THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPLICIT CURRICULUM: THE

EXPERIENCES STUDENTS HAVE WITH FACUTLY AND

DIVERSITY WITHIN THE MASTER OF SOCIAL

WORK PROGRAM AT STANISLAUS STATE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Social Work

By
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May 2020

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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Dr. John Garcia Professor of Social Work	Date

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DEDICATION

Como hija de inmigrantes, sé que este logro no solamente es mío, sino que también es logro de mis padres. Si no fuera por ellos no habría podido llegar a este momento en el ahora estoy: Obteniendo mi título en maestría en trabajo social. Por esa razón, quiero dedicar esta tesis a mis padres, quienes me han apoyado incondicionalmente en mis estudios. También quiero reconocer mi propio esfuerzo por seguir luchando. Aunque hubo muchos obstáculos en mi vida y en la vida de mi familia, logre persistir y culminar mi proyecto. Hubo momentos durante los cuales el estrés y la ansiedad que sentía no me dejaba pensar claramente. A veces, llegue a sentir que ya no podía y quería rendirme. Sin embargo, fui capaz de continuar y de superar los momentos de duda. Esta tesis también la dedico a las personas que nunca me dejaron sola en este capítulo de mi vida y que me ayudaron a no dejarme vencer. En especial, el apoyo de mis queridas amigas (Val, Cynthia, Karen, y Nelly) que me motivaban y me recordaban lo importante que era en llegar hasta el final. Sus regaños, que nacían de su cariño, también fueron importantes. También agradezco el apoyo constante que me brindó mi novio. Siempre estuvo ahí, en las buenas y en las malas, apoyándome y motivándome hasta el final. Finalmente, dedico esta tesis a mis abuelitos porque sé que me están mirándome desde el cielo. Ellos me inspiraron a seguir adelante. Eran y seguirán siendo las personas más importantes en mi vida. Por ellos, porque sus sacrificios en esta vida no fueron en vano.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of Master of Social Work

(MSW) students at Stanislaus State during the 2018-2019 academic school year

regarding only two aspects of the implicit curriculum: diversity and faculty issues.

While all accredited social work programs are required to evaluate their competencies

and other aspects of their program, the implicit curriculum is one critical evaluation

requirement that tends to receive less attention. This particular program evaluation

requirement entails a variety of components to a social work program; however, there

is a lack of research focused on the implicit curriculum. This study had a sample of

65 MSW students who were either in the Stateside (on-campus) or Hybrid (online)

program. The data were gathered via an electronical survey that was sent to all

students. The major findings of the study were that there was a high percentage of

students who expressed positive experiences regarding diversity and faculty issues.

However, the findings did identify some areas of concern regarding political diversity

and political correctness. This study highlights implications for practice, policy, and

future research related to the implicit curriculum.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Preparing social workers for professional practice is an arduous task. On a

daily basis, in their work with disenfranchised clients, social workers participate in

decision making that impacts the lives of the most disadvantaged individuals in our

communities. As such, it is critically important that we ensure that the educational

programs that are preparing them for this essential work are adequately meeting their

needs and ensuring that they are ready to meet the challenges that face them as they

join the profession. Likewise, in order to assure that social work programs are

preparing students for this occupation, the Commission on Accreditation (COA) of

the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) put into place the Educational Policy

and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The responsibility of the COA is to make sure

that social work programs continue to meet, sustain, and implement the accreditation

standards at the Master and Bachelor level. In order to become accredited, programs

must follow the accreditation policy standards implemented by the CSWE.

Moreover, the evaluation requirements of social work programs are to have a

curriculum that enables the assessment of students and the effectiveness with

implementation of the curriculum content. According to the CSWE, the EPAS allows

social work programs to incorporate a balanced curriculum to encompass traditional

and evolving models (CSWE, 2015). In other words, it is up to the program's

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discretion to interpret the CSWE accreditation standards and demonstrate their operationalization when preparing for accreditation or reaccreditation (Teasley & Archuleta, 2015). The four required areas of the accreditation standards for social work programs are crucial to the implementation and learning environment of the student. These are: program mission and goals, explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and assessment.

For each one, there are specific accreditation standards that need to be met in order to become an accredited program. With the mission and goals, social work programs are having to submit, explain, and identify a mission statement that is consistent with the purpose and values of the profession (CSWE, 2015). As for explicit curriculum, the focus is on the formal part of the education providing structure within courses and field education preparing students for professional practice at a bachelors or masters level (CSWE, 2015). The implicit curriculum requires social work programs to illustrate their dedication toward diversity, student participation in governance, faculty, resources, administrative structure, admissions policies and procedures, advisement, retention and termination policies (CSWE, 2015). Lastly, the assessment is where social work programs gather systematic, multidimensional data to provide information on student performance within the competencies at the level of generalist and specialized practice. Essentially once a program becomes accredited, they are required to maintain their accreditation through the reaffirmation process which occurs every eight years. Going through their

reevaluation of accreditation is crucial to ensure that social work students are being competently prepared for the work profession.

While all accredited social work programs are required to evaluate their competencies and other aspects of their program, the implicit curriculum is one critical evaluation requirement that tends to receive less attention. This particular program evaluation requirement entails a variety of components to a social work program, yet there is a lack of research in the knowledge base focused on the implicit curriculum. According to Bogo and Wayne (2013), the implicit curriculum involves the policies, procedures, and processes related to admission, advisement, retention, and termination; student participation in governance; administrative structures; and faculty and resources. However, their standpoint of the implicit curriculum is through the culture of human interchange lens where Bogo and Wayne (2013) make clear that to establish a quality of human interaction within students, faculty, and staff there needs to be additional educational interventions (Bogo and Wayne, 2013). Essentially, individual social work programs are not required to look at all aspects of the implicit curriculum but rather are given the freedom to select various facets for evaluation. Nevertheless, what is missing in the current knowledge base is the discussion of which aspects of the implicit curriculum are being evaluated and how the findings are being used to impact program decision making. According to Pardeck (2005), the social work education in the United States lacks having the proper skills, knowledge, and values that are critical to effective practice and policy interventions.

As such, the development of the knowledge base on the implicit curriculum will assist programs to better meet the goals of developing competent social work professionals.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of students with faculty and diversity issues within the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Stanislaus State. This quantitative study used a survey design to capture data that describes the strengths and concerns graduate students encounter during their interactions and engagement with faculty, as well as how they have experienced issues within the program surrounding diversity. This study is part of the MSW Programs' assessment plan which requires accredited programs to examine their implicit curriculum. In this case, the Stanislaus State Social Work program opted to focus on the two specific issues that are stated above. This led to the research questions: What are students' experiences with diversity issues in the MSW Program? What are the students' experiences with faculty in the MSW Program? The assumption underpinning the study was that students would have positive views of the program faculty and positive experiences with diversity issues. Additionally, it was expected that there would be no difference between the experience's students have surrounding faculty and diversity among the 2018-2019 cohorts (Stateside and Hybrid) of MSW students.

Significance of the Study

This proposed study allowed the Stanislaus State Master of Social Work program to understand how and in what way the implicit curriculum can be improved.

In addition, it provides information on students' direct interaction with faculty in regard to diversity issues in various settings. In part, this research is significant to social work practice and policy because as an accredited institution the social work program has to undergo review and examine the state of the implicit curriculum. In relation with social justice, the study allowed for the students to specify their experiences with faculty and diversity issues within the MSW program. As future social work students, it is fundamental that social work programs go through the reaffirmation process to make sure that students are receiving the adequate professional learning experience to prepare them for the work profession.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the following sections, four major areas of the existing knowledge base are examined and discussed to provide context for the current study. The first section explores the manner in which the implicit curriculum is described and how expectations are articulated by the Council on Social Work Education. The second section focuses on research studies regarding the implicit curriculum and the manner in which social work programs have set out to examine the implicit curriculum. In this second section, the focus is (respectively) on specific aspects of the implicit curriculum and what is known from research regarding: a) students' experiences with diversity in social work education and b) graduate students' experience with faculty. This literature review provides the reader with background information to understand the importance behind the implicit curriculum in social work education.

CSWE & the Implicit Curriculum

The implicit curriculum entails a significant portion of the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) accreditation requirements. The implicit curriculum, as defined by the CSWE, is indicated as the "learning environment" (CSWE, 2015, 14). Essentially it is composed of the social work "programs commitment to diversity; admissions policies and procedures; advisement, retention, and termination policies; student participation in governance; faculty; administrative structure; and resources"

(CSWE, 2015, 14). Equally as important as the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum plays a crucial part in the educational culture of the program which aligns with the values of the profession as well as the "mission, goals, and context of the environment" (CSWE, 2015, 14). The accreditation standards of the implicit curriculum are inclusive of diversity, student development, faculty, administrative and governance structure, and resources (CSWE, 2015).

Essentially, student development has four areas that it covers which are admission, advisement, retention and termination and lastly, student participation (CSWE, 2015). It requires a social work program to identify the criteria used to admit students, a description of the policies and procedures for advanced standing, as well as the evaluation of applications. Additionally, there needs to be a submission of a written policy regarding transfer of credits and the disallowance of social work credit for life or work experience (CSWE, 2015).

Furthermore, the requirements detailed for advisement, retention, and termination obliges the program to submit their process of policy and procedure for advising the student, evaluating their academic and professional performance, and lastly, terminating an enrollment of a student based on their performance (CSWE, 2015). With regard to student participation, social work programs have to provide specific rights and opportunities for students to participate and organize in their interest (CSWE, 2015). When it comes to administrative and governance, faculty and administration have the autonomy to develop how each role should be structured and implemented along with the curriculum in order to educate competent social workers

(CSWE, 2015). This essentially goes into the program's process to determine the curriculum.

While the implicit curriculum is robust, there are two specific aspects of it that are under investigation in the current research study: diversity and faculty. According to the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the educational policy for diversity articulates an expectation from social work programs to develop a commitment to cultural humility by learning the values and differences within diverse populations (CSWE, 2015). Additionally, the accreditation standard details that social work programs need to have a continuous effort to improve their inclusivity by providing a learning environment which models affirmation and respect to differences and diversity (CSWE, 2015).

With regard to faculty, the EPAS emphasizes that faculty qualifications are an essential aspect for students to develop the necessary knowledge, values, and skills for the social work profession (CSWE, 2015). In other words, the faculty is modeling the expected environment of behavior and values for students to carry out to the professional field. As for the accreditation standard (CSWE, 2015), it provides a more methodological point with regards to faculty in which social work programs are needing to meet. This includes the qualifications, competence, and expertise that the faculty has. Additionally, there needs to be a description of the faculty's workload and a discussion regarding the policies in place which will support the achievement of the program's mission and goals (CSWE, 2015).

Research on the Implicit Curriculum

There have been a number of studies published by social work programs regarding their assessment of the implicit curriculum. This section highlights those studies, with a particular emphasis on research examining the implicit curriculum related to diversity and faculty issues. Within the research it is important to note that Council on Social Work Education has given minimal direction to social work programs regarding the best way to address, implement, frame, or measure the implicit curriculum (Grady, Powers, Despard, & Naylor, 2011; Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014; Grady, Swick, & Powers, 2018).

Grady et al. (2011) did an expansive study on the implicit curriculum mainly focusing on six domains related to students' educational environment: academic experience, diversity, field education, community, student support services, and faculty advising. The specific information related to faculty and diversity was academic experience (instructors), faculty advising, and diversity. Interestingly enough, they found that what concerned students most with their academic experience with instructors was the that the instruction was too theoretical (not practical). Additionally, students noted that instructors were not "organized or able to stimulate critical thinking among students" (Grady et al., 2011, 470). Moreover, with faculty advising, 20% to 30% of students did not consider their advisors to be helpful with making decisions about their curricular needs. Some of the students reported that they mainly sought informal advising from faculty who they knew the best (Grady et al., 2011).

Furthermore, with regard to diversity, they found that 80% of students agreed that their MSW program welcomed, supported, and encouraged multiple types of diversity, including race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability (Grady et al., 2011). However, within the class environment, students expressed feeling isolated when talking about diversity (24%) and about 32% felt pushed into accepting politically correct attitudes that they did not believe or share (Grady et al., 2011). Additionally, their findings indicated that a "large number of students felt that the delivery of [implicit] curriculum varies tremendously based on the quality of the instructor" (Grady et al., 2011, 483). Moreover, their results demonstrated that "the learning environment that faculty members create contributes to whether students feel comfortable offering input in the classroom and whether they feel safe within the school community" (Grady et al., 2011, 483). Moreover, their research indicated that "nearly a quarter of respondents felt overwhelmed by their field experiences" (Grady et al., 2011, 484). In other words, this illustrated that students were not receiving the adequate experiences within the classroom setting or their previous field experiences to effectively prepare them (Grady et al., 2011).

Similarly, Peterson et al. (2014) assessed the implicit curriculum; however, their assessment is based on how the implicit curriculum shapes students' professional empowerment. Their research focused on faculty/staff diversity, supportive faculty, opportunity role structure and access to information. Essentially, there were three mediating factors: student participation (extracurricular activities), sense of community, and sense of being valued by the school (Peterson et al., 2014).

Moreover, the research relevant to faculty and diversity communicated that the students who reported greater diversity of faculty/staff were likely to have higher scores for feeling valued which tended to contribute to higher scores for professional empowerment (Peterson et al., 2014). Additionally, it was found that there was a "relatively strong total effect on sense of community," with diversity of faculty/staff indicating a 25% overall indirect effect through the feeling of being valued by the school (Peterson et al., 2014, 640).

Holosko, Skinner, MacCaughelty, and Stahl, (2010) emphasize the importance the implicit curriculum has in shaping the culture of a school. They recognize the significance of both the implicit and explicit curriculum to come together in order to develop the professional social work identity of students (Holosko et al., 2010). They point out in their research the consciousness of the hidden curriculum and draw out that it can no longer be eclipsed (Holosko et al., 2010; Bhuyan, Bejan, & Jeyapal, 2017). Moreover, Holosko et al. (2010) describe the development process of the implicit curriculum at a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program in a large Southern state university by using three web-based projects. Essentially, this included a glossary of terms for students, frequently asked questions (FAQs) for advisors, FAQs about field problems and resources for instructors and students (Holosko et al., 2010). Their method to build the implicit curriculum entailed using a five-step approach which included: key values and assumptions, glossary terms of BSW curriculum for students, BSW advising FAQs, field issues and resources: FAQs and, lastly, assessment. Moreover, to evaluate the BSW implicit curriculum implementation a

mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative) along with annual student focus groups are used to provide constructive feedback to ensure the implementation is working properly.

Correspondingly, Bhuyan, Bejan, and Jeyapal (2017) conducted research to solicit feedback from social work graduate students at an urban university in Canada. The study explores the institutional grounding of social justice within the coursework and field education of MSW graduate students in Canada. The research specifically focused on field education and how it characterized and embodied the knowledge and acquired skills for social justice. In particular, the portion of the study relating to diversity noted that students enrolled in social justice related courses were not obtaining the fundamental knowledge regarding anti-oppressive practice nor social justice (Bhuyan et al., 2017). Essentially, the researchers highlight the importance behind professionalizing equity and diversity work; however, they point out that management of field education, program structure, and the broader university play an institutional role that influences the implicit social work curriculum (Bhuyan et al., 2017). In their research, it is expressed that

> universities are increasingly influenced by the market values of consumerism, professionalism, and managerialism, students are positioned as tuition paying subjects; their education must cater to the 'needs' of the market in order for these subjects to secure employment after graduation and successfully integrate with the market system. (Bhuyan et al., 2011, 374)

Taking a different approach, Quinn and Barth's (2014) research does not focus on one social work program but rather evaluates the implicit curriculum in social work programs that offer degrees using distance education technology. Similarly, with Peterson et al. (2014) and Grady et al. (2011), Quinn and Barth (2014) note that the Council on Social Work Education does not provide any defined standard for what a distance degree program entails and how the implicit or explicit curriculum should be implemented. Essentially, in their research, they describe the differences in which distance programs are having to operationalize the implicit and explicit curriculum. Relating to diversity, about ten programs (65%) viewed themselves as representing a more diverse population than most on-campus programs. Two themes emerged with how programs defined diversity: location (remote and/or rural) and type of student (Quinn & Barth, 2014). In other words, distance programs have allowed for a diverse group of people to be included. Interestingly enough, in their research, one program expressed having a greater number of male students in their distance program (Quinn & Barth, 2014). Moreover, with faculty it varied from how each distance program had it structured. The research indicated that nine schools (56%) didn't require faculty to teach in the distance programs. However, for the professors who taught in distance programs, six schools (38%) required their faculty to complete a training or certification for such programs (Quinn & Barth, 2014). It's important to note that for a distance program to run successfully there needs to be a successful coordination. This is key for the learning environment (implicit curriculum) and the delivery for the explicit curriculum (Quinn & Barth, 2014). Yet,

their biggest challenge in implementing the implicit curriculum was finding a way to engage students in the distance program the same way as those on-campus programs (Quinn & Barth, 2014). Essentially, they came to question the assessment of the implicit curriculum in distance programs and wonder whether the implicit curriculum "be done in addition to its on-campus program or be assessed as an extension of the on-campus program?" (Quinn & Barth, 2014, 46).

O'Neill and Miller (2015) conducted research that entailed a 20-year commitment in reevaluating the Smith College School for Social Work (SCSSW) current implicit and explicit curriculum and to convert their focus to an antiracism curriculum. Relating to faculty in the implicit curriculum, their implementation consisted of providing instructors with the opportunity to expand on their teaching approach and how they view the topic (O'Neill & Miller, 2015). In other words, for all new faculty to teach any course they are offered an online course. This course essentially allows the faculty to explore their biases, assumptions, and questions regarding racial discrimination (O'Neill & Miller, 2015). In the research, their approach to assist students with experiences with diversity was by creating an antiracism consultation committee where student, faculty, and staff could consult about issues surrounding racism. Additionally, SCSSW provided their senior faculty of color with a stipend to "serve as advisers, mediators and mentors for students" (O'Neill & Miller, 2015, 167).

Based on the literature and information presented above, it is crucial that there continues to be research done on the implicit curriculum to find ways to improve,

implement, address, and measure the experiences that students and faculty have in relationship to teaching and learning. The knowledge base highlights the importance of the implicit curriculum in shaping the learning environment (for both students and faculty). The knowledge base also highlights that the implicit curriculum is very robust and that social work programs have received little direction from the Council on Social Work Education regarding how to assess the implicit curriculum. As a result, as revealed in the literature review, social work programs have taken varied approaches in their assessment of their learning environments. This is similarly the case is this study. Specifically, in this study, the main focus is solely on the students' experiences with diversity and faculty within the Master of Social Work program at Stanislaus State University. This study's purpose is to provide the knowledge base with additional research to understand how social work programs create a learning environment that nurtures students' professional development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of students with faculty and diversity issues within the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Stanislaus State. This quantitative study used a survey design to capture data that describes the strengths and concerns graduate students encounter during their interactions and engagement with faculty, as well as how they have experienced issues within the program surrounding diversity. This study is part of the MSW Program's assessment plan which requires accredited programs to examine their implicit curriculum. In this case, the Stanislaus State Social Work program opted to focus on the two specific issues that are stated above. This led to the research questions: What are students' experiences with diversity issues in the MSW Program? What are the students' experiences with faculty in the MSW Program? The assumption underpinning the study was that students would have positive experiences with faculty and diversity, and that there would be no difference between the experience's students have surrounding faculty and diversity among the 2018-2019 cohorts (Stateside and Hybrid) of MSW students.

Research Design and Instrumentation

This research consisted of a traditional survey study where one data set, 2018-2019 academic school year, was analyzed to provide a single snapshot of two critical

issues (diversity and faculty) in MSW program at Stanislaus State. This quantitative descriptive traditional survey study design analyzed the 2018-2019 surveys of students. This encompassed Stateside (on-campus) and Hybrid (online) students who were enrolled in the Master of Social Work program at Stanislaus State. The survey used for the research was made accessible via email and was sent out to all social work students during the 2018-19 academic calendar year. This survey was used to examine two critical issues: students experience with faculty and diversity within the Master of Social Work program.

The quantitative instrument was developed by the faculty of the MSW Program after gleaning items from a number of existing instruments. The tool mainly consists of questions set to a Likert scale where the answer options range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. In this particular tool, it does not include a neutral option. At the end of the survey, three demographic questions are completed by the participants. In regard to the construction of the survey, the tool has faced validity in the sense that it was created by discipline experts (the faculty/staff of the MSW program at Stanislaus State) based on existing tools; however, no information is available about the reliability of the tool. In total, this survey has forty questions, that are divided into three parts.

In the first section there are ten statements that probe students' experiences with faculty. The questions ask about the professor's ability to teach the subject matter, engage with students, provide a safe space to learn, give feedback to improve critical thinking as well as other issues. The second part of the questionnaire

encompasses eighteen inquiries that ask about diversity. This section is composed of three different areas of focus. These statements begin with an overview of different aspects of diversity and whether the student feels that the MSW program supports and encourages racial/ethnic diversity, international diversity, disability diversity among other facets. The questions that follow are in regard to the personal experiences that the participants have had in the MSW program. These inquiries look at how the MSW program has helped or discouraged diversity in the classroom and/or when meeting one on one with a faculty/staff. Lastly, the subjects that follow inquire about the sensitivity the MSW program has to diversity issues in various settings.

The third segment of the survey contains nine probing statements about whether or not the students feel that the MSW program has prepared them for the nine core competencies established by the Council on Social Work Education. These competencies include, but not limited to, ethical and professional behavior, engaging in policy practice, and advancing social justice. The survey also includes three questions surrounding demographic information about the student's ethnic background, the type of program the participant is in, and the year of the program.

Sampling Plan

This research study used a non-probability convenient sample with students who were enrolled in the MSW program for the 2018-2019 academic school year. The survey was sent out to all graduate students via email by the social work department of Stanislaus State. There was an estimation of approximately 70 students who were a part of this research. It was anticipated that not every student would

participate in the study. The specific cohort that was part of this study was the 2018-2019 academic school year.

Data Collection

All the data for this study was collected by the MSW Program. For this study, the researcher was provided access to the anonymous survey data and was in charge with the task of analyzing the data and reporting the findings. The data for this study was collected by an electronic survey. During the 2018-2019 academic school year, the survey was sent out in the winter term. There was a total of forty questions, and students were given approximately a month to complete the survey. In that time span, there were three email reminders that were sent out to the students about completing the survey. It was expected to take the student around ten to fifteen minutes to complete the survey. The survey is self-explanatory, so the researcher did not need to read over any questions or explain the informed consent to the participants. The strength of the data collection process was that it is convenient for the student as to when they have time to take the survey. This allowed the researcher to reach a large group in a cost-effective way. However, the weakness of the data collection process was that questions may have been misinterpreted or not answered. Also, there could have been participants that may have rushed through the survey without carefully reading what was being asked. Another scenario may be that some participants may have chosen to ignore the email and not do the survey.

Plan for Data Analysis

This researcher utilized a quantitative data analysis process in which it addressed the research questions. There are two quantitative components, a univariate and bivariate analysis. The univariate analysis explored each of the survey questions separately from the data set of the 2018-2019 academic school year. This part of the analysis allowed the researcher to look at the frequency distributions, as well as the values of the central tendencies. As follows, this helped to describe the students' perceptions in regard to faculty and diversity. The Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) allowed the researcher to analyze and interpret the data and report outcomes as well as the implications. To give a better understanding of the research, there are visual representation such as graphs or tables.

The second quantitative part of this study analyzed the data through the bivariate analysis. The test that was applied was the Independent Sample T-Test because it allowed the researcher to determine if there were differences in perceptions of faculty and diversity between Stateside and Hybrid students.

Protection of Human Subjects

The survey was sent out electronically and attached to the survey was the informed consent form. This offered the participants with the flexibility to complete the survey as well as review over the informed consent form at their convenience. There was no potential harm to the participants being the fact that no personal information was being collected via email. The only information being collected in the survey about the participant was their demographic information. The data

collected from the survey was stored in a secure place where only the researcher was able to access the information. In addition, there were no identifiable markers from the data collected that disclosed an inappropriate disclosure. Lastly, this study underwent review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) which ensured the protection and rights of the participants in the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The results are organized into three major sections. The first part covers an overview of the characteristics of the students who participated in survey. The second section provides the students' perceptions of diversity and their experiences with diversity in various aspects of the program. Additionally, a comparison is made to see if there are differences among students within the stateside (face-to-face) and hybrid (online) programs regarding their experiences and perceptions of diversity. The last portion provides students' perceptions and experiences of faculty in the MSW Program at Stanislaus State. This portion also provides a comparison of stateside and hybrid students with their perceptions and experiences with faculty. Holistically, these results examine two aspects critically important to the implicit curriculum.

Overview of the Sample

There were 65 students who participated in the survey. Of those 65 students, 50 (85%) students were enrolled in the Stateside (face-to-face) Program and 9 (15%) students were enrolled in the hybrid program. Moreover, there were 19 (33%) students who reported being in their first year of study; 24 (41%) students reported being in their second year; and 15 (26%) students that reported being in their third year. Additionally, out of the 59 students who provided data, 4 (7%) of them described themselves to be Multiple ethnicity/other, 5 (8%) as Black or African

American, 8 (14%) as Asian/Pacific Islander, 15 (25%) as White/Caucasian, and 27 (46%) as Hispanic/Latino.

Perceptions of Diversity

In the survey, students were asked about their experiences with diversity in three different ways: (1) the students' views of the MSW program supportiveness or encouragement with various forms of diversity, (2) the MSW program and how it has made students feel about diversity, and (3) the students' perceptions on various aspects of the MSW program toward diversity.

There were 9 items that explored students' views of how the MSW program supports or encourages diversity. As revealed in Table 1, on all 9 items the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the MSW Program at Stanislaus State supports diversity. Specifically, on the highest end of the spectrum, 96% of the students believed that the program supports sexual orientation diversity, and 95% of the students believed that the program supports age diversity. At a slightly lower percentage, 92% of students perceived the program to support gender diversity, and 89% of students believed that the program supports socioeconomic diversity. Additionally, 87% of students perceived that the program supports disability and international diversity, and 86% of students believed the MSW program to support racial/ethnic and religious and spiritual diversity. On the lowest end of the spectrum (but still well over the majority), 76% of the students believed the program to support political diversity compared to 23% of students who did not perceive the MSW program to be supportive.

Table 1

Perception of Program Support of Aspects of Diversity

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Racial/Ethnic	41.54%	44.62%	7.69%	6.15%
Gender	43.75%	48.44%	7.81%	0.00%
Sexual Orientation	46.15%	50.77%	1.54%	1.54%
Age	43.08%	52.31%	3.08%	1.54%
Disability	43.55%	45.16%	9.68%	1.61%
Religious and spiritual	39.06%	46.88%	10.94%	3.13%
Socioeconomic	49.21%	39.68%	7.94%	3.17%
International	44.44%	42.86%	12.7%	0.00%
Political	32.81%	43.75%	18.75%	4.69%

Moreover, the results for the MSW program and how it has made students feel about diversity also demonstrated that the majority of the students felt positive about the ways diversity was showcased. For instance, 97% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them recognize intolerance/injustice for diverse individuals and groups. Additionally, 92% of students felt that the MSW program helped them communicate or work effectively with individuals from different backgrounds, and 81% of students felt that the program respected their opinions. Furthermore, 78% of students did not think that the MSW program made them feel isolated from others in the classroom setting when talking about diversity. However, this is not to say that there were no concerns surrounding diverse perspectives: 29% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the MSW program made

them feel pushed to adopt "politically correct" attitudes that they didn't share.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that 47% of the students disagreed with this

perception and did not feel pushed to adopt politically correct attitudes.

Table 2

Impact of Program on Students' Feelings about Diversity

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Made me feel isolated from other in class whenever we talk about diversity	10.77%	10.77%	50.77%	27.69%
Helped me recognize intolerance/injustice for diverse individuals and groups	47.69%	49.23%	3.08%	0.00%
Made me feel that my opinions were not respected	6.25%	12.5%	50%	31.25%
Made me feel pushed to adopt "politically correct" attitudes that I don't share	7.81%	21.88%	46.88%	23.44%
Helped me communicate or work effectively with other backgrounds from my own	32.31%	60.00%	6.15%	1.54%

Additionally, when students were asked about the MSW program's sensitivity

to diversity in various aspects, students' responses were predominantly positive. In

MSW courses/classrooms, 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the social

work program was sensitive when it came to diversity. With regards to field

placements, approximately 84% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the

program was sensitive to diversity concerns that students had. Moreover, almost 94%

of the students strongly agreed or agreed that the MSW program's admissions was

sensitive in regard to diversity. Interestingly enough, when looking at the faculty

composition, the students' responses varied. About 17 % of students disagreed that

the MSW program was sensitive to diversity when it came to faculty composition.

Furthermore, bivariate tests of differences were conducted to examine students'

views regarding diversity and whether or not perceptions differed based on the

program in which they attended (face-to-face instruction versus hybrid instruction). In

all three areas related to diversity, the comparisons between Stateside (face-to-face)

and Hybrid (online) students revealed no differences in perceptions of diversity.

Table 3

Students' Perceptions of Diversity in the Program

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The classroom/MSW courses	39.69%	53.13%	14.06%	3.13%
Field placements	25.00%	59.38%	10.94%	4.69%
Admissions	28.57%	65.08%	6.35%	0.00%
Faculty composition	28.57%	47.62%	17.46%	6.35%

Perceptions of Faculty

In this part of the survey, students were asked 10 particular questions to assess

their experiences with faculty in the MSW program. These questions focused on the

professors' knowledge, availability, responsiveness with student feedback and emails, engagement, facilitation, learning environment, feedback regarding critical thinking and writing ability, and the quality of instruction. As viewed in Table 4, students expressed having relatively positive experiences with faculty in the MSW program, with exception of the last two questions (responsive to student feedback about courses and quality of instruction) where the responses of the students were a bit more dispersed.

Looking specifically at the higher end of the spectrum, 97% of students viewed their professors as engaging, and 94% of students perceived that their professors were knowledgeable about the subject matter being taught. Moreover, 92% of students felt that their professors responded to emails in time mannerly. Additionally, 91% of the students perceived their professors to facilitate discussions to critically think about important social work issues and provide reasonable availability outside of class if needed or requested.

At a slightly lower percentage, 88% of students felt that their professors did create a safe and respectful learning environment, and 86% of students perceived their professors to provide feedback about their assignments that helped them improve their critical thinking. As for professors providing sufficient feedback about the assignment to improve their writing ability, 80% of students agreed compared to 20% of students who disagreed. At the lower end of the spectrum, 69% of students perceived their professors to be responsive to student feedback about the course compared to 31% of students who disagreed. Moreover, 62% of students perceived

their professors' quality of instruction to be consistently high across courses compared to 38% of students who disagreed.

Again, bivariate tests of differences were conducted to determine if there were any differences in students' perceptions of faculty based on the program they attended. These statistical comparisons between Stateside (face-to-face) and Hybrid (online) students revealed no differences in perceptions of faculty.

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of Faculty in the Program

My professors:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Were knowledgeable about the subject matter they taught	35.38%	58.46%	6.15%	0.00%
Facilitated discussions in class that helped me to think critically about important social work issues	41.54%	49.23%	7.69%	1.54%
Were engaging	36.92%	60.00%	1.54%	1.54%
Created safe and respectful learning environment	31.25%	56.25%	7.81%	4.69%
Were available outside of class to meet with me if I needed/requested	39.06%	51.56%	9.38%	0.00%
Responded to my email in a timely manner	31.25%	60.94%	4.69%	3.13%
Provided feedback about my assignments that helped me improve my critical thinking about social work	27.69%	58.46%	9.23%	4.62%
Provided feedback about my assignments that helped me to improve my writing ability	21.54%	58.46%	15.38%	4.62%
Were responsive to student feedback about courses	25.00%	43.75%	25.00%	6.25%
The quality of instruction was consistently high across courses.	18.46%	43.08%	32.31%	6.15%

Overwhelmingly, the analysis of the implicit program in the areas of diversity and faculty revealed that students had very positive perceptions about the manner in which the implicit program is setting a context for their learning environment. In both areas (perceptions of diversity and faculty) students offered positive feedback regarding the manner in which the program is creating a context for learning that is engaging and supportive. Additionally, the results revealed that this pattern of supportiveness and inclusion is evident in both forms of instruction/programs (Stateside and Hybrid) that are offered by this MSW Program.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study examined data collected by the MSW Program at CSU,

Stanislaus as part of their program assessment plan requiring accredited programs to

evaluate their implicit curriculum. Specifically, the purpose of this quantitative study

was to describe the experiences of Master of Social Work (MSW) students with

faculty and diversity issues within the Stanislaus State program. This chapter

addresses the major findings of this study relating to the experiences that students had

with diversity and faculty. The findings will be compared and contrasted to past

literature. Moreover, the limitations, implications of the major findings, and

recommendations for future research are described. The research questions that

guided this study were:

1. What are students' experiences with diversity issues in the MSW

   Program?

2. What are the students' experiences with faculty in the MSW Program?

Major findings

There were three major findings within this study: a) students expressed

extremely positive views of their experiences with diversity with all aspects of the

Program related to the implicit curriculum; b) students also expressed positive views

of their experiences with faculty in nearly all aspects connected to the implicit

curriculum; c), the positive views of the implicit curriculum connected to diversity and faculty held up within both programs (Stateside and Hybrid).

As part of the first major finding related to diversity in the three different sections connected to the implicit curriculum (supportiveness/encouragement, how program made students feel about diversity, and perceptions of the MSW program toward diversity), the vast majority of the students revealed having positive experiences. While the findings were overwhelming positive, there was one area that could use further attention. Relating to supportiveness/encouragement, there was a small percentage of students who did not perceive the program to be supportive when it came to political diversity (23%). In addition, it is important to note that relative to the information surrounding political diversity, there was also a small group of students who reported feeling pressured to adopt "politically correct" attitudes when disagreeing with the attitudes (29%).

Related to the second major finding, the study revealed that students' perceptions about faculty was largely propitious. Yet, there was a small percentage of students who perceived their professors to lack quality of instruction (38%) and to be less responsive to student feedback about the course (31%).

In relation to the last major finding major, it was hypothesized that there would be no differences among the 2018-2019 cohorts within the Stateside (on-campus) and Hybrid (online) programs. By completing bivariate tests of differences regarding the two programs, it was found that there were no statistical differences between students' perceptions of faculty and diversity in the programs. Overall, there

were positive views relating to the implicit curriculum specifically to diversity and faculty.

Existing Literature

In this study, the findings of the evaluation of implicit curriculum specifically with diversity and faculty were relatively consistent with the current knowledge base. In this study, it was found that students' experiences regarding diversity with all aspects of the program were very positive. This finding is consistent with Grady et al. (2011) who found students to perceive their program to be welcoming and encouraging of diversity. The Grady et al. (2011) study revealed positive support toward sexual orientation, age, and gender. However, while the findings of the both studies saw diversity as positive, there were some concerns of political correctness. Grady et al. (2011) pointed out that students raised concerns about feeling pushed to adopt politically correct attitudes.

Regarding other aspects of diversity and the implicit curriculum, students from CSU Stanislaus expressed having very positive feelings regarding the MSW program helping to recognize intolerance/injustice for diverse individuals and groups. The findings from Grady et al. (2011) are also consistent with this finding, in which the majority of their students articulated positive perception with receiving help with recognizing intolerance/injustice for diverse individuals and groups.

Furthermore, students from both samples also expressed positive views of their experiences with faculty in almost all aspects of the program. In this study, it was found that more than half of MSW students viewed the quality of the instruction

consistently high across courses. This finding is directly in line with Grady et al. (2011), who found that the majority of their students were pleased with the delivery of the implicit curriculum related to the quality of instruction.

Another finding of this study was that MSW students felt highly supported by faculty. However, it is important to note that there was a small percent of students who didn't feel as though their opinions were not respected. This finding is also consistent with Peterson et al. (2014) who reported that students who experienced greater diversity of faculty/staff were more likely to report higher scores of feeling valued. Additionally, Grady et al. (2011) found that some of their students expressed that their opinions were not being respected.

Moreover, another finding was that students encountered positive experiences regarding the MSW program providing assistance with effectively communicating and working with other backgrounds. Which in turn includes professors who provide an engaging, safe, and respectful learning environment. This finding was also on point with Grady et al. (2011) who found students felt comfortable in offering input in a classroom when the faculty provided a positive learning environment. Essentially, the MSW students at Stanislaus State seemed to have received or were provided a learning environment that allowed them to effectively communicate or work with individuals from different backgrounds.

Between Stateside (on-campus) and Hybrid (online), it was found that there were no differences revealed by MSW students relating to diversity or faculty. In fact, positive perceptions of the implicit curriculum connecting to diversity and faculty

were found. Although there were no differences found, Quinn and Barth (2014) point out that for a distance program to function there needs to be a successful coordination. For instance, Quinn and Barth (2014) study relayed that about ten programs saw themselves as more diverse because of location (remote and/or local) and type of student enrolled. In addition, distance programs provided diverse groups of people to be included such as having a higher number of male students. Moreover, faculty within their study (nine schools) were not required to teach in distance programs. Yet, there were a couple of schools who required their faculty/staff to complete a training or certification in order to be equipped with the necessary tools for a distance program.

Essentially, an issue that arose was having to implement the implicit curriculum. The challenge was finding a way to engage students just like the programs on-campus. In other words, Quinn and Barth (2014) question how to effectively assess the implicit curriculum in distance programs and whether it should be done in addition to or assessed as an extension to the on-campus program. In addition, Quinn and Barth (2014) note that the Council on Social Work Education does not provide any defined standard for what a distance degree program entails and how the implicit or explicit curriculum should be implemented.

Limitations

As noted throughout this study, the implicit curriculum entails a significant portion of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation requirements. It is important to recall that the implicit curriculum not only covers

diversity and faculty but also entails the admissions policies and procedures, student participation in governance, administrative structure, advisement, resources, retention, and termination policies (CSWE, 2015). Within this research, there were three central limitations. The first limitation of this study was that only two aspects of the implicit curriculum (diversity and faculty) were being evaluated. The implicit curriculum, in it of itself, has various aspects of accreditation standards that require social work programs to abide by.

The second limitation concerned the questions within the survey. Student were not able to fully provide in-depth information regarding their experiences with faculty, specifically. This was a limitation because students could not fully evaluate each professor and/or course, individually. The student had to respond and lump their experience in one. For instance, the question regarding professors responding to emails in a timely manner. Professors may state in the syllabus a certain timeframe to allow them to respond to student emails; however, there can be some professors who may take longer to respond or may not respond. Another example would be professors providing feedback on assignments to help students improve their writing ability. There may be professors quick to provide constructive feedback, and there may be other faculty who provide no feedback or provide it after a second assignment has been turned in. The questions regarding faculty required students to provide a holistic perspective of their experience. This leads to the loss of insight and specificity.

Lastly, this study focused on one institution and one program: Stanislaus State Master of Social Work Program. Additionally, a relatively small sample of students participated in this survey. As such, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all students in this MSW program or beyond this MSW Program.

<div align="center">**Implications of the Major Findings**</div>

Throughout this study a wealth of information was provided to the reader regarding the implicit curriculum, including the importance of diversity and faculty in establishing a learning environment (i.e., the implicit curriculum) for supporting graduate education and students' progress towards competencies. While the knowledge base reiterates the importance of the implicit curriculum, and the Council on Social Work Education requires all programs to evaluate their implicit curriculum, it is critically important to point out that MSW Programs (nationally) have received very little guidance or direction on how to evaluate, implement, or measure the implicit curriculum (Grady et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2014; Grady, Swick, & Powers, 2018).

That is, MSW Programs are individually creating (unique strategies) to evaluate their own programs. Social Work programs are evaluating one or more aspects of the curriculum but with little direction. Programs need the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to provide social work educators with direction and uniformity to continue evaluating and reviewing their programs properly. Lack of direction and uniformity can be viewed through the study by Bhuyan et al., (2017) which revealed that universities are influenced by market values of consumerism,

professionalism, and managerialism. This creates the learning environment into an educational market where student's education must cater to the needs of the market in order to secure employment after graduation. This in turn generates an ongoing cycle where students are being influenced by market values (consumerism, professionalism, and managerialism) to integrate with the market system. Essentially, having no direction or uniformity becomes an issue because social work programs can easily become influenced by these issues and begin to lose sight of the core values of this professional education.

This need for direction leads to another implication: the need for resources and research support in order for programs to accurately evaluate or reaccredit their program. Even though the CSWE provides some guidance for MSW or Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs, the need for resources is crucial because social work programs do not have the resources (funds and human power) to fully follow through with what is required of them, such as designating a specific amount of faculty/staff to work on the evaluation. This handcuffs program and requires of faculty/staff to make and prioritize curriculum decisions absent of quality evaluation. Program evaluation is critical for understanding both the implicit and explicit curriculum. Without research support for social work programs, it will be difficult to understand the manner in which the implicit curriculum is contributing to or negatively impacting social work students' mastery of knowledge and preparation for professional social work practice.

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