

Using Community-Engaged Learning in High-Resistance Social Work Courses

Jayme Walters, Rachel Wishkoski,
Jessica Lucero, and Janice Snow

Abstract

Undergraduate social work students often have anxiety and aversion to research methods and macro or community-level content. Community-engaged learning (CEL) projects involve an experiential approach to teaching that addresses community needs and have shown promise as a high-impact practice in social work and related disciplines. The present study uses a qualitative design to examine a threaded CEL project executed across two undergraduate courses: Social Work Research Methods, and Community and Organizational Practice. By analyzing reflection essays with a deductive, two-cycle coding strategy, investigators sought to understand how the CEL project affected students' anxiety, interest, and self-efficacy. Overall, essays illustrated that real-world experience of the CEL process effectively increased interest and self-efficacy while reducing anxiety among students about course content. Implications for implementation and future research are discussed.

The field of social work has deep roots in macro practice, which involves community- and system-level change work. Over the last several decades, micro practice, or practice at the individual level, has proliferated in social work (Reisch, 2016; Specht & Courtney, 1994). In the last decade, a growing recognition of the need for system-level solutions has spurred a resurgence in macro practice and an interest in working across system levels to effect change for our clients. However, social work educational institutions have lagged. A 2014 study found that only 8.8% of all enrolled social work graduate students focused their studies on macro practice, and among the 172 faculty respondents, barriers to increasing macro curricular offerings ranged from obstructive attitudes among colleagues and administrators to too little or no hiring of macro faculty (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). This educational climate has led to a general lack of understanding and interest among students about the necessity of macro practice in our professional pursuit of social justice. Further, it is an unhelpful dichotomy for students who believe they can only choose one type of practice (Finn & Molloy, 2021).

This dichotomization of micro and macro practice in social work programs conflicts with the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) guidance, which aims for students to gain practice competency with "individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities" (CSWE, 2022,

p. 17). Further, when students subscribe to this dichotomy, they often enter macro-oriented courses—such as ones that focus on research methods—with high anxiety, negative attitudes, reduced interest, and less confidence (Bolin et al., 2012; Maschi et al., 2012; Negrea et al., 2018).

Community-engaged learning (CEL) that integrates opportunities to engage in macro practice may be an approach to bridging the macro-micro social work divide, thereby increasing interest and reducing students' stress regarding macro practice (Lucero et al., 2017). CEL can be conceptualized as a combination of academic instruction and experiential interaction or service with community partners that benefits the community (Hou, 2014). CEL has become increasingly popular in higher education and has been the focus of several studies in social work programs (e.g., Chakradhar, 2018; Knee, 2002; Lee et al., 2023; Lucero et al., 2017). Numerous benefits to CEL align well with social work training, including experience engaging with community partnerships; application of course concepts in a scaffolded and real-world context; increased interest in macro and anti-oppressive practice; benefits to the community; and increased feelings of competence, self-efficacy, and confidence (Berard & Ravelli, 2021; Knee, 2002; Lucero et al., 2017; Power & Sistare, 2021). Additionally, CEL has increased student empathy, especially when reflection opportunities are

integrated into the learning experience (Wilson, 2011). Empathy is critical for effective social work practice; clients who experience empathy about their social worker have improved outcomes (Gerdes & Segal, 2011). In social work education, students complete an intensive field practicum in their senior year, and the practicum is considered the signature pedagogy of social work education (CSWE, n.d.). When CEL is embedded at earlier points in the curriculum, students may enter their field practicums with the capacity to engage more meaningfully in skill-building. Students may be better equipped to outline learning goals across all system levels if they engage in macro-focused CEL at earlier points in their education (Lucero et al., 2017).

Although there is a growing literature base examining the impact of CEL on students' attitudes toward macro practice in social work, there is a need for additional research—especially in diverse course delivery formats (Gerstenblatt & Gilbert, 2014; Lee et al., 2023; Lucero et al., 2017; Sweet et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic prompted course-delivery format changes on a wide scale across social work education. At the study institution, the statewide land-grant mission has long demanded diverse course-delivery formats, including traditional face-to-face, online, virtual, and hybrid formats. Deepening our understanding of the impacts of CEL in various delivery formats is an important step toward promoting CEL in academic programs that may have previously considered CEL best suited for traditional face-to-face course delivery. Employing a qualitative design, the present study aimed to answer the following research question: How does employing community-engaged teaching methods impact undergraduate social work students' interest, self-efficacy, and anxiety related to research and community practice?

Methods

Project Description

The CEL project was implemented in the Utah State University Department of Social Work, an R1 public doctoral university in the Mountain West region of the U.S. (American Council on Education, 2022a). The university's institutional commitment to community engagement is formalized in its participation in the Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement, which recognizes "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities" (American Council on Education, 2022b, para. 1).

Figure 1 details the CEL project, which involved two required undergraduate social work courses over two years, taken by juniors in 2020–2021 and 2021–2022: research in the fall semester (asynchronous online delivery) and community practice in the spring semester (face-to-face delivery). Students who registered for the CEL methods section of research in their fall semester then registered for the corresponding community practice section the following spring. .

The CEL project focused on homelessness in the community, specifically the involvement of landlords in addressing homelessness. Long-term community partners included the Local Homeless Council (LHC) and the area's community action agency, Bear River Association of Governments (BRAG). The LHC includes elected officials, human-service administrators, frontline staff, people with lived experience, faith leaders, and other stakeholders interested in responding to and reducing homelessness in the community. BRAG is the primary provider of homeless services in the tri-county area, administering rapid re-housing programs, street outreach, prevention and diversion, and emergency shelter services. The two faculty members involved with the project have been partnering with BRAG and the LHC in various capacities since 2016, and the strength, reciprocity, and mutual benefit of these sustained partnerships have led to an evolving and dynamic responsiveness to community-identified needs. Over the past seven years, faculty were involved with community-engaged research, strategic planning efforts, and local and state advocacy that helped advance community partners' work. Likewise, community partners became co-instructors for social work students over these years—adding immense value to the classroom through panel discussions, consultations, and charettes. The two-year project for which student learning outcomes are being evaluated here should be viewed in the larger context of this long-term partnership.

For this CEL project, faculty met with the community partners during the summer months before the start of the fall semester to gather input to inform the general direction of the project (e.g., topic area, project goals, roles) and the process by which the CEL project was incorporated into the classroom and community. Faculty used this information to assemble a broad project description for the students and accompanying assignments. Throughout the academic year, feedback on the direction of the project was regularly sought by

faculty and students from community partners via email, meetings, and class visits. One of the most important learning opportunities was the community partners' class visits, which allowed students to ask questions, have discussions, and listen to decision-makers, frontline workers, and individuals who had experienced homelessness. After these visits, instructors processed with students the knowledge learned from partners and the overall panel experience. They then adjusted the project direction accordingly, demonstrating to the classes that responsive community engagement means that we do nothing for the community without the community.

For the project direction, community partners were eager to explore ways to better engage landlords in their efforts to house people transitioning out of homelessness in the face of rapidly rising rental rates and a tightening market. Thus began an exploratory, mixed-methods research project that evolved into a grant-funded pilot program for landlord education and engagement. The pedagogical goals of the project were: 1) Foster the development of research and practice skills needed to create and consume evidence-driven practice knowledge competently; develop new or improved social programs; and evaluate social services. 2) Understand the dynamic relationship between research, solution building, practice, policy, and people's lives. 3) Integrate meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities by applying course content to a real, community-identified need in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

Sample and Data Collection

Following Institutional Review Board approval, students from the two sections of community practice (spring 2021 and spring 2022) were recruited via email to share reflection essays written at the end of their semesters. Of 90 students enrolled across two academic years, consent was gained from 30 students, or 33%. These lower response rates were likely due to seeking consent after each academic year had already concluded.

Reflection is a fundamental aspect of CEL. Thus, using reflections written at the end of students' year-long experience as data sources provided meaningful information about the project's impact on their learning (Hatcher et al., 2004). Students' 500-word essays addressed the following prompts:

- What impact did the landlord project have on you?
- What were your experiences working in the community to gather data?
- What were your thoughts and feelings when you saw the results?
- What was your experience presenting data in the community?
- How do you feel you impacted the community?
- How do you feel this experience prepared you for practicum next semester?

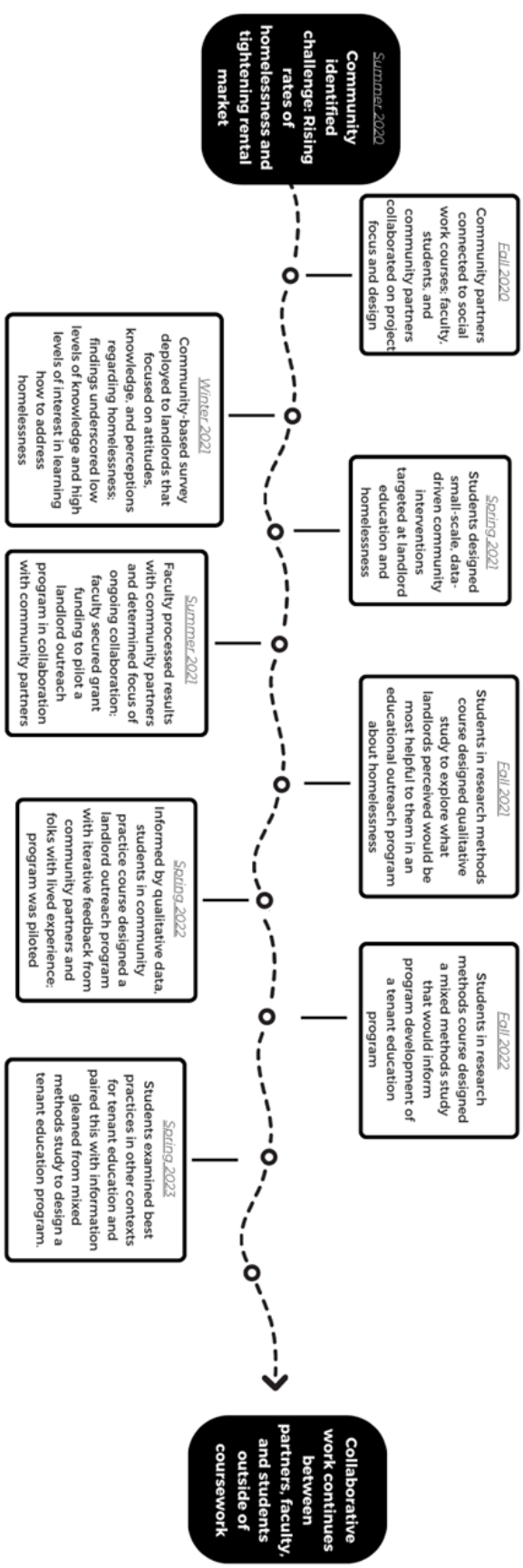
Data Analysis

Two authors were responsible for data analysis, employing a primarily deductive two-cycle coding strategy (Miles et al., 2019). Before engaging with the reflection essays, each author independently reviewed articles collected in the literature review about CEL, the survey instrument developed for the quantitative portion of the study, and the course objectives for both courses. Each author generated a list of possible codes that included the elements of this study's research question (i.e., interest, [self-]efficacy, and anxiety as facets of student attitude) and other themes from the literature (e.g., community impact). The authors asynchronously compared and discussed these proposed codes and agreed upon combinations, clarifications, and operational definitions to produce an initial codebook of nine codes.

After essay deidentification, the authors used a random number generator to select two reflection papers from each year (four total) against which to assess the utility of the initial codebook. Both authors read these four essays and agreed to add a tenth code, "project logistics," to capture details about project preparation and implementation relevant to course design for CEL.

The authors then independently re-coded the four essays with the second-draft codebook, using the online open-source platform Taguette. Each code was understood to contain its inverse (e.g., if a student wrote about feeling defeated or overwhelmed, that would be coded as "self-efficacy"). The authors agreed to select excerpt lengths that would provide sufficient context for later analysis (a sentence or short paragraph) and to apply up to a maximum of four codes per passage (though this was uncommon). The authors met synchronously to compare results and refine the codebook (consolidations and clarifications of operational definitions), the final version containing eight codes (see Table 1).

Figure 1. Landlord Project Key Components and Timeline



Note. Key components of the community-engaged process for the landlord project are outlined with time points identified in each box.

Table 1. *Study Codebook*

Code	Definition
Anxiety	Worry, nervousness, or concern about aspects of the course, project, or macro practice
Collaboration	Collaboration within student groups or collaboration with community partners
Connection to social work practice	Making connections of research, community practice, and organizational practice to social work practice, including level of preparation for practicum or future practice and real-world experience and/or application of abstract concepts to real-world situations
Impact change in the community	Specific community impacts, including recognizing the community change process
Interest	Interest, enthusiasm, investment, and motivation, including how the project connects to their personal life
Project logistics	How students would change the project or aspects they liked
Self-efficacy	Building or having confidence (or not) in their ability and skills, including personal growth and acquiring knowledge
Other	This code was never used but was available to capture any relevant content not otherwise encompassed by the codebook

Note. Final study codebook.

The remaining papers in the dataset were coded after recoding the four sample papers with the finalized codebook and reviewing the results for consensus. Both authors coded each essay, and the authors reviewed the results in synchronous discussion. Any discrepancies in excerpt length or code(s) applied were reconciled through discussion in a consensus coding approach. Once coding was completed, one author synthesized the excerpts in each code into a descriptive summary of findings with sample quotes. The other author reviewed these summaries.

A brief second cycle (pattern coding) process allowed the authors to identify overarching themes and relationships between them. The authors used Excel to calculate code occurrence and co-occurrence frequencies and also examined

connections and relationships that emerged from writing the narrative summaries of each code. Together, the authors determined two overarching patterns and their subcodes.

Results

The two overarching, connected patterns—each containing three codes—are shown in Figure 2. Personal growth encompasses how the CEL experience personally impacted students, including anxiety, interest, and self-efficacy. Real-world experience describes applied aspects of the CEL project, including collaboration, affecting change in the community, and connections to macro social work practice. Codes within these patterns often co-occur in passages, demonstrating, for example, how applied learning influences personal growth.

The excerpts from student essays are referenced by their community practice year, with a de-identified number (e.g., 21_S01).

Personal Growth

Anxiety. Students expressed feeling anxious or overwhelmed at many project stages—from project design, to data collection and analysis, to translating findings into materials for the public. Some were intimidated by doing an intervention at the community level. Stressors included the significant investment of time and effort required to communicate with community leaders. For the most part, however, students positioned their anxiety as something that was allayed by participating in the project. Though the work required students to get out of their “comfort zone” (21_S01, 21_S10), community needs ultimately outweighed individual anxieties, and students described a sense of responsibility and empathy for the outcomes of the work. As one wrote:

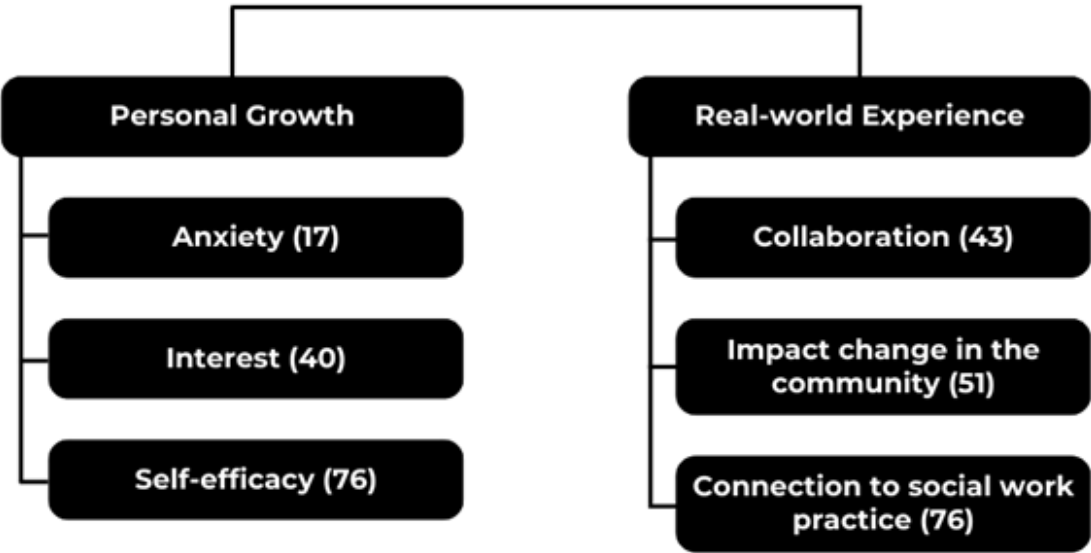
I have had to really get over my fears to be able to advocate and support those who need it. I took it personally when I realized that on any given night there are upwards of 60 people who are staying somewhere

not fit for human habitation. ... [This project] helped me with being scared to do something big for others. ... I have had to realize that we need to be the voice for the vulnerable population, and we can't take the easy way out, because there are actual people's lives on the line. (21_S11)

Interest. Students described their interest and motivation building throughout the project. As one explained, “the more time I spend working on this project, the more I care that it is successful” (22_S01). Some expressed surprise in this internal shift, with one reflecting that “the project that my group completed had a much bigger impact on me than I originally thought it would . . . I didn't realize how much I would want to be invested in the progress toward a solution” (21_S07). Reflecting on what they would change about their work over the course of the project, another stated, “Something that I wish I had changed was taking it seriously at the beginning. I was doing it because it was an assignment. I now am invested because I care about the lives of others” (21_S11).

How students wrote about their emotional connections to the issue of homelessness in the community reflected their interest in the CEL

Figure 2. Study Codes



Note. The main two patterns appear in the top boxes. Their codes are below, with the number of times they appeared in passages in parentheses.

project. Students described being devastated, frustrated, inspired, and amazed. They explained that creating a community intervention “made the work feel personal” (21_S10). Several expressed investment and excitement in remaining involved with homelessness advocacy going forward. Another demonstration of interest was students sharing their experiences and knowledge in their personal circles outside of class. For example:

In my personal life, I always got excited about telling my friends about the work I was doing in class. Some of them didn’t even know that homelessness in the area was a problem and I was able to bring awareness to the issue, which makes all the difference. (22_S02)

Self-Efficacy. Self-efficacy had two major facets: increased knowledge or skills, and increased confidence in one’s abilities. The former included technical skills (collaboration skills, emotional development, and knowledge about homelessness). Most students assessed their prior knowledge about homelessness as relatively low, or as one student described it, “pretty insignificant” (21_S06). The phrase “eye-opening” was used by at least five to describe learning experiences (21_S02, 21_S06, 22_S08, 22_S10, 22_S11). Students reflected on initial assumptions that homelessness was not “too big of a problem in Cache Valley” (21_S02).

Increased confidence in one’s abilities appeared in comments about areas of practice in which students did not have much prior experience. Though students initially felt “underqualified” (e.g., 22_S09), participating in the step-by-step process of a community intervention boosted their confidence. One student explained:

[The project gave] me the opportunity to follow ‘real’ social work out from beginning to end and could help remind me that I can start out by knowing very little about something, but with hard work I can become adequately equipped to be able to contribute to the thing I used to know very little about. (21_S08)

Real-World Experience

Collaboration. With a few exceptions connected to inequitable distribution of labor, students’ initial skepticism about group work (“normally my experience with groups in school don’t always work out as well as hoped,” 21_S06)

resolved into feelings of success. Students realized collaboration was essential to achieving project goals and recognized that multiple perspectives would lead to better results. One explained, “We all have different talents, insights, and ideas and that really played into our group project” (21_S04). Collaboration in the CEL project also strengthened cohort relationships. For example, one student shared, “I have to ... let you know that this was the best group I have ever been in for a group project. ... We created a text group from the start, and it was just constant support in not only this class but also our other mutual classes” (21_S05). Pride and feelings of accomplishment were not individual experiences, but were shared: “We were proud of ourselves and really happy about the work we did because we felt like we actually accomplished something of importance and not just finished another final project for a class” (21_S07). Finally, students recognized that working together was preparation for future practice, whether in collaboration with other social workers or community agencies.

Impact Change in the Community. Students highlighted the “real-life” (21_S10) nature of the project as something unique in their undergraduate learning experiences: “In most classes the assignments are all hypothetical. What we read, write, talk about, etc. is never really going to go further than our classmates and our professor. But this project is different, it has real world ramifications” (22_S09). Reflecting on how the stakes felt higher with CEL, another explained that “it is one thing to put together a hypothetical program, but to help put thoughts and ideas into a program with real data, stakeholders, and real communities is so different” (22_S12). Students shared the sense that even small changes matter, and many highlighted potential for community impact through education that “help[s] address ... misconceptions and open[s] the door to collaboration and understanding” (22_S06).

Many students understood that their community impact would continue after the course; the educational materials they created would “serve as a good resource where others can gain in their awareness of homelessness for many years” (21_S08). Though the ultimate impact of the project had not been realized by the end of the 2022 spring semester, students framed their contributions to the landlord education program as an important starting point and catalyst for community change:

I feel as though this project is a step in the right direction for our community. Going back to SW4100, I struggled to understand just how a project like this would impact the community, but after this class it is much clearer. I can see just how big of a problem housing is and especially for minority or underprivileged people within our community. It is hard for most people right now which makes the amplified problem even more dire for these people. My hope is that as this project continues that the education that landlords will receive will have an impact on these people and create more housing opportunities for them. (22_S05)

Connection to Social Work Practice.

Students' awareness of the importance of macro social work increased through their applied CEL experiences. "This project showed me the importance of community work," explained one student; "Macro work can be easily integrated into any social work career. It is where true societal change occurs" (21_S06). Student reflections demonstrated systems-level thinking. For example, "[The project] has helped me better understand the interconnection of volunteer work, community engagement, policies/programs, and social change" (22_S10) or become more "aware of gaps in systems and ... ready to help make changes" (22_S12). The experience challenged their stereotypes about macro practice: "I thought that I would have to have big ideas and have a strong personality to work in macro social work, but I was proved wrong" (21_S01).

The applied nature of CEL also led to the vast majority of students expressing feeling more prepared for practicum and their intensive field internship experience in their senior year—notably, translating their skills to practicum settings that are more micro-focused. Students placed in agencies where knowledge of homelessness and community resources would be relevant spoke about their increased ability to advocate for clients, connect them to local resources, and understand their needs in context (i.e., person-in-environment, a critical social work perspective). A student placed in a hospice care agency explained:

Hospice care in itself is something that I believe more information needs to be spread about. I feel like it is wrongly represented in society. ... From the skills

I have learned throughout this semester I am confident that I could find a way and work to get the message out. (21_S05).

Demonstrating progress on a key outcome of social work education, students commented that the project helped them understand how research-informed practice might work:

This project left a big impact on me because I saw the progress across two semesters with creating the study by focusing on research to implementing ideas for community resources. I believe it was important to bridge [the] major concepts together, research into community work. It was an amazing experience to see it all put together and building resources from the results of the study. (21_S03)

Some students shared that their attitudes shifted from research as something "not for me" (21_S09) to something they are able (self-efficacy) and open (interest) to pursuing:

At the very beginning, in Research Methods, I understand that research in social work was important, but it wasn't something that I had an iota of interest in; it was not for me. There are still aspects of research I dislike, but I could see myself conducting my own research. That is not something I would have said eight months ago. (21_S09)

Discussion

Undergraduate social work students in the present study entered research methods with minimal confidence and feelings of disinterest and anxiety, consistent with previous literature (Bolin et al., 2012; Maschi et al., 2012; Negrea et al., 2018). The CEL project was designed to create a real-world experience that allowed students to practice macro-level social work skills while also contributing positively to the community, which authors hoped would lead to increased interest and competence and reduced distress in macro courses, as past evidence shows (e.g., Knee, 2002). As students reflected on the year-long, two-course project, they expressed that they achieved personal growth—including increased self-efficacy and interest, and decreased anxiety—as a result of building collaborative relationships, making connections from the project to course content, and recognizing the positive community impact

of the project. The present study, its findings, and the CEL method are important for social work education—and, perhaps, other applied disciplines—as students must be prepared to practice across the generalist spectrum to best serve individual clients within the contexts of their communities (Reisch, 2016).

When well-planned and intentionally connected with the course content, CEL projects can illuminate fundamental values, knowledge, and skills, and push progress toward meeting discipline-centric competencies (e.g., Keesler & Presnell, 2022). In the present study, students' self-efficacy improved in explicit curricular content—like research design, data analysis, and identification of resource—as demonstrated in similar studies (e.g., Holbrook & Chen, 2017). However, as they were exposed to the problem of homelessness in their community and became involved in addressing it, students' connections to the implicit curriculum were strengthened—such as internalizing values and ethical principles of the profession like social justice, dignity, and worth of the person, as emphasized by the National Association of Social Workers (2021). Moreover, our study found that students bridged these understandings of the community social problem (homelessness) to how they would use their increased knowledge in senior practicum. Making these connections to practicum allows students to recognize opportunities to gain experience in macro-level work in their training agencies, even when they seem mostly micro-oriented (Iverson et al., 2021; Knee, 2002).

Along with the increase in self-efficacy and interest, the students in the present study seemed to be more satisfied with the outcomes of the macro-oriented classes than they anticipated at the start of the academic year. As instructors of courses where CEL projects may make sense consider their utility, the authors caution educators to consider the major time commitment, level of effort, and collaboration needed to implement CEL projects successfully. As noted by participants in the present study, the timeline for this CEL project felt rushed as problems with the research design and data collection occurred. Students also shared how face-to-face meetings were more optimal for collaboration, which may mean that CEL projects conducted solely in an asynchronous, online course may also not work. Frequently communicating, being transparent, and utilizing collaborative problem-solving with students throughout the project are necessary

for success when challenges arise. Further, instructors should not only extensively plan and dedicate resources ahead of the semester, but they also should prepare to be flexible and patient when plans do not work out.

Conclusion

Community-engaged teaching methods are established pedagogies in higher education. However, the use of CEL projects as a way to make unpopular classes, such as research methods in social work, more appealing and less anxiety-producing for students is less explored in previous research. Thus, the present qualitative study demonstrated how a threaded CEL project increased students' interest and self-efficacy and reduced anxiety in social work research methods and community practice, which are widely known to be less beloved by students. As the current investigation struggled with gaining consent from students to utilize their reflective essays after their semesters ended, future studies should consider ways in which data might be gathered during the course. The current study also did not collect demographic information to understand differences between students from different backgrounds. Therefore, quantitative studies with larger samples, validated measures, and demographic questions should be considered in future research to build evidence around using CEL in social work and related disciplines.

References

- American Council on Education. (2022a). *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*. Retrieved March 3, 2024 from https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php
- American Council on Education. (2022b). *The Elective Classification for Community Engagement*. Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Retrieved March 3, 2024 from <https://carnegieelectiveclassifications.org/the-2024-elective-classification-for-community-engagement>
- Berard, A., & Ravelli, B. (2021). In their words: What undergraduate sociology students say about community-engaged learning. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 15(2), 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1936724420975460>
- Bolin, B.L., Lee, K.H., GlenMaye, L.F., & Yoon, D.P. (2012). Impact of research orientation on attitudes toward research of social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 48(2), 223–243. <https://doi.org/10.5175/JSWE.2012.200900120>

Chakradhar, K. (2018). Forging and sustaining research-minded professionals: Teaching undergraduate research through student-community partnerships. *Social Work Education*, 37(4), 428–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1420769>

CSWE (Council on Social Work Education). (n.d.). *Council on Field Education*. <https://www.cswe.org/about-cswe/governance/governance-groups/council-on-field-education>

CSWE. (2022). *2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for baccalaureate and master's social work programs*. Retrieved March 3, 2024 from <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/bb5d8afe-7680-42dc-a332-a6e6103f4998/2022-EPAS.pdf>

Finn, J., & Molloy, J. (2021). Advanced integrated practice: Bridging the micro-macro divide in social work pedagogy and practice. *Social Work Education*, 40(2), 174–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2020.1858043>

Gerdes, K.E., & Segal, E. (2011). Importance of empathy for social work practice: Integrating new science. *Social Work*, 56(2), 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/56.2.141>

Gerstenblatt, P., & Gilbert, D.J. (2014). Framing service learning in social work: An interdisciplinary elective course embedded within a university-community partnership. *Social Work Education*, 33(8), 1037–1053. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2014.935731>

Hatcher, J.A., Bringle, R.G., & Muthiah, R. (2004). Designing effective reflection: What matters to service-learning? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 11(1), 38–46. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0011.104>

Holbrook, A.M., & Chen, W.Y. (2017). Learning by doing: An experiential approach to program evaluation. *Social Work Education*, 36(1), 62–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2016.1266322>

Hou, S.I. (2014). Integrating problem-based learning with community-engaged learning in teaching program development and implementation. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 2(1), 1–9. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1053922>

Iverson, M., Dentato, M.P., Green, K., & Busch, N. (2021). The continued need for macro field internships: Support, visibility and quality matter. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 57(3), 478–488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1671265>

Keesler, J.M., & Presnell, J.A. (2022). Research-centered service-learning: MSW student reflections on interviewing incarcerated individuals. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 58(3), 496–508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2021.1895933>

Knee, R.T. (2002). Can service learning enhance student understanding of social work research? *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 22(1–2), 213–225. https://doi.org/10.1300/J067v22n01_14

Lee, E., Kourgiantakis, T., Logan, J., Hu, R., Wilson, R., & Greenblatt, A. (2023). Centering social justice in undergraduate social work education: A scoping review of pedagogical methods of teaching. *Social Work Education*, 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2023.2225535>

Lucero, J.L., Evers, J., Roark, J., & Parker, D. (2017). Using community-based research to improve BSW students' learning in community practice: Bringing the macro into focus for traditional and distance learners. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 37(3), 260–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841233.2017.1320621>

Maschi, T., Wells, M., Slater, G.Y, MacMillan, T., & Ristow, J. (2012). Social work students' research-related anxiety and self-efficacy: Research instructors' perceptions and teaching innovations. *Social Work Education*, 32(6), 800–817. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.695343>

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., & Saldana, J. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th edition). SAGE.

National Association of Social Workers. (2021). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. NASW.

Negrea, D., Rapp, C., Westbrook, T.M., Lasher, R., Hahn, S.A., Schure, M., & Goins, R.T. (2018). Research attitudes and their correlates among undergraduate social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 54(3), 506–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2018.1434430>

Power, L.G., & Sistare, H. (2021). Writing in jail: A community-engaged, social work course model. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 57(2), 316–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2019.1671259>

Reisch, M. (2016). Why macro practice matters. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52(3), 258–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2016.1174652>

Rothman, J., & Mizrahi, T. (2014). Balancing micro and macro practice: A challenge for social work. *Social Work*, 59(1), 91–93. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swt067>

Specht, H., & Courtney, M.E. (1994). *Unfaithful angels: How social work has abandoned its mission*. Free Press.

Sweet, C., Sayre, M.M., & Bohrer, K. (2022). Virtual and in-person community-engaged learning: Is student learning virtually the same? *Journal of Experiential Education*, 46(1), 80–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538259221090622>

Wilson, J.C. (2011). Service-learning and the development of empathy in US college students. *Education + Training*, 53(2–3), 207–217. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911111115735>

Data Availability Statement

The reflection essay questions used in this study's scripts are available within the text. The data underlying this study are not publicly available due to privacy obligations to participants and lack of consent from participants to publicly release raw data.

Ethics and Consent

This research was approved by Utah State University's Institutional Review Board, protocol number 12304. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained from participants.

COI Statement

There is no conflict of interest to declare.

Author Contributions

Author 1 led the study design, research protocol submission, data analysis, manuscript production, and editing. Author 2 assisted with study design and research protocol submission and co-led the data analysis, manuscript production, and editing. Author 3 co-led the study design and research protocol submission, collected the data as part of their class, and assisted with manuscript production and editing. Author 4 assisted with manuscript production and editing.

Acknowledgments

We thank Utah State University's Social Work undergraduate classes of 2022 and 2023 for their efforts in our community-engaged course sequence and our dedicated community partners, BRAG and the LHC, who are important co-educators in our courses.

About the Authors

Jayne Walters is an assistant professor, undergraduate program director, and director of the Transforming Communities Institute in the Department of Social Work at Utah State University. Rachel Wishkoski is an associate librarian in the Learning and Engagement Services Unit of the Utah State University Libraries. Jessica Lucero is the department head of the Department of Social Work at Utah State University where she also serves as associate professor. Janice Snow is a master of social work student at Utah State University.