

Writing a Grand Challenges Paper

Students in my Practice III course sometimes are curious about how they ought to write a “Grand Challenges” paper for my class.

In this document I offer some steps you ought to take, and then I offer a sort of outline of a generic paper. Following that, I offer three examples from students who passed this course in past semesters.

Steps to take

To begin, you should choose one of the 12 Grand Challenges. You can learn about the grand challenges at the Academy for (at <https://grandchallengesforsocialwork.org>). The idea of the Grand Challenges came out of the American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare (<https://aaswsw.org>).

To understand the concept of grand challenges, you might also look up the engineering grand challenges (<http://www.engineeringchallenges.org/challenges.aspx>) or the development grand challenges (<https://www.usaid.gov/grandchallenges>).

After you choose one of the 12 Grand challenges, you need to narrow your focus. There are three questions or “filters” to use to narrow your focus.

First, will you be considering this challenge in terms of 1) national scope and policy, 2) state or tribal scope and policy, or 3) local scope and policies in a city or county or community?

Second, will you focus on: 1) education, how we can improve social work education to help our profession address this grand challenge; 2) education, what we can do to educate the wider public and allied professionals about the grand challenge and what we might do to solve it; 3) research, which sort of research projects and studies do we need—what research questions do we need answered? 4) practice, what do we need to do as social workers while we are doing our professional work to support the solution of this grand challenge?

In all of those four approaches, you will probably be participating in policy practice or else community organizing types of activities. So it's understood that whichever approach you take in the second filter, you'll be describing some things that need to be done in a macro-practice (policy practice, community organizing, administration) set of interventions.

Third, will you be focusing on: 1) prevention approaches to the grand challenge; 2) treatment to ameliorate the problems of the grand challenge; 3) cures for the problem such as more radical sorts of ideas that could restructure society to remove the problem entirely?

So, for example, the grand challenge about “Ensure healthy development for all youth” focuses on a few areas, and one of these is an emphasis on prevention: prevention interventions and specifically prevention in the area of mental health.

Think about this as a researcher: the dependent variable is “healthy development” and we will be interested in supportive factors that increase the probability of “healthy development” and risk factors that decrease the probability of the desired “healthy development”. We will be advocating for more of whatever encourages healthy development (supportive factors) and advocating to reducing whatever works counter to our aims (the risk factors). The idea of “prevention” is a single word that captures all those ideas. Healthy development exists in many dimensions. Healthy adults are emotionally healthy, physically healthy, and mentally healthy. They are generally self-sufficient, or at least capable of being as self-sufficient as they need to be. Healthy adults are autonomous; they are good citizens; good life partners; good friends; good parents; and good neighbors. Think broadly about that. What would a person be who is not healthy? That would be a person who isn’t those things. A young person who has committed many crimes, and perhaps ends up in prison; or a young adult who is unable to hold any job; or unable to participate in a mutually supportive and caring long-term relationship.

So, pick one of those areas. Mental health? Emotional well-being? Law-abiding and not doing crimes? Able to have good relationships? Not maimed and physically impaired by a catastrophic injury? Think about what we as social workers can do to help children make it to their early 20s in a way that is “healthy”. Some of the scholars in the “Ensure Health Development for All Youth” area put a special emphasis on preventing serious mental illness. Now that we know that most cases of schizophrenia can be prevented by intensive cognitive therapy to help structure thinking when the prodromal symptoms start to appear, it makes sense that we set up a culture and mental health systems with alert gatekeepers (family physicians, high school teachers, university resident life staff and professors and counselors, etc.) who will notice prodromal symptoms and refer older adolescents and young adults into preventive mental health treatment when the prodromal symptoms appear. Maybe that is goal you would like to examine.

The point is, nobody could write a short paper that describes with any interesting detail how to achieve the goal of “healthy development” so you will need to narrow your focus to one sort of healthy development and one way to support that one sort of healthy development. When you get specific, you can think of concrete steps to take, and I need you to show me you know something about community organizing by showing me that you can explain some of the concrete steps that would apply within the realm of one of the grand challenges.

Now that you have narrowed your topic, is this something you want to address at the national level? If you write about the national level, you will be writing about the NASW and other national or in-

ternational organizations related to social work. You'll be writing about the White House and the President and the Department of Health and Human Services. You'll be discussing bills that the Senate and House need to pass. If you consider the state level, you'll be thinking about the governor and the general assembly, the state chapter of the NASW and the regional sub-chapters. You'll be thinking about scholars around the state who have expertise in the area of your focus, or advocacy groups in your state and their leaders. If you think about the local level, you'll be considering local agencies and the city government, local groups of social workers, and things you and people you personally know might be doing together. In any case, you should do some work on the internet finding out the names and backgrounds of some of the key players you might involve in your proposed efforts. What are their names, their positions, and their backgrounds, and what makes you think they could be helpful to achieving what needs to be done?

After you have your level of intervention, you need to consider the education/research/practice issues. If you are doing education at a local level, you might be considering what we could do in our social work department. If you are considering the state-level, you will be thinking about how social work professors all across Illinois and the Continuing Education Credit system (used for maintaining licensure) could be used. At a national level, you'll be considering how CSWE might get involved, and how the committee of scholars involved with this grand challenge might create a clearinghouse of assignments, lectures, fact sheets, and so forth. If you are thinking about education in terms of how to educate allied professionals and the general public, then your paper will be about how to spread the word through public service announcements, books, articles and stories in media (websites, television, podcasts, youtube personalities, or whatever). If you want to focus on research, you likewise need to consider what sort of studies we might do in our local area, the state of Illinois (or some other state), or at the national level. If you choose to consider practice, you need to think of what social workers ought to be doing to implement the suggestions and research-based knowledge related to your theme in their practice. You can think of what local social workers could do, what social workers across the state might do in their practice, and what social workers all over the country might do, depending on you level of consideration.

Now that you have narrowed the focus, it is time to consider an outline of what a student might write.

Outline

Introduction. Explain what the grand challenges are, and introduce the grand challenge that you are writing about.

Your grand challenge. Explain more about the specific grand challenge you are addressing. What is the goal or what are the goals? What technology or knowledge gives us hope that we can achieve the goal? What is the evidence that we have solutions to this problem?

In your third or fourth paragraph you can get to the point of introducing how you have narrowed your focus to some aspect of the grand challenge. Explain the scope of the analysis and suggestions you will make.

Somewhere around the fourth to sixth paragraphs I'd follow the standard practice of outlining what we want and what we have and where the gaps are. That is, where are we falling short? This might include some assessment of what we are doing right and what good things are happening, and then some description of what sort of additional things are likely to be needed.

Somewhere around the fifth to eighth paragraphs you would begin writing about what needs to be done in general terms. What sort of goals would you suggest need to be accomplished? It's okay if you have only one goal.

The next part of the paper would probably begin a section where you would describe what needs to be done using some detail. So, from around the sixth to ninth paragraph you would begin a section of the paper in which you would demonstrate your ability to research the current state of the situation, the persons or organizations involved, and your knowledge of how to apply what we have learned in the class. You probably would have a paragraph about getting a vision or mission, and listening to lots of people to get a sense of what they want done and how they want to do it. A great paper will name five or six persons with whom you would want to have conversations. These would be conversations along the lines of, "I have been thinking about this problem, and I have considered that doing X might help us take a significant step toward solving this problem, but I need to hear what experts who are closely connected to this problem think, so what do you think about doing X, and is there some better way to get this done, and if we decide that X is the thing to do, what advice do you have, and who should we get involved, and so forth?" In your paper you can describe these conversations, and talk about the importance of listening as you begin to engage and assess. You would follow this up by identifying real individuals and organizations that might get involved in helping do what needs to get done. You would also discuss in general terms some of the organizations and the types of people you would need to recruit to get on board with the efforts to get us where we need to go and achieve what you claim needs to be achieved. You will need to describe a "core group" and discuss recruiting others to support and contribute.

After you have finished the section of the paper about doing assessment, putting together resources, and recruiting people to work together to get this thing done, you would next need a section where you would talk about building leadership, maintaining interest and energy, and the whole concept of taking actions and winning victories. These are the steps you and others will need to take to move us toward your goal and accomplish what needs to be accomplished. Once you have your resources and allies assembled, what is it that they must do? How will they do that? How will this effort be sustained, and how will leadership be used?

Having done all this, the paper is done, and you can sum up your paper with a conclusion paragraph or paragraphs.

Important guidance

Two things are very important to remember. Do not keep your paper at the level of generalities. Do not say, "I will find people who are interested in this issue and ask them to join me in accomplishing our goal." Tell me how you will find people, and what specifically a macro practice social worker would do (phone calls, meetings, events, e-mails, or what?). Tell me whom you think you will find, naming specific real individuals or actual agencies or departments or organizations where you would be looking for collaborators. The actual mechanics of asking people to get involved and help do his probably deserves a paragraph of its own. What would you do, and how would you do it? Be imaginative and specific (as much as you can be).

The other important thing is to use ideas we encountered in the class to write the paper. Be sure to illustrate some action or idea you have as something that would be endorsed by one of the authors or experts whose work we encountered in the course. When you write about the twelve grand challenges and your specific grand challenge, be sure to cite some research literature or some academic sources. When you describe what we ought to do, add in some observations or suggestions you take from books about community organizing or macro practice (e.g., texts we used this semester) and cite those.

Finally, keep in mind that you are not writing this paper only for me. Yes, I use this paper to assess your abilities to assess and intervene and evaluate practice at the macro level, but I want this paper to be something other students could read to understand some of the essentials of macro practice. I would be very glad if your work was useful to social workers or social work educators who could actually take your suggestions and apply them in actually accomplishing what you propose. Imagine that you are writing for social workers in general, or social workers in our community or our state. Imagine that you are writing for social work professors and educators. Imagine that your work will inspire them to actually do some of the things you suggest need to be done. If you write for that sort of an audience, I'm confident your papers will be memorable.

The outline I've provided here is one way to approach the problem of this grand challenges paper. I'm thinking that the paper is likely to be about 15 paragraphs in length. That could be a paper between 6 and 16 pages in length, with average length probably around 8-9 pages (not counting a title page or the list of references). I'm thinking you will spend approximately 24 hours on the paper, divided into thirds: about a full day (8 hours) researching issues specific to your grand challenge, about a full day writing a rough draft, and about a full day re-writing and editing and making sure you are citing sources correctly and getting your references accurately listed. During that re-writing block of time you will probably be going back to re-read your notes and your sources (both the sources you

encountered in this class related to community organizing and macro practice as well as the sources you read that are specific to your chosen topic within one of the grand challenges. I do not mean that you will actually sit down in three days and only work on this paper and finish it. I expect you to do three days of work (24 hours) over the whole second half of the semester.

Example papers:

Paper 1

This paper is an example of a very good paper, or even maybe I could say this is an "outstanding" paper (for an undergraduate). It is detailed, well-researched, well-written, and enjoyable to read. It is well organized, uses good sources, and makes a clear argument. It refers to macro practice skills and social work approaches, and it directly names real persons who would be involved in getting legislation passed to help on the domestic violence issue. It is also worth noting that the student is advocating for something that matches what the leaders in the Grand Challenge have been suggesting, so that is also a point in favor of this paper.

“According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, an average of 20 people living in the U.S. are physically abused by their partners every 10 minutes. That’s 10 million abuse victims every year. This violence doesn’t only threaten the well-being of its victims but also costs billions in spending for criminal justice. Social, family-focused interventions can help individuals identify abuse early on and prevent it from happening in the future” (Understanding the 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2019).

There are many factors that can contribute to domestic violence including alcohol and substance abuse, communication conflicts, mental illnesses, poverty and cultural or religious beliefs. Robertson and Murachver confirmed “domestic violence has no boundaries or limits. It can possibly

take place in any family at any time,” and “is very true in the cases of psychological abuses. After all, the violence doesn’t need to go physical or get aggressive through attacks, and family skirmishes. Many psychological researchers have incessantly pointed out that the psychological kind of abuses in families present more severe consequences than could be compared to the equally consequential physical and aggressive domestic violence” (Essays UK, 2017).

I have heard many people ask, “Why doesn’t she just leave?” The problem with this question is that there are a lot of things that keeps a victim staying with their perpetrator. The victim may be afraid of leaving or may lack the resources to do so. The victim may not leave out of love for their perpetrator or because of cultural or religious reasons. The victim may be an

illegal immigrant and fear seeking help or they may believe that their relationship is normal. "Women who leave their batterers are at a 75% greater risk of being killed by the batterer than those who stay" (Sojourn Inc., 2001-04). Women victims of violence and their children account for 50% of the homeless population in the U.S. Another issue of family violence is how it affects children. The number one risk factor for child abuse is if their mother is also abused. Children may end up blaming themselves for the abuse or may become violent themselves. "Eighty percent of juvenile and adult prisoners experienced domestic violence as children" and "sixty-three percent of young men age 11-20 serving time for homicide have killed their mother's abusers" (Sojourn Inc., 2001-04). Domestic violence affects the lives of children each and every day. Often, teachers and other school staff are the first to notice differences in students who have been living with family violence. Many children who are victims of domestic abuse or a bystander suffer in school. Children who experience or witness abuse may struggle with learning or concentrating. Some may become distant or disruptive in school. Although, sometimes the education of some children may not suffer at all. "Some children living with domestic abuse achieve highly in school; throwing themselves into school life and work can provide an escape" (Lloyd, 2018). They may also have bruises, cuts, or appear to be losing weight. These are some signs and symptoms teachers and other school staff should be cognizant of. But, many teachers and other school staff lack conviction and knowledge to help their

students who suffer from family violence or witness it.

One of the biggest hurdles is how do we prevent family violence from happening in the first place. Well the first place to start is to develop policies and education that will help eliminate family violence. Domestic violence, "is a raging conflict that may exist within a relationship perceived as very intimate, the cases of violence in families, marriages, between friends, in dating and all the intimate relationships categorically enclosed" (Essays UK, 2017). Policies and practices need to be developed in Illinois to help educators and other school staff gain the knowledge and skills to adequately help their students whom suffer in some way from family violence. The legislation in Illinois to address family violence directly, to my knowledge, does not exist. Although, there are a few legislations that I have found that address some forms of abuse in schools. One is the HB 0973 which addresses teen violence in school and how teen violence education can be used within a comprehensive health program for students in grades 8-12 (IL Gen. Assy., 2009). Although this bill addresses teen dating violence, it does not address violence within families. Another legislation is Public Act 095-0558. It requires that the Board of Education of Illinois assemble and secure the success in the schools task forces to create policies and procedures. It also addresses the educational needs of students who are currently pregnant or parents, as well as students who have been victims of domestic or sexual violence, to maintain and secure their success in continuing their education (IL

Gen. Assy., 2007). Although this bill addresses students who have been victims of domestic or sexual abuse, it does emphasize those students who have seen family violence within their home. This bill also does not emphasize family violence prevention within their education plan.

Both of these legislations serve a purpose on their own but they could be changed to include family violence or possibly a new legislation could be passed to require family violence education in schools. My policy recommendation is to educate school staff, students, parents, and the community on the signs of family violence and how to prevent it. The problem with this is many teachers in Illinois are not required to take continuing education units (CEUs) training in domestic violence. Currently, many professionals that are required to take CEUs for domestic violence include Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professionals (ICDVP), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and other professionals who work with those who have been a victim of domestic abuse. The Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV) provides a 40-hour training for those working to end family violence in Illinois and certain school staff should also be required to take this training (ICDVP, 2016). My proposal is for Illinois schools to require school social workers, counselors, administrators, school nurses and health teachers to take training. Although, I believe all teachers could benefit from such training. It is important that school staff has the knowledge and skills to be an advocate for their students.

Another way to inform and educate school staff and students is to have an outside domestic abuse shelter or organization hold an assembly at schools at least once per school year. The Sojourn Shelter, in Springfield, Illinois mission is “to build a community free of violence through service, leadership and education” (Sojourn Inc., 2001-04). My proposal is for a domestic abuse advocate from Sojourn or another shelter or organization similar to Sojourn hold violence awareness and dynamics education and prevention programs at schools throughout Illinois.

A policy that includes family violence education for school staff, students and their families is needed throughout schools in Illinois. The policy should include all types of domestic abuse as well as family violence. It should mandate a 40-hour in-service family violence training for certified teachers, school nurses, school social workers, school counselors, school administrators and other school staff that has direct contact with students. Schools across Illinois would then have to include family violence education into their health curriculum throughout grades 3-12. Note that the education should be age-appropriate and should be delivered by school personnel that have had family violence training. School district school boards should be required to adopt and implement this education program throughout Illinois. The policy should also incorporate the Department of Education to develop programs that include outside personal from local domestic abuse shelters or another agency that specializes in family violence to present infor-

mation and education materials during each school year.

In order to pass this policy I would need to develop a social group and recruit new members to join. I would call local domestic abuse shelters, schools, and legislators to gain knowledge and support for this bill. I would also recruit local teachers and parents that could help with this cause. I would contact local teachers, such as the health teacher at Jefferson Middle School, and gain his support. Also, I would contact domestic violence advocates, such as Jenna Duffy who works at Sojourn Shelter, and gain her support. Some Illinois legislators that I believe could co-sponsor this bill and present knowledge and support are House Representative Linda Chapa LaVia, Keith Farham, Joyce Mason and Terra Costa Howard. House Representative Linda Chapa LaVia is a co-sponsor of HB 0973, which addresses teen violence education in schools. She serves as chairperson on Appropriate Elementary and Secondary Education and Co-Chairperson on Education Reform Committee. House Representative Keith Farnham is also a co-sponsor of HB 0973. He serves of the Appropriation Human Services Committee, State Government Administration, and the Education Reform Committee. House Representative Joyce Mason is a former vice president of Gurnee-based Woodland Community School District 50 Board of Education. She currently serves on Elementary and Secondary Education School Curriculum Policy Committee and on the Human Services Committee. Another House Representative Terra Costa Howard specializes in advocating for at-risk children, families and seniors. She was the former president of Glen

Ellyn School District 41 Board of Education. Howard currently serves on Elementary and Secondary Education School Curriculum Policies Committee and the Mental Health Committee. Each person I have listed has the expertise and skills needed to co-sponsor this bill.

Domestic abuse education for students should be addressed by using a child-centered approach that involves prevention, intervention, and education. Educators and other school staff should take into account the issues students may be experiencing at home so they can provide the support they need to help them academically, socially, and emotionally. This can be done in a variety of different ways. Many children who suffer from domestic abuse are low-income and may not be getting the food they need to support their health and wellness. Schools should provide breakfast and snacks for children for free or at a lower cost so children can start their day right. Some other ideas to consider is by offering after school activities and study groups for children at no cost or low cost so children can help give children a safe place to do their homework and gain connections. School staff should also note that cooperation among multi-agencies is important for children's safety. School staff should have constant contact with social welfare programs and organizations, health care facilities, and law enforcement. Collaboration among agencies is a must so school staff can readily help their students who are victims of domestic violence or witness it in the home. Domestic abuse education can be incorporated through assemblies by having social workers and counselors who have domestic abuse training present and in-

form students. School staff should also incorporate education about healthy relationships, unhealthy relationships and family violence in their lesson plans. If a school staff member has evidence of family violence they should be able to contact non-offending parent, usually the mother, and work with them in a considerate fashion. School staff should have knowledge and skills to help parents receive education and resources they need. School staff should also remember to treat parents and children in a non-judgmental way. The education program I suggest should involve a wide range of addressing the issues of domestic abuse by focusing on not only abuse in teenage relationships, but also abuse in the family. School staff should also be thoughtful and considerate in their lessons. They should encourage and help children and teens get the help they need. The education program should note the gender inequalities and power, while also being heedful to not isolate young boys or teenage boys. The lessons should incorporate not only girls as victims, but boys as well. They should also be considerate of not showing girls as weak, but as victims of abuse and highlight her strengths. The program education should also include lessons on distorted views of relationships and the roles of women and men. For example, boys and girls may learn about sex through pornography and retain ideas about sex in relationships. Another example, boys and girls may see an unhealthy relationship between their parents and may see that as being normal. Lessons should be delivered in a variety of different ways including kinaesthetic exercises and group discussions. Because domestic abuse and family violence

are sensitive issues, teachers should be trusting and open with their students, as well as respectful. These lessons could be taught by a health teacher, or could be incorporated in other classes such as English or History. The lessons should be receptive to students' learning skills and be engaging. Teacher's should be open to suggestions from students, school staff, and outside community organizations specializing in family violence (Lloyd, 2018) and (Fox, Claire; Hale, Rebecca; Gadd, David, 2018).

All students of different ages should have opportunity to be presented with knowledge of domestic violence even if they are not a victim or a perpetrator of family violence. It is possible that they may be exposed to violence or become witness to violence in the future. Teachers should present lessons that help their students to be capable of recognizing the signs of abusive and detrimental interlinkage with others at an early age. A policy that includes family violence prevention education in schools should be passed in Illinois. The legislation should have the support from representatives that have experience, knowledge and compassion for creating a program that can improve the education of school staff, students and their families. The family violence prevention education program is needed in schools throughout Illinois. The program should be supported by individuals and community organizations that are experienced and dedicated. The program should be taught by school staff that have domestic violence training. Family violence is a very delicate and complex issue. It should be taught by school staff with conviction and understanding.

The family violence prevention education program should also include the support from a variety of outside organizations, such as domestic violence shelter, health facilities and law enforcement. Constant contact between the school and outside organizations is important because it helps school staff and students get the continuing education and support they need. Lessons

should be age-appropriate and be delivered in a thoughtful, engaging, and knowledgeable way. The family violence prevention education program should be taught by teachers who can be compassionate and understanding to the academic, social and emotional needs of their students.

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Paper 2

Advance Long and Productive Lives

This paper is about typical of what I would expect from a good student, and is worth a B or B+ at least. It is a bit short, and has a few little errors in the writing. Because it is so brief, it does not give enough specific detail about how to apply macro practice skills to the tasks needed. And yet, it does cover all the bases. It is well-written generally, and the ideas are sound. The citations are good, and used well. It does demonstrate an understanding of macro practice, and so I judge it to be a good paper. Not outstanding and great, but quite good, and it deserves a respectable grade.

Description of Grand Challenge

Due to an increase in age within the population, older adults are facing new challenges that are sadly, not being met. According to the Grand Challenges for Social Work, these challenges include social institutions being outdated and age segregated, growth in economic insecurity and health inequality, and hindering the ability for older adults to lead productive and meaningful lives (2018). In order to advance long and productive lives, it is critical for social workers to develop interventions for helping the elderly, and promoting greater overall health in aging populations. To do this, we need to increase new methods and programs that will facilitate older adults in work, caregiving, and volunteer opportunities (Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2018). With the use of federal fund-

ing, we would be able to increase the amount of civic service programs that are available in communities, as well as build more facilities to house older adults. These programs would create more opportunities that provide individuals of all ages supplemental and alternative pathways for a stable life stage transition (Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2018). Additionally, the United States is the only country that does not grant workers with paid medical and family leave, and fails to offer universal health care. Legislative efforts such as the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act, Social Security Caregiver Act, and Cash and Counseling Program, should provide funding for caregivers that would reduce financial stress, as well as create economic security and health equality by mak-

ing family and medical leave paid and accessible to all employees.

Concerns of Long Term Care

As of 2010, there were 15,642 nursing facilities in the United States (McGrath, 2015).

Although this may seem like a large quantity, it is not nearly enough as the baby boomer population continues to rapidly increase. In 2006, the Census Bureau reported that there were

78.6 million baby boomers in the United States. By 2020, many of the baby boomers will turn 70, and by 2030, 20% of the nation's population will be 65 and older (McGrath, 2015). What does this mean for the United States exactly? This means that because approximately 70% of the baby boomer population will need long-term care, there are simply not enough beds throughout the United States to house this growing population. Not only are there not enough facilities and beds, but there are also not enough physicians to care for this population. A survey that was initiated by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs (AP-NORC) found that "less than half of older Americans say their community is doing a good job of meeting older adults' needs for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and home health care aides to provide long-term care" (Benz et al., 2019).

Additionally, another area of concern in regards to long-term care in the United States is the cost. Frequently, older adults are not knowledgeable when it comes to long-term care, and underestimate the cost of senior living (Benz et al.,

2019). They are becoming less confident in their ability to pay for long-term care because of the uncertainty of health care issues arising in the United States. As referenced earlier, the survey given through the AP-NORC reported that 56% of older adults believed that Medicare should be responsible for paying for long-term care, while 52% of older adults believed that health insurance companies should also be covering these costs (Benz et al., 2019). In regards to this, many of the older adults in the United States expect to rely on Medicare and Social Security to pay for their long-term care needs. This is a concern because the average Social Security payment is 1,348 dollars per month, which is far from the average cost of multiple long-term care services (Benz et al., 2019). Medicare is an additional area of concern because as stated, " Medicare does not cover many expenses associated with long-term care, including most care in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or from home health care aides" (Benz et al., 2019). With these concerns at hand, as social workers there are many ways that we can advocate for funding to increase the number of facilities in the United States, as well as funding to create economic security and health equality.

Problematic Solutions

One way that has been shown to be effective in regards to creating economic security and health equality is providing paid family and medical leave. According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, states such as California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have implemented paid family and medical leave acts, and

have been shown to be doing exceptionally well (2018). These acts have also been shown to reduce stress among workers in these states because they do not have to worry about the financial burdens when they are not working. In order for this act to be implemented more around the country, we would have to spread awareness and let others know that this is a societal issue. Without paid family and medical leave, people do not take leave when they need to because they cannot afford it (Brainerd, 2017). It has also been proven that families are losing billions of dollars in wages due to unpaid medical leave because it is reducing their time at work to care for loved ones (Brainerd, 2017). For people to support this, we would have to reach out to people at the federal level. Democrats such as Kirsten Gillibrand and Rosa L. DeLauro support moving legislation forward for paid medical and family leave, but Republicans have also jumped on board as well (Sholar, 2019). It would also be beneficial to reach out to those involved at the state level to inform them how other states are benefiting from paid medical and family leave.

Additionally, when advocating for more long-term care facilities and their costs, Health Affairs (2018) reported that “community-based organizations have been increasing their business acumen and organizational capacity” (Super, Kaschak, Blair). These organizations include area agencies on aging (AAA) and centers for independent living (CILs), and they typically have relied on funding from the Older Americans Act of 1965 (Super, Kaschak, Blair, 2018). These funds have declined, and in order for these funds to start increasing, it is our job to realize how benefi-

cial these organizations are for communities. For example, much like advocating for paid family and medical leave, it is our job to spread awareness of these organizations and show people how much they do for older adults. For example,

“community-based organizations can identify and address risk factors, such as poor self-care skills, environmental hazards, need for social supports or protection, mental health challenges, or difficulty with medication management that can have a significant impact on health and health care spending” (Super, Kaschak, Blair, 2018).

As social workers, it would be beneficial to advocate for this at a local level. By going door to door, and asking people personally if they are affected by long-term health care costs, or have family that does not have the resources in their community, we would be able to get a better idea of how to organize a group to promote more beneficial ways to advance long and productive lives. If people were to be more educated as well on how rapidly the baby boomer population is growing, and the lack of resources they have access to, I believe people would act quicker in their communities. We should not only build coalitions with existing organizations, but continue to create new organizations as well. In order to advance long and productive lives, it is going to take a massive amount of organizations to increase funding and increase the amount of facilities due to the increase in the older population.

Conclusion

Overall, the Grand Challenge of Advancing Long and Productive Lives is so

critical in today's society. If paid family and medical leave were to happen throughout the country, and more facilities were to be implemented, I believe that older adults would live much longer and healthier lives. In order for these acts to happen, it is not a matter of going to a court or creating lawsuits, but rather it is a matter of getting legislation passed. As social workers, we tend to focus more on local and state levels,

but in order to make this Grand Challenge successful, it is our job to advocate more at federal levels. We should be educating people more on how many people will be without care, or will not be able to afford care if something does not get done. It is a matter of social change, and if we as social workers can create more awareness for this issue, we will be able to create successful change throughout America.

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Paper 3

Mission To Eradicate Social Isolation

This paper is an example of one that has some strengths, but is generally weak. The organization isn't very good. The citations are missing in many places where they are needed. The list of references is unimpressive. And yet, the idea is good. The writing holds up fairly well, despite the poor organization, until the later part of the paper, when the writing falls apart (the student may not have had time to edit the rest of the paper). There is a lot of effort in the paper, and some references to things we did in class, and I like the fact that the student created a list of actual people (although they are not clearly connected to the tasks the author would have in setting up this movement of small local organizations to fight against social isolation. All-in-all, if there were a graduate paper, it would not be acceptable, but for an undergraduate work, I think it deserves a C+ or B-. The student did well in other aspects of the class and earned a grade far higher than what they received on this paper.

Description of Grand Challenge

Social isolation is a silent killer, and with the pandemic of COVID-19, we are experiencing a truly tragic moment in history. People must keep social distance to defeat the pandemic and remain healthy, but this diminishes social connection, and people need social connection to remain healthy. Social isolation can be dangerous to health for smokers especially. Our challenge is to educate the public on how seriously we need to start taking this problem of social isolation. We must encourage health and human service professionals to address social isolation more, and we need to get past the incorrect thinking that someone's isolation and loneliness is none

of their concern. We need to stand by continuously promoting effective ways of creating more social connections among the community, friends, and family.

We discussed in class how religious congregations may be able to reduce the problems of socially isolated members of the congregation by checking up on them, doing friendly visits, and involving people in the many activities associated with religious groups (clubs, classes, outings, discussion groups, study groups, service groups and so forth). We also considered how the elderly are at high risk for living in single-occupant apartments, and as their friends and family pass away, some may become isolated and full of grief. We have

also considered some young couples who are socially isolated due to going to work and coming home to take care of their family. These observations help us keep in mind the lived experiences of persons who are isolated and the way groups can help people remain connected.

Recognizing that many persons are socially isolated, communities ought to organize themselves at the local level to keep people connected within neighborhoods. Social workers, public health workers, police, precinct committee persons, and volunteers working with city council members could come together to collect the facts about who is isolated at the level of each neighborhood. They should do this together by brainstorming new and brighter ideas to help us reach socially isolated persons and get them more contact time with neighbors and friends. We can start by coming up with a flyer and going door to door to see if we can build a bigger group of individuals who see the bigger picture and who stand for change. That is, we would approach people in door-to-door canvassing with our idea that we want to look out for each other, and not just in a "neighborhood watch" crime-fighting way, but in a way where we know who is elderly and might need a visitor once a week, and who is young and new to the neighborhood and might need some encouragement and invitations to monthly social gatherings among people in the area who have some common interest. We would point out that this is an effort of social work, law enforcement, public health, and the area agency on aging, all working together because social connection is even more powerful than good diet or active ex-

ercise in promoting good health and well-being.

Whatever groups start up in the local level will need methods of keeping in touch. Coming up with a Facebook page where people can follow your mission and journey as well as contribute to spreading the success and accomplishments to their Facebook friends will help sustain a community organization and get the message out. A group could use a phone tree or texting tree to quickly spread messages, and this might be even more effective than e-mails. A key practice is to have fun meetings on a regular basis where people can mainly relax and enjoy each other's company.

If we are organizing at the community level, we could use street-corner meetings and house meetings; and we might use local church basements or fellowship halls for some of our activities, or have block parties. Obama (1995) described some successes he had as a community organizer with social get-togethers with the Altgeld neighborhood residents, and how churches were used as a place for meetings. Brown (2006) also described having block parties, meeting in someone's home, and meeting in churches or libraries.

The pandemic has caused us to become socially isolated now than ever before. Even before the pandemic we needed a policy to check on isolated people and develop more trust and friendship in neighborhoods and communities, but now and soon after the pandemic has run its course, the need will be greater. The goal I'm focusing on is for local communities to have an understanding and safe space, which provides

people opportunities to come together and share their beliefs and stories to groups who care through interventions. With dedication and strong fighting hearts, and social workers by their side rooting for success, we can reduce the risk of social isolation across all populations and establish social relations that are a vital root of emotional strength and health improvement.

The social element of social work is the solution to lessening the danger of social isolation and establishing social relations amidst all peoples. Research has found that social separation is related to sleep issues, which lead to potential heart issues. One in four seniors suffer from social isolation and as of now with the isolation of the pandemic social distancing, nearly all seniors are experiencing social isolation. We must practice looking after those unable to care for themselves, especially sick and elderly people. The mere act of checking in on people, with regular friendly visits (in addition to Meals on Wheels visits) should make a huge difference.

But, how to achieve this sort of community social cohesion and solidarity group? I propose achieving this by getting interest groups involved by planning and having workshops through zoom meetings due to the coronavirus lockdown. We must set more opportunities to stop social isolation by creating a community connection.

Currently, there are three levels of social work practice, which are Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Social Work. Among the three levels of the social work community, the Micro Social Work level involves working directly with an individual or a family.

It refers to the most common practice area performed directly with an individual or a family. Family therapy and individual mental health counseling falls under Micro Social Work as well. Social workers and Social Service workers engaged at the micro level play many important roles due to having to help clients access housing and other social services; even doing this by helping families navigate the complex social services system.

Mezzo level practice should come into play by making sure certain needs are met in a group. Mezzo work is focused on smaller groups such as neighborhood businesses, religious centers, and local communities, schools and organizations. Mezzo social work involves direct practice with small groups to promote change, and I believe micro should focus on going neighborhood to neighborhood to spread the message and to get more people involved. By going to schools and informing staff about the mission as well, we can get schools involved. And youth are another resource; we should seek out students who express concern, especially those who want to be a part of something that is bigger and more practical than many other youth activities. One problem is that youth often only socialize with each other, and if we can create groups based on common interest and neighborhood proximity, we might bring together mixed ages so that more young people are socialized to work with adults. Lastly, Macro Social Work centers on investigating large scale social problems, and developing and implementing social interventions to make positive change at the community, state and national levels. The Macro-level Social Work workers will truly

be essential, and they will help communities identify needs, design interventions and implement strategies designed at improving the quality of life for all individuals within that community, especially those who are socially isolated. With all of the help I ensure a decrease in social isolation.

The issue of social isolation will cause disengagement from others, which can prompt mental and physical medical problems. Visits from loved ones could help forestall separation, yet as a rule, seniors are at a point in their lives where we are a standstill, and can not visit the elderly to ensure their safety. The state of being cut off from others by factors such as loss of mobility, joblessness, or medical problems causes real emotional and physical damage to us. There have been numerous issues that hinder the achievement of cohesive social solidarity, which past ages attempted to address through things like friendly societies, settlement houses, neighborhood watch organizations, and various local clubs and informal groups of friends who joined activities together through churches, unions, or hobby-oriented clubs. The COVID-19 Pandemic has increased social isolation and stopped many of these methods of enhancing social cohesion, but policymakers can keep us connected. We need policy solutions to address increasing social isolation and loneliness because before the crisis one of four adults ages 50 to 80 felt isolated. I would work with my group of committed social workers who care about this issue to get legislation at the state level, as well as city ordinances, to organize more of our local activities around the promotion of activities that enhance social cohesion and friendship in neighborhoods.

Money must be directed to the police departments, hospitals, public health agencies, and social service groups that collaborate in setting up and sustaining these local groups, and maintaining and encouraging such groups ought to be part of the work done by police, public health workers, social workers, and public libraries or parks & recreation departments. School districts should have their family outreach workers involved in this as well. The grassroots leadership started by social workers could lead to policies at the state or city level to encourage the sort of intervention I am suggesting.

Research has demonstrated that grown-ups with interminable conditions and physical or intellectual constraints are far more liable to report feeling socially separated (37%) compared to grown-ups who don't have these medical problems (15%). It is important that we screen for social isolation by creating programs that offer virtual social help. The government law must stretch out lawful securities to emotional well-being suppliers rehearsing in interchange work areas.

New York is building a system of volunteer authorized emotional wellness experts to offer free guiding and support to occupants during the emergency. Another thing we can focus on would be to increase access to the internet and smartphones to eliminate social isolation. Policymakers can consider approaches to expand access to utilities like the web and cell phones that are basic for remaining associated. During this season of national emergency, policymakers can find a way to guarantee the social separation we are doing across

America doesn't have the unintended outcome of expanding unsafe social isolation.

Middle-level experts and professionals and activists should make flyers and try getting into contact with individuals below them to get them more informed and active in the mission. They are the ones who have the drive into becoming more intuitive with social work problems so they can focus on more things on the social work scale. This will enhance our research and scientific understanding about the problem and its solutions.

Top leaders in schools of social work, national and International social work organizations, and professors who are leaders in the field should come together as a group to scavenge ideas as well. They are the ones who can get the message out to people struggling but due to COVID-19 things are hard. These issues must be discussed and brought to the public's attention and if not through the internet it must be discussed within schools, at organization meetings to make sure there will be improved education about the grand challenge and its solutions.

Professors and educators in high schools, junior colleges, universities, and graduate programs should all be coming together to scavenge more ideas which can help this epidemic. They also should come up with a curriculum section which focuses on social isolation and provide students with opportunities to volunteer at nursing homes in the future to try to see for themselves. Which would be in great interest to promote the best education about the grand challenge and its proposed solutions. Universities must monitor their students well-

being and build an inclusive and sociable environment. Susan Brown will have a workshop pertaining to social isolation. Possibilities are to have a summer workshop into teaching to get social isolation in the schools criteria. Workshops in Chicago headquarters, the target is to have 30 faculty in the north and 20 in the south. Talking to the dean to figure out what assignments to incorporate social isolation into the schools in Illinois curriculum. Holding conferences held at 8am -12 to give knowledge to people who want to improve this problem. It will be sponsored by a grant given to university faculty in order to attend. We will sustain it with interest groups with NAASW hands on projects. Having a 3 hour workshop each Saturday in Chicago where people who teach courses of social isolation come in and talk about their teachings with Susan Brown coming in and talking as well. Having people committing to resolve the problem.

Social workers out in the field with degrees need to promote a better understanding of the grand challenge and its solutions. They will do this by coming together two times out the week to lesson the problem. On zoom once a week to stack ideas on top of more ideas. The second meeting on zoom will be an open tap for people suffering with social isolation with social workers feeding in information to try to solve some problems step by step as being their weekly therapist. Students majoring in social work at the undergraduate and graduate level must promote a better understanding of the grand challenge and its solutions by working with their peers and classmates come up with a lesson plan which can come into part with professors

lesson plans which show how we can learn more about the topic and have students come out of the social work departments with more knowledge of how to stop social isolation and ways into helping people cope with the problem. Individuals of society who are not specialized experts or activists should try to find organizations to join and get the word out by talking with friends and family about the findings they have discovered. All together, all classes of individuals should join organizations which pertain to this matter in order to enforce good research about the grand challenge and its solutions.

In conclusion, I believe issues that might be the easiest to conquer as of right

now would be creating a facebook page for individuals who want to help can join. The most difficult would have to be going house to house and hosting events in public due to the fact that coronavirus is killing us. My prediction is that we will achieve the goal of my grand challenge. I believe this will work due to the social network platform because it is so big and everyone as or now has been seeking more need for therapy. This is smart work and it would make a big difference in the world. As a social worker you can volunteer for some of my programs. We must work out issues as a team and come together and get this accomplished.

Appendix 1: Social Work Activists

Preston Dyer	Baylor School of Social Work, Preston Dyer is one of the most familiar faces in the social work arena of academia.
Marcie Pitt-Catsouphe	A professor, director, leader, and investigator, Dr. Marcie Pitt-Catsouphe wears many hats for the field of social work.
Karen S. Haynes	Haynes is an advocate of community engagement and believes in making transformational regional impact.
Sandra Bernabei	She is a private practitioner who works as a liberation psychotherapist and life coach, with fieldwork in the areas of depression, anxiety, and addictions.
Maurice C. Daniels	Maurice Daniels is a dean and professor at the University of Georgia's School of Social Work. His teaching specialties include civil rights, community practice, and program development with research focus in the areas of social justice and community empowerment.
Tiziana Dearing	She has served as the Executive Director of the Hauser Center at Harvard University and has brought social awareness to a variety of problems in the area. Her work on social justice in public policy and poverty and inequity in urban environments has brought her international fame.

Tom Walsh	Tom Walsh is an advocate, leader, and educator in the field of social work. He oversees the structure and curriculum of one of the most prestigious social work programs in the country, and currently serves as the chair of the Academic Planning Committee. Walsh is a member of the Council of Social Work Education Commission on Educational Policy.
Cathryn C. Potter	Cathryn Potter is a proven leader in social work research and education. She has served as the Associate Provost for Research at the University of Denver and as the executive director of the Butler Institute for Families.
Keith Alford	Associate Professor for the School of Social Work at Syracuse University's Falk College, Keith Alford specializes in mental health service delivery to children and families. His research interests include human diversity and culturally specific programming for children in out-of-home care.
Ruth McRoy	She is the first holder of the Donahue and DiFelice Endowed Professorship at Boston College Graduate School of Social Work.
Jane Waldfogel	A professor of social work and public affairs at Columbia University School of Social Work, and visiting professor at the London School of Economics, Jane Waldfogel is a world-renowned social worker and researcher.
Dalton Conley	A sociologist and university professor at New York University's Department of Sociology, Dalton Clark Conley is recognized for his contribution to the field of socioeconomic status and how it is transmitted across generations.
Alice Walker	Known for her Pulitzer Prize winning novel, <i>The Color Purple</i> , critically acclaimed author Alice Walker began her journey as a women's rights and civil rights activist. She worked as a social worker, teacher, and lecturer and became recognized for her work with the Civil Rights Movement, fighting for equality for African Americans.
Ruby M. Gourdine	Recognized as one of the social work pioneers by the National Association of Social Workers, Ruby Gourdine is a professor at Howard University with research focus on child welfare, youth exposure to violence, women's issues, and social work history.
Roger Roffman	Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington's School of Social Work, Roger Roffman is recognized for his long-term dedication and research in the area of behavioral intervention for addictive disorders and domestic violence.
Thomas Crea	An Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work at Boston College, Thomas Crea joined the faculty in 2007 after working as a clinical social worker assisting with severely emotionally disturbed children.
Stephanie Berzin	Associate Professor and Chair of the Children, Youth, and Families Concentration at Boston College Graduate School of Social Work, Stephanie Berzin serves as the co-director of the Center for Social Innovation – a division working to build evidence based social preparedness and awareness.
Angelo McClain	Angelo McClain is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Social Workers. After serving six years as the Commissioner for the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, Dr. McClain moved to his current role of leading growth and support to the social work profession.
Darrell Wheeler	Dean and Professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work, Darrell Wheeler is a member of the Council on Social Work Education and President of the National Association of Social Workers. His research interests and publication focus emphasizes the exploration of individual and communal resiliency in HIV prevention.

Georgette Mulheir	Popular TED Speaker and pioneer for the movement to end child abuse imposed by orphanages, Georgette Mulheir works as the CEO of Lumos – a non-profit organization founded by JK Rowling. Mulheir has dedicated the last twenty years working to shift resources away from orphanages and toward family services, such as foster care and support. Her focus is in Central and Eastern Europe, but her reach is international.
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A story about loneliness and connection posted on Facebook:

I found a letter in old man Kolwalczk's trash when I was helping clean his house after he suddenly died at the beginning of December 1992. It was written on ordinary, yellowed, notebook paper. I found it hard to read his shaky and scratchy handwriting and the blue ink pen was running out of ink in spots. Steve kolwalczk was a quiet man who worked most of his life farming and making carnival glass at a glass factory. He raised two kids that lived in California.

They had some kind of falling out and did not speak. Whatever happened when he and Nan moved to Florida, they lived quietly in their small two-bedroom one bath with a carport Florida house with terrazzo floors and hand cranked jalousie windows.

He rarely joked or made small talk. We lived next door to him for over a year before I saw him at the mail box and walked over to say hello. The neighbors told me his wife died about two years before we came. They say he was pretty happy when his tall and honey-haired Nan was alive. But since her passing he just kept to himself and put out a vibe not to be bothered. On major holidays we always invite him over to share dinner and he would politely decline until the

Christmas of 1991 when we heard a knock on the door as the three of us were getting ready to sit down for our holiday turkey dinner. He wore a suit jacket, jeans, and a faded green dress shirt.

Steve was quiet but polite. He complimented the food and he answered the questions we dared to ask. I remember my son running up standing at side of his chair and just looking at him. He smiled a bit and tousled the three-year old's hair on his head. When it was time to leave, we packed a big take home bag with extra deserts and turkey. He tried to decline but I told him just take it because he could never win an argument with my wife-just taking it would be easier all the way around! Steve smiled a crooked smile and grabbed the bag with a knowing wink.

I wish I could say we had a close relationship after that but it was warmer and more cordial but Steve would not talk a lot or share and seemed relieved when I would tell him I had to go. Some people are just like that. He seemed like a good guy. That was enough for me.

When Steve passed, I saw a woman coming out of the house about a week after. I thought it would be a relative. Turns out it was a guardian. She said she would help get the house ready to sell. I offered to help. I hauled out a lot of trash. The guardian asked me if I could take a box to be donated to the salvation army and I was welcome to keep anything I wanted since I had helped. I saw a red old-fashioned coffee jar with a yellowing white lid. It reminded me of something that would be in my grandma's house.

When I got the canister home I thought I should probably throw the coffee out. When I opened the lid, I found the letter-along with over nine thousand dollars cash stuffed inside. I called the guardian and told her about the money over the protest of my wife. I did not feel we could keep the savings of someone who worked hard all his life. We did not deserve or earn it but I did read the letter. It had no date or time or signature. It simply said...

I still hold you in my thoughts.

The shadow of the day you ran out of breath
is always too close.

Sometimes I feel I can still touch you. Hold
you..

But then you are out of reach

It always stings—even now

I take you with me to my dreams

Our house is dark now

Missing it's only true light

I do the chores of life mechanically

I remember your smile and sometimes I will
smile back.

I love you-whether you are here or not

I will keep you in my heart to my last beat

That was it. I never saw this man as a romantic or a poet. Steve opened my eyes to old people. Steve gave me a very different view of a life purpose — and a tip for finding one

Find that one person. I knew I had not found her yet despite my marriage. When she left me, I was hurt but also hopeful? Maybe there was a Nan out there for me.

Or something like that