GRADUATE SCHOOL STRESS MANAGEMENT: TIPS FROM RECENT SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES TO FUTURE STUDENTS

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GRADUATE SCHOOL STRESS MANAGEMENT: TIPS FROM RECENT SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES TO FUTURE STUDENTS

A Project

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Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

GRADUATE SCHOOL STRESS MANAGEMENT: TIPS FROM RECENT SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES TO FUTURE STUDENTS

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Araxia Manukyan
Elisa Olmo

Statement of Problem

There is a lack of direction and suggestions passed down from recent Social Work graduates to current Social Work graduate students in regards to managing stress in graduate school. There is sufficient amount of data regarding the causes of stress on Social Work graduate students, however, there were no studies that investigated the impact of stressors related to the poor economy, such as budget cuts to programs, dwindling career opportunities and lay-offs. Given the various stressors experienced by Social Work graduate students such as balancing work schedules, field placements, class load, and personal factors, it would be beneficial to also analyze what impact, if any, the economy has had on stress levels among graduate level Social Work students and what interventions can be developed to address this issue.

Sources of Data

The population for this study was social workers that graduated in the last seven years from an accredited university program. In order to participate in this study the
participants needed to meet the criteria noted above. A total of 14 MSW graduates aged between 25 to 48 participated in this study.

**Conclusions Reached**

Our findings contribute to the Social Work Department and future students in regards to identifying the types of stressors they may encounter and coping methods to address these stressors. Based on the responses provided by the research participants, the top stressors while completing the MSW program were reported as follows: balancing coursework, internship, thesis/project, and work responsibilities, personal problems (i.e. divorce, living far from home)/lack of social support, financial problems, lack of preparation for work and internship, and health problems. The advice provided to current and future students from recent graduates in regards to how to cope with stressors related to the MSW program were as follows: balance of work and play, maintain social life, vent to supportive people, self-care, maintaining perspective, maintain peer and family relationships, and stay organized.

**Statement of Collaboration**

This research project, including all data collected, was a joint endeavor between Araxia Manuukyan and Elisa Olmo.

________________________________________, Committee Chair
Susan Talamantes Eggman, Ph.D., M.S.W.

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Date

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Finishing this Project has been the most stressful, challenging, and especially rewarding experience we have ever gone through. Through this experience we have learned about not only what our limitations are, but also what we are capable of and we could not be prouder of this accomplishment. Yet, we could not have made it this far without the love and support of our family, friends, and thesis advisor. I, Elisa Olmo, would like to dedicate the completion of this Project to my parents, Alvaro and Ana, who have been my rock through good times and bad, and to my sisters, Cristina and Monica, for being my number one cheerleaders. I, Araxia Manukyan, would like to thank my husband Raphael for all of his love and support through this process. Moreover, I would like to thank my parents, Gevorg and Asya, and siblings Stella, Moses, Emine and Joe for all of their encouragement and my newborn son, George William, who has already taught me so much about life. Additionally, I want to thank my friends Lilit and Lucia for always motivating me and believing that I would finish even when I did not, along with my cousin Anna who spent so many hours helping format. Finally, we have been fortunate to have had the greatest experience through our partnership and could not have asked for more. We are grateful for all the new memories we made in this process. We are overwhelmed with gratitude to you all, and we love you more than you will ever know.

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Chapter 1

THE ISSUE

Introduction

Graduate students are especially susceptible to stress and anxiety during their educational career given the pressures of balancing multiple roles. While at times stress can be motivating, stress can also have a negative impact on students when it becomes overwhelming and serves as a barrier to reaching goals and hinders their ability to function to their greatest potential. Social Work graduate students in particular tend to experience higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to other programs, given the added responsibility of professional fieldwork (Ngal & Cheung, 2009; Wilks, 2008; Moran & Hughes, 2006; Collins, 2006; Collins, et al., 2010; Tobin & Carson, 1994).

Multiple studies offer data regarding stress experienced by Social Work graduate students and solutions to reduce stress and anxiety levels during their educational career. However, there has not been a study on the influence that the recent downturn of the economy has had on Social Work graduate students’ stress levels and morale, given the added pressure of facing a job market with dwindling prospects and increasing budget cuts to crucial community programs. This study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to stress experienced by Social Work graduate students as perceived retrospectively by recent graduates with the goal of providing future students with solutions to better manage stressors during their educational career.
Statement of Collaboration

This research project, including all data collected, was a joint endeavor between Araxia Manuukyan and Elisa Olmo.

Background of the Problem

For most, pursuing higher education involves dedication and acceptance of the stress and anxiety posed by the challenges of being a student. For students of Social Work there is typically the added responsibility of professional fieldwork, which can be equally stressful as it is rewarding and educational. In a review of the literature related to stress among social work students, it is consistently acknowledged that students of social work struggle to balance the responsibilities of their multiple roles that come from being an employee, a member of a family, and even a friend (Ngal & Cheung, 2009; Wilks, 2008; Moran & Hughes, 2006; Collins, 2006; Collins, et al., 2010; Tobin & Carson, 1994).

A review of the literature regarding stress levels among Social Work graduates suggested that, when left unaddressed, stress can manifest in more serious symptoms beyond low morale. Of particular concern was data from a recent study, which suggests that 34% of Social Work students reported high levels of depressive symptoms, 12% had a history of suicidal ideation, and 4% reported having recent thoughts about suicide (Horton, Diaz & Green, 2009). Students of social work are also at risk of experiencing vicarious traumatization as they enter their professional internships, ill prepared to cope with exposure to situations which can have a lasting negative impression. It is the goal of this research study to better understand the experience of Social Work graduate students
in order to use their experience and suggestions to develop solutions towards effective stress reduction and to strengthen coping skills for future graduate students.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

There is a lack of direction and suggestions passed down from recent Social Work graduates to current Social Work graduate students in regards to managing stress in graduate school. There is sufficient amount of data regarding the causes of stress on Social Work graduate students, however, there were no studies that investigated the impact of stressors related to the poor economy, such as budget cuts to programs, dwindling career opportunities and lay-offs. Given the various stressors experienced by Social Work graduate students such as balancing work schedules, field placements, class load, and personal factors, it would be beneficial to also analyze what impact, if any, the economy has had on stress levels among graduate level Social Work students and what interventions can be developed to address this issue.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to explore the sources of stress experienced during the graduate social work program from the perspective of recent social work graduates and their opinion of effective stress relieving interventions. The secondary purpose of this study is to help future social work graduate students with their stress by providing coping techniques suggested by the recent graduates along with how to deal with the current the stressors related to the recent downturn of the economy.
Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are used in studies to better explain why a phenomenon occurs; in this case stress. The two theoretical frameworks that help better explain stress are the ecological systems theory and stress theory. Ecological systems theory framework is defined as

“the approach in which one studies human development that consists of the
'scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life
course, between an active, growing human being, and the changing properties of the
immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected
by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the
settings are embedded” (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p188).

Moreover, ecological systems theory studies the human development in four different systems such as the micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems. In order to understand and assess human problems and stressors one needs to understand how people and the environment influence one another (Hepworth, 2010).

Furthermore, stress theory is defined by Matthiew and Ivanoff (2006) as,

“Stressful life events are linked to the onset of distress or disorders. The stress response begins with a stressor, which is defined as any real or imagined event, condition, situation, or stimulus that instigates the onset of the human stress response process within an individual (p340).” This research will incorporate stress theory by identifying stressful life events. Furthermore, as these sources are identified then ones perceived stress can be altered through different coping mechanisms.
**Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are utilized in the work and are defined as follows:

**Stress:** “A physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily tension and may be a factor in disease causation or a state resulting from a stress; especially one of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

**Stressor:** “A stimulus that causes stress” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

**Coping:** “To deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties.

**Thesis:** The California State University Education Code defines a thesis as the written product of a systematic study of a significant problem. It identifies the problem, states the major assumptions, explains the significance of the undertaking, sets forth the sources for and methods of gathering information, analyze the data, and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished project (product) evidences originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, and thorough documentation” (Title V Section 40510).

**Qualitative:** “The process of data collection is open-ended and allows clients to express their reality and experience. In the assessment and evaluation process the goal is to explore the individuals (or families or groups) experience, frame of reference, beliefs, values, and cultural realities. In essence, the client is considered to be the key informant or expert regarding his or her problem and the desire to change” (Hepworth et al, 2010, p. 338).
Burnout: “A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity” (Ying, 2009).

Self-care: “Means to enhance mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being” (Ying, 2009).

Suicide: “The act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally especially by a person of years of discretion and of sound mind” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

Eating Disorders: “Any of several psychosocial disorders (as anorexia nervosa or bulimia) characterized by serious disturbances of eating behavior” (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

Assumptions

The premises upon which these researchers base their logical assumptions: 1) The participants experienced stress during their academic career; 2) The participants experienced stress related to personal life events; 3) Depending on their interpretation of their stress levels, they utilize the coping skills they developed; 4) The participants chose what coping skill to utilize depending on the source of stress; 5) The economic downturn has been an added stress on top of the common personal and academic stressors experienced by the participants.

Justifications

These researchers hope that this Project will benefit future social work students by providing analysis of the experience from recent social work graduates who have
experienced similar stressors related to their academic program. It will normalize the academic stress and allow future social work students to utilize the advice from former students as a coping skill.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study include: demographics, such as all of the participants being residents of Sacramento County. Secondly, the research is a qualitative study that limits the data to 10-15 participants. Thirdly, students are all graduates from a SW program of an accredited university and have obtained their MSW within the last seven years. Results may not apply to all social work graduate students of other universities. Answers are limited to the participant’s individual understanding and interpretation of their stress and the data is limited to the information that the participant is willing to divulge.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Students of Social Work are often faced with multiple stressors during their academic career given the challenges of balancing not only schoolwork and employment with social lives, but also with the added responsibilities that come with the field internship. Findings on the predominant origins of stress among social work students can be inconsistent, however certain themes are observed as more common than others. Work schedules, field placements, class load, personality types, personal factors, and gender roles are among the factors discussed in the literature reviewed (Cheung & Tang, 2009; Moran & Hughes, 2006; Davis, 2003; Ngai & Cheung, 2009; Negga et al 2007; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Risk factors associated with social work students stress are physical and emotional and can range from suicide to eating disorders (Horton, Diaz & Green, 2009; Wichianson, et al 2009). Additionally, some of the studies reviewed offered possible solutions to address these significant issues such as mental health screening and support, emotional preparedness, and social support (DiRamio & Payne, 2007; Dziegielewski, Roest-Marti & Turnage, 2004; Wilks, 2008; Yang, 2008).

Stress Themes

Work schedules

Given the recent downturn of the economy and the growing scarcity of jobs, there is some literature focused on the prevalence of social work students that have chosen to keep working while completing their program and the impact this has on their academic
performance and on their psyche. The general consensus concluded that employment, whether part-time or full-time, has a negative impact on the social work student’s academic performance (Cheung & Tang, 2009; Collins, Coffey & Morris, 2010; Munson, 1987). One study found that 72 percent of younger bachelor of social work students (BSW) and 62 percent of older BSW students had challenges balancing their student and work responsibilities and that students working part-time with a full course load were typical for the sample that was surveyed (Hawkins, Smith, Hawkins II & Grant, 2005). In response to the existing research regarding the significant impact of employment on a student’s academic performance, this study plans to explore solutions to address this pertinent issue.

Field Placements

In addition to stressors originating from employment, students may also experience anxiety that is distinct in comparison to other programs, especially when considering that social work students typically balance their academic work with their fieldwork (Ngal & Cheung, 2009; Wilks, 2008; Moran & Hughes, 2006; Collins, 2006; Collins, et al., 2010; Tobin & Carson, 1994). Although an education that combines schoolwork with fieldwork provides a holistic experience for the social work student, it is important to prepare the student for the realities of fieldwork and the influence it can have on them emotionally. The research has found that professional education programs that combine academic and professional instruction, such as nursing and social work, tend to evoke more stress than traditional educational programs (Collins, 2006; Collins, et al., 2010). Another study found that social work students might experience higher levels
of stress in their educational career than in their career as a social worker, is attributed in part to learning to cope with stressors associated with professional placement (Wilks, 2008).

Maidment (2003) discusses the stress levels of students in field placements, noting that students stress levels are high when they do not have a set of clear expectations and role clarification, when there is a problem in the relationship between supervisor and student, and when field does not integrate practice and theory. Therefore, it is suggested, that students are prepared in their programs to set realistic expectations in the field to be exposed to both the positive and negative aspects of field placement. Overall, stress levels are reduced and students respond well when they have regular feedback and when they have good role models in their field placements.

Class Load

Several studies found that a large number of social work students experience anxiety in regards to completion of courses related to research (Ying, 2009; Ying, 2008; Davis, 2003). One study in particular that surveyed 41 MSW students asserts that because social work students have a “propensity toward humanistic values and social interaction”, they have a tendency to experience stress and anxiety in taking a course related to mathematical computations (Davis, 2003).

Green et al’s (2001) study discusses the stress of MSW students when it comes to research and computer anxiety. MSW students generally have this belief compared to psychology and business students that research is less important to their profession, therefore, while in those classes they report higher levels of stress and anxiety.
Personality Types

In a study regarding idealism among social work students, it was found that students tending towards idealism reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Ngai & Cheung, 2009). It was found that the causes of emotional exhaustion were derived from a gap between the social work student’s expectation of fieldwork and the reality of their actual experience (Ngai & Cheung, 2009).

Multiple studies found that students that had experience in volunteer work were found to report lower levels of stress in regards to their field placement and noted increased competence (Cheung & Tang, 2009; Collins, et al., 2010; Rompf, Royse & Dhooper, 1993). Similarly, an early study suggests that in regards to reducing risk factors of burnout, experience outweighed age (Rompf, et al., 1993). The study contends that those students that had prior experience in volunteer work or even part-time summer jobs were better prepared and more confident in beginning their internship (Rompf, et al., 1993).

Carvalho et al (2009) discusses student’s levels of stress in correlation to their locus of control. They found that students with very high levels of severe stress associate their stress levels to chance, where as students with mild or moderate stress levels do not associate too much of their stress to chance.

One recent study of 37 entering and 28 graduating masters of social work students found that students in their last semester reported lower self esteem and sense of coherence and poorer mental health than incoming first year students (Ying, 2008). The study asserts that as students progressed in the program they became less mindful, which
had a direct negative impact on the student’s sense of competence and caused stress. This points to why many universities recently began educating students on the practice and value of mindfulness and spirituality as a resource when faced with stressors (Csiernik & Adams, 2003).

**Personal Factors**

Negga’s (et al 2007) study of college students and stress levels reports that the top five stressors for students while they were enrolled in college were death of a family member, getting low grades, time management, intimate relationships problems, and missing class. In addition, there was a correlation between students stress levels and their self-esteem and social support. Students with high self-esteem have lower academic and life stress. It was also found that stress levels lowered cognitive abilities and immune systems. Some of their recommendations to reduce stress levels for students were tutorial sessions, mentoring between peers and faculty, counseling for interpersonal and intrapersonal issues, and academic counseling in order to help students determine their academic strengths and weaknesses.

**Gender Roles**

Role strain is discussed in an earlier study conducted by Mallinckrodt & Leong (1992), who investigated the influence of social support on graduate students and questioned if there was a difference between men and women in regards to role conflict. The study found that female graduate students were more likely to experience role conflict than their male counterparts. The study suggests that women are traditionally expected to not only take on more responsibility, like work and school, while maintaining
their other duties as mother and wife, but they also have the added stress of the “superwoman syndrome”, with the expectation that she excel at all of her duties (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). In response to the existing research regarding the significant impact of role strain on a student’s psyche, this study plans to explore solutions to address this pertinent issue.

**Risk Factors**

*Suicide*

A recent study of social work students found that 34 percent reported high levels of depressive symptoms, 12 percent had a history of suicidal ideation, and 4 percent reported having recent thoughts about suicide (Horton, Diaz & Green, 2009). These statistics are particularly concerning given that students are working with vulnerable clients that seek support and resources. Given the level of stress that a social work student might experience during the program, some studies call for social work programs to take on the responsibility of monitoring their students’ mental health, especially when commencing fieldwork. One study even recommends for the selection process of social work programs to be more meticulous in an attempt to weed out applicants that may not have the capacity to cope with the all too often emotionally exhausting nature of the social work profession (Collins, 2006). This could be complicated given that the program would want to avoid discriminating against those students living with mental health disabilities. Additionally, students might not be open to sharing their mental health concerns with the school or field staff for fear that they may be judged as being incapable of helping others.
Ugurlu and Ona (2009) studied the “Relationship Between the Stress-Coping Levels of University Students and Their Probability of Committing Suicide.” Their study showed many correlations to suicide. For example, males are more likely to commit suicide whereas females are more likely to attempt suicide. This study also found that students with mothers with high rates of illiteracy had the worst stress coping techniques whereas students with highly educated mothers had much better and healthier stress coping methods. Being raised with one parent also contributes to students’ likelihood to attempt suicide. Students from split families or single parent households also have a higher likelihood of attempting suicide because of their high stress levels. Single parent households is attributed to having no social support for students therefore, feelings of loneliness and not being able to cope with stress is more prominent. Students who had other family members attempt or commit suicide have a greater chance of trying and or succeeding at committing suicide themselves. Finally, one other factor that contributes to the level of suicide attempts is the college department the student is enrolled in and how satisfied they are with their department (Ugurlu & Ona, 2009).

**Eating Disorders**

Another high risk factor and theme found with students experiencing stress was eating disturbances or disorders. For example, Wichianson’s study (et al 2009) looks at the stress levels of students and their coping methods such as night-eating. Over 60 percent of college students report experiencing either high or very high levels of stress and therefore turn to alcohol. They report depressive symptoms including anxiety and problem eating behaviors. It has been found that perceived high levels of stress have a
positive relationship with problem eating or eating disorders. Maladaptive coping was a mediat
er to problem eating in students who perceived high levels of stress and adaptive coping was a moderator for it.

Furthermore, Meyer (2005) discusses that women with healthier help seeking behaviors tend to seek help for their eating disorders compared to those who do not believe that their symptoms require treatment. Overall, positive help seeking behaviors tend to benefit students who are stressed and have eating problems related to stress. This research suggests that students might not seek help or treatments because societal stigma or the lack of available resources.

**Possible Stress Prevention Strategies**

*Mental Health Screening and Support*

Diramio and Payne (2007) discuss how campus programs are related to self-efficacy, stress and substance abuse. When current students mental health screenings are compared to 10 years ago more are getting screened for anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, grief issues, sexual abuse, and other even more severe disorders such as bipolar and schizophrenia disorders. Studies show that when students are mentally healthy they achieve higher academic status and give back more to their schools and communities. These authors suggest using a more proactive approach to mental health on college campuses such as student affairs setting up programs to help college students with the problems that they are facing.

Social support can provide sufficient stress relief for some students, however others might require professional help to tackle complicated emotions that surface in the
course of a social work program. One study recommends for programs to provide individual and group counseling for students as needed and contends that programs need “. . . To consider risk and to be mindful of the risk of exposing users/clients to students or workers who have no fully resolved their own difficulties” (Collins, 2006, p451). It is argued that when a student struggles with complicated emotions that are left unaddressed they are not only putting themselves at risk of emotional exhaustion, but they are also doing a disservice to the client as the focus would be somewhere other than the client’s needs. Mental health screenings would be a beneficial tool to reduce incidences of vicarious trauma and evaluate the student’s ability to cope before exposing them to vulnerable clients.

Emotional Preparedness

Some of the literature regarding stress among social work students focuses on solutions that have been developed to address this prevalent issue. One study found that a pilot seminar educating students on stress and burnout prevention was beneficial to social work students in that they were better prepared and more confident in dealing with challenging situations given the tools and coping skills they learned in the seminar (Dziegielewski, Roest-Marti & Turnage, 2004). Another study found that something as basic as the use of humor served to enhance coping skills among social work students (Moran & Hughes, 2006).

Segrin (et al 2007) discusses the importance of social skills and one’s psychological well-being. Good social skills or communication is associated with having lower experiences of stress because they tend to have higher self-esteem. Poor social
skills result in psychological problems such as higher levels of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Those with good social skills tend to have a better understanding of how to deal with problems more effectively and learn from their past success or mistakes. This again has a positive result because they feel more adequate and have higher self-confidence. Those with good social skills have lower perceived stress, which helps students have lower levels of depression.

Finally, a theme in the literature regarding stress among social work students is the risk of vicarious traumatization. In fieldwork there is a high probability for a student to be exposed to a client that has experienced a traumatic event that has led them to seek resources. If a student is not prepared to handle the impact this encounter can have on their psyche they may put themselves at risk of absorbing the client’s trauma vicariously. One study suggests that students are also at risk of vicarious traumatization in the classroom, given the amount of exposure to graphic case samples presented in class through presentations and class discussions (Cunningham, 2004). An understanding of these factors points to the need to prepare students and provide sufficient support throughout their duration of the program, which is what we intend to do with our study.

**Social Support**

The most common and main theme in regards to prevention of stress among social work students is the support of family, friends, school/field staff, and peers. There was an overall consensus that social support serves as a vital tool for the student to decompress and vent about challenges experienced in their academic career. One study that specifically looked at reliance among social work students found that there was a
positive correlation between a student’s support system and their capacity for resilience (Wilks, 2008). Another study notes that in workplaces where there is a high level of stress, especially in regards to dealing with clients, social support among peers served to dilute the stressors (Moran & Hughes, 206). In a study of 50 MSW students it was found that social support protected against emotional exhaustion (Yang, 2008).

Moreover, Redmond et al (2008) identifies the attitudes, perceptions, and concerns of social work students. Some of the stressors mentioned by students are stressful work environments, lack of resources, and lack of support. Students satisfaction levels are raised when they are acknowledged for their job roles, have a good supervisor, and colleague support. Students also tend to pick certain social work careers based on their perceptions of levels of autonomy, flexibility, challenge and status. For example, child protective and welfare services are seen as stressful areas to work in, therefore, many are drawn to private practice. However, as social work students become acquainted with these areas the more their stress levels decrease. This study suggests that social work students’ stress levels change as their perceptions change over time especially when it’s related to work and different social work arenas.

There has been much research conducted on the stress levels and coping strategies of college students. Academia adds tremendous stress to people’s lives. Students experience stress in different ways. MacGeorge et al (2005) discuss how academic stress is related to depression and physical illness. This study showed positive correlation between academic stress, depression and physical illness. They found that supportive communication and emotional support were associated with lower depression levels.
Their study suggests that through supportive communication, whether or not it’s emotional support from others or active listening from their social network, helps lower depression levels and overall reduces physical illnesses.

In addition to stress levels being reduced by support networks, Prouty et al (2002) discuss how important supportive friends and family are to college women who have eating disorder issues. They also discuss the importance of colleges having interdisciplinary teams to address all kinds of mental health issues, including eating disorders. They suggest that when resources are available women are more likely to turn to them for support. Women in the study reported that they would benefit from individual assistance when it comes to their needs. They also report that their social network is the number one place they would turn to, for example starting with their close friends, parents, and then significant others. These are all things for friends, families, and college administrators to remember when it comes to providing support for college students, especially those who are struggling with stress, mental health, or eating disorders.

Kling et al (2008) studied the relationship between perceived family support and coping effectiveness in premedical students. The results showed that family support has a strong impact in the way students were able to cope with academic stress. Students gain more confidence in their academic career with family support. This study shows that family support is one of the best resources for a student to have and it helps them cope and overcome academic challenges.
Ye’s (2006) article discusses the importance of social support networks and how they help to lower levels of depression, hopelessness, and even suicidal ideations among students. Students with a good social support networks are better able to cope with stress. Ye discusses two types of support: informational support and emotional support. Informational support refers to the advice or guidance given to someone regarding his or her questions or problems. Emotional support is when someone receives verbal or nonverbal caring support regarding their situation or problem. In this study Ye found that women are more satisfied with their support networks then men. Also, students who had used social networks perceived less stress than those who did not have any informational or emotional support.

Laurence et al (2009) offer statistics regarding college students stress levels. For instance, 19 percent of students report depressive symptoms and 15 percent report that their depression symptoms affect their academic performance. Also, about 1/3 of college students state that stress has in one way or another effected their academic performance. In another survey with just graduate students, 25 percent reported having depressive symptoms. Furthermore, they found that students with these stress levels benefit from social support. Even though their study focused on dental students, all the statistics were for undergraduate and graduate students from different disciplines. It can be concluded from the studies discussed that social support might be the main ingredient for reducing stress levels among college students especially graduate students.

Lin’s (2009) study also focused on the effects of social support on college student’s stress levels. They looked at students who had social support from kin such as
parents and relatives and non-kin such as friends, classmates, and teachers. Once again this study also found that the Chinese college students in Taiwan had less stress and their stress levels were alleviated because of their social support. In an earlier study regarding student’s preference of support, formal vs. informal, it was found that even when formal support was readily available to students, there was an overwhelming preference towards informal support from friends and family. The study found that while 70-95 percent of students sought informal support from family and friends, only 7-15 percent sought support from a therapist or a clergymen (Robbins & Tanck, 1994).

Although there was an overwhelming amount of literature noting the positive influence social support has on a student’s psyche and academic performance, one study notes that not all social relationships are supportive and some may even be harmful. This study contends that the student obtains the greatest positive influence from positive social support when there is an absence of negative relationships in their lives (Edwards, Hershberger, Russell & Markert, 2001). This research study plans to further explore the influence of positive and negative relationships on a student’s academic performance and psyche.

In reviewing the literature regarding the importance of social support for social work students it is evident that a positive relationship with the practice instructor is highly beneficial to the student (Collins, et al., 2010; Koeske & Koeske, 1991; Munson, 1987). One study found that when a student considered their relationship with faculty as supportive they were less likely to experience burnout and were less likely to consider quitting school (Koeke & Koeke, 1991). In this research study, the intent is to better
understand the valuable elements of faculty support that help to reduce anxiety and stress among students.

Although a positive relationship with a field instructor can be beneficial for some social work students, others might not feel comfortable being open with their instructor about challenges they are facing in their practice for fear that they will be perceived as less capable. A review of a pilot student mentoring program found that students were open to addressing concerns and issues that they were experiencing with the peer mentor without worry that doing so would have an adverse impact on their assessment (Topping, McCowan & McCrae, 1998). Additionally, the study found that the interaction with the peer mentors lead to lower levels of stress about the field practice in that the mentor provided realistic advice on what the student should expect in their placement. Students reported higher levels of confidence in starting their internship with the support of their peer mentor noting that the mentor served as a model of one that was able to endure through the program successfully (Topping, McCowan & McCrae, 1998).

**Spirituality**

When researching solutions to reduce stress among social work students, spirituality is frequently mentioned. As noted earlier, spirituality is a technique becoming steadily popular in the social work field and classroom, and has proven to be beneficial in not only reducing stress but also in enhancing coping skills. One study that interviewed 66 entering MSW students found that a student’s practice of self-compassion served as better stress relief and greater satisfaction than a student’s association with their religion or spirituality (Ying & Han, 2009). This research study plans to explore specific
elements of self-care and spirituality that students have found beneficial to alleviating stress and/or anxiety.

Calicchia and Graham also discuss the importance of social support and effective coping strategies for college students and their well-being. The areas of stress for graduate students are home, work, children, and negative life events. Graduate students who have social support report lower physiological and physical stress symptoms. This study focuses on spirituality as a support and found that those students who report higher levels of religiosity and spirituality have better ability to cope with stress, however, existential well-being was the most significant when it came to measuring stress scales and it’s relationship to well being.

Moreover, Ayalon and Young’s (2005) study focuses on the differences between African-American and Anglo-Saxon student’s and their help seeking differences. Their study found that 24 percent of African American and 30 percent of Anglo students report as high stress levels as outpatient psychiatric patients. Both groups also report that they have used psychological or social services in the past year, with Anglo students utilizing those services more than African-American students. However, the difference was that 87.1 percent of African-American students reported that they used religious services as a coping tool where as 74.2 percent of Anglo students reported using religious services as a coping tool. There were no real differences for their use of medical, emergency, clergy, and psychiatric resources, but the main finding was that African-American students used religious services more frequently when it came to help seeking behavior rather than turning to psychological or social services.
Furthermore, Turner-Musa and Wilson (2006) studied “religious orientation and social support on health promoting behaviors of African-American college students.” Their study found that African-American students who viewed religion positively had better health promoting behaviors compared to those who were antireligious. Students who perceived themselves to have high levels of support scored higher on spiritual growth, interpersonal relationships, stress management and other healthy coping behaviors compared to students who perceived themselves to have low levels of support.

**Conclusion**

Through existing research we have learned that students are faced with different stressors. Each social work student has unique stresses and it is important for each stressor to be considered and evaluated on a needs basis on a personal or professional level. As social worker students face challenges in their academics, personal lives, and field placements it is important to remember that social support, support from internship supervisors and academic support from professors can be some of the greatest stress relief. Universities can consider organizing support groups and encouraging field supervisors to encourage and guide students on a regular basis. Family and friends are the best support system and when students utilize them for extra encouragement their stress levels are minimized.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The basic purpose of this study is to explore the sources of stress experienced during the graduate social work program from the perspective of recent social work graduates and their opinion of effective stress relieving solutions. This study design is a qualitative method content analysis. Common themes will be identified and analyzed in an attempt to clarify the sources of stress and to perhaps suggest further areas of study.

This chapter focuses on the study design, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, instruments, data analysis approaches, organizing principles, and the protection of human subjects.

Study Design

The structure of this study was administered using both a qualitative and exploratory design. A qualitative design was chosen by these researchers in order to explore and analyze individual experiences of the participants rather than gathering statistical data from a greater pool of participants. In doing so the researchers were able to decipher commonalities in the participants responses. Through this approach, the researchers were also able to gather perspectives related to the downturn of the economy and its impact on the MSW graduates.
Population

The population for this study was social workers that graduated in the last seven years from an accredited university program. In order to participate in this study the participants needed to meet the criteria noted above.

Sample

A total of 14 MSW graduates aged between 25 to 48 participated in this study. Of the participants the overwhelming majority (85.7 percent) were female compared to only 14.3 percent male. The mean age of the participants was 32. Over half of the participants (53.6 percent) were Caucasian/White, while the remaining were Hispanic/Latina/Mexican American (17.9 percent), African American (14.3 percent), and Asian Indian (7.1 percent). Of the participants interviewed 71.4 percent were working full time, 21.4 percent were unemployed, and the other 7.1 percent were working part time. Of the participants interviewed 7.1 percent graduated in 2004, 21.4 percent graduated in 2005, 28.6 percent graduated in 2006, 0 percent graduated in 2007, 7.1 percent graduated in 2008, 7.1 percent graduated in 2009, and 28.6 percent graduated in 2010. The majority, 42.9 percent, of the participants associated themselves as being Christian, 28.6 percent were Catholic, 14.3 percent stated that they had no religious preference, 7.1 percent were Agnostic, and 7.1 percent spiritual.

Sampling Procedure

These researchers interviewed 14 people selected from a snowball procedure. The researchers began by asking interested colleagues from their work place and field placement and have them suggest others who may be interested in participating.
Participants were either asked in person, by phone, email, or social network websites such as Facebook.com. An interview date and time was scheduled and the consent form was provided before the interview began. Interviews were conducted outside of agencies and institutions. Participants received no compensation for completing this interview.

**Instrumentation**

In this research study the researchers utilized an interview questionnaire (Attachment 2). The interview questionnaire served to analyze the experiences of MSW graduates based on their views of causes of stress, effective coping methods, and to obtain advice and suggestions for effective stress relief for current and future MSW students. The interview questionnaire was also utilized to acquire demographic information such as age, gender, ethnic background, education, religious affiliation, year of MSW graduation, undergraduate major, current employment status, and ten open ended questions that were specifically related to MSW students and their experiences in graduate school. The interviews took approximately thirty to forty five minutes to complete. There were no other equipment, instruments, or any drugs or pharmaceuticals used in this study.

**Measurement**

The interview questionnaire had two sections. The participants were asked ten open ended questions related to their experiences while in the MSW program. The second section of the questionnaire was composed of eight demographic questions regarding the participant’s age, gender, ethnic background, education, religious
affiliation, year of MSW graduation, undergraduate major, and current employment status.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The research participants signed an informed consent form prior to being interviewed. A copy of the consent to participate can be found as Attachment 1. The participants received their own copy of the consent form after signing and were verbally informed of the purpose of this study. Through the informed consent document and procedure, potential interviewees were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation. Those that consented to participate were interviewed individually, in a private setting, and were asked the structured open-ended questions as well as their individual demographic information. The researchers wrote down responses verbatim and later transcribed each participant’s responses. Responses to interview questions were kept confidential. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed at which time the recordings were destroyed. The participants were interviewed at different locations in the community.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, the researchers informed each participant that they had the right to end the interview at any time and they were not required to answer any questions that they were not comfortable responding to. There was minimal risk of discomfort to the participants in the administration of this interview. Consent forms and all data were secured at the researcher’s home until the project was finished, at which time all consent forms were destroyed. Participants were given referrals for mental health support services.
Data Analysis Approaches and Organizing Principles

The results of the interviews were transcribed and the audiotape and written materials were destroyed. This study design is a qualitative method with mixed qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The benefit of implementing qualitative analysis was to look at the individual experiences of each participant while in their MSW program. In doing so the researchers were also able to analyze the commonalities and suggestions given by each participant. Furthermore, the analysis is also quantitative because it allowed these researchers to determine if there was a cause that produced an affect in general. Common themes were identified and analyzed in an attempt to clarify the sources of stress and to perhaps suggest further areas of study, including the stressors and coping of the economic downturn. There were no physical procedures used in this study. The data was analyzed to determine which stressors experienced by Social Work graduate students caused the greatest levels of stress and anxiety and whether the current state of the economy had any influence on that determined level. (See attachment #2 for Interview Guide).

Protection of Human Subjects

The Protocol for the Protection of Human Subjects was submitted and approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects from the Division of Social Work as minimal risk. Based upon the nature of questions regarding stressors during graduate school and the student’s ability to cope, the research is considered to be minimal risk. Recall of stressful events and personal issues during the graduate program may illicit emotional responses. The participants will receive the cover letter to the informed
consent form, which will include mental health resources if they should be needed (see attachment 1).
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the responses from the administered interviews. The demographics of the participants were examined, however, the emphasis was to address the ten major questions and the purpose of the study as stated in chapter 1. This analysis focuses on the stress levels students experience while completing their MSW graduate studies and the advice they provide to current and future students.

Demographics

A total of 14 MSW graduates aged between 25 to 48 participated in this study. Of the participants the overwhelming majority (85.7 percent) were female compared to only 14.3 percent male. The mean age of the participants was 32. Over half of the participants (53.6 percent) were Caucasian/White, while the remaining were Hispanic/Latina/Mexican American (17.9 percent), African American (14.3 percent), and Asian Indian (7.1 percent). Of the participants interviewed 71.4 percent were working full time, 21.4 percent were unemployed, and the other 7.1 percent were working part time. Of the participants interviewed 7.1 percent graduated in 2004, 21.4 percent graduated in 2005, 28.6 percent graduated in 2006, 0 percent graduated in 2007, 7.1 percent graduated in 2008, 7.1 percent graduated in 2009, and 28.6 graduated in 2010. The majority, 42.9 percent, of the participants associated themselves as being Christian, 28.6 percent were Catholic, 14.3 percent stated that they had no religious preference, 7.1 percent were agnostic, and 7.1 percent spiritual.
Overall Findings

When the participants were asked to identify their greatest sources of stress while in graduate school, 92.9 percent reported that they experienced the greatest amount of stress while trying to balance coursework, internship, thesis/project, and work responsibilities. Some of the other reporting’s were health problems (14.3 percent), lack of social support (7.1 percent) and financial problems (28.6 percent). While some participants noted stress related to their personal life (28.6 percent), such as going through a divorce and being far from home, others indicated that their stress stemmed
from their work and internship in that that they felt a lack of preparation in their position (21.4 percent).

**Figure 2. Stressors**

When questioned about which coping skills were most effective during stressful times in graduate school, the majority of the participants indicated that self-care was their greatest source of stress relief. More specifically, participants noted self-care activities to include exercise (i.e. bike rides, yoga, walking), professional therapy, going to church, and escaping through music and movies. Others admitted to partaking in negative activities, such as drinking excessively and eating “junk food” to cope with stress. Some of the participants reported that the most effective coping skill to reduce stress was derived from social support, support from peers, and support from professors, thesis advisors, and field instructors.
The participants were asked what they considered to be their top five resources to reduce stress while in graduate school. In analyzing their responses, it was found that the top 5 resources utilized, in order of significance, were: (1) Friends support and Self-Care (i.e. exercise, therapy, dancing, massage, time away, healthy eating, eating out, cooking, support groups, music, movies, vacation, pleasure reading), (2) Peer Support, (3) Family Support, (4) Spirituality and Support from Field Instructor/Thesis Advisors/Professors, and (5) Support from Spouse/Partner/Significant Other.

![Coping Mechanism](chart.png)

*Figure 3. Coping Mechanism*

The participants were asked in what ways their coping styles/practices/experiences were helpful to them during their graduate studies. Some of the common themes mentioned were that it helped them keep grounded and focused, and helped maintain a healthy perspective and be positive. Others reported that they reduced stress
and got their mind off of stress, helped maintain balance, gave them hope for the future, and helped them avoid burnout.

Significant non-academic stress experienced by the participants while in graduate school included issues with family such as health problems, substance abuse, and death. It was evident that many of the participants experienced personal life changing events while in the program such as pregnancy, divorce, and purchasing a home. Additionally, some of the participants mentioned that finances and having to work full time contributed to their non-academic stress.

In regards to their experience in graduate school, the participants were asked how their academic and non-academic stress impacted them. It was found that the participants had polarized responses in that they overwhelmingly felt that stress either had a positive or negative impact. The participants that noted a positive correlation stated that the stress enabled them to prioritize their responsibilities, helped learn their strengths, and helped them adapt to challenging situations. Those that reported a negative correlation indicated that stress made it difficult to focus on academics, made it challenging to have a social life, and reduced motivation to learn in that they did only what was needed to pass.

The participants were asked to note what factors they considered to have influenced their coping skills and ability to reduce stress. Half of the participants overcame challenges in their past, which they felt enabled them to apply coping skills while in graduate school to effectively reduce stress. Several participants agreed that family support influenced their coping skills, while others mentioned their religion and support from friends, spouses, and professors. Some of the other factors mentioned were
having positive role models, having a healthy perspective, good social skills, an active lifestyle, and self-care.

The participants were asked to offer suggestions to current students in regards to how to effectively reduce stress while in the graduate program. The top suggestions from the participants included learning to balance work and play, maintaining a social life, venting to supportive people, partaking in self-care, keeping things in perspective, and staying organized. Several people suggested to not work full-time, to exercise, and to be interested in the topic you are researching. Others noted the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with peers and family, keeping to a thesis timeline, and to procrastinate as little as possible.

![Graph showing advice](image)

*Figure 4. Advice*
When participants were asked if they were able to go back in time how would they address stressors differently in graduate school four of them stated that they would adhere to a timeline and maintain a to do list. Three different participants mentioned that they would not change anything and another three stated that they would eat healthier and exercise. A couple of the participants interviewed indicated that they would practice self-care more often and another set of participants stated that they would have sought support from their peers more frequently. Others that were interviewed reported that they would have been better prepared, socialized less, utilized resources, sought support from their thesis advisor, and had more self confidence in general.

When questioned about the effect of the recent downturn of the economy, we noted polarized responses from the participants in that there was a high negative impact or minimal to no impact at all. It was also noted that the year of each participants graduation had significant relevance to their response. Those who graduated in 2009 and 2010 reported great stress related to the poor economy given the nature of the job market, increase in tuition, and cuts to university courses. One participant in particular summarized this frustration by stating, “It had a big influence because tuition went up. Also, I was stressed about the job market because no one was hiring and I knew I couldn’t quit my job to concentrate on my studies. In my last semester I had to take extra classes that weren’t offered in prior semesters due to budget cuts.” Those that graduated 2008 and earlier did not express that the economy had any negative impact on their stress level.
Summary and Prevailing Themes

Advice to new MSW student:

- Self Care
- Exercise/Eating Healthy
- Professional Therapy
- Social, Peer, and Family support
- Professor and Field Instructor support
- Spirituality
- Maintaining Perspective
- Keeping to a timeline/To-do list/Stay organized
- Start thesis/project as soon as possible
- Maintain a healthy social life
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Discussion

This project was designed to gain a broader understanding of the sources of stress of recent MSW graduates while in graduate school with the objective of ascertaining suggestions and advice for effective stress reduction for current and future MSW students. This study also had the objective of gaining a deeper understanding of the amount of additional stress that was experienced by students due to the recent state of the economy. Given the amount of pressure and role-strain experienced by MSW students, the researchers felt that it was pertinent to investigate these issues for the benefit of current and future students. Although the findings of this qualitative study may not have added statistically significant data, the results of this study offers a more in depth understanding of the experiences and stressors of recent MSW graduates.

The researchers analyzed the sources of stress that were identified by the participants including, but not limited to, working full-time, course load, internship, and the challenge of balancing all three responsibilities. The stress theory applies to the students’ perception of situational stress experienced in graduate school in that the stressful event,

“….becomes a psychological stressor when the individual reacts to the stressful event or condition based on cognitions that the event will adversely affect his or her personal well-being. This perception of the event as psychologically stressful
is the vital component necessary to define the event as a psychosocial stressor in the human stress response. Over time, the strain of responding to stressful situations, whether mentally or physically, can be cumulatively detrimental”.
(Matthieu & Ivanoff, 2006, p. 340)

Our findings contribute to the Social Work Department and future students in regards to identifying the types of stressors they may encounter and coping methods to address these stressors. Based on the responses provided by the research participants, the top stressors while completing the MSW program were reported as follows: balancing coursework, internship, thesis/project, and work responsibilities, personal problems (i.e. divorce, living far from home)/lack of social support, financial problems, lack of preparation for work and internship, and health problems.

Most participants reported that their greatest stressor was derived from challenges in balancing coursework, internship, thesis/project, and work responsibilities. When asked what were some of the greatest stressors during graduate school, one participant stated, “work load, with school, internship, thesis. They each needed time and energy which was running low.”

Secondly, multiple participants reported that personal problems and lack of social support was their greatest stressor. Some indicated that they experienced serious health problems, went through divorce, illness or death in the family, and lacked social support. One participant in particular had major back surgery, which hindered her ability to sit long periods in class, and made it difficult to fulfill her eight-hour internship responsibilities. Furthermore, others indicated that they faced some form of financial
problems due to increase in tuition, housing costs, and not being able to work due to course load and internship. While others stated that they did not feel as if they were prepared enough through their coursework for their internships and jobs.

The advice provided to current and future students from recent graduates in regards to how to cope with stressors related to the MSW program were as follows: balance of work and play, maintain social life, vent to supportive people, self-care, maintaining perspective, maintain peer and family relationships, and stay organized. When asked what advice they would offer to future students, one participant suggested, “Sharing your experiences and stresses with other who can appreciate them and help you through them is key. This also opens up the possibility of others offering you effective suggestions for coping.”

The themes of stressors that are supported by the findings in the literature were work schedules, field placement, course load, and personal factors.

**Implications for Social Work**

These researchers found that the literature reviewed combined with their research could influence all levels of Social Work practice, including micro, meso, and macro. For example, on the micro level, students will learn to identify stressors and apply their coping skills to future stressors to effectively reduce stress levels once in the field and prevent or reduce incidences of burnout. Through this experience, student will become more self-aware, which will in turn provide them with the skills to identify causes of stress in the community and the clients they serve, enabling them to hone their advocacy skills. Furthermore, the implications for the meso level could be that MSW faculty, field
instructors, and thesis advisors will be better prepared to provide effective support to students that face challenges related stressors experienced while in the program. Finally, the macro level is also impacted by this research in that current policies can be revised or analyzed to decipher if changes can be made to current educational plans.

Given the findings of this research and the amount of stress experienced by MSW students while in graduate school, these researchers find it important that further studies should explore how Social Work Education programs can change or alter their existing programs. Through these modifications, future MSW students can experience a more effective and less stressful graduate program. Additionally, these researchers found that students experienced a significant reduction in stress levels when they had the support of their field instructor/liason, and MSW faculty while completing the program. It is therefore the recommendation of these researchers that faculty and staff obtain on-going education to provide a more supportive learning environment that students will untimely benefit from.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Although there were significant findings that were derived from the research of this study, there were also certain limitations. One of the limitations of this study was the number of participants interviewed, which was 14 in total from the Sacramento Area. For future research related to this subject it would be beneficial to interview a larger amount of participants from a larger geographic area to acquire more statistically significant findings.
Additionally, female students composed the majority of the participants interviewed in this study, although this is representative of the sample population. Given the small sample of participants, we were further limited given that two of the participants’ responses failed to answer the interview questions thoroughly, which made it challenging to maximize the quality of the findings. Had there been a larger pool of participants, responses that failed to fully answer the interview questions would not have had as much of a significant impact.

This study was especially interested in analyzing the impact the recent downturn of the economy had on the participants interviewed. However, the researchers found that most of the participants had graduated prior to the recession after the data was collected. The researchers assumed that students that graduated within the last five years would have had some form of impact on their stress levels due to the economy, however the findings show that the only participants that felt the impact from the recession were those that graduated in 2009 and 2010, while those that graduated before 2009 noted no impact. Along with having a larger pool of participants, future research would benefit from ensuring that at least half of the participants graduated in 2009 and after, while the other half of participants graduated before 2009 in order to conduct a comparative analysis.

Finally, this research failed to look at how stress impacted student’s health and other biological factors. Further research can investigate or question MSW graduates about the impact the stress they experienced had on their health.
APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in Research

You are invited to participate in a research study that will be conducted by Araxia Manukyan and/or Elisa Olmo, social work graduate students at California State University, Sacramento. This study will explore sources of stress experienced while in graduate school and coping methods used to effectively reduce stress.

Procedures:

After reviewing this form and agreeing to participate you will be given the opportunity to set up a time convenient for you. The interview should take approximately one hour. It will be audio taped. The tape will be transcribed and then destroyed.

As a participant in the interview you can decide at any point to not answer any specific question or to stop the interview.

Risks:

The discussion of some of the topics of the interview may illicit an emotional response. You will be provided a list of mental health support services as needed.

Benefits:

By being part of this study you may gain insight into effective coping strategies. In addition this research may help others to further understand the connection between stress experienced in graduate school and helpful coping methods. This information may be useful in providing more effective coping skills for graduate students.

Confidentiality:

All information is confidential and every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality. Your responses on the audiotape will be confidential. Information you provide on the consent form will be stored separately from the audiotapes in a secure location. All audiotapes will be transcribed by the researcher. The researcher’s thesis advisor will have access to the transcriptions for the duration of the project. The final research report will not include any identifying information. All of the data will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.
Rights to withdraw:

If you decide to participate in this interview, you can withdraw at any point. During the interview you can elect not to answer any specific question.

Consent to Participate as a Research Subject

I have read the descriptive information on the Research Participation cover letter. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary. My signature indicates that I have received a copy of the Research Participation cover letter, and I agree to participate in the study.

I ______________________________ agree to be audio taped.

Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________

If you have any questions you may contact me at ___________ or email me at__________

Or, if you need further information, you may contact my thesis advisor:

Susan Eggman, Ph.D., MSW
C/o California State University, Sacramento
916-278-7181
Elisa Olmo
ebolmo@yahoo.com
(916) 717-7137
Araxia Manukyan
araxmanukyan@gmail.com
(916) 952-0463
Community Counseling Referrals List

South Sacramento Counseling Center
Fair Community UCC
7486 Center Parkway
Sacramento, Ca 95823
916-427-5208

The Place Within
720 Sunrise Ave. Suite D 115
Roseville, Ca 95661
(916) 772-6158

Catholic Social Services
5890 Newman Court
Sacramento, Ca 95819
(916) 452-7481

Visions Unlimited
7000 Franklin Blvd. Suite #200
Sacramento, Ca
(916) 393-2203

Sliding Scale Fees: Ability to pay is determined by a patient's annual income and family size according to the most recent U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines.
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

- What were some of your greatest stressors during graduate school? List the top stressors you experienced in graduate school.

- What kind of coping skills and methods did you use during those times? Describe your coping practices to reduce stress during your academic career.

- List the top five resources you utilized to effectively reduce stress while in graduate school.

- In what ways were your coping styles/practices/experiences helpful to you during your graduate studies?

- Describe any significant stressful experiences, non-academic, you had in graduate school.

- How did your academic and non-academic stress impact your experience in graduate school?

- What factors in life have influenced your coping skills and ability to effectively reduce academic stress?

- If you could offer any advice to current graduate students on how to effectively cope with the stress of completing the program, what would you say?

- If you could go back and change the way you addressed stressors while in graduate school what would you change?

- How much influence did the recent economic recession have on your stress levels while in graduate school?

- Demographic information

  1. Age
  2. Gender
  3. Ethnicity
  4. Education
  5. Religious affiliation
  6. Year of MSW graduation
  7. College major
  8. Employment status
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Merriam-Webster Dictionary.


