Examining Influencing Factors on BSW Students’ Intent to Persist

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by

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Abstract

Students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). The first product of this banded dissertation presents a conceptual framework, through the lens of empowerment theory, for understanding the varied and nuanced influencing factors contributing to BSW students’ intent to persist. This paper explored ways in which social work programs are and are not providing opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners to the degree that they intend to persist in their social work education endeavors.

The second product of this banded dissertation is an empirical paper that seeks to expand the understanding of how BSW students from different racial/ethnic groupings differ in terms of their intent to persist through completion of their degrees. Additionally, the study explores ways in which student views concerning the presence of certain domains of implicit curriculum differed between ethnic groups. This study responds to the lack of such research by conducting a cross-sectional survey of 247 BSW students at a mid-size Midwestern university in the United States. T-tests were used to explore whether the intent to persist differed by ethnic group. With the exception of the frequency with which students across racial groups interacted with social work faculty outside of the classroom, responses through independent-samples-t-tests were similar across ethnic groups. Ninety-seven percent of students across all ethnic groups surveyed reported an intent to persist through the completion of their degree. Additionally, students from all ethnic groups reported positive implicit curriculum experiences through their participation in this social work education program. Regarding student/faculty interaction, Caucasian students reported
descriptively on average, interaction with social work faculty at a greater frequency than did students of color.

The third and final product of this banded dissertation is a peer-reviewed national conference presentation. In a workshop format, using elements of Empowerment Theory and focusing on implicit curriculum as a methodology through which retention can be addressed, this presentation focused on identifying ways to increase retention rates of BSW students of color. After identifying factors that can interfere with retaining students of color, presentation participants engaged in a presenter-facilitated small-group activity, and a large-group discussion during which attendees identified elements of their BSW programs that currently address this issue, and selected ways in which they could modify current practices, through components of implicit curriculum, in order to increase retention of BSW students of color.

*Keywords: Social work education, Intent to Persist, Retention, Students of Color, Ethnicity*
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Audrey Wiggins Roberts. Even in your absence, yours was the voice that inspired and guided me through this process. Thank you for your unrelenting support and unabashed pride concerning my pursuit of higher education. I am now “a professor at the University.”
Acknowledgments

I would like to extend thanks to many people who so generously contributed to the completion of this dissertation in explicit and implicit ways. I am grateful to the faculty and students at my home institution, Saginaw Valley State University. Their support of, and participation in the research project that is at the core of this banded dissertation is very much appreciated and valued.

To the members of St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas DSW Cohort 2, all of my admiration, thanks and good wishes to you as you pursue your dreams. A special thank you to my summer roomies-Lisa Borneman, Shannon Cassidy-Cousineau, and Judy Zimbelman. The friendships we developed have sustained me in all ways possible throughout this program, and for that I am immeasurably grateful.

I would also like to acknowledge my parents Judy and Bill who instilled a sense of curiosity in me that has served as a guiding force in my pursuit of higher education. A deep thank you to my brother Russ whose encouragement through this process was more valuable than he knows. Remember…you’re the smart one. And to Diane, Kathleen and Patrick – my family of choice – thank you for keeping me anchored through this process, and for making sure I have a life to return to postdoc.
EXAMINING INFLUENCING FACTORS

Table of Contents

Title Page................................................................................................................. i
Abstract.................................................................................................................. ii
Dedication............................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgements.............................................................................................. v
List of Tables.......................................................................................................... vii
List of Appendices................................................................................................. viii
Introduction........................................................................................................... 1
Conceptual Framework.......................................................................................... 4
Summary of Banded Dissertation Products......................................................... 7
Discussion.............................................................................................................. 8
  Implications for Social Work............................................................................... 9
  Implications for Future Research...................................................................... 11
Comprehensive Reference List.............................................................................. 13

Product 1:  BSW Students’ Intent to Persist Through Conclusion of Degree:
  Influencing Factors....................................................................................... 23

Product 2:  Examining Differences Between Students of Color
  and Caucasian Students: Perceptions of Implicit Curriculum as They Influence
  Intent to Persist............................................................................................. 43

Product 3:  Why Aren’t Students of Color Staying in BSW Programs?.............. 85
List of Tables

TABLE 2.1
Ethnic/Racial Profile of BSW Students

TABLE 2.2
Demographic Characteristics of BSW Student Participants

TABLE 2.3
Responses of BSW Students, by Racial/Ethnic Groupings, to Questions Concerning Implicit Curriculum

TABLE 2.4
Items on the BSW Student Intent to Persist (BSWSIP) Questionnaire Included in the Analysis

TABLE 3.1
Feedback Received from Participants
List of Appendices

APPENDIX 1
Workshop Evaluation Form ................................................................. 103

APPENDIX 2
Conference Workshop Activity Handout ............................................. 105
Examining Influencing Factors on BSW Students’ Intent to Persist

The social work profession is facing a major challenge: attempting to diversify its professional body. Especially regarding race, the social work profession is significantly less diverse than the U.S. population (Bowie, Cherry & Wooding, 2005; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Respecting diversity is a core principle in social work education. Since 1971, as a way to address racial disparities within schools of social work, the CSWE has required each accredited program “…to demonstrate the special efforts it is making to enrich its program by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty and staff” (CSWE, 1971, p. 10). In citing revisions made in the 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel (2011) assert that the CSWE further integrated standards regarding nondiscrimination as a way, in part, address issues of retaining underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. However, concerns remain about social work education’s ability to secure and enhance the number of students of color in their programs.

Even with these requirements in place, students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2013), 41.8% of full-time undergraduate students are from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, according to the CSWE, only 37.4% of the 30,000-plus BSW social work students actually graduate from accredited programs each year. While these statistics represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, they continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2013). Subsequently, one issue addressed in this banded dissertation will be attrition as a major obstacle to graduating ethnically diverse students from undergraduate programs.
EXAMINING INFLUENCING FACTORS

Many studies have looked at factors influencing social work career choice (Bowie at al., 2005; Butler, 1990; Limb & Organista, 2003; Rubin & Johnson, 1984). However, the majority of these studies have focused on MSW students, rather than BSW students. These studies largely focus on what brings social work students into the field (e.g. preexisting altruistic values, personal interaction with a social worker), or what contributes to career choice post-graduation (e.g. increase income, advance career) (Bowie & Hancock, 2000). Several studies have investigated recruitment of minority social work students (Morris-Compton, 2007; Dillon, 2011; Enoch, 1988; Raber, Tebb & Berg-Weger, 1998). Among the studies reviewed, very few have directly examined the retention of BSW students and of those studies, none have specifically examined intent to persist as a factor related to the retention of students of color. Retention rates commonly measure the percentage of undergraduate students who re-enroll the next academic year (Marrow & Ackerman, 2012). The primary reason that retention rates, along with graduation rates are important is that retention rates are perceived as indicators of academic quality and student access (Arnold, 1999). However, “persistence, a student’s continuation behavior leading to a desired goal, helps describe processes related to student goal achievement” (Arnold, p. 1). Studies outside of social work programs have found that a focus on intent to persist to be of value in determining how their programs influence students’ behavior related to persistence (Bowman & Denson, 2014; Wheeless, Witt, Maresh, Bryand, & Schrodt, 2011; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). While the extant literature has recruitment as one of its themes, little has been examined the additional tier of concern; which principle factors influence BSW students’ intention to persist, especially those students who could eventually diversify the field. Processes related to intent that must be explored if we are to understand why students of color are leaving social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts.
Social work is a field of study that has (at its roots) a focus on racial justice and empowerment. Although there is a significant focus on this within social work education programs and within undergraduate classrooms (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Jani, 2011; Teasley, Archuleta & Miller, 2014) data demonstrate that we, as social work educators, are not closing the gap between white students and students of color in our social work programs. Since schools of social work serve as the sentinel of the profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who enter and successfully complete a social work degree. If the social work profession is to adhere to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of its student body. This author acknowledges that cultural systemic factors, institutional factors specific to higher education, and elements related to explicit curriculum directly influence students’ intent to persist. However, the focus of this banded dissertation is limited to the principle elements of implicit curriculum as they impact intent to persist.
Conceptual Framework

Reasons for cultivating and securing a more balanced composition of a BSW student body through retention activities will be offered through the lens of empowerment theory. Empowerment theory emerged in its current form in the 1980’s (Wilkinson, 1998). Since then several variations of the theory have been offered as a way to understand oppressed populations, and the process by which empowerment is achieved (Carr, 2002; Gutierrez, Parsons, Cox, 1998; Parson, 1991). For the purposes of this dissertation, the tenets of the theoretical framework that will be employed are:

- individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else, and therefore should have the power to define and act upon them; all people possess strengths on which they can build; empowerment is a lifelong endeavor; and personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively (Lord & Hutchison, 1993, p. 4).

Current elements of empowerment theory were influenced by several and varied factors. These include Paulo Freire’s (1973) “critical consciousness,” Unionism, the Black Power Movement, the War on Poverty, and the Feminist Movement. Freire asserts a theory in which the individual learns to cultivate her or his own growth through situations from daily life. At the core of empowerment is the narrative that the individual creates and permits themselves to reflect upon and analyze the world in which they live—not so much to adapt themselves to this world, but rather as part of an effort to reform it and make it conform to their demands is at the core of empowerment.

Not until the 1970’s, and especially after the 1976 publication of Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Community (1976) by Barbara Solomon, however, does the term
empowerment formally come into usage by social services providers and researchers. Early concepts of empowerment developed in the United States are anchored in a philosophy that gives priority to the points of view held by oppressed peoples, enabling them not only to express themselves, but also to gain power and overcome the domination to which they are subject (Wise, 2004).

Empowerment is, first and foremost, about power; changing power dynamics in favor of those who previously exercised little power over their own lives. Simon (1994) defines power as having two central aspects; “control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self), and control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes)” (p. 11). If power means control, then empowerment is the gaining of control. Embedded within this definition is the assumption that empowerment can mean different things to different people and vary in form across settings and time (Rappaport et al., 1984; Zimmerman, 1990).

Common and major assumptions of the theory include:

- Individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power both to define and act upon them
- All people possess strengths on which they can build
- People should be assisted to empower themselves
- People who share commonalities need each other to attain empowerment
- Cultivating resources, strategies and competencies to attain personal and collective goals is essential (Keiffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Lee, 2001).

Considered individually and collectively, these assumptions serve to offer ways to “measure the construct in different contexts, to study empowering processes, and to distinguish empowerment
from other constructs such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 43). Empowering processes for individuals might include participation in community organizations. Empowering processes at the community level might include collective decision making and shared leadership. At both levels, the contextual theory of empowerment presents the transition from powerlessness to more control in life as a change in both human activity and the social structure. An empowerment approach requires focusing on helping client systems gain more control over their lives, making client systems more aware of and using their own personal resources, overcoming obstacles in meeting their needs and aspirations, having their voices heard in decision-making, and being able to challenge situations where they experience inequality and oppression (Wilkinson, 1998).

Social work is a field of study that has (at its roots) a focus on racial justice and empowerment. Although there is a significant focus on this within social work education programs and within undergraduate classrooms (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Jani, 2011; Teasley, et al., 2014) data demonstrate that we, as social work educators, are not closing the gap between white students and students of color in our social work programs. Since schools of social work serve as the sentinels of the profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who enter and successfully complete a social work degree. If the social work profession is to adhere to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of its student body.

Empowered learners are more motivated to perform classroom tasks, find the required tasks more meaningful, feel more competent in the classroom, and feel they have an impact on their learning process (Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer, 2009). One could conjecture that fewer students of color would be dropping out of BSW programs if they were empowered learners.
EXAMINING INFLUENCING FACTORS

Perhaps it is the case that we as social work educators are not empowering our students in the classroom or in our programs overall. This writer’s banded dissertation will explore ways in which social work programs are and are not providing opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners to the degree that they intend to persist in their social work education endeavors.

Summary of Banded Dissertation Products

Each of the three related components of this banded dissertation focuses on identifying factors that influence BSW students’ intent to persist through the completion of their degree, with particular focus on students of color. The first product, entitled “BSW Students’ Intent to Persist Through Conclusion of Degree: Influencing Factors” is a conceptual article that, through the lens of empowerment theory, presents a framework for understanding the varied and nuanced influencing factors contributing to BSW students’ intent to persist based on a review of the professional literature. Additionally, the article explores ways in which social work education programs can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners to the degree that they intend to persist in their social work education endeavors.

The second product of this banded dissertation is an empirical paper entitled “Examining Differences: Perceptions of Implicit Curriculum by Students of Color and White Students.” This article presents the results of cross-sectional qualitative research study based on a 2017 survey of 247 BSW students at a mid-size Midwestern university in the United States. This study sought to expand the understanding of how BSW students from different racial/ethnic groupings differed in their views concerning the presence of certain domains of implicit curriculum as these related to their intent to persist through completion of their degree. Findings from this study
suggest no difference between students of color and their white counterparts in terms of their intent to persist. However, with regard to student/faculty interaction, Caucasian students reported descriptively on average, interaction with social work faculty at a greater frequency than did students of color.

The third and final component of this banded dissertation provides an overview of a peer-reviewed workshop presentation at the annual Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD) conference held in Atlanta, GA, March 14–18, 2018. Using elements of Empowerment Theory and focusing on implicit curriculum as a methodology through which retention can be addressed, the first part of the presentation focused on this author and workshop participants identifying ways to increase retention rates of BSW students of color. During the second part of the presentation this author engaged workshop participants in conversation and collaboration concerning ideas about empowering and retaining BSW students of color in their individual social work education programs.

**Discussion**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) 86% of licensed social workers are white. As the U.S. population becomes more diverse it is imperative that the social work profession examine how the mostly Caucasian make-up of the profession will impact our work with a more diverse client population. One component of this examination is to address the low percentage of BSW degrees awarded to students of color, as compared to Caucasian students (CSWE, 2016).

The research of this banded dissertation adds to the body of work in the area of how empowering students through implicit curriculum influences BSW students’ intent to persist through the completion of their degree. Based on literature focusing on differences among student ethnic groups and intent to persist (Arnold, 1999; Bowie & Hancock, 2000; Bowman &
Denson, 2014; Hausmann, Schofield & Woods, 2007; Morrow & Ackerman, 2012), we should see distinctions in the data from this study. However, the results did not suggest that differences exist between ethnic groups, at least for students at the institution used in this study. Both groups of students (Caucasian students and students of color) in this BSW program reported an intent to persist through the completion of their degree at the same rate, and appeared to experience influencing factors (implicit curriculum) similarly in all areas but one. This area was regarding student/faculty interaction, where Caucasian students reported descriptively on average, interaction with social work faculty at a greater frequency than did students of color. However, at least on the surface, this level of interaction did not appear to alter the degree to which students planned to complete their BSW education. If, as Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer (2009) assert, empowered learners are more motivated to perform and feel more competent in the classroom, the results of this study suggest students at this institution feel empowered in ways that contribute to their desire to persist through the completion of their BSW degree.

While it is certainly justifiable to acknowledge the successful program elements that contribute to these similarities in the institution used for this study, perhaps examining underlying factors would reveal undiscovered differences between student ethnic groups. It is this writer’s belief that latent relations among variables could be identified to develop possible conceptual frameworks that would lead to a more critical understanding of this topic.

**Implications for Social Work Education**

Students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). Identifying ways to empower students of color will not
only bring social work’s professional values and ethics into our BSW classrooms, it will potentially increase the graduation rates of students of color from BSW programs. Subsequently, addressing this issue will also influence the lack of practicing social workers of color in our increasingly diverse U.S. population.

As BSW programs continue to work toward integrating implicit curriculum as an essential feature of their curriculum, social work faculty serving as student advisors may want to consider approaching advising and mentoring duties in ways that are consistent with social work practice. Rather than employing the same advising model and practices for each student, it is critical that social work education programs empower students through advising and mentoring that makes use of the student’s unique strengths while also considering their needs. It is conjectured that in doing so there will be an increase in interactions between students of color and social work faculty. Academic advising models such as proactive, inquiry based, and developmental advising (versus prescriptive advising) encourage faculty to become involved with the student from both academic and holistic perspectives (Walters, 2016). When working through a more democratic relationship between student and advisor, the student’s distinctive life experiences can be used to cultivate cultural and social capital for the student.

If other BSW programs are to expect similar positive results (as compared to the results of the study reported on in Product 2 of this banded dissertation) with regard students’ perception of implicit curriculum, and high levels of intent to persist, a fundamental element of these programs should be the empowerment of students. When students’ strengths and interests are incorporated into implicit curriculum design and application, such as involvement in the field education assignment process, and student advising, social work students see themselves as valuable components of the program’s culture. Ultimately it is through this lens of value that
students strengthen their professional identities and competencies and choose to persist through the completion of their degree.

**Implications for Future Research**

The study related to Product 2 examined factors related to students’ intent to persist through completion of their degree. Additionally, the perception of student-faculty interactions as they related to support and mentoring, and perception of social work classroom inclusion and experience were explored. Students across racial/ethnic groups in the institution involved in the study reported positive experiences of implicit curriculum descriptively, and when using independent t-tests across statistical approaches. Additionally, there were no significant differences regarding students’ intent to persist through completion of their BSW degree. The one area where a significant difference was found between student ethnic groups concerned the frequency with which students interacted with social work faculty. Social work students of color at this institution had fewer interactions with social work faculty than did their Caucasian counterparts. Because student-faculty interaction is one element of implicit curriculum that is known to influence persistence through completion of degree, it will be necessary to identify ways to address this discrepancy if social work education programs are to strengthen their ethnically diverse student population.

Future studies should include a larger and more diverse demographic base of BSW students, as the participant group in the empirical portion of this banded dissertation was limited. It would be constructive to include BSW students from other universities across the U.S. in order to expand the work of this research. A closer analysis of the latent factors among variables that may influence those student decisions as these views differ between racial and ethnic student groups should be explored as a way to provide a more critical understanding of the topic.
Additionally, focus groups could be used to enhance current findings as they can draw upon respondents' experiences, feelings, attitudes, reactions, and beliefs in ways that were not possible through the cross-sectional survey method used for this banded dissertation.


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BSW Students’ Intent to Persist Through Conclusion of Degree: Influencing Factors

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Abstract

Students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). Through the lens of empowerment theory, this article presents a conceptual framework for understanding the varied and nuanced influencing factors contributing to BSW students’ intent to persist. This article will explore ways in which social work education programs can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners to the degree that they intend to persist in their social work education endeavors. Findings will inform post matriculation activities such as academic advising, and field-practicum.

*Key Words:* Social work education, intent to persist, retention, students of color, ethnicity
BSW Students’ Intent to Persist Through Completion of Degree: Influencing Factors

The social work profession is facing a major challenge; attempting to diversify its professional body. Especially with regard to race, the social work profession is significantly less diverse than the U.S. population (Bowie, Cherry & Wooding, 2005; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Respecting diversity is a core principle in social work education. Since 1971, as a way to address racial disparities within schools of social work, the CSWE has required each accredited program “…to demonstrate the special efforts it is making to enrich its program by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty and staff” (CSWE, 1971). In citing revisions made in the 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, & Sowbel (2011) assert that the CSWE further integrated standards regarding nondiscrimination as a way to, in part, address issues of retaining underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. However, concerns remain about social work education’s ability to secure and enhance the number of students of color in their programs. Since schools of social work serve as the sentinel of the profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who enter and successfully complete a social work degree. One primary cause for concern results from the inconsistency between the number of people of color requiring social services and the number of people of color going into the social work profession. This discrepancy may result in the reduction of quality and quantity of services available to persons of color. If the social work profession is to adhere to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of its student body.

Even with CSWE requirements in place, students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016),
40.6% of full-time undergraduate students are from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). While these statistics represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, these students continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016). Subsequently, it is the processes related to students’ intent to persist that must be explored if we are to understand why students of color are leaving social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts. For the purposes of this article intent to persist will be defined as students’ expressed intention to continue their enrollment status with their current academic institution’s Bachelor of Social Work program. Empowering students in BSW programs is a critical role for social work educators. It is important to examine social work educators’ experience in this role, especially as they work with students of color because it is important that we close the gap between white students and students of color in our social work programs.

**Theoretical Framework**

Reasons for cultivating and securing a more balanced composition of a BSW student body will be offered through the lens of empowerment theory. Empowerment theory emerged in its current form in the 1980’s (Wilkinson, 1998). Since then several variations of the theory have been offered as a way to understand oppressed populations, and the process by which empowerment is achieved (Carr, 2003; Gutierrez, et al., 1998; & Parsons, 1991). Empowerment theory recognizes that all people have skills, understanding and ability. Views underscored by empowerment theory give priority to views of diverse service users. Since service users are often oppressed, disadvantaged, and marginalized, empowerment views of knowledge argue that the
understanding of service users’ (i.e. social work students) situation should be valued within the context of direct social work practice and education (Payne, 2005).

Empowerment is, first and foremost, about power; changing power dynamics in favor of those who previously exercised little power over their own lives (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990). Simon (1994) defines power in two ways: control over one’s resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self), and control over one’s ideology (beliefs, values, and attitudes). If power means control, then empowerment is the gaining of control. Embedded within this definition is the assumption that empowerment can mean different things to different people and vary in form across settings and time (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990).

Common and major assumptions of the theory include:

- Individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power both to define and act upon them
- All people possess strengths on which they can build
- People should be assisted to empower themselves
- People who share commonalities need each other to attain empowerment
- Cultivating resources, strategies and competencies to attain personal and collective goals is essential (Keiffer, 1984; Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Lee, 2001).

Considered individually and collectively, these assumptions serve to offer ways to “measure the construct in different contexts, to study empowering processes, and to distinguish empowerment from other constructs such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control” (Zimmerman, 1990, p. 43). Empowering processes for individuals might include participation in
community organizations, including the classroom. Empowering processes at the
community/classroom level might include collective decision making and shared leadership. At
both levels, the contextual theory of empowerment presents the transition from powerless to
more control in life as a change in both human activity and the social structure. Tenets of the
framework that will be employed to understand intent to persist are: “individuals are assumed to
understand their own needs better than anyone else, and therefore should have the power to
define and act upon them; all people possess strengths on which they can build; empowerment is
a lifelong endeavor; and personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping
effectively” (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).

Empowered learners are more motivated to perform classroom tasks, find the required
tasks more meaningful, feel more competent in the classroom, and feel they have an impact on
their learning process (Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer, 2009). Empowered students of color
will less likely drop out of BSW programs because they will become more aware of and use their
own personal resources, overcome obstacles in meeting their needs and aspirations, have their
voices heard in decision-making, and be able to challenge situations where they experience
inequality (Wilkerson, 1998). Since schools of social work serve as the sentinel of the
profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who
enter and successfully complete a social work degree. If the social work profession is to adhere
to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced
composition of its student body.

The core assumptions of this theory implicitly and explicitly align with social work
professional values. Additionally, the use of this theory allows for adherence to social work
ethical guidelines. In this conceptual paper, the writer primarily focuses on self-determination
principles as they relate to intent to persist for social work students. This article will explore ways in which social work programs can provide opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners to the degree that they intend to persist in their social work education endeavors.

**Purpose of Article**

The purpose of this article is to explore the problem of attrition as a major obstacle in graduating racially and ethnically diverse students. Secondly, the article attempts to offer ideas about how to engage social work students of color in ways that positively influence their intent to persist through their social work education.

**Literature Review**

In order to gain an understanding of what is impacting the lack of diversity in the number of graduating social work students, it is important to review previous studies found in the review of the literature. Understanding how universities are being intentional about maintaining a diverse social work student population, and what influences students to remain in social work programs provides perspective for consideration as the literature is reviewed.

**Graduate Rates & Ethnicity**

By 2025, the total undergraduate enrollment in the U.S. is projected to increase from the current approximate 16 million to 19.8 million students (NCES, 2016). Although enrollments are increasing, retention and graduation rates have remained relatively low. At public Ph.D. granting institutions in the U.S., approximately 21% of first-year undergraduate college students do not return for their sophomore year (ACT, 2016). Graduation rates are even more disconcerting. Only about 51% of college students in the U.S. complete their college degree within five years (ACT, 2016). While approximately 35 percent of college students leave university due to
academic reasons, the remaining 65 percent depart voluntarily for non-academic reasons (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012).

Factoring in race when considering retention and graduation rates generates additional concerns. According to federal data, between 1995 and 2015 the percentage of white 25-29-year-olds attaining bachelor’s degrees rose from 29 to 43 percent, a gain of 14 percentage points. But among black students, the percentage with bachelor’s degrees rose by only six points, from 15 to 21 percent, and for Hispanics it rose seven points, from 9 to 16 percent (NCES, 2016). Research studies on retention have been primarily directed toward traditional college students: White, middle-class, recent high school graduates. Clark, H., Garza, L., & Hipple, L. (2003) write that because most of the existing research findings on attrition and retention are based on “typical” students at traditional, residential universities, research is needed to examine the experiences of nontraditional students, including those of diverse ethnicity. As the number of social services clients who are poor and/or of color increases, the need for skilled social workers who are sensitive to special populations also grows. Influencing factors impacting students’ decisions to persist at a university, and what institutions can do to retain their students are critical elements when addressing attrition.

**Intent to Persist**

Authors have examined factors influencing social work career choice (Bowie at al., 2005; Butler, 1990; Limb & Organista, 2003; Rubin & Johnson, 1984). However, the majority of these studies have focused on MSW students, rather than BSW students. More specifically, these studies largely focus on what brings social work students into the field (e.g. preexisting altruistic values, personal interaction with a social worker), or what contributes to career choice of African American social work students, post-graduation (e.g. increase income, advance career, Bowie &
Hancock, 2000). For example, Biggerstaff (2000) argues that students who make early social work career choices, and those who indicate that social work was their first career choice appear to be more closely aligned with the central mission of the profession. Subsequently she contends that introduction to the profession should ideally begin during the first year of a student’s undergraduate studies. Dillon (2011) stresses the importance of using biographical questionnaires during the application process, especially with underrepresented minority student groups, in order to understand the candidate’s social context. The author argues that recognizing potential students’ world-view will better equip social work education administrators to consider how candidates’ life experiences could positively contribute to their social work education and practice. Dillon (2011) also argues for the use of interviewers from a wide range of communities and backgrounds as a way to minimize the potential for ethnocentricity, racial bias, and eurocentricity when determining admission.

Several scholars have investigated recruitment of minority social work students (Dillon, 2011; Enoch, 1988; & Raber, et al., 1998). For example, when discussing career choice by African American social workers Bowie and Hancock (2000) suggest that education programs should incorporate strategies that underscore professional development opportunities, and self-actualization in the social work profession. However, among these studies reviewed, very few have directly examined the retention of BSW students, and of those studies, none have specifically examined intent to persist as a factor related to the retention of students of color. Retention rates commonly measure the percentage of undergraduate students who re-enroll the next academic year (Marrow, J. A. & Ackerman, M.E., 2012). The primary reason that retention rates, along with graduation rates are important is that retention rates are perceived as indicators of academic quality and student access (Arnold, 1999). However, “persistence, a student’s
continuation behavior leading to a desired goal, helps describe processes related to student goal achievement” (Arnold, 1999, p. 1).

Researchers outside of social work programs have found focusing on intent to persist to be valuable in determining how their programs influence students’ behavior related to persistence (Bowman, N.A. & Denson, N., 2014; Wheeless V.E. et al., 2011; & Hausmann L.R.M. et al., 2007). While the extant literature has as one of its themes, recruitment, few have examined the additional tier of concern; the issue of which principle factors influence intention to persist of BSW students, especially those students who could eventually diversify the field. It is the processes related to intent that must be explored if we are to understand why students of color are leaving social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts.

**Influencing Factors**

Three areas of consideration, when evaluating students’ intent to persist, are the roles of institutional culture as it relates to students’ sense of belonging, the degree of student-faculty interaction, and students’ perception of classroom inclusion. Most persistence studies include measures of social and/or academic integration and involvement (Haussman, et al., 2007). However, the perception that one is an accepted member of one’s academic community, or sense of belonging, in distinct from one’s level of involvement with the university community. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) define a student’s sense of belonging as feeling part of the social work program, and propose that perceived cohesion (sense of belonging) consist of students’ sense of morale regarding group membership. Additionally, the authors assert that there is a positive association between students’ sense of belonging and intentions to persist. The affiliation students experience toward their university is an important determinant when evaluating why students may or may not persist at an institution. According to Bowman and Denson (2014)
“student-institution fit is associated with greater college satisfaction and lower social isolation, and fit is indirectly and positively related to intent to persist” (p. 138). A students’ sense of belonging at the program level can be directly influenced by the student’s positive interactions with faculty.

Similarly, Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya (2010) maintain that students who perceive their faculty members as being approachable, respectful and available are more likely to report being confident in their academic skills. Komarraju et al. (2010) indicate that student-faculty interactions are “associated with increases in motivation, career aspirations, and persistence” (p. 339). Crisp (2009) discusses the relationship between students and faculty through the lens of mentoring and moving beyond the formal instruction in the classroom. Campbell and Campbell (1997) report that the amount of mentoring interaction between student and faculty is positively correlated with retention (which is closely linked to persistence). Student/faculty interaction can be defined as interaction outside of formal class time. This includes interactions prior to the start of class, following the end of class, during faculty office-hours, email communication, and/or hallway conversations. While interactions with faculty outside of the classroom are a predictive measure to persistence, so are in-class experiences.

Given the emerging research supporting the link between effective college teaching and student retention (Braxton, J.M., Doyle, W.R. & Jones, W.A., 2013; Tito, 2006/2007), it is important to also consider students’ perception of traditional and virtual classroom inclusion when examining persistence. Academic programs and experiences must be consistent with, and relevant not only to students’ educational and career goals, but also to their cultural experiences. The increasing diversity and changing student demographics of higher education requires reassessment of traditional approaches to teaching, as well as examination of traditional
curricula, goals, teaching strategies, and assessment. Student diversity is not a new phenomenon, and neither is the need for adapting curriculum and instruction to individualized learning. What is new is the increasing numbers and widening range of student difference encountered in the college classroom (Mino, 2004), and the charge to make inclusion the rule rather than the exception. Consequently, exploring social work students’ perception of classroom inclusion is a relevant factor to consider when examining intent to persist.

Although there is a lack of empirical research focusing on how a student’s sense of belonging, the degree of interaction with faculty influence BSW students in general (as compared to other disciplines), or BSW students of color in particular, or students’ perception of classroom inclusion influence intent to persist, it is important to incorporate these concepts into the understanding of the issue. Making an intentional change through teaching and relationships, paying attention to how learning takes place, and putting this into practice are beginning steps toward positive change.

**Discussion and Implications for Teaching, Learning, and Practice**

The main focus of this conceptual paper has been to explore the problem of attrition as a major obstacle in graduating racially and ethnically diverse students, and to offer ideas about how to engage social work students of color in ways that positively influence their intent to persist through their social work education. Three areas of consideration, when evaluating students’ intent to persist, are the roles of institutional culture as it relates to students’ sense of belonging, the degree of student-faculty interaction, and students’ perception of classroom inclusion.

Researchers have found that a sense of belonging is positively associated with academic progress, academic achievement, and intent to persist (Haussmann, 2007; Meeuwisse, Severiens,
& Born, 2010; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). How connected students feel to their institution is an important factor to consider when examining why students may or may not persist at a university. Subsequently faculty who actively work to enhance sense of belong for ethnically diverse students through meaningful interactions, may influence not only the student’s academic engagement but also their persistence toward graduation, an advantage to the students, the institution, and to the social work profession. Finally, it is also necessary to attend to the complex ways in which students experience traditional and virtual classrooms. It is necessary for social work educators to facilitate students’ understanding of “how personal, cultural, and societal values cohere or conflict with core principles of social work” (Bernard, Fairtlough, Fletcher & Ahmet, 2014, p. 1945). Fostering an inclusive learning environment is critical if educators are to not only impact students’ intent to persist, but to prepare social work students for engaging with diverse groups of service users in practice.

As today’s college student-body becomes increasingly diverse, faculty are seeking ways to provide adequate support service to enhance learning and development (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Drawing back to Empowerment Theory as the conceptual framework, it is believed that all students possess strengths on which they can build. Empowered students of color will use their own personal resources, and be able to challenge situations where they experience inequality as a means to increase persistence through degree completion (Wilkerson, 1998). Based on the outcomes of this review of the literature, there are strategies that faculty may follow to strengthen ethnically diverse students’ academic capital, and enhance their intention complete their BSW degrees. Further, Empowerment Theory may be of assistance in encouraging educators to acknowledge the complex interplay between supporting students to challenge situations where they experience inequality, and students’ decision to persist.
We need to know more about the experiences of social work students of color, the ways in which those experiences influence persistence, and more importantly the types of institutional and classroom actions that enhance their success in higher education. This requires joint efforts on the part of students, faculty and administration to alter their pedagogical and curricular practices in ways that empower students to experience learning within the context of self-determination.

Conclusion

There is a pressing need for those of us involved in social work education to develop a more nuanced understanding of the implicit and complex forms of exclusion and inequality many ethnically diverse social work students encounter within their social work programs. Social work educators must be cognizant that not all students perform within equal economic, social, cultural and academic platforms and therefore students develop at different rates and have differing needs and strengths. Ways in which this lack of balance can interfere with students’ empowerment and success should be explored. It is also essential that educators consider the impact of factors such as: the students’ sense of belonging as it relates to both the institution and the social work program; the degree and quality of student-faculty interaction; and students’ perception of inclusivity in social work classrooms on rates of progression through the program and into employment for various groups of students. With the expanding demographics of our society, and consequently the people we serve, retention of students of color remains at the center of social work education.


Examining Differences Between Students of Color and Caucasian Students:

Perceptions of Implicit Curriculum as they Influence Intent to Persist

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Abstract

Students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). Through the lens of empowerment theory, this study sought to expand the understanding of how BSW students from different racial/ethnic groupings differed in their views concerning the presence of certain domains of implicit curriculum which refers to a student’s learning environment. This study responded to the lack of such research by conducting a cross-sectional survey of 247 BSW students at a mid-size Midwestern university in the United States. With the exception of the frequency students across racial groups interacted with social work faculty outside of the classroom, responses were similar across ethnic groups. Students from all ethnic groups surveyed reported positive implicit curriculum experiences through their participation in this social work education program. With regard to student/faculty interaction, Caucasian students reported descriptively on average, interaction with social work faculty at a greater frequency than did students of color. Findings have the potential to inform post matriculation activities such as academic advising, and field-practicum.

Key Words: Social work education, intent to persist, retention, implicit curriculum, students of color, ethnicity
Examining Differences:

Perceptions of Implicit Curriculum by Students of Color and White Students

The social work profession is facing a major challenge: attempting to diversify its professional body. Regarding race, the social work profession is significantly less diverse than the U.S. population (Bowie, Cherry, & Wooding, 2005; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Respecting diversity is a core principle in social work education. Since 1971, to address racial disparities within schools of social work, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has required each accredited program “…to demonstrate the special efforts it is making to enrich its program by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty and staff” (CSWE, 1971, p. 17). In citing revisions made in the 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), Jani, Pierce, Ortiz, and Sowbel (2011) assert that the CSWE further integrated standards regarding nondiscrimination as a way to address issues of retaining underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. However, concerns remain about social work education’s ability to secure and enhance the number of students of color in their programs. Since schools of social work serve as the sentinel of the profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who enter and successfully complete a social work degree. One primary cause for concern results from the inconsistency between the number of people of color requiring social services and the number of people of color going into the social work profession. If the social work profession is to adhere to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of its student body.
Even with CSWE requirements in place, students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), 40.6% of full-time undergraduate students are from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, only 37.4% of the 19,596 Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). While these statistics represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, students of color continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016). Examining approaches to empower students in BSW programs as a way to positively influence intent to persist is critical for social work educators.

Because factors that influence students’ intent to persist are often invisible and obscured in neutrality, it is reasonable to consider elements of implicit curriculum (IC) that may directly impact retention. Implicit curriculum, which refers to a student’s learning environment, has been identified as an essential element of a coordinated professional social work curriculum by the 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The concept of IC recognizes that students absorb material that may or may not be part of the formal course structure. It should be noted that the IC can reinforce the learning objectives of the formal, explicit curriculum: or, it can contradict the explicit curriculum, exposing hypocrisies or inconsistencies between the social work education program’s stated mission and values. However, because social work as a profession has a marked professional culture, the IC is grounded in and reinforces the values, attitudes, and norms specific to social work as a profession. Because social work as a discipline has a specific professional culture, the IC is grounded in and meant to reinforce the values, attitudes, and norms
pertinent to the field of social work. Through implicit curriculum, greater emphasis is now
placed on the educational framework as influencing not only an institution’s mission and goals,
but the social work student’s personal and professional development. Authors examining the
relationship between elements of implicit social work curriculum, and professional identity
through empowerment have discussed how difficult it can be to accurately measure the impact of
IC on values and attitudes (Craig, Iacono, Paceley, Dentato, & Boyle, 2017; Miller, 2014;
Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014; and Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). However, these same
studies point to the positive influences IC can have on social work students’ sense of
empowerment. What appears to be lacking in the literature is a focus on how IC shapes the
professional development of students of color, and successively impacts students’ intent to persist.

This study sought to expand our understanding of how BSW students from various
racial/ethnic groupings differ in their views of the presence of certain IC domains. The IC
categories used in this research were: students’ perception of faculty support/mentoring;
students’ sense of belonging as it relates to the university’s social work program; and students’
perception of their social work classroom experience. If the field of social work education is to
close the retention gap between white social work students and social work students of color, we
as educators can benefit from examining whether elements of IC are perceived differently
between racial/ethnic groups. This knowledge will directly affect how social work education
programs design and implement implicit curriculum policies and procedures to strengthen their
ethnically diverse student population and increase retention rates of those same students.

Theoretical Framework
The framework of empowerment theory was applied to the process of evaluating the impact of implicit curriculum on a BSW study body. Literature in social work and other disciplines was reviewed to identify characteristics of the implicit curriculum that might facilitate students’ professional empowerment. Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014) employed empowerment as the central conceptual framework for predicting and explaining students’ professional empowerment as it is related to potentially empowering characteristics of the social work implicit curriculum. They assert, “Empowerment represents a vital theoretical orientation for social work” (Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014, p. 633), because empowerment influences students’ sense of meaning and identity. Furthermore, elements of empowerment inform the extent to which social work students believe they have the capacity to demonstrate confidence in their social work practice. The tenets of the framework employed for this study are: “individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else, and therefore should have the power to define and act upon them; all people possess strengths on which they can build; empowerment is a lifelong endeavor; and personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively” (Lord & Hutchison, 1993). This study focused on empowerment at the individual level, as well as exploring the organizational processes within social work education programs that facilitate individual empowerment.

Empowerment is about power; principally about changing power dynamics in favor of those who previously employed little power within their own lives. Individual empowerment is characterized as a dialectical relationship between an individual’s own attributes, in conjunction with the organizational processes, and the context in which they may develop this sense of empowerment (Itzhaky & York, 2002; Speer, Jackson & Peterson, 2001). Simon (1994) defines power as having two central aspects; “control over resources (physical, human, intellectual,
financial, and the self), and control over ideology (beliefs, values, and attitudes)” (p. 11). If power means control, then empowerment is the gaining of control. Embedded within this definition is the assumption that empowerment can mean different things to different people and vary in form across settings and time (Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990).

Empowered learners are more motivated to perform classroom tasks, find the required tasks more meaningful, feel more competent in the classroom, and feel they have an impact on their learning process (Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer, 2009). Forming a strong professional identity through empowerment early in a student’s academic career has been shown to facilitate the successful transition to professional practice, motivating and instilling confidence in the beginning practitioner (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard & Day, 2010). One could conjecture that fewer students of color would be dropping out of BSW programs if they were empowered learners. Perhaps it is the case that we as social work educators are not empowering our students in the classrooms or in our programs overall. This project explored ways in which one particular BSW program was or was not providing opportunities, through implicit curriculum, for students to demonstrate that they were motivated and competent learners to the degree that they had a personal and professional efficacy.

**Literature Review**

**Retention in Higher Education**

By 2025, the total undergraduate enrollment in the United States is projected to increase from the current approximately 16 million to 19.8 million students (NCES, 2016). Although enrollments are increasing, retention and graduation rates have remained relatively low. At public Ph.D. granting institutions in the United States, roughly 21% of first-year undergraduate college students do not return for their sophomore year (ACT, 2016). Graduation rates are even
more disconcerting. Only about 51% of college students in the U.S. complete their college degree within five years (ACT, 2016). While nearly 35 percent of college students leave university due to academic reasons, the remaining 65 percent of student who leave depart voluntarily for non-academic reasons (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012).

**Graduate rates & ethnicity.** When race is factored into the consideration of retention and graduation rates additional concerns arise. According to federal data, between 1995 and 2015 the percentage of white 25-29-year-olds attaining bachelor’s degrees rose from 29 to 43 percent, a gain of 14 percentage points. But among black students, the percentage with bachelor’s degrees rose by only six points, from 15 to 21 percent, and for Hispanics it rose seven points, from 9 to 16 percent (NCES, 2016).

**Intent to persist.** Many studies have looked at factors influencing social work career choice (Bowie, Cherry, & Wooding, 2005; Butler, 1990; Limb & Organista, 2003; Rubin & Johnson, 1984). However, the majority of these studies have focused on MSW students, rather than BSW students. More specifically, these studies largely contribute to what brings social work students into the field (e.g. preexisting altruistic values, personal interaction with a social worker), or what contributes to the career choice of African American social work students, post-graduation (e.g. increase income, advance career) (Bowie & Hancock, 2000). For example, Biggerstaff (2000) argues that students who make early social work career choices, and those who indicate that social work was their first career choice appear to be more closely aligned with the central mission of the profession. Subsequently she contends that introduction to the profession should ideally begin during the first year of a student’s undergraduate studies.

Studies outside of social work programs have found that focusing on intent to persist to be valuable in determining how their programs influence students’ behavior related to
While the extant literature has as one of its themes, recruitment, few have examined the additional tier of concern. That being the issue of which principle factors influence intention to persist of BSW students, especially those students who could eventually diversify the field. It is the processes related to intent that must be explored if we are to understand why students of color are leaving social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts.

Several studies have investigated recruitment of minority social work students (Dillon, 2011; Enoch, 1988; Raber, Tebb, & Berg-Weger, 1998). For example, when discussing career choice by African American social workers Bowie and Hancock (2000) suggest that education programs should incorporate strategies that underscore professional development opportunities, and self-actualization in the social work profession. However, among the studies reviewed, very few have directly examined the retention of BSW students. Of those studies, none have specifically examined intent to persist as a factor related to the retention of students of color.

Retention rates commonly measure the percentage of undergraduate students who re-enroll the next academic year (Marrow & Ackerman, 2012). The fundamental reason retention rates, along with graduation rates are meaningful is that retention rates are perceived as indicators of academic quality and students engagement (Arnold, 1999). However, “persistence, a student’s continuation behavior leading to a desired goal, helps describe processes related to student goal achievement” (Arnold, 1999, p. 1).

Another area of consideration when evaluating students’ intent to persist, is the roles of institutional culture and student-faculty interaction, both included among elements of implicit curriculum. How connected students feel to their university is an important determinant when
evaluating why students may or may not persist at an institution. According to Bowman and Denson (2014) “student-institution fit is associated with greater college satisfaction and lower social isolation, and fit is indirectly and positively related to intent to persist” (p. 138). Similarly, Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya (2010) maintain that students who perceive their faculty members as being approachable, respectful and available are more likely to report being confident in their academic skills. The authors go on to assert that student-faculty interactions are “associated with increases in motivation, career aspirations, and persistence” (p. 339). Although there is a lack of research on how either of these factors influence BSW students in general, or BSW students of color in particular it is important to incorporate these concepts into this study.

**Intent to persist in social work education.** Social work as a profession is facing a major challenge in terms of attempting to retain a diversified student body, and subsequently its professional body. Especially with regard to race, the social work profession is significantly less diverse than the U.S. population (Bowie, Cherry & Wooding, 2005; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Respect for diversity is a core principle in social work education. Since 1971, as a way to address racial disparities within schools of social work, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has required each accredited program “…to demonstrate the special efforts it is making to enrich its program by providing racial and cultural diversity in its student body, faculty and staff” (CSWE, 1971). In citing revisions made in the 2008 Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), Jani et al. (2011) assert that the CSWE further integrated standards regarding nondiscrimination to address issues of retaining underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. However, concerns remain about social work education’s ability to secure and enhance the number of students of color in their programs.
Even with these requirements in place, students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), 40.6% of full-time undergraduate students are from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). While these statistics represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, they continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016).

A significant obstacle that needs to be addressed is attrition related to graduating ethnically diverse students from social work undergraduate programs. It is the processes related to intent that must be explored if we are to understand why students of color are leaving social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts.

**Historical Context of Implicit Curriculum**

Social work educators are not the first to operationalize implicit curriculum into the structure of their programs. According to Jackson (as cited in Bogo & Wayne, 2013), these ideas, originally developed from observations in elementary school education, have been present in education literature for 50 years. In addition to education, the concepts of implicit curriculum have long been recognized as an element of professional education and training across disciplines including medicine, nursing, and other health-related fields (Balmer, Master, Richards, & Giardino, 2009; Bennett, Lockyer, Mann, Batty, LaForet, Rethans and Silver, 2004; Cribb & Bignold, 1999; Wear & Castellani, 2000). Descriptions of IC include the climate, culture, and values that make up a hidden or unseen learning environment that may complement or contradict the content of a program’s explicit curriculum (Peterson & Deal, 2002; Rennert-Ariev, 2008; Wren, 1999). The fundamental theme in this literature is that the implicit
curriculum is expressed through institutional policies, the physical environment, and human and interpersonal experiences with personnel involved in students’ education, including course instructors in the classroom, and clinical instructors in practice settings. Eisner (2002) captures the fundamental significance of IC by stating:

The implicit curriculum of the school is what it teaches because of the kind of place it is. And the school is that kind of place through the ancillary consequences of various approaches to teaching, by the kind of reward system that it uses, by the organizational structure it employs to sustain its existence, by the physical characteristics of the school plant, and by the furniture it uses and the surroundings it creates. These characteristics constitute some of the dominant components of the school’s implicit curriculum. Although these features are seldom publicly announced, they are intuitively recognized by parents, students, and teachers. And because they are salient and pervasive features of schooling, what they teach may be among the most important lessons a [student] learns. (p. 97).

**Implicit Curriculum in Social Work Education.** The implicit curriculum (IC), which refers to a student’s learning environment, has been identified as an essential feature of an integrated professional social work curriculum by the 2008 and 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). IC is considered distinct from other central curricular elements specified by the EPAS. Other features involve the program mission and goals, explicit curriculum (i.e., courses and field experiences, core competencies), and assessment strategies. Together, the characteristics of a curriculum may shape the future of the social work profession by affecting the educational experience, the structure of knowledge
dissemination, and the competencies of potential leaders in professional and broader community contexts.

As Bogo and Wayne (2013) explain, the EPAS maintains that classroom and field practicum are of equal importance within the social work curriculum, each contributing to the development of requisite competencies or professional practice. Accordingly, the classroom itself can be thought of in the same context as a field setting; as a place where students are assisted in engaging in behaviors that reflect the integration of the social work profession’s theory, values, and skills. Moreover, an awareness of the role of the IC in social work education supports an educational environment that is consistent with “the values of the profession and mission, goals, and contexts of the program” (CSWE, 2015, p. 14). The 2008 and 2015 EPAS both promote the view of students as learners embedded in an environment that supports transparency, human interchange, and the promotion of social work values (CSWE, 2008; 2015).

**Implicit Curriculum and Diversity.** Studies support that racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other forms of diversity enhance students’ academic experiences by providing a rich environment for learning and for preparation to live in a diverse world (Dillon, 2011; Hurtado, 2007; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). However, as it was noted, statistics represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs. These students continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016). Institutions that lack diversity create challenges for non-White students, who may require additional supportive services in order to feel a sense of belonging (Jani et al., 2011). Studies have shown that students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds often perceive the climate of a campus (as developed through implicit curriculum) differently than their White, non-Latino counterparts (Craig et al, 2017; Cabrera & Nora, 1994).
Within the context of the IC, the 2015 EPAS Accreditation Standard 3.0 requires schools of social work to specify efforts to make the learning environment a space in which diverse identities are included and respected (CSWE, 2015). Additionally, schools must explain the ways in which these efforts contribute to an inclusive and supportive environment. Furthermore, schools are required to explain their plans for continued improvements to the learning environment that supports diverse identities (CSWE, 2015). More specifically, under the 2015 EPAS schools of social work must identify which characteristics of the IC they will assess, and conduct these evaluations regularly.

**Assessment of Implicit Curriculum.** Within the field of social work education, the assessment of IC is in its infancy, with a dearth of published research on the topic. Despite the 2015 EPAS expectation that schools of social work provide ongoing evidence of their collection and analysis of data related to IC, there is no standard set of measurements or assessment tools to facilitate this process. Petracchi and Zastrow (2010) offered several options for assessment tools, such as student exit surveys and course evaluations. Grady, Powers, Despard, & Naylor (2011) piloted an Implicit Factors Survey (IFS) with 64 graduating Master of Social Work (MSW) students that examined their perceptions of four components of an implicit curriculum, as specified by the CSWE evaluation standards: community, diversity, faculty advising, and support services. Their results described student satisfaction with these program features and identified, from open-ended responses, factors that contributed to students’ positive or negative perceptions. The study was a pilot, its scales were not empirically tested for reliability or validity, and no relationships between implicit factors and student outcomes were assessed. Peterson et al., (2014) evaluated measures and tested a path model developed by the authors that included perceptions of characteristics of IC (i.e., faculty and staff diversity, supportive faculty, and access to
information) and mediating variables (i.e., participation, sense of community, and feeling valued by the school) as predictors of professional empowerment. Their results were consistent with prior work identifying opportunity role structure as a key empowering characteristic of learning environments in higher education. No previous research in social work has examined or measured how features of an implicit curriculum might shape students’ professional empowerment as it relates to students’ race and ethnicity.

Methods

This study sought to highlight ways in which messages of the IC are perceived differently by various student groups. Further, it sought to contribute to the empirical literature that focuses on implicit curriculum in social work education as it relates to professional empowerment. Specifically, it intended to explore dissimilar perceptions of IC on the basis of students’ race and ethnicity. Since no instrument existed that measures BSW students’ intent to persist, or BSW students’ perceptions of IC implementation, the author constructed the BSW Student Intent to Persist (BSWSIP) questionnaire by integrating items from other validated surveys. The BSWSIP questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative purposes of this study. In addition to self-developed questions, this author incorporated items from Bollen and Hoyle’s (1990) “Sense of Belonging” subscale, and Crisp’s (2009) “Good Faculty Practice” scale. Additionally, exploratory, open-ended questions were included in three sections as a way to capture meaningful information to supplement the understanding of how IC is perceived by various groupings of social work students. It should be noted that the initial aim of this study was to explore BSW students’ intent to persist through the completion of their undergraduate degrees by race and ethnicity, which speaks to the title of the questionnaire. However, since fewer than 1% of the respondents indicated that they did not plan to persist through the completion of their
degree, and the categories included in the questionnaire speak to areas of IC, this author shifted the emphasis of the data analysis to focus on students’ perceptions of how elements of IC are implemented.

**Study Participants**

Participants included 247 out of approximately 325 potential Bachelor of Social Work Students from a mid-size, Midwestern, public university enrolled as of January 2017. Students had declared social work as their major, but had not been admitted to the social work major through the department’s formal admissions process. In an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, participants ranged from sophomore to senior level students, and were enrolled in at least one of the nine core BSW social work courses which included: Social Work Practice I, II, and III; Human Behavior in the Social Environment I and II; Social Welfare Policy I and II; Social Work Research; and Integrative Social Work Senior Seminar. Procedures, including informed consent, outlined by the University’s institutional review board (IRB) were followed. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Females represent approximately 90% of BSW students at this institution. With regard to African American and Hispanic students, this Department of Social Work is more diverse than the University’s general student profile. Table 1 summarizes the ethnic/racial profile of students in the social work program compared with the university.

Table 1

*Ethnic/Racial Profile of BSW Students (reported in percentages)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicities</th>
<th>Social Work Program</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hispanic
Hawaiian/Pacific Is
Caucasian
Multi-racial
International
Canadian
Not reported

5.5
0.0
66.1
1.8
0
0
7.8

3.68
0.04
70.06
1.74
9.12
0.18
5.92


Data Collection

Because this research was not deemed sensitive or identifiable by the IRB, it was considered less than minimal risk to participants and subsequently was exempt from full board review protocols. Questionnaires were distributed in class by full-time faculty members who taught core social work courses during the winter semester, 2017. As all core courses met at least once per week, a one-week period in March 2017 was determined for the in-class distribution of the questionnaire. For those courses included in the study but taught by the Primary Investigator, conflicts of interests were avoided by the questionnaire being administered by an independent third party from the social work department.

Measures and instruments. The BSWSIP questionnaire included five sections, with a total of twenty-three questions. The first section requested demographic information which included respondents’ current GPA, class level, gender, age, racial/ethnic identification, socio-economic status, and college general level.

The second section of the instrument included four, five-point Likert-scale items (strongly agree to strongly disagree) which addressed the student’s interaction with social work faculty. Crisp (2009) discusses the relationship between students and faculty through the lens of mentoring and moving beyond the formal instruction in the classroom. Campbell and Campbell
(1997) report that the amount of mentoring interaction between student and faculty is positively correlated with retention (which is closely linked to persistence). Subsequently, this author included questions from Crisp’s (2009) “Good Faculty Practice” scale as a way to measure students’ interaction with social work faculty. The questions in this section were: “I have received satisfactory psychological and emotional support from any social work faculty.” “I have received satisfactory social work degree and career support from social work faculty.” “I have received academic subject knowledge support from social work faculty.” and “Social work faculty have served a role model for me.” An additional contingency item, which asked students to indicate the frequency with which they interacted with social work faculty while enrolled in social work courses, was also included. For the purposes of this study, student/faculty interaction was defined as interaction outside of formal class time. This included interactions prior to the start of class, following the end of class, during faculty office-hours, email communication, and/or hallway conversations.

The third section included three Likert-type items (strongly disagree to strongly agree) aimed at identifying the participant’s sense of belonging as feeling part of the social work program. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) propose that perceived cohesion consist of students’ “sense of belonging to a group as well as their sense of morale regarding group membership” (p. 482). Additionally, the authors assert that there is a positive association between students’ sense of belonging and intention to persist. Subsequently, items from Bollen and Hoyle’s (1990) “Sense of Belonging” subscale was used in this section. Items included in this section are: “I feel a sense of belonging to < name of institution >.; I am happy to be at < name of institution >.” and “I see myself as part of the <name of institution > community.”
The fourth section of the questionnaire included seven Likert-type items (strongly disagree to strongly agree) that explored the social work classroom experience. Items included in this section were: “Overall, social work instructors raise new issues and perspectives.” “Overall, social work instructors broaden a variety of experiences shared in the classroom.” “Interactions in social work classes expose students to different perspective.” “Overall, social work instructors allow for a broader variety of experiences to be shared.” “In my social work classes, I am treated with respect by other students.” “In my social work classes, I am treated with respect by the instructors.” and “I feel comfortable participating in class.”

The final section assessed intentions to persist and was comprised of a single item. This single item was “I intend to complete my Bachelor of Social Work degree at < name of institution >.” Although intentions to persist and actual persistence are not equivalent, the use of intention to persist as an outcome in college student persistence research is supported by studies that show a strong relationship between intention to persist and actual persistence (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Miller & Lesik, 2014; and Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015).

**Data collection procedures.** The primary investigator (PI) provided informed consent information, copies of the questionnaire, and information regarding the study in general to the nine full-time faculty members in the social work department who distributed the questionnaire to their classes. Informed consent forms and questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of identified classes, and participants were given 15 minutes to review the consent form, and complete the questionnaire. Students were not asked to sign the consent forms, but rather were informed that by completing and submitting the survey there were giving consent to participate. As a way to avoid duplicate responses, students were invited to complete the questionnaire only if they had not completed it in a previous class. Faculty who administered the survey remained in
the class for the first five minutes to answer questions about the consent form, however they left the classroom while participants completed the anonymous questionnaire. Students were instructed to place their completed or uncompleted forms in a large envelope at the front of the classroom. Faculty returned all envelopes to the PI after each class.

**Data analysis.** Understanding BSW students’ perceptions of implicit curriculum application is a complex issue its influencing factors are varied and nuanced. In an attempt to tease out the principle factors that influence students’ perception of IC implementation, various survey measures, scales, and variables were selected to describe and compare BSW students’ views, as separated by ethnic groups, on IC application as it related to student-faculty interaction, and classroom experience. SPSS (24) was used for all analysis. A bivariate analysis was conducted through independent-samples t-tests in order to assess whether a statistically significant difference existed between student ethnic groups, and perception of implicit curriculum application within this university. The following research questions guided the analysis of this study:

**Research Question 1:** Are there differences between BSW student ethnic groups as to the perceived implementation of implicit curriculum?

**Research Question 2:** Is there a difference between BSW student ethnic groups with regard to the frequency of student/faculty interaction outside of the classroom (e.g. meeting during office hours, hallway discussions, etc.)?

**Research Question 3:** Does the frequency of student/faculty interaction outside of the classroom (e.g. meeting during office hours, hallway discussions, etc.) influence the perception of implicit curriculum application, by student ethnic group?
**Research Question 4:** Are there differences between student ethnic groups as to students’ intent to persist through the completion of their BSW program?

**Results**

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the perceptions of various elements of IC between BSW students of color, and white BSW students at a mid-size university in the Midwest United States. Elements of IC focused on in this study were divided into two main categories as outlined on the survey: faculty support and mentoring (four questions), and social work classroom experience (three questions).

**Sample Description**

Data from 247 survey participants were used for this study. Table 2 illustrates demographics of the sample. Caucasians comprised the majority of BSW students (79.4%), as did female students (87.9). While the majority of Caucasian students and students of color (78.1% and 68.6% respectively) fell into the traditional age-range (18–24 years), it is interesting to note that while only 9.2% of Caucasian students report being 35 years or older, 20.6% of students of color identify as being in the same age group.

Table 2

*Demographic Characteristics of BSW Student Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Caucasian Students</th>
<th>Students Of Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>247</td>
<td>196 (79.4%)</td>
<td>51 (20.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 24 yrs.</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34 yrs.</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 &amp; older</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class Level (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $34,999</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $89,999</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $90,000</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Don’t know”</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Students of Color = Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American/American Indian.

Findings

A summary of responses by percentages, for each question separated by ethnic group (all students, Caucasian students, and students of color) can be found in Table 3. With the exception of the question asking students about the number of times they interacted with social work faculty outside of the classroom, responses appear to be quite similar between ethnic groups.

Regarding student/faculty interaction, Caucasian students reported descriptively on average, interaction with social work faculty at a greater frequency than did students of color.

T-tests were run separately for each of the seven questions. Results of six of the analyses indicated that there was no statistical difference between the scores for students of color, and scores for white students as they related to students’ perception of the application of IC in their BSW program. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the frequency that white students (M = 2.09, SD = 1.12) and students of color (M = 2.47, SD = 1.16) interacted with social work faculty outside of the classroom: t (245) = 2.11, p = .04. The mean for this question represented responses on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = interacted with faculty more than 20 times, 2 = 10–19 times, 3 = 5–9 times, 4 = 1–4 times, and 5 = have never interacted with faculty outside of the classroom. Table 4 presents inferential statistics and exact wording of the items used in the principal axis factor analysis.
The results of this study indicated little difference in the perception of elements of implicit curriculum application among BSW student ethnic groups at this university. Although there was a difference regarding the frequency that students of color and Caucasian students interact with faculty, with Caucasian students reporting more contact with faculty, this difference does not appear to influence students’ perception of IC application. Even without statistically significant differences, implications for social work education programs can be discerned through this study and are discussed below.
Table 3

Responses of BSW Students, by Racial/Ethnic Groupings, to Questions Concerning Implicit Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>All Students (N=247)</th>
<th>Caucasian Students (N=196)</th>
<th>Students Of Color (N=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty Support &amp; Mentoring</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received satisfactory psychological, and emotional support from any social work faculty. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received satisfactory social work degree and professional career support from social work faculty. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have received academic subject knowledge support from social work faculty. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work faculty has served as a role model for me. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of times I have interacted with any social work faculty outside of the classroom (email communication, during faculty office hours, hallway conversations, etc.) while enrolled in social work courses. (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20 times</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 19 times</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Work Classroom Experience

- **In my social work classes I am treated with respect by other students. (%)**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 94.7, 95.4, 94.1
  - Neutral: 3.6, 3.1, 5.9
  - Disagree/Strongly Disagree: 1.2, 1.5, 0.0

- **In my social work classes I am treated with respect by the instructor. (%)**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 96.0, 96.4, 96.1
  - Neutral: 3.6, 3.6, 3.9
  - Disagree/Strongly Disagree: 0.0, 0.0, 0.0

- **I feel comfortable participating in my social work classes. (%)**
  - Strongly Agree/Agree: 93.1, 92.9, 94.0
  - Neutral: 5.7, 5.6, 5.9
  - Disagree/Strongly Disagree: 0.8, 1.0, 0.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Course 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 – 9 times</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 4 times</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

*Items on the BSW Student Intent to Persist (BSWSIP) Questionnaire Included in the Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question &amp; Student Ethnic Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty Support &amp; Mentoring</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I have received satisfactory psychological, and emotional support from any social work faculty.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I have received satisfactory social work degree and professional career support from social work faculty.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I have received academic subject knowledge support from social work faculty.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Social work faculty has served as a role model for me.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The number of times I have interacted with any social work faculty outside of the classroom (email communication, during faculty office hours, hallway conversations, etc.) while enrolled in social work courses.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.036*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Work Classroom Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In my social work classes I am treated with respect by other students.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EXAMINING DIFFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students of Color</th>
<th>Caucasian Students</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In my social work classes I am treated with respect by the instructor.</strong></td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel comfortable participating in my social work classes.</strong></td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* With the exception of the question concerning frequency of student/faculty interaction, these measures were derived from responses to Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). *Significant difference (p<.05) between students of color and Caucasian students on this measure.*
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to build upon the literature regarding BSW student views of implicit curriculum as they relate to intent to persist, as those views differ between racial and ethnic groups. This study responded to the lack of such research by conducting a cross-sectional survey of 247 BSW students at a mid-size Midwestern university in the United States.

The EPAS of CSWE states that implicit curricula in schools of social work are expected, in part, to shape professional competence and character. The two major themes identified in this study, and in the literature, may provide a foundation for how the application of IC may influence the development of professional proficiency in BSW education. Based on literature focusing on IC and differences among student ethnic groups, we should see distinctions in this study in how student ethnic groups perceive the application of IC. However, the results did not suggest that differences exist, at least for students at this institution. Both groups of students (Caucasian students and students of color) in this BSW program appeared to experience elements of the IC in positive ways.

If, as Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer (2009) assert, empowered learners are more motivated to perform and feel more competent in the classroom, the results of this study suggest students at this institution feel empowered in ways that contribute to their desire to persist through the completion of their BSW degree. It may be instructional to consider some elements of this BSW program that may contribute to students across race and ethnic groups reporting positive experiences with regard to the application of implicit curriculum. Class-size for BSW core-classes is small, averaging 20–25 students. This allows more interaction between students and faculty during class, allows faculty to spend more time on student-feedback, and positively contributes to students’ competency development. Additionally, it is the policy of this
social work department that all core classes be taught by full-time social work faculty. Two of the many advantages of this design, over core classes being taught by adjunct lecturers, is that BSW students are more likely to have access to established faculty who have access to on-campus professional and personal development resources. Furthermore, full-time faculty in the social work education program have all expressed a commitment to understanding and incorporating elements of IC, as outlined by CSWE, into their classrooms.

Another characteristic of the BSW program used for this study is that full-time social work faculty are actively involved in coordinating on-campus events relevant to social work practice. Students are frequently encouraged to actively participate in the planning and operationalization of these events. This approach leads to empowerment of the BSW students and speaks to the implicit (and explicit) student-centered culture of the department.

In 2008 the CSWE identified field education as the signature pedagogy of social work (CSWE, 2008). As a result, field education was designated as the assembled, integrative curricular area in which students are socialized to the profession. The majority of BSW practicum programs in the U.S. minimally incorporate student input into field agency assignment (Mallory, Cox & Panos, 2012; Sussman, Bailey, Richardson & Granner, 2014; Wayne, Bogo & Raskin, 2006). The institution through which this study was conducted uses an innovative process to link BSW students with potential field education agencies. Approximately five months prior to the start of students’ practicum representatives from all field agencies meet with potential field students for “field day.” During this three-hour event, students conduct brief informal interviews with as many agency representatives as they wish in order to gather information about the populations served and services provided by the agencies. Additionally, students inquire about learning opportunities offered by the agencies. This information is used
by students and agencies to make decisions concerning proceeding toward formal interviews and ultimately field practicum placements. Admittedly this is a lengthy and involved process, however the significant role students play in determining where they will spend their months-long practicum empowers them in ways a more traditional BSW field placement format does not. The implicit message to students is that they are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else, and are trusted to advocate for themselves in ways others cannot. Furthermore, this experience potentially influences students’ beliefs that they have the capacity to demonstrate confidence in their social work practice and effectively develop their professional identity.

Another characteristic of this BSW program that has perhaps contributed to students’ positive view of IC application across student ethnic groups is the effort put forth by the faculty to create a culture that encourages interactions between students and faculty. Each semester full-time faculty hold a social work major open house event during which faculty reach out to pre-social work majors in ways that highlight aspects of the program and of the profession. Additionally, once per academic year the full-time BSW faculty host a welcoming event for all students who have been accepted into the major. During this event there are formal introductions of faculty, who also serve as academic advisors/mentors, and planned activities that stimulate discussion between faculty and incoming students. Furthermore, standard language is used in all social work course syllabi that encourage students to meet regularly with their advisor to receive support and guidance. Despite these efforts, not all students take advantage of this support and guidance, choosing not to engage with social work faculty members.

Particularly, the results of this study indicate that students of color have less interaction with faculty than do their Caucasian counterparts. This finding is consistent with the literature that focuses on faculty-student interactions in higher education. Heisserer and Parette (2002),
EXAMINING DIFFERENCES

Museus & Neville (2012), Powers, Carlstrom, & Hughey (2014), and Smith (2013) maintain that students of color have less contact with faculty, staff, and advisors in university settings. Especially on predominately white campuses, non-white students face obstacles that may interfere with their willingness to approach and take advantage of supportive services. Even when students of color do reach out to faculty for academic advising or personal guidance, faculty may not be aware of pertinent resources. Moreover, cultural favoritism, which is pervasive in higher education, is a strong contributing factor in when evaluating IC in general, and student-faculty interactions specifically. According to Smith (2013) cultural favoritism occurs “when institutions show preference for students who express similar cultural attitudes, behaviors, norms, and values as the dominant groups in the school” (p. 19). Although this form of partisanship predominately functions at the unconscious level, the rewards that are granted as a result of it increases the racial disparities with regard to the frequency and nature of student-faculty interactions.

Limitations and Implications

Despite efforts to ensure quality in the current investigation, there are at least three limitations that warrant consideration when interpreting the findings. First, the findings are context bound and cannot be generalized to other BSW education programs. It will be important to replicate this study in other similar undergraduate social work programs to determine if these tentative, positive results hold in other settings. Second, with the exception of family income, the study did not consider larger systemic elements (e.g. family cohesion and support, access to community resources) that could influence differences between student ethnic groups as they perceive the application of IC and make decisions concerning intent to persist. This study predominately focused on characteristics within the social work program as a way to explore
student perceptions. It will be important to examine the role of social factors (e.g. family obligations, perceptions of discrimination) to help explain any ethnic differences in persistence and/or experiences with regard to implicit curriculum. A third limitation is related to the methodology of this study. As previously discussed, the questionnaire was distributed in class by social work faculty, and students were given a limited amount of time to complete the survey. Although the Primary Investigator was not present, and students were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, the fact that respondents completed the instrument within a relatively brief allotted time, while in class with other student’s present could have influenced their responses. It is believed that the use of class-time for survey completion was a key factor in the high response rate, however making modifications from an in-class to on-line survey is worth consideration.

As BSW programs continue to work toward integrating IC as an essential feature of their curriculum, social work faculty serving as student advisors may want to consider approaching advising and mentoring duties in ways that are consistent with social work practice. Rather than employing the same advising model and practices for each student, it is critical that social work education programs empower students through advising and mentoring that makes use of the student’s unique strengths while also considering their needs. It is conjectured that in doing so there will be an increase in interactions between students of color and social work faculty. Academic advising models such as proactive, inquiry based, and developmental advising (vs. prescriptive advising) encourage faculty to become involved with the student from both academic and holistic perspectives (Walters, 2016). When working through a more democratic relationship between student and advisor, the student’s distinctive life experiences can be used to cultivate cultural and social capital for the student.
If other BSW programs are to expect similar positive results with regard to student perception of IC and high levels of intent to persist, a fundamental element of these programs should be the empowerment of students. When students’ strengths and interests are incorporated into implicit curriculum design and application, such as involvement in the field education assignment process, social work students see themselves as valuable components of the program’s culture. Ultimately it is through this lens of value that students strengthen their professional identities and competencies.

**Conclusion**

While there has been a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, students of color continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016). This study sought to expand our understanding of how BSW students from various racial/ethnic groupings differ in their views of the presence of certain elements of implicit curriculum as they relate to intent to persist. Specifically, the study examined student perception of student-faculty interaction as it relates to support and mentoring, and perception of social work classroom inclusion and experience. Students across racial/ethnic groups in this institution reported positive experiences of implicit curriculum both descriptively, and when using independent t-tests across statistical approaches. Additionally, there were no significant differences with regard to students’ intent to persist through completion of their BSW degree. The one area where a significant difference was found between student ethnic groups concerned the frequency with which students interacted with social work faculty. Social work students of color at this institution had fewer interactions with social work faculty than did their Caucasian counterparts.
Because student-faculty interaction is one element of IC that is known to influence persistence through completion of degree, it will be necessary to identify ways to address this discrepancy if social work education programs are to strengthen their ethnically diverse student population.
References


Why Aren’t Students of Color Staying in BSW Programs?

Teresa L. Beadlescomb

St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas
Abstract

Data suggests a slight increase over the last several years in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs in the United States, however these students continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (CSWE, 2016). Using elements of Empowerment Theory and focusing on implicit curriculum as a methodology through which retention can be addressed, this presentation focused on identifying ways to increase retention rates of BSW students of color. After identifying factors that can interfere with retaining students of color, presentation participants engaged in a presenter-facilitated small-group activity, and a large-group discussion during which attendees identified elements of their BSW programs that currently address this issue, and selected ways in which they could modify current practices, through components of implicit curriculum, in order to increase retention of BSW students of color. This presentation was given at the annual Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD) conference which was held in Atlanta, GA, March 14 – 18, 2018. The presentation was in workshop format with approximately 60 individuals in attendance.

Keywords: students of color, BSW students, retention, empowerment
Product Three: Conference Presentation

Why Aren’t Students of Color Staying in BSW Programs?

Introduction

Students of color remain underrepresented in social work education programs. According to the Council on Social Work Education (2016), only 37.4% of the 19,596 BSW degrees awarded during the 2014-2015 academic year, were awarded to students from historically underrepresented groups (CSWE, 2016). While data represent a slight increase over time in the enrollment of students of color in BSW programs, these students continue to drop out at higher rates than their white counterparts (ACT, 2016; CSWE, 2016). Since schools of social work serve as the sentinel of the profession, few elements are more crucial to the profession than the diversity of the students who enter and successfully complete a social work degree. If the social work profession is to adhere to its charge of promoting equity and diversity, it must cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of its student body.

Ways to cultivate and secure a more balanced composition of a BSW student body will be offered through the lens of empowerment theory. Empowerment is, first and foremost, about power; changing power dynamics in favor of those who previously exercised little power over their own lives (Lord & Hutchison, 1993; Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990). Tenets of the framework employed during the presentation were: individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else, and therefore should have the power to define and act upon them; all people possess strengths on which they can build; empowerment is a lifelong endeavor; and personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively (Lord & Hutchison, 1993).
Empowered learners are more motivated to perform classroom tasks, find the required tasks more meaningful, feel more competent in the classroom, and feel they have an impact on their learning process (Bowman & Denson, 2014; Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer, 2009). One could conjecture that fewer students of color would be dropping out of BSW programs if they were empowered learners. Perhaps it is the case that we as social work educators are not empowering our students enough in our classrooms or in our programs overall. If we are to understand the underrepresentation of students of color in BSW graduation rates, ways in which social work programs are, and are not providing opportunities for students to demonstrate that they are motivated and competent learners must be explored (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012).

Respecting diversity is a core principle in social work education. Consequently, it is important that we close the retention gap between white students and students of color in our social work education programs. This presentation examined social work educators’ experience in the role of empowering social work students, especially as it relates to working with students of color, through components of implicit curriculum. Through small-group activities and large-group discussion facilitated by this author, elements of existing BSW programs' culture which foster inclusion, engagement, and empowerment of students of color were explored. Additionally, participants identified ways to apply various elements of empowering BSW students of color to student recruitment, student mentoring/advising, and practicum experiences.

Presentation of Content

This presentation was given at the annual Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors (BPD) conference which was held in Atlanta, GA, March 14 – 18, 2018. The presentation was in workshop format, and was conducted on Thursday, March 15 from 11:00am – 12:15pm. This presentation was consistent with the 2018 BPD conference theme “The Grand
Challenges of Political Change” in that it focused on ways to navigate social work education policies and practices in ways that will address the sociopolitical of retention of BSW students of color. The presentation included three main categories: discussion concerning possible contributing factors to the issue, an overview of the elements of Empower Theory as they relate to student retention, and an examination of implicit curriculum in their programs as a methodology for empowering students; a small-group activity during which attendees identified ways to operationalize their ideas about empowering students through implicit curriculum; and a large-group discussion during which the presenter facilitated the sharing of ideas about empowering and retaining BSW students of color.

Slide 1
**Slide 2**

**Agenda For Today**
- Where we are now with regard to students of color in BSW programs
- Why is this topic important?
- What is empowerment and how does it effect students
- What can interfere with students being empowered?
- Empowerment through implicit curriculum
- Preliminary findings from my research
- Small group activity
- How SVSU tries to empower students

*Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University*

**Slide 3**

**Where We Are Now**

- BSW Enrollment
- BSW Degrees Awarded

- Students of Color
- Caucasian Students

*Council on Social Work Education, 2015*
Empowering Students

- Empowerment influences students’ sense of meaning and identity
- Empowered learners are more motivated to perform classroom tasks, find the required tasks more meaningful, feel more competent in the classroom, and feel they have an impact on their learning process (Houser & Brainbridge-Frymeyer, 2009).
- Elements of empowerment inform the extent to which social work students successfully transition to professional practice, and believe they have the capacity to demonstrate confidence in their social work practice (Benner, Surpren, Leonard & Day, 2010; Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014).

Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University
Slide 6

What Can Interfere With Empowering BSW Students of Color In Our Classrooms...

- Theories, frameworks, social welfare policies
- Students being asked to serve as the spokesperson
- Focus on marginalization, oppression, etc., but not on the strengths
- People who look like me...

Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University

Slide 7

Additional Possible Contributions to This Problem

- Cultural institutional factors (e.g. poor funding of public schools, racist practices in social services agencies)
- Higher Education institutional factors (e.g. lack of affirmative action policies, campus culture)
- Explicit curriculum within social work programs (e.g. course syllabi, assignments)
- Implicit curriculum within social work programs (e.g. program cultural values, honoring multiple perspectives, hidden readings)

Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University
Implicit curriculum

- “The educational environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented” (EPAS, 2015 p.10)
- “The climate, culture, and values that make up a hidden or unseen learning environment that may complement or contradict the content of a program’s explicit curriculum” (Peterson & Deal, 2002, Rennert-Ari, 2008).
- “The role of the implicit curriculum in social work education supports an educational environment that is consistent with “the values of the profession and mission, goals, and contexts of the program” (EPAS, 2015, p. 14).

Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University

Slide 9

Do Elements of Empowerment Inform Your Program’s Implicit Curriculum?
Slide 10

**Discussion**

- How have you approached empowering students of color in your program through implicit curriculum?
- What ideas did you come up with today?

_Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University_

Slide 11

**Preliminary Findings of My Research...**

- Interactions between students of color and social work faculty outside of the class
- Correlation between “sense of belonging” and “faculty support” for students of color

_Teresa Beadlescomb – Saginaw Valley State University_
Slide 12

What Saginaw Valley State University is Doing to Empower Students

- Small class sizes
- Core social work classes taught by FT Social Work faculty
- Fulltime faculty serve as student advisors
- Social work major open house
- Field practicum placement structure

Slide 13

References

Summary of Feedback Received from Participants

Between 60 – 65 individuals attended the presentation, however approximately five people left before the workshop concluded. Of the participants who responded to the questions concerning how many years of professional experience they had in social work education, approximately half had ten years or more experience in social work higher education. Fifty-six participants completed the feedback form provided by this writer (see Appendix A). The feedback form is two-sided, however even though participants were directed to turn the form over, not all participants completed the second side. Subsequently, the data presented below (see Table 1) focus on responses located on side one of the feedback document. Questions 1 – 3 pertain to the presenter (e.g., communication, organization, knowledge), and questions 4 – 6 are related to the workshop learning objectives.

Table 1

*Feedback Received from Participants (N=56)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree or Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The instructor was a good communicator</td>
<td>55 (98%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The material was presented in an organized manner</td>
<td>55 (98%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The instructor was knowledgeable on the topic</td>
<td>54 (96%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I was able to identify ways to apply various elements of empowering BSW students of color to student recruitment, student mentoring/advising, and practicum experiences</td>
<td>52 (93%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. I was able to identify elements of existing BSW programs’ culture which foster inclusion, engagement, and empowerment of students of color

6. I gained knowledge about factors contributing to students of color leaving BSW social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N=56</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>52.67 (94%)</td>
<td>2.17 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the feedback received by participants that offered suggestions for improvement one general area emerged from the open-ended responses. Several workshop attendees suggested that more specific examples be given as to which elements of implicit curriculum are most closely associated with empowering students of color. Some participants suggested that this be done by fleshing out the findings of the professional literature in preparation for the conference presentation. Others suggested that this be done by allowing for more time in the workshop for attendees to report out and share further the results of the small-group activity that was a part of the presentation (see Appendix B for activity handout). These suggestions correspond to the data provided in Table 1 in that the lower scores related to knowledge participants gained about moving forward in their own BSW programs.

Of the feedback offered focusing on what the participants most appreciated about the presentation, two general areas surfaced from the open-ended question. The first related to the presenter’s knowledge about the topic and her ability to navigate a sensitive topic with humility, directness, and even humor when appropriate. Several attendees commented on their appreciation of the presenter’s willingness to undertake research about, and discussions
concerning elements that contribute to retaining students of color in their BSW programs. As one participant wrote, “…this opens up the conversation social workers are afraid to have amongst themselves.” The second area that emerged from the open-ended question related to attendee’s appreciation for the time to discuss this topic with peers. Participants valued the time set aside during the workshop for them to discuss and share ideas about which elements of their BSW programs are currently addressing this issue, and what they could be doing differently to increase retention of BSW students of color. Attendees commented on the usefulness of the activity handout (see Appendix B) both during the workshop, and as it could be applied to work they are doing in their individual institutions.

**Critical Analysis of Conference Presentation**

Using elements of Empowerment Theory and focusing on implicit curriculum as a methodology through which it could be addressed, this presentation attempted to identify ways to increase retention rates of BSW students of color. It was important to first provide a general overview of the enrollment vs. graduation rates of BSW students of color in the United States. Following a discussion about this data and its relevance to the social work profession’s ethics, this presenter focused on developing a motive for the presentation by identifying various reasons that the exploration of this topic is important. The presenter guided a discussion that focused on these reasons as they appear inside the classroom, and as a critical element concerning our profession’s racial and ethnic makeup. Finally, as a way to create a framework for the workshop small-group activity, the presenter reviewed the main elements of empowerment as it relates to working with college students, and the basic definition of implicit curriculum through which empowerment can be operationalized.
Approximately 15 minutes was allotted for the small-group activity during which participants were asked to identify examples of empowerment, using a handout distributed to attendees, that could be incorporated into components of implicit curriculum in their own BSW programs. Following this 15-minute period, participants were asked to move into larger groups and share their ideas about empowering students. Finally, the presenter led a large-group discussion focusing on ideas for moving forward in the areas of retaining students of color in our social work education programs.

Overall, the workshop was successful. This presenter was fortunate in that the length of the workshop was 1 ½ hours in length. This allowed for not only a presentation of the current literature and research on the topic, but also for application of this material to workshop participants’ individual institutions. Even so, there didn’t seem to be enough time to adequately share ideas about how to apply elements that can improve retention for a variety of racial and ethnic student groups. As a way to conserve time, this author considered eliminating the section of the presentation that focused on implicit curriculum, but retained it in the event there were attendees unfamiliar with the concepts. In fact, comments provided on the feedback forms supported this in that a number of people indicated that they wished we had spent more time discussing examples of implicit curriculum so that they could have moved through the small-group activity more effectively.

While preparing for the presentation, this author was most anxious about being a Caucasian person, believing she was an expert on a topic concerning people of color. Although the author is genuinely interested in, and is extremely concerned about the retention of BSW students of color, she did not want to be perceived as another white person who tells black and brown people the best way to approach issues related to them. To this end, the author very
deliberately employed components of cultural humility in her presentation development, and performance.

Subsequent to the completion of the presentation, and responses of the attendees this author is encouraged to present at future professional conferences. Additionally, the vibrant and constructive discussions that were a part of the presentation reinforces the need for more research in the area of the retention of BSW students of color.
References


Morrow, J.A. & Ackermann, M.E. (2012). Intention to persist and retention of first-year


Appendix A

Workshop Evaluation Form

Your feedback is critical for the completion of this presenter’s banded dissertation. We would appreciate if you could take a few minutes to share your opinions.

Please return this form to the instructor or organizer at the end of the workshop. Thank you.

Workshop title: Why Aren’t Students of Color Staying in BSW Programs?

Date: March 22, 2018  Instructor: Teresa Beadlescomb, MLS, MSW, LMSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The instructor was a good communicator

2. The material was presented in an organized manner

3. The instructor was knowledgeable on the topic

4. I was able to identify ways to apply various elements of empowering BSW students of color to student recruitment, student mentoring/advising, and practicum experiences.

5. I was able to identify elements of existing BSW programs’ culture which foster inclusion, engagement, and empowerment of students of color.

6. I gained knowledge about factors contributing to students of color leaving BSW social work programs at higher rates than their white counterparts.

7. Given the topic, was this workshop:  ❑ a. Too short  ❑ b. Right length  ❑ c. Too long

8. In your opinion, was this workshop:  ❑ a. Introductory  ❑ b. Intermediate  ❑ c. Advanced
9. What did you most appreciate/enjoy/think was best about the workshop?

10. Any suggestions for improvement?

Your Background:

10. Which of the following best describes your current position?
   - □ a. Tenured Faculty
   - □ d. Field Practice Program Director
   - □ b. Tenure-Track
   - □ e. Field Practice Program Staff
   - □ c. Adjunct/Lecturer
   - □ f. Student (are you: □ Undergrad □ Graduate □ Post-grad
   - □ g. Other:______________________________

11. How many years of professional experience do you have in social work education?
    _______ years

12. Is your BSW program:
   - □ a. Predominately Students of Color
   - □ b. Predominately White Students
   - □ c. An equal balance of Students of Color and White students

Thank you!

Please return this form to the instructor or coordinator at the end of the workshop.
### Appendix B

Conference Workshop Activity Handout

**Merging Elements of Empowerment with Implicit Curriculum**

**As an Approach to Retaining BSW Students of Color**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Implicit Curriculum</th>
<th>Elements of Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recruitment procedures</td>
<td>1. Individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Admission policies and procedures</td>
<td>2. Students should have the power to define and act upon those their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student advising</td>
<td>3. Students possess strengths on which they can build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Retention and termination policies</td>
<td>4. Personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping and developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Attendance policies</td>
<td>5. Students have contributions to make to issues that affect their education/professional development within the context of their education communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Faculty/administration structure</td>
<td>6. Students can make ongoing contributions to their education communities through relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Program’s commitment to diversity</td>
<td>7. For empowerment to occur students must be the ones to identify the problems and solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Resources available to students</td>
<td>8. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Student participation in governance &amp; curriculum development</td>
<td>9. Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Modeling of professionalism in teaching, communication &amp; navigation of conflict and tension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Choice of assigned readings, hidden readings, case studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify two aspects of implicit curriculum related to empowering BSW students that your program might address and identify possible interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of I.C.</th>
<th>Element of I.C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What could you change? (strategy must be measurable)</td>
<td>What could you change? (strategy must be measurable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who needs to be involved?</td>
<td>Who needs to be involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you implement this?</td>
<td>How would you implement this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you measure this?</td>
<td>How would you measure this?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where will this be made explicit in the context of your curriculum and/or syllabi?</td>
<td>Where will this be made explicit in the context of your curriculum and/or syllabi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>