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Student and Faculty Perceptions of Mandated Counseling for Master of Social Work Students

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STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF MANDATED COUNSELING
FOR MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

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

by
Elizabeth Contreras-Estrada
Kasey Rochelle David
June 2016
STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF MANDATED COUNSELING FOR MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

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June 2016

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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed the opinions of students and faculty about perceptions of mandated counseling for Master of Social Work (MSW) students at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The MSW program at CSUSB does not explicitly endorse a strategy to facilitate personal growth and development, such as personal counseling. Given the evidence that counseling can help build self-awareness, reduce stress and manage mental illness, counseling can be beneficial to its students, as it relates to personal growth and professional development. This study’s significance is that it examined social work students and professionals, specifically. This study used a quantitative survey design and the results were analyzed using a between-groups ANOVA. The implications affect policies towards mandated counseling and the means by which students develop professionally.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. vi

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement ............................................................................................................. 1
Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................................... 5
Significance for Social Work Practice ............................................................................... 8
Research Question .......................................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 11
California State University San Bernardino School of Social Work Expectations of Master of Social Work Students ......................................................... 11
Perceptions of Mandated Counseling ............................................................................ 12
Outcome Studies on Mandated Counseling .................................................................. 14
Theories Guiding Conceptualization .............................................................................. 18
Summary ......................................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 20
Study Design .................................................................................................................... 20
Sampling .......................................................................................................................... 21
Data Collection and Instrument .................................................................................... 21
Procedures ...................................................................................................................... 23
Protection of Human Subjects ...................................................................................... 23
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Variables ........................................................................................................27
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Attitudes Towards Mandated Counseling by Specialization………………31
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Students face a number of unique pressures while in college, such as managing stress, lifestyle changes, and acclimating to a new environment with more rigorous standards (Garrett, 2001). These pressures create a need for adjustment and the creation of coping mechanisms so students may persist and be successful in their education. Poor adjustment, such as ineffective coping skills for a high stress environment, has been shown to be a factor in students not doing well in school or dropping out completely. Research has illustrated, that stress reduction for college students helps them achieve their academic success by increasing their ability to manage and cope (Murff, 2005). Stress management is an important tool for this population, but it is only a small part of overall mental health.

Addressing mental health in the college population as it pertains to not just academic but overall success has become very important. It was noted by Davis and Humphrey (2000) that over 75% of university counseling center directors noted an increase in the number of students displaying complex psychological problems. Students may be exiting school prematurely based more directly or indirectly upon psychological health and wellness rather than academic failure. This suggests that there is a need for a system in place to support and facilitate
student mental health and wellness, because it has been shown to affect academic achievement and self-growth.

Travers, Morisano, and Locke (2015) studied “growth goals”, which were goals that were related to personal growth among undergraduate college students. They found that this type of personal, reflective goal setting had both direct and indirect effects on academic success. For example, students who developed personal “growth goals” had developed a better work-life balance, acquired abilities to manage stress, increased social support, and abilities to cope. These effects translated to an increased ability to ask questions in class and seek support from others, reduced stress, increased positive self-esteem and satisfaction with school performance. This finding lends support to the idea that universities and academic programs should invest in the elements that have been empirically proven to support academic achievement, such as investing in mental health and personal growth, and not just academic growth and success.

However, most of the literature on mental health and student success has been done on undergraduate students (Prosek, Holm & Daly, 2013). There is a dearth of research on graduate student’s mental health and wellbeing as it pertains to their academic or professional success. This is an important topic to study because graduate students face additional pressures while in school, such as finances, researching, teaching and securing employment (Lustig, Madon, Hyun, & Quinn, 2006; S. A. Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003).
Special consideration should be given when it comes to evaluating the elements that support graduate students, as they adjust differently and need different resources than undergraduate students (S. A. Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003). For instance, Lustig, Madon, Hyun, and Quinn (2006) stated that 40% of graduate students surveyed reported feeling overwhelmed, “frequently” or “all of the time” along with feelings of depression and other negative emotional states. This illuminates the need to assess and address graduate students mental health needs, including research on any possible relationship between student field or discipline and utilization of mental health services.

Graduate students in social work, specifically, have even less research. This is surprising because students in social science programs are not immune to any risk factors for academic decline or psychological distress. Graduate students in the sciences were actually found to have higher levels of overall stress and presentation of mental health problems (Toews et al., 1997).

Students enrolled in graduate social work programs should be evaluated as needing just as much consideration about mental health needs because they may also include some of the same foci of other programs, such as providing counseling. For instance, Prosek, Holm and Daly (2013) stated that students enrolled in Master's-level counseling programs have been shown to display clinically significant levels of distress on mental health scales. Smith et al. (2007) also found that 16.8% of counseling students reported significant impairments in
fulfilling obligations and roles at work, home, and school. Psychological distress and unfulfilled obligations may lead to untreated mental illness, which has been an important contributor to graduate school dropout (Turner & Berry, 2000).

Professional development creates another implication. Building the professional self is comprised of many factors, such as gaining knowledge of self and others, building competency, knowing ethical and legal obligations and managing multiple roles. Social work students may engage in micro or macro practice, which necessitates that they develop good self-awareness, knowledge of theoretical foundations and applications, an ability to relate to others and their clients, demonstrate strong competency as a practitioner and be familiar with professional obligations. How social work students acquire this professional development and how it is related to academic development is delineated differently in each individual social work program.

As the research showed that personal growth and development was related to academic growth and success, it follows that personal growth would also relate to professional growth and development. In graduate school, developing this professional growth is just as important as being academically successful. These concepts are interconnected, and so must be the strategies to develop them.

The Masters of Social Work program at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) does not explicitly endorse a strategy to facilitate personal growth and development, such as personal counseling (L. Smith, personal
communication, June 5, 2015). Given the evidence that counseling can help build self-awareness (Topuz & Arasan, 2014), reduce stress (Seibel, 1997) and manage mental illness, (Prosek, Holm & Daly, 2013) counseling can be beneficial to its students, as it relates to personal growth, academic success and professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes toward mandated counseling for Masters of Social Work students at CSUSB. The study participants are from the CSUSB School of Social Work program, consisting of bachelors- and Masters-level students, and faculty. This study seeks to understand the attitudes toward mandated counseling for MSW students to address why no clear policy or recommendation exists for this social work program. This study also aims to differentiate the attitudes between students and faculty, as well as by educational status (e.g. bachelors or masters).

The CSUSB School of Social Work teaches the generalist model for social work practice. The generalist model includes learning both a micro and a macro practice focus. In a micro practice orientation, students engage in micro practice social work, such as case management and individual therapy. With a macro practice orientation, students learn and participate in community organizing, advocate for changes in policy, evaluate program effectiveness and more (Popple & Leinhninger, 2011). Being equipped with both orientations is considered
an integral part of social work practice and the program is made academically and professionally rigorous to support the utilization of the generalist model.

Having a program that challenges the students personally and professionally means that the students need to be equipped with the right coping skills, be able to function well interpersonally and maintain good communication throughout the process with professors and others directly involved in their learning and professional growth. Exploring counseling as a mandate will evaluate whether or not participants believe these processes happen through therapy. Also, having a program that allows students to become therapeutic clinicians themselves necessitates being able to empathize with consumers of mental health treatment. This would mean being able to accurately understand and relate to the feeling of being a consumer. Having a mandate of counseling for each student intending to practice therapy would fulfill this requirement.

Studies have shown that there are characteristics of graduate programs that related to the emotional well-being of the students and the likelihood of graduating. When a program focuses on a professional versus an academic degree, has a high level of administrative, social and financial support from the department, and utilization of counseling is considered positive, students are more likely adjust well psychologically and to graduate (Benton, 2003). A counseling mandate would authenticate the belief that counseling is an often needed and an appropriate way to give support to students. It would normalize the experience for students and in-training clinicians and be considered part of a
strong graduate program with a supportive faculty, increasing their chance of success. Currently, there is no requirement for counseling to be admitted or to graduate the CSUSB Masters of Social Work (MSW) program.

Students enrolled in this program are particularly concerned about this study because it has implications for policy. If mandated counseling becomes a policy, it may affect the student's choice of programs. Some students may or may not enroll in a social work program with mandated counseling. A student with a macro practice orientation or someone who does not see themselves as struggling may not see the utility in this mandate and thus this program.

It may also create or alleviate any negative reactions towards receiving counseling. For instance, if a student was struggling personally while in the program and not able to cope, enrolling in a program with this requirement may alleviate any negative feelings about the stigma to enter personal counseling to cope, because every student receives the same.

Professors, field instructors and others involved in the integration of the classroom and the field are also concerned with this study in that they may make personal recommendations for some students to seek counseling for professional development. Professors who have been in the field for a long period of time may encourage it to enhance students' abilities to empathize with clients, because they would have experienced the vulnerability the clients feel when entering therapy, but students may never initiate it.
The method for collecting the data is a self-administered survey design, to be delivered electronically to the participants. Using a survey design will allow the researchers to best capture participants’ attitudes and beliefs on the topic, using measures that can be analyzed quantitatively. It is also most appropriate data collection method about attitudes for a large group of people. Responses will be gathered on a likert-type scale, using responses like “agree” and “disagree” and “neither agree nor disagree”.

The most appropriate method to capture the attitudes of the participants is to create an instrument specifically for this study. However, one limitation of creating an instrument is that the reliability and validity will be unknown. Given the limited time frame for data collection, and the objective for the current study to assess and not implement, a quantitative, self-administered survey design will be most practical and applicable to the topic matter.

Significance for Social Work Practice

There is no available research on social work programs and views about mandated counseling as there are with Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) and other “counseling” programs. Social work programs often have a micro practice focus that includes the use of assessment and diagnosis, similar to MFT and counseling, however social work programs are not given the same degree of research and evaluation of attitudes towards a mandate for counseling. It is possible that because micro practice is not always social work’s only focus, it has
not been a priority in research. This study will be significant to social work in that it will examine social work students and professionals.

The key findings of this study contribute to social work knowledge by informing social work policy and education standards and adding to the social work body of knowledge. The results may provide support for or against education standards that include personal therapy as a part of the curriculum. If the results of this study indicate that the participants agree with mandated counseling at the master's-level, the Council on Social Work Education may want to include it as a part of social work education, whether the mandate is used to address personal coping, professional growth or both. However, if the findings indicate that mandated counseling during the program is too intrusive or ill-advised because of the personal characteristics of the students, then policy will be better informed.

The phase of the generalist intervention process informed by this study is engagement and assessment. The study will engage with the participants and elicit their attitudes, opinions and beliefs about mandated counseling. This study will then assess participant attitudes for or against mandated counseling.

Exploring views for a mandate of counseling for MSW students would inform policy decisions and have practical consequences. One practical consequence is that they are able to cope with the demands of an academically and professionally rigorous program, operating under the generalist model.
Research Question

Oden, Miner-Holden & Balkin (2009) study is similar to the one this proposal would like to investigate; this proposal would like to investigate the attitudes toward a counseling mandate for students of the CSUSB Masters of Social Work program. This study will be different than other studies in that it will be more current, it will be specific to the population of MSW students and not just “counseling” students. It would ascertain the perceptions of benefits of counseling, history of counseling and any perceived benefits and reasons for or against a mandate for counseling. One of the implications of this study would be the Department would have data about attitudes to rely on, should it decide to follow up and make a recommendation or mandate for counseling. This study seeks to ascertain the difference between student and faculty perceptions of mandated counseling for MSW students at CSUSB and furthermore, if there is a difference in attitudes when compared by specialization.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
The literature review will be reported in four sections. Section one will discuss gaps in the literature. Section two will discuss limitations of the literature. Section three will discuss support found in the literature. Section four will discuss theories guiding conceptualization.

California State University San Bernardino School of Social Work
Expectations of Master of Social Work Students

Chapter 4 of the MSW Handbook in the School of Social Work of CSUSB, describes the “Standards for Social Work Education”. The Handbook states that because of the nature of professional social work practice, the School of Social Work has different expectations for its students and it lists the skills and competencies students must acquire in order to be successful professionally and academically. It states that the following standards are linked to student’s abilities to become effective social work professionals.

The CSUSB School of Social Work MSW Student Handbook (2014) addresses in Section 2.2 “Emotional and Mental Abilities Necessary for Performance in the Program and Professional Practice” and in 2.3 “Professional Performance Skills Necessary for Work with Clients and Professional Practice”. These areas cover stress management, emotional and mental capacities, self-awareness, interpersonal, communication and cognitive skills. The professional
standards for the MSW program are clearly addressed in the Handbook, but the expectation for how they will develop the personal self while in the program is absent. Professional growth, however, is depicted as excelling in field placement and in education.

Even in the beginning of their education in the master’s program, many social work students face high levels of stress (Graham & Shier, 2013). Social work students must take on multiple roles, because developing professionally, usually means a field internship and focusing on education simultaneously. Social work itself is at a higher than average risk of occupational stress due to the emphasis in helping others (Moran & Hughes, 2006), so the nature of the field necessitates students to have self-awareness, role-management, insight, emotion-management and to be psychologically capable. There is so much to learn and apply in practice that many students lose control of or focus on their personal self. In this regard, counseling as a mandate of the CSUSB MSW program could help students to develop personally, academically and professionally. The MSW Handbook proposes social workers acquire these features, but they do not propose a methodology.

Perceptions of Mandated Counseling

Fouad and Hains (1990) looked at 106 master’s level counseling program students’ views in participating in required counseling for counselors in training. Out of the 106 masters levels counseling students, 66% supported the idea of having students enroll in required counseling. Some of the students who
supported counseling, had a past history of counseling. This may be in an important variable in support for or against a counseling mandate. Fouad and Hains (1990) described how the self-awareness and the mental health of clients were affected when the counselor/therapist had high or low self-esteem, as found through therapy while in the program. The authors showed that counselors who had high self-esteem were more likely to increase the client’s self-esteem compared to counselors who had low self-esteem (Fouad & Hains, 1990). This study illustrates the personal qualities of the therapist affecting that of the client.

More research with related findings is the study of White and Franzoni (1990) who studied professional counselors and personal mental health. White and Franzoni (1990) found that students enrolled in counseling programs had higher levels of psychopathology than did the general population. In the study, 191 graduate counseling students were studied to see their emotional state. The study indicated that some professionals who enter into the mental health field do so in order to resolve their own emotional problems. They posited that the types of students who enter counseling programs might be doing it to avoid seeking their own individual treatment. Through the results of the study, the authors suggested that students in counseling programs should begin to find ways of identifying students with psychological problems and that the programs should recommend personal counseling (White & Franzoni, 1990). This study illustrates that, mandated counseling can be beneficial but the findings are not current.
Outcome Studies on Mandated Counseling

Prosek, Holm and Daly (2013) studied whether counseling students who participated in 10 sessions of counseling, as a part of a course requirement, would demonstrate decreases in overall problems, depression and anxiety. The study measured depression and anxiety through scaled measures on 55 graduate students enrolled in master’s level counseling program. Data was collected through a self-reported intake form developed by the counseling clinic using three subscales of the Adult Self Report (ASR) - total problems, DSM-oriented Depressive Problems, and DSM-oriented Anxiety problems. The study demonstrated that students enrolled in introductory counseling courses reported fewer problems, decreased depressive symptoms and decreased anxiety symptoms after receiving required counseling. This study however, did not survey the attitudes of the students in regards to support for or against mandated counseling after the decrease in symptomology.

This study supported a previous study done by Leech (2007) where differences between required counseling and not required counseling in master’s degree programs were studied depending on four variables: attitude toward counseling, social support, self-concealment and distress. Five one-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to determine the differences in programs requiring counseling versus the other ones that do not require counseling. The results showed that counseling students in required
counseling programs reported higher levels of perceived social support and lower levels of distress.

Oden, Miner-Holden and Balkin (2009) surveyed 164 students in a counseling preparation program that required 10 sessions of individual counseling. This study examined the counseling student’s perceptions on the effects of the counseling requirement on self-awareness, their support for the counseling requirement and their recommendation for enhancing effectiveness of the required counseling experience. The instrument was developed for the study by the researchers and consisted of a survey to assess student’s perceptions of required counseling in the counseling program which included: whether they supported required counseling for future students, what they would change of the program and any additional notes they wanted to provide about their experience in required counseling. The results of the study demonstrated that participants were better able to identify with and relate to the clients, became more self-aware, understood the counseling process better, had increased personal growth, understood the role of the counselor and gained insight about expectations of the program (Oden, Miner-Holden & Balkin, 2009). One limitation of this study is that the term “counseling preparation programs” may include a wide variety of programs, not necessarily graduate-level social work program.

Professors in graduate school tend to focus on education, but not necessarily on personal development (R. Allinson, personal communication, June 5, 2015). Counseling can be used as a tool for self-awareness, since most
program does not explicitly state how students are to develop it; counseling grants students the chance to gain self-awareness and be able to experience the client's point of view. Some benefits for graduate students engaging in therapy are increases in the emotional health of the therapist, a deeper understanding of intra- and interpersonal functioning and increased self-awareness, a decrease in the therapeutic blind spot, increases in the therapist's personal conviction about the ability of therapy to work and an increased respect for the role of the client (De Vries & Valadez, 2006).

De Vries and Valadez (2006) examined graduate students on their attitudes toward counseling and mental health. The study used many measures to test for the attitudes of required counseling: Personal Orientation Inventory, the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire and the Attitude toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale. The results showed that the attitudes towards counseling were negative or impaired demonstrating that many of the students might not be prepared to begin a career in the profession of counseling.

A qualitative study by Downs (as cited in De Vries & Valadez, 2006) investigated graduate level counseling students' perception of mandated counseling. Findings suggest that 69% of participants felt that they needed or benefited from counseling. The students surveyed believed they benefited from counseling because they could relate to the feeling of being a consumer of mental health treatment. (De Vries & Valadez, 2006). Neukrug and Williams (1993), through a survey questionnaire, found that women were more likely to
seek out counseling or therapy than men. This illustrates the importance of self-awareness in practice important because counselors should be able to be productive and insightful by identifying the good and negative qualities of themselves. One way that this can be facilitated in graduate school is to encourage students to engage as clients in the therapeutic process.

As part of researching this project, the authors contacted 14 accredited Masters of Social Work schools in California. Of these requests, 9 responded to the inquiry. Azusa Pacific University, California State University, Fullerton, Northridge, Stanislaus, Sacramento, San Bernardino, Humboldt State University, University of California Berkeley and San Jose State all do not require the students in their MSW programs to seek out counseling, nor do they make recommendations. At most, any recommendations would come on a personal basis, if the student was observed to be having personal difficulties interfering with their academic success or a stress related incident (D. Tran, personal communication, June 8, 2015; M. Sommer, personal communication, June 9, 2015).

Fouad and Hains (1990) used an instrument that may be beneficial is the Survey of Attitudes Regarding Counseling (SARC). This instrument consisted of 15 item questionnaire designed to assess students attitudes toward counseling, the items are designed to determine history of counseling prior to taking counseling classes and, if so, their satisfaction with counseling. The instrument also assessed whether or not students should be required to take counseling as
a part of their counseling program, the type of counseling they would seek and whether or not they would enter the program based on this requirement. This instrument looks very similar to the questions that would be addressed in this proposal. The questions would be very similar in that, students would be asked if they would be willing to be part of the program if counseling was a requirement. One limitation in using this instrument is that it might be outdated, since this study was in 1990.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

One theory guiding this study topic conceptualization is stress management model. Slavik and Croake (2006) define the stress-diathesis model as having two parts: the cognitive and interactive aspects of stress. Cognitive stress-diathesis models are defined as the vulnerability that people think of themselves and the world. Interactive stress-diathesis models places responsibility on behavior instead than on the manner of thinking. These concepts are of interest to this proposal because it illustrates the theory of stress being closely related to mental illness, such as depression and vulnerability. The social work profession requires a lot of time for students to focus and many of the duties of a social worker can cause stress. Slavik and Croake (2006) explained that many of the people studied who didn’t have coping skills to alleviate their stress were left vulnerable to contracting depressive symptoms (Slavik & Croake, 2006). As the profession of social work often includes work in mental health,
social work practitioners would need to be aware of self and stress levels to prevent mental illness such as depression.

Because the level of stress in graduate school is high, and the pressures students face are different than undergraduate students (Lustig, Madon, Hyun, & Quinn, 2006) having coping mechanisms built into the program can help students alleviate their stress. In a graduate social work program stress relief, personal development and professional growth will all be interrelated.

Summary

Many of the studies conducted were with graduate students who had been part of a program that required individual counseling through different programs. The results showed that student support for mandated counseling varied, along with individual and psychological factors. There is support for mandated counseling in the literature, however little research done and differing terminology makes results difficult to apply.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The contents of this chapter present the methods used in this exploratory study. This chapter specifically covers the design, procedures, sampling method, data collection, instrument, the protection of human subjects, and quantitative data analysis.

Study Design

This study explores graduate Social Work Students’ attitudes and beliefs toward mandated counseling at California State University, San Bernardino. The information gained from this study is being used to better understand attitudes towards counseling and trends for seeking counseling, to best meet the mental health needs of students in the Masters of Social Work program. This was accomplished through quantitative survey design.

The research method was a self-administered, electronic survey questionnaire. This design is most appropriate for data collection about assessing attitudes of a large sample of people. The survey was mailed electronically for participants to complete.

One limitation of this study’s design is that there are a limited number of participants to survey. Without a large number of participants, the results may be difficult to generalize to the larger population. Another limitation of this study is
the degree to which respondents were honest in their answers. Survey designs rely on the respondents to be truthful in their responses, but researchers need to be aware that the nature of the questions or perceived impact of the distribution of study results may lead some respondents to answer dishonestly.

Sampling

This study employs convenience sampling, where the researchers reached out to the students and faculty of the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. The sample consists of bachelor's-level and masters-level students, along with program faculty. Approximately 402 potential participants are being utilized, with 105 being Bachelors students, 259 Masters students and 37 faculty.

Sampling criteria include that the students are currently enrolled and the program faculty be currently employed, with all participants being at least 18 years of age. The desired number of participants is 150, comprised of a mixture of students and faculty. A sample of this size is desired to accurately capture the beliefs represented by each category of participants and to increase the researchers’ ability to statistically analyze the data for meaningful results.

Participants were recruited via email solicitation.

Data Collection and Instrument

Data for the study was collected by the use of self-administered survey questionnaires (see Appendix A). The instrument developed for this study was
broken into two sections: demographics and beliefs about counseling. The demographics section collected information such as age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, employment status, and general health status. The level of measurement for the data were nominal, ordinal, and interval/ratio data. The beliefs about counseling section captured concepts such as attitudes towards counseling, history of past counseling, perceived benefits of counseling, support for a counseling mandate and reasons why the respondents would or would not support mandated counseling. The beliefs about counseling section were specific to faculty or students. Students were asked to fill out demographics and the “student” section of the instrument. Faculty were asked to fill out demographics and the “faculty” section of the instrument. A five-point likert scale was utilized with possible responses of “strongly agree”, “somewhat agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree”. One limitation of creating an instrument for this study was that it has unknown validity and reliability as this instrument was designed in 2015, specifically for this study. Another limitation is that cultural sensitivity is unknown. The strength of using this method is that it is the best tool to capture the attitudes and beliefs of a large group of people.

The independent variable considered is student and faculty status and the dependent variable is attitudes toward mandated counseling. An instrument was created for this study because the researchers needed a tool to capture the perceptions of mandated counseling for social work students, specifically. Most
of the literature described “counseling” as general and was not specific to social work students. The instrument was created by evaluating what concepts would be measured and then altering the concepts to appear in question form.

Procedures

The researchers have approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Social Work Sub-committee to conduct this study. The researchers also have a letter of support from the Director of Social Work to utilize the population. The data collection began in January 2016 after IRB approval and continued until March 2016. The survey link was delivered electronically to student and faculty email addresses on file with the School of Social Work. The researchers advertised the study by leaving flyers in the student mailboxes to inform them of the upcoming study. Participants were provided with a consent form before being able to access the survey. Once participants sign the consent form, understand the purpose of the study, risks and benefits, and that participation is voluntary, they accessed the survey. The data was collected via self-administered questionnaires. The researchers compiled a record of all surveys completed, electronically. There were no incentives offered for participation.

Protection of Human Subjects

The primary concern of the researchers in this study is to protect the privacy of the participants. Therefore, in order to protect the human subjects involved in this study, the following precautions were taken. First, participants
were advised in informed consent, prior to survey access, that all participation is completely voluntary and that they may withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. They may also refuse to answer any questions that they do not want to, without penalty. Second, no identifying information was collected, such as names, addresses and phone numbers to limit the amount of information that can be linked to the participants. Third, access to the data was limited to the researchers. The data was secured in a password-protected computer, and was input into statistical software for analysis only by the researchers. After the study has completed, the data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

This study will employ quantitative analyses techniques. This study used descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the sample, such as measures of central tendency, measures of variability, and frequency distribution. One-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used.

The concepts, constructs, and variables to be measured are age, gender, beliefs about counseling, practice orientation, student status and history of counseling. All relationships will be correlational or descriptive in nature. The study will not employ an experimental design, and thus cannot make causal conclusions. The relationships to be examined will be faculty perceptions compared to student perceptions, undergraduate compared to graduate students' perceptions, and history of counseling and beliefs about general efficacy of counseling compared to support for or against a mandate for counseling.
Summary

This chapter presented the methodology of how this exploratory study will be conducted. This quantitative study will explore the attitudes towards mandated counseling for Masters of Social Work Students at California State University, San Bernardino and the relationship among concepts such as age, student status and history of counseling. Self-administered survey questionnaires will be electronically delivered to the participants and the appropriate statistical tests, such as chi square and t-tests, will be used to analyze the results.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will cover the statistical analyses used, the demographics of the participants and results of the data. Tables are used to facilitate descriptions of all of the demographic variables.

Demographics

This study collected demographics about age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, family income, number of children, overall health and practice orientation. This study sampled 83 participants, of whom 10.8% were male and 89.2% were female. “Ethnic identity” also varied. 41.50% of participants identified as “White/Caucasian”, 13.40% identified as “Black or African American”, and 37.80% identified as being “Hispanic or Latino. Practice focus of the respondents were represented roughly equally, with 42.20% “micro practice”, with 43.40% identifying as both “micro and macro practice”, 8.40% “macro practice and 6% reporting “unsure”. A majority of participants specializations were “child welfare” (41.70%) and “mental health” (29.80%).
Table 1. Demographic Variables

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<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<td>Very Good</td>
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<td>Good</td>
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<td>Gerontology</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>School social work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work in the health care system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correctional services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social work in the work place</td>
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<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Analysis

This study collected demographics as outlined in Table1. The data of this quantitative study were analyzed using a one way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) and an independent samples t-test to explore student and faculty attitudes about mandated counseling for MSW students. The attitudes were measured by a survey design to capture their beliefs about mandated counseling for MSW students at CSUSB.

Students and Faculty Perceptions about Mandated Counseling

One way between group analysis of variance explored whether student and faculty attitudes about mandated counseling for MSW students differ. There was no statistical significance ($p = .815$) between MSW students, BSW students and faculty attitudes towards mandated counseling: $F (2, 77) = .205, p = .815$. The analyses failed to yield significant results for a difference between MSW students, BSW students and faculty attitudes about mandated counseling for MSW students. The average score for all three groups combined was $M = 8.79$ ($SD = 3.60$), with a minimum raw score of 5 and a maximum raw score of 25. On this scale, a total score of 5 represented answering “strongly agree” on all items and a total score of 25 represented answering “strongly disagree” on all items. The scores were then averaged per group and yielded averages for MSW students of $M = 8.88$ ($SD = 3.52$), BSW students at $M = 8.10$ ($SD = 2.64$) and $M = 8.91$ ($SD = 4.85$) for faculty.
Since there was not a large enough sample size for each of the self-identified specializations, our study only assessed the mental health and child welfare specializations in regards to their attitude to mandated counseling. Therefore, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the attitude to mandated counseling scores for child welfare and mental health specialization (see Figure 1). Results indicated a significant difference in scores between mental health ($M = 7.79$, $SD = 3.31$) and child welfare specialization ($M = 9.71$, $SD = 3.61$; $t(56) = 2.06, p < .05$, two-tailed), demonstrating that those who specialized in mental health practice are more likely to agree to mandated counseling than those in child welfare.

Attitudes Towards Mandated Counseling by Specialization

![Figure 1](image.png)

Figure 1. This figure illustrates the average score broken down by specialization, indicating that those who specialize in mental health were more in support for mandated counseling than those who specialized in child welfare.
Summary

This chapter illustrated the demographics of the participants surveyed and discussed the results of a one way between-groups ANOVA and an independent samples t-test. These analyses were used to determine statistical significance between participant status and specialization and attitudes towards mandated counseling. The data failed to yield significant results regarding attitudes towards mandated counseling for MSW at CSUSB students between Masters students, Bachelors students and Faculty.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will present the significant findings of perceptions of mandated counseling for MSW students at California State University, San Bernardino. Limitations of the study, suggestions for future research and implications for social work practice will also be presented.

Support Towards a Mandate

The researchers sought to identify student and faculty beliefs about mandated counseling for MSW students at CSUSB. The data of this study did not yield significant results, indicating that there is no difference between BSW students, MSW students and faculty on attitudes towards mandated counseling for MSW students at CSUSB. When cumulative answer choices ranged from a minimum raw score of 5 to a maximum raw score of 25, the average score of all three groups was $M=8.79$. Furthermore, the averages did not differ significantly between the groups (BSW, $M=8.10$, MSW, $M=8.88$, and faculty $M=8.91$).

One reason some respondents would support a mandate for counseling included gaining self-awareness. This is upheld in the literature as studied in Oden, Miner-Holden and Balkin (2009). This study reported that students enrolled in a “counseling preparatory program”, whom were required to undergo at least 10 sessions of counseling themselves, felt they gained self-awareness
and insight as a result of receiving required personal counseling. Participants of the researchers study also reported greater feelings of self-growth and a better understanding of program expectations. Counseling is shown to develop good self-awareness, knowledge of theoretical foundations and applications, and an ability to relate to others and their clients in students enrolled in a masters-level “counseling program” (Topuz & Arasan, 2014; Selbel, 1977; Prosek, Holm & Daly, 2013).

A second common reason respondents stated they would support mandated counseling was if a student had been affected by a personal event/trauma or demonstrated having their own mental health symptoms that interfered with their ability to participate in field practicum or classroom learning. For instance, some respondents felt that mental health symptomology, trauma, grief and loss, or tragedy that interfered with the students’ ability to learn, grow and develop as an MSW would be grounds for mandated counseling.

Research, though more dated, has supported the finding that graduate students have higher levels of overall stress and do present mental health symptoms in graduate programs of the social sciences (Toews et al., 1997). There is also agreement in the literature from Prosek, Holm and Daly (2013) on levels of clinical distress in students enrolled in a graduate counseling program. Students in this study participated in mandated counseling as a part of their counseling program and reported to have fewer problems, reduced depressive symptoms and fewer anxious symptoms after receiving required counseling. As
graduate counseling students are not immune from depression and anxiety, any history of trauma or mental health symptomology may be compounded by the additional stressors of a graduate program, creating the need for counseling as a program component.

Support for a mandate for counseling has also been found with De Vries and Valadez (2006). These researchers found that of those surveyed about perception of mandated counseling for graduate counseling programs, 69% reported they felt they needed or benefitted from counseling. Those surveyed also reported that mandated counseling helped to build their professional competency, by allowing them to experience the vulnerability of being a consumer of mental health services.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the instrument was not assessed for its validity. No instrument could be found that explored the research area, specific to the social work practice, in the existing literature. Another limitation of this study is that only 8.0% of the sample surveyed was comprised of BSW students and only 14.4% surveyed identified as faculty.

A third limitation of this study is that a disproportionate ratio of females to males were sampled. 89.20 % of the sample surveyed identified as female, while only 10.80% identified as male. Due to the disproportionate demographics, caution must be taken when generalizing gender and respondent status to the population from which these samples were drawn.
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

One suggestion for social work practice, policy and research is to continually evaluate what constitutes critical components of social work education. This study explored how perception of social work education may have evolved to include the students’ own mental health as a part of the curriculum. Mandating personal therapy as a part of the social work curriculum could build professional competency, increase student’s self-awareness and allow students to experience the vulnerability of being a consumer of mental health treatment if they have not been, already. It is incumbent, then, to explore what an evolved picture of social work education may look like.

Another suggestion for social work research, policy and practice is to investigate the extent to which students feel the professional experience is impacted by receiving mental health counseling while in school. Because social work is comprised of more than mental health concentrations, some social work students may not feel that engaging in mental health services applies to them because they do not plan to enter the mental health field. For example, students intending to go into child welfare practice may not see a direct link between building professional competency and receiving mental health counseling. When analyses for this study were run testing perceptions of mandated counseling between mental health and child welfare specializations, the results found a significant difference in scores, such that those who specialized in mental health practice were more likely to agree to mandated counseling than those in child...
welfare. A closer look at specialization and agreement for a mandate is necessary in order to determine whether students feel they will be impacted by counseling.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This study adds to the professional body of literature in social work practice about perceptions of mandated counseling for graduate counseling students. Historically, only Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) and other “counseling” programs have been extensively researched. Social work programs are similar to MFT and other counseling programs, in regards to their use of micro practice components, such as mental health assessment, diagnosis and interventions.

Another implication is to draw awareness to CSUSB about the beliefs of their students and faculty. Even though CSUSB does not explicitly endorse a strategy to facilitate personal growth and development, such as personal counseling (L. Smith, personal communication, June 5, 2015), this study can strategize other ways to implement or offer personal therapy to all the students in their Masters of Social Work program.

Summary

This section explored student and faculty perceptions of mandated counseling for MSW students at California State University, San Bernardino. The results of this study illustrated that no significant differences exist in attitudes
towards mandated counseling between the groups studied (e.g. BSW and MSW students and faculty). However, there was a difference in attitudes, when analyzed by mental health and child welfare specializations, with mental health specializations supporting mandated counseling. One limitation of this study is that a significant portion of the respondents were female, so caution must be taken when generalizing results. One implication of this research is that the perceived components of social work education may be evolving to include the student’s own mental health as a part of the curriculum. Suggestions for future research include further surveying Masters of Social Work students by specialization to ascertain the degree to which they feel their specialization requires their own mental health to be taken into account while in school.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Attitudes Toward Mandated Counseling for Masters of Social Work (MSW) Students at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB)

This survey is designed to explore attitudes and beliefs about mandated counseling for Masters of Social Work students at CSUSB. There are no correct or incorrect answers and your responses will remain anonymous. This survey is completely voluntary. You may stop at any time and leave questions unanswered, without penalty. Thank you for your participation!

Section A:
First, let’s get to know you better. Tell us about yourself.

1. What is your gender?
   1. Male
   2. Female
   3. Other (please specify)

2. How old are you? _________ years

3. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?
   1. Married
   2. Widowed
   3. Divorced
   4. Separated
   5. In a domestic partnership or civil union
   6. Single, but cohabiting with a significant other
   7. Single, never married

4. What is your ethnicity? (please select all that apply)
   1. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   2. Asian or Pacific Islander
   3. Black or African American
   4. Hispanic or Latino
   5. White/Caucasian
   6. Prefer not to answer
   7. Other

5. What is your approximate average household income?
   1. $0-$9,999
   2. $10,000-$19,999
   3. $20,000-$29,999
   4. $30,000-$39,999
   5. $40,000 and up
6. How many children do you have?____________

7. In general, how would you rate your overall health?
   1. Excellent
   2. Very good
   3. Good
   4. Fair
   5. Poor

8. What would you consider your social work practice focus to be?
   1. Micro
   2. Macro
   3. Both
   4. Unsure

9. What is your field of practice or area of specialization?
   1. Child Welfare
   2. Mental Health
   3. Gerontological Social Work
   4. School Social Work
   5. Social Work in the Health Care System
   6. Physical and Mental Disabilities and Rehabilitation
   7. Correctional Services
   8. Social Work in the Work Place
   9. Substance Abuse
   10. International Social Work
   11. Other

10. What is your status?
    1. Masters Student
    2. Bachelors Student
    3. Faculty
Section B

Now, we would like to ask you a few questions about your status as a student.

**Students Status- Masters**
1. Which cohort do you belong to in the Masters of Social Work program?
   1. Full time
   2. Part time
   3. Distance Education Program (Pathways)

2. What year are you in the Masters of Social Work program?
   1. 1st year
   2. 2nd year
   3. 3rd year

3. Are you currently employed outside of the program (excluding internship)?
   1. Not employed
   2. 1-10 hours
   3. 11-15 hours
   4. 16-20 hours
   5. 21 + hours

**Student Status- Bachelors**
1. Are you interested in applying to a Masters of Social Work program?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Unsure

2. Are you currently employed outside of the program (excluding internship)?
   1. Not employed
   2. 1-10 hours
   3. 11-15 hours
   4. 16-20 hours
   5. 21 + hours

*Once you have finished Section B, Please proceed to Section C.*
Section C:
Now, we would like to ask you a few questions about your attitudes and beliefs towards personal counseling. Please reflect on your current experiences and feelings as a student.

S1. Do you have any previous history of or are you currently receiving personal therapy?
   1. Yes
   2. No

S2. If yes, what did you find most helpful about personal therapy?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Using the scale, rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

S3. Personal therapy can be beneficial.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S4. Personal therapy can be beneficial to Masters of Social Work students, while enrolled in the school.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S5. As part of a Masters of Social Work program, all students should receive personal therapy at least once.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
S6. As a Masters or Bachelors of Social Work student, I would seek out personal therapy, if I felt I needed it.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S7. As a Masters or Bachelors of Social Work student, I would be more likely to seek out personal therapy if the school recommended it.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S8. I would willingly enter a Masters of Social Work program where mandated therapy was a program requirement.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S9. As a program requirement, Masters of Social Work students at California State University, San Bernardino, should be mandated to receive personal therapy.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

S10. I believe that under certain conditions, Masters of Social Work students should be mandated to receive personal therapy.
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Somewhat Agree
    3. Neither agree nor disagree
    4. Somewhat Disagree
    5. Strongly Disagree
S11. Under what conditions, if any, should students in the Masters of Social Work program be mandated to receive personal therapy?

S12. I would support a mandate to receive personal therapy for students in a Masters of Social Work program in accredited schools.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
Section D
Now, we would like to ask you a few questions about your attitudes and beliefs towards personal counseling and counseling as a program requirement. Answer these questions based on your experience and knowledge as a faculty member.

F1. Do you have any previous history of or are you currently receiving personal therapy?
   1. Yes
   2. No

F2. If yes, what do/did you find most helpful about personal therapy?
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

Using the scale, rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

F3. Personal therapy can be beneficial.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

F4. Personal therapy can be beneficial to Masters of Social Work students, while enrolled in the program.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

F5. As part of a Masters of Social Work program, all students should experience personal therapy at least once.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree
F6. As a program requirement, Masters of Social Work students at California State University, San Bernardino, should be mandated to receive personal therapy.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

F7. All accredited Masters of Social Work programs should explore mandated therapy.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

F8. I believe that under certain conditions, Masters of Social work students should be mandated to receive personal therapy.
   1. Strongly Agree
   2. Somewhat Agree
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Somewhat Disagree
   5. Strongly Disagree

F9. Under what conditions, if any, should students in the Masters of Social Work program be mandated to receive personal therapy?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your participation!

Developed by Elizabeth Contreras-Estrada & Kasey Rochelle David
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to explore attitudes towards mandated counseling for the Masters of Social Work students at California State University, San Bernardino. The study is being conducted by students Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David, under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragan, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine student, and faculty perceptions of mandated counseling for Masters of Social Work students at California State University, San Bernardino.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked questions regarding their history of counseling, attitudes toward mandated counseling, their practice focus, beliefs about the benefits of counseling, and some demographics.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: It will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Armando Barragan at (909) 537-5301 or armando.barragan@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Please contact Dr. Armando Barragan (email: armando.barragan@csusb.edu) or the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2016.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

Place an X mark here          Date

909.537.5501

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) Elizabeth Conteles & Kasey Davidson
Proposal Title: Student Stress and Faculty's Perception of Mandatory
Counseling for Students of Social Work Students

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the
Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

Proposal is:
[ ] approved
[ ] to be resubmitted with revisions listed below
[ ] to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:
[ ] faculty signature missing
[ ] missing informed consent [ ] debriefing statement
[ ] revisions needed in informed consent [ ] debriefing
[ ] data collection instruments missing
[ ] agency approval letter missing
[ ] CITI missing
[ ] revisions in design needed (specified below)


Committee Chair Signature 12/15/2015
Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student
REFERENCES


D'Andrea, M., and Daniels, J. (1992). Do the leaders of counselor education programs think graduate students should be required to participate in personal counseling: The results of a national survey. *Research/Technical, 143*.


This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. **Data Collection:**

   Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David

2. **Data Entry and Analysis:**

   Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David

3. **Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:**
   a. **Introduction and Literature**

      Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David
   b. **Methods**

      Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David
   c. **Results**

      Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David
   d. **Discussion**

      Team Effort: Elizabeth Contreras and Kasey David