

A COMPARISON OF THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF EXPERIENCED
VERSUS INEXPERIENCED MSWs EARNING THE SOCIAL WORK DOCTORATE

by

THOMAS ALEXANDER ARTELT

(Under the Direction of Bruce A. Thyer)

ABSTRACT

Social work doctoral programs in the United States purport to educate students for careers in social work research, teaching, and service. There is an implicit assumption that having some years of post-MSW social work experience prior to beginning doctoral education puts the student in a better position to benefit from their studies. This dissertation surveyed the performance of a convenience sample of 98 social work doctoral students from four programs in the United States. It noted that experienced social workers in doctoral programs took longer to graduate, published fewer scholarly papers, made more conference presentations, were less likely to graduate, and were about equally likely to obtain an academic position than social work doctoral students who had less than two years of post-MSW practice experience. The potential applications of these findings, if replicated, for doctoral program admissions policies are discussed, as are the limitations of the present investigation, and ways in which future research in this area could be improved.

INDEX WORDS: Social work practice experience, Post-MSW practice experience, Social work doctoral education, Social work doctoral programs, GADE, CSWE, Social Work

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
3 METHODOLOGY	47
4 RESULTS	57
5 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION	78
REFERENCES	87

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1	Number of Doctoral Students and Graduates in the United States for 1980 to 20015
2	Post-MSW Work Experience Admissions Standards Provided by Social Work Doctoral Programs24
3	Quotations from Doctoral Programs that Require or Prefer Students with Post- MSW Practice Experience28
4	Table 4 Cover Letter Sent to Doctoral Program Directors52
5	Table 5 Sample Survey Instrument to be Completed on Their Doctoral Graduates who enrolled in Their Programs from 1991-199654
6	Table 6 IRB Approval Confirmation from The University of Georgia56
7	Descriptive Statistics on Interval Variables58
8	Post-MSW Social Work Experience Levels of the Study's Participants59
9	Time the Study's Participants Spent in Their Doctoral Program60
10	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Racial Background61
11	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Gender62
12	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Marital Status63
13	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Social Work Licensure63
14	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Outcome Status65

Table

15	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Dissertation Type	67
16	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Outcome Site	68
17	Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Range of Enrollment Years	69
18	Results for Hypothesis 5	72
19	Results for Hypothesis 6	73
20	Results for Hypothesis 7	74
21	Results for Hypothesis 8	76

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of doctoral education in social work is to “prepare high-quality researchers and educators” amid “the tremendous responsibility for the advancement and dissemination of professional practice knowledge in these challenging times” (Munson, 1996, p. 167). Regensburg (1966, p. 13) notes that the student is to “concern himself with the advancement of learning and emphasizes teaching and research as the foremost career objectives of students in the doctoral program.” Given the diversity of the social work doctoral programs in the United States today, the likelihood that doctoral graduates will be working in social work research or teaching positions is high. The disparity of admissions requirements in doctoral programs in social work and debate on the value of post-MSW practice experience as a requirement for admission to social work doctoral programs were examined in this study. This study identified outcomes of social work doctoral graduates by studying the academic performance of experienced versus inexperienced persons who hold the Master of Social Work (MSW) degree and who earn the social work doctorate.

Doctoral students in social work may earn either the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) degree in the United States today. The diversity of self-contained academic programs range from state-supported and private resident campus environments that hold classes during the daytime, the evening, and on weekends to technologically advanced distance learning settings at an annual cost of between a few thousand dollars to \$30,000 (Thyer, 2002).

The first social work doctoral program in the United States began in 1915 at Bryn Mawr College. It offered the PhD degree. The University of Chicago started a social work doctoral program that led to the PhD degree in 1924. Two schools, The Catholic University of America and The Ohio State University, started programs in 1934 that awarded the PhD degree in social work. The University of Pittsburgh initiated doctoral education in social work that led to the DSW degree in 1945 while Saint Louis University's PhD program began in 1947. Eight additional programs started in the 1950s (3 PhD and 5 DSW), seven doctoral programs began in the 1960s (3 PhD and 4 DSW), 15 programs started in the 1970s (5 PhD and 10 DSW), and 12 more programs began in the 1980s (6 PhD and 6 DSW) (Holland, 1987). Twenty additional doctoral programs in social work began between the publication of the Holland (1987) article and today.

The PhD degree is the dominant doctoral social work degree today. Only two of the 67 established (there are three developing doctoral programs) doctoral programs in the United States (Adelphi University and Norfolk State University) confer the DSW degree on graduates who complete their programs (Yeshiva University converted from a DSW program to a PhD program in April, 2000.). A significant reason for this shift to the PhD degree in social work is offered by Valentine et al. (1998) who stated,

The PhD degree was introduced in the United States as a primarily research degree, following the German model. Consistent with this notion, the preparation of social work doctoral students for research competence has been the focus of attention among doctoral programs for the past 15 years. (p. 273)

The demise of the practice-orientated DSW degree and the ascent of the research-orientated PhD degree may signal a shift away from the development of refined practice competence at the

doctoral level to the rigors and acceptance of research knowledge as a significant outcome and career choice for the existence of a majority of social work doctoral programs and graduates in the United States today.

The need for social work doctoral graduates is acute today. According to Dr. Charles Cowger of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Social Work in an article published in the University of Missouri's School of Social Work Newsletter titled, "Paving the Way for Social and Economic Justice," social workers today confront complex issues and problems that need solutions. "Without the knowledge of what leads to desirable outcomes, however, effective practice is impossible" (*Paving the way*, 2001, p. 1). A shortage of trained, doctoral level social work researchers stands at the forefront of this need for knowledge. "There is a critical shortage of qualified personnel who possess the rigorous research skills needed to develop, plan, and evaluate social work interventions and the structure of social services" according to Cowger (*Paving the way*, 2001, p. 1). Proctor also stated, "The primary purpose of social work doctoral education is to prepare social work scholars, who through research, publication, and teaching contribute to the knowledge of social welfare problems and professional practice" (Proctor, 1996, p. 161). Moreover, the social work profession's proud legacy of research, practice, and education compels it to face the future with a cohort of qualified personnel who offer effective interventions to clients in a compassionate and progressive social welfare system that must evaluate and monitor its practice and knowledge base to maintain and improve its heroic legacy of human care. "An era of social experimentation has called old programs into question, led to new, large-scale programmatic efforts, and created huge, complex programs which cost billions annually" according to Cowger (2001, *Paving the Way*, 2001, p.1).

Graduates of social work doctoral programs in the United States are prepared to research and expand social work's knowledge base. Dr. Paul Sundet was the Interim Director of the PhD program at the School of Social Work at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Sundet wrote, "Doctoral education occupies a particularly critical place in the overall structure of social work education because it is the training ground for almost all those who become faculty members and who build and disseminate the profession's knowledge base" (*Paving the way*, 2001, p.1).

As social work programs expanded at the BSW and MSW levels in the United States over the last 20 years, graduation rates of BSW students increased by 40% while graduation rates of MSW students increased by 50% because of increased numbers of students in undergraduate and graduate levels of social work education. Four social work doctoral students graduated from the nine social work doctoral programs in 1950 and 213 social doctoral students graduated from the 44 social work doctoral programs in 1980 (Thyer, 2002). The numbers of graduates of social work doctoral programs in the United States remained relatively constant in the 1980s and 1990s, however. Researchers noted that "the average number of doctoral graduates across all programs during the 1990s has been 4.5 graduates per program, per year. In comparison, there has been an average of 8.5 admissions per year, suggesting a sixty per cent completion rate" (Austin, 1998, p. 23). Austin (1998) also wrote that in 1996 and 1997 70% of the doctoral graduates were women and 30% were men. As social work doctoral programs increased in number, the numbers of doctoral graduates did not significantly rise. In 1992 there were 53 social work doctoral programs with 243 graduates. In 1996 the 56 social work doctoral programs had 258 graduates. Thyer (2002) notes,

Since 1980 there has been only one year when the number of doctoral graduates exceeded 300. Thus, while the tradition of doctoral social work education in the

United States extends back over 80 years, most programs remain small and produce relatively few graduates. (p. 154)

Table 1 documents the number of social work doctoral students who enrolled in social work doctoral programs (full-time and part-time) and graduated from social work doctoral graduates between 1980 and 1996. Of particular interest for this study is that there was a total of 795 social work doctoral graduates for the years 1991 through 1996 in the United States (Austin, 1998, p. 23., Paving the Way, 2001, p. 1) and Lennon, (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). Even though the numbers of students who enrolled in social work doctoral programs increased from a low of 1430 students in 1985 to a high of 2436 students in 1997, the number of social work doctoral graduates remained constant at between 181 graduates and 294 graduates between 1980 and 2001.

Table 1

Number of Doctoral Students and Graduates in the United States for 1980 to 2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Doctoral Students Enrolled (FT & PT)</u>	<u>Total Doctoral Graduates</u>
1980	1535	213
1981	1662	226
1982	1720	284
1983	1809	227
1984	1825	181
1985	1430	181
1986	1442	297
1987	1523	195
1988	1914	332

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Doctoral Students Enrolled (FT & PT)</u>	<u>Total Doctoral Graduates</u>
1989	1846	189
1990	1794	247
1991	2111	245
1992	2005	243
1993	2034	229
1994	2097	294
1995	1949	279
1996	2087	258
1997	2436	286
1998	2122	266
1999	1953	267
2000	1279*	229
2001	1485*	254

(* Data for 2000 and 2001 reflected “Students Taken Coursework” and “Students Completed Coursework” rather than full-time and part-time enrollment as noted by Lennon, 2004.)

Approximately 400 to 500 social work faculty vacancies in schools of social work were advertised in recent years. The pool of available doctoral graduates who could potentially fill these vacancies remained at about 250 to 300 per year in the last few years. About 100 of these graduates did not enter academia (*Paving the way*, 2001, p. 1) thereby making the shortage of qualified doctoral-level graduates more acute and stressing the need for more doctoral graduates to fill these vacancies.

The number of social work doctoral graduates has not been adequate to meet the needs of the profession due to faculty deaths and retirements, the expansion of new and existing social work programs, and the needs of the public and private social work sectors. Austin (1999) pointed out that a majority of social work doctoral students began a doctoral program after they completed a MSW degree and a period of professional social work experience. These students were generally in their mid-30s, were older than doctoral students in other fields, and faced limited post-doctoral research and academic careers when compared to doctoral graduates in other fields because they were generally in their mid-40s when they earned the doctoral degree in social work. Approximately 40-50% of social work doctoral students did not complete their programs and only about one half of the doctoral graduates sought careers in the CSWE-accredited BSW (350+) and MSW (120+) programs (Thyer, 2002).

Lest some leaders in the social work profession be accused of age discrimination in advocating for younger doctoral students when compared to the older and more experienced social work doctoral student Thyer and Wilson stated, “The authors have found that both older and newer MSWs can make excellent Ph.D. students” (Thyer & Wilson, 2001, p. 7). Moreover, “it appears likely that current doctoral programs are not contributing significantly to an expansion of the total number of active scholar/researchers in social work” (Austin, 1998, p. 22).

According to the School of Social Work Doctoral Program website, Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida stated,

Schools of social work nationwide need to fill faculty positions at a rate greater than doctoral programs can currently supply. . . . The profession needs educators and scholars in BSW, MSW, and doctoral programs. Faculty positions are available nationwide. These

positions are opening at a rate greater than doctoral programs can currently supply. (*Why a Ph.D. in social work?* (n.d.). Retrieved February 19, 2004, from Barry University, School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.barry.edu/socialwork/degreePrograms/PhD.html>)

Boston University echoed this need for social work doctoral graduates and stated in its School of Social Work Doctoral Program website, “There is now a growing demand for social work faculty with Ph. D. training. The broad interdisciplinary focus of the Boston University program and its strong research component makes our graduates especially competitive for these academic positions” (*Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in sociology and social work*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2004, from Boston University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.bu.edu/ssw/msw.html>). Similar sentiments concerning opportunities for doctoral social work graduates are noted by the University of Georgia. In its doctoral program website, the University of Georgia noted,

Career opportunities for social work Ph.D. are currently excellent and getting even better!

The numbers of social work doctorates produced nationally each year is not sufficient to replace retiring faculty, much less fill the numerous positions open in newly established academic social work programs. (*Program*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 10, 2004, from

University of Georgia, School of Social Work Web site: http://www.ssw.uga.edu/cgi-bin/webmanage/web_showpage.pl?119.html).

The Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago stated that its mission was to “. . . educate professional social workers, develop knowledge, and provide leadership in the development and implementation of policies and services on behalf of the poor, the oppressed, racial and ethnic minorities, and other at-risk urban populations” (*Summary of the*

program. (n.d.). Retrieved February 5, 2005, from Jane Addams School of Social Work, Web site: http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/academic/academic_phd.html#summary). It linked this mission and vision as it discussed the job prospects for its social work doctoral graduates by writing in its website,

Consistent with this mission and Jane Addams' Hull House tradition, the PhD Program in Social Work attempts to respond to the urgent demand for more effective human services, the need for changes in social policy, and the growth in social work education at all levels. (*Summary of the program*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 19, 2004, from Jane Addams School of Social Work, Web site:

http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/academic_phd.html)

Moreover, the University of South Carolina PhD Program in Social Work recognized the need for social work educators, and defined its mission as, “. . . our Ph.D. program is a research-based degree and it focuses exclusively on the preparation of social work educators. The focus addresses an important need and makes our doctoral program unique.” (*PhD Program Admissions*. (n.d.) Retrieved February 19, 2004, from University of South Carolina Web site: <http://cosw.se.edu/admissions/phd/adminfo.html>. This program's mission is described further when the University of South Carolina's website notes,

The Ph.D. program at the University of South Carolina focuses on the preparation of social work educators through advanced study in research and teaching. Many graduates of the program pursue careers in social work education as professors in colleges and universities that offer graduate and undergraduate degrees in social work. (*Social work PhD curriculum*. (n.d.) Retrieved February 19, 2004, from University of South Carolina College of Social Work Web site: <http://cosw.sc.edu/admissions/phd/phdcurr.html>)

In addition to the issue of the quantity of social work doctoral program graduates that the profession needs, one must also consider what ensures the quality of the social work doctoral programs and qualifies its graduates for expanded roles in social work research, teaching, and service. A “Committee on Advanced Curriculum” was created by the American Association of Schools of Social Work in 1948 (Thyer, 2002). The Committee studied social work doctoral programs and education, and, according to Holland & Frost (1987), stated in 1953 that the goal of this level of doctoral education was the “advancement of learning, emphasizing teaching and research as the foremost career objective” (Thyer, 2002, p. 154). The “Advisory Committee on Advanced Education” was formed under the auspices of the Council on Social Work Education in 1961 and concluded that doctoral social work education should focus on developing competence in three areas, teaching, practice, and research (Regensburg, 1966). While no single agency such as the Council on Social Work Education has been mandated to oversee and accredit social work doctoral education programs as it does with BSW and MSW social work programs, one entity, “The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work” (GADE) was created in 1977. Its membership includes the various directors of social work doctoral programs in the United States and some from abroad. Membership in GADE currently includes social work program directors of 71 social work doctoral programs in the United States (including Puerto Rico), seven social work doctoral programs in Canada, one in the Philippines and one social work program in Israel (*Purpose of GADE* (n.d.) Retrieved February 5, 2005 from GADE Web site: <http://web.ucomm.edu/gade/mbrstate.htm>). Thyer (2002) described the focus of GADE,

Its purposes are to promote high quality doctoral education, to assist in the exchange of information about doctoral education, to be a resource for new and developing doctoral programs, to solicit funding for doctoral education, and to

advocate for doctoral education amongst constituent groups and funding sources.

(pp. 156-157)

GADE created its “Guidelines for Quality in Social Work Doctoral Programs” (Retrieved February 5, 2005, from GADS Web site: <http://web.uconn.edu/gade/constitution.htm>) in 1992 and revised them in 2003 as a set of advisory guidelines to encourage quality among social work doctoral programs. GADE maintains a website (<http://web.uconn.edu/gade/>), hosts conferences on social work doctoral education, and publishes presentations and papers of interest to consumers of social work doctoral education (Thyer, 2002).

The present project examines the historical antecedents and contemporary practices related to linking social work doctoral admissions decisions to post-MSW work experience, and describes the first empirical investigation of the potential influence such experience has on a doctoral student’s academic progress.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The need for doctoral graduates in social work confronts the issue of what qualifies one for admission to a social work doctoral program. Is it prior education? Are scores on the *Graduate Record Examination* (GRE), *Miller Analogies Test* (MAT) or another nationally recognized examination decisive in determining admission? Is it grade point average, the applicant's past program of study, or a significant academic achievement? Is it scholarly research or publication? Is it an interpersonal nature that conveys empathy, warmth, and genuineness through a pre-admission interview? Is it social work practice experience at any and all levels (paid and volunteer)? Is it the submission of an articulate admissions essay that conveys one's career goals, values orientation, family history, and a desire to complete a doctoral degree? Is it financial resources to finance one's own education? In reviewing the websites and print materials that social work doctoral programs produce and share with their applicants, all of the above items may contribute to a favorable admissions decision.

Post-MSW social work practice experience may be a crucial requirement or preferential factor for admission to 33 social work doctoral programs in the United States today. Second year MSW students in the author's seminar on social work practice and health care (SOWK 7263, Spring Semester 2003, UGA) said that they appreciated the author's use of "real world" social work practice examples and illustrations because they were based on his social work experiences as a social worker in health care settings (SOWK 7263 students, personal communication, August 7, 2003). Undergraduate students in the introduction to social work course the author

taught (SOWK 2154, Spring Semester 2003, UGA) evaluated the author's teaching performance and offered these comments: the instructor "related course content to real life situations every class period," "The material was related very well to real world activities," and the instructor "generated interest in the subject" (SOWK 2154 students, personal communication, April 30, 2003). Furthermore, "There is a widespread belief that Ph.D. students with post-MSW work experience can somehow benefit or gain more from their doctoral programs than newly graduated MSWs but the authors are unaware of any actual data addressing the issue" (Thyer & Wilson, 2001, p. 16).

This dissertation, however, specifically studied the requirement of post-MSW social work practice experience in determining a student's acceptance into a doctoral program and its contributions to the student's doctoral education outcomes. The issue of requiring or preferring doctoral applicants to have post-MSW practice experience before admission into a social work doctoral program dates to the early years of social work doctoral education at Bryn Mawr. Lindeman (1926) noted that "Adult education is a process through which a learner becomes more aware of significant experience" (p. 169) and Lindeman stressed the value of an adult learner's experience by stating, "Experience is the adult learner's living textbook" (p. 10). Lindeman (1926) continued to stress experience as a component of adult education by noting, "Experience, the stuff out of which education is grown, is after all a homely matter. . . . Experience is, first of all, doing something; second, doing something that makes a difference; third, knowing what difference it makes" (pp. 137-138). Lindeman (1926) continued to integrate adult education and experience by stating,

Educated persons find their satisfactions in bringing knowledge to bear upon experience, and the best-informed person is still ignorant if his knowing is not a lively ingredient of

his living . . . Life is experiencing and intelligent living in a way of making experience an educational adventure. (pp. 170-171)

Knowles (1990) also valued the contributions experience made to an adult learner's education because adults entered the education process with more experience than a child or young person, the adult had a wide range of heterogeneous experiences that influence one's perceptions, and a rich resource for adult learning was the student himself. Experience was a significant factor in determining one's self-identity according to Knowles (1990) since a child generally defined himself by external factors (who their parents are, where one lives, where one goes to school, etc.) while an adult learner defined himself through the interpretation of the experiences he had. Knowles stated

To children, experience is something that happens to them; to adults, their experience is who they are. . . . The implication of this fact for adult education is that in any situation in which adults' experience is ignored or devalued, they perceive this as not rejecting just their experience, but rejecting them as persons. (p. 60)

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998) noted that an adult's experience can compliment learning and it may also inhibit an adult's education by stating,

While adult learning leaders have long capitalized on adult learners' experiences as a resource for learning, they have not adequately recognized its role as a gatekeeper for learning. On the one hand, experience can aid in learning new knowledge if the new knowledge is presented in such a way that it can be related to existing knowledge and mental models. On the other hand, those same

mental models can become great barriers to new learning when the new learning challenges them. (pp. 143-144)

In other words, an adult learner's pool of experiences complemented and complicated the ability to integrate experiences and the content of new academic exercises in a learning milieu.

A significant factor that influenced a doctoral program in social work to adopt a post-MSW social work practice experience requirement or preference among its doctoral applicants seems to be related to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The CSWE Accreditation Standard 4 dealt with faculty issues. Standard 4 for "Faculty" stated, "Faculty who teach required practice courses have a master's social work degree from a CSWE-accredited program and at least two years post-baccalaureate or post-master's social work degree practice experience" (CSWE, 2003, p. 16).

This study began when the earlier CSWE Standards were in effect. The former standard noted that one who taught required social work practice classes was required to have at least two years of post-MSW social work practice experience. The current Standard 4 noted, "Faculty who teach required practice courses have a master's social work degree from a CSWE-accredited program and at least two years post-baccalaureate or post-master's social work degree practice experience" (CSWE, 2003, p. 16), and it is significant to consider that there is little CSWE description of what this standard actually is designed to do. That is, Standard 4 does not specify what this "practice experience" must be. Must the practice experience be "paid experience?" Standard 4 does not define "full-time" nor does it specify that this experience must be completed in 40 hour work weeks. Could one meet the standard of "two years of full-time experience" by having four years of half-time practice?

Furthermore, CSWE Standard 4 does not define what “practice” actually is. One normally associates “practice” with social work activities that are called “clinical” or “direct practice” and related to a social worker’s interventions with a client. In its present form, however, Standard 4 does not explicitly state that a social worker with two years of post-MSW social work experience in administration, research, or even consultation is ineligible to teach required practice classes. Moreover, can a social worker who has two years of volunteer or unpaid social work experience be considered to be qualified to teach required practice classes and be in compliance with Standard 4? Moreover, the past CSWE standard and the current CSWE standard addressing work experience only pertains to the teaching of *required* practice classes. Advanced clinical elective courses in a social work practice have no such restriction. This gives rise to the anomalous situation that foundation (first year) courses taken by everyone must be taught by a social worker with at least some work experiences, whereas more advanced practice classes can be taught by anyone, regardless of work experience, or even the possession of ANY social work professional degree (e.g., BSW or MSW).

In other words, CSWE-accredited schools are required to have an experienced BSW or MSW level social worker to teach Social Work Practice I and II in an MSW program but do not have the same standard for those who teach advanced elective courses in advanced clinical practice, community practice, human behavior in the social environment (HBSE), cultural diversity, research, and policy. The new Standard 4 allows for a BSW-level social worker with two years of practice experience to get an MSW and then be immediately eligible to teach required and elective practice courses. Such a situation also affirms, therefore, the relative equivalency of social work practice at both the BSW and the MSW levels. While this is obviously an untested, and perhaps, speculative, assumption, it is also noted that such a scenario

weakens and devalues the MSW degree since it assumes that BSW level training and practice experience are equivalent to MSW practice and MSW experience. Finally, the idea or “standard” of requiring any degree of post-BSW or post-MSW social work experience in order to teach required social work practice courses implicitly affirms the value of such training and experience. Whether this training and experience has a certain value or worth in both the academic environment and the social work employment marketplace are open questions since the assertion that either scenario apparently has a minimal empirical foundation. Ironically, the University of Chicago School of Social Work does not mention the CSWE requirement of social work practice experience as a prerequisite for teaching required practice courses when it tells it prospective doctoral students that,

With the exception of applicants seeking concurrent admission to the A.M. and Ph.D. programs, applicants to the Ph.D. program must have completed a master's degree in social work or a related field prior to beginning advanced study. Applicants who wish to seek faculty positions upon graduation are advised that the Council on Social Work Education requires a master's degree in social work in order to teach practice courses. (*Admissions*. (n.d.) Retrieved February 5, 2005 from University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration Web site:

<http://www.ssa.uchicago.edu/admissions/doct.html>)

Despite the fact that there is no nationally recognized accreditation organization for doctoral programs in social work in the United States today, the CSWE's faculty standards on practice experience may limit “the opportunity for MSW graduates with a strong research interest, regardless of the amount of their pre-MSW practice experience, to pursue doctoral studies in social work immediately following the completion of the MSW studies” (Austin &

Smith, 1998, p. 30). It also may influence a course of action within the doctoral programs.

Requiring or preferring applicants to social work doctoral programs to have post-MSW practice experience may have a negative impact on the profession. according to Proctor (1996). Proctor (1996, p. 162) confronted a strict adherence to a standard of requiring post-MSW practice experience when she stated,

Reliance on rules, such as those pertaining to prerequisite degrees and professional experience, may simplify the selection and education processes; yet rules should not substitute for thoughtful, critical evaluation of a candidate's capacity for leadership or scholarship in significant areas of social welfare.

In addition, Proctor (1996) also noted that such practice experience or degree requirements “excludes many talented individuals from entering social work doctoral programs, serves as a disincentive to others, and delays the professional contributions of yet others by prolonging their preparation for research and teaching careers” (p. 162). The pool of qualified social work doctoral applicants will also increase in size and quality if post-MSW practice experience requirements or preferences are dropped according to Proctor (1996). In considering the CSWE post-MSW practice experience Shore wrote, “It is a reason to be selective about who enters our programs, but we should be selective anyway, without rules that say ‘never’” (Shore & Thyer, 1997, p. 130). Shore advocated a broad attitude in social work doctoral admissions by noting, “We surely do not need to believe that we cannot select those people who are most suitable for social work. Rules that ban people take the responsibility away from admissions committees. Do we really need to do that” (Shore & Thyer, 1997, p. 132)?

Not all social work scholars agreed with the idea that social work practice experience was not a valid requirement for the academician. Curtis and Julia (1997) noted that post-doctoral

social work practice experience was not valued in higher education when compared to funded research and publications among faculty members of social work schools in the Big Ten athletic conference. Curtis and Julia stressed the dilemma social work faces between its appreciation for practice experience and academic roles by quoting a conclusion to a study that was written by Walden, Siegel, and Brown (1983) and wrote, “Nothing can be more deadly than to have a cadre of faculty who have been isolated from practice for many years and whose teaching materials have not kept pace with the newest professional technologies” (Curtis & Julia, 1997, p. 31). Moreover, Curtis and Julia quoted Welk (1994) who wrote, “Practice experience then becomes the main avenue for articulation of those professional innovations connecting the community and academia” (Curtis and Julia, 1997, p. 31).

Munson (1996) disagreed with Proctor’s recommendations. Munson advocated for the establishment of the post-MSW practice experience requirement as one admissions criterion for social work doctoral education. Moreover, Munson (1996) stressed the need for such a requirement when he cited Perlman who stated, “A ‘knowing’ teacher knows the . . . subject mentally and feelingly . . . knows it not ‘by heart’ but ‘in the heart’” (p. 167). Munson (1996) advanced his position by noting, “‘By heart’ refers to scholarly knowledge, and ‘in the heart’ to practice wisdom; the two must be combined in competent social work scholars and educators” (p. 167).

Munson (1996) stressed that the then existing post-MSW practice requirement for doctoral applicants must be maintained. First, the CSWE’s post-MSW practice experience requirement for social work educators who teach required practice courses or supervise field instruction programs may enhance the quality of the social work student’s learning and practice experiences. Without such experience, the students, the clients, and the students such persons

will teach after the social work doctorate was earned may be impacted negatively. Second, lacking post-MSW social work practice experience may also limit the doctoral-level career options for the social work educator who seeks employment in an academic setting since the academy may overlook candidates who are not able to teach the full range of the school's course offerings at the BSW and MSW levels (Munson, 1996). Third, this issue may also limit one's qualifications for social work licensure since many states require supervised social work practice as a licensure requirement. Fourth, it may also endanger the public since some states may grant a social work license to persons who earn a social work doctorate without any social work practice experience (Munson, 1996). Fifth, social work doctoral students without social work practice experience may "avoid doing a dissertations in practice-related areas, exacerbating a downward trend in the number of practice-orientated dissertations and curtailing knowledge building for the profession" (Munson, 1996, p. 169).

Munson (1996) stated that "a vacuum occurs when professionals attempt to generate practice knowledge without practice experience" (p. 170). Munson summarized his research on social work practice and education issues by writing, "Social work is a practice profession that will remain relevant and viable only by continuing to ground its teaching and research in practice" (p. 170). As a final warning to a profession that seeks to loosen practice experience requirements for social work doctoral education, Munson quoted a seasoned practitioner who said, "Social work is the only profession that has tried to increase its status by lowering its standards" (p. 170).

Munson (1996) wondered how doctoral programs would help their students gain practice experience if this post-MSW practice requirement was abandoned. One option, noted in Table 2, was to offer a combined MSW-PhD program that allows students to earn both degrees in the

same, seamless program. Practice experience via the traditional MSW practicum or internship would be included in this academic track, as it would be the route to practice experience for those who aspire to become doctoral-level social work professionals.

Table 2 documented the policy of whether a social work doctoral program in the United States required post-MSW practice experience for admission, had a preference for applicants with post-MSW practice experience, had no such requirement or preference, and offered the option to applicants who did not hold the MSW degree to earn the MSW and PhD degrees in social work. Some programs required the completion of the MSW before the student was admitted to the PhD program while other programs admitted applicants without the MSW degree to a joint MSW/PhD degree program. Thyer and Wilson (2001) noted some advantages with this model,

The essence of a joint degree is to afford students the opportunity to truncate the length of time it takes to complete both degrees, compared to completing the MSW and then beginning the Ph.D. application process. Frequently doctoral classes may count as MSW program electives, leaving students with fewer course requirements for their Ph.D.s, and in some instances doctoral classes replace core MSW courses (e.g., research). (p. 11)

The social work doctoral programs at Florida International University (<http://w3.fiu.edu/sw/Phdadmissions.htm>. Retrieved January 7, 2005), the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY-Albany) (<http://www.albany.edu/ssw/academic/phd-tour/degree.html#joint>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Houston (<http://www.sw.uh.edu/prospectivestu/phd/phdappliinfo.htm>. Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Minnesota (http://ssw.che.umn.edu/admissions/Phd_Admiss.html, Retrieved

January 7, 2005), the University of Missouri-Columbia (<http://ssw.missouri.edu/phd.shtml#adm>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Utah (<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/phd/admissionsapplication.asp>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Wisconsin (<http://socwork.wisc.edu/prospectivestudents/appadmfinancialsupport.php>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), Washington University (<http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/academic/phd/curriculum.htm>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), and Yeshiva University (<http://www.yu.edu/wurzweiler/doctoral.hum>, Retrieved January 7, 2005) required doctoral students who did not have a MSW degree to successfully complete some MSW course work in their respective MSW programs before one was admitted to the social work doctoral program. The number of courses ranged from two or three to the entire “professional foundation” course sequence of the first year MSW program. Fordham University admitted non-MSW graduates to its social work doctoral program but may require such a student to complete a traditional social work internship as part of their doctoral program (http://www.fordham.edu/images/Graduate_Schools/GSS_Bulletin%2000-02.pdf, Retrieved January 7, 2005). Clark Atlanta University noted that prospective doctoral students must have an MSW degree before admission to the doctoral program (*Ph.D. program*. (n. d.) Retrieved February 5, 2005 from Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Web site: http://www.cau.edu/acad_prog/soc_work/sw_phdprog.html).

Moreover, the University of Houston noted in their social work doctoral program catalog that although they expect applicants to their social work doctoral program to have the MSW degree, they will admit students without the MSW degree to their social work doctoral program. The University of Houston noted the importance of social work practice experience and stated

that, “Applicants with at least two years full-time post M.S.W. practice experience should highlight their area of expertise. Non-M.S.W. applicants are expected to have at least two years paid social service experience under the supervision of an L.M.S.W. (or equivalent)”

(<http://www.sw.uh.edu/prospectivestu/phd/phdappliinfo.htm> Retrieved January 7, 2005, p. 1).

Jackson State University admitted social work doctoral students who held a “master's degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, or a master's degree in a related discipline” and “professional competence as evidenced by at least two years of post-M.S.W. experience preferred” (*Ph.D. program*. (n. d.) Retrieved February 5, 2005 from Jack State School of Social Work Web site: <http://ccaix.jsums.edu/socialwork/phdinfo.htm>).

The University of Denver (<http://www.du.edu/gssw/00/phdadmcr.htm>. Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Kansas (<http://www.socwel.ku.edu/academics/PhD/requirements.shtml>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Pennsylvania (<http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/home/programs/phd-programhtml#admit> Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Texas at Austin (<http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/apss/phd/admissions.html>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), the University of Washington (<http://depts.washington.edu/sswweb/programs/phd/phdadmit.html> Retrieved January 7, 2004), Virginia Commonwealth University (<http://www.vcu.edu/slwwweb/admissions/phd.html>, Retrieved January 7, 2005), and Portland State University (http://www.ssw.pdx.edu/pgPhd_Admissions.shtml, Retrieved January 7, 2005) noted that they admit applicants to their social work doctoral programs who do not hold the MSW degree if they satisfy any or all of the following requirements: (1) the applicant has a master's degree in a field allied with or related to social work's knowledge base; (2) the applicant has practice experience in social work/welfare; (3) the applicant embraces social

work's ethical standards; (4) the applicant has exceptional research experience; (5) the applicant understands the priorities of the profession of social work. Moreover, the University of Illinois-Urbana moves beyond offering the range of social work degrees (BSW, MSW, PhD, and joint MSW/PhD) by offering the only option in the United States of earning a doctorate in social work and a medical degree (PhD/MD) (University of Illinois-Urbana School of Social Work PhD Program Retrieved January 18, 2005: <http://www.social.uiuc.edu/HTM/phdprogr.htm>).

One wonders how this requirement and preference statements are presented to the doctoral program applicant. The author assessed all of the social work doctoral programs in the United States that are members of GADE by the following methods: (a) contacting each of the programs and asking if they require, prefer, or have no opinion about whether doctoral students at these programs have post-MSW social work practice experience; (b) reading data in their application packets (school catalogs, program brochures, informational handouts, etc.), and (c) by reading information on their website. To create Table 2, the author reviewed the school's materials and correspondence with doctoral program directors on September 13, 15, and 30, 2004, October 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 18, 2004, December 13 and 14, 2004, and January 18, 2005).

Table 2

Post-MSW Work Experience Admissions Standards Provided by Social Work Doctoral Programs

School	Requires Post-MSW Work Experience	Prefers PMSWWE	No Post-MSW Requirement	Joint Option MSW/PhD
Adelphi Univ	X			
Arizona State Univ		X		

School	Requires Post-MSW Work Experience	Prefers PMSWWE	No Post-MSW Requirement	Joint Option MSW/PhD
Barry Univ	X			
Boston College			X	
Boston Univ			X	
Brandeis Univ			X	
Bryn Mawr College		X		
Case Western Reserve Univ				X
Catholic Univ of America		X		
Clark Atlanta Univ	X			
Columbia Univ	X			
Florida International Univ			X	
Florida State Univ			X	
Fordham Univ			X	
Howard Univ			X	
Hunter College-CUNY	X			
Indiana Univ			X	
Jackson State Univ		X		
Louisiana State Univ			X	
Loyola Univ of Chicago		X		
Marywood Univ		X		
Michigan State Univ			X	
New York University		X		

School	Requires Post-MSW Work Experience	Prefers PMSWWE	No Post-MSW Requirement	Joint Option MSW/PhD
Norfolk State Univ		X		
Ohio State Univ			X	X
Portland State Univ			X	X
Rutgers Univ			X	
Simmons College		X		
Smith College		X		
SUNY-Stony Brook			X	
Tulane Univ		X		X
Univ at Albany-SUNY		X		X
Univ at Buffalo			X	
Univ of Alabama			X	
Univ of California at Berkeley			X	X
Univ of California at Los Angeles			X	X
Univ of Chicago			X	X
Univ of Connecticut	X			
Univ of Denver		X		X
Univ of Georgia			X	
Univ of Hawai'i at Manoa		X		
Univ of Houston			X	X
Univ of Illinois-Chicago			X	X
Univ of Illinois-Urbana			X	

School	Requires Post-MSW Work Experience	Prefers PMSWWE	No Post-MSW Requirement	Joint Option MSW/PhD
Univ of Iowa			X	X
Univ of Kansas	X			
Univ of Kentucky		X		
Univ of Louisville		X		
Univ of Maryland-Baltimore			X	
Univ of Michigan			X	X
Univ of Minnesota	X			
Univ of Missouri-Columbia		X		
Univ of North Carolina	X			X
Univ of Pennsylvania			X	X
Univ of Pittsburgh		X		X
Univ of South Carolina		X		
Univ of South Florida			X	
Univ of Southern California		X		
Univ of Tennessee	X			
Univ of Texas-Arlington			X	
Univ of Texas-Austin			X	
Univ of Utah	X			
Univ of Washington			X	
Univ of Wisconsin-Madison			X	X
Virginia Common Univ	X			

Washington Univ	X
Yeshiva Univ	X

Table 3 presents selected quotations from the doctoral social work programs in the United States that either require or prefer that the applicants to their respective programs have post-MSW social work practice experience.

Table 3

Quotations from Doctoral Programs that Require or Prefer Students with Post-MSW Practice Experience

School and Comments

Adelphi University

“... students benefit from the School’s experienced faculty and well-developed system of advisement and mentorship. They learn to learn to think critically, to evaluate a broad spectrum of clinical, administrative, and policy interactions, to use extant knowledge creatively, and to become scholar-practitioners, educators, researchers, and leaders in the field.” “. . . They work in public and voluntary social service organizations, teach in colleges and universities, provide clinical services in hospitals, mental health agencies, and schools, and are clinical entrepreneurs.” (Retrieved September 13, 2004 from Adelphi University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://academics.adelphi.edu/swk/courses.php>)

Arizona State University

“Evidence of leadership and successful work experience in human services. . . .

Demonstrated motivation to contribute to the social work body of knowledge through research, publication, practice, and teaching.” (Retrieved September 13, 2004 from

Arizona State University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://ssw.asu.edu/degreeprograms.html>)

Barry University

“Criteria employed in determining admission include evidence of achievement in previous academic programs, increasing competency in professional performance, knowledge of critical issues associated with applicant’s area of professional interest and potential for contributing to the knowledge of the profession.” (Retrieved September 13, 2004 from Barry University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.barry.edu/socialwork/degreePrograms/PhD/default.htm>)

Boston University

“Solutions to the pressing urban clinical and macro problems of our time require the creative integration of social science theories and research with social work practice. The Ph.D. program provides a supportive context in which practitioners, administrators, and policy specialists can deepen their knowledge and prepare themselves for doctoral careers in a multicultural society. . . . There is now a growing demand for social work faculty with Ph.D. training. The broad interdisciplinary focus of the Boston University program and its strong research component makes our graduates especially competitive for these academic positions. (*Educating for change*. (n.d.) Retrieved January 19, 2005 from Boston University School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.bu.edu/ssw/msw.html>).

“Admission is open to those who hold a Master of Social Work degree or who hold a master's degree from an allied discipline or profession and who have practice-related experience relevant to the objectives of the program” (*School of social work bulletin* 2004-2005. Retrieved January 19, 2005 from Boston University School of Social Work

Web site: <http://www.bu.edu/bulletins/ssw/item03.html#anchor17>).

Bryn Mawr

Requirements for admission to the PhD program in social work include “A Master's degree in social work from an accredited university or a Master's degree in a related field. . . . Two years of post-MSW work experience is recommended but not required” (*Doctor of philosophy: Admission*. (n.d.) Retrieved January 19, 2005 from Bryn Mawr School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/socialwork/phd/admission.shtml>).

Case University

“To be admitted to the Ph.D. program, a candidate should have a master's degree from an accredited school of social work or a master's degree in a related field. He or she must demonstrate a superior record in undergraduate and graduate studies and have practical experience in social welfare” (*Doctorate in social welfare*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 19, 2005 from Case University School of Social Work Web site: <http://msass.case.edu/doctorate/admissn.htm>).

Columbia University

“The program’s mission has consistently been to train scholars capable of initiating and carrying out innovative research and scholarship that is applicable to the field of social welfare. . . . The CUSSW Doctoral Program has long been considered a home of future social work leaders. Most graduates assume academic positions, while others pursue careers as researchers, clinical instructors, policy analysts or administrators in various government, private and nonprofit agencies (*Curriculum: Overview*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ssw/phdprogram/curriculum/index.html>).

Florida State University

“In addition, applicants will be evaluated regarding demonstrated leadership in the profession in accordance with their years of professional work experience. This will include attention to the applicant's participation in professional and scholarly activities including publications, presentation of papers at meetings, and leadership at workshops and institutes” (*PhD program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 19, 2005 from Florida State University School of Social Work Web site: <http://ssw.fsu.edu/phd-admission.html>).

Fordham University

“Fordham's doctoral program in social work seeks, through a balance of theoretical learning, scholarly research opportunities and mentored skill development, to prepare experienced social work practitioners for careers as University professors, researchers and investigators of new theories, public and private sector agency administrators, community planners and policy makers in leadership positions” (*Ph.D. program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 19, 2005 from the Fordham University School of Social Work Web site: http://www.fordham.edu/Academics/Colleges__Graduate_S/Graduate__Profession/Social_Service/Programs/The_Doctoral_Program_3054.html).

Hunter College

“The program accepts up to 15 students each year and requires that the candidate have at least three years of post-master’s work experience. . . . The applicant must have a master of social work degree or its equivalent from an accredited program of study, at least three years of successful experience in social welfare and/or human service subsequent to the award of the master’s degree, and a capacity for successful study” (*Social welfare, the bulletin of the graduate center, 2003-2005, 266-269*. Retrieved

January 19, 2005 from the Hunter College School of Social Work Web site:

http://www.gc.cuny.edu/bulletin/bulletin_2003_2005/social_welfare.pdf).

Loyola University

“Two years post-masters clinical experience is preferred although direct entry from an MSW program can be considered for applicants who show exceptional promise and capacity to use a continuing course of study” (*Requirements for Ph.D. admission*. (n.d.).

Retrieved January 19, 2005 from the Loyola University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.luc.edu/socialwork/phd/index.shtml#admissions>).

Marywood University

“The Social Work Specialization was designed for those seeking a career within the broad scope of social work practice, such as in human services, administration, policy and program development, or as a faculty member of a school of social work in an accredited college or university” (*The social work specialization*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20,

2005 from Marywood University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.marywood.edu/departments/humdev/>).

Michigan State University

“Experience in the field of social work, including research, policy and practice”

(*Required materials for application to the Ph.D. program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20,

2005 from Michigan State University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.msu.edu/user/sswphd/bulletin/phdblttn.pdf>).

Norfolk State University

“The DSW program prepares students for leadership roles in social work and in the field of family-centered social work practice. Special emphasis is placed on knowledge building for social work practice and service delivery on behalf of diverse, especially

African American, families. The program seeks students who are committed to a focus on the family as the unit of attention in research and theory development. The program is unique in its focus on family-centered social work with African American families. It also has integrative seminars designed to help students to connect theory and research, and to develop dissertation ideas and proposals. . . . DSW admission requirements: a master's degree in social work. A minimum of two (2) years of full-time post MSW practice experience" (*Doctor of social work*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from Norfolk State University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.nsu.edu/schools/socialwork/dsw.html>).

Portland State University

"Selection is based on educational background and academic performance, quality of relevant experience, demonstrated interest in the development and communication of professional knowledge, and the clarity and appropriateness of professional goals. . . .

Applicants are expected to possess a Master of Social Work degree. Applicants with advanced degrees in related fields may be admitted if they possess exceptional practice or research experience" (*Ph.D. program admissions*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005

from Portland State School of Social Work Web site:

http://www.ssw.pdx.edu/pgPhd_Admissions.shtml).

Rutgers University

"Admission for students in the direct practice area include the M.S.W. degree; two years of postmaster's experience in social work is preferred. Students in the area of social policy analysis and administration are required to hold an M.S.W. or an equivalent degree in a related field" (*PH.D. PROGRAM*. (n.d.) Retrieved January 20, 2005 from Rutgers

University School of Social Work Web site: <http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/catalogs/social/social02-04.pdf>).

Simmons College

“This doctoral program prepares advanced clinical scholars who will contribute to and disseminate the profession's knowledge base as practitioners, educators, researchers, consultants, and administrators in a variety of professional settings, locally and nationally.

. . . No clinical practicum is required although students should currently be involved in clinical practice. (*Ph.D. in social work*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from School of Simmons College School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.simmons.edu/ssw/academics/phd.shtml>).

Smith College

“The Doctoral Program, which offers a Ph.D. in social work, is designed to train leaders in advanced clinical social work who will take positions as social work educators, as clinical supervisors and consultants, as researchers and scholars, and/or as advanced practitioners. The Doctoral Program, like the Master’s Program, is wholly concentrated on graduate education in clinical social work” (*An overview*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site:

http://www.smith.edu/ssw/doctoral_program.htm). “The Doctoral Program is open to women and men who have graduated from an accredited school of social work following a period of post-master's practice. In unusual circumstances, direct entry from an MSW program may be considered for applicants who show exceptional promise and capacity to use a continuing course of study” (*Admissions*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site: http://www.smith.edu/ssw/doctoral_admission.htm).

University at Albany-SUNY

“In using the forms, please note that GREs are required as a part of the application unless you have 10 or more years of professional post-masters experience” (*Welcome*. (n.d.).

Retrieved January 20, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.albany.edu/ssw/academic/phd-tour/welcome.html>.

SUNY-Stony Brook

“Admission requirements include: . . . 1. A Master's Degree from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; . . . 5. Professional competence as demonstrated through substantial experience in responsible social work and/or human services positions supported by three letters of reference, including one, if possible, from someone familiar with the applicant's capacity to conduct research.” (*Admission requirements*.

(n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from SUNY-Stony Brook School of Social Welfare

Web site: http://www.hsc.stonybrook.edu/sosw/sosw_doctprog.cfm#criteria).

Tulane University

“The Ph.D. Program in Social Work at Tulane University trains students for research excellence in integrative clinical and community practice. . . . A minimum of two years post-master's degree experience in social work is strongly preferred” (*Mission*. (n.d.).

Retrieved January 20, 2005 from Tulane School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.tulane.edu%7Etssw/new/Programs/phd/phd.shtml>).

University of Alabama

“The social work doctoral program builds on a base of professional knowledge and practice in social work. It is recommended that the applicant also have: 1. A master's degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work

Education (CSWE) at the time of the student's graduation; 2. A minimum of two years of full-time employment (or its equivalent) in social work after earning the master's degree.

There are certain advantages to having the MSW and practice experience prior to entering the PhD Program: 1. The MSW and practice experience permit graduate students, under current CSWE Accreditation standards, to engage in the full range of teaching and

advising assignments at accredited schools of social work. 2. The MSW and practice experience provide a context helpful for students' understanding of PhD coursework; 3.

Graduates with an MSW and post-MSW practice experience have a competitive advantage in the job market; 4. Ability to transfer of up to 12 hours of MSW course work into the PhD Program, subject to UA Graduate School policies on transfer of credit. 5. If an applicant is admitted without the MSW, the Academic Adviser and/or the Concentration Chair will decide early in the planning process whether make-up courses are necessary.

The number of hours required will vary according to student needs. (*Admissions*

requirements. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site:

<http://socialwork.ua.edu/phd/adrequirements.html#ua>).

University of California at Berkeley

Applicants should be aware that most faculty appointments in schools of social work and social welfare require not only the doctoral degree but also two years of post-MSW practice experience. Students preparing for an academic career who lack this experience can receive assistance in accumulating practice experience during their doctoral program.

(*Program requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of California

School of Social Work Web site:

http://socialwelfare.berkeley.edu/academic/ap_programs/PhD/requirements.htm).

University of Connecticut

“This program offers a rigorous curriculum designed to prepare experienced social workers for careers as college and university faculty, researchers, policy analysts and planners, and high-level administrators in public and private social service organizations” (*Ph.D. program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Connecticut School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.ssw.uconn.edu/phdprog2.html>). This school also noted a prospective doctoral student should “Have an MSW with a grade point average of 3.0 or better from a school accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; Have a bachelor’s degree with a grade point average of 3.0 or better from an accredited college; Have a minimum of two years post MSW experience in social work” (*Ph.D. admission requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Connecticut School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.ssw.uconn.edu/phdprog.html>).

University of Denver

“Applicants to the GSSW doctoral program must have a master's degree conferred by a school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or a master's degree in one of the social sciences and demonstrated evidence of substantial professional experience in the social work field. At least two years of post-master’s practice experience is preferable, but not mandatory” (*PhD admission criteria*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Denver School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.du.edu/gssw/00/phdadmc.htm>).

University of Hawai’i at Manoa

“The primary purpose of the application process for the PhD in Social Welfare is to select students who show the greatest potential for *scholarship* and for future contributions to the field of social welfare in Hawai’i and the Pacific Basin. . . .

Applicants with at least two years of experience working with a multicultural population will be preferred” (*Criteria for admission*. (n.d.) Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Hawai’i School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.hawaii.edu/sswork/programs/phd-admit&finaid.html>).

University of Houston

“Applicants with at least two years full-time post M.S.W. practice experience should highlight their area of expertise. Non-M.S.W. applicants are expected to have at least two years paid social service experience under the supervision of an L.M.S.W. (or equivalent)”. (*Ph.D. application information*. (n.d.) Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Houston School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.sw.uh.edu/prospectivestu/phd/phdappliinfo.htm>).

University of Kansas

“At least two years social work related experience is required; two years post-M.S.W. social work related experience is desirable” (*Ph.D. program requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Kansas School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/academics/PhD/requirements.shtml>).

University of Kentucky and University of Louisville

“The Joint Social Work Ph.D. program emphasizes theory development and research. There is insufficient time in a Ph.D. program to completely orient students to every specialty within the complex and diverse field of social work, as well as prepare academic and research scholars. Therefore, this program is limited to individuals who hold a Master’s degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). All students must have at least two years of

post-master's, full-time paid social work experience. This is a CSWE requirement for teaching social work practice and practicum courses in accredited social work education programs" (*Who should apply?* (n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2005 from University of Kentucky School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/prospective/phd/phd-application.pdf#page=6>).

University of Minnesota

"Two years of post masters practice experience; . . . Preference is given to applicants with post-masters work experience, but the amount and type of experience required of applicants varies according to their previous experience and career goals" (*PhD Admission information*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Minnesota School of Social Work Web site:

http://ssw.che.umn.edu/pf/Admissions/PhD_Admiss.html).

University of Missouri-Columbia

"A professional resume highlighting social work experience is required. There is no specific requirement regarding experience, however, a minimum of two years' postmasters practice experience is encouraged" (*Admission requirements*. (n.d.).

Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Missouri-Columbia School of Social Work Web site: <http://ssw.missouri.edu/phd.shtml#adm>).

University of North Carolina

"Evidence of two years of work experience in human services (may be waived in special circumstances). . . . Ideally, applicants to the Ph.D. program will have two years of work experience after completing the MSW. This acquaints them with how the world looks to practitioners and provides the practical experience from which research interests spring.

In addition, two years of post-MSW experience for teachers of practice is required by the Council on Social Work Education as part of their accreditation standards. Even if you don't intend to teach practice courses in a school of social work, your marketability will be increased by meeting this requirement.

If you enter our program without this experience and wish to obtain it, we can assist you to find part-time employment in a practice setting so that you can meet the requirement"

(*Admissions requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of North Carolina School of Social Work Web site:

<http://ssw.unc.edu/doctoral/admissions/index.html#requirements>).

University of Pittsburgh

"The University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Doctoral (PhD) program prepares students for leadership roles in social work education, social work research, social policy formulation and assessment, and administration (*Doctoral program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~pittssw/academics/phd/history.html>). . . . If you are interested in a faculty position in a school of social work after completing your PhD, please note that the Council on Social Work Education, the accrediting body for social work undergraduate and master's programs, requires that social work practice courses be taught by faculty with the MSW plus the equivalent of two years of full time post-BSW or post-MSW experience. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that individuals who do not possess an MSW and who desire an academic position in a school of social work should consider the option of our joint MSW-PhD program. We also strongly encourage those do not have the requisite practice experience to obtain it before completing their PhD" (*Master of Social*

Work/Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in social work. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~pittssw/academics/msw/degrees.html#philosophy>.

University of South Carolina

“Please note that our Ph.D. program is a research-based degree and it focuses exclusively on the preparation of social work educators. . . . The College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina prefers two years post-MSW full-time social work practice experience or its part-time equivalent. The rationale for this admissions standard is based on the belief that social work educators who have practice experience are better prepared to teach. Doctoral students with practice experience also enrich the classroom learning environment by bringing diverse practice perspectives and experiences to the classroom. The doctoral committee, however, acknowledges the unique experiences and situations of some applicants who may, for example, have many years of post-BSW experience in the human services. The doctoral committee values diversity and reserves the right to consider these applicants. The individual strengths of each candidate will be considered. Post-MSW social work experience will be one factor to be considered in selecting the best class from among a pool of applicants” (*PhD program.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of South Carolina College of Social Work Web site:

<http://cosw.sc.edu/admissions/phd/index.html#ADMISSIONS>).

University of Utah

“Our principal goal is to prepare students to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of social welfare and the profession of social work (*CSW PhD Program.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Utah College of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/phd/index.asp>). . . . A minimum of two years social work or related experience is required. This experience should demonstrate the applicant's professional competence, ability to undertake advanced study, and potential for leadership” (*Admission requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from the

University of Utah College of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/phd/admissionrequirements.asp>).

University of Washington

“The Council on Social Work Education requires that faculty who teach required practice courses in accredited programs have 2 years of post-BSW or post-MSW practice experience. Thus, obtaining this experience is valuable for those who ultimately seek academic positions following graduation” (*PHD program description*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from School of Social Work Web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/programs/phd/phd.html#A2>).

“Applicants who are selected for admission are those who have completed a Master's Degree in Social Work or a related field and whose scholastic achievement, previous experience, and aptitude for social welfare research and scholarship indicate the greatest promise for achieving the objectives of the program. Although an MSW is not required for admission, an MSW or a BSW and 2 years post-degree practice experience are required by the Council on Social Work Education in order to teach foundation practice courses in accredited programs” (*Admission to the social welfare PhD program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Washington School of Social Work Web site: <http://depts.Washington.edu/sswwweb/programs/phd/phdadmit.html> . . . “Doctoral

programs in social work in the USA often prefer that incoming students have practice experience. This is partly related to a Council on Social Work Education requirement that those teaching certain MSW practice courses have 2 years post-BSW or post-MSW experience. Although we do not make this a requirement for entrance into our program, it is a plus. We are concerned that our incoming students have some degree of field experience, whether as a practicing social worker, related professional, or volunteer, or through training as a student whether pre- or postmasters. We look for applicants who have a grasp of the theory and practice aspects of the social work profession and of the main issues and questions that social work researchers need to address” (*PHD program in social welfare*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from University of Washington School of Social Work Web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/sswwweb/programs/phd/phdfaq.html>).

Virginia Commonwealth University

“Applicants to the program must have an earned master's degree in social work or a related discipline. In addition, professional and/or practice-related experience relevant to the applicant's career objectives is required. The relevancy of the applicant's professional experience to her/his career objectives must be clearly articulated in the personal statement (see procedures for admission). It is highly recommended that applicants have a master's degree in social work and social work policy or clinical practice experience. Applicants whose career goals are to teach in a school of social work should be aware that an M.S.W. degree and practice experience, along with the Ph.D., are often minimal job requirements. In addition, CSWE accreditation standards currently require that individuals who want to teach practice courses must have a M.S.W. and at least two years

of post-M.S.W. practice experience (*Admission requirements*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work Web site: <http://www.vcu.edu/slwwweb/admissions/phd.html>).

Yeshiva University

“The doctor of social welfare degree program is designed for the working social work professional. . . . Practice and policy issues, both historical and contemporary, provide a focus for studying social work as an institutionally based profession. . . . Requirements . . . 3. At least two years of professional social work experience. This requirement may be waived for more recent WSSW (only) graduates with outstanding academic records and related experience ” (*Admissions*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 21, 2005 from Yeshiva University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://www.yu.edu/wurzweiler/Catalog%202004/PHD%20PROGRAM%20IN%20SOCIAL%20WELFARE.pdf>).

Dinerman, Feldman, and Ello (1999) noted that about half of the students in doctoral programs were interested in academic careers in social work after attaining the PhD degree, and stated that “student interest in academic careers was fairly consistent, whether or not program goals directly addressed preparing them for teaching” (Dinerman et al., 1999, p. 26). How do doctoral programs define the beneficial aspects of requiring post-MSW social work practice experience to applicants who are interested in their school and/or program? The University of North Carolina openly emphasized the benefits of entering a social work doctoral program with post-MSW practice experience by saying:

Ideally, applicants to the Ph.D. program will have two years of work experience after completing the MSW. This acquaints them with how the world looks to practitioners and provides the practical experience from which research interests spring. In addition, two years of post-MSW experience for teachers of practice is required by the Council on Social Work Education as part of their accreditation standards. Even if you don't intend to teach practice courses in a school of social work, your marketability will be increased by meeting this requirement (*About work experience in human services*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2005 from University of North Carolina School of Social Work Web site: <http://ssw.unc.edu/doctoral/admissions/index.html#FAQ>).

The University of South Carolina's College of Social Work also highlighted the need for post-MSW social work practice experience and stressed the benefits such practice experience afforded to the social work doctoral student.

The College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina prefers two years post-MSW full-time social work practice experience or its part-time equivalent. The rationale for this admissions standard is based on the belief that social work educators who have practice experience are better prepared to teach. Doctoral students with practice experience also enrich the classroom learning environment by bringing diverse practice perspectives and experiences to the classroom. The doctoral committee, however, acknowledges the unique experiences and situations of some applicants who may, for example, have many years of post-BSW experience in the human services. The doctoral committee values diversity and reserves the right to consider these applicants. The individual strengths of each candidate will be considered. Post-MSW social work experience will be one factor to be considered in selecting the best class from among a

pool of applicants. (*Admissions*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2005 from University of South Carolina College of Social Work Web site:

<http://cosw.sc.edu/admissions/phd/index.html>).

Florida State University acknowledged the benefit of post-MSW social work practice experience by noting in their social work program catalog, “In addition, applicants will be evaluated regarding demonstrated leadership in the profession in accordance with their years of professional work experience” (*Admission to the program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 24, 2005 from Florida State University School of Social Work Web site:

<http://ssw.fsu.edu/phd-handbook-2004-2005.pdf>).

Social work doctoral programs advised prospective doctoral students of the CSWE practice requirement for faculty who teach practice courses and stated the belief that their learning and classroom experiences would be enriched by the practice experiences the student brought to their doctoral program. Nothing was said, however, of the fact that their post-doctoral career may be shortened because the student must have served some time in the field before beginning a doctoral program in social work. Interestingly, none of the schools that did not require any post-MSW social work practice experience used the advantage of a longer post-doctoral career as a recruiting tool in their application packets.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

It has been shown in the previous chapter that there is a common implicit assumption, which is sometimes explicitly stated, that having some years of post-MSW social work experience prior to beginning doctoral education puts the PhD student in a better position to benefit from their studies. This study examined empirically the performance of social work doctoral students from a number of social work doctoral programs in the United States, compared the outcomes of experienced versus inexperienced MSWs on variables such as dropout, GPA earned while a doctoral student, length of time until graduation, scholarship generated, and noted the nature of the student's first post-doctoral position. It is hoped that this study contributes to an empirical corroboration or a refutation of the CSWE's previous requirement of two-years post-MSW social work experience for the instructors of required practice courses, and existing for field practicum instructors or supervisors.

The hypotheses in this study were developed by the author in consultation with the author's doctoral committee chairperson. The hypotheses were based upon the implicit and explicit assumptions that assumed that having some sort of noteworthy post-MSW social work experience offers social work doctoral students with an advantage in successfully completing their doctoral degree. The hypotheses were listed in the order these data were collected on the study's survey instrument. Each hypothesis is based on a specific issue on the survey.

Hypothesis 1

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will graduate in a shorter time period than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 2

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will have a higher doctoral grade point average than students with less than two years of post MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 3

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will publish a higher number of scholarly papers while enrolled in the social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 4

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will make a greater number of social work presentations at social work scholarly conferences than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 5

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will be more likely to graduate from the social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 6

“Doctoral students with post-MSW work experience will be more likely to obtain an

academic position immediately post-Ph.D., compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 7

“Doctoral students with post-MSW work experience will be more likely to hold a social work license, compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Hypothesis 8

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were less likely to drop out of their social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

Potential Ancillary Hypotheses

Although data were gathered on factors such as the doctoral students’ race, gender, marital status, age, etc., and these data lend themselves to a form of analysis similar to that used to test hypotheses related to work experience (e.g., Do men and women differ in terms of how long it takes them to graduate with their doctorate? Do African-Americans and Caucasians have different patterns of publication activity while a doctoral student?), such results are not reported in this dissertation, which has as its focus an examination of the specific role of post-MSW work experience on success during doctoral study. If specific hypotheses had been developed to examine ALL potential relationships and differences available for analysis within this database, adjusting the alpha level used to define statistical significance would require such a stringent standard that few, if any, differences would likely emerge.

Participants

The potential participants for this study were solicited by contacting in writing each of the doctoral programs that were listed as members in the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) when this study was initiated in April, 2002. The author of this study included a cover letter (See Table 4) that explained the purpose and scope of this research study and noted that this study included an approval to perform it from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Georgia. The survey instrument (Table 5) was included with this cover letter, too. A copy of the University of Georgia IRB approval page is included in Table 6. The participants for this study were doctoral students in the doctoral programs in the United States for the years 1991-1996.

Lennon (1992-1997) and the IASWR noted that about 70% of the doctoral students between 1991 and 1996 were female while 30% of the social work doctoral students in the same period were male. This study expected the same ratio of female and male students but observed that 57.3% ($n = 56$) of the survey participants were female while 42.7% ($n = 42$) of the survey participants were male. The actual number of survey participants was 98. Some of the surveys' questions that the schools' directors submitted on these participants were not completed in full. Hence some of these data categories did not include 98 responses.

Survey Instrument

The study's survey instrument was developed by the principal researcher and dissertation committee chairman. It is included in the Table 5. It includes demographic variables and variables on pre-matriculation and educational outcome variables.

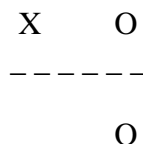
Procedure

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia, the principal researcher mailed a study packet (i.e. cover letter and survey) to all 65 social work doctoral program directors in the United States who were members of GADE at that time and invited them to participate in this study by completing the attached one page survey form for each student entering their social work doctoral program during the years 1991-1996.

There was no attempt to obtain a representative sample of doctoral students. In a preliminary study of this kind, a convenience sample was deemed adequate. Doctoral directors were mailed the letter of invitation to participate, as well as a supply of the survey forms. The returns were anonymous in that the author had no way of knowing the identities of the students for whom doctoral program directors completed the requested information. There were no apparent risks for the students in question, and there were no obvious benefits for them either.

Experimental Design

This design featured the non-random assignment of participants (doctoral students from the four reporting programs) to the independent variable (having more than two years of post-MSW work experience, or not), and a series of dependent variables reflecting the respondent's academic performance as a doctoral student (e.g., programs (e.g. GPA, licensure status, graduation from the program, scholarly productivity in the areas of presentations made and publications written, and the student's first post-PhD position), all assessed after some time in the Ph.D. program. This study thus follows the Static Group Comparison design as described by Campbell and Stanley (1963, p. 12): "This is a design in which a group which has experienced X is compared with one which has not, for the purpose of establishing the effect of X." This design can be illustrated as:



With X representing participants who had entered their doctoral students with two or more years of post-MSW work experience, O representing the results for a given dependent variable after being in the Ph.D. program for some years, and the dashed line separating the two groups indicating the non-random assignment of participants to these two conditions.

Table 4 Cover Letter Sent to Doctoral Program Directors

April 2002

Dear Colleague,

The University of Georgia social work Ph.D. student Thomas Artelt is conducting his doctoral dissertation on the topic of examining the role of post-MSW work experience as a potential predictor for success in completing a social work doctoral program. As you know, our accreditation body, the Council on Social Work Education, mandates that teachers of required BSW and MSW courses have themselves had at least two years of post-MSW work experience. This is a controversial requirement which has a number of consequences, perhaps both good and bad. The purpose of this research is to empirically evaluate whether or not social workers with post-MSW work experience perform better during their doctoral studies, compared to students who lack such experience. This research may be published.

The title of this project is “A Comparison of Academic Performance of Experienced Versus Inexperienced MSWs Earning the Social Work Doctorate.” We are asking that you voluntarily complete the attached survey on **all** of the doctoral students you admitted into your

program between the years 1991-1996, inclusive **who had previously earned the MSW degree**. Please do not complete these forms for students admitted without the MSW degree. While we do ask for the name of your university (to assist us in determining response rates and the features of the responding programs), we do not ask for any personally identifying information on your students (e.g., names, SSN). If you believe that any given question may lead to the potential identification of your student, simply leave that item blank. It would be better to have partially completed surveys from your program than none at all. We anticipate that you will be able to complete this information by consulting your program's administrative records. We are requesting de-identified information for each doctoral student who fits the criteria mentioned above. We will keep all responses confidential, and will only release the raw data (in response to possible future requests) after deleting the university of origin. We anticipate it will take about 15 minutes to complete each survey. We will accept data from you on your doctoral students through 31 December 2002 . Please do not submit any data after that date. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. To withdraw, do not submit any data forms to me. To withdraw after they have been submitted to me, send me a letter formally withdrawing your data. I will return your materials to you, not keep any copies, and destroy any data of your's I may have entered electronically. All surveys and university identifiers will be destroyed no later than 31 December 2002.

This is a very important study, and when our report is complete we will mail you a copy, in return for your participation. If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask now or at a later date. You may contact either investigator, Thomas Artelt or Bruce Thyer, if you have any questions. For questions or problems about your rights please call or write Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research

Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-

7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator

Thomas Artelt, LCSW

Doctoral Candidate

School of Social Work

University of Georgia

Athens, GA 30602-7011

artelt@aol.com

706-310-1523-voice

Principal Investigator's Academic Advisor

Bruce A. Thyer, Ph.D., LCSW

Dean and Professor

School of Social Work

Florida State University

Tallahassee, FL 32306-2570

bthyer@mail.fsu.edu

850-644-4752-voice; 850-644-8995-fax

Table 5 Sample Survey Instrument to be Completed on their Doctoral Graduates who enrolled in Their Programs from 1991 - 1996.

Pre-Matriculation Variables

Name of Your University: _____

Student Race: _____ Student Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Student Marital Status: ☐ Married ☐ Single

Year Student First Enrolled: _____ Age when student first enrolled: _____

Undergraduate GPA _____ MSW/Graduate GPA _____

Year Earned MSW _____ # of Years of Full-time Post-MSW Work Experience: ____

Where Did Student Earn the MSW (if appropriate)? _____

Did student possess a state social work license when s/he first enrolled? ____ Yes ____ No

Educational Outcome Variables

Did this doctoral student graduate? ____ Yes, in year _____; ____ No, still enrolled;

____ No, dropped out, in year _____; GPA Earned while a doctoral student _____

Number of scholarly papers published while a doctoral student: _____

Number of scholarly conference presentations while a doctoral student: _____

Primary Nature of Dissertation: ____ Quantitative ____ Qualitative ____ Mixed Methods

Nature and place of student's first post-doctoral position: _____

_____ (e.g., Assistant Professor of Social Work, New York University)

Table 6 IRB Approval Confirmation from The University of Georgia

Office of The Vice President for Research

DHHS Assurance ID No.: M1047

Institutional Review Board

Human Subjects Office

606A Graduate Studies Research Center

Athens, Georgia 30602-7411

(706)542-6514

APPROVALS OF RENEWALS/CHANGES**Request Date:** 2002-11-26 **Project Number:** H2002-10783-2

Name	Title	Dept/Phone	Address	Email
Mr. Thomas A. Artelt	MI	410 Tucker Hall+7016	1090 Woodridge Lane Watkinsville GA 30677 (706) 310-1523	tartelt@aol.com
Dr. Bruce A. Thyer	CO	School of Social Work Tucker Hall+7016 542-5440	Social Work/Florida State University	bthyer@mailers.fsu.edu

Title of Study: A Comparison of the Academic Performance of Experienced Versus Inexperienced MSWs Earning the Social Work Doctorate**45 CFD Category:** Continuing Review**Renew:** Yes**Change(s):**

RENEWAL OF APPROVAL PERIOD WITH NO CHANGES.

Approved : 2002-11-26 **Begin date :** 2002-12-02 **Expiration date :** 2003-12-01*NOTE: Any research conducted before the approval date or after the end data collection date shown above is Not covered by IRB approval, and cannot be retroactively approved***Number Assigned by Sponsored Programs:** **Form 310 Provided:** No **Funding Agency:**

Your request for approval of renewal and/or changes has been approved as indicated under IRB action above. If you will need to extend your approval period again or to make additional changes to your study please follow the same procedures as before.

You must report any adverse events or unanticipated risk to the IRB within 24 to 72 hours. Refer to the IRB Guidelines for additional information.

For your convenience in obtaining approval of changes, extending the approval period, or closing your file we are providing you with blue Researcher Request form. Detach this blue form, complete the form as appropriate, sign and date it, then return it to the IRB office. Keep this original approval form for your records.

Copy: Dr. Bonnie L. Yegidis; Dr. Larry G. Nackerud

Christina A. Joseph, Ph. D., Chair, IRB

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Ninety-eight completed survey forms from four social work doctoral programs were returned to the author. In addition, four social work doctoral program directors declined to participate in this study since their programs began after 1996. The directors of two social work doctoral programs declined to participate in this study because they did not have administrative staff persons to review their records and record the data on the survey instrument. One survey packet was returned unopened and it was addressed to the preferred address and mailed again. No other social work program directors responded to the principal researcher's invitation to participate in this study. No incentives were planned to try and maximize the rate of return.

The four doctoral programs that participated in this study represented four geographical regions of the continental United States. There was one school each from the northeastern, southern, mid-western, and western parts of the continental United States. Three of the schools that participated in this study were large state universities known as "Doctoral Extensive" or "Research-1" Universities. The remaining one school that participated in this study was a private school that was associated with a particular religious belief system and tradition. Only one of these four schools required any post-MSW social work practice experience as a criteria for admission to their doctoral social work program. The other three schools did not have a requirement for and did not have a preference for admitting doctoral social work students who had any post-MSW social work practice experience.

Results of this study were noted in verbal and quantitative data formats. A “participant” was defined in this study as a doctoral student that has a completed survey instrument submitted on him or her to document their demographic information and academic performance.

Issues and questions this dissertation explored and answered included: Do students with post-MSW social work experience: (1) Graduate at higher rates? (2) Graduate in shorter periods of time? (3) Earn higher grade point averages (GPA)? (4) Author more papers? (5) Make more conference presentations? Ancillary issues examined factors such as: (1) Did the student do a quantitative versus qualitative dissertation? (2) Demographic data (e.g., age, marital status, race, gender, undergraduate and graduate GPAs, local MSW, and possession of a social work license, etc.).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics on Interval Variables

Variable Name	Total Sample			>2 yrs Exp			<2 yrs Exp		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Age	98	36.45	8.35	67	37.84	8.02	31	33.45	8.39
Age Range	98	20 to 56 years		67	24 to 56 years		31	20 to 49 years	
Undergrad GPA	67	3.28	.45	48	3.27	.49	19	3.33	.34
MSW GPA	82	3.69	.22	54	3.67	.24	28	3.73	.17
PhD GPA	59	3.65	.28	35	3.63	.30	24	3.67	.26

Table 7 shows the age distribution and grade point averages for this study’s population. Note that the participants had a broad age range (20 years to 56 years for all participants; 24 years to 56 years for participants with two years or more of social work experience; 20 years to 49 years for participants with less than two years of social work experience) and that the 31

participants with the lowest levels of social work experience had a mean age of 33.4 years. This mean age is three years lower than the mean age for the more experienced group (37.8 years). This group of less experienced doctoral students were older than the typical MSW graduate (i.e. mid-twenties) and seemed to indicate that a gap between completion of the MSW degree and the beginning of doctoral work may have existed. Only 27 of the study's 98 participants were younger than 30 years of age. Lennon (1992-1997) documented that females over 31 years of age made up between 55% and 60% of the doctoral student body population between 1991 to 1996 while males over 31 years of age made up between 22% and 29% of the doctoral student body population.

Data on grade point averages based on the participants' undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs did not show much variance across the groups and did not reach statistical significance.

Table 8

Post-MSW Social Work Experience Levels of the Study's Participants

<u>Experience Level</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Mean Experience</u>	<u>SD</u>
All Participants	98	0 yrs to 24 yrs	5.0 yrs	5.7 yrs
2 or More Yrs of Exp	67	2 yrs to 24 yrs	7.2 yrs	5.7 yrs
<u>Less than 2 Yrs of Exp</u>	31	0 yrs to 1 yrs	.22 yrs	.4 yrs

Table 8 noted the experience levels of the study's participants as a group ($N = 98$), as a group with more than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience ($n = 67$), and as a group with less than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience ($n = 31$). One noted that the level of social work experience among those doctoral students who had a least two years of post-MSW experience ranged between 2-24 years, and was substantial at a mean level of experience of 7.2 years (SD 5.7 years). In contrast, the group of doctoral students who had less than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience had a mean experience level of 0.22 years (SD .4 years).

Table 9

Time the Study's Participants Spent in Their Doctoral Program

Variable Name	Total Sample			>2 yrs Exp			<2 yrs Exp		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Yrs In PhD Prog	98	3.4	1.40	67	3.50	1.30	31	3.10	1.52
No. of Papers	98	.61	1.15	67	.63	1.11	31	.58	1.25
No. of Conf Pres	98	1.04	2.24	67	1.30	2.57	31	.48	1.12

Table 9 documented the number of years the study's participants ($N = 98$) spent in the doctoral programs for all participants. It also noted the length of time doctoral students spent in their respective doctoral programs with 2 or more years of post-MSW social work experience ($n = 49$) or who had less than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience ($n = 31$). The group of study participants who were the most experienced practitioners took approximately one quarter of a year longer to complete their program. The mean time in program was determined to be approximately three and one half years.

This study surveyed participants' racial identity based on racial groups that are usually represented within American society and academia. Table 10 shows the racial affiliation of the 98 participants in this study. Since the study also assessed participants based on their level of

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Racial Background

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Race	98	100.0	67	100.0	31	100.0
White	51	52.0	32	47.8	19	61.3
Black	26	26.5	19	28.4	7	22.6
Latino	6	6.1	5	7.5	1	3.2
Asian	8	8.2	5	7.5	3	9.7
Other	5	5.1	4	6.0	1	3.2
Unknown	2	2.0	2	3.0	1	3.2

post-MSW social work practice experience, data were included to show how the groups of doctoral students compared to each other and to the larger sample on the variable of racial identity. Tables 10 also shows the racial affiliation of the 98 participants in this study based on their years of post-MSW social work practice experience. One group was composed of doctoral student students with two or more years of social work experience while the other group included only those doctoral students with less than two years of post-MSW social work experience. It was noteworthy that these data on these participants remained relatively constant among the three groups (i.e. all participants, participants with two years of more of social work experience, and participants with less than two years of social work experience). Two of the

groups were not dominated by a majority of white students in these categories, and this may indicate that opportunities for doctoral students reflected the diversity of the profession as a whole and, particularly, of social workers who pursue doctoral education.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Gender

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Gender	98	100.0	67	100.0	31	100.0
Male	42	42.9	31	46.3	11	36.5
Female	56	57.1	36	53.7	20	64.5

Table 11 note the distribution of the study's 98 participants based on gender in an aggregate amount and based on the years of post-MSW social work practice. experience (i.e. one group was composed of social workers with more than two years of post-MSW social work experience and the other group was made up of social work doctoral students who had less than two years of social work experience). It was interesting to note that the predominance of females in this sample of study participants reflected the gender distribution within the general population and the social work profession as a whole. This small, focused, and limited study indicated that on a small scale, the future of doctoral education would not be dominated by white males.

This study collected data on the marital status of its participants that was based upon the relatively simple categories of "married" and "single." These data are included on Table 12. No attempt was made to ascertain the length of the marital relationship or the status of the "single

state” (i.e. single, never married; single but co-habiting; divorced, widowed, etc.). The distribution of the marital status remained relatively constant across all groups of participants

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Marital Status

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Marital Status	98	100.0	67	100.0	31	100.0
Married	48	49.0	33	49.3	15	48.4
Single	24	24.5	17	25.4	7	22.6
Unknown	26	26.5	17	25.4	9	29.0

(i.e. all participants, participants with two years or more of social work experience, and participants with less than two years of social work experience). The response “Unknown” also remained constant across all three groups of study participants.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Social Work Licensure

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Possess SW Lic	98	100.00	67	100.00	31	100.00
Yes	12	12.2	11	16.4	1	3.2
No	9	6.0	4	6.0	5	16.1
Unknown	77	78.6	52	77.6	25	80.6

Table 13 document the numbers of study participants who possessed a social work license when they enrolled in the doctoral social work program. The largest percentage of study

participants who had a social work license was noted among participants who had two or more years of social work experience. The “Unknown” categories of participants in response to this study area remained relatively constant among all participants in each of the three groups (i.e. all participants, participants with two years or more of social work experience, and participants with less than two years of social work experience). Since the study specifically asked if the doctoral students had a social work license at enrollment into the doctoral program, no attempt was made to ascertain how many doctoral students may have applied for and earned a social work license during their respective doctoral programs. Moreover, the high number of responses to the “Unknown” category may also indicate that social work doctoral program administrators do not gather these data during the application process. No attempt was considered to collect data on participants’ advanced practice credentials from other bodies such as the National Association of Social Workers [e.g. Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW), Qualified Clinical Social Worker (QCSW), Diplomate in Clinical Social Work (DCSW)], or additional speciality areas such as case management, school social work, and in addictions or the Board Certified Diplomate (BCD) credential that is administered by the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work.

Table 14 noted if study participants graduated from the social work doctoral program in which they enrolled. It was encouraging to note that the overall number of participants who graduated was relatively high at 63.3%. The highest percentage of participants who graduated from their doctoral programs was among those who had less than two years of post-MSW social work experience (80.5%). The participants who had two or more years of social work experience had the lowest graduation rate (55.2%). Based on these data it was noteworthy that the limited levels of social work practice experience among some study participants did not seem to have an

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Outcome Status

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Did Stu Graduate	98	100.00	67	100.00	31	100.00
Yes	62	63.3	37	55.2	25	80.6
No, still enrl	11	11.2	11	16.4	0	0.0
No, dropped	23	23.5	17	25.4	6	19.4
Unknown	2	2.0	2	3.0	0	

adverse impact on whether these participants graduated from their doctoral program. In other words, students with limited social work practice experience graduated from their doctoral program in high numbers. One speculated that this may be a consequence of this population's younger age, possibly more limited family and vocational obligations, financial needs, academic abilities, and countless other areas that contributed to their academic success.

In this study's sample of participants, experienced social workers who enrolled in a social work doctoral program were least likely to complete their doctoral education and graduate from their program. No attempt was made in this study to gather data on why these participants did not graduate from their doctoral programs. Obviously it could be inferred that low levels of academic achievement, financial issues, socialization issues, disenchantment with the content and process of doctoral-level social work education, work commitments, and countless other issues of a personal, educational, and vocational nature may have been involved in compelling a study participant to leave a social work doctoral program. As a result, the supposed wealth of

practice experience that a veteran and seasoned social worker could have brought to a post-doctoral career was lost.

Ironically, this area in this study had a low level of responses in the “Unknown” category (2% to 3%). One can only speculate what energies were expended by social work doctoral program personnel in retaining these developing social work scholars. These data also illustrated that increasing numbers of social work doctoral graduates may be among those who have less than two years of social work practice experience. These graduates may not be qualified to teach required practice courses in some social work programs nor will they be able to enrich classroom discussions with “real world” personal social work practice examples. Hopefully, the relatively large percentage of study participants who were still enrolled at the time these data were collected (11.2%) graduated from their program.

Table 15 documented the type of dissertation the study’s participants’ wrote in their program (i.e. quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). The distribution of the types of dissertations remains relatively constant across all three groups within this study (all participants, participants with more than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience, and participants with less than 2 years of post-MSW social work experience). It was unfortunate that the “Unknown” category in this area also remained constant (between 23% to 29%) between the three groups. It would have been interesting to see which dissertation type, if any, dominated this study since the profession continues a dialogue between the merits, rigor, and credibility of quantitative versus qualitative dissertations. Perhaps the relative equitable distribution of the “Mixed Methods” dissertation type (10% to 12%) among all three groups of study participants witnessed to this desire to blend these types of scholarship.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Dissertation Type

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Nat of Dissert	98	100.00	67	100.00	31	100.00
Quant	26	26.5	18	26.9	8	25.8
Qual	11	11.2	7	10.4	4	12.9
Mix Meth	11	11.2	7	10.4	4	12.9
Dropped Out	23	23.5	17	25.4	6	19.4
Still Enrolled	2	2.0	2	3.0	0	0.0
Unknown	23	23.5	14	20.9	9	29.0
Missing Data	2	2.0	2	3.0	0	0.0

Where did study participants go upon leaving their social work doctoral program? Table 16 highlighted the types of post-graduate positions these students accepted. The doctoral social work graduate most often enters academia. The distribution of results among study participants who entered academia ranged from 35% to 45%. The numbers of study participants who entered the fields of research and clinical practice are consistently low among all groups of this study's participants (e.g. Research, 1% to 3%, and Clinical Practice, 3%). The category in this area that noted the largest numbers of study participants among all three groups was the "Unknown" category with a range of 48% to 59%. The largest number of "Unknown" responses was from the group of study participants who had two years or more post-MSW social work practice experience. One was unable to discern whether the most experienced social work practitioners entered academia and used their wealth of experience to enhance the students' academic

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Outcome Site

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Post-Doc Posit	98	100.00	67	100.00	31	100.00
Academia	38	38.8	24	35.8	14	45.2
Research	2	2.0	1	1.5	1	3.2
Clin Practice	3	3.1	2	3.0	1	3.2
Unknown	55	56.1	40	59.7	15	48.4

experiences and professional development because of this high number of “Unknown” responses. In addition, the author of this study was not able to determine if this lack of data was due to the fact that doctoral programs failed to collect this information on their graduates or if these data were simply not located for this study by the person who completed the survey.

Table 17 presented the distribution of doctoral students based on the year they enrolled in their doctoral program. The year 1996 had with highest number of students enter their doctoral program (30). The smallest number of students (10) entered their doctoral program in 1991. The data this study collected were used to substantiate some response to each of the study’s eight hypotheses. The data that addressed each hypothesis are presented in a chronological order based on the number of the hypothesis. A discussion of what the data showed was also included in a discussion of each hypothesis.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics on Categorical Variables: Range of Enrollment Years

Variable Name	Total Sample		>2 yrs Exp		<2 yrs Exp	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Year Enrolled	98	100.00	67	100.00	31	100.00
1991	10	10.2	7	10.4	3	9.7
1992	17	17.3	12	17.9	5	16.1
1993	16	16.3	8	11.9	8	25.8
1994	14	14.3	8	11.9	6	19.4
1995	11	11.2	7	10.4	4	12.9
1996	29	29.6	24	35.8	5	16.1
Unknown	1	1.5	1	1.5	0	0.0

Hypothesis 1

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will graduate in a shorter time period than students with less than two years of post MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A independent samples t-test examined the difference between the mean number of years it took to graduate with the social work doctorate, between these two groups.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 49) graduated in an average of 3.5 years (SD = 1.3), while those with less than two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 31) took an average of 3.1 years (SD = 1.5). This difference

[$t(80) = 0.09$; $p < .05$] was statistically significantly different, in the direction *against* that proposed in Hypothesis 1 - those with more work experience took somewhat longer to graduate, not shorter. Thus Hypothesis 1 was disconfirmed.

Hypothesis 2

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will have a higher doctoral grade point average than students with less than two years of post MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A independent samples t-test examined the difference between the mean grade point average between these two groups.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 35$) earned an average grade point average of 3.63 ($4.0 = A$) ($SD = 0.30$), while those with less than two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 24$) earned a grade point average of 3.67 ($SD = 0.26$). This difference [$t(59) = 0.05$; $p < .05$] was not statistically significantly different, in the direction *against* that proposed in Hypothesis 2 - those with more work experience earned a somewhat lower grade point average than the less experience social work doctoral student. Thus Hypothesis 2 was disconfirmed.

Hypothesis 3

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will publish a higher number of scholarly papers while enrolled in the social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A independent samples t-test examined the difference between the mean number of scholarly papers the students in each group published.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience. (N = 36) published an average of 1.17 scholarly papers (SD = 1.2), while those with less than two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 11) published an average of 1.6 scholarly papers (SD = 1.6). This difference [$t(47) = 1.25$; $p < .05$] was statistically significantly different, in the direction *against* that proposed in Hypothesis 3 - those with more work experience reliably published *fewer* scholarly papers than students with less post-MSW work experience.. Thus Hypothesis 3 was disconfirmed.

Hypothesis 4

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will make a greater number of social work presentations at social work scholarly conferences than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. An independent samples t-test examined the difference between the mean number of presentations social work doctoral students made at social work conferences.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 33) made an average of 2.7 presentations (SD = 3.1) at social work scholarly conferences, while those with less than two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 11) made an average of 1.3 presentations (SD = 1.3) at social work scholarly conferences. This difference [$t(44) = 1.8$; $p < .05$] was statistically significantly different, in the direction *supporting* that proposed in

Hypothesis 4 - those with more work experience made more presentations at social work scholarly conferences, not less. Thus Hypothesis 4 was corroborated.

Hypothesis 5

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will be more likely to graduate from the social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were more likely to graduate from their doctoral program. The raw data are reported in Table 18.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 62$) were *less* likely to graduate than those social work doctoral students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 31$). This difference [$X^2(93) = 4.08; p < .05$] was statistically significantly different, in the direction *against* that proposed in Hypothesis 5 - those with more work experience were *less* likely to graduate. Thus Hypothesis 5 was disconfirmed.

Table 18

Results for Hypothesis 5

Post-PhD Position	WITH Two-Years Experience	Percentage	WITHOUT Two-Years Experience	Percentage
Graduated	37	39%	25	26%
Did Not Graduate	25	26%	6	6%
Total	62	66%	31	32%

Hypothesis 6

“Doctoral students with post-MSW work experience will be more likely to obtain an academic position immediately post-Ph.D., compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were more likely to obtain an academic position immediately post-Ph.D., compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience. The raw data are reported in Table 19.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 67$) were about equally likely to obtain an academic position immediately post-Ph.D., compared to those social work doctoral students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience ($N = 31$). This difference [$X^2(98) = 0.77$; $p < .05$] was not statistically significantly different. Thus Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Table 19

Results for Hypothesis 6

Post-PhD Position	WITH Two-Years Experience	Percentage	WITHOUT Two-Years Experience	Percentage
Academic	24	24%	14	14%
Non–Academic	43	44%	17	17%
Total	67	68%	31	31%

Hypothesis 7

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience will be more likely to hold a social work license, compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A chi-square test was conducted to assess whether social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were more likely to hold a social work license, compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience. The raw data are reported in Table 20.

It was found that those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 67) were *less* likely to hold a social work license, compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 31). This difference [$X^2(98) = 3.43$; $p < .05$] was not statistically significantly different, in the direction *supporting* that proposed in Hypothesis 7 - those with more work experience were *more* likely to hold a social work license, compared to those without at least two years of post-MSW work experience. Thus Hypothesis 7 was disconfirmed.

Table 20

Results for Hypothesis 7

Post-PhD Position	WITH Two-Years Experience	Percentage	WITHOUT Two-Years Experience	Percentage
Had a License	11	11%	1	1%
Had no License	56	57%	30	30%
Total	67	68%	31	31%

Hypothesis 8

“Doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were less likely to drop out of their social work doctoral program than students with less than two years of post-MSW work experience.”

The sample was divided into two groups, those with at least two years of post-MSW work experience, and those lacking this background. A chi square test examined whether that students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were less likely to drop out of their doctoral program.

The results were [$\chi^2(94) = 4.44; p < .05$] noted that those WITH at least two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 63) were *more* likely to drop out of their social work doctoral program, while those with less than two years of post-MSW work experience (N = 31) were *less* likely to drop out of their social work program (there were four participants with “unknown” in the “2 or more years of experience” group). This difference was statistically significant in the direction *against* that proposed in Hypothesis 8 - those with more work experience were less likely to drop out of their social work doctoral program. Thus Hypothesis 8 was disconfirmed. The raw data are reported in Table 21.

This study documented results for each of the eight hypotheses it assessed. The results were discussed in chronological order based on the number of the hypothesis. In summary, it was noted that social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW social work practice experience took longer to complete their program and graduate when compared to social work doctoral students who had less than two years of post-MSW social work experience. The doctoral students with more post-MSW social work practice experienced were on average older than the students with less post-MSW social work experience and may have faced more

Table 21

Results for Hypothesis 8

Drop Out?	WITH Two-Years Experience	Percentage	WITHOUT Two-Years Experience	Percentage
Dropped Out	26	27%	6	6%
Did not Drop Out	37	39%	25	26%
Unknown	4	4%	0	
Total	67	70%	31	32%

competing demands from other areas of life such as family and work commitments as they sought to maintain a rigorous and disciplined academic life. Perhaps related to these issues was the commendable result of hypothesis two; the students with at least two years of post-MSW practice experience maintained a grade point average in their doctoral program that was roughly equivalent to their less experienced peers amid the demands that may have extended their time on the doctoral program as discussed in hypothesis one.

Hypothesis three noted that the doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW social work experience published fewer scholarly papers when compared to doctoral students with less than two years of post-MSW social work experience. Again, the competing demands (e.g. family, work, finances, school, etc.) on the more experienced students may have contributed to this difference.

Social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW social work experience made more presentations at scholarly social work conferences when compared to the less experienced social work doctoral students as noted in hypothesis four. One can only

speculate over the reasons for this finding but it could be related to issues like the more experienced doctoral students had more of a professional social work network and attended scholarly social work conferences where presentations could be made. Moreover, the more experienced social work doctoral students presented at more social work scholarly conferences perhaps for additional reasons such as presenting issues related to practice experience to peers, networking for a social work job, funding to attend conferences could be tapped from multiple sources beyond academia, and there was a greater precedent for attending scholarly conferences from one's life before beginning a doctoral program.

According to the results of hypotheses five through eight, social work doctoral students with at least two years of post-MSW work experience were less likely to graduate from their doctoral program, about equally likely to get an academic position upon completing their social work doctorate, less likely to hold a social work license, and more likely to drop out of their doctoral program. These results may signal concern, and show areas where student support could be developed. Social work educators and prospective social work doctoral students who are experienced practitioners may see these results as areas of potential student failure and where a student's professional development could be enhanced. More research could be done in each of the hypotheses in this study to gain more perspective on both the strengths and limitations of these areas of social work doctoral education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION

As with other empirical studies in social work, this study and survey of doctoral social work education presents some limitations that confront the utility of this study and its results. Despite these limitations or concerns, one must recall that this is an original and exploratory study of a topic that has received limited attention from scholars within social work. Any attention, however limited, does indeed shine the light of social work process and inquiry upon a topic that may benefit from future research.

A limitation that immediately confronts one is the low response rate of doctoral program directors to this study's survey. Only four out of 67 program directors chose to participate in this study for a myriad of reasons. As a result, the low response rate of 98 returned questionnaires does indeed limit this study's generalizability to social work doctoral education. Moreover, the low response rate of 98 participants means that it is unlikely that these data are representative of either doctoral social work programs and social work doctoral students. Any data, however, is useful to scholars investigating this heretofore unexamined area.

Another limitation within this study is related to the fact that the study relied upon the voluntary and good-natured efforts and cooperation of doctoral program directors and the person who completed the survey forms. As in other areas of academia where staff members are asked to "do more with less," some doctoral program data were simply unretrievable due to a shortage of staff time that could be devoted to this study. Related to this spirit of grace and professional cooperation is the issue that one is unable to assess the validity and reliability of the collected

data. It is possible that the data that was submitted were not complete, correct, or accurately reflected the status of that program's cohort of doctoral students between 1991-1996. There was no "check and balance" that assured the collection of accurate data.

Another interesting limitation within this study is that the author did not study the impact post-BSW level social work experience played in a doctoral student's academic program, progress, and outcomes. Studying this issue in light of the current CSWE standard for faculty who teach required social work practice classes would enhance further research by exploring post-BSW experience and how it prepared one to teach practice courses at the BSW and MSW levels. For example, did generalist social work practice experience enhance a social work doctoral graduate's employment on the one hand and impact the doctoral graduate's expertise in the classroom on the other hand? Remember, it is possible to earn the social work doctoral degree without holding an MSW degree. How competent is a teacher of required MSW-level practice courses who has BSW-level experience, a social work doctorate, and non-post-MSW work experience? How might that faculty member's instructional abilities and evaluations compare to other academics who hold the MSW, possess at least two years of post-MSW social work experience, have a social work doctorate, and teach the same general types of required social work practice courses? Perhaps this information would be influential in defining and refining the scope and intent of the CSWE's standards regarding social work practice experience for teachers of required social work practice courses.

The author did not control for the variable of full-time and part-time enrollment. Although three of the four doctoral programs that participated in this study permitted a doctoral student to enroll as a "part-time" student, the study's survey did not consider part-time status in assessing a student's progress in the doctoral program. It is assumed that a

part-time student most probably would continue to work to pay bills, etc., and, therefore, the part-time student would probably take a longer period of time to complete the doctoral degree. One could have also studied the less experienced social work doctoral student to assess whether these students were younger in age. Might these doctoral students be in a better position to attend a doctoral program full-time since the financial and familial obligations that impact or limit the feasibility of graduate education for the older student may not have entered the younger student's life yet?

Another area that this study did not assess was the type of academic institution the new social work doctoral graduate chose to join as a new faculty member. In other words, many social work doctoral programs stress the employability of their graduates in social work programs as an incentive to enroll in a doctoral program. Given the scope, breadth, and quality of social work education in the United States today, one could study the issue of whether social work doctoral graduates with at least two years of social work experience more likely to be initially employed by a "better" (i.e. a Doctoral Extensive or Research-1 University) social work program than a social work doctoral graduate with less than two years of social work experience? One could go further in this same area by studying where the social work doctoral graduate with and without the MSW degree was initially employed. Were these graduates hired by the "better" social work programs, and, if so, what were they expected to teach? Such a study would confront the issue and viability of having doctoral graduates teaching courses in an academic degree program where they themselves have not earned the same degree.

Even though this study was not perfect and had a share of limitations, this study is the first known effort and attempt to empirically study and discuss the rationale and justification for requiring some degree of post-MSW social work experience as one criteria for admission to a

social work doctoral program. This study did complete a plan of research that was outlined earlier in a research prospectus and approved by the author's doctoral committee. This effort presents some initial findings in this area as it also becomes a springboard for further research in this same general area. This study researched a here-to-fore topic of interest to social work education, doctoral program directors, and to social work doctoral students.

Future Directions for Further Research in this Area

As a way to increase the survey's rate of response among doctoral directors, one might highlight the voluntary effort and knowledge expansion of a study such as this, and appeal to the directors' goodwill by offering some sort of financial benefit to their program and school. This would not necessarily be a financial payment to the director or staff person as a way to compensate them for their time. For example, the author of a study like this could offer a monetary gift (e.g. \$100) to the scholarship program at the doctoral program director's school, earmark a financial gift (e.g. \$100) to school's field education program, or simply hold a lottery among all schools that submitted surveys. The winning school would receive a \$1000 contribution to their scholarship fund. This gift would enhance social work education at one of the study's participating schools.

Another way to increase the survey's rate of return would be to simplify the survey itself and eliminate some items on the survey that were only marginally related to the core issues of this study. For example, one could have deleted items such as the nature of the dissertation, the doctoral student's undergraduate and MSW grade point averages, and whether the doctoral student held a social work license. The exclusion of these data would shorten the survey form in both content and time for completing it, make it easier to complete, and increase its rate of return. One might also discuss whether this study's methodology could be changed to garner a

larger pool of useful data. An obvious change would be to send the survey form to doctoral students and ask them to complete it. This method would circumvent the need to have doctoral directors directly involved in the data collection process of this study. The doctoral program director would be given a supply of cover letters, survey forms, and they could distribute the study to their students. This research study could be made more “user-friendly” by doing it completely online if the appropriate systems for data collection and security/confidentiality are in place and operating. Doctoral directors and doctoral students could possibly go to a website that would have the survey for on it, they could complete it and email it to the author.

A future study in this area could change its methodology to re-direct its focus. First, the study could narrow its focus by only targeting a smaller number of doctoral programs. This work would achieve a smaller random sample of doctoral programs and this smaller group of programs would enable the researcher to focus on a smaller number of schools. Second, the study could expand its focus on social work practice experience by including post-BSW social work experience and not just post-MSW social work experience. This would accurately reflect the recently revised CSWE standards. Finally, one could contact everyone who was listed on a roster for job seekers through the CSWE or the prestigious Society for Social Work and Research for a specific year, send them a survey to complete, and return to the researcher. These rosters are frequently used by recent graduates of doctoral programs to find an academic position.

Implications for Social Work Doctoral Education

This study’s hypotheses were written as if to support the idea that two or more years of social work practice would enhance a doctoral student’s progress in a social work doctoral program. Few of these hypotheses were supported. In fact, some of the hypotheses supported having less experience when the results showed that social work doctoral students with at least

two years of post-MSW social work experience took longer to graduate from their doctoral program, published fewer scholarly social work papers, were less likely to graduate from their social work doctoral program, were about equally likely to get an academic position upon completing a social work doctoral program, and were more likely to drop out of their social work doctoral program. Such results, however small, question the efficacy of the past or current CSWE standards that favor having two years of post-BSW or post-MSW social work experience as a factor to support the admission of certain students to doctoral social work programs. Perhaps this study would encourage the CSWE or GADE to do more extensive and exhaustive research in this area with the goal of re-evaluating the efficacy of the post-degree practice requirement.

An additional area of possible change is the career path social work graduates take to the academic appointments. Rather than requiring or preferring some sort of post-BSW or post-MSW social work experience to gain acceptance into a doctoral program, why not encourage MSW graduates to continue in school to get a Ph.D. degree in social work and then enter the work force as a doctoral level practitioner for a number of years to gain practice experience before entering the academy? The focus and emphasis of this approach would be to ensure that competent practitioners are groomed for the academy, the academy values practice experience for its intended purpose, namely teaching required practice courses, and a larger number of younger doctoral students would be attracted to the field of doctoral study since a set number of years of social work experience were not needed prior to acceptance. Doctoral programs could expand their programs by offering field education opportunities for their students, too.

Finally, the CSWE could strengthen its current standard on requiring work experience for faculty who teach practice courses. The present standard does not define issues such as paid employment, direct practice experience, or full time employment. Such an arbitrarily composed

and stated standard actually devalues the legitimate post-degree social work practice experience an incoming doctoral student may possess and draw from as a foundation for learning advanced research, practice, and instructional methods.

One step in the direction of acknowledging practice and academic competence would be to require all social work faculty who teach direct practice courses to be licensed as an independent practitioner or at the highest level of licensure in their state, as advocated by Thyer (2000). Such a requirement would enhance professional standards and it would be more in line with the often discussed value of hiring social work faculty who themselves had practice experience and advanced academic credentials for teaching social work skills. This move toward hiring faculty with practice credentials would be interesting to study.

Social work needs professionals at every level who embody the profession's best levels of knowledge, values, and ethics. Given the shortage of qualified doctoral-level social work researchers and educators, the profession faces an ongoing shortage of personnel who completed a doctoral degree. As a result of this reduced doctoral level labor force, the profession of social work is impoverished and its diligent efforts in research, knowledge-building, advanced clinical practice and supervision, and professional development are inhibited. Requiring post-MSW full or part-time paid social work experience as a requirement or preference for admission to a social work doctoral program however commendable and legitimate, may be misguided because it delays select social work professionals from attaining greater knowledge and competence to push the social work profession to greater levels of research and practice. Requiring such delays overlooks the difficulties the older student, perhaps with more familial, employment, or fiscal obligations may experience in attempting a return to graduate school. Indeed, the factors may differentially impair the ability of *female* social workers to enroll in doctoral education.

Moreover, the requirement of some sort of post-MSW social work practice experience disallows self-determination on the part of the doctoral social work program applicant who seeks to further their education when it establishes an arbitrary requirement or preference for social work practice experience as one of the criteria for admission to a social work doctoral program. Further, this practice requirement or preference discriminates against new MSW graduates, established social work professionals who may be forced to leave a satisfying position for the disadvantaged economy facing today's graduate student, and the system of social work education. It may promote a two-tiered hierarchy among social work doctoral programs in the United States since there are no consistent admission standard regarding an applicant's level of practice experience and practice competence. These criteria for admission are not consistently defined, established, administered, and supervised since there is not a nationwide accreditation body for doctoral level social work education as there is for the BSW and MSW social work programs.

The post-MSW practice experience requirement or preference today does not imply a dichotomy between scholarship and professional competence as Bolte (1971) suggests when he studied the PhD and DSW degree programs in the early 1970s. This dissertation studied these issues of post-MSW social work practice experience carefully to discern its benefits and burdens through the best tools of social work scholarship. Hollis and Taylor (1951) observed,

At the moment, schools of social work are believed to be suffering from a plethora of faculty members who are practitioners rather than educators and, what is more to the point, who are transmitting little more than the "doing" side of narrow fields of practice. . . What is needed are teachers of intellectual force as well as effective experience. (pp. 300-301)

Fifty years have passed since Hollis and Taylor succinctly advocated for a social work educational system that appreciated the interdependent relationships between research and experience. Will we accept their challenge and drop the 2 year post-MSW full or part-time social work practice experience as an admissions requirement or preference? The doctoral programs in the United States, the systems of social work education at all levels (BSW, MSW, Doctoral), and the profession of social work await our informed, educated response. We need not do anything more. We dare not do anything less. This dissertation probed these issues and provides one with an opportunity to engage other social work professionals in this engaging and productive dialogue.

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