

Educating Bilingual Social Workers for the Child Welfare Workforce: A Distributive Justice Approach

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Abstract: *Spanish/English bilingual (SEB) speaking social workers are in high demand, particularly in the area of Child Welfare. Most require training and institutional support to increase their cultural and linguistic competence, yet the majority receive no specific education or support. As a result, many encounter inequities in the workforce. Research points to several elements that are essential to the education and development of SEB social workers. They include professional terminology, supervision in Spanish, and the opportunity to integrate theory and practice. To respond to the needs of a growing Spanish-speaking population, the UConn BSW Program has added a Child Welfare and Protection (CWP) track. CWP is designed to provide BSW SEB speaking students with specialized knowledge and experience to meet the needs of Latinx families served by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (CT DCF). This paper describes how the UConn BSW program and DCF collaborated to re-envision social work education for SEB students and contribute to distributive justice for client and worker. The CWP Track prepares BSW students to work with a range of Spanish-speaking clients while facilitating institutional support including incentives to create a much-needed workforce pipeline for SEB social work students interested in child welfare.*

Keywords: *Social work education, Spanish-English bilingual, distributive justice, equity, child welfare*

According to the 2020 United States Census Bureau (2021), in the past decade, the Latinx population has increased from 16% to 18% maintaining their place as the largest non-White racial/ethnic group in the US. The Black/African American population comprised 12% of the population and Whites 61% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Yet the Children's Bureau Office of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reports that of the 407,493 children in foster care, 22% are Latinx, 23% are Black, and 43% are White (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], 2021). This overrepresentation of Black and Latinx families in the child welfare system is not new and the mechanisms that contribute to such disparities are not all the same (Miller et al., 2012). Both populations are affected by racial bias and discrimination imposed by professionals (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008). For Latinx families their disparate numbers in the child welfare system are also indicative of the social forces that disproportionately affect Latinx families, such as poverty, health inequities, mental health issues, language barriers, and stressors related to immigration status (Cardoso et al., 2014; Garcia et al., 2012; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). When it comes to meeting the needs of the Latinx population in the child welfare system, the social work workforce is not prepared, particularly around issues of language (Ayón, 2011; Sevilla et al., 2018). Salsberg et al. (2017) estimate that less than

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10% of Masters level social workers in the workforce are Latinx. Not included in this assessment is the number of social workers who are Spanish-speaking. For Spanish-speaking clients seeking treatment in their preferred language, the lack of Spanish/English Bilingual (SEB) social workers impacts client outcomes (Ayón, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Marrs Fuchsel, 2015) as well as workforce equity (Lanesskog et al., 2015; Logan, 2018). Many SEB social workers experience additional demands and challenges or have added workloads when working with Spanish-speaking clients yet are not appropriately compensated (Engstrom et al., 2009; Garcia et al., 2012; Lanesskog et al., 2015; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Wall et al., 2016). This article will assess the disparate treatment and expectations of SEB social workers from their English-speaking colleagues. The term *Latinx* and *Hispanic* are used interchangeably depending on the context and source of the information provided. Although in academic settings Latinx is widely used, the client population discussed here are more likely to use the term Latino/a. Using Rawl's (1971) concept of distributive justice it will also introduce an initiative created to address the service needs of Spanish-speaking children and families in order to reduce the inequities that exist institutionally for both Latinx clients and SEB social workers.

Since nearly 40% of social work activity comprises work with individuals and families (Salsberg et al., 2017), there is good reason for child welfare agencies to be concerned about how to best meet the linguistic and cultural needs of the Latinx population through added education, training, and workforce equity. The difficulties Latinx families face in the child welfare system are not always related to general accessibility but to accessing ethical and equitable services (Thomas et al., 2010). Therefore, it is incumbent on social work programs to appropriately train social workers, not only in the general nine competencies required by CSWE, but in linguistic and cultural competencies essential to providing ethical service. While the disparities facing Latinx families need to be addressed, what can not be ignored are the inequities that exist for the Latinx social workers who service these families. By addressing important gaps in social work education, training, and awareness, the goal of this initiative is for Latinx families to receive and SEB social workers to provide ethical, and socially equitable services.

The focus of this article will primarily be on SEB social workers who are what Lewelling and Peyton (1999) call heritage Spanish speakers. Heritage Spanish speakers are those who grew up in the US, educated in the US and learned to speak Spanish as a result of their parents, friends, or other Spanish-speaking relatives. Heritage Spanish speakers face the unique challenge of being educated and trained in one language (English) for most or all of their life but use another language (Spanish) in the workplace. An initiative created by the UConn School of Social Work and the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) was developed to address issues of equity for SEB social workers and their Spanish-speaking clients. The educational program facilitates the development of skills specific to culture, language use, and professional identity germane to SEB social workers, while highlighting the cultural, linguistic and social justice issues present when working with a Latinx population.

Literature Review

Latinx Children and Families in the Child Welfare System

Within the last decade the Latinx population has grown by 23% in the US (Jones et al., 2021). Nationally, Latinx children constituted 26% of the U.S. child population, with 22% of children in foster care being Latinx (US DHHS, 2021). Of the children in Connecticut's foster care system, the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau (AFCARS) reports that 33.6% are Latinx, 32.8% are White, and 24.9% are Black (US DHHS, n.d.). Although this is a snapshot of children in foster care, it indicates that Latinx families in Connecticut are overrepresented in this area of the child welfare system. These data do not indicate the number of Latinx children and families that are Spanish-speaking; however, according to the US Census Bureau (2019a) 13.5% of U.S. Latinx households are Spanish-speaking and 12.5% are Limited English Proficient, or LEP (US Census Bureau, 2019b).

In addition to social workers needing Spanish language proficiency to effectively serve LEP families, research indicates that understanding a client's culture can be vital to ethical service delivery, particularly since the majority of child welfare systems follow a western individualistic model (Templeman & Mitchell, 2002; Miller & Gaston, 2003). As a result, it is incumbent upon social workers to assure the ethical and equitable treatment of Latinx families and children through language accessibility and culturally informed treatment that meets the needs of these families. In order for this to occur, more SEB social workers must enter the workforce. However, research suggests that SEB social workers providing services to Latinx families have differential work experiences than their monolingual English-speaking colleagues (Engstrom et al., 2009; Garcia et al., 2012; Logan, 2018). For example, Engstrom et al. (2009) found that many SEB social workers report higher rates of fatigue due to working in two languages as well as having to spend more time with their LEP clients. On paper, even though SEB social workers are expected to maintain a caseload equal to that of their English-speaking colleagues, in practice, SEB social workers report having higher caseloads and added responsibilities (Bok, 2005; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Garcia et al., 2012; Lanesskog et al., 2015; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Wall et al., 2016). Even when caseloads are equal in number, the workload is far from equitable due to the increased time required as well as the psychological, cognitive, and physical burden (Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). This invisible and unacknowledged burden does a disservice to both client and worker (Logan, 2018; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021).

Working with LEP families often requires the SEB social workers to take on demands and responsibilities that are not required of their monolingual English-speaking colleagues (Engstrom & Min, 2004; Garcia et al., 2012; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). Such tasks might include, providing in-depth information not only about the child welfare system but other systems such as immigration or social welfare services, translating documents not available in Spanish, and translating for non-Spanish-speaking staff when a translator is not available (Engstrom et al., 2009; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Garcia et al., 2012; Logan, 2018). These time consuming tasks may or may not be related to the issue that brought the family to the child welfare system but regardless, SEB social workers complete them without extra

compensation because they understand that they may be the only one available to provide these services in Spanish to their LEP clients (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Logan, 2018).

Distributive Justice

The basic tenet of distributive justice puts forth that all members of society are afforded the same rights, protections, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits to increase one's chances in life (Rawls, 1971). Wakefield (1988) demonstrates how social work's primary tasks centered around people's "social functioning" and "linking people and resources," intuitively follows the principles of distributive justice (p. 209). Distributive justice concerns itself with how primary goods that are necessary for members of society to live, are distributed. The two types of primary goods are natural and social (Rawls, 1971). Natural goods pertain to health and intelligence and can exemplify differences between people and often fall outside the auspices of distributive justice. Social goods reflect aspects of society that encompass issues of liberty, power, opportunity, economic needs, and self-respect (Rawls, 1971). The aspect of distributive justice which refers to the manner in which "economic and social goods and services are distributed in a society" (Longres & Scanlon, 2001, p. 448) is particularly important when examining the delivery of social services to clients and the equitable treatment of its workers because it is likely to have an effect on client outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Marrs Fuchsel, 2015; Wakefield, 1988). Currently, in our child welfare system, both Latinx service providers and Latinx service users are experiencing systemic barriers to important services, limiting their opportunity and power and enabling inequities and unfairness (Engstrom et al., 2009; Garcia et al., 2012; Logan, 2018).

The need for a distributive justice lens when it comes to servicing LEP families in child protection/welfare is two-fold. First, as mentioned above, Spanish-speaking families deserve to receive treatment in the language of choice. Research has been conducted on the advantage of speaking in one's preferred language when it comes to emotions, experiences, engagement and therapeutic alliance (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Marrs Fuchsel, 2015; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Second, due to the increase of LEP children and families in need of services, there are insufficient SEB social workers to meet this need (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Marrs Fuchsel, 2015; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b) often resulting in inequitable work demands (Engstrom & Min, 2004; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). This puts an undue strain on SEB social workers who often begin their work without any specialized education or training around language use. Issues such as translating terminology or clinical concepts learned in English as well as understanding the impact on code switching (changing from one language to the other) has on client/worker relationship and worker's use of the bilingual self, are specialized skills not taught in most social work programs (Biever et al., 2002; Engstrom et al., 2009; Liu, 2013; Oliva, 2019).

The execution of social work is integral to the workings of socio-political aspects of society, which includes cooperation among its members and the ability for social workers to enhance self-respect, esteem, confidence and knowledge (Wakefield, 1988) to those they serve. Where this is particularly important is when members of society are under-

valued and subjected to unfair and discriminatory treatment based on their race, ethnicity, legal status, or linguistic ability (Garran et al., 2021a, 2021b). The notion of fairness must go beyond everyone having access to the same services; particularly since very few services models have been created to meet the needs of a Spanish-speaking population (Ayón, 2011). In this case, fairness must include quality services that align with ethical treatment through the equitable distribution of social goods (Miller & Gaston, 2003; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Templeman & Mitchell, 2002).

Language and Social Work Education

Most social work programs in the US do not prepare SEB social workers to work with LEP clients (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). Courses are taught in English, reading materials are in English, assignments are expected to be turned in in English, and simulations or role plays that occur in class are in English (Sevilla et al., 2018). This gives SEB social workers little opportunity to hone their Spanish language skills while learning the profession which could increase their efficiency (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2000b). Just as English-speaking social workers have the opportunity to practice their clinical engagement skills in their own language and language they will be using in their work, so should SEB social workers who will be using Spanish in their work. In any profession, part of the education is learning and practicing the terminology in the classroom and experiential settings. Addressing this from the perspective of the just distribution of social goods can help in developing educational opportunities that address the unmet needs of SEB social workers in delivering services.

The social work profession acknowledges its commitment to providing services in languages other than English. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2015) Statement on Cultural Competence Standard 9 Language and Communication, asserts “it is the responsibility of both social workers and organizations to provide services in each client’s preferred language” (p. 45), but does not expand on how to deliver such services. To accomplish this, social workers can turn to the two amendments in the 2021 NASW Code of Ethics that relate to SEB social workers and their clients within the context of distributive justice. The first appears under the ethical principle of “Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner” which acknowledges that a part of ethical practice includes personal and professional self-care (NASW, 2021, para. 15). Olcón and Gulbas (2021) found that providing SEB social workers with stress management and coping skills in efforts to enhance self-care is not enough, which implies that this ethical standard which refers to professional self-care is not being upheld. Therefore, for the profession to be able to equip SEB social workers with the capacity to abide by this ethical standard it must facilitate SEB social workers to receive education and training in Spanish as it provides them with skills that are needed to prevent fatigue and burnout (Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). The second is located under 1.05 Cultural Competence which is a subsection of ethical standards. This standard requires social workers to “take action against oppression, racism, discrimination and inequities” (NASW, 2021, para. 17). Providing services to LEP children and families without the capacity to practice self-care can prevent SEB social workers from providing their clients with services of the best quality. This potential inequity in service quality as well as inequities in the workforce exemplify the ethical responsibilities of the

profession and social work educators to ensure the needs of SEB social workers are met. At the same time SEB social workers have an ethical obligation to advocate on behalf of their clients and the profession. They must challenge the education and training they currently receive and explain how this neglected aspect of their education has real consequences for providing equitable care to LEP children and families in the child welfare system.

Cultural and Linguistic Competency

There are several elements to cultural and linguistic competency in addition to understanding the language, different values, and cultural practices. Dettlaff et al. (2009) explain the importance of being knowledgeable about acculturation and generational differences. Researchers highlight the importance of understanding cultural historic and contemporary narratives and experiences of systemic and interpersonal discrimination (Garcia et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2011). Knowing how to speak the Spanish language is but one aspect of linguistic competence. Varying degrees of fluency in reading, writing, and speaking can make a difference in whether or not families are receiving all they need. Recognizing the various meanings codified in different Spanish words based on a person's ethnicity or country of origin is important, as not all words have the same meaning and not all meanings are expressed using the same Spanish word (Oliva, 2019).

In most instances, SEB students have obtained their elementary and secondary education from English dominant institutions (Sevilla et al., 2018). During the course of their education, SEB students not only have to learn the content being taught but also attempt to understand how certain concepts or techniques can be delivered in Spanish. Additionally, their educational experience is often compounded by the lack of economic and social resources (Schneider et al., 2006). These initial disparities disadvantage Latinx students and frequently derive from their parent's immigration status, socioeconomic factors, and their lack of familiarity with the United States education system (Schneider et al., 2006).

Latinos are not a monolithic ethnic group. Traditions, beliefs, and language can differ among ethnicities, enough to cause confusion and disruptions in the work. First and second-generation Latinos can have different points of reference for everything from gender roles to familial expectations. Research shows that just speaking Spanish with LEP clients is not enough to ensure a client-worker alliance to develop (Marrs Fuchsel, 2015). SEB social workers are in need of training and institutional support to increase their cultural and linguistic competence. There are myriad dynamics that reside within the Latinx population. Contemporary and historic tensions between countries, economic differences, citizen and immigration status can affect the SEB social worker - LEP client relationship. Also, simply by being a SEB social worker does not guarantee they will have knowledge of all issues facing the various Latinx ethnic groups (Lanesskog et al., 2020).

One area that is important in any social worker's practice is supervision. Among other things, supervision provides social workers with a place to reflect on their practice and discuss ways to improve their skills. There is strong evidence illustrating the importance of supervision being held in the same language that was being used in the treatment setting

(Lanesskog et al., 2020; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). Research suggests that the majority of their SEB participants felt that they needed further training to help with fluency in conversation, the acquisition of particular vocabulary that was specific to the clinical context, and the application of theoretical concepts to their work (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Sevilla et al., 2018). From a distributive justice standpoint, SEB social workers have the same obligations to their clients as English-speaking social workers and should be provided the same opportunities and resources.

Service Delivery

SEB social workers are well aware that there are not enough resources to service the Spanish-speaking population (Engstrom et al., 2009; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). The workload issues experienced by SEB providers often result in high turnover and burnout in child welfare services (Barbee & Antle, 2011; Engstrom et al., 2009; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Garcia et al., 2012; Logan, 2018), interrupting continuity of care. Aware of the demand, not only do SEB social workers often agree to increase their caseload because of the need, they do so without added compensation or adjustments to other work-related responsibilities (Lanesskog et al., 2015; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Wall et al., 2016). Knowing that their clients often wait longer for referrals because of the lack of Spanish-speaking providers, SEB workers often continue to engage with them until they are connected to another provider (Engstrom et al., 2009; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021).

Examining these differential work demands from a distributive justice perspective, the issue of workload equity extends beyond having a larger caseload. As mentioned above, as a result of limited resources and inadequate support available to SEB social workers, LEB clients take more time and attention (Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). When SEB social workers need to refer their clients to other agencies or services and are unable to locate a Spanish-speaking worker for these services, SEB social workers often spend more time researching other possible referrals, while still working with these clients until an appropriate referral can be found. SEB social workers also spend time discussing cultural differences and simple systems, such as education, taxes, utility bills, often translating documents for them in the process (Engstrom et al., 2009; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). They also are frequently asked to translate for other colleagues who may have brief or limited contact with a Spanish-speaking client, often educating them about Latinx socio-political-cultural issues as well (Engstrom et al., 2009; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Logan, 2018; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a).

Although most SEB social workers have little difficulty in acquiring employment, job satisfaction is often a challenge as many feel the amount of specific language skill, extra labor, and minimal support is tiring (Engstrom et al., 2009; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Logan, 2018; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). When SEB workers want to advance to a higher position, particularly one where they may not have a caseload, they are often not selected for the position because their language ability is essential to the agency's direct services (Engstrom & Min, 2004). SEB social workers also do not receive the appropriate professional development and training that must be ongoing (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). Having a bilingual supervisor is not a luxury but a necessity

for SEB workers to be able to process everything from abstract dimensions of language to how they may see themselves differently when working with a Spanish- vs. English-speaking client (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). From a distributive justice perspective, SEB social workers should be afforded the same protections from these factors that influence their burnout and high turnover.

Overview of Child Welfare and Protection Track

In an attempt to respond to the needs of an ever-growing Spanish-speaking population in child welfare settings, the UConn School of Social Work and the Connecticut DCF collaborated on an initiative formed to specifically address the lack of much-needed linguistic and culturally competent Spanish-speaking social workers in the workforce. The Child Welfare and Protection (CWP) track was designed to holistically prepare SEB baccalaureate social work students interested in child welfare and protection services. UConn's long-standing relationship with DCF allowed the evolution of this program to develop swiftly and will serve as a pipeline for its BSW interested students to join the child welfare workforce upon graduation. The goals of the program are 1) increase student's interest and knowledge in child welfare and child protection 2) provide a foundational understanding of the skills needed to engage, assess, and secure services that will meet the needs of Spanish-speaking families, and 3) increase student's interest in pursuing a career at DCF.

The UConn School of Social Work and Connecticut's Department of Children and Families partnership extends across several years. The partnership is sustained by sharing mutual values centered around the importance of promoting the educational goals of students and employees who are vested in expanding their knowledge base of child welfare and child protection services. The sharing of this educational value has benefited both institutions and the people they serve.

The Connecticut DCF is similarly situated with other child protection agencies across the nation with respect to the rate of children of color entering the system at a disproportionate rate compared to their white counterparts. Currently, Hispanic children represent 31% of the population of children who are placed in care by the agency (Connecticut DCF Results Oriented Management, 2021). In addition, the Hispanic families currently receiving services from the agency represent 29% of the total population of families who receive services from DCF (Connecticut DCF Mindshare, 2021). These numbers, although lower in comparison to the Black/African American population, are evidence of the disproportionality that remains to date for families and children involved in Connecticut's Child Welfare system. It is also important to note that Latinx children often remain in the system longer and have a delay in the achievement of permanency (Connecticut DCF Mindshare, 2021). Although the data sets at any given point in time can and do fluctuate, this does not negate the need to address the presence of disproportionality amongst the families and children of color, specifically the Latinx population. The Connecticut DCF has been steadfast in its desire to ensure equity for all involved in the system seeking to improve safety, permanency, and well-being for all children. This initiative was created as a way to enhance equity for its Spanish-speaking population.

In order to combat the rate of disproportionality and disparate treatment families of color face upon referral and acquisition of services, the agency has a decade long commitment, evidenced through its mission and goal, to becoming a racially just organization (Connecticut DCF, 2022). As cited in the report on the Connecticut DCF (2020) Racial Justice Data, Activities and Strategies legislation was codified in 2018 to exemplify the value and importance of such work. All facets, from policy development, practice guides, supervision, engagement skills, assessments and hiring practices, are viewed from a racial and distributive justice lens.

From a DCF organizational development standpoint, attention to equity issues around service delivery was embedded in a statewide group, composed of members from varying levels within the organization and community partners. The work was segmented into the following areas: policy/practice, workforce development, and contracts and services. The concepts from these areas are then promulgated with local racial justice groups within the area offices, divisions and facilities of the department. Newly hired social workers, social worker trainees and interns are exposed to the work via various workforce development opportunities in the form of training. Each training opportunity requires staff to delve deeper into a contextualized level of self-reflection in relation to recognition of their internalized implicit bias. The workforce development opportunities provide a clearer understanding of oppression, poverty, the underpinnings of historical trauma, and the ambiguity felt by families of color when mandated to receive services from a child protection service agency. Staff are called upon to examine more thoroughly the correlation of their assessments with the disparate treatment of children and families entering the system. In addition to the professional development opportunities, leaders within the agency are charged with developing racial justice change initiatives. Each change initiative includes delineated strategies that will guide staff in lessening the rate of disproportionality and disparate treatment experienced by families and children of color. The CWP track is one of these initiatives. The success of this and other initiatives will be measured from a qualitative and quantitative lens in order to capture the changes from a micro and macro perspective from the vantage point of the agency.

Professional Education

Professional education comprises not only the formal classroom education students receive in the School of Social Work and wider University, but field education and ongoing professional mentorship are crucial to students' identity as social workers. Addressing each aspect of a student's educational experience is a part of ensuring culturally competent, ethical, and equitable practice.

Program Model

Given that the majority of Latinx social work students are educated in English (Sevilla et al., 2018), in order to ensure an equitable educational opportunity for SEB social work students, the same social goods known to enhance professional outcomes for English-speaking social work students must be available to SEB students. Consequently, the BSW CWP track was developed with distributive justice in mind. The BSW CWP track is a

voluntary option and is open to students in junior standing. Student participants are required to fulfill the obligations of this non-credit bearing program in addition to completing other course requirements including a senior field placement at DCF. Students also have the option of petitioning to have their work in this program count toward an independent study, satisfying one of their elective courses. Upon successful completion of the spring and fall semesters, CWP students are awarded a financial stipend of \$500.

Students who consider the CWP track as an option, should have an interest in child welfare, agree to participate in the program track series of eight sessions (spring-fall-spring) and complete their senior year field internship at DCF. The commitment involves 17 hours of in person participation and up to five hours for preparation of their presentation. As part of the program criteria, students 1) must have the ability to speak Spanish fluently - fluent is defined as the ability to converse with another person in a language other than English on a variety of subjects without much strain; 2) have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.7 and remain in good academic standing; 3) have junior standing with a minimum of 54 credits by the end of the semester of the application cycle; and 4) are required to meet UConn and DCF's internship requirements. Submission of application materials includes an application form, a transcript, current resume and a personal statement. Recruitment for the program begins during the incoming student orientation and throughout the fall semester. In order to ensure students are fully informed about the program, UConn and DCF staff conduct an informational session.

The program track series begins in the spring semester and includes an opening reception with the program participants and representatives of the UConn School of Social Work and DCF. The purpose of this reception is to underscore the importance of this initiative and how it aligns with the mission and goals of DCF as it pertains to racial justice and the School of Social Work's commitment to social justice and equitable education. Students are also given the opportunity to introduce themselves and share their background and interest as it relates to child welfare. Subsequently, there are three additional sessions during their first spring semester 1) a focus on the history of child welfare and protection services and the role of the social work profession, 2) an overview of DCF as the largest child welfare organization in the State of Connecticut and 3) an experiential shadowing of a DCF Spanish-speaking social worker working with Latinx families.

The fall semester consists of 1) a session on understanding the Latinx population - Connecticut's demographics, diversity within the Latinx population including culture, beliefs, values, as well as language challenges and 2) a session on understanding how DCF works within a cultural and linguistic competence and racial justice frame when serving Latinx families. The end of the program concludes with an evaluation session and a celebration of the graduating cohort which includes a poster presentation session by CWP students. All these sessions are conducted by faculty/staff of the UConn School of Social Work or DCF. As the program grows, additional trainings on language skills and development; specific information on barriers to engagement due to issues of immigration and/or undocumented status; intergenerational barriers between parents/children and workers/clients; and reflection on their own positionality will be provided.

Particularly important to this program is exposing the students to the field. Field education is the signature pedagogy of social work education (Wayne et al., 2010). Through the field education experience, students learn how to apply theory to practice under the guidance and supervision of an experienced professional social worker. In developing the program model, the shadowing of a DCF Latinx social worker and completion of a one-year field internship at DCF are considered integral and valuable components of the students' learning. The shadowing opportunity will aim to prepare the students for the year-long internship. The full day experience will consist of an overview of the agency, its mission and guiding principles, along with the demographics of their assigned office. Students will be afforded the opportunity to shadow Spanish-speaking workers to gain an understanding of their role and responsibility as a department social worker. During this interaction, they will have the opportunity to participate in various case management activities associated with current Spanish-speaking families. These activities range from administrative case reviews, meetings with community providers, court appearances and home visits. This day-long opportunity serves as a prelude to the full internship consisting of 400 hours during the academic school year. During this time students will experience the breadth of child protection services ranging from investigations, in-home services, children in placement, to permanency. Students will learn the importance of working with all families with a lens towards achieving racial equity. Opportunities will be created for students to assume case management responsibilities for the Spanish-speaking families with direct oversight provided by the assigned social worker and the Spanish-speaking field intern supervisor.

Student Assessment

One of the challenges Verdinelli and Biever (2009b) found facing many of their SEB participants is the difficulty applying theory into practice, particularly when their education occurred in English, and they are practicing in Spanish. In an effort to respond to this, students in this program create a poster presentation to reflect their cumulative experience with the BSW Child Welfare and Protection Track program and how it impacted their personal and professional development as a social work student.

The main components of the presentation include students highlighting two key areas: 1) integration of theory to practice and 2) how the use of self-reflection throughout their program contributed to their professional development. Students need to demonstrate their learning of theory to practice by choosing two of the educational session topic areas: Child Welfare & Protection Services, DCF 101, Experiential Shadowing, Understanding the Latinx Population and DCF's Racial Justice Framework. In addition to their coursework content the students will use their DCF field experience to highlight the linkage between what they have learned and how it was applied to working with Latinx families. Students also need to demonstrate how self-reflecting on child welfare practice with Latinx families, and the significance of language, culture, values, and beliefs in working with Latinx families influenced their professional development. As part of this process, students also describe their most memorable experience and how it influenced their personal and professional development as a SEB social worker. Students then integrate supporting sources, demonstrate their creativity and conduct a professional presentation. Students are

asked to present in Spanish as well as in English. The students are assessed on four key elements 1) their ability to identify theories that guided their practice; 2) the ability to complete a bio-psycho-social-cultural assessment of a client; 3) the ability to self-reflect on the influence that language had on their practice and 4) their ability to reflect on their professional identity as a SEB social worker.

Program Evaluation

As the Child Welfare and Protection Track program becomes fully operational, the challenge will be deciphering the impact the experience has on the identified students and the long-term effects. It is not sufficient to simply provide the students with training and shadowing opportunities. The key is to determine ways in which they are able to capitalize on their experiences to make a difference in the lives of the LEP families with whom they engage. Student retention rates along with an evaluation of their work in the program will be used to assess the progress of the program. The students will be asked to complete a survey at the end of each semester while in the field, which will assess their knowledge and skill acquisition when working with LEP families. They will also be asked questions about their own professional identity as an SEB social worker and learning experience.

This experience of observation and practice provides students the opportunity to apply their knowledge, skills, values, and Spanish language to their work with Latinx families. By doing so, they continue to develop strategies to culturally and linguistically meet the needs of these families that often go underserved due to the lack of SEB social workers represented within the child welfare system. To ensure the goals of the CWP track are being met, ongoing program evaluation will be conducted to assess the various stages of the program's development to determine its efficacy. A total of three anonymous surveys are disseminated throughout the program - at the conclusion of the first spring semester, the subsequent fall semester and the final spring semester.

The first survey assesses the application process and communication, the informational sessions conducted by social work faculty and DCF staff, and the experiential shadowing of DCF social workers assisting Latinx families. These areas assess the increase in knowledge of topic areas, the amount of information presented and length of sessions, the role of social workers in child welfare and protection services, the benefits of the shadowing experience and overall semester participation. The second survey is distributed after the fall semester to assess the informational sessions conducted by social work faculty and DCF staff and the DCF field experience which includes areas such as utilizing engagement skills in Spanish to work with Latinx families and working from a racial justice framework. The third survey is distributed in the last semester of the spring to assess the continuation of the field experience and the overall CWP track experience since students began the program. As the students complete the program a follow up fourth survey will be administered six months post BSW graduation to identify employment and workforce readiness in serving Latinx families.

After the completion of each CWP track cohort, an analysis of program outcomes provided by the various assessments and evaluations mentioned above will be conducted. This information will be used to determine the achievement and sustainability of the

program goals and program modifications will be made accordingly. Ongoing evaluation will continue to allow for continuing feedback of the CWP track to ensure the programs goals are being met and demonstrate the program's progress toward the ultimate goal of increasing workforce readiness for SEB social workers.

With the next cohort the program will look to adapt the existing scale, Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Competency Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Health Care Services (PCLC; Goode, 2009), which measures cultural and linguistic competence. The measure comprises a 41 item scale with three subscales: the Physical Environment which measures the degree to which the agency environment is reflective of the clients' cultures; the Communication Style measuring the worker's cultural and linguistic competence in communication practices, which measures the use of materials in the client's language, use of translation; and the Values and Attitudes, which measures acceptance of differing viewpoints on health practices, family, gender roles, etc. This would be a pre/posttest survey which would be given before the students begin the program and at the end of the program. Another area for consideration would be the collection of qualitative data through focus groups and interviews, which would focus on the students' experience with supervision and overall usefulness of the various program components. Findings from these pilot tests would provide useful information on which aspects of the program might need to be enhanced.

Implications for Social Work Educators and Child Welfare Practice

Addressing the need for Latinx children and families to receive services in their preferred language and the workforce disparities that exist for SEB social workers due to their invisible and extra labor are crucial to the ethical treatment of LEP Latinx families. SEB social work students have the right to be equitably trained to work with the Spanish-speaking population as well as to advocate for employers to recognize the added time spent with LEP clients. Applying the distributive justice lens uncovers the inequity that exists in the education of SEB social workers as well as in the workforce. SEB social workers should be afforded the same primary social goods necessary for linking LEP families to resources and aiding in their social functioning. Without the same opportunities to attain the necessary social goods SEB social workers will continue to experience discrimination and exploitation. At the same time, this inequitable distribution of work among social work professionals disproportionately negatively affects LEP families. Knowing that Latinx children and families are overrepresented in the child welfare system and have disparate outcomes in comparison to their White counterparts (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Marrs Fuchsel, 2015; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b), the social work profession must attempt innovative ways to address changes needed in SEB social worker education.

The ethical issues that have been raised regarding the provision of services to LEP individuals and families need to be addressed in every social work program. Offering educational opportunities that focus on the linguistic and cultural competencies of all SEB social work students is a tool that enhances their professional education and thereby increases Spanish-speaking individuals' and families' access to ethical and equitable

services. Further research is needed to assess the particular elements of programs addressing cultural and linguistic competence to ascertain the aspects most conducive to providing ethical practice.

From a child welfare practice perspective, the overrepresentation of Latinx children in the child welfare system requires agencies to equitably and effectively recruit, hire and train prospective SEB staff. As indicated, recruitment and training of SEB social work students at the BSW and MSW level is vital in order to expand the SEB workforce. By having more culturally and linguistically competent SEB social workers working in child welfare, LEP client's quality of care will improve as well as workforce equity for many SEB social workers. Innovative programs such as the CWP track places students with interest in the field on a trajectory for potentially sustaining a gratifying career in child protection services. Child Welfare/Child Protection service agencies must review their Latinx demographics within their respective counties and states to determine the level to which their recruitment efforts will represent those families. Statewide partnerships with local colleges and universities can serve as a valuable resource for recruiting prospective Latinx employees.

More research needs to be conducted to measure outcome differentials based on language provision because most assertions about better outcomes are vague. The literature that does exist states that LEP individuals and families who have their services provided in Spanish "adopt healthier practices" (Marrs Fuchsel, 2015, p. 252) and have better treatment outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Lanesskog et al., 2020; Sevilla et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Bieber 2009b) such as higher satisfaction and greater likelihood of following recommendations given by the provider (Diamond et al., 2019). Having had better training, SEB social workers who are able to do their work more efficiently and effectively will be better prepared for the workforce and potentially be less susceptible to burnout (Lanesskog et al., 2020; Olcón & Gulbas, 2021). The mutual justice provided to both Spanish-speaking clients and workers by the equitable provision of social goods creates an opportunity to address current disparities in child welfare.

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