

## **Trauma Exposure and the Social Work Practicum**

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*In this study, 58 undergraduate and graduate students at 1 Canadian school of social work voluntarily completed a survey at the conclusion of their academic year consisting of open- and closed-ended questions intended to examine their exposure to trauma during the course of their field practice. The authors discovered that the majority of students entered the program having already experienced or been exposed to at least 1 significant traumatic incident. These ranged from verbal and sexual harassment, to having been stalked, to having experienced the death of a child or partner. Likewise, during their field practicum, the majority of these social work students experienced, or were exposed to, at least 1 incident that was emotionally or physically distressing. Although most instances neither occurred on a regular basis, nor had an overwhelming effect, a small number of social work students were exposed to traumatic incidents that were of significance to them. This fact was the result of the actions and behaviors not only of clients but also, in a few instances, of their field instructors or faculty consultants. In total, there were 52 significant or severe events reported by the 58 participants. They stated that changes in sleeping, eating, concentration, psychoactive substance use, confidence, and academic performance all occurred as a result of attending practicum. Hence, it might be beneficial for students and field instructors if schools of social work had specific curriculum*

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*and activities to assist in preparing for the emotional elements of field practice before beginning the practicum. Also, formal mechanisms to assist students in debriefing and responding to these incidents perhaps should be core components of every school of social work's curriculum.*

**KEYWORDS** *trauma, practicum, social work students*

A vital aspect of all social work education is the practicum. There, students enter a social work setting, typically for the first time in a professional role, to attain experience in applying social work theory and knowledge to practice. Recent literature highlights the importance of understanding the complex needs and dilemmas of social work students in their placements, including the role of trauma and exposure to trauma (Furman, Benson, Grimwood, & Canda, 2004; Miller, 2001; Rey, 1996). Although some studies speak about trauma education for social work students, there has been no systematic examination of the effect of fieldwork practice on the wellness of social work students (Gelman, 2004; Zakutansky & Sirles, 1993).

There is a range of trauma types discussed in the professional literature. *Secondary trauma* is the emotional duress experienced by people after having close contact with a trauma survivor (Figley & Kleber, 1995; Geller, Madson, & Ohrenstein, 2004; Hesse, 2002). *Vicarious trauma* is defined as the permanent transformation in the inner experience of the clinician that comes about as a result of empathic engagement with clients' trauma material, with the main symptoms being disturbances in the practitioner's cognitive frame of reference, identity, world view, and spirituality (Hyman, 2004; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). The main differences, as suggested by Figley (1995), are a focus on symptomatology versus theory, the nature of symptoms, observable reactions versus more covert changes in thinking, relevant populations, and a critical amount of exposure to trauma survivors. Whereas secondary trauma may be experienced by having contact with a client, vicarious trauma results from cumulative exposure to traumatized clients over time (McCann & Pearlman, 1990), although the length of time may vary from counselor to counselor. Other variables of vicarious trauma include age, gender, amount of interaction with exposed clients, length of time providing treatment, and the clinician's own history (Cunningham, 2003, 2004; Dane, 2002; Way, Vandeusen, Martin, Applegate, & Jandle, 2004). There is also the comparatively new concept of compassion fatigue, a process that happens over time and is not the result of a one-time event, as with secondary traumatic fatigue (Thompson, 2004). Compassion fatigue reflects a physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that overtakes helpers and causes a decline in their ability to feel and care for others (Figley, 1995). It can occur to anyone as a result of serving in a helping capacity (Rothschild, 2006).

Along with emotional effects of practice also come issues resulting from exposure to and experiences of physical trauma, a possibility that should be addressed in depth with students because it encompasses real and perceived harm, or threats of harm (Rey, 1996; Smith McMahon, & Nursten, 2003). There are inherent physical risks associated with social work practice, such as visiting clients in their home, working with high-risk clients (who have committed violent acts) and interaction with agitated clients who are in a crisis state. Newhill (1996) indicated that up to 20% of BSW students had been verbally or physically assaulted during their practicum experience. Research also suggests that it is incumbent upon the student to be aware of agency policy and risk management protocols, yet it is also the responsibility of the field instructor and school of social work to teach awareness and management of risk in practicum settings (Macdonald & Sirotich, 2004; Newhill, 1996; Zakutansky & Sirles, 1993). Physical trauma is an ongoing concern, and social workers who have been threatened or abused by clients report higher levels of irritability, depression, anxiety, and burnout compared with workers who have not experienced threats or abuse (Jayaratne, Vinokur-Kaplan, Nagda, & Chess, 1996).

Self-awareness is an important attribute for successful social work practice in any setting. Therefore, it is critical that social work students examine their own family of origin and previous life experiences as part of their preparation for practice. Research indicates that there are a disproportionate number of social workers who enter the field with unresolved family of origin issues (Black, Jeffreys, & Hartley, 1993; Russel, Gill, Coyne, & Woody, 1993). These issues include but are not limited to alcohol or other drug addiction of a family member; divorce or separation of parents; physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (or some combination of the three); mental or chronic physical illness of a family member; and a suicide, attempted suicide, or death of a family member (Black et al., 1993). It is no surprise that such family of origin issues have an effect, positive and negative, on practicum placements, especially as the issues of loss often are the same ones with which students must assist others (Mishna & Rasmussen, 2001).

Trauma can bring about significant change in one's life. Janoff-Bulman (1992) discussed three basic assumptions that are "shattered" by trauma; a belief in personal invulnerability, the perception of the world as meaningful and comprehensible, and the ability to fundamentally view ourselves in a positive light. Figley (1995) identified several reasons why counseling professionals are vulnerable to secondary trauma:

1. Empathy is a major resource for trauma workers to help the traumatized but it can also make the worker vulnerable to counter transference.
2. Most trauma workers have experienced some traumatic event in their own lives—and this can be used to aid their understanding of trauma—but they must maintain boundaries with the person who is seeking help.

3. Unresolved trauma of the worker may be reactivated if the client's trauma is similar.

Moreover, Figley (1995) observed that children's trauma frequently is more difficult for helpers to cope with than adult trauma. Thus, it is no surprise that *burnout*, defined as a defensive response to prolonged occupational exposure to demanding interpersonal situations that produce psychological strain and provide inadequate support (Jenkins & Baird, 2002), is an occupational hazard of social work. The groundwork for burnout can easily be laid as early as the first practicum.

Research here was undertaken to examine the effect of field work practice on the wellness of student social work practitioners. This exploratory study examined the actual experience of students in a variety of placement settings in attempting to develop a beginning understanding of physical, emotional, and vicarious trauma experienced as a part of their required field education.

## METHOD

### Setting

The King's University College School of Social Work is located in London, Ontario, Canada, and it offers a 2-year BSW degree, and a 1-year MSW degree for those individuals who have a BSW. Both degrees may be taken on either a full- or part-time basis. Undergraduates complete two practica in two distinct fields of practice. The first practicum is 245 hours long and occurs during the second term of the students' first year in the professional program, whereas the second requires approximately 570 hours, with students in the field 3 days per week for two terms. MSW students participate in one 500-hour practicum also over two terms. The coordinator of field instruction meets individually with all students to assess their learning needs and determines the best fit to a field practicum, field instructor, and faculty consultant. This process includes a field forum for undergraduate students, where agency representatives meet with students in an informal manner, followed by individual interviews in the field setting. The typical matching process takes 6–8 weeks to complete. Faculty consultants then oversee the practicum through assisting with development of the learning contract, undertaking field visits and liaising with field instructors. They also lead an integration seminar with their assigned students examining how issues of theory link and relate to field practice, with an additional focus on ethical dilemmas and critical incidents in the field. Students are assigned a practicum from a range: child welfare to medical social work to policy analysis and research.

### Design

All students completing a practicum during the 2006–2007 academic year were invited to voluntarily complete an anonymous questionnaire that

consisted of open- and closed-ended questions examining issues of previous personal trauma exposure, and trauma issues that had arisen in their current practicum. The instrument approved by the university ethics review committee was 11 pages in length and included a two-page consent form indicating the purpose of the study and the risks associated in completing it. The survey itself consisted of six sections. Part A examined anxiety regarding beginning the practicum, and Part B asked about the frequency and severity of 21 different types of potentially traumatizing activities, ranging from being physically threatened by a client to being yelled at by one's field instructor. Part C was an open-ended inquiry about the students' wellness, whereas Part D asked about the types of supports used to deal with the incidents reported in Part B. Part E asked about traumatic events that had occurred before entering the school of social work and that had occurred while enrolled but outside the practicum experience, as well as resources that were used to respond to these incidents. The final section allowed participants to add any additional comments that they thought would be worthwhile.

The instruments were distributed either before or during the first 30 min of one of the integration seminars by two former graduates of the School of Social Work. Both held MSW degrees, were practicing in the field, and were familiar with the school's practicum process and expectations. Participants were informed that, if there were any issues triggered by completing the survey, they could discuss these concerns with the investigators, given that they both had undergone the same educational and field processes themselves. Participants also were encouraged to discuss any issues arising from completing the instrument during their forthcoming integration seminar. All integration instructors were aware of the questions being posed and were prepared to respond to any issues. Also, the background letter provided to participants outlining the study contained contact information for university counseling resources which could be accessed by respondents at no cost.

In this study, 17 of 40 (42.5%) third-year students, 33 of 40 (82.5%) fourth-year students, and 8 of 20 (40.0%) MSW candidates completed the instrument for an overall participation rate of 58.0%. The demographics reflected most social work programs. The majority of undergraduate participants were female, and all of the MSW students were female. The MSW students were older and had more years of experience in social work, as would be anticipated.

## RESULTS

At the initiation of the practicum, social work students had already been exposed to a broad range of traumatic incidents (Table 1). More than half had experienced verbal harassment in the past 2 years, 40% reported having been verbally threatened, 25% having been sexually harassed, 10% had

**TABLE 1** Critical Incidents Experienced by Students (%)

	Within the past 2 years				2 or more years ago			
	3rd <i>n</i> = 17	4th <i>n</i> = 30	MSW <i>n</i> = 8	Total <i>n</i> = 55	3rd <i>n</i> = 17	4th <i>n</i> = 33	MSW <i>n</i> = 8	Total <i>n</i> = 58
Verbally harassed	64.7	53.3	50.0	56.4	35.3	39.4	37.5	37.9
Verbally threatened	52.9	33.3	37.5	40.0	35.3	36.4	50.0	37.9
Sexually harassed	23.5	33.3		25.5	11.8	27.3	25.0	22.4
Threatened with physical harm	11.8	13.3		10.9	17.6	21.2	25.0	20.7
Threats to damage personal property	11.8	13.3		10.9	5.9	18.2		12.1
Racial/ethnic harassment	5.9	10.0		7.3	11.8	6.1		6.9
Physically assaulted - no injury	17.6	3.3		7.3	29.4	12.1		15.5
Physically assaulted - injured	11.8	0.0		3.6	17.6	6.1	12.5	10.3
Death of a parent	5.9	3.3		3.6	17.6	21.2	25.0	20.7
Sexually assaulted	5.9	0.0		1.8	29.4	12.1	12.5	17.2
Death of a child	5.9	0.0		1.8	0.0	6.1		3.4
Threatened with harm to family member or colleague	5.9	0.0		0.0	5.9	6.1		5.2
Stalked	0.0	0.0		0.0	17.6	15.2		13.8
Death of a partner	0.0	0.0		0.0	5.9	0.0		1.7
Death of other family member	0.0	0.0		0.0	5.9	0.0		1.7

been threatened with physical harm and 10% had been racially harassed. More than one third had been verbally harassed and verbally threatened, and at least 1 in 5 had been sexually harassed, threatened with physical harm, or had experienced the death of a parent. Also, 13.8% reported having been stalked in their lifetime. The most common mechanisms of support sought to deal with exposure to these traumatic incidents were the following: friends outside of school (60.3%), family (56.9%), friends at school (31.0%), or community-based counseling (25.9%). Only 1 student, a MSW candidate, reported having discussed the issue with a faculty consultant or professor.

It was anticipated that there would be a level of anxiety experienced by social work students before beginning practicum. Third-year students were most anxious regarding the expectations of the school and their practicum agency. Fourth-year students were more concerned about the client group with whom they were working and about beginning the placement itself. It is not surprising that MSW students who all had experienced at least prior two placements during their BSW studies (along with having previous work experience) had the least amount of anxiety regarding their practicum (Table 2).

The most common incident reported by respondents during the course of their practicum experience was being emotionally upset after meeting with a client ( $n = 49$ ), becoming emotionally upset after reading a case file ( $n = 40$ ), becoming physically upset after meeting with a client ( $n = 33$ ), becoming emotionally upset during the course of an integration seminar intended to discuss issues in the field ( $n = 31$ ), and becoming emotionally upset after meeting with another professional in the field ( $n = 29$ ). Although issues of sexual and racial harassment were infrequently reported, they still occurred (Table 3).

Respondents reported the frequency of incidents on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*regularly*) and the severity of incidents on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*none*) to 4 (*severe*). The majority of occurrences identified as traumatic were not reported as being severe; however, a few social work students reported incidents that had a significant effect on them. Although only 1 fourth-year student

**TABLE 2** Areas of Anxiety

	3rd $n = 17$	4th $n = 33$	MSW $n = 8$
Beginning placement	2.8	3.1	2.6
Client group	2.8	3.0	2.5
Expectations of school	3.5	2.8	2.4
Expectations of agency	3.4	3.2	2.8

*Note.* Mean score: 1 = low, 5 = very high.



**TABLE 3** Nature, Frequency, and Intensity of Traumatic Incidents ( $N = 58$ )

	Experienced (%)	Frequency (0–4)	Severity (0–4)
Emotionally upset after meeting with a client	84.5	1.6	1.8
Emotionally upset after reading case files	69.0	1.7	1.3
Physically upset after meeting with a client	56.9	1.3	1.4
Emotionally upset as a result of seminar	53.4	1.8	1.6
Emotionally upset after meeting with another professional	50.0	1.6	1.7
Yelled at by client	44.8	1.6	1.4
Emotionally upset after a home visit	34.5	1.7	1.1
Physically upset after reading case files	34.5	1.4	1.0
Verbally disciplined by field instructor	32.8	1.7	1.7
Verbally intimidated/threatened by a client	29.3	1.6	1.6
Physically upset after meeting with another professional	25.9	1.3	1.7
Physically upset as a result of seminar	24.1	1.7	1.7
Physically upset after a home visit	15.5	1.4	1.4
Verbally Intimidated or threatened by colleague/supervisor	13.8	1.8	2.3
Yelled at by colleague/supervisor	12.1	1.9	2.4
Sexually harassed by a client	12.1	1.6	1.0
Physically intimidated/threatened by a client	12.1	1.4	1.6
Sexually harassed by a colleague/supervisor	8.6	1.6	3.0
Racially harassed/discriminated by a client	6.9	1.5	1.3
Racially harassed or discriminated by a colleague/supervisor	3.4	2.5	1.3
Physically intimidated of threatened by colleague/supervisor	1.7	2.0	3.0

reported feeling physically intimidated by a supervisor, this was an experience that occurred more than once to the student and produced a high level of stress and anxiety. Likewise, although only 8 students perceived that they were verbally intimidated or threatened by a colleague or supervisor and 7 noted that they were yelled at, both types of trauma were reported to occur on more than one occasion and had a moderate level of impact during this period of mentorship.

The issue of power is highlighted by examining the responses of the 7 students who perceived being sexually harassed by clients versus the 5 who perceived being sexually harassed during their practicum by a colleague or supervisor. For those harassed by clients, the average severity was only 1.0, with 2 students reporting it had no effect on them, whereas 2 others stated that the effect was minor. In contrast, each student who perceived being sexual harassed by a colleague or supervisor stated that the effect was significant. It also is important to highlight that despite these responses in this anonymous questionnaire, no complaints of harassment had been filed with the School of Social Work, which has a clear harassment policy



that included the practicum package all students receive. Likewise, to our knowledge, no students indicated to the agency where they were placed that they had been harassed by a colleague or supervisor.

Exposure to traumatic incidents reported as having a severe effect by at least 1 student included being physically threatened by a client, being verbally threatened by a supervisor, becoming emotionally upset after reading a file, becoming emotionally upset after meeting with another community professional, and becoming physically upset during the course of an integration seminar when discussing events in the field. In all five of these cases, it was a fourth-year student who was affected. Thus, although the majority of these incidents occurred infrequently, and with minimal effect, there were 25 reported incidents occurring either regularly or frequently. In total, 54 incidents were reported as having had a significant or severe effect on the students during the course of the practicum. There is an expectation that new as well as experienced practitioners will be anxious, as will experienced practitioners moving from the role of social work practitioner to social work student. Also, it is not surprising to find that unexpected or overwhelming experiences during the practicum led students to the experience some physical and emotional symptoms. However, evidently an event did not need to be overly traumatic to lead to negative outcomes, and often it was the practicum environment (in addition to the clients) that created the traumatic response. Psychosocial responses that arose among social work students during the course of their practicum included issues with the following:

1. Sleeping: "I had problems sleeping after the gun incident and after witnessing violence."
2. Eating: "... after seeing clients with eating disorders: I began to judge myself more harshly, and scrutinize my own body, worrying about my body image and my weight."
3. Concentration: "I found after being yelled at by a client I had poor concentration and increased anxiety. I was not as motivated to attend placement as usual."
4. Substance misuse: "My alcohol use increased when too many demands arose at placement, i.e., client load, paperwork, crisis. I was having drinks at times at the end of my placement day."
5. Anxiety: "...my focus is all over the place. I am anxious a lot more, for the first time last week I threw my cell phone against the car window while I was driving. I have always looked over my shoulder (I have been stalked when I was younger) but now I find it has increased. When I find my stress is high I am now getting the shakes on the inside."
6. Physical responses: "... after the client yelled and intimidated me I talked with him until he laughed with me and then I left his house. From the door to my car I noticed my hands and body were shaking."

“With the intake with a suicidal (client) I broke down crying uncontrollably that night. I cried driving to and from practicum.”

Learning to handle a variety of relationships is a critical component of becoming a social worker. The practicum is essential in providing experiences regarding worker–client interaction, interdisciplinary working relationships and agency interaction among all levels of staff. However, not all relationships can be expected to be positive. In addition, for students, the power imbalance can lead them to make conscious decisions to not always share upsetting issues with their field instructors even though this remains their most critical practicum relationship.

“... yelled at by supervisor – avoided supervisor, less confident making decisions ... did not want to attend placement.”

The exposure to trauma experienced by social work students led many to actively seek out social supports to deal with practicum concerns. These typically were friends and family rather than professional resources. However, these supports were not always available or useful in dealing with issues arising from the placement, which in turn affected students’ overall academic performance.

“... through running groups, I hear the clients’ sadness with the social stigma and I at times take it out on my partner and family.”

“... due to anxiety and emotional difficulties, there tended to be a downslide by compensating through missing class for self-care and missing (assignment) due dates, which continues to add emotional and mental stress, which continues to add to the cycle rather than fix the original problem.”

The integration seminar at King’s University College is integral to management of critical incidents and trauma exposure, and thus essential for allowing students to openly discuss their concerns in a safe environment. Although not intended as a counseling environment, social support from peers and from the professor (who also serves as faculty consultant to the field) are vital in helping students work through and resolve practicum issues. Although the majority of students perceived their faculty as being supportive, in a limited number of instances the professor was perceived as exacerbated issues arising in the field.

I experienced demeaning treatment in the form of power differential between faculty consultant and students I did not want to participate in the seminar because of (the) unsupportive faculty.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult knowledge for faculty to teach often is the reality of the social work field and the political nature of agency life.

... office politics – much anxiety about how I am perceived by other office professionals. (I) worried about (having) a tarnished reputation before school is even over. (I witnessed) mistreatment of (a) client – verbal abuse and demeaning comments contrary to social work values. I thought that all social workers have empathy for clients, but based on some of the incidents at my practicum, I can clearly see that this is not necessarily so.

## DISCUSSION

“I required counselling to deal with personal issues triggered by (my) practicum experiences.” —MSW intern

It has been recognized that many enter schools of social work having been exposed to personal trauma (Furman et al., 2004; Russel et al., 1993). Perceptions of verbal and sexual harassment, verbal intimidation and being threatened with physical harm were common previous experiences of those enrolled in the social work program at King's University College. More than 10% reported that they had been stalked in the past, and 4 students had experienced the death either of one of their children or of their partner. However, only one quarter of respondents had sought counseling. It therefore would appear that unresolved but remembered traumas are issues that need to be recognized and addressed through postadmittance preparation for practicum. There would be benefit for students, field instructors and faculty to formally assist students in recognizing significant previous trauma and critical incidents that they have not resolved. This group should be further supported in seeking appropriate assistance, including counseling, to address these issues before the beginning of field practicum.

It is remarkable that almost every respondent in the study indicated that they had experienced a personally upsetting or disturbing incident during their practicum. Although the majority were deemed as having minimal negative impact, these past incidents can still readily become the foundation for the development of secondary and/or vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue if students do not have the opportunity to deal with the issues and experiences in a timely manner. In reviewing the written comments made by students regarding the effect of their practicum upon them, there was little difference than when reviewing the journals of other trauma survivors. There were significant changes in sleeping, eating, concentration, psychoactive substance use, confidence, and academic performance. The most unexpected outcome, however, was that the most significant critical

events were not the result of worker–client interactions. Rather, the most serious negative impacts came from the few incidents involving field instructors and faculty consultants. Feeling yelled at or feeling verbally intimidated by a coworker or supervisor, either in private or a group setting, and feeling threatened or harassed in the practicum setting by a colleague or field instructor, produced the greatest negative consequences. Likewise, in the instances wherein faculty consultants were perceived to be unsupportive or unresponsive, some students stated feeling oppressed and helpless. As a result of the lack of power students have in the academic and field environments, they may understandably choose a path of least resistance to avoid conflict with those who hold their future in their hands.

Preparing social work students for exposure to trauma issues therefore should become a core component of social work classroom and field education. This educational component should include providing knowledge of trauma, examination of individual student attitudes and reactions to trauma, enhancing coping skills, creating an awareness of organizational stress and dynamics, and with an exploration of students' own histories and family of origin issues that could lead to countertransference. This process could be invaluable by assisting students in learning how to manage their exposure to trauma and, in turn, aiding in the creation of resilience, a skill that they could carry forward into their professional careers.

Integration of classroom learning with field practice could include preparatory seminars before beginning practicum, integration seminars that not only link theory to practice but also link theory and practice to personal reactions and responses to practice. Matching students not only to the setting but also to the field instructor and to the faculty consultant, although complicated and time consuming, also can assist in minimizing interpersonal conflicts. Also, ensuring that there are sufficient supports available, and that students are actively and routinely encouraged to use them, along with field instructor and peer support within field integration classes, all can assist in better managing traumatic events that may occur at practicum. In the field, it is important for supervision to consist not only of discussions regarding clinical and administrative issues, but also of student reactions to clients and to the organizational environment. On the basis of the study's findings, schools of social work that still do not provide integration seminars or related opportunities for students to debrief about issues occurring in the field may not be doing enough to support their students and unwittingly may even be placing them at risk.

The need for safety was further highlighted by the few yet substantive instances in which the field instructor or faculty consultant was the perceived cause of distress for the student. This underscores the necessity for a well-orchestrated matching process and the willingness of the practicum coordinator to act as a neutral third party when issues arise, as this study would show they inevitably do. It also speaks to the value of

preparatory and ongoing professional education programs for field instructors. At King's University College, there are three introductory modules that address the supervisory relationship, student anxiety, and student evaluation. In addition, special topics have been offered on coaching and mentoring, evidence-based practice, and supervision for non-social work practitioners. Now a seminar on exposure to trauma during the practicum is being planned. In addition to these are professional development workshops offered by the Association of Field Practice Educators on such topics as generational differences in supervision and diversity.

The other reality is that not all social workers have the propensity to be good field instructors, nor all professors the ability to be effective field consultants. Thus, the use of anonymous survey instruments that students can complete independent of their own practicum evaluation, regarding their experience with their field instructor and field consultant, need to be part of the field practice evaluation process.

Perhaps the most profound effect of practicum is that this first exposure to the field in a professional capacity often does lead to the necessary loss of innocence about the utopian ideal of what the practice of social work truly entails. The academic environment simply cannot prepare students for the emotion and trauma of clients' lives that all practitioners routinely face in the field.

This study, like all exploratory work, is limited in part by the number of participants. The uniqueness of students in one program also limits the generalizability of the findings. However, exposure to trauma appears inevitable in our work, and thus the small scale of this study should not negate the fact that we need to assist students in responding to it, and allow them to grow from the experience, instead of becoming traumatized and overwhelmed. Schools need to find ways to support students to promote resilience during their practicum, as field work generally remains the most profound component of students' social work education. As a component, it is thus incumbent upon academic institutions to establish a culture of self care and to encourage students to seek formal and informal support, either within or outside the academic setting. To be student-centered institutions of higher learning, then trauma education, self-care, and personal preparation for field practice should be integral parts of the curriculum.

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