

## **How History Informs Social Work Practice: Interprofessional Collaboration in Military Contexts (1950-1955)**

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### **Abstract**

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*This article is a qualitative study that examines the collaborative efforts between social work and military professionals through the historical work of the National Committee on Social Work in Defense Mobilization (NCSWDM, 1950-1955). The development of the NCSWDM in 1950 was the first collaboration of its kind bridging the social work field with military establishments to increase the number of social workers in the field at a time of severe shortages and increased needs in defense affected communities. The author argues that the NCSWDM is a valuable historical example of interprofessional practice that informs military social work. Interprofessional practice in this context is increasing the footprint of social workers in military affected contexts to improve outcomes for service members and their families. This study contributes to the underdeveloped area of research related to interprofessional practice with military social workers and outlines the limited information available that documents the historic work of the NCSWDM during its tenure.*

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**Keywords:** military social work, national committee on social work in defense mobilization, council on social work education, national association of social workers, united community defense services, national social welfare assembly, interprofessional practice

### **Introduction**

Military engagements since September 11, 2001, comprise the longest continuous combat efforts in United States history and have escalated the need for competent social workers in military contexts (Brand & Weiss, 2015; CSWE, 2010; Strong, et al., 2014; Wooten, 2015). The sheer number of individuals and families affected has created a need for an intentional, collaborative response from the social work field at every level (Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Hosek, Kavanagh & Miller, 2008; Nedegaard, 2012). Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, depression, traumatic brain injury (TBI), suicide, and problems within the family have created an urgent need for social workers competent in military environments (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Nedegaard, 2012; Tanielian, et al., 2008). Without support and left untreated, military members and veterans suffer high rates of substance use, marital problems, unemployment, homelessness, chronic mental health problems, and suicide (American Psychological Association, 2016; Brand & Weiss, 2015; Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Newell, 2012).

Efforts to meet the need of military affected individuals, families, and communities is not a new phenomenon for social workers. For decades, social workers have recognized the value of bringing professional stakeholders together from various fields to bridge areas of knowledge and expertise to achieve better outcomes for clients (Charen, 1946; Newell, 2012; Wickendon, 1955; Wooten, 2015; Young, 1946).

In 1950, during the beginning of the Korean war, the American Association of Group Workers, the National Association of School Social Workers, the American Association of Medical Social Workers, the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, and the American Association of Social Workers initiated the development of the National Committee on Social Work in Defense Mobilization (NCSWDM). The NCSWDM addressed the complex needs in defense affected communities by bridging the social work field with military establishments (Wickenden, 1955). The NCSWDM included 14 national organizations and agencies and was funded by the United Community Defense Services, Inc. with the goal of increasing the number of professional social workers able to provide comprehensive social work services and resources to military members, veterans, and their families (NCSWDM, 1953).

The NCSWDM provides a rich history of interdisciplinary collaboration that appears to be absent in the literature related to military social work. With the recent focus and need to establish competent social work practice in collaboration with military and civilian organizations, this qualitative study examines the archival record of the NCSWDM during its tenure and considers the implications and relevance for the social work field. Utilizing the framework and lens of interprofessional practice, this study considers the relationship, contributions, and efficacy of the NCSWDM's multidisciplinary efforts and posits that the NCSWDM is a valuable historical example of an interprofessional framework that informs current military social work practice. The construct of interprofessional practice extends beyond the tenets of multidisciplinary frameworks to include the reciprocity of practice efforts between diverse professions with the goal of improved client outcomes (D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005).

### **The Complex Needs of Military Affected Communities**

For nearly two decades, the military engagements Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation New Dawn (OND) have created a new era in the history of the country's all-volunteer force (APA, 2016; Brand & Weiss, 2015; Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Nedegaard, 2012; Wooten, 2015). Deployments are lasting for longer periods and redeployment is common with limited breaks in between (Frey, Collins, Pastoor & Linde, 2014; Hosek, Kavanagh, & Miller, 2008). Military members are exhibiting emotional, psychological, and interpersonal problems that are evident in communities in escalating numbers (Wooten, 2015).

**Number of military and veterans affected.** With the over two million service members deployed since OIF began, it is estimated that approximately 26 percent returning are experiencing significant issues (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Nedegaard, 2012). The high rates of PTSD and TBI among post deployment service members has encouraged scholars to consider them as the "signature wounds" of OIF and OEF (Tanielia et al., 2008). It is estimated that approximately 300,000 individuals suffer from PTSD or major depression and approximately 320,000 individuals may suffer from a deployment related TBI (Tanielia et al., 2008). Some research estimates that about one-third of individuals previously deployed report some symptomology of PTSD, depression, and TBI (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Nedegaard, 2012).

**Barriers to seek treatment.** Military populations represent a diverse community with active-duty members, reservists, national guardsmen, civilian workers, and military family members (Acosta et al, 2014). Recent studies indicate that reserve and guard units are at an increased risk of mental health issues including suicide and suicide ideation as they are deploying more often and have less support as they reintegrate back into civilian life (Kehle, et al., 2010; Tanielian, et al., 2008; Wooten, 2015). Studies have examined issues related to stigma and barriers to early help-seeking behaviors within both military and veteran populations (Kehle et al., 2010; Quartana et al., 2014). Recent literature uncovers fear as a barrier in both recognizing emotional issues and in seeking treatment (Acosta et.al., 2014; Bein, 2011; Jones et. al, 2013; Kehle et al., 2010; Salzer, 2014; Valenstein et al., 2014). Embedded in the culture is a belief system that it is risky to seek help for emotional issues (Bein, 2011). The culture to support a collective mission may cause service members to feel afraid that admitting a problem equates to letting down the team and the mission (Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Frey, Collins, Pastoor, & Linde, 2014; Michalopoulou, Welsh, Perkins & Ormsby, 2016).

### **Advancing Competent Military Social Work Practice**

In 2015, the CSWE prepared a policy entitled, "Specialized Practice Curricular Guide in Military Social Work" and in 2012, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) published "Military Social Work Practice Standards" to guide the social work field in developing competent military social work practitioners (CSWE, 2015; NASW, 2012).

Wooten (2015) contends that schools of social work and the social work profession itself provide excellent opportunities for preparing and educating culturally competent social workers to respond to the critical need of coordinating services for military members and veterans.

**Military social work research.** Forgey and Young (2014) report there is limited empirical research about what social workers know about military social work including the education and training efforts to prepare them to work with military populations. Over the past several years, studies have started to emerge examining the efficacy of military social work education and military social work practice (APA, 2016; Brand & Weiss, 2015; Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Frey et al., 2014; Hosek, Kavanah & Miller, 2008; Newell, 2012; Savitsky et al., 2009; Selber et al., 2015; Strong, et al., 2014; Tanielian, et al., 2008; Weng, et al., 2015; Wooten, 2015).

### **The History of Military Social Work**

With the recent attention recognizing the value of military social work, the literature shows that this is not a new phenomenon. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015) contends that dating back to 1918, clinical social workers were trained to intervene with soldiers suffering from shell shock from battles in World War I. Early in World War II, the social work profession recognized the pressing need for clinical services leading to the creation of a military social work specification (CSWE, 2010; Okeefe, 1946; Segal, 1945). There is substantial research that suggests that social workers have been a critical part of the military for decades (Charen, 1946; CSWE, 2010; Okeefe, 1946; Segal, 1945; Young, 1946).

Brand & Weiss (2015) report that psychiatric social work was valued and recognized by the Army as a vital occupation specialty as far back as 1943. Historically, research dating back to the 1940's suggests the important role of social work within every branch of the military system (Young, 1946). Segal (1945) claimed that a tremendous amount of work was accomplished for the recognition of professional social workers within the armed forces. O'Keefe (1946) asserted that social work has become an important field due to valuable treatment contributions with men in military service. During this time, in recognition of the valuable role, the military placed social workers on a critically needed and scarce specialist list (Charen, 1946).

The development of the National Committee on Social Work in Defense Mobilization (NCSWDM) in 1950 was the first collaboration of its kind bridging the social work field with military establishments. Along with the five organizations that made up the NCSWDM there were representatives participating from the National Social Welfare Assembly and the Council on Social Work Education, which was previously called the American Association of Schools of Social Work (Wickenden, 1955). The NCSWDM was primarily concerned with ensuring that social workers were trained and readily available to assist communities affected by national defense efforts (NCSWDM, 1953).

**The historical tensions.** When considering the history of military social work, it is important to address the inherent strains between the two fields apparent throughout the years. Aside from the early literature before the 1950's and the recent literature focusing on military social work contexts, there is limited literature in the years between. The following two articles provide insight about conflicts articulated by the social work field in relation to military environments. The examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather provide a sample of tensions expressed over the years. Brown (1984), a social work practitioner working with Vietnam veterans, outlines clinical practice strategies considering posttraumatic stress symptoms as a delayed response to the stresses of war. In the article, Brown challenges social workers to continually self-assess for bias or stereotyping and generalizations. Moreover, Brown contends that the social work field must "open its own system to meet the needs of the Vietnam veteran and his family" (p. 378). This recommendation suggests that the field was not inherently open to military social work contexts at the time.

Verschelden (1993) wrote an article in the journal of *Social Work* entitled *Social Work Values and Pacifism: Opposition to War as a Professional Responsibility*. Verschelden contends that the NASW Code of Ethics and core values of the profession are opposed to war. The article explains that social justice is a foundational issue for social work with a focus on the importance of the individual, respect and appreciation for difference, and a commitment to the well-being of all in society. Verschelden challenges social workers to stand against policies and legislation that promote war by drawing on the courage from the esteemed social work pioneer, Jane Addams, "who was against war and believed it created more problems than it solved" (p.765).

The CSWE (2015), *Specialized Practice Curricular Guide in Military Social Work* guidelines address the strains between the military and social work values directly by stating that providing competent social work practice and research related to the military does not “endorse war or aggression, but rather extends meaningful help to those who have been affected” (p. xvi). The guidelines challenge social workers in the profession to get involved in promoting the education and practice of competent military social work with recognition that social work is at the core, a healing profession. Moreover, social workers have a profound influence as a profession and take a leadership role in social work education, practice, and research promoting efficacy in military social work contexts. The challenge by social work leaders to promote competent practice and research for military social work regardless of value differences, contributes to the increase in literature related to military social work in recent years.

### **The Conceptual Lens of Interprofessional Practice**

Interprofessional practice provides a framework for social workers working alongside diverse professional teams to address best practices for military members and their families (D’Amour & Oandasan, 2005). The underpinning premise of interprofessional practice contends that multidisciplinary teams exchange knowledge and foster a collaborative practice culture to improve practice efficacy (D’Amour & Oandasan, 2005; Delunas & Rouse, 2014; Grant & Alexander, 2014). Responding within an interprofessional framework, military and social work communities can collaboratively attend to practice strategies that espouse a cohesive response to the needs of diverse military environments. The complexity of military systems and the inherent differences between the social work profession and military culture can be mitigated through interprofessional practice strategies. The work of the NCSWDM provides a historical interprofessional practice example and a lens to consider current social work practice efficacy with military environments.

### **Potential Contributions of this Study**

There is increasing literature looking at the unique behavioral health issues related to military and veteran communities as well as literature related to military social work curricula and specialized programs (APA, 2016; Brand & Weiss, 2015; Canfield & Weiss, 2015; Forgey & Young, 2014; Frey et al., 2014; Hosek, Kavanah & Miller, 2008; Newell, 2012; Savitsky et al., 2009; Selber et al., 2015; Strong, et al., 2014; Tanielian, et al., 2008; Weng, et al., 2015; Wooten, 2015). There is limited literature that outlines the historical work of the National Committee on Social Work Defense Mobilization and the contributions of their efforts. There is a gap in the literature that examines historical interdisciplinary efforts such as were evidenced through the committee from 1950-1955. This research study contributes to the underdeveloped area of research related to interprofessional collaboration necessary in preparing competent military social workers. It also adds to the limited information available that documents the work of the NCSWDM during its tenure.

### **Methods**

This study utilized a historical content analysis design using exploratory qualitative methods to examine the collaborative efforts between social work and military professionals that foster social work practice in military contexts. In the past 15 years, there is a common understanding of the complexities involved with establishing competent social work practice in collaboration with military and civilian organizations. Therefore, there is value in examining the historical role of the NCSWDM during its tenure and considering the implications and relevance for social workers moving forward in competent military practice.

This study proceeds from the belief that the NCSWDM is a valuable historical example of interprofessionality that informs current military social work practice. The record was examined using the following qualitative questions to explore themes and processes:

1. What themes are identified in the record of the interprofessional collaboration of the NCSWDM committee seeking to promote military social work?
2. What is the relative strength of the themes identified?

### **Sample**

Qualitative data were collected by analyzing 105 primary source documents from the records of the NCSWDM in the Social Welfare History Archives (SWHA), Elmer Anderson Library at the University of Minnesota. The records are comprised of the following:

- SWHA data of NCSWDM organizational papers which includes folders 1375 through 1405
- SWHA data that documents liaison activities between the social welfare profession and various public and private agencies and organizations related to the national defense effort which includes folders 1406 through 1419
- SWHA data about the NCSWDM's service to individuals which includes folders 1420 through 1426
- SWHA data that shows the relationship of NCSWDM with the United Community Defense Services which includes folders 1427 through 1430.

The records include letters, meeting minutes, policy statements and memorandums initiated by the NCSWDM, or written to the NCSWDM from interdisciplinary agencies and organizations.

### **Analytic Methods**

The themes identified in the record were analyzed using a thematic content analysis (Coffee & Atkinson, 1996) applying grounded theory principles and techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to identify recurring themes and their prevalence in the record. Grounded theory methods utilize a theory-building approach that looks for ongoing themes and issues present in the record. The themes were grouped into categories that explain the common issues or salient themes within the data. The content analysis method provides information regarding how much of the data is connected to each of the identified categories.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

For data collection, the documents were reviewed at least three times to ascertain relevance to the author's research topic. To reduce author bias and strengthen internal validity of the study, documents chosen from the NCSWDM boxes were taken from multiple internal and external data sets. The data is comprised of unpublished primary sources drawn from the 1950-1955 from individuals and organizations that were reliable and actively working with or for the NCSWDM to develop social work structure in defense affected communities. This study applied a three-step approach as outlined by Padgett (2017) to increase the reliability of the data. The primary source documents were first read using an inductive method of open coding applying grounded theory principles to explore themes. The coding process initially identified themes in sentences and paragraphs with the goal of documenting categories of themes (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). The categorical themes that emerged through this process include social work education and recruitment, advocacy with selective service, interprofessional collaboration between military and civilian entities, inherent strains between civilian and military structures, and the succession plan of the NCSWDM to the NASW and the CSWE. These themes were then utilized to deductively analyze the record applying a qualitative content analysis to explore the nature and degree the themes were found in the record. Finally, the record was analyzed a third time using an inductive method of open coding to look for missing themes data that may have been missed during the first two readings.

### **Study Strengths and Limitations**

The study of history provides information and perspectives from the past that can help inform the present and contribute to future contexts. The three-tier analysis provided a thorough assessment of the data. The reliability of analysis was strengthened by the number of records assessed. However, there are limitations considering not all the perspectives from the archive material could be represented in this study. Moreover, historical data was subject to personal ideological constructs and interpretation of the researcher (Andrews, 2001). The historical relevance of the data is subject to change in relation to new perspectives, knowledge, and scholarship.

### **Findings**

The NCSWDM concentrated on several issues during its five-year stint. Particularly the NCSWDM was concerned with the role of social work in national defense in both military and civilian spheres. The committee described their purpose as an "Emergency committee established by five professional social work membership organizations in 1950 to promote a maximum concentration of social work services in the defense period" (NCSWDM, p. 1, 1955). The five professional social work organizations that established the committee recognized the wide range of differences between communities in relation to the need for social workers and social work services (NCSWDM, 1955). The committee's top goals were developing social welfare services in areas where they were greatly needed, as well as recruiting for the social work profession (NCSWDM, 1953). Table 1 summarizes the analysis of categorical themes identified through the data.

**Table 1.** Categorical Themes Identified in the Records

Categorical Theme	Number	Percentage
Social Work Education and Recruitment	182	29
Advocacy with Selective Service	118	18
Interprofessional Collaboration	145	23
Addressing the Inherent Strains	105	16
NCSWDM Succession Plan	89	14

The analysis describes the number of instances and percentage in which the data alluded to the coded categorical theme. In total, the analysis identified 639 instances a categorical theme was identified through the inductive analysis. As the table suggests, social work education and recruitment accounted for 29 percent of the coded categorical themes (i.e., 182 of 639), advocacy with selective services represented only 18 percent of the coded categorical themes (i.e., 118 of 639), interprofessional collaboration accounted for 23 percent of the coded categorical themes (i.e., 145 of 639), addressing the inherent strains represented 16 percent of the coded categorical themes (i.e., 105 of 639), and succession of the NCSWDM accounted for 14 percent of the coded categorical themes (i.e., 89 of 639). The categories speak to the depth and scope of collaboration that existed between the various entities connected to the NCSWDM.

### Social Work Education and Recruitment

The major focus of the NCSWDM was to recruit social workers into the profession specifically to work with military and military affected populations at the time of a severe shortage (NCSWDM, 1952; UCDS, 1955). The NCSWDM members were motivated by the belief that the social work profession was responsible for providing knowledge, skills, and expertise to military and civilian communities (NCSWDM, 1955). Table 2 presents the most common education and recruitment themes represented in the data.

**Table 2.** Codes for the Most Common Themes to Education and Recruitment

Coded Theme	Number	Percentage
Social Work Career Recruitment	96	53
Social Work Education	41	23
Collaboration	45	24

The number column indicates the number of times the coded theme is represented in the data, and each percentage outlines the amount of data connected to that theme. The data emphasize priority placed on social work recruitment, education, and collaboration.

The NCSWDM was established during a time when the Army and the Air Force had an urgent need for qualified social workers (NCSWDM, 1952). In fact, the committee outlined the shortage of medical social workers nationwide. They contended, "There are at present a minimum of 4500 psychiatric social workers...257 unfilled jobs requiring psychiatric social workers in national agencies...and it is estimated that within five years, 9860 additional social workers will be needed" (NCSWDM, 1952, p. 2). The committee's 1953 NCSWDM statement of purpose prioritized the recruitment and development of social workers for the profession due to the escalating need in areas affected by defense efforts. The statement of purpose explained, "Trained social workers are needed to help people...survey and understand the social problems emerging, to help militate resources for dealing with them, and to give leadership in establishing and carrying forward necessary programs and services" (NCSWDM, 1953, p. 1). Prior to the work of the NCSWDM there was not a central source to deal directly with the shortage of social workers in defense affected communities (NCSWDM, 1955). The NCSWDM championed the message that a national recruitment program for the field of social work was essential (NCSWDM 1953; NCSWDM, 1955).

The NCSWDM worked closely with schools of social work educating them about the need for social workers in defense affected areas as well as "acting as a clearing house for schools of social work in relation to the Armed Services" (NCSWDM, 1953, p. 1).

The committee advocated for deferment with the Selective Service for social work students to complete their education prior to serving (NCSWDM, 1952). The collaboration between schools of social work and the Selective Service was successful in effecting change in policy and practice to create opportunities for military social work (NCSWDM, 1953). The NCSWDM encouraged schools of social work to develop recruitment campaigns (NCSWDM, 1952). The CSWE January 27, 1954 meeting minutes read, “There has been a marked upgrading of qualifications due to an increased supply of draft eligible graduate social workers” (CSWE, 1954, p. 1). The minutes detail the shortage that occurred during the outbreaks of hostilities in Korea and how through the NCSWDM collaborative efforts there was an increased number of individuals seeking social work positions.

The NCSWDM’s dedicated focus on recruitment coincided with increased recruitment campaigns by the Council on Social Work Education and the National Social Welfare Assembly. In 1952, the National Social Welfare Assembly coordinated a meeting to establish a division of responsibility and develop a coordinated effort to increase the efficiency of efforts (NSWA, 1952). The NCSWDM continued to take a leadership role as the central service for handling social work inquiries, coordinating recruitment campaigns, and for providing recruitment materials across the nation.

### Advocacy with Selective Service

The NCSWDM worked closely with the selective service dealing with policy issues, as well as working one on one with direct issues facing students and service members seeking social work positions. Table 3 presents the most common advocacy with Selected Service themes represented in the data. The number column indicates the number

**Table 3.** Codes for the Most Common Themes to Advocacy with Selective Service

Coded Theme	Number	Percentage
NCSWDM Advocacy with Selective Service	77	65
Optimal Personnel Usage	41	35

of times the coded theme is represented in the data, and each percentage outlines the amount of data connected to that theme. The data analysis related to advocacy with selective service accounted for 18 percent of the categorical themes identified and demonstrates the ongoing advocacy of the NCSWDM with the Selective Service.

The NCSWDM was hopeful that their advocacy efforts would reduce the number of educational interruptions for social work students so that they could complete school and help alleviate the shortage of social workers in the Army (NCSWDM, 1952). The NCSWDM (1952) described specific examples of “individual hardships and cases of improper classification and assignment” where the committee was instrumental in resolving issues and “positively affecting classification and assignment procedures” (NCSWDM, 1952, p. 2). In the final letter to the NASW on June 7, 1955, the NCSWDM described the valuable collaboration experienced over the years between the NCSWDM and the Selective Service Branch. The letter detailed the following:

Quite frequently committee assistance has been sought by social workers drafted into the armed forces that were assigned to nonprofessional duties. The NCSWDM has consistently called such cases to the attention of appropriate military authorities, most often with good results, thus promoting both good manpower utilization and professional interests (NCSWDM, 1955, p. 4).

The data addressing the collaboration between the NCSWDM and the Selective Service demonstrated improved utilization of social workers in defense contexts.

### Interprofessional Collaboration between Military and Civilian Entities

The data analysis connected to interprofessional collaboration accounted for 23 percent of the categorical themes. This is the second largest category and suggests the value the NCSWDM placed on interdisciplinary collaboration. Table 4 presents the most common interprofessional collaboration themes represented in the data. The number column indicates the number of times the coded theme is represented in the data, and each percentage outlines the amount of data connected to that theme.

**Table 4.** Codes for the Most Common Interprofessional Collaboration Themes

Coded Theme	Number	Percentage
Interdisciplinary Consultation and Collaboration	56	39
Communicating Needs	34	23
Developing Relationships	29	20
The Value of Social Workers	26	18

The NCSWDM utilized resources from various entities to accomplish a common goal and became a central connecting point for professional membership associations, graduate schools of social work, the Council on Social Work Education, and national social welfare agencies (NCSWDM, 1955). The NCSWDM reviewed activities of the connected agencies to discover gaps, exchange information, and plan strategies for recruitment (NCSWDM, 1954). The NCSWDM's Statement of Program (1953) stated, "In developing our relationships with the Department of Defense, the Army, Navy and Air Force, we are constantly alert to opportunities to increase our usefulness" (NCSWDM, 1953, p. 4). There is substantial discourse that detailed the collaborative efforts of all the agencies and organizations involved with the NCSWDM.

The NCSWDM maintained a relationship between social welfare and the various private and public agencies related to national defense efforts. The interdisciplinary efforts included the Army, Navy, Airforce, Department of Defense, Federal Civil Defense Administration, National Social Welfare Assembly, National Office of Selective Service, Education and Welfare, Department of Health, The American Social Hygiene Association, the United Services Organization, the United Community Defense Services and graduate schools of social work (NCSWDM, 1955). The NCSWDM emphasized the importance of "information getting and giving – information, while available through many sources, is quickly outdated" (NCSWDM, 1955, p. 2). During the NCSWDM's tenure, information collected was prepared and distributed via general releases and reports. In a NCSWDM memo to deans of social work the committee reported, "NCSWDM has served as a channel of information specific problems referred by individual social workers, social agencies, and institutions on the one hand various official agencies and offices related to the defense establishments on the other" (NCSWDM, 1955, p. 1). The NCSWDM's ability to quickly disseminate information contributed to the success of the collaboration.

#### **Addressing the Inherent Strains between Civilian and Military Structures**

The NCSWDM was transparent about the inherent strains that existed between the civilian and military structures. This categorical theme of addressing the inherent strains accounts for 16 percent of the categories identified. Table 5 presents the most common themes addressing the inherent strains between civilian and military structures represented in the data.

**Table 5.** Codes for the Most Common Themes to Recognizing the Inherent Strains

Coded Theme	Number	Percentage
Developing a Common Understanding	41	39
Respect and Sensitivity	28	27
Collaboration	36	34

The number column indicates the number of times the coded theme is represented in the data, and each percentage outlines the amount of data connected to that theme. In a 1952 NCSWD meeting with the UCDS, the minutes read, "The military community itself, with which the committee has a special concern, gave minimal recognition to the values of professional social services and one of the major challenges to the committee in its program is to examine this particular situation" (NCSWDM, 1952, p. 1). The NCSWDM worked to find solutions regarding the inherent strains that existed between civilian and military structures. Elizabeth Wickenden, a consultant to the NCSWDM on March 17, 1955, wrote, "People in the military world tend to be as ignorant of this social welfare structure as most social workers are about the military structure" (Wickenden, 1955). Another document entitled *The Draft of Military Needs and Welfare Services* (1955) conferred that the goal was to establish a two-way understanding between the military and social welfare (NCSWDM, 1955).



The NCSWDM understood the vast differences between the civilian and military structures and recognized the value of talking about them openly and developing a common understanding (NCSWDM, 1953).

Wickenden (1955) described the value differences between how an individual is viewed in the military as compared to civilian contexts. She explained that in civilian welfare programs the individual is the focus of attention as compared to military welfare programs where the focus of attention is on the social obligation to the common effort. Recognizing and understanding differences with respect and sensitivity became an effective strategy for the NCSWDM. Through collaboration the NCSWDM sought to “assure such an inter-meshing of social measures under both civilian and military auspices in order to provide for the need in the most efficient manner” (NCSWDM, 1952, p. 2). The committee served as a liaison between civilian and military organizations and developed strong working relationships to increase social work presence in the field.

### **Succession of the NCSWDM to the NASW and CSWE**

The data analysis connected to succession of the NCSWDM to the NASW and CSWE accounted for 14 percent of the categorical themes. This is a significant number considering the succession plan is only addressed in the last two years of data (1954-1955). The data suggests the committee placed a priority on a successful succession plan. Table 6 presents the most common themes addressing the succession of the NCSWDM represented in the data. The number column indicates the number of times the coded theme is represented in the data, and each percentage outlines the amount of data connected to that theme. The themes indicate the value that the NCSWDM placed on roles and responsibilities and interdisciplinary collaboration in their succession plan and beyond.

**Table 6.** Codes for the Most Common Themes to Succession of the NCSWDM

Coded Theme	Number	Percentage
Roles and Responsibilities	50	56
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	39	44

The final letter of the NCSWDM to the NASW (June 7, 1955) addressed the primary concerns of the committee. The letter outlined the role of the social work profession in national defense, the development of social welfare services in defense affected contexts, the utilization of manpower, and social work recruitment (NCSWDM, 1955). The letter explained, “The areas of responsibility encompassed by the NCSWDM are and should be a continuing concern of the social work profession and the NASW” (NCSWDM, 1955, p. 1). The letter described how the NASW will assign the Commission of Personnel Standards and Practices the responsibility to carry out activities that were formerly the responsibility of the NCSWDM. Moreover, the Commission will continue to develop and advocate the social work role in military and civil defense programs, and the NASW will accept full responsibility of the NCSWDM’s mission moving forward (NCSWDM, 1955).

The NCSWDM provided detailed documentation establishing how the committee activities would be carried out after their termination of services. They informed the various entities they served that “all functions which this committee has carried in relation to the national military program and civil defense as well as those in recruitment for the field of social work will be carried forward without interruption” (NCSWDM, 1955, p. 2). The committee was articulate outlining various roles and responsibilities, the support and funding sources, and what entities were responsible for their continued work and collaboration. In the final letter of the NCSWDM to the Executive Director of United Community Defense Services (NCSWDM, 1955) on September 28, 1955, the committee thanked the UCDS for their support, acknowledged that the newly formed NASW will assume responsibility of the NCSWDM programs, and the CSWE will accept responsibility for the recruitment program. Until the end of their tenure, the NCSWDM worked tenuously to ensure a coordinated succession of services.

### **Discussion**

The data reflecting the contributions of the NCSWDM demonstrate a comprehensive collaborative effort that existed during the committee’s short tenure from 1950 through 1955. The NCSWDM acted as a central clearing house that engaged military and civilian individuals, agencies, organizations, and government structures to improve social welfare within defense affected contexts. The categorical themes identified through the analysis demonstrate the priority placed on recruitment, advocacy, and interprofessional collaboration, while acknowledging differences and providing for a succession plan.

The NCSWDM data provides a valuable documented history of CSWE and NASW contributions related to interdisciplinary practice and military social work. Moreover, the data presents information depicting the origins of the NASW and provides some context related to the era in which the organization was established.

### **Discussion Related to Themes and Parallels to Modern Contexts**

**Social work education and recruitment.** The NCSWDM was established at a time when there was a shortage of military social workers and an increased need in defense affected communities for social work services. This is like the present need for social workers that prompted the NASW and CSWE to establish standards for military social work (CSWE, 2010, NASW, 2012). The recognition by the NCSWDM that the social work profession possesses knowledge and skills that are valuable related to defense affected communities aligns with the CSWE's (2015) recognition that social work is a healing profession for veterans and military members (CSWE, 2015). Additionally, the NCSWDM's commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration at all system levels related to education and recruitment is congruent with current social work practice that recognizes the value of interdisciplinary collaboration to increase practice efficacy (CSWE, 2015).

**Advocacy with selective service.** The data outlining the collaboration between the NCSWDM and the Selective Service demonstrate the historic issues related to the draft and the placement of social workers in military career fields. The NCSWDM was instrumental advocating with Selective Service to assign social workers into the appropriate career path. They were also successful in promoting change in the deferment process so that MSW students could postpone entering the military until after graduation. The results identify an interesting future study that could consider the draft related to social workers with pacifist leanings or the relationship between social work and the military systems during the era there is limited scholarship (1955-2000). The NCSWDM's commitment to advocacy at micro, mezzo, and macro levels provides a powerful historical example of social work's long history of affecting change with individuals, families, groups, and communities.

**Interprofessional Collaboration.** The NCSWDM collaborated with multiple organizations and agencies that represented diverse civilian and military entities. Like current social work practice, they recognized the value of relationships and communication and understood that knowledge was continually evolving. The NCSWDM was able to act as the central point of contact related to military social work and efficiently disseminate information in a timely manner. The NCSWDM provides a rich example of interprofessional collaboration in historical contexts. As defined in the literature, they were successful in effective collaborative practice that resulted in improved outcomes (D'Amour & Oandasan, 2005; Delunas & Rouse, 2014).

**Addressing the inherent strains.** The NCSWDM navigated the inherent strains and cultural differences between military and civilian communities openly. They recognized that communicating information with respect, honesty, and sensitivity provided a foundation to collaborate toward common goals despite inherent differences between culture and norms. The NCSWDM was able to leverage their role as a liaison to unify efforts among the diverse agencies and organizations that were involved. There are similarities in modern military social work practice efforts that recognize complex contexts; however, there is not one current central point of contact such as was evidenced through the work of the NCSWDM.

**NCSWDM succession plan.** The NCSWDM provided a detailed plan with their succession that outlined how their work would continue once the committee disbanded. The data reflect a priority placed on a concise succession distributing the committee's work to the newly formed NASW and CSWE. In the succession plan, the NCSWDM articulated the value of each of their goals including the overall importance of social workers in defense affected communities. Further study examining the early work of the NASW and CSWE would add to our understanding of the era after the NCSWDM disbanded related to their succession plan.

### **Study Strengths and Limitations**

The NCSWDM provides a historical example of interprofessional practice efforts to improve social work services to defense affected communities. The data analysis of this study utilized a robust process to analyze the information and understand connections. This study provides important historical data about the NCSWDM that is not reflected in the literature. As with all historical data, this study is limited to this researcher's interpretation about what is important in the data. In addition, the data is limited to five years of information and is not meant to be exhaustive.

### Implications for Practice, Education, and Future Research

The NCSWDM provides a rich example of interprofessional practice. The committee connects diverse civilian and military entities in a unified effort to increase the number of military social workers and military practice efforts. There are implications for social work practice considering the work of the NCSWDM as a historical interprofessional practice example and the limited related scholarship. The NCSWDM provides an example of interprofessional teamwork for educators teaching social work students about the historical work of the NCSWDM and parallels for modern practice contexts. Courtenay, Nancarrow, and Dawson (2013) outline how active efforts that foster good communication with a clear definition of roles promote effective interprofessional teams. Future research studies analyzing the NCSWDM's succession plan and how it was carried out by the NASW and CSWE after the committee disbanded would provide insight about the historical roots of military social work efforts beyond the NCSWDM. The gap in literature related to military social work between 1955 and 2000 is another compelling area of interest for inquiry exploring the reasons why research is limited during this timeframe.

### Conclusion

The ramifications of the longest US military engagement in history have created a plethora of needs among service members, veterans, and communities. As social workers within the profession respond to the escalating issues, the historical work of the NCSWDM provides a rich example of strength-based collaboration and practice. The NCSWDM engaged diverse entities and navigated inherent strains between military and social work cultures remaining consistent to their shared goal of improved outcomes for service members, their families, and communities. Similarly, current social work practice in military contexts requires diligent efforts to remain focused on the shared goal of improved outcomes for service members navigating differences and seeking solutions collaboratively.

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