.8%) field instructors indicated they had not adopted EBP because research was too limited and did not fit the client population. The chi-square tests for independence that were planned to test for an association between the faculty and field instructors' responses to these items were not completed because the assumption that no more than 20% of the cells could have expected frequencies less than 5. Due to the few responses among faculty, this assumption was not met. As a result, no decision could be made to reject or not reject the null hypothesis.

*Research Question 3:* Is there a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice?

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice.

A one-way multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis that faculty and field instructors differed in their perceptions of openness, attitudes, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice. Group membership was used as the independent variable, with the four subscales used as the dependent variables. Table 13 presents results of this analysis.

Table 13

*Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Openness, Attitudes, and Support (Leadership/Technology) toward EBP by Group Membership*

Hotelling's Trace	F Ratio	DF	Sig of F	Effect Size
.07	6.68	4,367	<.001	.07

A Hotelling's trace of .07 produced on the one-way MANOVA comparing the four subscales on openness, attitudes, and support (leadership/technology) for EBP was statistically significant,  $F(4, 367) = 6.68, p < .001, d = .07$ . The effect size of .07 indicated that while the overall result was statistically significant, the practical significance was small. To further investigate the statistically significant result on the MANOVA, the between subject effects tests were examined. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

*Between Subjects Effects – Openness, Attitudes, and Support (Leadership/Technology) toward EBP by Group Membership*

Subscale	Faculty (n = 47)			Field Instructors (n = 325)			DF	F-Value	Sig
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Openness	47	5.23	1.24	325	5.64	1.00	1, 370	6.39	.012
Attitudes	47	4.61	.88	325	4.86	.85	1, 370	3.69	.055
Support – Leadership	47	5.09	1.18	325	4.78	1.59	1, 370	1.70	.193
Support – Technology	47	5.04	1.05	325	4.68	1.02	1, 370	4.91	.027

The results of the comparison between faculty ( $m = 5.23, sd = 1.24$ ) and field instructors ( $m = 5.64, sd = 1.00$ ) for openness was statistically significant,  $F(1, 370) = 6.39, p = .012$ . This finding provided evidence that field instructors were more willing to adopt EBP into their practice than faculty were into their teaching.

A statistically significant difference was found on the comparison support-technology between faculty ( $m = 5.04$ ,  $sd = 1.05$ ) and field instructors ( $m = 4.68$ ,  $sd = 1.02$ ),  $F(1, 370) = 4.91$ . This result indicated that faculty were more likely to have positive perceptions that they had access to the necessary technology to support the use of EBP in their classrooms than field instructors.

The remaining two subscales, attitudes and support-leadership, did not differ significantly between faculty and field instructors. Based on the mixed findings on these analyses, the null hypothesis of no difference cannot be rejected.

### **Ancillary Findings**

The faculty and field instructors provided open-ended responses to questions posed on the survey. The responses to each question were analyzed using content analysis procedures to determine patterns and trends. Table 15 presents results of the first question.

Table 15

*What do you think students need to help them use EBP?*

What do you think students need to help them use EBP?	Faculty	Field Instructor
Strong Field Instructors (mentor/supervisor) and agency support to model and use EBP	3	52
Integration of EBP into practice and connect with coursework	8	51
Resources such as technology, training, and time to research	3	43
Clear definition of EBP and relevance to practice	10	27
Don't know/unsure	1	6
Total	25	179



The largest group of field instructors (n = 52) indicated that students need strong field instructors and agency support to model and use EBP. Few faculty (n = 3) provided this response. In contrast, the largest group of faculty (n =10) and 27 field instructors indicated that the students need a clear definition of EBP and relevance to practice. Eight faculty and 51 field instructors responded that students need to understand the integration of EBP into practice and connect with coursework.

The participants were asked to indicate additional reasons for why they had not adopted EBP into their work. Their responses were summarized for presentation in Table 16.

Table 16

*Additional reasons for not adopting EBP into your work*

Additional reasons for not adopting EBP into your work?	Faculty	Field Instructor
No research in area of work or Does not apply to my work/teaching (macro/administrative work)	2	13
Have not made it a priority/Do not know what EBP is or what EBP to use	1	10
No time/funds/training for use of EBP	0	8
Not sure how to use EBP in my work/ No clear application	0	5
My work/employer does not support /use EBP	1	1
Total	4	37

The largest group of field instructors (n = 13) and 2 faculty reported that there is no research in their area of work or it did not apply to their work/teaching (macro/administrative work). The second largest group of field instructors (n = 10) along with 1 faculty had not made the adoption of EBP a priority and they were not sure what EBP was or which evidence-based practices to use in their work.

The responses to the third question were summarized using content analysis procedures. The results were summarized for presentation in Table 17.

Table 17

*Other areas important in defining EBP*

Other areas important in defining EBP	Faculty	Field Instructor
Therapist experience/bias and evaluating outcomes should be considered	8	28
Must consider differences in population served (culture, spirituality). Accept specific interventions (case studies)	3	16
Client choice/feedback and therapeutic relationship is primary	2	16
EBP is not new – preparing students for practice should be the focus	1	5
Don't know/ Other	2	14
Total	16	79

Twenty-eight field instructors and 8 faculty indicated that therapist experience/bias and evaluating outcomes should be considered when adopting EBP. Sixteen field instructors and 3 faculty indicated that differences in populations served (culture, spirituality) should be considered when defining EBP.

The responses from the participants regarding discussions among students regarding the integration of EBP into their fieldwork were analyzed. The summations of their responses are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

*Do your students discuss integrating EBP into their fieldwork?*

Do your students discuss integrating EBP into their fieldwork?	Faculty	Field Instructor
Discussed in supervision as part of Learning Contract/incorporated in work	5	56
Student do not yet grasp the relevance of EBP – Just beginning to discuss	3	39
Not encouraged by employer or not relevant (macro)	3	22
Discussed as relating to class assignments	6	7
Other/Don't know	1	7
Total	18	131

The largest group of participants (n = 56) and 5 faculty indicated that they discussed EBP in supervision as part of the learning contract/incorporated into their work. Thirty-nine field instructors and 3 faculty reported that their students do not yet grasp the relevance of EBP and they are just beginning to discuss its use in their practice.

### **Summary**

The results of the data analysis that provide a description of the participants and their adoption of EBP into their practice/teaching, along with the results of the inferential statistical analyses used to address the research questions and hypotheses have been presented in this chapter. A discussion of the findings, conclusions, and implications for practice can be found in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

Evidence based practice (EBP) continues to be debated by faculty members, as well as agency based practitioners to determine its benefits and viable use in social work education during the next decade. Resources and improved technology are expected to have a substantial impact on the use and adoption of EBP among these groups. While proponents of EBP state that mandating its use ensures that the best available practices are utilized, others argue that consensus among professionals and educators alike about the definition of EBP has not been reached and thus mandating use is not viable. While the debate continues, funding and grant requirements are driving some organizations to adopt EBP or at least some practices that are evidence based, also referred to as empirically supported interventions (ESIs).

Leaders in higher education, as well as in community-based agencies, are slowly contemplating the infrastructure necessary to begin incorporating EBP into curriculum and professional practice (Gigun, 2005; Springer, 2006). Accrediting bodies and funding sources are beginning to mandate use of EBP; thus, administrative leaders are considering the levels of change that must take place to advance EBP within these settings (Glisson, 1992, 2002; Manuel, Mullen, Fang, Bellamy, & Bledsoe, 2009; Thyer, 2004). The present research investigated perceptions held by social work faculty and agency-based field instructors regarding the incorporation of EBP into social work courses and field placement experiences. This study was designed to:

1. Identify perceptions of social work faculty and field instructors about EBP;

2. Determine the extent to which social work faculty and field instructors incorporate and use EBP; and
3. Determine what organizational leadership and/or technology supports influence adoption and utilization of EBP

This chapter focuses on a discussion of findings resulting from this research, its implications to social work education, training of social work students in agency-based field placements, the relationship between schools of social work and field instructors as well as the leadership practices in these settings that will impact use and adoption of EBP. Finally, implications for future research on use and adoption of EBP in schools of social work and service organizations are discussed.

### **Methods**

A nonexperimental, descriptive and explanatory research design was used as the framework for the study. The participants included social work faculty members from three public, state universities (i.e., University of Michigan [UM], Michigan State University [MSU], and Wayne State University [WSU]) and affiliated field instructors. The participants completed complementary survey instruments that used the same questions but were focused on either classroom instruction or field-based experiences. The researcher contacted potential participants through their institutions' listserves. The surveys were completed online using Zoomerang. Data were analyzed using PASW ver. 19.0 (formerly SPSS).

### **Discussion**

Emails were sent to 123 faculty members and 1,027 field instructors in schools of social work at three state-supported universities to ask them to participate in the study. Of

this number, surveys were completed and returned by 56 faculty members and 327 field instructors for an overall response rate of 33.3%.

The age and gender characteristics for both groups were consistent with what is found within the literature (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], web site). The largest group of both faculty members and field instructors were between 50 and 59 years of age and female. Students entering social work programs tend to be predominantly female and often are characterized as “nontraditional” as the average age often is noted to be in the early 30s. The sample for this study appears to be a good representation of the general population of social work faculty members and agency based practitioners.

While the majority of participants ( $n = 280$ , 73.1%) indicated they had adopted EBP into their courses and practice (this number included 49 (87.5%) faculty and 231 (70.6%) field instructors), they did not delineate if specific practices or processes related to EBP were adopted. Many field instructors, as well as faculty advisors, discussed or used specific practices that were evidence based; however, this did not mean that they were using the multi-step EBP process. Many faculty members and field instructors added specific elements of EBP to be considered when adopting EBP even though these suggestions are part of the process. These types of responses appear to indicate that they may be confused about, or lack knowledge about the EBP steps. Many field instructors assumed that using a practice that is informed by research is equivalent to adopting and/or using EBP. For example, field instructors who work at agencies that are using assertive community treatment (ACT) would report using EBP even if the remainder of their work with client populations does not meet the criteria for EBP.

Most faculty respondents indicated they had attended trainings on or about EBP if such trainings were offered by their employer. More than half of the field instructors had attended these types of training if offered by the university with which they were affiliated. Most of these trainings were offered with continuing education (CE) credits, resulting in participation by many field instructors. Licensed social workers in Michigan are required to have CE to maintain their licensure. Three (6.4%) faculty and 44 (13.7%) field instructors indicated their employers had provided **a lot** of training for EBP. While schools of social work and community agencies recognize the importance of EBP in preparing competent social work practitioners, this approach in teaching and practice has not been mandated by the CSWE. The CSWE alluded to EBP when developing their new 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) by including the following competency, “Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.” While this competency made references to EBP indirectly, it was not a mandate to use or adopt EBP into the social work curriculum. As a result, schools may have a great deal of latitude in demonstrating this competency, including their definition of EBP and its use in teaching and practice. The majority of participants (n = 237, 65.7%) indicated that they had not attended any nonwork training sessions for the use EPB in practice. This finding may suggest that faculty members and field instructors thought that they were getting enough training through their work or that this training lacked value. However, training for EBP may be offered only through employers and not through independent programs to earn continuing education credits.

### **Opportunities to use EBP**

The findings indicated that an association existed between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in classroom/practice. Significant results found that field instructors, more than faculty:

- Perceived that opportunities for the use of EBP would provide more quality and well-trained staff;
- Perceived that the use of EBP could encourage continuous training, supervision, and monitoring;
- Were more positive about the use of EBP to motivate staff and management; and
- Were more likely to agree with the use of EBP to increase staff retention.

These findings indicated that faculty members may be more skeptical about the benefits of adopting/using EBP. This skepticism may be due to how these two groups conceptualize and operationalize EBP. Faculty members may be hesitant to adopt EBP as they viewed it as a change to the entire social work curriculum, a major task that has elicited controversy. This concern, combined with the lack of consensus on the definition of EBP, may have negatively influenced faculty members' perception of the benefits of EBP. While field instructors also had issues regarding the adoption/use of EBP, these concerns tended to focus more on resources needed to learn and use EBP and less on the importance of EBP. Field instructors were committed to providing the best available practices to clients and supporting EBP as a model of practice that could ensure this outcome. The adoption of EBP in teaching and practice could assure that continuous training could be provided as new practices informed by research are always being



considered. A trained staff would be retained by agencies as they also would perceive their input was valued. Many field instructors, however, cited budget concerns, high case loads, and lack of time as barriers to use of EBP.

If a school of social work is to successfully incorporate EBP into the curriculum, faculty and agency-based field instructors must “buy” into this new paradigm and agree to receive education and training to help students incorporate course content into their field placement experiences. Lack of support from either of these groups may result in students experiencing a disconnect between their classes and field work.

### **Barriers to Use of EBP**

An association was found between faculty and field instructors regarding barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice. Of the 383 participants in this study, 6 faculty and 107 field instructors reported that they had not adopted EBP in their classrooms/practice. Approximately half of this group (3 faculty and 55 field instructors) indicated they had not adopted EBP because of a lack of a clear definition for EBP in the social work field. Participants who indicated that they *had* adopted EBP into their classroom/practice may have been referring to instances of incorporating a specific EBP practice rather than an EBP process. Field instructors who did not use EBP noted time and access to technology support as major barriers. Forty-nine (45.8%) field instructors indicated that they had not adopted EBP due to a lack of protected time available for the use of EBP, demonstrating that those who do not use EBP at all view this as a major concern. Additionally, 43 (40.2%) field instructors reported that they had not adopted EBP because of lack of access to online resources to use EBP. At times, field instructors collaborate with their student interns to gain access to library databases relevant to EBP.

Many agencies are unable to afford the fees necessary to access these databases. If universities are unable to provide access to electronic databases for agency-based field instructors, using EBP becomes more challenging, if not restrictive. Additional reasons cited for not adopting EBP included 54 (50.5%) field instructors who indicated a lack of funding to support EBP. According to 66 (61.7%) field instructors, EBP was not adopted due to the lack of a consistent and well-trained staff. Four faculty and 34 (31.8%) field instructors indicated they had not adopted EBP because research was too limited and did not fit the client population. While small, these numbers reflect a continuum of concerns, suggesting that responses to the concerns must involve agency and university partnerships.

### **Leadership**

Schools of social work and agency administrators recognize that successful incorporation of EBP into the curriculum and practice requires that leadership must be cultivated and strengthened among teaching faculty and agency-based supervisors. The leadership from faculty and supervisors can promote the use and acceptance of EBP in teaching and agency work. Manuel et al (2009) suggested that efforts to implement EBP into practice need to take specifics of agency context and culture into account. They asserted that a “multilevel approach – one that targets practitioner attitudes and motivations, agency climate and context, and university-agency partnerships – has the greatest potential to support implementation of EBP in social agencies” (p. 626). The findings in this study supported the necessity to involve faculty and staff in implementing the EBP model. Many faculty (n = 32, 57.1%) and field instructors (n = 255, 78.0%) included in this study reported that being mentored was a leadership practice needed to

facilitate implementation of EBP. A total of 234 (61.1%) participants reported that investment of funds to build an infrastructure for EBP was a needed leadership practice. Both faculty members and field instructors noted that changes to their teaching and/or practice may be required without proper planning or appropriate resource allocation. Thirty-two (57.1%) faculty and 263 (80.4%) field instructors reported that consistent and quality training to use EBP are leadership practices needed to facilitate implementation of EBP. Participants appeared to link good leadership practices with a well-trained staff that was supported and nurtured. This support included providing resources for implementing EBP, including the time needed to incorporate EBP into their work, as well as providing technology and training. Evidence-based practice requires consideration of best available practices when delivering services. Similarly, faculty and staff need the best available training and support to use the EBP model.

The majority of the participants (68.9%) perceived that promoting and facilitating partnerships with other institutions/organizations to share information and training are leadership practices needed to facilitate implementation of EBP. Similarly, a large number also indicated that involving staff in training to build leadership skills and opportunities facilitated EBP implementation. Supporting research ideas is a leadership practice that was supported by 30 (53.6%) faculty and 225 (68.9%) field instructors. Unlike previous models that may have incorporated information and supported certain practices, the use of EBP requires faculty and field instructors to constantly search for new research to assure that best practices are being used in their classrooms and at their agencies. Successful implementation of EBP is related to strong leadership practices that

encouraged collaboration among universities and agencies and sharing of available resources and on-going training (Aarons, 2006).

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study surveyed full time social work faculty and agency-based MSW practitioners who volunteer to be field instructors for social work students attending three large public universities in Michigan. Results may not be generalized to faculty at other institutions or other MSW level practitioners in Michigan, other states, or other countries.

Additional limitations are related to methodology since the questionnaire was administered electronically via email. Response rate may have been impacted by comfort and ease with which participants use technology and email. Because surveys are self-reporting measures, participants may consistently give high or low ratings. These responses may bias results and serve as sources of error and affect variance.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of a commonly accepted definition of EBP by the social work community. While literature differentiates between EBP as a process and specific effective practices that are based on research evidence, some individuals may view the utilization of a practice or approach that has been identified as effective based on research to be EBP rather than using definition of EBP as a process with specific steps. As a result, responses may have come from the view that EBP is a specific empirically-supported treatment modality (such as cognitive behavioral treatment [CBT] or assertive community treatment [ACT] program) rather than viewing it as a process.

Finally, this study examined perceptions of faculty and field instructors that may not necessarily translate into behavior. Thus what respondents say they do may not

always be consistent with what they actually do in teaching and practice. This concern is compounded by school and agency administrators mandating or strongly encouraging use of EBP. Faculty and field instructors may have responded affirmatively with respect to EBP use because it was expected rather than demonstrating a true indication of use/adoption.

### **Implications for Theory and Practice**

Proponents of EBP state that its use assures that each client gets the best available treatment and service possible. Arguments from supporters of EBP abound stating that EBP assists practitioners in maintaining current knowledge, supplementing clinical judgment, saving time, and saving lives. These arguments may be true if consensus is reached on defining EBP and its use by practitioners. The literature contends that a consensus regarding the definition of EBP has not been reached in the social work community. Individuals who do not support adopting EBP into practice have cited the lack of an agreed upon definition as a reason for not accepting EBP as the norm for practice. The results from this study supported the lack of agreement on defining EBP. Further, this lack of definition may result in concerns with program implementation and use of EBP in practice. Some practitioners, for example, indicated that they used EBP when they were actually using empirically-based interventions or a specific evidence based practice such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), Parent Management Training (PMT) or cognitive Problem Solving Skills Training (PSST). Agency-based field instructors must understand the EBP process and agree on its importance in preparing social work students for professional practice.

None of the schools of social work or community based agencies are able to systematically incorporate EBP without consensus on defining EBP by faculty members and practitioners. At the very least, leaders must understand and accept differences in viewpoints about EBP, along with attaining full staff support before engaging in major steps to incorporate EBP.

Varying perceptions about EBP among faculty and field instructors have the potential to effect social work education and social work practitioner preparation. In addition to the CSWE educational policy standards, the National Association of Social Worker (NASW) Code of Ethics supports the integration of research and practice by stating, “Social workers should base practice on recognized knowledge, including empirically based knowledge, relevant to social work and social work ethics” (NASW, 1999, section 4.01c).

Social work faculty members are invested in their school’s curriculum design because course content and, therefore, teaching may be affected. The possibility of changing or shifting the curriculum often elicits strong reactions from faculty members (Edmond et al., 2006). Results of this study indicated that faculty were more likely to have positive perceptions that they had access to the necessary technology to support the use of EBP in their classrooms than field instructors. Despite these faculty perceptions, additional findings in this study provided evidence that field instructors appeared to be more willing to adopt EBP into their practice than faculty were into their teaching. This difference may be related to faculty members’ concerns about incorporating EBP into social work curriculum without a well-thought-out design and accepted definition in the social work community.

Literature indicated that at least one school of social work (George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University) has chosen evidence-based practice as the organizational framework for its social work graduate curriculum (Jenson, 2005) and others are considering ways of incorporating EBP content into their curriculum. It is unclear if more schools can be expected to follow this example, resulting in a trend in schools of social work and other disciplines to use EBP as the foundation of their curriculum. The use of EBP approaches is considered the standard in many helping professions, from medicine to managed behavioral health care (Corcoran & Vandiver, 2004). However, the varying definitions of EBP, as well as the different criteria for evidence-based practices that have been developed to guide program review make it difficult to share information across disciplines. While these differences in defining and applying EBP continue to be debated in the literature, faculty across disciplines are less likely to agree to reform their curriculum to incorporate this new framework. Instead, individual faculty (those teaching research methods courses most likely) may choose to incorporate certain aspects of EBP (i.e., learning to formulate a research question) into their course(s). Many proponents of EBP (Gambril, 2006; Howard et al, 2003; Manuel et al, 2009) argue against this practice, citing the importance of teaching the process of EBP across curriculum areas to promote better integration of theory, research, and practice. Adoption of EBP has not been endorsed by many faculty as indicated by the small number of programs that have adopted the EBP framework into the program curriculum.

Access to technology continues to grow, allowing for greater integration of theory, research and practice. Preparing competent social work students for professional practice rests with both faculty and field instructors. Agency-based practitioners are

moving toward adoption of EBP as insurance companies are encouraging use of these practices (Bellamy, Bledsoe, & Traube, 2006). University faculty use of the EBP approach must coincide with the agency adoption of EBP if students are to be appropriately educated in using this treatment method. Students must be able to experience the integration of research and practice in the classroom and in field placement.

Schools of social work are able to support field instructors and their agencies' use of EBP by providing training and particularly continuing education. These trainings can assist field instructors in learning the EBP process and help students to better integrate theory, research, and practice. Students often report that they experienced a gap between what they learn in the classroom and their practice in the field placement (Bogo, 2005). Encouraging field instructors to use EBP process may help minimize the gap that students experience and help connect the classroom content to assignments that students are given in their field placements. More than half (53.5%) of the field instructors in this study stated that they received university-affiliated EBP training, suggesting that many field instructors looked to the universities to provide them with tools to support their students' use and application of this treatment approach.

Literature suggests that practitioners are more positive about and more open to adopting EBP than faculty (Jenson, 2005; Manual et al, 2009). The present research confirmed these findings as field instructors were more likely than faculty to perceive that opportunities to use EBP could result in quality care and a better trained staff. Field instructors also were more positive that the use of EBP could increase staff retention. If external forces, such as managed care and funding sources, mandate the use EBP in



practice, perhaps educators can be encouraged to make changes to their curriculum to stay connected to the practice community and impact treatment outcomes.

The field of social work has received criticism as scholars have assumed the practice of social work lacks rigor and technological expertise (Hall, 2008). The use and adoption of EBP provides opportunities to change these perceptions as critics may be less likely to challenge the professional status of social workers. The use of EBP can allow practitioners to better assess treatment approaches and link practice to research. The public's perceptions of social work may indirectly impact resource support for certain social services, as well as the public's willingness to seek assistance from social workers. Additionally, the social work profession's public image may have an effect on attracting qualified students to sustain the profession.

EBP is not an approach that can be taught once and learned; rather, it is an on-going educational process that requires the incorporation of problem solving and critical thinking skills. The appropriate use of the EBP process requires an endorsement by social work educators as well as the practice community. Leaders of these groups need to adopt the model and accept EBP as part of their on-going learning environment. The integration of research, theory, and practice must continue to develop and be tested constantly to create effective social work practices.

### **Need for Further Research**

This study should be replicated using different universities with social work programs to validate the results of the present study. As EBP is a new approach to social work practice, additional research with a broader participant pool may either support or refute the findings of this study.

This research showed a difference in perceptions about EBP among faculty and field instructors. The next areas for research may need to involve students to obtain their perceptions about EBP to determine if they are learning about EBP in their classrooms and field placements. Further research can assist in determining if students understand the EBP process and if they are able to connect their knowledge of EBP to their field placements.

Another area of research is the investigation into the use of leadership practices that are considered necessary to successfully implement EBP in community-based agencies. This research is needed to examine the relationship between leadership practices and barriers that agencies may be experiencing in the adoption of EBP. In addition, the role of leadership and strategies used to overcome/manage these barriers should also be included in future research. Effective leadership practices, more than resources, may be the key to assisting an organization accept this new approach to practice.

A longitudinal research design should be used to follow the implementation of EBP in agency-based social work practice to determine its effectiveness and feasibility by social work professionals. As EBP is a new approach to social work practice, the long-term outcomes cannot be determined without a study that follows its implementation. This study should examine field instructors' perceptions of EBP, social work professionals' use of EBP, and client outcomes to assess the effectiveness of this approach to social work practice.

## APPENDIX A

## FACULTY INSTRUMENT

## Full Time SW Faculty Members Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Survey

1. Have you adopted EBP into any course you teach?
  - a. Yes (continue with Question 1b)
  - b. No (skip to Question 1c)
    - 1b. If you answered YES, please indicate the number of courses in which you have adopted EBP? \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1c. If you answered YES, Please indicate below how you have incorporated EBP into your teaching (*please choose all that apply*):
      - Lecture on the process of EBP
      - Assignments demonstrating use of EBP
      - Use of computer lab to demonstrate use of EBP
      - Group assignments focusing on use of EBP
      - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1d. Please estimate the percent of your course content that focuses on EBP (0 to 100 percent): \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1e. If you answered no, please indicate which of the following you view as a barrier to adopting EBP into your teaching (*please choose all that apply*):
      - Lack of clear definition for EBP in the social work field
      - View of EBP as being more work
      - Research minimizes need for practice wisdom
      - EBP is not new, I already use similar practices in my teaching
      - Lack of protected time available for the use of EBP
      - Lack of access to on-line resources to use EBP
      - Lack of funding to support the use of EBP
      - Lack of consistent and well-trained staff
      - The belief that the research is too limited and does not fit the client population I'm interested in
      - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rank the *top three terms* that you feel are most important in defining EBP (Indicate first choice as #1, second choice as #2 and third choice as #3)
  - a. judicious use of current best evidence
  - b. making decisions about the care of individual clients/patients
  - c. Clinical expertise and patient values.
  - d. Locating and appraising credible evidence
  - e. A process of lifelong learning

- f. Using specific questions of direct practical importance to clients
- g. searching objectively and efficiently for the current best evidence
- h. taking appropriate action guided by evidence
- i. Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. In what curriculum areas do you teach?

- a. Research
- b. Policy
- c. Human Behavior and the Social Environment
- d. Practice Methods
- e. Field Education
- f. Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you hold administrative/leadership responsibilities in addition to your faculty designation?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Please respond to the following statements and check the answer that most closely matches your feelings or opinions for each item using the following scale with number one being Strongly Disagree to number seven being Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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- 5. EBP should be incorporated into curriculum of all schools of social work.
- 6. Students should be taught the process for conducting EBP.
- 7. The EBP movement in social work is here to stay.
- 8. The EBP movement will positively impact social work education.
- 9. The EBP movement will positively impact social work practice.
- 10. I discuss the importance of EBP for practice with my students.
- 11. I have the time that is needed to be able to use EBP in my teaching.
- 12. My school/department of social work supports use of EBP.
- 13. I have the technology at work to access information for EBP.
- 14. The resources available to use EBP at my school/department are inadequate.
- 15. I would be more open to using EBP if I had access to advanced technology.

16. I am unable to access information that would help me to use EBP in my work.
17. The leadership in the school/department where I am employed provides support for use of EBP.
18. I am encouraged by my dean/department chair to take a leadership role in using EBP within my work.
19. There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for teaching.
20. There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for practice.
21. EBP is a new word for practices that are already in place.
22. My students are familiar with EBP.
23. EBP is more suited for medical practice rather than behavioral or clinical practice.
24. The lack of research using minority subjects in clinical trials makes it difficult to apply EBP to methods to practice with minority populations.
25. It is important that students accept EBP.
26. It is important that students understand EBP.
27. EBP is not helpful for the students that I teach.
28. EBP is not going to change social work education.
29. My colleagues tend to be open to using EBP in their teaching.
30. Seasoned social workers are less likely to adopt EBP into their practice.

**Please respond to the following questions:**

31. How many years of post MSW teaching experience do you have?

\_\_\_\_\_

32. Are you licensed to practice social work (LMSW) in the state of Michigan?

a. Yes

b. No

33. Are you a member of National Association of Social Workers?
- Yes
  - No
34. Do you have access to high speed internet at your place of employment?
- Yes
  - No
35. Do you have access to high speed internet at home?
- Yes
  - No
36. Does your school/department provide you training for use of EBP?
- International conferences/trainings
  - National conferences/training
  - Trainings by outside paid consultants
  - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
37. How much training in the *past two years* has your employer provided you on how to use EBP?
- A lot
  - Moderate
  - Minimal
  - None
38. What kind of support does your school/department provide for use of EBP? (check all that apply)
- Technology (high speed internet, access to electronic journals/databases/collaborative)
  - Staff support
  - Computer lab for instruction of EBP
  - Provide funds to purchase tools (books, manuals, computer software, etc) to use EBP
  - Consultants to support ongoing training
  - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
39. Do your students discuss integrating EBP into their field work?
- Yes
  - No

Explain why or why not:

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40. In the *last two years*, have you attended any non-work training sessions about the use of EBP in practice?
- Yes
  - No
41. What do you perceive as opportunities for the use of EBP (*please choose all that apply*):
- Will have more quality and well-trained staff
  - Will encourage continuous training, supervision and monitoring
  - Will motivate staff and management
  - Increase staff retention
  - Will have more funding to support the use of EBP
  - Will have more protected time to use EBP
  - Will engage in innovations to help clients
  - Will have technical assistance and access to research items
  - None
  - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
42. What do you perceive as opportunities for the adoption of EBP: (*please choose all that apply*)
- Will have more quality and well trained staff
  - Will encourage continuous training, supervision/monitoring
  - Will motivate staff and management
  - Increase staff retention
  - Will have more funding to support the use of EBP
  - Will have more protected time to use EBP
  - Will engage in innovations to help clients
  - Will have technical assistance and access to research items
  - None
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
43. What leadership practices do you feel are needed to facilitate the implementation of EBP in social work (*please choose all that apply*):
- Mentoring of staff and supervisors
  - Investment of funds to build an infrastructure for use of EBP (high speed on-line, subscription to databases)
  - Consistent and quality training for all staff to use EBP
  - Promoting and facilitating partnerships with other institutions/organizations to share information and training
  - Involving staff in trainings to build leadership skills and opportunities
  - Supporting research ideas (provide funding for conference/workshop presentations)
  - Supporting publication and collaboration with others to promote EBP (i.e. time needed)
  - None
  - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

44. What do you think students need to help them to use EBP:

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**Please complete the following:**

45. Are you...

- a. Male
- b. Female

46. How old are you?

- a. 18-29
- b. 30-39
- c. 40-49
- d. 50-59
- e. 60 and older

47. What is the highest degree that you completed?

- a. BSW
- b. MSW
- c. PhD
- d. DSW
- e. EdD
- f. PsyD
- g. Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

48. How satisfied are you with the nature of the work you perform?

49. How satisfied are you with the person who supervises you (your organizational superior?)

50. How satisfied are you with your relations with others in the organization with whom you work (your coworkers or peers)?

51. How satisfied are you with the pay you receive for your job?

52. How satisfied are you with the opportunities which exist in this organization for advancement/promotion?

53. Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your current job situation?



## APPENDIX B

### FIELD INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

#### SW Field Instructors Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Survey

1. Have you adopted EBP into your work with student interns?
  - a. Yes (continue with Question 1b)
  - b. No (continue with Question 1d)
    - 1b. If you answered YES, Please indicate in which areas you incorporate EBP into your field instruction (*please choose all that apply*):
      - Weekly supervisory session
      - Process Recordings
      - Assessment tools
      - Group work assignments
      - Training programs
      - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1c. Please estimate the percent of your work that focuses on EBP (0 to 100 percent): \_\_\_\_\_
    - 1d. If you answered NO, please indicate which of the following you view as a barrier to adopting EBP into your work with student interns (*please choose all that apply*):
      - Research minimizes need for practice wisdom
      - Lack of clear definition for EBP in the social work field
      - Staff view of EBP as being more work
      - Lack of protected time available for the use of EBP
      - Lack of access to on line resources to use EBP
      - Lack of funding to support the use of EBP
      - Lack of consistent and well trained staff
      - The belief that the research is too limited and does not fit the client population
      - Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rank the *top three terms* that you feel are most important in defining EBP (Indicate first choice as #1, second choice as #2 and third choice as #3)
  - j. Judicious use of current best evidence
  - k. Making decisions about the care of individual clients/patients
  - l. Clinical expertise and patient values.
  - m. Locating and appraising credible evidence
  - n. A process of lifelong learning
  - o. Using specific questions of direct practical importance to clients
  - p. Searching objectively and efficiently for the current best evidence
  - q. Taking appropriate action guided by evidence

- r. Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. In what area of social work practice are you engaged in? (*Please check all that apply*)
  - g. Clinical
  - h. Case Management
  - i. Macro (community/policy/administration/research)
  - j. supervisory
  - k. Other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to the following statements and check the answer that most closely matches your feelings or opinions for each item using the following scale with number one being Strongly Disagree to number seven being Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

- 4. EBP should be incorporated into the curriculum of all schools of social work.
- 5. Students should be taught the process for conducting EBP.
- 6. The EBP movement in social work is here to stay.
- 7. The EBP movement will positively impact social work education.
- 8. The EBP movement will positively impact social work practice.
- 9. I discuss the importance of EBP for practice with my students.
- 10. I have the time that is needed to be able to use EBP in my field instruction.
- 11. My employer supports use of EBP.
- 12. I have the technology at work to access information for EBP.
- 13. The resources available to use EBP at my place of employment are inadequate.
- 14. I would be more open to using EBP if I had access to advanced technology.
- 15. I am unable to access information that would help me to use EBP in my work.
- 16. The leadership in the organization where I am employed provides support for use of EBP.

17. I am encouraged by my supervisor/director to take a leadership role in using EBP within my work.
18. There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for teaching.
19. There are too many definitions of EBP and thus it cannot be adopted for practice.
20. EBP is a new word for practices that are already in place.
21. My student(s) are familiar with EBP.
22. EBP is more suited for medical practice rather than behavioral/clinical practice.
23. The lack of research using minority subjects in clinical trials makes it difficult to apply EBP to methods to practice with minority populations.
24. It is important that students accept EBP.
25. It is important that students understand EBP.
26. EBP is not helpful for the students that I supervise/instruct in field.
27. EBP is not going to change social work education.
28. My colleagues tend to be open to adopting EBP in their practice.
29. Seasoned social workers are less likely to adopt EBP into their practice.
30. How many years of post MSW practice experience do you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
31. Are you licensed to practice social work (LMSW) in the state of Michigan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
32. Are you a member of National Association of Social Workers?
  - c. Yes
  - d. No
33. Do you have access to high speed internet at your place of employment?
  - c. Yes
  - d. No
34. Do you have access to high speed internet at home?

- c. Yes
- d. No

**Please check the appropriate letter(s) that correspond to your answer.**

35. Which of the following does your employer provide you to support use of EBP? (please check all that apply)
- a. International conferences/trainings
  - b. National conferences/training
  - c. State/local conferences/trainings
  - d. University affiliated trainings
  - e. Trainings (at agency) by outside paid consultants
  - f. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
36. How much training in the last two years has your employer provided you on how to use EBP?
- a. A lot
  - b. Moderate
  - c. Minimal
  - d. None
37. What supports does your employer provide for use of EBP? (check all that apply)
- g. Technology (high speed internet, access to electronic journals/databases/collaborative)
  - h. Staff support
  - i. Computer use for students
  - j. Provide funds to purchase tools (books, software, etc) to use EBP
  - k. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
38. Do your students discuss integrating EBP into their field work?
- c. Yes
  - d. No

Explain why or why not:

---



---

39. In the last two years, have you attended any non-work training sessions about the use of EBP in practice?
- c. Yes
  - d. No
40. What do you perceive as opportunities to the use of EBP: (check all that apply)
- a. Will have more quality and well trained staff
  - b. Will encourage continuous training, supervision/monitoring
  - c. Will motivate staff and management

- d. Increase staff retention
  - e. Will have more funding to support the use of EBP
  - f. Will have more protected time to use EBP
  - g. Will engage in innovations to help clients
  - h. Will have technical assistance and access to research items
  - i. None
  - j. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
41. What do you perceive as opportunities to the adoption of EBP: (check all that apply)
- a. Will have more quality and well trained staff
  - b. Will encourage continuous training, supervision/monitoring
  - c. Will motivate staff and management
  - d. Increase staff retention
  - e. Will have more funding to support the use of EBP
  - f. Will have more protected time to use EBP
  - g. Will engage in innovations to help clients
  - h. Will have technical assistance and access to research items
  - i. None
  - j. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
42. **What leadership practices do you feel are needed to facilitate the implementation of EBP in social work: (check all that apply)**
- a. Mentoring of staff and supervisors
  - b. Investment of funds to build an infrastructure for use of EBP (high speed on-line, subscription to databases)
  - c. Consistent and quality training for all staff to use EBP
  - d. Promoting and facilitating partnerships with other institutions/organizations to share information and training
  - e. Involving staff in trainings to build leadership skills and opportunities
  - f. Supporting research ideas (provide funding for conference/workshop presentations)
  - g. Supporting publication and collaboration with others to promote EBP (i.e. time needed)
  - h. None
  - i. Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
43. **What do you think students need to help them to use EBP?**
- 
-

**Please complete the following:**

44. Are you...
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
45. How old are you?
  - a. 18-29
  - b. 30-39
  - c. 40-49
  - d. 50-59
  - e. 60 and older
  
46. What is the highest degree that you completed?
  - a. BSW
  - b. MSW
  - c. PhD
  - d. DSW
  - e. EdD
  - f. PsyD
  - g. Other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
47. How satisfied are you with the nature of the work you perform?
  
48. How satisfied are you with the person who supervises you (your organizational superior?)
  
49. How satisfied are you with your relations with others in the organization with whom you work (your coworkers or peers)?
  
50. How satisfied are you with the pay you receive for your job?
  
51. How satisfied are you with the opportunities which exist in this organization for advancement/promotion?
  
52. Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your current job situation?

**APPENDIX C**

**RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET**

Dear faculty member OR Dear Field Instructor:

I am a doctoral student at Wayne State University College of Education in the Educational Leadership program. The focus of my dissertation research is to examine the attitudes of field instructors and social work faculty members about incorporating Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) into field work and the classroom.

You are being asked to participate in this research by completing a survey by linking to a zoomerang web site which you will see at the end of this email. Please read the Information Sheet below to decide if you will participate.

**APPROVED**

MAY 1-8 2010

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

## Barriers and opportunities for Evidence-Based Practice

**Research Information Sheet**

Title of Study: Barriers and opportunities for Evidence-Based Practice: curriculum change in fieldwork and classroom

Principal Investigator (PI): Anwar Najor-Durack  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, College of Education  
313-577-4479

**Purpose:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study to examine the attitudes of field instructors and social work faculty members about incorporating Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) into field work and the classroom because you are either a full time faculty member at a school of social work or a field instructor for social work students. This study is being conducted at Wayne State University, University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

**Study Procedures:**

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to complete an online survey which may take approximately 10 to 20 minutes. You will be asked to provide your perceptions (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) about statements that focus on the utilization and/or adoption of EBP either in the classroom or in agency based social work practice. You will also be asked to provide your views on the barriers as well as opportunities for use and adoption of EBP into teaching and practice. You will be free to choose not to answer any question on the survey.

**Benefits**

- As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

**Risks**

- There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study

**Costs**

- There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

**Compensation**

- You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

- All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept without any identifiers.
- No one at WSU School of Social Work will know who responded to the survey.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with Wayne State University or its affiliates.

Submission/Revision Date: [insert date]

Page 1 of 2

Protocol Version #: [Insert Number]

HIC Date: 5/08



## Barriers and opportunities for Evidence-Based Practice

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Anwar Najor-Durack at the following phone number: 313-577-4479 or by email at [ac1724@wayne.edu](mailto:ac1724@wayne.edu). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Participation:**

By completing the on-line survey you are agreeing to participate in this study.

**APPROVED**

MAY 18 2010

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEESubmission/Revision Date: [insert date]  
Protocol Version #: [Insert Number]

Page 2 of 2

HIC Date: 5/08

## APPENDIX D

## HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE APPROVAL



HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE  
 101 East Alexandrine Building  
 Detroit, Michigan 48201  
 Phone: (313) 577-1628  
 FAX: (313) 993-7122  
<http://hic.wayne.edu>



## CONCURRENCE OF EXEMPTION

**To:** Anwar Najor-Durack  
 Social Work Instruction Un  
 4756 Cass Avenue

**From:** Ellen Barton, Ph.D. E. Barton  
 Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

**Date:** May 18, 2010

**RE:** HIC #: 051710B3X

Protocol Title: Barriers and Opportunities for Evidence-Based Practice: Curriculum Change in Fieldwork and Classroom

Sponsor:

Protocol #: 1004008312

The above-referenced protocol has been reviewed and found to qualify for **Exemption** according to paragraph #2 of the Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations [45 CFR 46.101(b)].

- Recruitment Email
- Internet Information Sheet

This proposal has not been evaluated for scientific merit, except to weight the risk to the human subjects in relation to the potential benefits.

- Exempt protocols do not require annual review by the IRB.
- All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the HIC **BEFORE** implementation.
- Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the HIC Policy (<http://www.hic.wayne.edu/hicpol.html>).

**NOTE:**

1. Forms should be downloaded from the HIC website at each use.
2. Submit a Closure Form to the HIC Office upon completion of the study.

**REFERENCES**

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**ABSTRACT****BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE:  
CURRICULUM CHANGES IN FIELDWORK AND CLASSROOM IN SOCIAL  
WORK EDUCATION**

by

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August 2011

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The purpose of this study was to consider perceptions held by social work faculty and agency-based field instructors to incorporate EBP into social work student classroom and field placement experiences. This study identifies perceptions of social work faculty and field instructors about EBP, determines the extent to which social work faculty and field instructors incorporate and use EBP; and considers how organizational leadership and/or technology supports influence adoption and utilization of EBP.

The population for this study included all full-time social work faculty members employed by three large public universities in southeast Michigan (Michigan State University [MSU], University of Michigan [UM], and Wayne State University [WSU]), as well as the agency-based master-level social workers who serve in the role of field instructors for students enrolled in the social work programs at these institutions.

A web based survey was used as the primary source of data allowing for both quantitative, as well as qualitative components to be studied. Separate sections of brief questions for faculty members and field instructors with 4-point Likert item responses

were used. Open ended questions were used to capture participants' views on multiple factors that impact perception and use of EBP in instruction and practice.

Findings indicated that there is an associate between faculty and field instructors on opportunities to use EBP in the classroom/practice as well as on barriers to the use of EBP in the classroom/practice setting. Findings also indicated that there is a difference between faculty and field instructors regarding attitudes, openness, and support (leadership/technology) for the use of EBP in the classroom/practice.

EBP is not an approach that can be taught once and learned; rather, it is an on-going educational process that requires incorporation of problem solving and critical thinking skills. The appropriate use of the EBP process requires an endorsement by social work educators, as well as the practice community. Leaders of these groups need to adopt the model and accept EBP as part of their on-going learning environment. The integration of research, theory, and practice must continue to develop and be tested constantly to create effective social work practices.



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