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by

Amber M. Mollhagen

May 2015

CONSIDERING RACIAL/ETHNIC DIVERSITY EXPERIENCE AS A PREDICTOR
OF SUCCESS FOR GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology and Individual Differences

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May 2015

Acknowledgement

To Jeff, Aidan and Lydia, I dedicate this work to you. Jeff, I am deeply grateful for our partnership without which I could not have accomplished a task such as this. I am fortunate to call you family and friend. To Aidan and Lydia, you are both an inspiration to me. You bring me enormous hope and joy. Thank you all for your patience, support, encouragement and love, especially during the last 5 years.

There are no words to adequately thank my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Catherine Horn to whom I am indebted for guiding me through this process. Cathy, you literally opened your home and life to us. And you have done so repeatedly. I will experience true success if I can even partly emulate your dedication to students and to addressing barriers within systems of higher education. I am fortunate to have you as a teacher and mentor.

Dr. Lyle McKinney, thank you for your commitment to me and to students in general. Having you as a professor early in the program contributed greatly to my sense of belonging and self-efficacy within the doctoral program. As a committee member, you provided needed encouragement and thoughtful feedback. You challenged me to expand my perspective for which I am grateful.

I also find it difficult to find just the right words to thank Dr. Beverly McPhail for her contributions to this project. Beverly, you went well beyond the call of a dissertation committee member. Thank you for your honest feedback, for your challenge to do my best work, for the hours you spent reviewing the work and for teaching me how to conduct quality qualitative research. Thank you also for your example as you work in all parts of your life for a more just and fair world.

Dr. Sheara Jennings, thank you for willingness to take part in this project, a project to which you had no obligation to participate but did so anyway. You also provided wonderful feedback and support and helped me see areas for development. I am always impressed with your commitment to justice, your sense of fairness, and your wisdom. I am glad to have had this opportunity to work with you.

I could not have completed the doctoral program if not for the support of my colleagues, friends and family members. I am particularly grateful for the cohort to which I was assigned which includes Pamelyn Klepal Shefman, Toya Conston, Jerrel Wade, Kate Noonan, Patricia Rehak, Mac Griswold, and Cory Owen who all believed none of us were successful unless all of us were successful. This cohort continued to support one another to the very last dissertation defense in June 2015 at which time all 8 of us, many of us working full-time, finished the program in less than 5 years. I am particularly appreciative of Toya with whom I studied for every one of our statistics and research classes, Kate with whom I exchanged ideas, resources, encouragement and laughter, especially during the last stretch, Pam who is already a seasoned mentor and teacher and is the master of the PowerPoint presentation, Mac who would drop everything to help anyone of us in need, and Patricia who is a source of inspiration. I also thank Dan Maxwell, our honorary cohort member, who was there for us to the end.

I would not have begun a doctorate degree had it not been for my supervisor Dr. Ira Colby. From application to graduation, he encouraged me, allowed me to flex my work schedule, and instilled confidence in me that I could actually complete a doctorate degree, work and raise a family. Dr. Paul Raffoul continued the encouragement after the retirement of Dr. Colby. Dr. Raffoul, your support was also essential to my completion

and I am grateful. I am appreciative to colleagues who provided support and professional expertise including Jamie Parker, Ann Liberman, Jan Leger, Ginger Robbins, Sandra Lopez and Heather Kanenberg. In particular, Ann, your consistent encouragement made the difference many days. Jamie, I am grateful for everything you provided including information, resources, opinions, expertise and especially your support and friendship. Heather, I hope to be as good of a teacher, mentor, scholar and administrator as you one day. I thank my friends for your patience and support and for being there for me now. I am especially grateful to those who helped take care of my children during this time including Ana and Ruben Mercado, Cathy Munoz, Kevin Gilbert and Pam Shubert, Francesca Fuchs and Bill Davenport. I also thank Jackie Georgiou Gagliardi and Heather Wood who have always accepted me wholeheartedly.

Most importantly I thank my parents, Clyde and Jeanne Mayo for their support and encouragement. Thank you specifically for your financial support and the values you instilled in me regarding education. To my father, thank you for tutoring me in high school algebra and again for doctoral statistics. I am also grateful to my brother, Brady Mayo, who never ceases to see the good in me. My family by marriage feels like my birth family for which I am grateful. They include Jennifer Mollhagen, Kelsey Williams, Francis Williams, Delores Bailey, Joel Mollhagen, and Tony Mollhagen and Jacque Homan. I am fortunate to have a wonderful extended family including several aunts and uncles who have cheered me on throughout all of my education. I am grateful to all of you.

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August 2015

Mollhagen, Amber. "Considering racial/ethnic diversity experience as a predictor of success for graduate social work students." Unpublished Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Houston, August 2015.

Abstract

Social workers require a unique set of skills, knowledge and values in preparation to work with diverse populations. Graduate social work programs struggle with identifying useful admissions criteria beyond undergraduate GPA. Literature on college diversity has shown that students who have exposure to others who are different from themselves experience enhanced critical thinking skills and strong pluralistic orientation outcomes. As admission decisions are critical to shaping the profession of social work, this study considers students' college diversity experiences as a predictor of their success in an MSW program, and asks 3 questions: 1) Does (ethnic/racial) structural diversity of a MSW students' undergraduate institution predict students' success (graduate grade point average and field evaluation scores in three competency areas) in the graduate social work program?; 2) To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?; and 3) What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the program?

Three multiple regression analyses looking at overall field competency scores (F (13, 545), $p < .01$), MSW GPA for graduates (F (13, 391), $p < .001$), and MSW GPA for current students (F (13, 139), $p < .001$) found that advanced standing status, gender, undergraduate GPA, full-time experience, GRE scores and campus ethnic diversity scores were statistically significant predictors. Additionally two logistic regression analyses looking at critical thinking field scores ($\chi^2(13) = 30.750$, $p < .05$) and field scores in

human rights and social justice ($\chi^2(13)= 26.041, p < .05$) found that advanced standing status, gender, undergraduate GPA, and full-time experience were statistically significant predictors. A qualitative analysis of five interviews with successful MSW students was also conducted. Undergraduate diversity experiences were present for each student but were under-emphasized for the outcomes of interest. Instead pivotal experiences with injustice both early in life and in college and identification as part of a marginalized group lead to skill and interest development in social work as well as an overall social justice orientation. Success of students identifying as marginalized, in part, was based on access to communities and groups from which they received support, hope, and a sense of belonging.

The study is preliminary and associative, and thus does not allow for causal conclusions and is of only one discipline at one graduate program. Future research is suggested on the advanced standing program within social work education as well as critical mass for marginalized students. For practitioners, it is recommended that exposure and interaction with diversity be considered as an additional criterion for graduate social work admissions decisions along with traditionally considered criteria of undergraduate GPA and full-time work related experience. This study looks at different criteria for social work admissions as well as uncovers important student characteristics that help us understand their success in social work graduate studies.

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Study

Social work program admissions offices consider themselves to be gatekeepers for the profession as their decisions ultimately shape the field of social work (GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002). Over the last several decades, a relatively few number of articles have addressed MSW admissions criteria and their ability to predict student success. The literature that does exist considers a small number of factors including undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, work experience, personal statements, reference letters, and academic potential (GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002; Thomas, McCleary, & Henry, 2004). With the exception of undergraduate GPA, the research in this area does not consistently support any admissions criteria as effective predictors of student success (Thomas, McCleary, & Henry, 2004).

Since the beginning of the profession in the late 19th century, social workers have worked to bring attention to and address our nation's social problems. Early social workers saw suffering and injustices and took action to impact society in numerous ways by speaking out against abuse and neglect of all kinds and social justice for all people (NASW, 2013). Social workers were involved in creating humane treatments for people with mental illness, helping workers gain labor rights, creating systems to prevent child abuse and neglect, lessening the stigma for those seeking treatment for mental illness and substance abuse, and accessing healthcare for the poor, disabled and elderly people (NASW, 2013). Social workers historically have been concerned with the most vulnerable in society. Early social workers include social work pioneers best known for establishing settlement houses in Chicago for immigrants in the early 1900s, Jane

Addams, Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, and civil rights trailblazer and inspiration for President Johnson's War on Poverty, Whitney M. Young, Jr. (NASW, 2013).

Since the 1900s, the profession has expanded to include a wide variety of practice areas. Today social workers are employed in a wide range of situations and settings helping people cope with challenges in their lives. Examples include working with children, people with disabilities, and people with serious illnesses and addictions. The core concern for vulnerable populations continues to be a mainstay in the values of the profession and for the practice of social work. Social workers must be open to and prepared for practice with diverse populations within all stages of life (NASW, 2013).

To become an advanced level social work practitioner, a minimum of a master's degree in social work and a master license is required. A master's degree generally takes 2 years to complete and includes around 60 semester credit hours and 900 hours of field work. Successful completion of a standardized exam is required for licensure. Many positions, including those in mental health and health care, also require two years of post-master experience in a supervised clinical setting and a clinical license. A clinical license requires the successful completion of a standardized exam focused on clinical practice (NASW, 2013).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are over 600,000 current social work practitioners (2012). Overall employment of social workers is projected to grow 19 percent within the next ten years. This growth will vary by practice area. Employment of child, family, and school social workers is projected to grow 15 percent, employment of healthcare social workers is projected to grow 27 percent, and

employment of mental health and substance abuse social workers is projected to grow 23 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

Since 1985, there has been a rapid growth of social work education programs. In 1985, there were 89 master's programs and 351 baccalaureate programs, with 9 master's programs in candidacy and 10 baccalaureate programs in review (Karger & Stoesz, 2003). Today there are 235 master's programs, with 19 in candidacy and 504 baccalaureate programs, with 16 in candidacy (CSWE, 2015). This growth has brought attention to how critical admission decisions are to the shaping of the profession and the provision of competent, ethical social workers to serve the public.

Characteristics that define social work are a focus on self-awareness, the practice of social justice, and a commitment to understanding difference and working with clients from all backgrounds towards positive change (Sowbel, 2012). Social workers must be guided in their practice by core values of acceptance, non-judgment, self-determination, and inherent worth of every individual (Sowbel, 2012). Clients' racial and ethnic diversity presents challenges for all mental health professionals, including social workers (Vasquez, 2007). To practice ethically, social workers need to have a unique set of skills and attitudes to work with clients from all backgrounds.

A main concern of social work educators is screening out unqualified students who may cause harm to clients (Moore & Urwin, 1991, Sowbel, 2012). One of the main reasons for counseling students out of social work programs is the student's inability to accept and respect human diversity (Madden, 2000). Because bias is a primary concern in social work programs, applicants' diversity experience is a compelling area to consider.

In the last two decades, several studies examining undergraduates' diversity experiences identified many benefits. Research shows that diversity experience positively impacts learning and democratic outcomes, enhances critical thinking skills, reduces biases in students, leads to the development of positive attitudes about others, and the ability to see the world from another's perspective (Dovidio, Gaertner, Stewart, Esses, Vergert & Hodson, 2004; Gurin, 2002; Saenz, 2010). Dalton and Crosby point out that many universities now provide a diversity experience resulting in a variety of benefits including adjustments in thinking and broadening of perspectives as well as growth in social attitudes and behaviors and positive shifts in moral values, beliefs and behaviors (Dalton & Crosby, 2013).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to consider if students with undergraduate diversity experiences or exposure are better prepared to enter into an MSW program. The main measure of diversity for this study is the US News Campus Ethnic Diversity Index score which considers ethnic/racial diversity (2014). There are three guiding questions for this study. The first question is: "Does structural diversity of an MSW students' undergraduate institution predict student success in a graduate social work program?" For this question, the dependent variables are the students' competency-based field evaluation scores in three areas (human rights and social justice, critical thinking, and diversity), the average of the total of 11 field evaluation scores and grades achieved in the MSW program. The hypothesis for question one is that MSW students who attend a diverse undergraduate setting will have a higher MSW GPA and higher field evaluation scores in critical thinking, diversity and human rights and social justice. The second

question is “To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?” The dependent variables are the same as question one. The third question for which a qualitative analysis of student interviews will be conducted is: “What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the program?” For this question, 3 - 5 interviews of successful MSW students will be conducted followed by a thematic analysis of the interviews.

This study is a mixed methods design with both qualitative and quantitative research questions. As informal interactional diversity cannot occur without structural diversity, the variable of interest for the two quantitative questions is the campus ethnic diversity scores of each graduate student’s undergraduate institution. However, this variable alone does not tell the full story of a student’s college experience with diversity and how they may have benefitted. For this reason, a qualitative component is included in the study in which the researcher asks several successful students about their college experiences. This data adds a rich dimension to the study providing additional insight about if and how the students' interactions with diverse others early in their academic careers impacted them and helps the researcher to make additional connections between the students’ undergraduate experiences and their interest and potential for a graduate program in social work.

Significance of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to add to social work graduate admissions research by exploring diversity experiences as a new potential predictor for student performance to be used within social work admissions. This information could improve

the efficacy of MSW admission officers to make consistently good admissions decisions. The study could also provide insight to the benefits of undergraduate diversity experiences for students in any program. The study will also help inform faculty and staff to better understand and implement additional opportunities for student development.

Key Terminology

There are several key terms for which a brief definition is helpful. Two terms come from social work literature. Five terms come from literature focused on the outcomes of diversity experience for college students. The two terms specific to social work education include gatekeeping and unsuitability. The terms from the literature on diversity benefits include pluralistic orientation, diversity rationale, structural diversity, informal interactional diversity, and classroom diversity. Definitions for the two social work terms are presented below, followed by descriptions of the five diversity terms.

Gatekeeping. According to Moore & Urwin (1991), gatekeeping is the professional obligation of social work educators to ensure graduates are fit to practice social work by screening out unqualified or unsuitable students who may cause harm to clients.

Unsuitability. Madden (2000) defines unsuitability within social work as the student who because of emotional or mental instability poses a risk of harm to themselves or clients or whose values conflict with the values of the social work profession.

The terms from literature on the outcomes of diversity experiences within undergraduate studies are listed and defined below.

Pluralistic orientation. Engberg, Meader and Hurtado (2003) define pluralistic orientation as “the ability to see the world from another’s perspective, have tolerance for difference, and the ability to work cooperatively with diverse others”.

Diversity rationale. This term was first introduced by Justice Powell in his opinion on Regents of the University of California v Bakke in 1978. It refers to the idea that a diverse student body improves the overall quality of the educational environment.

Structural diversity. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Peterson and Allen (1999) define structural diversity as the “numerical representation of diverse groups” on a college campus. Structural diversity focuses on people of different races, not other forms of diversity such as class, sexual orientation, gender or religion.

Informal interactional diversity. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) explain that informal interactional diversity is the opportunity for interaction with diverse peers with a focus on the frequency and the quality of interactions. Most of these interactions occur outside the classroom and involve activities such as experiences in residence halls, campus events, and participation in student organizations and social groups.

Classroom diversity. Classroom diversity refers to the incorporation of content knowledge about diverse groups and the opportunities to interact with diverse peers in the classroom and the curriculum (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

For this study, the first two questions focus on structural diversity and therefore consider racial/ethnic diversity. The last question, which is qualitative and exploratory, considers multiple types of diversity experiences including racial/ethnic background, country of origin, sexual orientation and gender orientation.

Overview of the Study

The study begins with an introduction to the research topic followed by a thorough literature review. The review includes the literatures of graduate social work admissions, and undergraduate diversity outcomes. Subsequently, the three forms of diversity are defined, as well as the Council on Social Work Education's educational standards and core competencies. The competency areas are listed, along with literature that supports the consideration of three of these areas. Introduced in the next section of the study is the methodology that will be used for the study, including further description of the variables and data analysis techniques.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Introduction

Social work educators have agreed for a long time that gatekeeping (see definition¹) is a fundamental ethical obligation (GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002, Haski-Leventhal, Gelles & Cnaan, 2010, Kindle & Colby, 2008). In particular, social work programs are concerned with screening out unqualified students who may cause harm to clients (Moore & Urwin, 1991, Sowbel, 2012). Admissions decisions are critical to the shaping of the profession and the provision of competent, ethical social workers to the public. However, over the last several decades, a relatively small amount of literature has addressed MSW admissions criteria and their ability to predict student success. In fact, GlenMaye and Oakes (2002) state that graduate admissions is one of the least studied areas of social work education. With the exception of undergraduate GPA, the research in this area does not consistently support any admissions criteria as effective predictors of student success (Thomas, McCleary, & Henry, 2004). Admissions literature in other graduate disciplines is also limited and suggests that more clarity around the process is necessary (Katz, Motzer & Woods, 2009; Nelson & Nelson, 1995; Thompson & Kobrak, 1983).

Characteristics that distinguish social work from other professions include a focus on self-awareness, the practice of social justice, and a commitment to understanding difference and working with clients, from all backgrounds, towards positive change

¹ According to Moore & Urwin (1991), gatekeeping is defined as the professional obligation of social work educators to ensure graduates are fit to practice social work by screening out unqualified students who may cause harm to clients.

(Sowbel, 2012). Racial and ethnic diversity among clients presents challenges for all mental health professionals, without exception (Vasquez, 2007). To practice ethically, social workers need to have the capacity to practice awareness and have sensitivity and empathy for all clients.

A large body of evidence has emerged over the last several decades, since Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Lewis Powell introduced the idea of a “diversity rationale” in his opinion on *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* in 1978, referring to the benefits of diversity in higher education institutions. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) found that students attending school in diverse environments experience positive learning and democratic outcomes. In their study, Engberg, Meader and Hurtado (2003) concluded that students who interact with diverse peers think more complexly, are more culturally aware, are more willing to take social action and subscribe to the belief that conflict enhances democracy. Hurtado, Laird, Landreman, Engberg and Fernandez (2002) in their study comparing students in a diversity course to those in a general management course found that students in the diversity course were much more likely to be interested in taking action to address social inequities than those in the general management course. These studies and others show that students who experience diversity in college are more likely to have a “pluralistic orientation,” the ability to see the world from another’s perspective, have tolerance for difference, and the ability to work cooperatively with diverse others (Engberg, Meader & Hurtado, 2003). These are outcomes not only considered important for students’ general capacity to function well in an increasingly diverse society, but also for those students who enter professions that require cultural competency in daily practice.

This review of literature will explore evidence that justifies the consideration of a student's undergraduate diversity experience as a possible predictor of success in a Master of Social Work program, a field in which it is critical for individuals to be tolerant, open to others' views, and able to see things from another's perspective. The review includes research published on MSW admissions criteria, admissions processes in other graduate disciplines, outcomes of undergraduate diversity, and descriptions of three forms of diversity experience. Three of the core competencies from the Social Work Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, critical thinking, diversity, and human rights and social justice, are included along with literature for each competency area supporting their inclusion.

MSW Program Admissions Criteria

The first article to address the topic of MSW admissions criteria was published by Schubert in 1963 in the *Social Services Review*. Since then around 25 articles have been published, many of which focus on a relatively small number of criteria (i.e. applicant demographic information, personal statements, GRE scores, reference letters and past work experience), which have different, often conflicting, results (Dunlap, Henley, & Fraser, 1998). Pfouts and Henley (1977) identified students' potential for graduate school, post-college paid experience, gender, and quality of undergraduate education as the main factors of consideration for admissions. They found of those four factors, potential for graduate school, which included undergraduate GPA, was the most helpful in predicting success in the MSW program. Dunlap (1979) considered undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, social work experience, undergraduate degree, interview scores and reference letters and found the faculty interview and GPA to be the best predictors of

student success. Dunlap, Henley, and Fraser (1998) considered prior social work experience, undergraduate GPA, and GRE scores, and found students with high GRE scores and GPA were more likely to succeed in their graduate programs. Milner, McNeil and King (1984) considered minority graduate students' academic performance and found that the GRE was not a good predictor of success. Thomas, McCleary and Henry (2004) showed human service experience and letters of recommendation to be useful in predicting success in the field practicum, and GRE scores and undergraduate GPA to be good predictors of success for the classroom. GlenMaye and Oakes (2002) concurred that undergraduate GPA is a good predictor for academic success, but did not conclude on a good predictor for success in field. In their thorough review of the literature on social work admissions in the US, Ryan, Cleak and McCormick (2006) looked at 11 studies, including the ones listed above, considering social work admissions criteria and performance within social work programs. They found that of the seven studies considering prior academic performance, four reported correlations between undergraduate GPA and GPA within the graduate program. Five studies showed faculty ratings of application materials to be positively correlated with performance within the graduate program. Seven studies showed no association between prior social work experience and graduate school performance (Ryan et al., 2006). In their own study, Ryan, Cleak and McCormick (2006) considered the association between admissions criteria and first and second field placements within an Australian bachelor of social work program ($N=463$). They found that three predictor variables including age, work experience and positive non-academic references were statistically significant. Their findings and the overall review of the social work admissions criteria literature support

what Miller and Koerin found earlier in 1998 when they surveyed accredited MSW programs and concluded that most programs struggle with identifying useful admissions criteria and gate-keeping. With the exception of GPA as a predictor of classroom success (but not field), the results are inconsistent.

General Predictors for Success in Masters Level Programs.

As with social work admissions literature, very little research on admissions processes exists for graduate studies at large. Similarly, studies considered factors such as undergraduate GPA, experience, test scores, and references. They too provided mixed findings. One study of entering graduate students on probationary status at a medium-sized Midwestern university found that only GRE verbal scores and the nine-hour GPA (of graduate level courses) served as predictors for regular admission students (Nelson & Nelson, 1995). An older study focused on predictors of success for a Master of Public Administration program at another medium-sized Midwestern university (Thompson & Kobrak, 1983). Their findings showed that undergraduate GPA and job ranking were significant predictors, but only accounted for 16% of the variance in the graduate grade point average (Thompson & Kobrak, 1983). The University of Washington School of Nursing closely considered GRE scores as a predictor for student success in the graduate nursing school. The study used cumulative grade point average as the outcome indicator compared to GRE scores for 217 students (Katz, Motzer & Woods, 2009). Findings showed that test scores did not serve as good predictors for their program, and in fact presented a large barrier to the application process for their students (Katz, et al., 2009). A recent article entitled *A Test that Fails* published in *Nature* explored the challenges with using the GRE when making decisions about graduate admissions in science,

technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields (Miller & Stassun, 2014). Miller and Stassun reviewed several studies on graduate admissions for STEM fields and found weak correlations between high GRE scores and success in STEM fields. They argue that emphasizing the GRE results in the under admittance of women and minorities in these fields and recommend that graduate admissions committees focus more on grit and diligence.

Suitability for Social Work Profession.

Another way to understand admissions criteria for graduate social work programs is from the perspective of who has been determined unsuitable for the profession. A number of articles explore suitability for social work. Lyons (1999) defines professional suitability as having good understanding of social work knowledge, skills and values and performing appropriately in practice situations. Conversely, Madden (2000) defines unsuitability as the student who “exhibits emotional or mental instability that poses a risk of harm to the student or to potential clients or whose values are in clear and direct conflict with those of the social work profession” (p. 141). In their article on ethical and legal dilemmas regarding the admission of convicted felons, Haski-Leventhal, Gelles, and Cnaan (2010) state that social work educators are responsible for three gates to the profession including entry, education and graduation, but are not in control of the licensure gate. For this reason, they suggest that social work educators have a greater responsibility for ensuring only suitable candidates enter the profession (Haski-Leventhal, Gelles, & Cnaan, 2010). The consensus from the literature is that several criteria are relevant regarding unsuitability including performance problems,

incompatible ethics, and mental health problems or emotional instability (Koerin & Miller, 1995).

LaFrance, Gray and Herbert (2004) conducted a qualitative study of 10 social work field instructors utilizing both focus groups and interviews. The themes among the field instructors' responses suggested that maturity is important for success in the field, as is ability for transparent and open communication with others. Apathy and cynicism were seen as barriers to good practice. Interest in political action and awareness of broad societal conditions affecting clients were among the characteristics of strong students. Overall the researchers suggest the emphasis on academic ability within the admissions process be reversed with a focus on emotional intelligence and social attitudes congruent with social work practice (LaFrance, et al., 2004). In the study by Bogo, Regehr, Woodford, Hughes, Power and Regehr (2006) that reviewed field instructors' experiences with problem students, the field instructors stated the main issues they experienced included rigidity, defensiveness, and intolerance as well as students who were quiet and students who lacked empathy. Bogo et al. (2006) found that the student's approach to learning, ability to "conceptualize practice broadly," and relational abilities were as significant to field performance as operational skills. Pelech, Stalkner, Regehr and Jacobs (1999) looked at students who had experienced problems in the program, including those who had an issue in their field placement, extended practicum, poor academic performance, and problems with interpersonal relationships. They found GPA to be a positive predictor and extensive social work experience to be a negative predictor of student success (Pelech, et al., 1999).

As summarized earlier, other than undergraduate GPA, few criteria have consistently correlated with student academic performance in the MSW classroom, (GlenMaye & Oakes, 2002; Thomas, et al., 2004). Even less evidence is available for prediction of field outcomes within social work programs. Given the scarcity of academic predictors for success in MSW programs and particularly field placements, assessing diversity experiences may help us better understand suitability for social work programs and ultimately the profession.

Diversity Rationale

The outcomes of diversity in higher education have been the focus of debate and the subject of research for the last several decades and were recently in the national spotlight again with the Supreme Court case, *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (2011). Research supports the diversity rationale introduced by Justice Powell in his opinion on *Regents of the University of California v Bakke* in 1978 which refers to the idea that a diverse student body improves the overall quality of the educational environment. Studies show that students who attend racially diverse institutions and engage with peers who are different from themselves experience cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal gains that are helpful during and after college (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). In addition, research shows that institutions with a diverse student body experience a broad range of outcomes for their students including enhanced learning and civic outcomes. Diversity experiences have also been linked with the acquisition of democratic skills for students including the endorsement of overarching ideals of justice and equality, committing to these ideals, and taking action to support and defend them when faced with violations of justice and equality (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Three Forms of Diversity Experience.

According to Patricia Gurin's pioneering research on diversity within higher education, there are three types of diversity experiences: structural, informal interactional, and classroom (1999). Structural diversity refers to the composition of the student population. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Peterson and Allen define it as the "numerical representation of diverse groups" on a college campus (1999). Informal interactional diversity involves the opportunity to interact with diverse peers with a focus on the frequency and the quality of interactions (Fisher, 2007; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Most of these interactions occur outside the classroom and involve activities such as experiences in residence halls, campus events, and participation in student organizations and social groups (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). The last form of diversity experience, classroom diversity, refers to the incorporation of content knowledge about diverse groups in the curriculum and the opportunities to interact with diverse peers in the classroom (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002, Fisher, 2007).

Structural Diversity. Chang (2001) examined links between racial diversity and positive educational outcomes among African American, Asian American, Hispanic and White college students. Findings included that socialization across race and discussions of race and related issues were positive educational experiences. Overall, campus diversity had a positive impact on students' college experiences. In 2004, Chang, along with Astin, and Kim, using a national longitudinal data set, considered the relevance of cross-racial interaction at college campuses. Findings showed that these interactions have positive effects on students' intellectual, social and civic development.

Looking at data from the Preparing College Students for a Diverse Democracy project, Victor Saenz (2010) explores the impact of diverse college experiences on cyclical effects of segregation. He examines data collected from 4,697 students from nine public research universities from across the country. An important finding from his work was the positive predictive strength of structural diversity on positive cross-racial interactions. Similar to what Chang, Astin and Kim (2004) found, Saenz reports that more diverse institutions not only enhance opportunities for cross-racial interactions, but also facilitate more positive contexts in which such interactions occur. In conclusion, the findings showed that students who come into college with segregated precollege experiences describe positive effects with their levels of interaction with diverse peers when attending structurally diverse universities (Saenz, 2010).

Chang, Denson, Saenz and Misa (2006) considered students with higher levels of cross-racial interaction during college or had peers who had higher levels of interaction and found they experienced positive effects on their openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence. Students gained in these areas even if their own levels of cross-racial interactions were lower, showing that structural diversity of the institution does have an impact on the entire student population. This study included data from 19,667 students at 227 four-year institutions surveyed upon entering college in 1994 and again in 1998.

Pike, Kuh, and Gonyea (2007) evaluated the diversity rationale for affirmative action by looking at the direct and indirect relationships between structural diversity and students' gains in understanding people from diverse backgrounds. Their results from an analysis of data from 428 colleges and universities participating in the National Survey of

Student Engagement showed structural diversity was indirectly related to students' increased understanding of people different from themselves.

Wolfe and Flether (2013) used Wave 3 of Add Health data ($N = 2844$) collected in 2001 – 2002 to consider the impact of structural diversity on a number of outcomes including years of schooling, earnings, family income, composition of friends, and probability of voting. The researchers found a positive link between attending a diverse college or university and higher earnings and family income. There was not a link between structural diversity and additional years of schooling or probability of voting. The research on structural diversity shows that diverse student populations on college campuses contribute to a number of educational and democratic outcomes.

Informal Interactional and Classroom Diversity. In their foundational 2002 article mentioned earlier, Gurin et al. explore the relationship between students' undergraduate diversity peer experiences in institutions of higher education and the impact on their educational outcomes. In this study, the authors examine the effects of classroom diversity and informal interactional diversity among African American, Asian American, Latino/s and White students on democracy outcomes and learning. Their findings from single- and multi-institutional data, over a four year period, showed consistent results concluding that the experiences students have with diversity positively affect important learning and democracy outcomes. Democracy outcomes refer to the students' capacity and motivation to participate in an increasingly diverse society, also referred to as community and democratic citizenship (Gurin et al., 2002).

Hu and Kuh (2003), using data from the College Student Experience Questionnaire from 53,756 undergraduates at 124 universities, examined the effects of

interactional diversity experience for white students and students of color. Their findings showed whites had larger gains from interactional diversity than did students of color including gains in general education, science and technology, and diversity competence. The only exception was within vocational preparation in which students of color benefitted more from diversity interactions. The researchers suggest that whites may have benefitted more because students of color, already being the minority, are accustomed to interacting with people different from themselves, muting the college interactional diversity experience (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

Hurtado (2007), with data from the Preparing College Students for a Diverse Democracy project, a long-term research project following thousands of college students throughout the country, found students who had positive, informal interactions with diverse peers had higher scores in complex thinking, cultural and social awareness, and perspective taking skills. Increases also occurred with students' pluralistic orientation, interest in poverty issues, and concern for the public good.

Social Work Core Competency Areas

The curriculum required by the U.S. accreditation agency of social work programs, Council on Social Work Education is organized around 10 core competency areas. The MSW program standards provide thresholds for professional competence and prepare social workers for advanced practice (CSWE, 2008). The competencies measure practice behaviors which include knowledge, values and skills related to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Each competency includes a description of the characteristic being assessed and the resulting practice behavior. The core competency areas include professional identity, values and ethics, critical thinking,

diversity, human rights and social justice, research, human behavior and the social environment theory, social policy, professional context and practice (CSWE, 2008).

Because of the research supporting them, competency areas of interest for this study are critical thinking, diversity, and human rights and social justice.

Competency Area One - Critical Thinking. Educational Policy 2.1.3 – Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments. *Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information.*

There is much to be found in the literature that links diversity experience and critical thinking. In her longitudinal study of students who studied with someone from a different racial/ethnic background, Hurtado found students had improved critical thinking skills (2001). Chang, Hakuta, Jones and Witt (2003) conclude that higher-order thinking skills are one of the many benefits of diverse campuses after summarizing research evidence on racial dynamics in higher education.

Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) in their article on the relationship between students' experiences with diverse peers and educational outcomes go into further explanation about the link between critical thinking and diversity. They tested their diversity theories using two longitudinal databases, the Michigan Student Survey database and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program. The Michigan Student Survey included data from students who entered the University of Michigan in 1990, with a follow-up survey in 1994. This sample included 1,129 students. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program included 11,383 students from 184 institutions who were

surveyed in 1985 and again in 1989. One of many findings from this research is that critical thinking is promoted by experiences with diversity. They explain that diversity in the student population provides discontinuity, which then spurs active thinking processes, moving students away from more narrow worldviews and towards the consideration of others' views (Gurin, et al., 2002; Hurtado, Dey, & Gurin, 2003).

Development theory supports this idea as does Gurin's 1999 summary of research presented to the Supreme Court. When students encounter new and different situations, people or experiences, they cannot rely on familiar ways of thinking and acting. To grow cognitively, individuals need conflict and contradictions that a diverse environment provides (Gurin, 1999). Gurin discussed how exposure to diversity, particularly racial diversity, creates conditions for students in which they are less likely to move into "automatic" mode with thinking and instead be more engaged.

In a recent study, Loes, Pascarella and Umbach (2012) analyzed first year data from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) which includes longitudinal data from 19 institutions within 11 different states and four general regions. One outcome of interest within the survey was critical thinking measured by the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency. The predictor variables within their study included scales measuring first year students' experience with classroom diversity and interactional diversity. While they did not have statistically significant findings for classroom diversity, the researchers did find that students who entered college with low levels of academic preparation experienced significant increases in critical thinking benefits based on their interactional diversity experiences (Loes et al., 2012).

Competency Area Two – Diversity. Educational Policy 2.1.4 – Engage diversity and difference in practice. *Social workers understand how diversity characterizes and shapes the human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim.*

In order for social workers to be able to engage with diversity and difference in their practice, they must be aware of and willing to address their biases, be open to other perspectives and be able to work with people very different from themselves. There is much evidence that a significant benefit of diversity is movement towards a more democratic perspective in which individuals are able to be open to alternative views, experiences, and belief systems very different from their own. Sylvia Hurtado, along with other researchers in the field, has enhanced our understanding of how pluralistic orientation outcomes experienced from diversity. Pluralistic orientation includes increased tolerance of others with different beliefs, increased ability to work cooperatively with diverse people, increased openness to having views challenged, increased ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues, and increased ability to see the world from another person's perspective (Hurtado, 1999). Gurin (1999) also summarized these benefits including the ability to understand and consider multiple

perspectives, to better deal with conflict, and to learn about and appreciate common values in pursuit of the common good.

Support from the literature also comes from Dovidio, Gaertner, Stewart, Esses, Vergert and Hodson (2004) in which they explored the impact of the exposure to diverse classroom content and interactions with diverse peers and the development of positive attitudes and the reduction in bias for students. In their study, diverse environments in which students are learning and interacting with each other help address and reduce the anxiety and feelings of discomfort people experience with groups that are different from themselves (Dovidio, et al., 2004). Hurtado, Dey, Gurin and Gurin (2003) had similar findings in their research on racially and ethnically diverse college environments. In their study involving two large databases, one from the University of Michigan, and the other a national database, the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, they found that diverse college environments contribute to students' capacity to consider multiple and different perspectives and to change behavior.

Levin, van Laar, and Sidanius (2003) found that in contrast to those students who had only racially homogenous friendships, undergraduates with friends outside of their race were less biased and anxious toward those who were racially different than themselves. In the National Study for Student Learning, Hurtado (1997) considered students who had interaction with diverse peers. Using a longitudinal college student cohort from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, Hurtado found that the strongest effects of informal interactional diversity is acceptance of people from different backgrounds, an increase in overall cultural awareness, and tolerance of people with

different beliefs. Students also showed greater openness to diverse perspectives and a willingness to rethink their own beliefs (Hurtado, 1997).

In a recent study, Schueths, Gladney, Crawford, Bass and Moore (2012) conducted a qualitative study in which they reviewed student evaluations from required diversity courses at a predominately white U.S. public university. The researchers reviewed two years of data from 29 instructors and found a wide range of themes. One of the themes included the development of greater intellectual openness and social empathy for diverse others. Students felt the courses had helped them generate a sense of critical reflection on their own positions and other forms of diversity around them (Schueths et al., 2012).

In their more recent study focused on pluralistic orientation for preparation for a diverse workforce, Hurtado and DeAngelo (2012) used the 2009 College Senior Survey ($N=25,602$) studying student outcomes focused on civic awareness and complex thinking skills for a diverse democracy. Results showed positive cross-racial interactions, socialization with someone from another race, and exposure to diverse opinions, cultures and values were positively associated with changes in pluralistic orientation. Students who experienced “real-world” work through volunteering, community service, leadership activities or activism also showed positive changes in pluralistic orientation. Civic awareness, defined as the understanding of global, national and local issues and problems as well as students’ thinking about a diverse democracy, was rated high by students who attended cultural awareness workshops, took a diversity or cultural studies course, participated in community service or studied abroad.

Competency Area Three - Commitment to Social Justice. Educational Policy 2.1.5 – Advance human rights and social and economic justice. *Each person, regardless of position in society, has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care and education. Social workers recognize the global interconnections of oppression and are knowledgeable about theories of justice and strategies to promote human and civil rights. Social work incorporates social justice practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice.*

A distinguishing characteristic of the profession of social work, as well as an important part of its history, is its commitment to human rights and social and economic justice. Going back to the initiation of Hull House by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889, a focus on addressing social issues impacting the most vulnerable populations in society has been the primary focus of the profession. Social Justice is listed as one of six core values of social work in the National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics (NASW, 2013).

Whitla, Orfield, Silen, Teperow, Howard and Reed (2003) surveyed medical students from Harvard Medical School and the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine about the impact of racial diversity in their educational programs and found that diversity enhanced the overall experiences of the students. Gallup interviewers contacted students enrolled in all four years of the medical schools, with a total reach to 639 students, 338 from Harvard and 301 from University of California, San Francisco. One of their findings relates to social justice. Students responded that having a diverse student body increased their concern for treating a diverse population, access to care for

the underserved and concern about the equity of the healthcare delivery system (Whitla, et al., 2003). In the qualitative study cited earlier by Schueths et al. (2012), students similarly shared that taking courses about and with diverse others helped them develop greater awareness of dynamics of social inequalities including prejudice, cultural and gender bias and racism, and in some cases students were inspired to participate in social activism.

Nagda and Gurin (2003a) researched the effects of intergroup dialogue, a type of educational group that brings diverse students together in a small group environment on college campuses. In two studies in which pretest and posttest surveys were used, they found that as a result of being in the intergroup dialogue diversity groups, students think more about their membership in social groups and more about larger societal and historical influences on their behavior (2003a). In another study, Nagda and Gurin (2003b) considered first year undergraduate students' understanding of diversity. They compared those who were in the structured diversity groups with other students and found those who participated in the groups were much more likely to think about racial and ethnic inequalities than those who did not participate. Nagda and Gurin have continued to study the benefits of the intergroup dialogue groups and repeatedly find that students who participate in the dialogue groups are more engaged and committed to social justice than those who do not participate.

As stated earlier, social workers impact peoples' lives in significant ways. Students who have opportunities to attend college with people who are different from themselves experience positive changes, some of which could translate into good

preparation for helping professions in which a pluralistic orientation is beneficial and perhaps even necessary.

Summary of Literature Review

What we know about admissions is that there are few consistent predictors for student success in the MSW program or for general graduate admissions. MSW programs struggle with identifying useful admissions criteria beyond GPA, which has shown support only for performance in the classroom, not field (GlenMaye & Oaks, 2002; Ryan, Cleak & McCormick, 2006; Thomas, McCleary, & Henry, 2004). Also, there are gaps in the literature related to strong predictors of success in graduate social work programs. We also know that admission offices play an important gatekeeping role in a profession in which critical thinking, openness to diversity and consideration of social justice is important (GlenMaye & Oaks, 2002; Kindle & Colby, 2012). From the diversity literature, we know many benefits come from diverse campuses. Students who have exposure to people who are different from themselves experience positive benefits to their critical thinking skills (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). Diversity helps people move away from “automatic” modes of thinking to higher levels of cognitive engagement (Gurin, 1999). Much of the research in this area has shown that students who have experience with diversity have strong pluralistic orientation outcomes including the increased tolerance of others with different beliefs, increased ability to work cooperatively with diverse people, increased openness to having views challenged, increased ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues, and increased ability to see the world from another person’s perspective (Engberg, Meader & Hurtado, 2003). Participating in a diverse school environment also has an impact on one’s concern for

social inequities and interest in social justice (Whitla, Orfield, Silen, Teperow, Howard & Reed 2003).

We do not know as much about linkages between these types of experiences, especially at the undergraduate level, and one's performance in an advanced degree program and/or profession. We also do not know if the experiences are needed for preparation for specific graduate programs. One might be able to "catch up" on the benefits within a graduate program, if the graduate program provides opportunities for engagement with diverse others or engagement in content about diverse others.

However, because there is evidence that supports the consideration of these types of experiences in relation to the skills and attributes required for effective, competent social work practice, it is an area worth considering as an additional predictor of success in graduate social work programs. In this study, the impact of students' undergraduate diversity experiences will be evaluated against three of the ten competencies identified by CSWE: critical thinking, diversity and social justice. Both structural diversity and informal interactional diversity will be explored.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the association between students' undergraduate diversity experiences and their success, as defined by graduate GPA and field evaluation scores, within a graduate social work program. There are three guiding questions for this study. The questions are 1) Does structural diversity of an MSW students' undergraduate institution predict student success in a graduate social work program?; 2) To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?; and 3) What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college how did those impact their success in the program?

Study Design for Research Question One: *Does (ethnic/racial) structural diversity of a MSW students' undergraduate institution predict students' success (graduate grade point average and field evaluation scores in three competency areas) in the graduate social work program?*

This part of the study is a secondary data analysis, utilizing existing educational records from students admitted to a graduate social work program at a large, urban public university in the Southwestern part of the United States between fall 2010 and fall 2013. This program, which will be referred to as the Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW) admits between 150 – 180 students each year. The majority of the students are admitted in the fall to one of four enrollment options: a full-time day program, a flexible part-time program, a weekend college, and an accelerated program called “advanced standing” for

students who hold a BSW degree. The full-time and part-time enrollment option students are required to complete a one semester foundation experience which includes a foundation field placement which spans two semesters. By the end of the first year of the full program, students have completed a total of 420 hours of field experience in a social service agency with supervision from an advanced level social worker. Students complete an advanced level field experience at the end of their final year of the program. This field placement requires 480 hours. Students are evaluated at the end of each field semester, two in the foundation setting and two in the advanced setting.

Advanced standing students are exempt from the foundation courses and their first field semester is waived. They are required to complete the second field semester and are evaluated at the end of each semester as well, one in the foundation setting (second field semester), and two in the advanced setting (third and fourth field semesters). While foundation students are required to begin the program in the fall, advanced standing students can begin in fall or spring.

The GSSW Field Education Office worked for several years with an advisory board which included academics and practitioners on a set of rubrics for each field semester. The rubrics assist with addressing inter-rater reliability concerns common within evaluation processes. Rubrics for the first two field semesters have been in place since fall 2010. All students within this data set were evaluated after rubrics were in place.

For the first research question, a number of predictors including undergraduate campus ethnic diversity scores were considered as predictors and compared to MSW

students' field scores at the end of their second semester of field work of the MSW program and the students' overall grade point average from the MSW program.

Sample for Research Question One. The original dissertation proposal suggested considering students admitted between fall 2008 and fall 2013 which would have included approximately 1030 students. The year 2008 selected because it was the year in which the accreditation agency, Council on Social Work Education, for social work programs implemented its current set of competencies on which the field evaluations are based as well as the year in which the GSSW implemented a new curriculum. However, field evaluations and application materials were not available in either hard copy or electronically for students admitted prior to fall 2010. For this reason, the sample now includes students admitted between fall 2010 to fall 2013. During this time, a total of 703 students entered the GSSW. From this group, 18 students attended undergraduate universities outside of the United States for which U.S. News does not calculate a campus ethnic diversity index score and were thus excluded from the study. Forty six students were excluded because their undergraduate college graduation date fell prior to the commencement of the U.S. News campus ethnic diversity index score or because institutional data were not accessible due to the time in which they graduated. Another 64 students were missing field scores due to dismissal or withdrawal from the program prior to the second field evaluation or had not yet completed their second field semester. Five hundred and sixty four students remained in the sample ($N=564$).

Due to the fact that some of those within the sample of 564 were current students and did not yet have a final MSW GPA, the sample was divided into two groups for the regression models focused on final GPA as a dependent variable. One group consists of

409 graduates and the other includes 155 current students. Information for each sample follows.

Overall Sample. Of the overall sample (N=564), 65% were full-time students and 35% were in a part-time program. Forty eight students (9%) were male, while the majority of the class was female with 516 (91%) students. Students' ethnicity included 37% white, 34% black, 22% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 1% Native American, and 1% unknown. The age range of the student group was from 20 years of age to 63 years of age with 69% of students 20 - 29 years of age, 19% of students 30 to 39 years of age, 9% of students 40 – 49 years of age and 3% older than 50. The average age of students was 28 years. Ninety six percent of the students were admitted unconditionally while 4% were conditionally admitted. Twenty three percent were defined as advanced standing, admitted to an accelerated program and 77% was part of the full program. More detailed information on the sample is displayed in Table 1.

Students GRE scores ranged from .5 to 6.0 for writing scores, 130 to 170 for verbal scores, and 130 to 163 for quantitative scores, and from 261 to 323 for total verbal and quantitative scores. Students entered with an average GRE writing score of 3.4, GRE verbal score of 147, GRE quantitative score of 142 and total GRE score of 288. The average undergraduate GPA of students was 3.4 (on a 4.0 scale). Students ranged in their level of full-time, part-time and volunteer experience. For full-time experience, 56% had none, 20% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 16% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 8% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. Students had less part-time experience. Ninety three students had no part-time experience, 5% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 2% had between 2 (25 months)

to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and less than 1% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. For volunteer experience, 43% had no experience, 46% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 9% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 2% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. U.S. News campus ethnic diversity index scores (on a scale from 0 – 1) representing the students' undergraduate institutions ranged from .06 to .76, with an average score of .54. The overall average scores on field evaluations, on a scale of 1 – 5, was a 4.3. Thirty six percent received a 5 (advanced) for the critical thinking field score, 50% for diversity, and 35% for human rights and social justice. Descriptive information on GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, work and volunteer related experience, enrollment status, campus ethnic diversity scores and field evaluation scores can be found in Table 2.

Table 1

RQ 1 Sample Demographics – Overall Sample (N=564)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	48	9
Female	516	91
<i>Total</i>	564	100
Part-time	196	35
Full-time	368	65
<i>Total</i>	564	100
Advanced Standing	129	23
Non-Advanced Standing	435	77
<i>Total</i>	564	100
Conditional	21	4
Unconditional	543	96
<i>Total</i>	564	100
White	211	37
Black	191	34
Hispanic	125	22
Asian	28	5
Native American	3	1
Unknown	6	1
<i>Total</i>	564	100
20 – 29 years old	387	69
30 – 39 years old	111	19
40 – 49 years old	48	9
50 years and older	18	3
<i>Total</i>	564	100

Table 2

RQ 1 Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
GRE W	564	.5	6.0	3.37	.82
GRE V	564	130	170	146.93	6.14
GRE Q	564	130	163	141.50	6.14
GRE T	564	261	323	288.43	12.89
Undergrad GPA	564	2.60	4.00	3.44	.314
Critical Thinking	564	2	5	4.27	.62
Diversity	564	3	5	4.46	.58
Social Justice	564	3	5	4.27	.59
Average of Total Field Scores	564	2.9	5.0	4.34	.44
Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	564	.06	.76	.54	.19
Full-time Experience	564	0	228	17.32	31.03
Part-time Experience	564	0	192	1.78	11.53
Volunteer Experience	564	0	276	9.95	19.41

Graduate Sample. From the overall sample, 409 students had a final MSW GPA. Of those 70% were full-time students and 30% were in a part-time program. Thirty five students (9%) were male, while the majority of the class was female with 374 (91%) students. Students' ethnicity included 37% white, 32% black, 24% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 1% Native American, and 1% unknown. The age range of the student group was from 21 years of age to 60 years of age with 68% of students 20 - 29 years of age, 20% of students 30 to 39 years of age, 9% of students 40 – 49 years of age and 3% older than 50. The average age of students was 29 years. Ninety seven percent of the students were admitted unconditionally while 3% were conditionally admitted. Twenty five percent

were defined as advanced standing, admitted to an accelerated program and 75% were part of the full program. More detailed information on the sample is displayed in Table 3.

Students' GRE scores ranged from .5 to 6.0 for writing scores, 130 to 170 for verbal scores, and 130 to 163 for quantitative scores, and from 261 to 323 for total verbal and quantitative scores. Students entered with an average GRE writing score of 3.4, GRE verbal score of 147, GRE quantitative score of 141 and total GRE score of 289. The average undergraduate GPA of students was 3.4 (on a 4.0 scale). Students ranged in their level of full-time, part-time and volunteer experience. For full-time experience, 57% had none, 22% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 14% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 7% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. Students had less part-time experience. Ninety four (94%) percent of students had no part-time experience, 4% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 2% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and less than 1% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. For volunteer experience, 45% had no experience, 45% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 9% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 1% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. U.S. News campus ethnic diversity index scores (on a scale from 0 – 1) representing the students' undergraduate institutions ranged from .06 to .76, with an average score of .54. The overall average scores on field evaluations, on a scale of 1 – 5, was a 4.4. Thirty eight (38%) percent received a 5 (advanced) for the critical thinking field score, 49% for diversity, and 38% for human rights and social justice. Descriptive information on GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, work and volunteer related experience,

enrollment status, campus ethnic diversity scores and field evaluation scores can be found in Table 4.

Table 3

RQ 1 Sample Demographics – Graduated Student Sample (N=409)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	35	9
Female	374	91
<i>Total</i>	409	100
Part-time	124	30
Full-time	285	70
<i>Total</i>	409	100
Advanced Standing	102	25
Non-Advanced Standing	307	75
<i>Total</i>	409	100
Conditional	13	3
Unconditional	396	97
<i>Total</i>	409	100
White	152	37
Black	132	32
Hispanic	96	24
Asian	22	5
Native American	2	1
Unknown	5	1
<i>Total</i>	409	100
20 – 29 years old	279	68
30 – 39 years old	84	20
40 – 49 years old	35	9
50 years and older	11	3
<i>Total</i>	409	100

Table 4

RQ 1 Descriptive Statistics of Graduated Students

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
GRE W	409	.5	6.0	3.41	.82
GRE V	409	130	170	147.06	7.95
GRE Q	409	130	163	141	6.25
GRE T	409	261	323	288.52	13.12
Undergrad GPA	409	2.60	4.00	3.44	.31
Critical Thinking	409	2	5	4.30	.62
Diversity	409	3	5	4.45	.57
Human Rights and Social Justice	409	3	5	4.30	.61
Average of Total Field Scores	409	3	5	4.37	.44
Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	409	.06	.76	.54	.19
Full-time Experience	409	0	228	15.57	29.68
Part-time Experience	409	0	192	1.83	12.81
Volunteer Experience	409	0	150	8.62	14.75

Current Student Sample. From the overall sample, 155 students were in their last half of the MSW program. For this group of students, their cumulative MSW GPA was recorded. Of this sample, 53% were full-time students and 47% were in a part-time program. Thirteen students (8%) were male, while the majority of the class, again, was female with 142 (92%) students. Students' ethnicity included 37% white, 38% black, 19% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 1% Native American, and 1% unknown. The age range of the student group was from 21 years of age to 63 years of age with 63% of students 20 - 29 years of age, 21% of students 30 to 39 years of age, 12% of students 40 – 49 years of age

and 4% older than 50. The average age of students was 30 years. Ninety five percent of the students were admitted unconditionally while 5% were conditionally admitted. Seventeen percent were defined as advanced standing and 83% were part of the full program. More detailed information on the sample is displayed in Table 5.

Students' GRE scores ranged from 1.0 to 6.0 for writing scores, 130 to 167 for verbal scores, and 130 to 160 for quantitative scores, and from 261 to 321 for total verbal and quantitative scores. Students entered with an average GRE writing score of 3.3, GRE verbal score of 147, GRE quantitative score of 142 and total GRE score of 288. The average undergraduate GPA of students was 3.4 (on a 4.0 scale). Students ranged in their level of full-time, part-time and volunteer experience. For full-time experience, 54% had none, 15% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 18% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 13% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. Students here also had less part-time experience. Ninety two (92%) percent of students had no part-time experience, 5% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 3% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience. No students had over 5 years of experience. For volunteer experience, 37% had no experience, 49% had 1 month to 2 years (24 months), 11% had between 2 (25 months) to 5 years (60 months) of experience, and 3% had over 5 years (61 months or more) of experience. U.S. News campus ethnic diversity index scores (on a scale from 0 – 1) representing the students' undergraduate institutions ranged from .10 to .76, with an average score of .54. The overall average scores on field evaluations, on a scale of 1 – 5, was a 4.3. Thirty percent (30%) received a 5 (advanced) for the critical thinking field score, 52% for diversity, and 27% for human rights and social justice. Descriptive information on GRE scores,

undergraduate GPA, work and volunteer related experience, enrollment status, campus ethnic diversity scores and field evaluation scores can be found in Table 6.

Table 5

RQ 1 Sample Demographics – Current Student Sample (N=155)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	13	8
Female	142	92
<i>Total</i>	155	100
Part-time	72	47
Full-time	83	53
<i>Total</i>	155	100
Advanced Standing	27	17
Non-Advanced Standing	128	83
<i>Total</i>	155	100
Conditional	8	5
Unconditional	147	95
<i>Total</i>	155	100
White	57	37
Black	59	38
Hispanic	29	19
Asian	8	4
Native American	1	1
Unknown	1	1
<i>Total</i>	155	100
20 – 29 years old	98	63
30 – 39 years old	33	21
40 – 49 years old	18	12
50 years and older	6	4
<i>Total</i>	155	100

Table 6

RQ 1 Descriptive Statistics for Current Students

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
GRE W	155	1.0	6.0	3.27	.81
GRE V	155	130	167	147	7.63
GRE Q	155	130	160	142	5.88
GRE T	155	261	321	288	12.30
Undergrad GPA	155	2.60	4.00	3.44	.33
Critical Thinking	155	2	5	4.20	.62
Diversity	155	3	5	4.46	.54
Human Rights and Social Justice	155	3	5	4.20	.54
Average of Total Field Scores	155	3	5	4.28	.43
Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	155	.10	.76	.54	.19
Full-time Experience	155	0	188	21.94	34.03
Part-time Experience	155	0	60	1.65	7.14
Volunteer Experience	155	0	276	13.45	27.97

Instrumentation for Research Question One.

Structural Diversity. The campus ethnic diversity index from *U.S. News* college and university rankings was used as a measurement of structural diversity of undergraduate institutions. Wolfe and Fletcher (2013) used a similar measurement in their study on estimating the benefits from university-level diversity in which they ask whether attending a more diverse university influences a variety of outcomes including retention in college, earnings post-college, family income, voting and composition of friends. The *U.S. News* campus ethnic diversity index ranges from 0.0 to 1.0, with 1.0 representing the highest level of diversity for a college campus (“U.S. News Campus

Ethnic Diversity,” n.d.). The categories used for the U.S. News calculation of the diversity index score include Black or African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian Pacific Islander, White (non-Hispanic), and multiracial. The basis of the methodology for the campus ethnic diversity index is from the work of Philip Meyer and Shawn McIntosh published in their article “The USA Today Index of Ethnic Diversity” (1992). Meyer and McIntosh created the index based on the total proportion of minority students within a university, leaving out international students, and the mix of all groups of students (1992). U.S. News publishes a new list of universities each year with updated diversity index scores on their website.

To capture the diversity of the institution during the general timeframe in which each student graduated, diversity index scores were assigned to a time band covering increments of 5 years, going back to 1996.² For example, a student who graduated from college in 2009 will be assigned a score from the 2013 *US News* diversity data. See Table 7 for details.

Examples of campus ethnic diversity scores include: University of Wisconsin – Madison’s score was a .29 for the year 2013, University of Texas – Austin had a score of .57 in the year 2007 and Rutgers University – Newark, which consistently has a high campus ethnic diversity score, was the highest in 2013 with a score of .77.

² US News began the campus ethnic diversity scores in 1993.

Table 7

U.S. News Campus Ethnic Diversity Index Time Bands

Time Bands	Year on which Campus Ethnic Diversity Score is Based
2008 – 2013	2013
2002 – 2007	2007
1996 – 2001	2001

Field Evaluation Scores. Students are evaluated four different times during the MSW program, once for each semester in which they are in a field assignment. Students are assigned to a foundation placement for the first two semesters and an advanced placement for the last two semesters of the program. The field evaluation focuses on the ten competency areas determined by CSWE in which students must show satisfactory progress each semester in order to continue in the program. The areas of evaluation include: professional identity; values and ethics; critical thinking; diversity, human rights and social justice; research; Human Behavior in the Social Environment theory; social policy; professional context and practice (CSWE, 2008). Each competency includes a description of characteristic knowledge, values, skills and the resulting practice behaviors that may be used to operationalize the curriculum (CSWE, 2008). Individual social work programs make decisions on how to implement and measure the competencies. At the GSSW, students are evaluated on all 10 competency areas, along with one additional competency area, professional behavior, at the conclusion of each semester in which they are in a field placement. For each competency, students are ranked on a 5 point scale. The ratings are, from lowest to highest, Unacceptable Progress (UP), Insufficient Progress

(IP), Emerging Competence (EC), Competence (C), Advanced Competence (AC). Scores are assigned to each individual area. For this study, scores were initially converted to a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 representing Unacceptable Progress (UP) and 5 representing Advanced Competence (AC).

Because of findings in the diversity literature that support their inclusion, three competency areas are of interest for this study: critical thinking, diversity, and human rights and social justice. Students receive one rating in each of these areas based on the scale described above. Field evaluation scores were obtained from students' second evaluation period. The second evaluation period marks the end of the student's foundation field experience. The field evaluation instrument and rubrics are included in the appendix. For these analyses, because of score inflation within the evaluations, (the majority of scores were 3 or above on a 5 point scale), the scores for Critical Thinking, Diversity, and Human Rights and Social Justice were converted from a continuous variable to a dichotomous variable (Advanced and Non-advanced). The advanced category included students who received a rating of advanced (5) in a particular competency area. Non-advanced included those who received a score of 4 or below.

Academic Performance. Academic performance is measured by a cumulative GPA at the time of graduation or the completion of the students' last semester of the MSW program prior to the analysis. To control for prior academic ability, undergraduate GPA and GRE scores were also considered. As the field evaluation requires an assessment of the students' overall progress in all competency areas of the MSW program, the average of all eleven competency scores for each student were included as a measure. For this variable, the scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 representing

Unacceptable Progress (UP) and 5 representing Advanced Competence (AC) was used for the analysis.

Prior Social Work Related Experience. Related experience was disaggregated and coded as three independent variables: 1) full-time paid related experience, 2) part-time paid related experience and 3) volunteer related experience, including nonpaid internships. The number of months in which students were involved in these three activities, based on information available on the students' resumes submitted at the time of admission, were counted and recorded as the data point. If admission materials were not available for a student, information was gathered from the students' application for their first field experience, with the month of their entry into the program as the ending point for experience. For experiences in which only the years are listed (example 2012 – 2013), the experience was counted as a full year or 12 months.

Experience was counted if it included more than simple exposure to a certain population or setting. For example, months of employment as a secretary in a social service setting were not included in experience. Also, experience that was occurred a single time was not counted. For example, assistance at a day long food drive was not counted. Experience in related professions that requiring some overlapping skills but are distinct from social work were not counted for this study but certainly could be an additional variable in a future study. For example, months of experience as a nurse were not counted. If no description was listed regarding the experience, nor time frame, the experience was not included.

To address reliability issues, a faculty member of the GSSW admissions committee reviewed 20 resumes of the 564 students' admission materials. Correlation

statistics were run to understand inter-rater reliability. See table 8 for more details.

Comparisons of the reviews allowed for discussion and clarification of the boundaries to consider for defining experience. For example, students inconsistently listed internship experiences as part of employment and part of volunteer experience. A decision was made to include internship as part of volunteer experience. Some discussion occurred regarding exposure versus experience and specifically the types of experience in which social workers engage. A decision was made to include only experience in which students had an opportunity for some skill and knowledge development related to vulnerable populations. For example, experience working at a summer camp was not included, but working at a summer camp for at-risk children was included.

Examples of what were included for full and part-time paid experience are a direct support staff position at a psychiatric facility, a child welfare specialist at Children's Protective Services, a child life specialist at a hospital and a case worker for Mental Health Mental Retardation agency. Examples of volunteer experience are a social work intern at a hospice organization or a center for children with disabilities, bereavement group facilitator for a grief center, a Child Advocates volunteer, and a volunteer for a crisis hotline center.

Table 8

Reliability Coefficient for Full-time, Part-time and Volunteer Experience

Experience	Coefficient, r
Full-time	.99
Part-time	.30
Volunteer	.72

Procedures for Research Question One. With permission from administration of the college and approval from the university's IRB office, secondary data was obtained from the GSSW Admissions Office, the GSSW Field Office, and the university's electronic student information system. From each student record, undergraduate institution information, GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, enrollment status within MSW program, advanced standing and conditional admission status, and race and ethnicity were gathered. The name and graduation date was gathered from each student's record in order to assign a campus ethnic diversity score for each record. Information on students' employment and volunteer experience was gathered from their admission file as well as from their applications for field placement. From field evaluations, scores from the three competency areas including critical thinking, diversity, and human rights and social justice and the average of all competency scores were converted to a 5 point scale and recorded. Grades achieved in the MSW program at the conclusion of the students' graduation or final semester were obtained from the GSSW student information system and entered. All records were de-identified with names removed and a unique identifier code assigned to each record. De-identified data was transposed from the systems listed above and into SPSS for analysis.

Analytical Approach for Research Question One. A series of regression analyses were conducted to answer the first research question. The primary predictor variable of interest is the campus ethnic diversity score. Control variables include GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, race/ethnicity, enrollment status, conditional admission and advanced standing status. The dependent variables included the three separate field evaluation scores, the students' average of all 11 competency scores on their field evaluation, and the MSW GPA.

Study Design for Research Question Two: *“To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?”*

For research question two of this study, the same secondary data set utilizing existing educational records from students admitted to a graduate social work program at a large, urban public university in the Southwestern part of the United States between fall 2010 and fall 2013 was used. The focus of this question was on the mediation effect of experience with the students' level of diversity at their undergraduate campus.

Sample for Research Question Two. For this question, the same group of students described above for research question 1 who entered the GSSW between 2010 and 2013 were considered. See Table 1 for sample demographics.

Instrumentation for Research Question Two. For research question two, the independent variables of interest are prior social work related experience and the campus ethnic diversity score as well as the six outcome variables considered earlier including field evaluation scores from three competency areas, critical thinking, diversity, and

human rights and social justice, the average of all competency scores, MSW GPA for graduates and MSW GPA for current students. See table 2 for descriptive statistics.

Procedures for Research Question Two. With permission from administration of the college and approval from the university's IRB office, secondary data was obtained from the GSSW Admissions Office, the GSSW Field Office, and the university's electronic student information system. The name and graduation date was gathered from each student's record in order to assign a campus ethnic diversity score for each record. Information on students' employment and volunteer experience was gathered from their admission file as well as from their applications for field placement. From field evaluations, scores from the three competency areas including critical thinking, diversity, and human rights and social justice and the average of all competency scores were converted to a 5 point scale and recorded. Grades achieved in the MSW program at the conclusion of the students' graduation or final semester were obtained from the GSSW student information system and entered. All records were de-identified with names removed and a unique identifier code assigned to each record. De-identified data was transposed from the systems listed above and into SPSS for analysis.

Analytical Approach for Research Question Two. Several regression analyses were used to analyze data for question two. Baron and Kenny (1986) recommend a four step process to determine mediation effects. They suggest three simple regression analyses, to better understand the relationships between the variables of interest. If there are significant relationships, then a multiple regression analysis will be conducted to learn about partial or full mediation of prior related social work experience. These four steps were conducted for each dependent variable including the three separate field

evaluation scores, the students' average of all 11 competency scores on their field evaluation, and the MSW GPA.

Study Design for Research Question Three: *“What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the program?”*

For the third research question, interviews were conducted to learn more about the types of diversity experiences successful students participated in during college (if any) and how those experiences may have contributed to their success within a graduate program of social work.

Sample for Research Question Three. Purposive sampling was utilized to select five important cases that provide insights to the background experiences of current successful students. Students currently enrolled in the MSW program were selected based on their GPA, field evaluation scores, and participation in the college. Staff of the Student Affairs Office at the GSSW were asked to identify 20-30 successful students who have high grade point averages, high scores on their field evaluations, are in their final year of the program, and are actively involved in the MSW program. Staff was also asked to consider diversity of gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and enrollment status for the sample.

Participants included 4 full-time students and 1 part-time student. One of the five students had transferred from another MSW program halfway through her degree program. The group included 2 Hispanic students, 1 white student, 1 black student and one Hispanic/white student. One of the participants was male. The other four were female. Two of the students identified as LGBT during the interview. Two of the

students speak more than one language. The ages of the participants were 24, 26, 28, 33 and 46. The graduate GPA of the students ranged from 3.86 to 4.0. Additional information about each participant is provided in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation for Research Question Three.

Informal Interactional Diversity. A protocol for exploring this question about informal interactional diversity experiences developed from findings in the literature and from findings from a prior project conducted by the researcher was created and used for interviews. Several studies were considered in developing the protocol looking first at Astin's work (1993) on college students' "diversity activities" in which he generates a list of categories. Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado (2007) added to Astin's work with a study focused on factors that influence positive college students' interactions across race, resulting in a list including diversity co-curricular activities, diversity courses, opportunities for dialogue between students of different backgrounds, service learning courses, academic support services and participation with faculty who demonstrated interest in their development. Other examples of diversity activities specify socializing with someone of another race and taking cultural study classes such as women's or ethnic studies (Saenz et al., 2007). Hurtado and DeAngelo (2012) examine college experiences that foster civic awareness and skills needed for a diverse democracy in their study examining national surveys, which includes racial/ethnic interaction, curricular activities and civic activities. They also consider experiences that foster pluralistic orientation including racial/ethnic interactions and student activities. In the study by Hu and Kuh (2003), the authors focus on interactional diversity experiences. Their questions, scored on a four point Likert scale, included items about becoming acquainted and/or having

discussions with students whose race or ethnic background are different, acquainted with students from another country, engaging in discussions with students whose philosophy of life or values are different, and discussions with people of different political or religious beliefs.

The interview protocol also includes questions about students' perceived status as part of the minority or majority at their undergraduate institution, the impact of their status within their undergraduate experience and possible benefits and challenges. This set of questions follows up from a finding in an earlier research project in which students who identified as part of the minority group in some way during college had expressed a strong sense of empathy for other minority groups as well as increased opportunities for discussion and interaction with other diverse groups (Mollhagen, 2014). Another finding from the prior candidacy project was that successful MSW students were more likely to include working with diverse populations or settings that value inclusivity as part of their graduate school application statement (Mollhagen, 2014). For this reason, questions about future goals were included in the interview protocol for this project.

Procedures for Research Question Three. Staff of the Student Affairs Office at the GSSW identified and emailed 30 successful students who have high grade point averages, high scores on their field evaluations, are in their final year of the program, and are actively involved in the college. The staff also considered diversity of gender, race and ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and enrollment status for the sample. Within the email, students who were interested in participating in the study were instructed to contact the researcher directly. From the 30 students, 13 responded to the researcher expressing interest in the study. The researcher selected a total of 8 students, based on

diversity of gender, race, age, sexual orientation (if known) and enrollment status. Two of the students were unable to interview during the time frame in which the interviews were taking place. One student did not respond. Interviews were completed with five students. Each student who participated in the interview completed a consent form. Face to face interviews with each student lasting 30 to 45 minutes took place. Interviews were conducted in a quiet office and were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

After data from interviews were collected and transcribed, transcriptions were de-identified. Names and other identifying information were removed or replaced with pseudonyms and a unique identifier code was assigned to each record. Names and identifiers were stored in a separate password protected document. After interview transcripts were de-identified, they were stored within a password protected computer.

Analytic Approach for Research Question Three. A thematic analysis was used for Research Question 3. Thematic analysis is not simply a process to be utilized within other qualitative approaches, but is a method in itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis provides a process for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest & MacQueen, 2008). The prevalence of a theme may not be defined quantitatively but rather for its importance in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While the literature review for this study provided a broad conceptual framework for what types of themes may be present, an inductive approach was used for the analysis resulting in a richer description of the data.

The process for thematic analysis involves 6 phases and begins with a general review of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher for this study began the analysis with some familiarity with the data as she conducted and transcribed all

interviews. For the transcripts, the researcher included a verbatim account of the words spoken as well as notes of nonverbal communications. To become even more familiar with the data, the researcher reread the interviews multiple times. Toward later readings of the interviews, the researcher took notes marking ideas for coding. The second phase of thematic analysis involves generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this phase the researcher labeled data with short words or phrases that captured interesting and relevant ideas related to the research question. The result was a list of raw codes from each interview. Coding was done manually, not with the assistance of a software program. The researcher started coding by writing notes on the texts under review and then moved segments of data to index cards. The cards were useful for organizing codes in later phases. For data segments relevant to more than one idea, they were coded twice or several times. In phase 3 connections between the codes were made and codes were sorted into themes or categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher used the index cards on which data segments and codes were written to sort the information. Through the sorting process, relationships between ideas emerged and levels of themes started to take place. The outcome of this phase was stacks of index cards organized by prospective themes and subthemes. Themes were identified at the latent or interpretative level for which an examination and interpretation of underlying ideas, thoughts, feelings and conceptualizations took place (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Reviewing themes is the fourth phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, the researcher closely reviewed the patterns of codes, as well as the raw data itself to confirm codes fit their assigned theme. During this process, the researcher reorganized several themes. For example, the researcher moved themes

“College Experiences with Injustice” and “Through a Child’s Eyes – Early Life Experiences” to the subtheme category, both occurring under the main theme “Pivotal Experiences”. The codes for the theme “Diversity is Expansive and Relative” were initially under the description of “College Diversity Experiences”. After reviewing the items, the researcher decided the codes were important on their own so a separate theme was created for them. Several of the codes under “Growth Orientation” were initially in a miscellaneous category. After considering them again, they appeared connected and the researcher put them together to form their own theme. Level 2 of phase 4, an overview of all the themes occurs to check how well the entire set of themes tells the story of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After completion of this level, the researcher moved to phase 5, defining and naming themes. This phase involves labeling themes with titles that describes their essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, conclusions were made about what each theme truly represented for the stories collected. In this phase, the researcher selected theme titles such as “Found Kinship” and “There’s Us and There Are Others”. Some of the names reflected specific words provided by study participants themselves that accurately and poignantly described key ideas. The last phase, phase 6, involves producing the final report in which the story of the data within and across themes are reported with excerpts of the data demonstrating the prevalence of those themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For validation of the data, the researcher employed triangulation, member checking and peer review. For triangulation, the participants’ interviews were compared with their application materials, including resumes, narrative statements and transcripts, as a source for confirmation of the accuracy of the information provided. For member

checking, the researcher provided a summary of each interview to each participant for confirmation that the main ideas of their responses were captured accurately. For peer review, the researcher shared the transcripts of interviews with a faculty member to confirm the integrity of the interview process. The researcher also worked closely with a member of the dissertation committee with expertise in qualitative analysis to review coding and exchange extensive feedback.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

Findings divided by research chapter are shared in this chapter along with an overview of population demographics and variables. The chapter begins with findings from the two quantitative questions, both for which results of a series of regressions will be presented. For question three, qualitative findings are shared. The chapter closes with a summary of findings for all three questions.

Findings for Research Question One: *“Does (ethnic/racial) structural diversity of a MSW students’ undergraduate institution predict students’ success (graduate grade point average and field evaluation scores in three competency areas) in the graduate social work program?”*

Data for research question one were first explored using frequency tables and other preliminary analyses. Data were checked for errors and cleaned and missing data. To compare campus ethnic diversity index scores and other covariates to students’ outcomes, three logistic regressions and three multiple linear regressions were used. The primary predictor variable of interest is the diversity index score, along with students’ demographic, academic and social work related experience. The dependent variables, respectively, include the three separate field evaluation scores, the students’ average of all 11 competency scores on their field evaluation, and the MSW GPA. ³

³ Two variables, gender and MSW GPA, indicate the possibility of negatively skewed distribution. Several variables including conditional admission and advanced standing status, ethnicity, age, and experience indicate the possibility of positively skewed distribution. The kurtosis statistic is negative for most variables with the exception MSW GPA, overall competency scores, experience, gender, ethnicity, age and

For the regression analysis focused on MSW GPA, because some of the students within the sample were still in progress and did not have a final cumulative GPA the sample was divided into two groups, those who had graduated and those who are current students. See Table 8 for more information on all the variables.

Table 9

Analysis of Research Question 1

<i>Question</i>	<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Dependent Variables</i>
Does structural diversity of a MSW students' undergraduate institution predict students' success, as defined by academic performance and field evaluation scores in three competency areas, in the graduate social work program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. News campus ethnic diversity index score • GRE Scores • Undergrad GPA • Gender • Age • Race/Ethnicity • Conditional Admission Status • Enrollment Status • Advanced Standing Status • Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time Part-time Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSW GPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduates Current Students • Critical Thinking Scores • Diversity Scores • Human Rights & Social Justice Scores • Average of All Competency Scores

Note: Scores are from field evaluations completed at the end of students' first field placement.

Logistic Regressions. Because field evaluation scores were inflated (all 3 or above on a 5 point scale), the scores for Critical Thinking, Diversity, and Human Rights and Social Justice were converted from a continuous variable to a dichotomous variable (Advanced

conditional admission status which are positive indicating possibility of a platykurtic distribution or a flat distribution. Multiple regression, however, is largely robust to such challenges (Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006).

and Non-advanced). After the conversion to a dichotomous scale on three of the competency areas, three different models were tested and the findings from Critical Thinking and Human Rights and Social Justice both yielded significant results. Results from the three models are presented in turn.

Critical Thinking. A logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict critical thinking competency scores on field evaluations for the foundation field experience using undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between advanced and non-advanced critical thinking scores ($\chi^2(13)=30.750, p < .05$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .073 indicated a relationship between prediction and grouping. Prediction success overall was 64% (90.3 for non-advanced and 18.2 for advanced). Specifically advanced standing status ($p < .05$) is a significant negative predictor, gender ($p < .05$), and undergraduate GPA ($p < .05$) are significant positive predictors for the critical thinking field score.

Diversity. A logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict diversity competency scores on field evaluations for the foundation field experience using undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and

volunteer related experience as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model showed the model failed to achieve significance ($\chi^2(13) = 18.848, p > .05$).

Human Rights and Social Justice. A logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict human rights and social justice competency scores on field evaluations for the foundation field experience using undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience as predictors. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between advanced and non-advanced human rights and social justice scores ($\chi^2(13) = 26.041, p < .05$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .062 indicated a relationship between prediction and grouping. Prediction success overall was 66% (95.1 for non-advanced and 12.2 for advanced). Specifically advanced standing status ($p < .05$) was a significant negative predictor and undergraduate GPA ($p < .01$), and full-time related experience ($p < .05$) were significant positive predictors for the human rights and social justice field score.

Other Competency Scores. Logistic regression analyses were also conducted to predict the other 8 competency scores on field evaluations for the foundation field experience using same set of demographic, academic and experience predictors. These included field scores for students' performance with social policy, research, professional identity, values and ethics, human behavior theory, professional context, practice, and professional behavior. Only one of these models, for social policy, yielded significant results. A test of the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant

for social policy, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between advanced and non-advanced policy scores ($\chi^2(13)= 33.673, p < .01$). Nagelkerke's R^2 of .075 indicated a relationship between prediction and grouping. Prediction success overall was 68% (93.6 for non-advanced and 21.3 for advanced). Specifically advanced standing status ($p < .05$) was a significant negative predictor and gender ($p < .05$), and total GRE scores ($p < .05$) were significant positive predictors for policy field scores.

Table 10

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Field Competency Scores. (n= 564)

Variable	Critical Thinking			Diversity			Human Rights & Social Justice		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
Cond Admit Status	.21	.55	1.24	.590	.52	1.8	-.589	.68	.56
Enroll Status	-.19	.21	.82	.113	.20	.89	-.254	.21	.78
Adv Stand Status	-.66**	.25	.52	.338	.22	.71	-.464*	.24	.63
Gender	.77*	.37	2.16	.496	.33	1.64	.391	.35	1.48
Ethnicity	.12	.09	1.12	.144	.09	1.20	-.071	.90	.93
Age	.00	.01	1.00	.010	.01	.99	-.008	.01	.99
GRE W	-.03	.15	.98	.034	.14	1.04	-.156	.15	.86
GRE T	.02	.01	1.02	.004	.01	1.00	.011	.01	1.01
Undergrad GPA	.94**	.34	2.56	.599	.33	1.82	1.102**	.35	3.00
Diversity Score	-.35	.50	.71	.350	.47	1.42	-.075	.50	.93
FT Exp	.08	.10	1.09	.126	.10	1.13	.219*	.10	1.25
PT Exp	.09	.09	1.09	.159	.12	1.17	-.009	.11	.99
Vol Exp	-.05	.09	.95	.093	.09	.91	-.015	.09	.99
Constant	-9.51			1.30			-6.97		
χ^2		30.75			18.85			26.04	
df		13			13			13	

N=564. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Note. Advanced Standing and Conditional Admission status coded as 1 for *yes* and 0 for *no*. Enrollment status coded as 1 for *part-time* and 0 for *full-time*. Gender coded as 1 for *female* and 0 for *male*. Experience variables were recorded by number of months.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Multiple Linear Regressions. Both MSW GPA and the overall field evaluation scores were variant enough to allow for multiple linear regressions. Three linear regressions were run, two for MSW GPA and one for overall field evaluation scores.⁴

MSW GPA for Graduates. A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if MSW GPA could be predicted from undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience. The data were screened for missingness and violation of assumptions prior to analysis.⁵

A display of points showing the spread of residuals fairly constant over the range of values of the independent variables provided evidence of homogeneity of variance. Tolerance values were greater than .01 and the variance inflation factor scores for all independent variables was less than 10. However, the eigenvalues for two of the 14 predictors were close to 0 (.004 and .001). After removing GRE verbal and quantitative scores, the tolerance values and VIF scores showed multicollinearity was not a major concern.

⁴ GRE verbal, quantitative and total scores showed collinearity. For this reason, for all multiple linear regressions, only GRE total scores were considered. The full-time, part-time and volunteer experience variables which showed high levels of skewness (positive) and kurtosis (positive) were converted to z-scores for multiple linear regressions.

⁵ Review of the partial scatterplot of the independent variables and the dependent variables indicated linearity is a reasonable assumption. Examination of casewise diagnostics, including Mahalanobis distance and the production of a residuals scatterplot occurred. The analysis of the Mahalanobis Distance extreme values table indicated five cases ($\chi^2 > 16.266$). These cases were temporarily removed for this analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to evaluate independence of errors and was 2.166, which is considered acceptable. This suggests that the assumption of independent errors has been met.

The results of the multiple linear regression suggest that a statistically significant proportion of the total variance in MSW GPA was predicted by the model ($F(13, 391)$, $p < .001$). Multiple r^2 indicates that approximately 37% of the variation in MSW GPA was predicted by this model. Specifically advanced standing ($p < .001$) was a statistically significant negative predictor while GRE writing scores ($p < .001$), GRE total verbal and quantitative scores ($p < .05$), undergraduate GPA ($p < .001$), and full-time related experience ($p < .05$) were significant positive predictors for MSW GPA. Conditional admission status, full-time enrollment status, gender, ethnicity, age and undergraduate campus diversity score did not make a significant contribution to the prediction of MSW GPA. See Table 10 for results.

Table 11

Regression Analysis Summary for Admission Variables Predicting MSW GPA for Graduates

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Age	-.001	.001	-.029
Undergrad Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	.079	.046	.072
Undergraduate GPA	.204	.032	.301***
Gender	.049	.031	.065
Ethnicity	.000	.008	-.001
GRE Writing Score	.066	.014	.257***
GRE Total Score	.003	.001	.189**
Conditional Admission Status	.094	.054	.076
Enrollment Status	-.005	.019	-.010
Advanced Standing Status	-.080	.021	-.166***
Full-time Related Experience	.021	.009	.098*
Part-time Related Experience	-.005	.008	-.029
Volunteer Related Experience	-.001	.011	-.004

N=409. *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001.

MSW GPA for Current Students. A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if MSW GPA could be predicted from undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics of each variable). The data were screened for missingness and violation of assumptions prior to analysis.⁶

⁶ Review of the partial scatterplot of the independent variables and the dependent variables indicated linearity is a reasonable assumption. Examination of casewise diagnostics, including Mahalanobis distance and the production of a residuals scatterplot

A display of points showing the spread of residuals fairly constant over the range of values of the independent variables provided evidence of homogeneity of variance. Tolerance values were greater than .01 and the variance inflation factor scores for all independent variables was less than 10. However, the eigenvalues for two of the 14 predictors were close to 0 (.004 and .000). After removing GRE verbal and quantitative scores, the tolerance values and VIF scores showed multicollinearity was not a major concern.

The results of the multiple linear regression suggest that a significant proportion of the total variance in MSW GPA was predicted by the model ($F(13, 139), p < .001$). Multiple r^2 indicates that approximately 28% of the variation in MSW GPA was predicted by this model. Specifically undergraduate GPA ($p < .01$), campus diversity scores ($p < .05$) and GRE writing scores ($p < .05$) were significant positive predictors for MSW GPA for current students. Conditional admission status, full-time enrollment status, advanced standing status, gender, ethnicity, age, GRE writing and total scores, full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience did not make a significant contribution to the prediction of MSW GPA for current students. See Table 11 for results.

occurred. The scatterplot revealed no residual outliers. The analysis of the Mahalanobis Distance extreme values table indicated five cases ($\chi^2 > 16.266$). These cases were temporarily removed for this analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to evaluate independence of errors and was 2.031 which is considered acceptable. This suggests that the assumption of independent errors has been met.

Table 12

Regression Analysis Summary for Admission Variables Predicting MSW GPA for Current Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Age	.000	.002	.015
Undergrad Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	.232	.092	.202*
Undergrad GPA	.188	.061	.277**
Gender	.005	.064	.006
Ethnicity	.018	.018	.074
GRE Writing	.053	.028	.195*
GRE Total	.002	.002	.117
Conditional Admission Status	-.010	.083	-.010
Enrollment Status	.032	.040	.071
Advanced Standing Status	-.024	.048	-.042
Full-time Related Experience	-.005	.019	-.026
Part-time Related Experience	-.003	.027	-.008
Volunteer Related Experience	.013	.012	.085

N=155. *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001.

Overall Field Scores. A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if overall MSW field evaluation scores (dependent variable) could be predicted from undergraduate campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE verbal, writing, and quantitative scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, and race/ethnicity, status in enrollment, advanced standing and conditional admission and full-time, part-time and volunteer related experience. The data were screened for missingness and violation of assumptions prior to analysis.⁷ Examination of casewise diagnostics, including

⁷ Review of the partial scatterplot of the independent variables and the dependent variables indicates linearity is a reasonable assumption.

Mahalanobis distance and the production of a residuals scatterplot occurred. The scatterplot revealed no residual outliers.⁸

A random display of points showing the spread of residuals appears fairly constant over the range of values of the independent variables which provides evidence of homogeneity of variance. Tolerance values were greater than .01 and the variance inflation factor scores for all independent variables was less than 10. However, the eigenvalues for two of the 14 predictors were close to 0 (.004 and .001). Considering the tolerance values and VIF scores as primary evidence, multicollinearity is not a major concern here either.

The results of the multiple linear regression suggest that a significant proportion of the total variance in overall field scores was predicted by the model ($F(13, 545)$, $p < .01$). Multiple r^2 indicates that approximately 52% of the variation in MSW GPA was predicted by this model. Specifically advanced standing status ($p < .01$) was a statistically significant negative predictor while gender ($p < .05$), undergraduate GPA ($p < .01$), and full-time related experience ($p < .01$) were significant positive predictors for overall field scores. Conditional admission status, full-time enrollment status, ethnicity, age, GRE writing and total scores, part-time and volunteer related experience and undergraduate campus diversity scores did not make a significant contribution to the prediction of overall field scores. See Table 12 for results.

⁸ The analysis of the Mahalanobis Distance extreme values table indicated 5 cases ($\chi^2 > 16.266$). These cases were temporarily removed for this analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to evaluate independence of errors and was 1.996, which is considered acceptable. This suggests that the assumption of independent errors has been met.

Table 13

Regression Analysis Summary for Admission Variables Predicting Overall Field Scores

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Age	-.001	.003	-.022
Undergrad Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	.012	.102	.005
Undergrad GPA	.197	.070	.138**
Gender	.145	.070	.090*
Ethnicity	.020	.018	.046
GRE Writing	-.013	.030	-.024
GRE Total	.003	.002	.083
Conditional Admission Status	.038	.110	.016
Enrollment Status	-.017	.042	-.018
Advanced Standing Status	-.133	.048	-.126**
Full-time Related Experience	.052	.021	.118*
Part-time Related Experience	.013	.019	.030
Volunteer Related Experience	-.008	.019	-.019

* $<.05$, ** $<.01$, *** $<.001$

Findings for Research Question Two: *The second question is “To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?”*

Several regression analyses were used to learn if social work related experience mediates the contributions of students’ undergraduate institutions’ structural diversity. To determine mediation effects, three simple regression analyses were conducted to understand the relationships for each dependent variable of interest including field scores for critical thinking, diversity, human rights and social justice, the students’ overall field scores and the MSW GPA for both current students and graduates (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

None of the models indicated the existence of a zero-order relationship as each showed one or more nonsignificant relationships. For this reason, it is concluded that mediation of structural diversity by related social work experience is not possible. Details about the regressions follow.

Critical Thinking. Step one of the mediation testing process was conducted to predict critical thinking with the undergraduate campus diversity score as the predictor. A test of the full model against a constant only model showed the model failed to achieve significance ($\chi^2 (1) = .862, p > .05$).

Diversity. Step one of the mediation testing process was conducted to predict diversity field scores with the undergraduate campus diversity score as the predictor. A test of the full model against a constant only model showed the model failed to achieve significance ($\chi^2 (1) = .926, p > .05$).

Human Rights and Social Justice. Step one of the mediation testing process was conducted to predict field competency scores in human rights and social justice with the undergraduate campus diversity score as the predictor. A test of the full model against a constant only model showed the model failed to achieve significance ($\chi^2 (1) = .052, p > .05$).

MSW GPA for Graduates. Step 3 of the mediation testing process shows the simple regression analysis with the predictor of related experience⁹ for the dependent variable of MSW GPA for graduates failed to achieve significance ($F(3, 401) = .669, p > .05$).

⁹ Since interest in the mediation effects of any social work related experience was considered, full-time, part-time and volunteer social work related experiences are considered holistically for the regression analyses testing mediation.

MSW GPA for Current Students. Step 3 of the mediation testing process shows the simple regression analysis with the predictor of related experience for the dependent variable of MSW GPA for current students failed to achieve significance ($F(3, 150) = 1.659, p > .05$).

Overall Field Scores. Step 3 of the mediation testing process shows the simple regression analysis with the predictor of related experience for the dependent variable of overall field scores failed to achieve significance ($F(3, 555) = .959, p > .05$).

Findings for Research Question Three: “What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the program?”

For this question, data emerged in two ways. Information about the presence or lack of presence of undergraduate diversity experiences and the descriptions of those activities were shared and are summarized here. Several themes that emerged from the data are shared here as well. The findings section begins with a short review of the demographics of the five participants, then a description of the students’ undergraduate diversity activities, and finally the review of common themes from the interview data.

Demographics. Participants included five students from the MSW student cohort from fall 2013. Students included four females and one male, ranging in age from 24 to 47. Two of the students were Hispanic, one was Caucasian, one was Black, and one was Hispanic and White. Two students held bachelor degrees in Sociology, one had a degree in Psychology, one in Art Communications, and one in Human Development and Family Studies. One student recently graduated, three were planning to graduate the next semester and one student had plans to graduate the following fall. Four students attend

school full-time while one is a part-time student. Grade point averages of participants ranged from 3.87 to 4.0. Names of participants have been changed; they will be referred to as Joe, Ally, Cathy, Katy and Jacy. An overview of participant demographics is included in Table 13.

Table 14

RQ 3 Student Demographics

Student	Gender	Enrollment Status	Ethnicity/ Race	Age	GPA	Undergrad Major
Joe	M	Full-time	Hispanic	24	3.87	Sociology
Alicia	F	Full-time	White, Hispanic	34	3.97	Art History
Cathy	F	Full-time	White, non- Hispanic	47	3.96	Psychology
Katy	F	Full-time, transfer	Hispanic	24	4.0	Sociology
Jacy	F	Part-time	Black, non- Hispanic	29	3.90	Human Dev & Family Studies

Part I: Description of College Diversity Experiences. Students had diversity encounters multiple ways during college, through their jobs, classes, areas of study, cities in which they attended school, residential life as well as through political activism, volunteering, internships and community service. From the descriptions of these experiences, classroom diversity was not as emphasized as other types of experiences and encounters with others. Instead opportunities for connections were through informal interactional diversity experiences as well as through the larger environments in which their universities were located.

Classes Not as Important. All acknowledged taking classes with content on or with diverse others. One of the five students did emphasize her classroom experiences

while the other four did not. Katy felt like her classes provided her opportunities to learn about diversity. She commented about her the impact of her classes:

...one was social problems, so studying in depth different problems for an entire semester and doing a lot of research and reading and the other class was Sociology of Education which looked at education and how screwed up the system was really helpful and impactful not only from the reading and learning but also the discussions we had and the way our professor sort of shaped the way we talked about things and not as all was lost.

For the others, classroom experience was not remembered as important as other lived experiences during and around the time of college. Instead, the campus environment and culture, belonging to a particular major and engagement in student organizations and the community were stronger reflections for the students about diversity experiences. Cathy shared about her college memories, “I don’t remember a lot of the activities of academics of my undergraduate degree but I have much more vivid memories of just life, college life and the diversity I was exposed to.” Cathy also shared:

(My undergraduate university) is a very international school. So there were students from, I want to say, from just about every country around the world.

There probably really are, and, but it really was like meeting people I had never met before, from places I had never experienced before... Um, they were just all over campus. It wasn’t like a class or a formal group, it was just in regular life.

Area of Study Provides Opportunities. Although the students did not emphasize specific classes they took, several of them acknowledged the importance of their major or areas of study leading to learning about diverse others and the exploration of new ideas

beyond their individual experiences. Ally shared about being encouraged to think critically and pushed outside her ordinary life experiences:

Because everything was so new and I was in the art department and they encourage you to think outside of yourself so I think that's helpful. I went to, this is going to sound really strange, I went to an erotica show through that which is like where they literally hang people up by meat hooks, it was very disturbing but there were all these opportunities similar to things you would never even think of that happened.

Ally also shares about interacting with diverse others through opportunities presented through her major. She commented,

I was an art history major and I got involved in several art history organizations in the (city) and one of them was for Latino/Latina artists. So through that I got a lot of cultural experience.

Katy talked about how the department in which she studied provided unique opportunities to talk about a variety of issues on her homogenous college campus. She said:

My experience was a little bit different being in Sociology and Women's Studies classes, but in general the population isn't super diverse. I spent a lot of time honestly with a lot of rich white girls who were in my organization. And so I was not diverse. But I made a point to throw myself at people in class who were a little bit more diverse, from different racial backgrounds. So you got to have their perspectives join with their perspectives in class and learning from them.

Katy again commented on the unique opportunities provided by her major:

I was in a unique setting because of the major I was in. We had different backgrounds and different experiences that were all talking and sharing with one another but also being one of the few people that are pretty liberal on campus, a campus noted for being incredibly conservative, is an opportunity to hear from those who are really conservative and different in their political beliefs.

Active Student Life. All five of the students shared they participated in volunteering, community service, internships, and/or political activism. These experiences provided a community connection as well as opportunities to engage with diverse people. Ally and Joe both volunteered with HIV/AIDS organizations while Jacy completed an internship at a MHMR facility and Katy was the coordinator for community service for a religious organization. Joe and Cathy were involved in political activism. About his experiences, Joe shared, “I also became a member of a couple of different organizations where I was able to kind of interact and go outside the school to meet other people from diverse backgrounds.” He also commented about his volunteer work:

Going into my senior year, I was placed at an HIV/AIDS hospice. The majority of the people there were African American or older white males. I was there for a year and I want to say I saw maybe 40 clients with whom I interacted prior to them passing away. That was my interaction. People outside, you know, my background.

Katy commented about her involvement in college:

I was the service coordinator the last two years. Um, I was just out in the community trying to coordinate different service projects for the girls in the

organization. Um, so having to understand what is the community and how can we help them.

About his involvement as an activist in college Joe commented, “So I had opportunities to explain my point of view and also listen to others so I have had some experiences to talk with people who have not lived, or look at life through my lens.”

City Itself is a Diversity Experience. Students also mentioned the city in which they attended college was instrumental for expanding their world views and allowing for contact with diverse others. Ally stated about going to a large city, “So I think every experience I had at (college) from the very beginning was really different from anything that I knew.” She also stated:

There were all these opportunities similar to things you would never even think of that happened of that. I feel like racially there wasn’t as much until I moved to a bigger city.

Joe commented on the city in which he grew up and attended college, “(City) is all that I know and it’s that big melting pot, so I’ve been able to experience very different neighborhoods and the different aspects of those neighborhoods.” Cathy stated that college allowed her a change from her suburban neighborhood in which she was raised. She said, “Just being at (her undergraduate university) was an interesting experience (in city). Um, you know because it was just so different from anything you experience at a regular suburban co-ed high school.”

Part II: Themes

From the thematic analysis of the interviews, several themes emerged. The themes include diversity is expansive and relative, marginalized identity, pivotal

encounters, found kinship, and growth orientation. Several of the thematic categories include subthemes.

Diversity is Expansive and Relative. Students described, defined, and listed diversity in many ways. For some the emphasis was the individual differences within groups, for others the commonalities between groups, and others felt diversity would be encounters with homogeneity. Students also listed throughout their comments things that possibly separate or unite people far beyond race and ethnicity. They shared about differences in gender, political and religious orientations, types of university, skin color, nationality, geography, socio-economic status, those who do and do not care, those who participate in Greek life and those who are not in sororities or fraternities, enrollment status, immigration status, LGBT status, those who live on campus and those who commute, and differences in power. Their comments provoked thoughts about what diversity means and how it is experienced. Jacy summarized her vision of diversity at her university:

While here it's kind of like, I don't know, like salt, pepper, paprika and all these other seasonings mixed into a bowl. It's not just like a chunk here and you see this and a chunk there and you see that, you see everything here, everything.

Cathy talked about struggling with gender categories:

Because gender is becoming a much more fluid concept and yeah, exactly, it's not a binary thing. And I went to a women's college and it was such a huge part of my identity to be at women's college all this time and now all of a sudden it's like what does that mean and there are women who are going and becoming men during their transitioning during their experience there.

For Joe, diverse experiences are with rich white people or homogenous cultures. Joe talked about his diversity interactions took place while working for his family's moving company in his youth:

I would interact with people from (high income neighborhood). I've been to a lot of the mansions there, obviously as an employee. I had interactions with them through those years.

Joe also talked about how diversity seemed normal. Seeing a homogenous community would be a diversity experience for him. He commented:

So the diversity here looks so normal to me. People come to (city) and say this is so diverse, this is a very diverse city but I don't see it that way because this is all that I know. I don't see the diversity aspect.

He continued:

I think the day that I step out of (city) and go to, I don't know, say perhaps Aspen where 96% of the population are Anglo American, then I'll see myself as different and I'll see the world differently and that's what diversity, although it's not very diverse, it will be diverse for me.

Cathy discussed how diversity was present even within homogenous groups.

There's no one experience, right. I'm a lesbian, well that doesn't mean I know what every lesbian experience is. You just don't. So there's sort of commonalities within different diversity groups but then there's also so much diversity.

Jacy discussed our commonalities in the midst of our differences when talking about clients with whom she worked in a college internship:

I learned that generally, parents all want the same thing. No matter what they're background, they want their children to do better. They want their children to succeed... I think that I pretty much learned that for the most part, parents just want their children to succeed and, just the littlest things, like if their child wasn't doing something a month ago and their child starts to do something, it really makes their day.

There's Us and There Are Others – Marginalized Identity. First interpretation of the students' experiences with others was they participated in both majority and minority groups. For example, one white female identified with the majority student population at her women's university. However, she also identified as part of the minority as a lesbian. Another student described sense of belonging in a majority group as a Hispanic male at an Hispanic Serving Institution, but then identified as part of the minority as an undocumented student. At closer look, the commonality between all five students was not simply their belonging to a minority group, but rather their feelings of being an outsider in some way. They identified as marginalized. Below are their comments related to feeling separate from the group. Joe described his awareness of being separate from others because of his ethnicity and immigration status:

I've always been aware of the issues, the places where I grew up in (home country) and in (city), um I went to school in (neighborhood). We like to say (neighborhood, state) because we're not from (neighborhood, city). That experience opened up my, my ideas that there's us and there are others.

Later he shared about challenges he anticipates facing in his future:

I think you see that, especially going into administrative social work, many of the positions held in nonprofit agencies are usually held by people who are not like myself and I think those are challenges I'll face...

Cathy shared about her feelings of being different as a lesbian:

My sexuality was a minority, that was a minority on campus, and um, I was very aware, I was keenly aware of, even though it was a very open and accepting school... It was also when I become aware, because I meant no harm, I'm just this regular person, just trying to find my way.

She shared later in the interview about an incident in which her car was vandalized:

I mean, I belonged and identified with a group that some people really don't like and that puts me in some danger sometimes. So that was the first time, well it certainly was, the first time I started internalizing fear in that way, beyond sort of the fear of being a woman.

Katy talked about being an outsider within her family and on campus due to her political views:

I've always been kind of the odd one out in my family too. Just having to understand where I'm coming from and trying to understand other people's point of views too and why they might think the way they do.

She continued:

We had different backgrounds and different experiences that were all talking and sharing with one another but also being one of the few people that are pretty liberal on campus, a campus noted for being incredibly conservative, is an opportunity to hear from those who are really conservative and different in their

political beliefs. So bringing those two together, being one of many in a classroom and being one of the few in the larger campus setting.

Ally shared about how she was unable to disclose her sexual orientation with her sorority members due to fear of being dismissed:

And then there was one girl who I didn't know who came out as gay the year before I got there and she was asked to leave. So only my intimate friends for the years I was active knew I was gay.

Jacy talked about feeling like an outsider in class due to her race:

The professor was asking us to tell her, you know, where we came from. I don't know where I came from, you know, like. I couldn't tell you, oh my family came from, like others could say Germany, or .. I couldn't tell you, I don't know. I don't think my dad knows. I don't think my Grandpa knows, you know... It would be pretty difficult for me to trace it back that far. So that was the thing, and just everyone else being able to say and I'm like I don't know.

Jacy also shared her feelings about being a commuter student, missing out on college life:

I wish that I could say I was part of the majority as in there are a lot of people who joined organizations. I wish I could say, looking back, I just felt like... It made me realize, so many other people are just here and they get to do this stuff and I have to leave and go to work. Like what are they doing. So it made me aware, in that sense. Yeah, I got responsibilities that others might not have.

She continued:

I felt like I didn't get the college life, having to fight traffic to get here, to get home, but just having to work and not really being able to interact with people as

much as I probably should have. I think that was the biggest challenge. Not really having friends on campus and meeting people on campus.

Pivotal Experiences Leading to Social Justice Orientation. Connected to their marginalized identities were stories of encounters with injustice, both of which they were the victims as well as witnesses. These encounters were pivotal for the students as they shared repeatedly the phrase “it made me think” and “I didn’t know” and followed with comments on their increased awareness about inequalities and injustice and their desire to change. Students described experiences from college as well as their youth.

Encounters with Injustice - Self and Others. Transformations and awareness building occurred not as much from simple interactions with diverse others but more from experiences of injustice and discrimination. These experiences, some of which involved the students, some of which they witnessed or heard about, raised awareness for them and led to a path to a strong justice orientation. Joe shared about the barriers he faced due to his immigration status:

I just graduated from high school, I was in college and I was trying to live the college experience to a certain extent in a communal aspect both at (community college) and (undergraduate university) but because of my immigration status I couldn’t drive... I’ve driven a vehicle without a driver’s license. Um, I’ve always driven a vehicle that doesn’t belong to me because I can’t own anything and I’m uninsured, and there’s all these different things, you know.

He continued about some of his peers at school:

...although they were from Latino or Hispanic backgrounds never, if they were born here, they could do certain things that I couldn’t. That includes going out to

a bar or a club and you get asked for an ID...It was more difficult so you kind of felt more excluded sometimes. And some of the things you wanted to take part in as a young college student, you know, the college experience.

Cathy talks about her fears and concerns about being gay:

Um, you know just the fear of how that would impact my life. It's different from an outward difference like race difference you know that you wear and you've had that all your life so you know what that meant all your life and you grow up with your fears. So it was a different kind of transition. So there was fear about how it would impact my job. That was my mom's biggest fear – "You'll never get a job." Ok, well, I hope I will. I then I was like well maybe I won't. I never thought about that, right. But that's a real thing, you know. That there's discrimination against people who are gay from working there.

She continues about the fear and reality of loss:

Well, fear of rejection, loss of friends, loss of family. And all those things are big issues to confront and deal with. Those two good friends I had growing up, ironically we all ended up in college in Boston and we never got together, ever. We never saw each other. It was just the strangest thing. And I've had issues with my parents over time.

Ally shared two experiences from college in which she learned about injustice:

There was literally one black woman that was pledging out of all of these people and there was a black sorority but she was pledging, I don't know why they were still segregated, but that's the way it is...And usually you have 5 or 6 left out of 15 and she had only 1 left at the end of the second day. She was like this is

ridiculous. She ended up quitting. And we had tons of conversations. She and I had a lot of conversations because we were kind of in the same group, it's a small group, and she's like I'm not gonna even try, she's like even if this one wants me, it doesn't make any sense. I don't want to be where I'm not wanted.

She continued about another experience:

Um, like have upstairs girls, they were the ones who weren't very pretty by, I don't know, whoever chooses that, um but they did really, they had really good grades, so the sorority needed them to fulfill a GPA requirement but they didn't want them to be seen at rush time. And I'm like What!, that blew my mind.

Seeing Others Through A Child's Eyes. Several of the students shared that some of these pivotal experiences for them occurred during childhood. These childhood encounters also led to realizations and awareness of difference and injustice. Katy talked about returning to the low income neighborhood in which she grew up to open a community center. Joe shared experiences he had working as a youth for his uncle's moving company. Ally shared about volunteering with her grandparents in her segregated hometown:

I think I started when I was five delivering Meals on Wheels with my grandparents and that was really a formative experience for me. Um, because you saw this socio-economic spectrum, right, but also the town where I grew up was very segregated, black and white... But really there's a black section of town, like what!, and I remember being in junior high and being aware of this. The nicest neighborhood in town, there's one black family. And, it's like hard to believe that still exists.

Cathy shared about meeting her aunt's friend from India and how that changed how she looked at different people:

My aunt had been a missionary for some time in India, and some of her Indian friends came to visit so I actually met people from India as a child so that didn't really seem that strange to me. It's really interesting the way your childhood experiences change the way you look at what's different to you.

Made Me Think - Awareness of Inequities. These experiences both as youth and as college students created an awareness of difference and inequities for the students. Most of them talked about a light bulb moment, when they became aware of inequity and privilege. They describe these moments as making them think differently. Cathy shared about the international students with whom she attended school:

They were even in the United States, and were able to go to school, as a woman, was a really big deal that you know you just take for granted when you live in the United States and you're a mainstream, middle class. So I hadn't even really thought about those issues before going to (college). There were people there who just weren't privileged the way I was.

Ally talked about wealthy students at her school:

I think just watching the amount of money people spend frivolously, um, kind of helps you check your privilege as well.

Jacy commented on a personal encounter with injustice, "I think that was the only thing though, that really, where I was kind of like ok, that made me really think, that was just a little bit different from what I normally think about." Ally shares about her building awareness:

I feel like it's ridiculous to say that I don't see color. That just like, I don't know, it just negates everything, but I just never thought about her or what kind of struggle she would have had every day. We were just friends immediately, so it just kind of made me think about what her everyday experience is like.

Wanting to Change. These encounters, both lived and learned about, inspired change for the students. Students repeatedly said they wanted to do things differently.

Cathy shares how she reacted:

I experienced some of these really intense biases, and discrimination against people in high school too so when I went to college I already had some of these ideas – I didn't like those biases. I didn't want to have those biases so I would try, as much as I could, see how I felt about those biases, try different things.

Ally similarly shares, “ I think that helped me be like, I don't want to be like that, I don't want to have anything to do with that.”

Found Kinship. Several students talked about how their families had biases they wanted to overcome or change or their homes were places in which they felt marginalized or like an outsider. In contrast, students shared, in familial terms such as hermanidad and sisterhood, about joining or forming communities with whom they had commonalities. These groups were instrumental, even critical for some, to their survival and success. These solid communities of marginalized others, sometimes referred to as underground communities, served as an important home base from which the students could grow and thrive that led them to a sense of belonging, pride and strength. The members of these close knit groups shared experiences and ideas and expressed a strong commitment to

one another. For some of the students, these groups are described like family. Cathy shared about her family of origin:

All growing up, I railed against my family's biases. So I was pretty aware that biases existed. Like my grandmother was very prejudiced...One of my friends was Jewish so she would always call her my Jewish friend. She could never call her by her name, you know what I mean. I grew up with that.

Conversely she shared about both her sense of belonging at a woman's college:

It was great to be part of a women's college, the sisterhood, to feel that comraderie... It's just really, you know once you're in, you're in. You're never ousted from being a graduate of a women's college.

Cathy also shared about her identification and group membership with other gay students and the importance of their support:

There was an advantage in the solidarity developed there too because you really did stick together. You had to have each other's back. Again we're talking about safety and risk, and um, something so new to us all. You're just coming out and you haven't thought at all about your sexuality really before, you really relied on your friends to help you understand and help keep each other safe. We were really close, we were such a close knit community, much different from this.

She continued:

Last, I came out in college, as a lesbian. So that was a big deal. I was introduced to a whole new group through that. It's almost like an underground culture...That probably molded my experience the most. It was a formative time of life, college.

Joe commented about people from his low income neighborhood growing up:

There's so much pride. There's a lot of pride being from a certain place and when you're from there, you take a lot of pride with you, but it's always funny when you say well I'm from (neighborhood) and someone else says, well I'm from Denver.

He continued about his network, "There's this underground, kind of covert community of people and things you do for each other." He later shared about how this group takes care of one another:

So I got that through that network of people who said I know how to create this, I know how to make this, I know someone who can get you a fake social security number or I know someone who works somewhere where they can get you into a job and so that sense of network that's kind of under the covers, I want to say, in a certain sense in the darkness but that's how people communicate that way. I love it...I feel like there's always going to be this sense of hermanidad, brotherhood. So you have this somewhat commitment to each other.

Joe shared how this kinship spreads to those with whom you may not know but have shared experiences:

When I say I'm from (city), I grew up on the border, one of the first things people will say, Oh I've been there and the next question is did you cross through there and people will say, yeah, that's where I crossed and that develops a sense of belonging. We know a similar place because our paths crossed, indirectly crossed.

While Ally and Katie do not describe their communities like family, they describe having a group with which they feel connection and belonging. For both of them, their groups

are the college departments in which they were enrolled. Ally talked about being connected to other Latina artists through the art department at her university:

So I was an art history major and I got involved in several art history organizations in the metroplex area and one of them was for Latino/Latina artists.

So through that I got a lot of cultural experience.

Katy described her department as a place where she is one of many, while being one of few on the larger campus. She commented:

We had different backgrounds and different experiences that we're all talking and sharing with one another but also being one of the few people that are pretty liberal on campus, a campus noted for being incredibly conservative, is an opportunity to hear from those who are really conservative and different in their political beliefs. So bringing those two together, being one of many in a classroom and being one of the few in the larger campus setting.

Jacy is the only student who does not talk about a strong group connection and also is the one who talked most about feeling separate from the university or activities of the university.

My Struggle Helps Me Understand Your Struggle. Another clear finding was that the students' experience of marginalization served as a path for empathy for others. Their lived experiences motivated them to work to make others feel comfortable, helped them understand the importance of belonging, led them to meaningful conversations with others in which they listened and sought understanding of others' points of views. Joe commented about his marginalized identity:

I'm better able to understand why people are the way they are and the reasons why they're there. I think had I not experienced that I would not have been able to develop that sense of rapport with a lot of people. And have empathy towards them and kind of realize why, why they're there and the struggles that they're kind of trying to overcome and take that first step to move out of that place.

Cathy shared about her experiences:

...like these are really unique experiences, like that might be useful for me. I can understand some different things that not everyone experiences and then there's some common things like being a woman and whatever are commonalities. These are things that helped me decide to go back to school and I think I have a better handle on my life than I've ever had, with distance from some of my issues, some of the painful stuff that has gone on in my life. I healed enough from some of that. I feel like I can go back into a role in which I can work with people.

Katy commented on working with those who disagree with her:

It goes back to understanding people and what they believe and hold for the future for themselves. Like we don't have agree. It's called an opinion for a reason. It's understanding their opinions and beliefs. We don't all have to agree on things but because we come from, like you said, diverse backgrounds, we're not all going to be on the exact same page every single time.

Growth Orientation. The last theme to emerge was the students' overall commitment and openness to growth and learning. Students shared how life experiences of any type were an opportunity for growth. They shared about their awareness around their biases as well as others, acknowledging that personal and professional development

is an ongoing process. They were hopeful about change and expressed passion for working in their respective areas of practice. These qualities of the students collected into an overall orientation for growth that seemed to impact their worldview.

All experience is valuable. Ally shared two comments about life experiences as learning opportunities, “Again, I think I benefitted because every experience gives you something. Like I said I wouldn’t change it.” She again shared how she would not change her past because it is part of her development, although she has regrets. She commented about her involvement in a sorority:

I don’t know that I would change it because I think all your experiences make up who you are but there are some deplorable things that they do.

Cathy shared about how her collective experiences led her to her social work, “I think everything that happened leading up to me deciding to become a social worker impacted your decision to become a social worker.” She continued how her experiences have been useful to her:

I had experienced a lot of different things. Some things were common things, some things weren’t so common. My mother had passed away, my dad is gay, like different things, like these are really unique experiences, like that might be useful for me.

Joe embraces his experiences with his struggles due to his immigration status as well:

I love the fact that I had this experience and I think it’s a part of my, to a certain extent, heritage and ethnicity, because we’re Latinos or Hispanics.

Katy shares about her overall education experience, “Yeah, I think kind of all undergraduate education in general kind of shaped that.”

Sense of Hope. Students, even when encountering injustice, felt hopeful for their future as well as others. Katy commented about the future:

So really studying and learning from an academic research point of view. This is what the issues are, but it's not hopeless. There is a possibility to make this better if we actually do something about it, get up and stop being lazy...

Awareness of Biases – Self and Others. Students are aware about their biases and practice self-awareness on an ongoing basis. Interestingly several students also talked about identifying biases or lack of awareness in their peers. Katy commented:

You have to be aware of other people but aware of yourself and what you think and believe. That's beneficial. If you're not aware, that's I guess that's ignorant.

Ally stated about her cultural competency, "In school, I thought I was culturally sensitive and diverse and I get here and I'm like, what, I don't know anything!"

Cathy made two comments about working on biases.

It's just been very thought provoking for me and challenged my assumptions in a way that I just didn't, I didn't even realize that I had some of these assumptions. I realized that I really need to do some work in this area.

She continued:

So, knowing that is helpful, right, so you don't go thinking you know everything or that you have to know everything. Just know you don't so that you're open and you can ask questions.

The students have awareness of bias or ignorance in others around them as well.

Ally shared about another student:

This makes me think about this woman who's in my year, who I really enjoy. She's a little bit older than I am, but I think this might be her first diversity experience, to listen to her, it just comes out of a place of not knowing. I think other students are shocked sometimes by what she says, but it's not because she's bigoted or racist or anything else, I think she has had just zero exposure.

Katy commented on feeling frustrated with peers in community service:

...but there are times with the girl's organization where you felt they were being forced to participate in things they didn't care about. So to me that's frustrating. I want to help everyone and be out there and help the world and they're like, hm, yeah, we're not interested.

Joe identifies a student in his class who lacks awareness:

Sometimes, even in some of our courses, you hear comments from people who have had different experiences...you have a cohort or a group in a classroom and you're talking about sensitive issues like race, you know um, politics, income, ethnicity, national origin, documentation, stuff like that, some people don't realize when a comment is offensive to others and whether, while it's a social work program, they're just not experienced with that.

Passionate about People. Students shared about their passion for working in the community and with others. Ally stated about her work:

I hope to be just really involved with the community. I love it. Best days ever.

Joe talked about being in the community:

And I love it. I love being on the streets. I know the city very well, working for the moving company actually helped a lot because I drove around all over,

everywhere. I know the city, I know the neighborhoods, and it's, you, you can create relationships with people.

Katy shared how she's passionate about education policy, "I'd really want to change the education system for everyone."

Summary of Findings

Three multiple regression analyses looking at overall field competency scores ($F(13, 545), p < .01$), MSW GPA for graduates ($F(13, 391), p < .001$), and MSW GPA for current students ($F(13, 139), p < .001$) found that advanced standing status, gender, undergraduate GPA, full-time experience, GRE scores and campus ethnic diversity scores were statistically significant predictors. Additionally two logistic regression analyses looking at critical thinking field scores ($\chi^2(13) = 30.750, p < .05$) and field scores in human rights and social justice ($\chi^2(13) = 26.041, p < .05$) found that advanced standing status, gender, undergraduate GPA, and full-time experience were statistically significant predictors. Mediation effects between structural diversity and related social work experience was not.

The qualitative analysis findings showed undergraduate diversity experiences were present for each student but were under-emphasized for the outcomes of interest. Instead pivotal experiences with injustice both early in life and in college and identification as part of a marginalized group lead to skill and interest development in social work as well as an overall social justice orientation. Success of students identifying as marginalized, in part, was based on access to communities and groups from which they received support, hope, and a sense of belonging. Students also seem to have

an orientation towards growth and development that may also be contributing to their success.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Social workers in the field impact peoples' lives in significant ways. If lacking culturally competency, they could potentially harm others. As admission decisions are critical to shaping the profession of social work, consideration of an applicant's college diversity experiences could be an important piece of information about the student's preparation and potential for a field in which skill, knowledge and values for working with a diverse population is essential. We know that there are few consistent predictors for the MSW program. MSW programs struggle with identifying useful admissions criteria beyond GPA, which has shown evidence only for performance in the classroom, not field. From diversity literature, we know many benefits come from diverse campuses. Students who have exposure to people who are different from themselves experience positive benefits with critical thinking skills and pluralistic orientation outcomes including the increased tolerance of others with different beliefs, increased ability to work cooperatively with diverse people, and increased ability to see the world from another person's perspective (Engberg, Meader & Hurtado, 2003). We do not know as much about linkages between these types of experiences, especially at the undergraduate level, and one's performance in an advanced degree program and/or profession. The aim of this study was to learn more about these connections.

Discussion of Research Question 1: *“Does (ethnic/racial) structural diversity of a MSW students' undergraduate institution predict students' success (graduate grade point*

average and field evaluation scores in three competency areas) in the graduate social work program?”

Within the first research question, the variable of undergraduate campus ethnic diversity scores was considered as a predictor for graduate grades and field evaluation scores. Three logistic regression analyses were conducted as well as three linear regressions. Of the three logistic regressions analyses, two analyses produced significant results. The models predicting field scores in critical thinking and human rights and social justice, which included campus ethnic diversity index scores, GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, gender, age, race/ethnicity, enrollment, conditional and advanced standing status and related experience variables were significant. For critical thinking, gender and undergraduate GPA were positive predictors while advanced standing status was a negative predictor. For human rights and social justice, undergraduate GPA and full-time related experience were positive predictors while advanced standing status was a negative predictor.

Undergraduate GPA, gender, full-time related experience as positive predictors, advanced standing status as a negative predictor and the overall model including the variables listed above were significant for overall field scores. The overall model was also statistically significant for MSW GPA for both graduates and current students. For graduates, a number of variables including GRE writing and total scores, undergraduate GPA, and full-time related experience were all significant positive predictors while advanced standing status was again a negative predictor. For current students, GRE writing, undergraduate GPA and undergraduate campus ethnic diversity scores were positive predictors of success for MSW GPA.

The findings both support and contradict social work admissions literature. Undergraduate GPA is the most consistent predictor of graduate GPA in the literature on social work admissions (Dunlap, Henley, & Fraser, 1998; Pfouts & Henley, 2004; Thomas, McCleary, & Henley, 2004). Within this study undergraduate GPA was a positive predictor within all five significant regression analyses showing agreement with prior research and supporting its inclusion as part of admissions criteria for graduate studies.

Dunlap, Henley and Fraser (1988) did not find related experience to be a predictor for success for graduate studies, and Pelech, Stalkner, Regehr and Jacobs (1999) found extensive social work experience to be a negative predictor of overall success for students. However, Thomas, McCleary and Henry (2004) did find prior experience a useful predictor of student success within a social work graduate program. Within this study, full-time related experience was a positive predictor for critical thinking field scores, overall field scores and MSW GPA for graduates. This supports several of the prior studies in this area. Part-time and volunteer experience, which included internships, was not a statistically significant predictor. One explanation for the difference between full-time and other types of experience could be that students who have full-time experience also have additional years of life experience and more maturation. This idea is supported by a qualitative study of field instructors by LaFrance, Gray and Herbert (2004) from which they found that maturity is important for success in graduate field work. Another consideration is the challenges with measuring experience from applicants' resumes submitted within the MSW program applications. Full-time, part-time, volunteer and internship experience was listed inconsistently on resumes.

Requesting a certain format or providing a template to gather experience information in the future is recommended. For these reasons, it is difficult to make a conclusion about the impact of experience as a predictor for applicants' performance in a graduate social work program.

Dunlap, Henley, and Fraser (1998) considered prior social work experience, undergraduate GPA, and GRE scores and found that students with high GRE scores and high GPA were more likely to succeed in their graduate programs. However, Donahue and Thyer (1992) and Milner, McNeil and King (1984) found that GRE test scores are not strong predictors. Other studies in social work and other disciplines also show inconsistent results including a study by Katz, Motzer & Woods (2009) focused on a graduate program in nursing. The current study shows writing scores on the GRE as well as the total GRE score may have some predictive value for graduate social work admissions, specifically for MSW GPA.

Gender was included in prior social work admission studies, but was not found to be a statistically significant predictor in the past (Dunlap, Henley & Fraser, 1998; Pfouts & Henley, 1977; Ryan, Cleak & McCormick, 2006). In contrast, this study showed females have a higher likelihood of having higher critical thinking field scores as well as overall field scores. This may be due to the large percentage of females in the sample, over 90%. It may also reflect bias on the part of a predominately female population of field instructors responsible for completing field evaluations. Last, it may be other traits that co-vary with gender are contributing to the results.

An unexpected finding was related to advanced standing status. Advanced standing refers to students who enter the graduate social work program with a bachelor's

degree in social work into an accelerated track with a waiver of the first 15 hours of the 63 semester credit hour graduate program. Advanced standing status was a negative predictor for field scores in critical thinking and human rights and social justice and overall field scores as well as final MSW GPA for graduates. Noble and Hepler (1990) drew attention to early criticism of the advanced standing program. In their study on the performance of advanced standing students in MSW programs, they conclude that higher admission standards be in place for this population. Results from this study may support these early concerns and recommendation.

It may also be that field instructors assume BSW students enter into field with an already established base of social work skills and knowledge and may evaluate them more rigorously than non-BSW students. Another consideration is that advanced standing students are only in their field placements for one semester while non-BSW students are evaluated after two semesters. Field instructors may feel one semester is too short of a period of time to evaluate student progress. One other possibility is that advanced standing students themselves may make assumptions about their knowledge and skill base based on their undergraduate degree that is somehow having a negative impact on their performance in the second field semester.

No study has considered undergraduate campus ethnic diversity scores (structural diversity) as a predictor of success for graduate social work education, however, several studies have shown clear benefits, both academic and democratic, from structural diversity. In their study, Engberg, Meader and Hurtado (2003) concluded that students who interact with diverse peers think more complexly, are more culturally aware, are more willing to take social action and engage in the belief that conflict enhances

democracy. In 2004, Chang, along with Astin, and Kim, using a national longitudinal data set, considered the relevance of cross-racial interaction at college campuses.

Findings showed that these interactions have positive effects on students' intellectual, social and civic development. These are outcomes that are beneficial for students who enter professions that require cultural competency in daily practice. While five of the six overall models, inclusive of the campus ethnic diversity score, showed prediction value, only one of the models, for MSW GPA for current students, showed the campus ethnic diversity score contributing separately as a positive predictor. This suggests that its inclusion in criteria for admissions may be useful as part of a larger set of criteria. It as a predictor in itself is limited and not sufficient. The qualitative findings, further explored in the next section, also suggest that experiences with diverse others can occur at either diverse or homogenous campuses. It is recommended that admission officers consider a number of variables holistically, as many already do, including the types of experiences students have in college that involve opportunities to learn about others different from themselves.

Enrollment status (full-time or part-time) was not a predictor, positive or negative of student success in any of the models. Prior social work admissions research also does not show enrollment status to be predictive of student performance. From this, it appears that a students' status as part-time or full-time does not predict their overall outcomes for graduate studies.

Discussion of Research Question 2: *“To what extent does social work related employment, internship or volunteer experience mediate the contributions of structural diversity?”*

As mentioned in the above section on research question 1, other studies have considered prior related experience as a predictor variable for success in graduate studies. As none of the studies considered campus ethnic diversity scores, they also did not consider mediation between the two variables. Mediation testing did not show any effects of related social work experience on structural diversity for the outcome variables of interest. This is not a surprise as the campus ethnic diversity score was a predictor on only one of the six regression models.

Discussion of Research Question 3: *“What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the program?”*

Five successful MSW students were asked about their college diversity experiences in order to find insights about the prevalence of those experiences as well as their benefits. From their responses, several themes emerged. First students provided a general description of college experiences and description of diversity itself. Themes included students identifying as outsiders in some way but also having groups in which they felt belonging, they had pivotal experiences both in college as well as earlier in life that impacted their social justice orientation along with their awareness of inequality, level of empathy and desire for change and they had an overall orientation for growth.

Although students listed classes in which they studied about diverse others, classroom diversity was not their emphasis related to their memories of diversity experiences. Instead they shared more about volunteering, community service and political activism as ways to learn about others, as well as their own experiences with membership of an outsider group or marginalized population and consequently

experiences of injustice that served as pivotal encounters for change. The under emphasis of the classroom experience suggests that it may not be enough to read and hear about diverse others, but more impactful to know someone from a diverse background and specifically to hear their story.

All of the students had ways in which they could identify as either the majority or the minority population, but interestingly as mentioned above, each identified as an outsider in some way. Being marginalized however, did not result in hostility or withdrawal for these students as one might think it would. Instead it led to more empathy. Students shared how their outsider experiences helped them to better understand and connect with the struggles of others who felt marginalized in some way.

Connected to their marginalized identities were stories of encounters with injustice, both of which they were the victims as well as witnesses. These encounters were pivotal for students as several shared “it (the encounter) made me think” or “I didn’t know” and followed with comments on their increased awareness about inequalities and injustice and their desire to change.

Students recalled stories of injustice and diversity exposure from their youth as well that had a similar impact on them of making them think differently about the world. These childhood encounters may be of importance for further consideration. It is also interesting to think about how diversity experiences and encounters with injustice reinforce or challenge those early experiences.

A key finding about this group of students is that all but one of them identified with a strong community outside of their families, of other outsiders with whom they could connect, receive support, see the world differently and gain strength and pride.

These found communities, about which they describe in familial terms and serving familial roles such as helping them get their basic needs met, provided a home base for the students from which they could go out into the world. Although part of a marginalized group, when students find like others, they can be successful and thrive. A follow up question from this finding is how many members of marginalized community are necessary in order for its members to experience the benefits of empowerment, strength and pride.

Finally the group overall had an orientation towards growth including self-awareness about biases, willingness and openness to learning, hopefulness, and the belief that all experiences in life provide value and opportunity for development. It is unclear if this orientation towards growth is developed in the social work program or if these are characteristics with which the students come into the program that help make them successful.

Research shows structural diversity is beneficial. Chang (2011) studied links between racial diversity and positive educational outcomes and found overall campus diversity had a positive impact on college experiences. Saenz (2010) looked at 9 public universities for cyclical effects of segregation and concluded structural diversity has a positive impact on cross-racial interactions. These are just two of multiple studies on the benefits of structural diversity. However in this qualitative part of the study access to diversity in itself for this group was not the pivotal experience leading to change. Their descriptions were not as much about diversity encounters as they were about their identification as marginalized, experiencing injustice for themselves and others, and having like others with whom they could identify and receive support. Diversity does,

though, allow for the opportunity to hear a story other than our own. In this regard, structural diversity is important. Without some diversity on college campuses, the important conversations that provide the lightbulb moments seem unlikely to happen.

Informal interactional diversity experiences were evident for the students. Several studies look at this type of diversity experience in college and show democratic outcomes. One of the studies by Hurtado (2007) considered data from the Preparing College Students for a Diverse Democracy project found that students who had informal interactions with diverse peers experienced more complex thinking, social awareness and perspective taking skills. The students within this part of the study shared similar outcomes when talking about how encounters with injustice increased their awareness of inequities and privilege and commitment to change. They also shared their engagement in critical thinking and empathy for others. However, their experiences were spurred by more than simply hearing about students' differences. Can an assumption be made that part of the impact of the informal interactions with diverse others comes from hearing each other's stories, some of which will be about past inequity and injustice?

Chang shared in his article on student diversity in higher education that we now have clear research showing that diversity has educational benefits, but not clarity about *how* diversity is beneficial or what types of conditions promote benefits (2013). He suggested a focus on the substance and quality of interactions between diverse students. This study would support the continued exploration of the conditions that promote diversity.

Limitations

A number of limitations are identified within this study. An overarching limitation is the study is preliminary and associative, and consequently does not allow for any causal conclusions to be made. Rather the study is exploratory and provides ideas and information for possible future research areas. Each research question also has its own set of limitations. For research question 1, the instrument for gathering field evaluation scores presents some challenges. Even though rubrics are in place for the evaluation tool, there is still score inflation and reviewer subjectivity with which to contend. An additional measure of success may be of interest for inclusion in a future study. Another limitation of research question 1 is the narrow definition of diversity experience. The campus ethnic diversity index score, as does the construct of structural diversity, considers only ethnic/racial diversity. We know that students are diverse in many ways beyond race/ethnicity including gender, age, sexual orientation, religious orientation, and culture. While the qualitative section of this study focused on capturing a broader picture of diversity and the benefits of exposure and experience with different types of diversity, further work in this area is needed. This study did not include students who had been dismissed or withdrew from the program, a group from which valuable information could have been gained related to the variables of interest. Another consideration, mentioned earlier, is the challenges with measuring experience from applicants' resumes submitted within the MSW program applications which are often inconsistent. Requesting a certain format or providing a template to gather experience information in the future is recommended. The sample has a high percentage, over 90%, of females which may have skewed the results related to gender as a predictor for

success. Results could reflect bias on the part of a predominately female population of field instructors responsible for completing field evaluations or reflect other traits that covary with gender contributing to the results of the study. For future studies, a goal could be a more evenly balanced sample with regard to gender. Last, this study considers only students at one university which may limit the potential to generalize its findings to other graduate social work programs.

For research question two, social work students are encouraged throughout their program to engage in diversity and gain awareness about how difference shapes life experiences. Social work places a strong value on diversity. For this reason, social desirability could have been an issue with interviews as students may have felt compelled to respond positively regarding diversity.

Implications for Practice

Both analyses from question one and the qualitative interviews focused on informal interactional experiences of successful students are useful for admissions practices. They provide insights about a number of variables including diversity and ultimately information about what types of experiences prepare students for helping professions.

Historically, admission committees have considered a somewhat narrow set of variables including applicants' work and life experience as part of their assessment. Committees look for experience related to the discipline for which the applicant is being considered, not necessarily experience that leads to a certain set of qualities like pluralistic orientation. Results of this study suggest a holistic review is useful when considering applicant's abilities and potential for social work. As part of the holistic

review, inclusion of information that help social work programs understand applicants' commitment and capacity to work with diverse others towards goals of social justice should be included . Questions that solicit information about students' pivotal experiences with injustice and their identification as part of marginalized groups on the admissions application are recommended. Specific questions could include "Do you identify as part of a marginalized population and if so how has that affected your perspective?", "Describe an encounter you have had with social injustice." and/or "Discuss a time in which you experienced or learned about social injustice and how the experience impacted you." In addition, social work program admission officers should consider using a checklist or rubrics that identify positive predictors including social work related experience, undergraduate GPA, and experience with diverse others. Last, based on the results of this study in which advanced standing was a negative predictor of success for several outcome variables, it is recommended that a set of higher standards be considered for applicants applying for advanced standing. Higher standards could be set for undergraduate GPA, professional experience and experience with diverse others.

Based on the findings of the qualitative section of this study, it is recommended that universities take steps to create and support safe environments in which students, particularly those who are part of the minority or who identify as an outsider, have a "home base", a critical mass of others with which they can identify, from which they can receive support and experience belonging. . First this means universities have the flexibility to shape enrollment in such a way that builds critical mass for every part of its population. Second, this means universities are purposeful about and committed to

creating spaces on campus and off campus for students to connect such as LGBT student centers, student organizations for minority students, and cultural studies programs.

For the full set of diversity benefits to be realized, opportunities for interactions with diverse others in which students feel safe to share their stories and struggles with one another should be made available. These experiences might be facilitated in the classroom or via co-curricular activities through offices such as those focused on diversity and inclusion and Student Affairs. In the classroom, more assignments focusing on privilege and oppression, particularly those that encourage self-awareness and awareness of others could be assigned. Quality programs outside the classroom in which students have the opportunity to learn about others' lives, in particular about others' struggles with injustice and inequity would be important as well. These opportunities might include formal presentations, facilitation of dialogue groups in which diversity and issues related to oppression and discrimination are discussed, and through co-curricular reading assignments such as the assignment given to freshmen at many campuses upon entering the university. Service learning could also be part of the requirements for undergraduates, as it has become at a number of universities. Service learning is another way students gain exposure, interact and learn about individuals and populations different from what they know upon entering college.

Areas for Further Study

Although there are multiple limitations with this study, the results of the regressions and qualitative analysis show promise and support further exploration in this area. The study could be repeated with other institutions to confirm and learn about new predictors of success within graduate social work programs as well as learn more about

the impact of diverse university campuses on students' preparation for graduate studies and participation in helping professions. A study including students who withdrew or were dismissed from the program to learn about predictors of their performance is strongly recommended. A study examining the advanced standing program and overall performance of advanced standing students is also recommended. In future regression models, the inclusion of internship experience as a fourth variable separate from volunteer experience is recommended as internship experience has a unique purpose for orienting an individual to a profession and professional behavior as well as developing a certain set of skills and knowledge.

For research question two, students described differences in so many ways, well beyond race and ethnicity, as well as provided new perspectives on diversity itself as an experience. In an article about the unfinished research agenda on student diversity in higher education Chang (2013) encourages a shift within this research to other forms of diversity that also contribute to learning. Qualitative findings support his recommendation as students in the study had important and rich learning experiences from multiple types of diversity encounters. The qualitative findings from this study along with prior research lead to additional questions about the characteristics of successful students that identify as marginalized, the change process people navigate as they encounter injustice, as well as the importance of and determination of critical mass needed for student success.

Conclusion

As more is learned about the benefits of diversity within the college experience and more is learned about connections between these benefits and students' potential for

success in advanced levels of study, the more equipped admissions offices will be to select, advise, and support students and their success. This is particularly important in a program like social work in which students must develop competency to work with people from all backgrounds as well as strong problem solving skills. The findings from this study both aid in providing another piece of information for stronger admissions practices as well as pave the path for the next study of this type.

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Appendix A

GSSW Field Practicum II: Advanced Evaluation Form

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Field Practicum II: Advanced Evaluation Form

Evaluation Categories

Rubrics by Competency Area

1. Professional Identity
2. Values and Ethics
3. Critical Thinking
4. Diversity
5. Human Rights and Social Justice
6. Research
7. HBSE/Theory
8. Social Policy
9. Professional Context
10. Practice

A. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: Establish and maintain professional roles and boundaries during the assessment process.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Identify the difference between the professional role and personal experience during the assessment process.
2. In supervision, identify how one's own biases and/or life experiences may impact the assessment process; demonstrate the ability to modify one's behavior accordingly.
3. Demonstrate the ability to know when to seek out supervision during the assessment process.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

B. VALUES AND ETHICS: Demonstrate an understanding of how personal and professional values guide the assessment process.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Identify personal values that may influence the assessment process.
2. Demonstrate conscious value based and ethical behavior during the assessment process in professional communication and documentation.

Evidence to support rating:**Strategies to increase competence:**

C. CRITICAL THINKING: Distinguish multiple sources of knowledge, including research based knowledge and practice wisdom, in the assessment process.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Critique the assessment process in relation to desired outcome.
2. Gather and assess relevant information using abstract ideas to interpret information effectively.
3. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication of assessment outcomes.

Evidence to support rating:**Strategies to increase competence:**

D. DIVERSITY: Assess client systems without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skill.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Describe one's own stereotypes and biases toward diverse cultures and populations.
2. Articulate how those stereotypes and biases might impact an assessment.

3. Conduct assessments with respect and skill and critique the outcome in relation to non-discrimination.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

E. HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:
Address relevant issues of oppression and social change
when completing an assessment.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Identify how the standardized agency based assessment process may contribute to or diffuse oppression.
2. Articulate how the assessment process may relate to social change.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

F. RESEARCH: Evaluate the assessment process
based on research relevant to the client population and
setting.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Demonstrate familiarity with research relevant to the client population and setting.
2. Critically analyze readings and other resources and apply one of them to improve the assessment process.
3. Review and critique for accuracy at least two empirically based tools and/or measures for assessment.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

G. HBSE/THEORY: Demonstrate application of
theoretical frameworks in the assessment process.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Identify the appropriate theoretical framework used to guide an assigned assessment process.
2. Demonstrate use of the knowledge about individual and organizational development and behavior in the assessment process.
3. Identify strengths and coping patterns pertinent to an assigned client.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

H. SOCIAL POLICY: Assess how social policy impacts client systems, agencies and communities.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Assess the impact of a specific *social* policy on a client system within the agency setting.
2. Assess the impact of a specific *agency* policy on a client system within the agency setting.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

I. PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT: Assess organizational policies, functioning, resources, and agency culture for their impact on service delivery.

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practice Tasks

1. Assess agency culture for its impact on achieving agency goals.
2. Assess adequacy of agency resources for achieving agency goals.
3. Assess how organizational policies relate to organizational functioning.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

J. PRACTICE: Conduct assessments that

UP	IP	EC	C	AC
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demonstrate an integrated and contextualized social work perspective.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Practice Tasks

1. Demonstrate effective use of engaging skills when performing assessments of client systems.
2. Demonstrate an ability to use both close-ended and open-ended questions and an understanding of when each is most effective.
3. Demonstrate an ability to gather information from the client and other relevant resources to the problem for which help is sought.
4. Demonstrate an ability to utilize an ecological perspective in assessment.
5. Demonstrate an ability to assess both specific strengths and challenges faced by the client system.
6. Define the assessment outcome with implications for both micro and macro change.

Evidence to support rating:

Strategies to increase competence:

EVALUATION CATEGORIES

UP Unacceptable Progress

Never demonstrates awareness, knowledge and skills as a graduate social work intern

IP Insufficient Progress

Rarely demonstrates awareness, knowledge and skills as a graduate social work intern

EC Emerging Competence

Inconsistently demonstrates awareness, knowledge and skills as a graduate social work intern

C Competence

Consistently demonstrates awareness, knowledge and skills as a graduate social work intern

AC Advanced Competence

Expertly demonstrates awareness, knowledge and skills as a graduate social work intern

Appendix B

Dissertation Interview Protocol

Research Question: What types of diversity experience (if any) did successful students participate in during college and how did those impact their success in the MSW program?

Background Information

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me today to talk about some of your college experiences. Specifically I'll be asking about experiences and opportunities you had with your undergraduate education.

Topic Domain 1: Classroom and Co-curricular Diversity, Hurtado and DeAngelo, 2012

Lead-off question: In college, did you participate in formal learning experiences in which you interacted with diverse others or learned about diverse populations?

Follow up questions: Did you attend a racial/cultural awareness workshop that you can remember? Can you tell me about it? Did you take an ethnic studies, women's studies course or LGBT course? What was that like?

Did you perform community service as part of a class? Participate in a study abroad course? Tell me about the experience.

Topic Domain 2: Structural and Interactional Diversity, Hu and Kuh, 2003

Lead-off Question: Can you tell me about some experiences outside of the classroom in which you interacted with people different from yourself during college?

Follow up questions: Did you have opportunities to become acquainted with students whose race or ethnic background, country of origin, sexual orientation or gender orientation was different from yours?

What does diversity mean for you? Would you consider your college diverse?

In college, did you have serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values or life experiences were very different from yours? with students whose political opinions were very different from yours? What was that like?

Did you have serious discussions with students whose race or ethnic background was different from yours? Can you tell me about that?

Did you have serious discussions with a student from a different sexual or gender orientation than you? Can you tell me specific things you learned about other groups that you were not aware of before? Did you become aware of biases that you had that you did not previously recognize? Did specific feelings arise for you because of that experience? If so, can you name and describe?

Topic Domain 3: Benefits of College Diversity Experience

Lead-off Question: In your earlier response, you mentioned _____ experience. Can you tell me about how that experience impacted you?

Follow up questions: What did you gain, if anything, from that experience? Did anything negative occur from the experience? How about the other experience to which you referred? Did knowing diverse students/others impact your understanding of yourself?

Covert categories (not to be asked): How was the student impacted by learning about or from diverse others? Did the experience impact their world view or widen their perspective? Does the student connect a broader ability to see the world from another's perspective from these experiences? Did the experiences lead to increased tolerance for difference? What were the benefits? Were there drawbacks? Were the experiences reflective of positive cross-racial interactions? Were they reflective of negative cross-racial interactions?

Topic Domain 4: Personal identification as a minority

Lead-off Question: Thank you for telling me about some of your experiences in college. How did you personally identify in college, as part of the majority or the minority? What was that like?

Follow up questions: How did your experiences as a minority (or part of the majority) impact your self-awareness? Your awareness of others? How did you benefit from being the minority? How was being part of the minority challenging? How was being part of the majority?

Covert categories (not to be asked): Did the experiences impact student's sense of empathy for others? Did the student feel marginalized because of their perceived status, or did they feel empowered? Were there opportunities for them for meaningful, supportive interactions with people different from themselves because they were the minority? Did they feel sense of belonging? Did they feel like a "token" student member? What were the benefits for them, if any?

Topic Domain 5: Impact of college diversity experiences on future goals

Lead-off Question: Can you tell me more about your goals after you finish the program?

Follow up Questions: What population/s would you like to work with when you finish the MSW program? Is there a population with which you don't want to work? Do you feel prepared to work with people from different backgrounds? Do you think getting to know people who are different from yourself had an impact on your future goals? Did exposure to diversity impact your decision to be a social worker or part of a helping profession? Did diversity experiences impact other decisions about your future?

Covert categories (not to be asked): Is inclusivity important to the student? Does the student seem to have biases (of which they're aware or not aware)? Is diversity (working with diverse populations) of value to them? Did diversity experiences increase the student's understanding of and/or commitment to social justice? Did the experience help them clarify their interests and professional goals? Did they make a commitment to social work because of the experience, in part or full?

Appendix C

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Social Policy

Field Competency Score

Table A1

Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Field Competency Scores.

(n = 564)

Variable	Social Policy		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>e^B</i>
Cond Admit Status	-.98	.68	.37
Enroll Status	-.02	.21	.98
Advanced Standing Status	-.58**	.24	.56
Gender	1.03**	.39	2.8
Ethnicity	-.06	.09	.95
Age	.00	.01	1.00
GRE W	-.20	.15	.82
GRE T	.03**	.01	.82
Undergrad GPA	.53	.34	1.70
Campus Ethnic Diversity Score	-.01	.50	1.00
FT Experience	.20	.10	1.22
PT Experience	.02	.10	1.02
Vol Experience	-.02	.09	.98
Constant	-9.87		
χ^2		33.67	
df		13	

Notes: Advanced Standing and Conditional Admission status coded as 1 for *yes* and 0 for *no*. Enrollment status coded as 1 for *part-time* and 0 for *full-time*. Gender coded as 1 for *female* and 0 for *male*. Experience variables were recorded by number of months.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Appendix D

Conceptual Coding for Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

Conceptual Codes

College Diversity Experiences

Encounters with diversity

Seeking out diversity or accidental diversity

Active student lives - work, school, volunteering, communities, political activism, community

service, leadership experiences

Leadership experiences for some

College is the time and place to explore, allows diversification from family and home

City allows for contact with diverse others

melting pot cities

Classes not as important

College major impacts experiences, area of study may be critical

Everyday life on campus is a diversity experience

Campus culture – international students

Relativity of diversity

Categories of people or how people are separated

Diversity is “different from what I know”, diversity is normal for others, diversity for one student was going to a homogenous setting

Diversity occurs between groups as well as within groups and there are also similarities across groups

Reverse diversity

Serving as the diversity

Diversity is skin color, nationality, geography, class, experience, motivated vs. not motivated, socio-economic status, enrollment status, GLBT status, part of Greek life or not, different opinions, gender, women’s college, those who care and those who don’t, documented and undocumented, those who reside on campus and those who commute

Diversity is the spice of life – salt, pepper, paprika, seasons mixed together in a bowl

For some diversity is taken for granted while for others it is something to be sought

Diversity is not accessible for all – it is itself a privilege

Marginalized identity – leads to skill development, empathy and activism

Lessons from marginalization or outsider status

Lived experiences

Us and others

People don’t look like me

My struggle helps me understand your struggle

Empathy

Pathway to empathy – marginalized me sees marginalized you

Listen to others

Conversations with others

Understand importance of belonging
 Makes me want to make others feel comfortable
 Advocacy

Pivotal experiences

Encounters with injustice – self and others or seeing social injustice

Consciousness-raising experiences
 Frustrated with those who don't care
 Ignorant others – identification by comparison
 Social justice inoculation
 Not as much about diversity as experiences of injustice, inequities

Awareness of Inequities – budding social conscience, social justice conversion, development of social justice conscience

Awareness of privilege
 Awareness under development
 Development of critical thinking “made me think”
 Wanting to change
 Frustrated with those who don't care

Childhood Encounters with diversity or Injustice through a Child's Eyes

“Through a Child's Eyes”
 Early life experiences
 Led students to think about people and society differently
 Led to awareness of injustice or unfairness
 Pivotal or impactful experiences – experiences “set in” and help redefine some things about life
 Childhood experience changes way you look at what's different

Activism, advocacy

Family of Origin vs. Found Kinship

Community/family consolidation – both in college as well as elsewhere
 Survival – have each other's back
 Family of origin
 Solid community of marginalized others leads to strength, pride, critical mass
 Community of one's own
 Belonging
 Critical mass
 Hermanidad, sisterhood
 Community
 Underground community
 Pride
 Shared identity, shared experiences, shared ideas
 People brought together

Where family of origin for some students was a source of discrimination and bias, or a place in which students felt marginalized or like a minority, students talk about becoming part of communities in familial terms such as hermanidad and sisterhood that become a source of getting needs met, sometimes even for survival.

People who want to help – Growth mindset or orientation

“I can change my part of the world”

Hopeful

Passionate

Persistent, ongoing change

All experiences have value, can be learned from, including those that are painful or chronic

Challenging experiences framed as strengths

Awareness of one’s own biases, growth occurs from awareness

Growth is an ongoing process of discovery

Self-aware

Aware of others’ biases

Lessons

Skill development

Diversity skills developed through lived experiences, understanding others, not separating self

Committed to community

Dedicated

What’s required to reach “critical mass” in order for benefits, including pride, belonging, strength, to be realized?