BRIDGING THE GAP: EXPLORING SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Shauna Lei De Jesus
California State University - San Bernardino, 004819616@coyote.csusb.edu

Mariela Licon
California State University - San Bernardino, licom300@coyote.csusb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd
Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation
De Jesus, Shauna Lei and Licon, Mariela, "BRIDGING THE GAP: EXPLORING SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES" (2018). Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations, 647.
http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/647

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
BRIDGING THE GAP: EXPLORING SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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
Shauna Lei De Jesus
Mariela Licon
June 2018
BRIDGING THE GAP: EXPLORING SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PREPAREDNESS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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

by
Shauna Lei De Jesus
Mariela Licon
June 2018

Approved by:
Carolyn McAllister, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work
Janet C. Chang, Research Coordinator
ABSTRACT

Children with developmental disabilities are a particularly vulnerable population with complex, unique needs. In order to ensure that these clients are achieving the best quality of life possible, they typically require an array of community support services where social workers will often intersect with them in a variety of settings and roles. Therefore, there is a substantial need to ensure that student’s entering the workforce as newly qualified workers have some familiarity and exposure to what presenting issues these children are facing as well as the different techniques and tools available to engage with and assess them.

This study examined California State University School of Social Work student's preparedness, willingness, and eagerness to work with children who have developmental disabilities. It utilized a quantitative approach with a questionnaire that was distributed via the Qualtrics system to student’s emails. A total of 80 social work students participated in the study and answered questions regarding their demographics, familial and curriculum exposure to developmental disabilities, their work experience, and their perceived levels of preparedness, willingness, and eagerness to work with children who have developmental disabilities. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the student data collected.

The social work curriculum provided to students in the program is designed with the intent to prepare them for working with a diverse population
that have a variety of needs, which will include individuals who have developmental disabilities. In order to effectively do this, it is recommended that courses offer more comprehensive lesson plans exploring not just a definition-based approach to developmental disabilities, but also incorporate elements of effective engagement, advocacy, and assessment methods.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to Dr. Carolyn McAllister, who supported us and guided us through this experience. Thank you for your dedication to studying the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. We admire your passion and drive for research within this population. We would also like to thank Dr. Chang for her assistance with this process; without her expertise and knowledge, our successful completion would not have been possible. We would also like to thank all the student participants who took the time to complete our survey and help us collect data for our project. Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to the entire CSUSB School of Social Work faculty who have supported all of us students through our academic journeys as well as our personal journeys by always providing the encouragement and support we needed.
DEDICACIÓN

Para mi Madre, Me gustaría agradecerle por siempre estar a mi lado, desde que era pequeña hasta ahora que me e graduado de mi programa de maestría. No hubiera podido completar mi programa de maestría sin su amor, apoyo e inspiración! Te amo mamá, continuarás siendo mi héroe, para siempre!

Special thanks to my wonderful family who have been supportive, empowering, and believed in me! When I was ready to give up, your presence and love fulfilled me to keep pushing. Thank you for instilling the faith of God because with him, anything is possible. Thank you for being my rock, this degree is also yours. TE AMO FAMILIA!

Special thanks to my nephews and niece for the encouragement, hugs, and kisses that you have provided me with throughout my graduate program. I want each of you guys to continue to do well in school, dream big, and make your goals become reality. I wake up every morning and thank God for the beautiful family I have!

Lastly, I would like to thank my thesis partner, Shauna De Jesus you have been a wonderful partner for our thesis, but most importantly throughout our academic experience. Congratulations to the both of us, now let’s go serve those who need our assistance!

Mariela Licon
First and foremost, I ultimately dedicate this project to God, without whom nothing I have accomplished in my life would ever be possible. When my daughter, Maya, was born and diagnosed with Down syndrome almost 8 years ago, I remember being scared and confused about the trajectory that our lives had entered upon. I never imagined the positive impact she would have on our family as well as everyone else she encounters in her day to day life. Her innate ability to comfort, love, and show empathy yet still exhibit strength and determination is something I aspire to emulate. Her struggles have helped to ignite my passion for advocacy and helped me realize that we can impact the world one person at a time, even in the seemingly smallest of ways. I want to dedicate this project not only to her, but also to my son, Michael, my daughter, Desiree, and my husband, Mike. God has blessed me with an amazing family and they are truly my everything.

Desiree, your compassion and enthusiasm for life kept me going through both my BSW and my MSW programs more than you will ever know. You were the angel that God sent to help me change my whole life and the driving force behind my return to school. I love you, Munikin. Michael, your kindness, authenticity, and humor have inspired me to be a better person and I feel so blessed that we became family. Mike, you have been my voice of reason and provided me with balance and unconditional love. As I watch you continue your educational journey, I am beyond proud of the man you have become and the
person you continue to evolve into. We have been through so much and I love you more today than ever. We’ve come a long way since SBVC!

To my mother and father; I could never repay the support that you have provided over the years and I want you to know that I truly appreciate you. To my research partner, Mari, you have been an amazing source of support and kept me grounded through this process when necessary. You are a truly beautiful soul and I know you will do great things in this field. Finally, I dedicate this project to all individuals with developmental disabilities in hopes that one day, we can achieve inclusivity and equity in our society together. Until that day, we will continue using our voices to educate and advocate for you.

Shauna De Jesus
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... v
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement ................................................................................................. 1
Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................. 3
Significance for Social Work Practice ...................................................................... 6
Research Question ................................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 10
Social Work Education and Disabilities ................................................................. 10
Children with Disabilities and the Child Welfare System ....................................... 15
Children with Disabilities in Non-Child Welfare Settings ..................................... 21
Theories Guiding Conceptualization ....................................................................... 24
Summary .................................................................................................................. 27

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 28
Study Design ............................................................................................................ 28
Sampling .................................................................................................................. 30
Data Collection and Instruments ............................................................................. 31
Procedures .............................................................................................................. 33
Protection of Human Subjects .......................................................... 35
Data Analysis ...................................................................................... 36
Summary ............................................................................................ 37

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction ...................................................................................... 39
Demographics .................................................................................. 39
Education .......................................................................................... 41
Confidence Levels ........................................................................... 42
Experience Levels ............................................................................ 44
Presentation of the Findings .............................................................. 47
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 49

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction ...................................................................................... 50
Discussion .......................................................................................... 50
Limitations ........................................................................................ 53
Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy .............................. 56
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 59

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE ..................................................... 61
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT ............................................. 65
APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL .......... 67
REFERENCES .................................................................................... 69
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES ...................................................... 72
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Attributes of Survey Respondents .......................... 40
Table 2. Confidence Levels of Survey Respondents ................................. 43
Table 3. Experience Level of Survey Respondents ................................... 46
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Children with disabilities are at an increased risk for maltreatment. Studies have estimated that children with mental disabilities are as much as two to three times more likely to be victims of child abuse than children who do not have a disability (Hershkowitz, Horowiz, & Lamb, 2007). However, despite these increased abuse rates, there are a limited number of professionals that have expertise in the field of disabilities. Many social workers that these clients encounter are not properly trained in working with this population. This can affect the wellbeing of the child, because the worker may have difficulty communicating, understanding, and making appropriate decisions that are in the best interest of the child and his or her support network.

An inability to communicate with children who have disabilities will lead to missed opportunities for rapport building and oversight of information that is critical to ensuring the most beneficial case planning services. The duty of social workers, as set forth by the National Association of Social Workers, is to practice by a specific code of ethics and values. These key values include respecting a client’s right to self-determination, appropriate service delivery, respecting the dignity and worth of the person, realizing the importance of human relationships, and practicing with integrity and competence (National Association of Social
Workers, 2017). Not being properly trained and educated in the field of disabilities creates a conundrum that impinges on all of these values. Clients cannot make informed decision when their workers cannot provide them with the full scope of information necessary to do so. Appropriate services cannot be recommended by case managers if they are unable to decipher what the client’s totality of needs are or the full spectrum of what their disability entails. Additionally, workers are unable to convey a full level of respect to their clients, to afford them their full level of dignity, or to include them in decision making when they do not understand how to communicate effectively with them. Without proper communication, there is also a lack of comprehension as to who they view their supportive network as. Finally, there is no integrity and competence in practice that is ignorant due to the lack of field training and educational courses related specifically to disability content.

The argument has been presented that CSUSB’s social work curriculum is a generalist model and that appropriate disability related curriculum is incorporated into courses related to human development. Although social work students enrolled at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) gain education in courses such as human behavior and the social environment, working with groups and individuals, policy, and research, there is very little material covered regarding services for children with disabilities. This makes it difficult for a social work graduate who decides to seek employment with this population. The graduate students have limited knowledge and insight, which can
impact the services being delivered and wellbeing of the child. This is particularly concerning public child welfare (Title IV-E) students since in the Child Welfare System, there is a significant percentage of children who have disabilities (Shannon & Tappan, 2010). Furthermore, there is little information and knowledge on how child welfare workers respond to this population.

There is a need for additional curriculum and trainings for social work students. Students would benefit from the CSUSB social work department incorporating specialized curriculum that addresses working with children who have disabilities. This curriculum should provide guidance, assessment methods, and effective resources for children with disabilities. Providing effective support to developing social work professionals should be instructed by a trained professional with expertise that is experienced in working with children who have disabilities. This can be completed by having guest speakers and successful advocates who have served this population. Students who receive proper materials and training can increase their knowledge base and become more prepared for their professional field placements and careers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this proposed research is to assess the preparedness and willingness of CSUSB social work students to work with children with disabilities. It is hypothesized that CSUSB social work students who complete their degree programs are underprepared to work with children with disabilities because they
are not exposed to proper training and tools. This research will evaluate if social work students are interested in, willing to work, and prepared to work with this population.

There are few field internship positions or specialization topics focused on clients with disabilities in many schools of social work, including California State University of San Bernardino (CSUSB). Generalist models infrequently cover disability related information and when the content is covered, it is mainly definition based as opposed to intervention or practice based. Engagement is one the most vital parts of the social worker/client relationship, yet the social work curriculum currently in place fails to address the appropriate tools to engage a client who has a type of developmental disability. There is also no assessment based content, which also sets the foundation for social work case planning services. Additionally, negative biases and inaccurate perceptions of individuals with disabilities are still persistent in both society as well as in the professional field of social work. Exposing the gaps between classroom curriculum and what is needed in the field of employment will seek to mitigate these pervasive and damaging views.

Social work student’s ability to enter the field of practice and appropriately assess disabled clients is impeded by a lack of knowledge on the issues they are facing. When appropriate assessment fails to occur, inadequate services or resources may be recommended, or there may be a substantial discrepancy in what a client needs versus what is included in their case plan. A lack of
collaborative case planning is also a risk which hinders a client’s right to self-
determination and the worker/client relationship. Furthermore, workers will fail to
properly advocate for their clients’ needs when they are unable to communicate
with the client or to have insight as to what their clients are facing systemically
and socially. Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1996) have discussed the lack of
attention social work as a profession has given to disabilities as opposed to other
groups that have faced discrimination and oppression and their minimal efforts in
advocacy of disabled client’s rights (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1996).

The lack of academic curriculum also impacts the recruitment of social
workers within agencies that work with clients who have disabilities. Due to the
absence of solid disability content in the classroom, the number of workers
specializing in work with the disabled community is disproportionate when
compared to other fields of social work. When the field of social work was
examined as a whole and the various subdivisions were compared, there was a
rarity of social workers who worked with persons who had disabilities
(Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1996).

The method of research utilized for this study was quantitative design. A
self-administered electronic questionnaire set up in the Qualtrics program was
distributed via email to all potential participants. This method of data collection
was practical for the number of students enrolled in the CSUSB School of Social
Work and the many sub-programs within the department, which included
Bachelor’s level, Master’s level, part time, full time, distance education
(pathways), child welfare concentrated Title IV-E stipend recipients, and other
generalist track specializations. The design was also beneficial due to the strict
time constraints that the research project afforded the authors. The tool further
ensured participants would be able to complete the questionnaire in a
comfortable and confidential environment at their own leisure.

Significance for Social Work Practice

Throughout the past five decades, the number of minors in the United
States living with a disability has grown three-fold as a result of medical
advancements that have increased survival rates (Murphy & Carbone, 2011).
Children currently comprise the highest increase of disabilities in any age group
in the last ten years (Murphy & Carbone, 2011). With the tremendous growth occurring in this population, specialized education focusing on disability related content and comprehensive training for field interaction is crucial to successful partnerships and case outcomes in practice.

It is also important to note that though social work is a strengths-based profession, data has demonstrated that contact between workers and clients often focuses more on disabilities and presenting issues rather than the client’s strengths and abilities (Galambos, 2004). Traditional biases and lack of education help to facilitate and perpetuate this approach. Increased training in school of social work programs will lead to better communication with clients,
more informed intervention methods, more knowledge on local resources, and better case outcomes for clients overall.

Students who are educated about options in field of social work with developmental disabilities will also make informed decisions about what area they want to work in and if they choose to work in this field, it will have skilled practitioners assisting this vulnerable population. Furthermore, potential cases of abuse will be assessed effectively by workers who are knowledgeable about children with developmental disabilities increased risk for abuse and how to engage with and interview them. Ultimately, more comprehensive training on disabilities further promotes best practice, which is a component of social work education that is emphasized in the Core Practice Model.

With historical passages of key legislation pieces such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, the Americans With Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the United States has begun to move toward a more equitable and inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities. These passages have also affected the field of social work by impacting policy and practice at agency and organizational levels. Gaps in knowledge about disabilities in both workplaces and classrooms, however, have prevented the full potential of this legislation from reaching clients they were passed to affect. Enhanced exposure on the issues facing the disability community as well as comprehensive training on the ranging definitions and symptoms of disabilities will help to create
appropriate policy formulation within agencies as well as in larger, governmental settings.

Social workers’ field exposure affords the ability to provide feedback on how policy is directly impacting those it was passed to assist. By understanding disabilities more thoroughly, workers will have richer insight and ability to become the link between consumers/clients and structural organizations making policy decisions. This can lead to more productive partnerships with lawmakers who seek to pass successful policies that are fiscally responsible.

Increased knowledge about children with developmental disabilities will also increase social worker’s ability to advocate for social justice issues affecting these clients. Informed social worker’s will be able to contribute to policy formulation and legislation. Social workers who are able to effectively communicate with clients can help them to achieve self-determination by assisting in self-advocacy training and sometimes being their voice when they are unable to speak about what is affecting them.

Gourdine & Sanders (2002) have noted the lack of published research on issues regarding disability by scholars in the field of social work; they have further noted the lacking number of social work presentations at disability conferences across the United States (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). Helping to perpetuate this has been the insufficient amount of encouragement offered to students to pursue disability focused employment or curriculum courses (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002).
Social work students receiving adequate exposure to issues facing children with developmental disabilities will expose gaps in research and seek to address these gaps by initiating new studies. The new research will address current problems in this community and help to bring multiple disciplines together to strategize effective solutions. This study will expose student perspectives on potential gaps in CSUSB’s social work curriculum and may inspire future students to continue working toward closing these gaps and advocating for more exposure to children with developmental disabilities and their needs.

Research Question

The researcher’s study attempts to measure whether students enrolled in the CSUSB School of Social Work program are properly prepared to engage and work with children who have developmental disabilities, and whether social work students are willing and eager to work with this population. It is proposed that the knowledge they are exposed to in the classroom may be more definition based than practice centered and that levels of exposure (either in classroom or personal life outside of the program) are directly related to preparedness, willingness, and eagerness.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature presented in this study will explore the issues facing social work education on developmental disabilities in classroom curriculum, the child welfare system, and in other areas of social work field practice. Each of these areas intersects with children who have developmental disabilities in their own individualized ways and thus faces their own set of unique challenges and concerns.

Social Work Education and Disabilities

Children with disabilities are overrepresented in abused populations, yet research shows that they tend to be underrepresented in child welfare caseloads (Orelove, Hollahan, & Myles, 2000). This can be attributed to the lack of knowledge and training in working with this population as well as difficulties in identifying disabilities. There is a collective professional response that more comprehensive training is necessary in the field of social work to address the special needs of children with disabilities, but the actual training components are starkly non-existent. The American Psychological Association has suggested that abuse in disabled populations receive more attention (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006) and the National Association of Social Workers has also stated that disability content is important since social workers frequently serve persons who
are disabled, and their ethical responsibilities include advocacy for oppressed populations (National Association of Social Workers, 2006). Additionally, the Council on Social Work Education has also set forth mandates requiring disability content to be incorporated into accredited social work education programs (CSWE, 2008). An examination of the current state of social work, however, shows a disparity still present in disability training and education both in the classroom and in the field. Research shows that additional barriers currently present in the field of child welfare range from workers attitudes towards cases and clients with disabilities, to lack of protocols and collaboration.

Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1996) address that while social work has an extensive history in advocacy for oppressed populations, it has been less forthcoming in efforts to address the needs of persons who are disabled (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1996). This has, in part, been linked to the pervasive stereotypical views on disabilities and assumptions on what clients diagnosed with them are capable of, as well as the societal medicalization of disabilities. As society has evolved, however, an increased consciousness about abilities, rights, and overall desires of the disabled community has helped to initiate a movement that has worked toward shifting previous perspectives. The field of social work has been slow to completely align with this movement and continues to illustrate inconsistencies between its willingness to serve diverse clients and its lack of provided training and education on persons with disabilities. Mackelprang and Salsgiver further state that this lack of allegiance to individuals with disabilities is
elucidated in the lack of disability related articles being published in social work
literary works and the frequent absence of disability related presentations or
topics at conferences (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1996). These gaps created by
this persistent ideology carry over into social work academic programs and other
structured agencies dealing with disabled children, such as child welfare, where
there is scarcity in training and education on disabilities.

There has been some progress, however, as illustrated by Bean and
Krcek. Their study (2012) showed that 80% of schools offering social work
education across the U.S. did include curriculum focusing on disability into their
courses, mostly through an infused approach (79.8% of courses offered) rather
than a dedicated or specialization style setup (Bean & Krcek, 2012). Infused
approaches distribute content related to disabilities across multiple courses
within curriculum rather than focusing individual classes on the topic (Bean &
Krcek, 2012). Two weaknesses evident in this study were the manner in which
data was collected and where it was gathered from. The researchers utilized
course titles and descriptions from twenty-five of the top ranked schools of social
work in the United States and both BSW and MSW program listings were
analyzed, but analyzing only the top-rated schools affected the generalizability of
the study (Bean & Krcek, 2012). Additionally, this method of examination does
not definitively identify what is covered in the classroom or what knowledge the
students are taking from the curriculum. It was only able to provide whether titles
or descriptions of the offered courses included or failed to include content related
to disabilities (Bean & Krcek, 2012). An additional shortcoming that the authors of the currently proposed study are faced with is that California State University San Bernardino was not included in the list. In fact, the only two California Universities on the list analyzed were both University of California affiliated (Los Angeles and Berkeley), not California State University affiliated.

One study conducted by Ogden, McAllister, and Neely-Barnes (2017) that was inclusive of California State University San Bernardino explored the lack of inclusion of disability related subject matter into current social work curriculum. The study sample included 300 Council of Social Work Education members and utilized a mixed methods (quantitative/qualitative) methodology (Ogden, et. al., 2017). The results indicated that when disability curriculum is offered as an individual course, it is primarily done so outside of the social work program courses (Ogden, et. al., 2017). Disability content was also predominantly incorporated into the curriculum via diversity related courses as opposed to research and evaluation focused classes (Ogden, et. al., 2017). Respondents rated the importance of disability related information in social work curriculum as very high, but reported a disparity of it in their school’s coverage of it was low (Ogden, et. al., 2017). Reasons provided in the qualitative portion of the study for the disparity indicated a lacking interest from social work professors which led to a shortage of teaching material and also that self-professed lack of knowledge about or interest in disability content overall was a core obstruction to including content into their course curriculum (Ogden, et. al., 2017).
Laws et. al. (2010) discussed the need for more comprehensively trained social work students who can successfully enter and navigate the field disability related social work (Laws, et. al., 2010). Their study measured the amount of disability related content exposure in fifty United States schools of social work as well as the backgrounds of the faculty teaching in them. The results showed that there was a marked disparity between the exposure and training in these schools compared to what is needed in communities they will serve upon graduation. The accredited schools failed to offer disability focused curriculum and even when this course work was intermingled within courses that covered broad topics (such as health, mental health, or aging), they were superficial in disability content. Approximately fifty percent of the tenured faculty that taught in these schools, however, indicated that they had research experience that was relative to issues facing the disabled community. Through their research, this faculty had direct access to evidence based practice in disability related content, yet were not given a chance to implement it into their school’s teachings. This failure to explore disability related content beneath the surface resulted in a lack of information for students, therefore creating limited comprehension on the topic. These missed opportunities to link students to developmental disability related information hinders students from potential employment in a field that is in substantial need of a larger workforce that will match the rising population of persons with developmental disabilities they serve.
Children with Disabilities and the Child Welfare System

The fact that children who are disabled are at increased risk and vulnerability for abuse and exploitation vastly increases their chances for interaction with both the social work and child welfare systems. A review of literature from 1996 to 2009 performed by Stalker and McArthur (2010) explored the challenges facing child protection efforts and children with disabilities. Their findings indicated that most research regarding this subject has been performed in the United States, but that there are very few studies both globally and in the U.S., that address disabled children’s own accounts of abuse or their feelings about child protective services systems overall (Stalker & McArthur, 2010). This creates a substantial hardship in meeting juvenile clients’ needs, including them in case planning activities, and ensuring proper service delivery efficiency, all of which are key points in social work. Stalker and McArthur (2010) stated that lack of information on the children’s views regarding services and support perpetuated the gap in knowledge necessary to increase efficacy of child protection services. Current literature across multiple countries indicated that there was a strong correlation between child maltreatment and disability, showing that children who had disabilities were far more likely to be victims of abuse than their non-disabled peers (Stalker & McArthur, 2010). It was also noted that there was evidence that the abuse of children with disabilities is underreported and that more research on cultural and social factors as well as long term effects needs to be undertaken to fully understand the phenomenon and prevalence of abuse in
this population (Stalker & McArther, 2010). There is also a lack of research in efficacy of current child protective services and the present professional responses to this abuse that is occurring (Stalker & McArthur, 2010).

Manders and Stoneman (2009) discussed the response of child welfare workers in Georgia Child Protection Services (CPS) in investigations and case management with families whose children were disabled. In their study, they chose three different types of disabilities for workers to explore and respond to in vignettes: cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, and emotion/behavioral disabilities. Their findings showed that social workers investigating cases where the child was disabled were more likely to empathize with abusive parents and to also believe that the children had characteristics that contributed to their abuse (Manders & Stoneman, 2009). Workers also communicated that they had feelings of discomfort in dealing with children who had disabilities during investigations (Manders & Stoneman, 2009). These cases were also more likely to receive child centered services rather than parent focused, which was the opposite of cases in which the children were not disabled (Manders & Stoneman, 2009). Workers further indicated that they were more sensitive to the fact that a child with a disability helped create additional stress for parents. While this sensitivity was desirable in understanding these cases, it was also indicated that it could possibly lead to the mentality that abusive behavior on the parent’s part was partially excusable. This further created the potential for the child welfare response system’s protective capacity to decrease (Manders & Stoneman,
Manders and Stoneman also found that in cases where a child’s disability could rationalize the appearance of marks or bruises (such as in cerebral palsy), an allegation of abuse was less likely to be substantiated. Overall, this study reflected a substantial need for further training to be provided to CPS workers and for the potential collaboration between workers and disability specialists. They suggested that assembling teams of responders for cases in which children were disabled would prove beneficial to the investigations success. The authors did acknowledge some shortcomings in their study, including the fact that their sample size was small, comprised mainly of volunteers, and the respondents were predominantly white. Moving forward, they discussed the need for a more diverse population to be utilized.

Lightfoot and LaLiberte (2006) examined the types of protocols in place for child welfare case management in Minnesota. The study examined eighty nine percent of the child protection agencies across the state by utilizing telephone surveys with the directors or their designees (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006). Their findings showed that only 6.7% of them (five counties) had a written policy related to services for persons with a disability and that there were eighteen different types of procedures in place (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006). Over 53% of those responding were unaware of any disability related agency policy in place (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006). Five of the counties contacted had workers in place who had expertise in both child protection and disabilities (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006). One of the main barriers identified in survey results was a lack
of disability knowledge in workers, but it was also noted that a third (30.6%) of the participants did encourage their workers to attend trainings on disability related issues and that 14.7% stated their workers had received training from their core, mandatory CPS training (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006). The internet was also listed as a source of data and information gathering for cases involving disabilities by 10.7% of those being surveyed (Lightfoot & LaLiberte, 2006).

Recently, Slayter’s study (2016) evaluated the status of youth with disabilities that were involved with U.S. child welfare systems. Slayter noted that little is currently known about the experiences of those residing in foster care or under the supervision of child protection services (Slayter, 2016). The cross sectional exploratory study analyzed secondary data of youth in the foster care system from all fifty states in the U.S. as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The findings indicated that 31.8% of this population were disabled youth aged zero and older (Slayter, 2016). The findings further raised inquiries as to whether the child welfare system was equipped to handle the needs of these minor clients and whether there were enough specialized foster care homes to support these children with difficulties in areas such as communication or hearing impairment, such as children who utilize sign language (Slayter, 2016). Slayter also suggested that disabled youth had an increased amount of contact with the child welfare system than their non-disabled peers (Slayter, 2016). The study also discussed the need for more collaboration between the child welfare system and the disability system, noting that there is substantial gap between practice
approaches and the underlying theoretical approaches in each of these systems (Slayter, 2016). Disability competency trainings are not only necessary for child welfare, education, and disability workers, but also for new foster and pre-adoptive parents who can help to promote inclusion of these children and foster change toward a more positive social reaction toward them (Slayter, 2016).

Shannon and Tappan (2010) also examined the experiences of children with developmental disabilities in the child welfare system. Their data showed similar results indicating that there is difficulty in accurately assessing child welfare responses due to states lack of information on disabled children receiving services (Shannon & Tappan, 2010). They also presented that child welfare workers reported complications with understanding what effective communication with children who experience limited communication skills is and that a further need for training on interviewing developmentally disabled children is needed (Shannon & Tappan, 2010). Staff further reported difficulty in meeting needs of their disabled minor clients and issues with finding appropriate placements (Shannon & Tappan, 2010). Identification of supportive services for both children and families, collaboration with other collateral agencies, and enhancements in training of staff were also listed by participants as areas of concern (Shannon & Tappan, 2010). In response to the collected data, the authors re-iterated the need for training of child welfare staff and collateral contacts that was both global (including identification, policy, programs, definitions, and prevalence) as well as specific to particular types of disabilities (Shannon & Tappan, 2010).
Orelove et. al. (2000) further explored the service gaps presented in working with individuals who have disabilities. In a study conducted to examine perspectives of parents, educators, and investigative workers (including law enforcement and Child Protective Services), their findings indicated that training inadequacies did exist, but that there was a great desire to rectify that on the part of professionals. In fact, 96% of respondents involved in investigations concerning abuse of disabled children reported they would attend specialized training on disabilities if it was offered (Orelove et. al., 2000). Also interesting was the fact that 43% of them had utilized other professionals to assist them in investigations of abuse due to their lack of knowledge on the subject matter (Orelove et. al., 2000). When asked to prioritize training topics for investigators, recognizing abuse and neglect in children with disabilities was number one and being provided with strategies for interviewing children with disabilities was priority number two (Orelove et. al., 2000).

The authors closing remarks indicated that while more training is vital, the respective training is lacking, which leads to a deficit of knowledge in the fields that are most likely to provide early intervention for children with disabilities being abused (Orelove et. al., 2000). One limitation of this study is that a convenience sample of Child Protective Services workers was used at a conference on child abuse. 42% of the sample characterized in the study as investigation workers were from Child Protective Services, while 39% were from law enforcement, and 19% were from other agencies such as probation, parole, social workers, victim
advocates, prosecutors, mental health clinicians, and medical professionals (Orelove et. al., 2000).

Children with Disabilities in Non-Child Welfare Settings

Despite social work’s important and influential role as social justice advocates and educators, there is a still the persistent speculation that they are not making enough of an effort to advance disability related issues in the field of social work overall. There has been an expanding shift in socially constructed movements calling for inclusion and expansion of knowledge, but published literature indicates that social work practice, education, research do not match this shift (Galambos, 2004).

Historically, social workers have predominantly focused on an individual’s disability as the “presenting problem” rather than viewing the client in a more strengths based capacity and emphasizing their abilities (Galambos, 2004). Due to this outlook, provision of more comprehensive assessments by workers becomes problematic and services that may prove beneficial to meeting client’s needs can fail to be implemented into their case plans (Galambos, 2004). Stereotypical attitudes from workers toward their disabled clients have hindered the working relationship and the client’s opportunities to exercise their rights to self-determination and autonomy (Galambos, 2004).

Mackelprang (2010) discussed that the last thirty years bore witness to many changes and discussions on the definitions of what disability is; he further concluded that the quandaries social work has faced with the topic reflect the
dilemmas that have occurred in society as whole (Mackelprang, 2010). The two main professional organizations in place that have set standards for social work practice, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), have both struggled with their approaches to disability inclusion in both client and employee related focuses (Mackelprang, 2010). In recent years, the CSWE has formulated Council on Disability and Persons with Disabilities to address these issues. Further efforts on their part have included obtaining disabled individuals in leadership positions and commission membership, encouraging the view of disabilities as diversity, and revising their accreditation framework to include disability within the diversity portion (Mackelprang, 2010). The NASW, however, has not evolved quite as rapidly as they still focus on the medical model in their publications which focuses on disability as a deficit (Mackelprang, 2010).

Mackelprang further explored the overrepresentation of children with disabilities in the foster care system and compared it to the rate of disproportion that African American children face; he added that once in the system, they are also at an increased risk for maltreatment (Mackelprang, 2010). He emphasized that the issues are viewed through a civil rights oriented lens when examining African American youth and other cultural groups seen as endangered but that this has yet to occur with children who have disabilities (Mackelprang, 2010). Mackelprang ventured to correlate the validity of disability programs for social
work student experiences to the adoption of this civil rights oriented approach (Mackelprang, 2010).

Warner and Araten-Bergmen (2017) sought to examine if the same type of disability specific biases they found in the public sector held true in the professional sector, after clients had expressed that professional stigma was a crucial hurdle to their receipt of service access (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). Their study concluded that individuals with intellectual disabilities were viewed more favorably than those with mental illness (specifically schizophrenia) and developmental disabilities (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). The authors surmised that this view of developmental disabilities was attributed to a scarcity of appropriate expertise and comprehension of these types of disabilities (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). They further deduced that this lack of expertise was directly correlated to the fact that developmental disabilities are underrepresented in social work curriculum and this lack of preparation in the school setting leads to a lack of adequately informed service provision in the workplace (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017).

Workers were also shown to espouse assisting behaviors for all range of disabilities examined and although the strongest feeling associated with their views of the clients was pity, it was reportedly not a reason for the assistance (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). Other frequently utilized, stereotypical views reported were seeing client as dangerous due to their diagnosis and thus this belief manifested itself in prejudicial behaviors such as “segregation, coercion,
and avoidance" (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). The authors did speculate that these behaviors may be directly linked to the ethical standards and core values of the social work profession itself as interventions are adopted based upon clinical judgments and those judgments are required to be professional and equal, regardless of personal feelings (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017). Segregation measures are perhaps for the protection of social surroundings as well as the client due to their perceived dangerousness (Warner & Araten-Bergmen, 2017).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The studies discussed in this literature review have utilized two theoretical approaches to address social work’s response to the needs and issues faced by the disabled community. The specific theories used in conceptualization are Systems theory and Conflict theory.

Systems theory addresses the various systems that children with developmental disabilities are involved with and how each one influences the client and each other. The schools of social work provide a certain level of curriculum and training for incoming social workers who then enter agencies of social work and come into contact with children who have developmental disabilities. The level of preparedness, willingness, and eagerness that the classroom and internship opportunities have helped instill into the student directly impacts them as a new worker performing their employment duties, which then
directly impacts the client receiving case management services. Clients also impact the entire field of social work with their unique needs and struggles, which helps to contribute to content that is focused upon in curriculum and job training. In System theory, Broussard, Hopper, Marx and Worster (2010), explained a framework to analyze and/or describe a group of entities that work in a concert to produce a result. Therefore, an individual defines their own system and resides in various other larger systems. This allows professionals to understand the dynamics of the client’s system and comprehend the problems one may be facing. However, children with disabilities may have limited capacities, where it will become difficulty to determine how systems they are associated in may affect them. Therefore, this can interrupt the client-professional relationship because some professionals are not equipped to work with the disabled population. This can cause disequilibrium to the child’s system(s) due to not having their needs accommodated.

Conflict theory is also utilized to illustrate the effect on resources that the developmentally disabled minor clients and the field of disability social work face with a lack of proper education and training on the subject matter. Without exposure to the subject matter, there may be a lacking knowledge of what jobs are available to students working with this population and therefore, the agencies in the field are impacted when there is a shortage of available workers willing to perform in these roles. A lack of knowledge on what this population needs or the unique struggles they face can result in a lack of advocacy from social workers.
for their clients and a lack of funding for agencies who are working to assist this population. Conflict theory has also been used to explain social and economic struggles that occur between organizations (Morrison, 1995). It is apparent when discussing how resources for disabled clients in the social work field are consistently lacking and have failed to be measured for efficacy. There is a continued discussion regarding the need for disability centered training and education, but research shows that this need remains unmet due to limited resources and knowledge.

The current study being presented will continue to focus on systems and conflict theories to explain the current state of social work academia in California State University San Bernardino. It will use the data collected from students to examine the current need for training and education. It will also seek to show that there is student interest in learning about this population’s needs. The study will seek to explain the benefits of incorporating more disability focused intervention methods and tools and specifically focus on how it will help prepare students for successful outcomes in professional settings during practicum courses and post-graduation. It will also emphasize how this addition will help to modernize the academic program and align it with both the National Association of Social Workers’ and the Council of Social Work Education’s mandates for diverse study, Practice, and ethical obligations toward social justice.
Summary

The National Association of Social Workers provides the guidelines and ethics for the social work profession. One of the core values is to advocate for oppressed populations, like disabled children. Without exposure to education and proper training, social work students will not be prepared to successfully advocate or engage with these clients. This will impede their abilities as new social workers and affect their professional and ethical obligations. There are numerous studies outlining the need for more concentrated trainings to provide disabled clients with more successful outcomes. However, these needs are not materializing into practice or classroom curriculum. This study seeks to explore whether this is occurring at CSUSB and if so, possibly use the gathered data to bridge that gap and enhance student's level of preparedness and awareness.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This section provides a thorough description of the research methods and procedures that will be utilized in this study. The chapter specifically contains the design of the study, sampling methods, data collection instruments, procedures, methods of protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

Study Design

The California State University of San Bernardino (CSUSB) School of Social Work’s focus is to prepare students to consult with and advocate for clients in an informed, strength based capacity, but there is limited curriculum provided to students specifically covering children with disabilities. This research study explored CSUSB social work students’ preparedness, willingness, and eagerness to work with children who have developmental disabilities. This study enhanced the social work program’s level of efficacy and promote positive professional outcomes for students if these gaps are analyzed and addressed. This study also promotes the alignment of educational content with the values and ethics that are set forth by both the National Association of Social Work and the California Social Work Education, both of whom are responsible for providing the framework for all accredited social work schools.
This study utilized a quantitative survey design and collect data from participants through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire measured whether the CSUSB social work curriculum has prepared the participants to work with developmentally disabled children and quantified student’s willingness and eagerness to work with this population. The researchers provided an electronic link to the survey to the CSUSB School of Social Work’s Administrative Support Coordinator, Andrew Copeland. Mr. Copeland then generated a mass e-mail to all enrolled students in the CSUSB School of Social Work that provides them with a letter of introduction from the researchers that included their contact information, the informed consent information, and a link to the survey questionnaire. The surveys were accessible to students through email and Internet access using the Qualtrics system. After the questionnaire was completed the participant submitted the survey and the researchers had access to the anonymously collected data. The sampling criteria for the study consisted of all CSUSB School of Social Work Students who were enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) full time, part time, and pathway programs. There was a total of 265 MSW students and 105 BSW students (54 first year and 51 second year), which indicates there is a total of 370 enrolled students. Out of the 370 enrolled students who were sent the survey invitation, 75 participated.

The researcher’s rationale for selecting a quantitative research design and utilizing a self-administered electronic survey was due to the study’s strict time
limitations, the fact that it was free of cost, and that it provided the ability to ensure participant confidentiality. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire was valuable when attempting to gather data from a large population.

This study sought to address the research question: how prepared, willing, and eager are students to work with children who have developmental disabilities? It was estimated that student’s responses would be directly correlated to their exposure to developmental disabilities in the CSUSB School of Social Work programs and would also be influenced by historical exposures in their personal lives.

Sampling

Participants for this study were selected from all cohorts in the CSUSB School of Social Work program. These participants included BASW and MSW full time, part time, and pathway program students. Due to the studies purpose of assessing social work student preparedness, willingness and eagerness, the researchers chose to recruit CSUSB social work students who were actively enrolled and participating in the social work program. Aside from Mr. Copeland’s assistance in survey link distribution, all CSUSB School of Social Work faculty were excluded from participating in this research study. The sample included both male and female social work students varying in educational background, ethnicity, and amount of experience with the developmental disabilities.
population. Social work students from both generalist social work and child welfare concentration tracks were recruited.

There was a total of 370 School of Social Work students attending California State University of San Bernardino at the time of the study. These students all met the criteria for participating in this study, which indicated that there was a proximal sample size of 370 participants. Although, a self-administered questionnaire was emailed to all 370 social work students, it was foreseeable that at least 50 percent (or 185 participants) would complete the survey. However, the sample size of 75 was determined by the number of surveys that were actually completed and submitted.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data for this study was gathered by student’s utilizing a self-administered electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to students via a Qualtrics survey program link. An instrument was not currently in existence that addressed the desired study specifications, so the researchers created one. This tool was formulated based upon the content that the researchers sought to explore. It was further expanded to examine any related foundational attributes that could contribute to a students’ knowledge base of developmental disabilities (family background information or personal exposure to the disability community). The instrument was not pre-tested or tested for reliability due to it being created by the researchers.
The sections of the questionnaire asked questions addressing the independent variables and the dependent variable that the authors sought to measure and report on. The dependent variables of this study were CSUSB social work student’s preparedness, willingness, and eagerness toward serving children with disabilities. Student preparedness was measured by questions that addressed students’ perceptions about their levels of confidence, knowledge, and whether their curriculum had prepared them appropriately. The questions that were asked about their preparedness were based off the curriculum they have gained from their classrooms, required school trainings, internship placements, and exposure to experts on this material. Their willingness was measured by inquiring whether students were inclined or interested in working with this population to see how effective it would be to expose the students to the material. Their measure of eagerness was measured by asking questions that addressed their attitudes about working with this population, their post-graduation career plans, knowledge on existing community resources, and whether they felt curriculum involving children with developmental disabilities is beneficial to their education.

The independent variable in this study was the material they were taught in academic curriculum and their personal exposure to developmental disabilities, such as having a child or family member who is developmentally disabled. Survey questions for independent variables addressed student’s perceptions on the type of disability content covered in their curriculum and whether internships
or personal life experiences outside of school have exposed them to developmental disabilities. The questions were presented to respondents in a range of options such as yes/no, true/false, multiple choices, questions where choosing multiple offerings as answers is possible, and Likert scale answers. Survey questions for the dependent variable were presented in the same form.

The survey also collected data regarding student’s demographic information to offer more information on the characteristics of the population being surveyed. The demographic data collected were variables like age, identified gender, ethnicity, educational level, prior degree information, familial exposure to developmental disabilities and social work employment history.

The strengths of this instrument were the customization of the questions that address exactly what the researchers were studying. The questions were also specifically tailored to the students’ academic program exposure. The weaknesses of this tool were that it had not been previously tested for reliability and validity; therefore, the reliability and validity were unknown. It was also not generalized for future use in other locales independent of California State University San Bernardino.

Procedures

The initial phase of this research process was to complete and submit the Application to Use Human Subjects in Research packet to the California State University San Bernardino Institutional Review Board. The packet included a
detailed description of the time frame of the study, who the investigators/faculty advisors were, information on who participants would be, confidentiality considerations, risks and benefits, a copy of the informed consent, a copy of the researchers CITI training completion certificates, and a copy of the study instrument.

The next step was to obtain a letter of support for the study from the director of the CSUSB School of Social Work, Dr. Laurie Smith. Dr. Smith was provided with an explanation of the project’s procedures, details about the participant recruitment process, and what the participants would be asked in the questionnaire. Upon completion of these two tasks, the questionnaire was uploaded into the Qualtrics program so that an electronic version was available for distribution to all potential participants. The electronic version contained the instrument as well as the informed consent for participants. The Administrative Support Coordinator of the School of Social Work was contacted and asked to distribute the electronic survey link via email to all students enrolled in the School of Social Work cohorts. Once the email link was sent out on January 23, 2018, the survey remained open until February 7, 2018.

The informed consent was uploaded into the survey as the first question to ensure that every student was aware of their rights as a participant prior to completing the survey. No signatures of identifying information (such as name or student identification number) was required for access to the electronic questionnaire or submission of it. The informed consent requested that
participants check a box to indicate that they had read it and that they were voluntarily agreeing to proceed with the process. The informed portion was also set to forced completion in the Qualtrics system so that it could not be bypassed.

The survey contained 28 questions related to the independent variables (social work students past personal exposure to developmental disabilities and their curriculum exposure at CSUSB) and the dependent variables (social work student’s preparedness, willingness, and eagerness to work with children who have developmental disabilities). The survey also provided 10 additional voluntary questions related to participant demographics to capture the personal attributes of the sample population. The estimated time for completion of this survey was 8-10 minutes.

Protection of Human Subjects

The research design selected by the investigators ensured the protection of rights and welfare of all participants through the processes and procedures implemented. The participants were given a letter of introduction prior to starting the survey, which explained the purpose of the research study and confidentiality procedures. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw their consent to participate at any time. Their consent was provided to researchers via a checked box instead of any identifiable information to ensure anonymity.
All participants returned their informed consent and survey questionnaire through the Qualtrics system, which further secured the confidentiality of the participant’s identity. Once the data collection was completed, the data was transferred into the IBM SPSS system application to extract the findings. The participant’s informed consent, completed survey questionnaires, and the SPSS data remained confidential in a computer database, which required a secured password for access and was only accessible by the researchers. At the conclusion of the research study, the surveys and all SPSS data were destroyed to ensure participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

This study employed a quantitative data analysis method. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the data collected. Frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median and mode) and measure of variability (e.g., range, variance, and standard deviation) were used to describe the data and to establish patterns.

Inferential statistics were utilized to estimate the relationship between the dependent variables (preparedness, willingness, and eagerness of students) and the independent variables (students past personal exposure to developmental disabilities). Kruskal Wallis tests were used as needed to assess the level of confidence in the relationships being evaluated.
Summary

The method of research utilized for this study was a quantitative, self-administered survey design that was distributed to all California State University School of Social Work students via email. The email provided a link to access the survey in the Qualtrics system. Participants were recruited via this emailed link and participation was explicitly voluntary. Candidates were not offered any type of direct compensation for their participation. The potential study population included 54 first year Bachelor’s students, 51 second year Bachelor’s students, and 265 total Master’s level students for a combined total of 370 potential participants. The actual number of participants was 75. The sample consists of both male and female students with varying ages and degrees of personal and professional social work experience as well as varying degrees of potential personal exposure to developmental disabilities.

The distributed questionnaire consisted of different sections addressing the two independent variables (student’s past personal exposure to developmental disabilities and student’s curriculum exposure in the CSUSB social work program) and the three dependent variables (social work student’s preparedness, willingness, and eagerness to work with children who have developmental disabilities) being measured. The survey also gathered generalized demographic data from participants. The tool was created by the researchers and was not be pre-tested for reliability or validity. A mixture of
descriptive and inferential statistics was employed to analyze the collected student data.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

Introduction

This section discusses the results of the study. A total of 75 students from the California State University of San Bernardino’s School of Social Work participated in the study that took place from January 23, 2018 and concluded on February 7, 2018. First, the authors will summarize the descriptive statistics of the study. Second, the authors will review the data gathered. Lastly, the authors will review the results of this study.

Demographics

This study collected data from a total of 75 student participants. Out of this sample, 11 respondents were male (15%), while 64 identified as female (85%). The ages of the students surveyed varied from 18 to over 61. The most common age range reported was 24-29 years old at 44%, followed by age 41 and older (21%), 30-35 years (17%), 18-23 (13%), and 36-40 (4%). The demographic questions regarding the student’s ethnic background yielded 79 responses out of 75 participants, indicating that some respondents identified as more than one ethnicity. The responses reflected a predominantly Hispanic/Latino cross section with 50 respondents choosing this category (67%). Additionally, there were 26 students who identified as White/Caucasian (35%), 5 who identified as African
American (7%), 1 who identified as Native American (1%), 1 who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander (1%), none who identified as Middle Eastern, and 1 who identified as other (1%). When questioned about personal exposure to developmental disabilities, 5% responded that they had a child with a developmental disability (4), while 31% of participants (23) indicated that they family member other than a child who had developmental disability. Table 1 below summarizes the demographic attributes of the sample population utilized in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 and above</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child with Developmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Member (not child)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Developmental Disabilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the 75 participants, 30.7% were either previously or currently employed as a social worker (23). Of these participants who had indicated current of past social work employment, 13 had been employed under 1 year (17.3%), 11 had been employed for 1 to 3 years (14.7%), 3 had been employed for 3 years 1 day to 5 years (4%), and 5 had been employed for a period of over 5 years (6.7%). Due to the CSUSB School of Social Work being comprised of both Bachelor and Master level students, respondents were also asked which educational program they were currently enrolled in; 17 were in the Bachelor of Social Work Program (22.7%), while 55 were enrolled in the Master of Social Work Program (76%). One participant failed to provide their current program enrollment.

Education

The survey also inquired about the 75 student participant's educational exposure to developmental disabilities within the CSUSB School of Social Work academic program. 67.6% (50) reported that their Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) courses did discuss developmental disabilities. Similarly, 64% also reported that their HBSE courses specifically covered developmental disabilities in children. Regarding the content type covered on developmental disabilities, 60% (45) disclosed that it was definition based, while 16% (12) felt that it was intervention based, 20% (15) reported it was engagement based.
When asked about role plays regarding developmental disabilities, 92% (69) responded that they had engaged in any during classroom activities.

When questioned about micro course curriculum (for graduate level students) and Practice course curriculum (for undergraduate level students), 33.3% (25) reported that they had covered developmental disabilities. 28% (21) further reported that they had covered developmental disabilities in children. The types of content were listed by 28% (21) as definition based, by 17.3% (13) as intervention based, and 14.7% (11) as engagement based.

When discussing internship opportunities that students had participated in through CSUSB School of Social work, 17.3% (13) reported that they had been placed in a setting working with children who had developmental disabilities. 9 of these participants (12%) had interned in this setting as a Master’s level student, while 1 (1.3%) had interned as a Bachelor’s student, and 1 (1.3%) reported that they had interned with children who have developmental disabilities as both an undergraduate and graduate student.

Confidence Levels

Participants in this study were asked about their confidence levels when working with children who have developmental disabilities in the social work field. Table #2 explains statistics about the participant’s confidence levels when working with children who have developmental disabilities. Around 31.4% (22) felt moderately confident to engage with children who have developmental
disabilities. However, 24.3% (17) of participant did not feel confident to engage at all. More than half of the participants (52.2%) (36) reported they lacked confidence in assessing children who have developmental disabilities. Although, 33.3% (23) participants stated they felt moderately confident to assess this population. About 30% (21) of the participants reported they felt moderately confident in interviewing this population. However, the ranges in feeling slightly confident (16) and not feeling confident at all (16) were equally calculated at 22.9%. The participants were asked how knowledgeable they felt about developmental disabilities in which the participant’s rated themselves as 37.7% (26). On the other hand, 36.2% (25) reported they felt slightly confident about their knowledge in developmental disabilities.

Table 2. Confidence Levels of Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel to engage with children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work?</td>
<td>Extremely Confident - 9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Confident- 7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Confident -22</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly Confident- 15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not confident at all - 17</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel to assess children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work?</td>
<td>Extremely Confident - 5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Confident- 5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Confident -23</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly Confident- 16</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not confident at all - 20</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident do you feel to interview children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work?</td>
<td>Extremely Confident - 4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Confident- 13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately Confident -21</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly Confident- 16</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not confident at all - 16</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How knowledgeable do you feel about developmental disabilities?</td>
<td>Extremely knowledgeable t - 3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very knowledgeable- 7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderately knowledgeable - 26</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly knowledgeable- 25</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not knowledgeable at all - 8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experience Levels

The participants in this sample were asked about their experience with children who have developmental disabilities. Table #3 demonstrates the data that explains the participants' current and future experience with the developmental disabled population. The participants were asked what social work career they would like to pursue after graduation. 14.7% (11) of the participants explained that they would like to seek employment in adult and aging services, 32% (24) reported child welfare services, 30.7% (23) reported medical social work, 38.7% (29) reported mental health, 12% (9) reported non-profit, 10.7% (8) reported “other”, and only 6.7% (5) reported an interest in seeking employment for working with individuals who have developmental disabilities.

The participants were asked if their social work education is preparing them for working with children who have developmental disabilities, in which 26.1% (18) of the participants disagreed with this statement. In contrast, 18.7% (14) did not agree or disagree with this context. The majority of participants (94.2%) (65) agreed that the social work program should cover context that is content related to children with developmental disabilities. Almost all of the participants (97.1%) (67) agreed that having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is necessary to work in the social work field. All the participants (100%) believe having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is beneficial to work in the social work field. The majority of participants (88.4%) (61) reported interest in learning more about developmental disability in
children. The participants were asked their interest in working with children who have developmental disabilities, in which 53.6% (37) reported that they agreed. However, 30.4% (21) reported they neither agreed or disagreed to the interest in working with the children who have developmental disabilities. 15.9% (11) of the participants disagreed to have interest when working with this population. The majority of the participants 85.5% (59) expressed willingness to work with children who have developmental disabilities.

The participants were asked how many community resources in San Bernardino County they were aware of that work with children who have developmental disabilities, 25.4% (17) reported they were not aware of any resources, 22.4% (15) were aware of one, 32.8% (22) were aware of two resources, 9.0% (6) were aware of three, 4.5% (3) were aware of four, and 6.0% were aware of 5 or more resources for children who have developmental disabilities. The participants were asked to rate their interest level in learning how to work with children who have developmental disabilities. 42% (29) of the participants reported they were interested in learning how to work with this population. On the other hand, 43.5% (30) of the participants reported their interested at a moderate level and 14.5% (10) of the participants stated they were not interested. The participants were asked how many times in the past they volunteered with children who have developmental disabilities, 44.1% (30) reported they have never volunteered with this population, 27.9% (19) reported
once, 8.8% (6) reported twice, 8.8% (6) reported three times, and 10.3% (7) reported they volunteered 5 or more times.

Table 3. Experience Level of Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After I graduate I plan to pursue employment in (check all that apply):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult and Aging – 11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare – 24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with Developmental Disabilities – 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Social Work – 23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health - 29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – 9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My social work education is preparing me for working with children who have developmental disabilities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree -12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree -14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree – 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree – 18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree – 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social work program should cover content related to children with developmental disabilities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree – 26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is necessary to work in the social work field:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree -24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is beneficial to work in the social work field:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree – 36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in learning more about developmental disabilities in children:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree – 20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree – 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree – 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am interested in working with children who have developmental disabilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree – 6</th>
<th>Agree – 17</th>
<th>Strongly disagree – 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 14</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree – 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 14</td>
<td>Disagree – 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am willing to work with children who have developmental disabilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree – 16</th>
<th>Agree – 31</th>
<th>Strongly disagree – 0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree – 12</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree – 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree – 8</td>
<td>Disagree – 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree – 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many community resources in San Bernardino county are you aware of that work with children who have developmental disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 – 17</th>
<th>1 – 15</th>
<th>2 – 22</th>
<th>3 – 6</th>
<th>4 – 3</th>
<th>5 or more – 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate your interest level in learning how to work with children who have developmental disabilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely interested – 10</th>
<th>Very interested - 19</th>
<th>Moderately interested – 30</th>
<th>Slightly interested – 6</th>
<th>Not interested at all – 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How many times in the past have you volunteered with children who have developmental disabilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 – 30</th>
<th>1 – 19</th>
<th>2 – 6</th>
<th>3 – 6</th>
<th>4-0</th>
<th>5 or more – 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of the Findings

A Kruskal Wallis, non-parametric test and an analysis of correlation were utilized to examine the data. The following is a discussion of the significant findings from this study.

A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the data to explore the relationship between participant’s level of work experience with persons who have developmental disabilities and their confidence levels in engaging children...
who have developmental disabilities. The results demonstrated that the relationship between these variables was significant, $H(2) = 25.699$, $p<.01$. A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the data to explore the relationship between participant’s level of work experience with persons who have developmental disabilities and their confidence levels in assessing children who have developmental disabilities. The results demonstrated that the relationship between these variables was significant, $H(2) = 21.108$, $p<.01$. A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted on the data to explore the relationship between participant’s level of work experience with persons who have developmental disabilities and their confidence levels in interviewing children who have developmental disabilities. The results demonstrated that the relationship between these variables was significant, $H(2) = 18.791$, $p<.01$. The data illustrated that the more experience a respondent had working with children who had developmental disabilities, the higher their level of perceived confidence of engaging, assessing, and interviewing this population was.

A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to examine the relationship between respondent’s perceived level of knowledge about developmental disabilities and them having work experience with persons who have developmental disabilities. The results demonstrated that the relationship between these variables was significant, $H(2) = 13.456$, $p<.01$. A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to examine whether there was a relationship between whether participant’s felt that the CSUSB School of Social Work was preparing them to work with children with developmental disabilities and
developmental disabilities and them having prior work experience with persons who have developmental disabilities. The results demonstrated that the relationship between these variables was significant, $H (2) = 7.690, p < .05$.

A Kruskal Wallis test was performed to explore whether having a child or family member with a developmental disability impacted a student’s feelings of confidence. The results indicated that there were no significant correlations to respondent’s reported levels of confidence. A Kruskal Wallis test performed examining student’s program levels in the CSUSB School of Social Work also demonstrated that there was no significant correlation to their perceived levels of confidence.

**Conclusion**

Chapter four explored the results of the study and the statistical relationships of certain variables. There are no other findings of significance to present from the collected data. The findings have discussed the correlation between participants prior work experience and their levels of confidence in working with children who have developmental disabilities.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will examine the findings that were detected through the survey and its significance to the social work profession. Additionally, the authors will discuss limitations that were found in this study and suggestions for any future studies regarding the preparedness, willingness, and eagerness when working with children who have developmental disabilities. This chapter will also include how this study could impact future social work practice and policy.

Discussion

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 6.3% of children within the United States that are aged between five and fifteen have at least one disability and of this group, 1% (which equates to approximately half a million) cannot provide care for themselves (Murphy & Carbone, 2011). As time has progressed, the way in which disability care is approached has also evolved. Instead of institutions or hospitals providing permanent places or residence for these children, a utilization of community based services and programs is occurring and children are able to reside within their own communities and homes (Murphy & Carbone, 2011). Social work has a vital role in assisting to link these families to their community resources and even to help in the planning and
implementation of policies and services within the agencies. Social workers can help educate families about their options and provide support when parents and caregivers are in need of it.

Research has identified a disparity between the overall goals and values of social work and their lack of actually doing so, stating that social work has been resistant to practice advocacy of inclusion and diversity not only in the field with their clients, but also in agency staffing and school of social work faculty (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). The field of social work has an obligation and a duty in accordance with its values and ethics to achieve a larger presence in the field of disability related issues, but that this has not yet occurred (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). The problems facing persons with disabilities have been likened to those facing other oppressed populations that constitute the many isms that the field advocates for (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). Suggestions offered for accomplishing a more comprehensive approach to disabilities are more education in schools of social work, more specialized course work with appropriately detailed bulletins outlining the subject matter, more scholarly research and published findings, and more exhibitions or lectures at conferences across the United States (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002).

The researchers designed this study to measure CSUSB School of Social Work student’s preparation and willingness to work with children who have developmental disabilities. The literature reviewed prior to compiling data for this project initially illustrated that social work students have generally reported that
they are not being adequately prepared to work with children who have developmental disabilities post-graduation. The data collected for this study further reinforced this theory as 9.3% of respondents reported that they somewhat disagreed that their CSUSB School of Social Work academic curriculum has adequately prepared them to enter the workforce and do so, while 24% reported that they disagreed and 6.7% strongly disagreed. Similarly, a majority of students also consistently ranged their levels of confidence in assessment, engagement, and knowledge of developmental disabilities as moderate, slight, or not at all. Additionally, 53.3% of respondents reported that their Micro (for MSW level students) and Practice (for BASW level students) courses failed to cover disability content at all. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that although 66.7% of students reported that their Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) courses covered developmental disabilities, it was predominantly definition based rather than intervention or engagement based. Similarly, a high number of interviewees (69.3%) further disclosed that they had not had an internship experience in a setting that had children with developmental disabilities in it.

The reviewed literature also indicated that due to a lack of training in social work academic settings, the number of graduating students entering the workforce in the field of developmental disabilities was disproportionate in comparison to other fields of social work. The collected data in this study did
corroborate this as only 6.7% stated that they planned to pursue employment in the field the time they took the survey.

One particularly notable and unanticipated result of this study were respondent’s reporting that having a child or a family member with a developmental disability did not impact their preparedness or willingness to work with this population. The only factor that impacted participant’s levels of confidence for working with this population was their work experience. Also unanticipated was the lack of knowledge that participants had on community resources regarding developmental disabilities, as 72% ranged their knowledge between 0 and 2 available resources. Additionally, a high number of respondents reported that despite their lack of exposure, they had a desire to learn more about and seek employment in working with this population. It was also notable that a majority of participants reported strong agreement levels that their social work curriculum should cover disability related content and that is was both necessary and beneficial to employment in the field of social work.

Limitations

When conducting research for this study there were some limitations concerning the survey tool utilized for data collection. Due to the limited research conducted on social work student exposure to developmental disabilities in their academic programs, the research authors opted to create their own tool. This tool was not pre-tested or tested for validity. Furthermore, the research tool
developed was focused on CSUSB School of Social Work students, so it is not applicable for universal use or even use outside of CSUSB.

The barrier that the researchers faced by using a quantitative research design was the low success in data collection. The researcher’s initial goal was to capture at least 50 percent of the 370 social work students to participate in and complete the survey. There were limited responses and the research authors encountered many surveys that were incomplete and had to be discarded, which further reduced the sample size to 75 students. Lacking knowledge, personal experiences, or confusion about developmental disabilities among students, may have led to skipped questions, biases, or inaccurate responses. The researchers were unable to receive feedback from the anonymous participants, so it is unknown whether the questions listed on the survey caused confusion or if the number of questions were excessive, which may have resulted in these participants failure to complete it. Furthermore, the participation for the study was voluntary and there were no incentives offered to encourage student’s participation.

Another barrier to this study was the population of student participants were predominantly female. According to the data collection in this study, 64 participants identified themselves as female, which is also the equivalent to 85%. Also, there was a greater number of Master of Social Work students (76%) who participated in the study than Bachelor level social work students (22.7%). Another limitation that was identified in the study was a greater number of
generalist student participants (61.3%) than Title IV-E participants (29.3%) and Mental Health participants (9.3%). This disproportionality was to be expected, however, given the small size of the total sample that participated and the program composition of the CSUSB School of Social Work program overall. It would be interesting to conduct future research on each program independently to evaluate their responses for preparedness when working with children who have developmental disabilities.

Additional future research suggestions regarding social work students to work with children who have developmental disabilities may include a qualitative approach to allow students to express their beliefs and input about the academia, tools, or training they would like to see implemented in the classroom setting. By allowing the students to express their interest may decrease stereotypes that come with working with the developmental disability population and provide support to the students that may encounter working with this population in their future career.

In the study, the question asked the participants if they had a child (5.3%) or a family member (30.7%) who had developmental disabilities, in which they indicated “yes”. It would be compelling to ask this question in a qualitative approach to examine who the participant identified their family member is, examine proximity of their relationship, and explore the participants exposure or understanding towards the family member’s disability.
Another question in this study asked the participants if they carried any social work experience, in which respondents stated that they either had previous or current exposure to the social work field. Therefore, it would be interesting to ask in a qualitative approach that identifies the participants experience by asking their position in the social work agency they worked for, roles, and the populations they were exposed to. By asking this form of question may measure the degree of contact and amount of experiences when working with the population of developmental disabilities.

Furthermore, the question which asked the participant if they felt confident to assess children who have developmental disabilities, more than half of the participants (52.2%) stated that they lacked confidence when assessing children who have developmental disabilities. Therefore, it would be interesting to ask the identical question in a qualitative research study and find out what education, training, or tools a social worker student may need to feel competent in this scope.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

This research study exposes that social work students entering the workforce do not have a solid foundation to work with children who have developmental disabilities, which is particularly concerning for Title IV-E recipients whose specialization is child welfare and investigating cases of abuse and neglect. The data collected has illustrated the need for incorporating more
comprehensive course content that will adequately expose students to information that will increase confidence levels in regard to working with children who have developmental disabilities. Changes to approach and attitude toward disabilities must occur in the classroom so that it can continue to evolve in practice. Gourdine & Sanders (2002) have indicated that recent changes in socially constructed ideologies (like de-institutionalization and programs seeking to promote inclusiveness) are now helping to cultivate a climate in which social worker’s skills are vitally important (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). Social worker’s expertise in social justice issues and advocacy are a necessity in facilitating involvement of those with disabilities to play a larger role in their own communities (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). Social workers are professionally trained to function in multiple roles while working with their clients (such as advocate, educator, broker, counselor, and facilitator) and all of these roles are vital to help meet the needs of the disability community. Furthermore, the lack of exposure and encouragement students have faced in classrooms and internship opportunities has contributed to these graduates not seeking work with this population later when job seeking (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002). There is a high need for passionate and appropriately trained social workers to work in the field of developmental disabilities. Amendments to current CSUSB School of Social Work curriculum would assist in working toward satisfying this need in the community.
Student participants also indicated that their lack of knowledge and exposure has not prepared them to appropriately assess the needs of minor clients with developmental disabilities, which further translates into a lack of knowledge about current policies and legislative actions that their clients with disabilities are affected by. Increased training will allow social work students to enter the workforce and have an ability to identify gaps in service delivery. With the macro education components that CSUSB School of Social Work curriculum incorporates into the program, students will be able to perform advocacy to draft and lobby for policies that will seek to close these gaps and enhance client’s access to resources. These policies can then help to provide concise groundwork for schools of social work also by establishing what graduating students entering the work force will need to be knowledgeable on. The economic and political environment of the United States is fluid and with social work’s emphasis on social justice, service, and advocacy, there is a dire need to stay informed and educated for best practice to occur.

Recent proposed changes to the national approach on health care coverage and the fluidity of the budget structure for assistance programs that many disabled clients utilize further exemplify the need for social workers to become educated in policy. To engage in effective resource management and utilize available community and federal resources, workers must understand how funding systems and policy operate and how changes in them will affect clients in their field of practice. Social workers are frequently consulted to offer valuable
insight in macro and political settings due to their unique position of direct client interaction.

This study further exposes the need for more representation in student research for studies exploring the needs of the developmental disability community and the deficits occurring in the classroom related to covering this topic in social work course content. This research is key to increasing publication of scholarly research necessary to demonstrate the need for more disability related content to be incorporated into the curriculum presented to students in schools of social work. Students reported lack of competency and preparedness could be mitigated by more evidence-based research studies being presented and by being encouraged by this content to conduct their own disability related research.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to assess CSUSB social work student’s preparedness, willingness, and eagerness when working with children who have developmental disabilities. Significant findings in this study were that participants did not feel that their social work curriculum was preparing them to work with children who have developmental disabilities. Further findings explained that participants found it important to carry these qualities when entering the social work field. Therefore, it is important for social work programs to bring awareness and explain the complexities when working with this population. The researchers propose further research to be conducted regarding social work student’s
curriculum and their preparedness, willingness, and eagerness when working with children who have developmental disabilities. By examining each factor, could measure what needs to change or be implemented to mitigate any stereotypes when working with this population. Furthermore, further research could assist social work students feel prepared with the foundation they need to assess for risk or safety and increase their willingness to work with children who have developmental disabilities. Therefore, incorporating these mechanisms to social work academia could assist social work students to become a better developed professional in the scope of developmental disabilities.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPED BY THE AUTHORS
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Identified Gender: M F
2. Age Range: 18-23 24-29 30-35 35-40 41 or above
3. Ethnicity (mark all that apply) African American Hispanic/Latino Asian/Pacific Islander Native American White/Caucasian Middle Eastern Other _______
4. Have you previously been or are you currently employed as a social worker? Yes No
5. If you answered yes to question 4, how many years did you or do you have in employment as a social worker? Under 1 year 1 to 3 years 3 years 1 day to 5 years over 5 years
6. Please choose your focus of study in the social work program: Generalist Title IV-E recipient
7. Are you a Master’s or Bachelor’s of social work student? Master's Bachelor's
8. What year of the program are you currently in? 1st year full time 1st year part time 2nd year full time 2nd year part time 3rd year part time
9. Do you have a Bachelor degree in social work? Yes No
10. If you answered yes to question 9, is this Bachelor of Social Work degree from Cal State San Bernardino? Yes No

Participants, please note that for the purposes of this study, the definition of Developmental Disability is: a severe and chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment that begins before an individual reaches adulthood. These disabilities include intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and disabling conditions closely related to intellectual disability or requiring similar treatment (State of California Department of Developmental Services, 2013). State of California Department of Developmental Services. (April 18, 2013) . Information About Developmental Disabilities. Retrieved from http://www.dds.ca.gov/general/info_about_dd.cfm

11. Do you have a child with a developmental disability? Yes No
12. Do you have a family member (other than a child) with a developmental disability? Yes No
13. For what length of time in the past have you worked with children who have developmental disabilities? Under 1 year 1 to 3 years 3 years 1 day to 5 years over 5 years
14. Did your Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) course discuss developmental disabilities? Yes No
15. Did your Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) course discuss developmental disabilities in children? Yes No
16. Was the content (Check all that apply): Definition based Intervention based Engagement Based
17. How many role plays in class have you engaged in involving developmental disabilities? 0 1 2 3 4 or more
18. Did your Micro (for MSW students) or Practice (for BASW students) courses discuss developmental disabilities? Yes No
19. Did your Micro (for MSW students) or Practice (for BASW students) courses discuss developmental disabilities in children? Yes No
20. Was the content (Check all that apply): Definition based Intervention based Engagement Based
21. Have any of your internships at Cal State San Bernardino been in a setting working with developmentally disabled children? Yes No
22. Was this internship as a: Masters student Bachelors student Both N/A
23. How confident do you feel to engage with children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work? Very confident somewhat confident not confident
24. How confident do you feel to assess children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work? Very confident somewhat confident not confident
25. How confident do you feel to interview children who have developmental disabilities in the field of social work? Very confident somewhat confident not confident
26. How knowledgeable do you feel about developmental disabilities? Very knowledgeable somewhat knowledgeable not knowledgeable
27. My social work education is preparing me for working with children who have developmental disabilities: strongly disagree disagree unsure agree strongly agree
28. After I graduate I plan to pursue employment in: (check all that apply)
   Adult and Aging  Child Welfare  Individuals with
   Developmental Disabilities  School Social Work  Medical
   Social Work  Mental Health  Non-Profit  Other

29. The social work program should cover content related to children with
developmental disabilities? strongly disagree disagree unsure
   agree strongly agree

30. Having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is
   necessary to work in the social work field: strongly disagree
   disagree unsure agree strongly agree

31. Having knowledge about developmental disabilities in children is
   beneficial to work in the social work field: strongly disagree
   disagree unsure agree strongly agree

32. I am interested in learning more about developmental disabilities in
   children: strongly disagree disagree unsure agree
   strongly agree

33. I am interested in working with children who have developmental
   disabilities:
   strongly disagree disagree unsure agree
   strongly agree

34. I am willing to work with children who have developmental disabilities:
   strongly disagree disagree unsure agree
   strongly agree

35. How many community resources in San Bernardino county are you aware
   of that work with children who have developmental disabilities? 0
   1  2  3  4  5 or more

36. Please rate your interest level in learning how to work with children who
   have developmental disabilities: very interested somewhat
   interested unsure uninterested very uninterested

37. How many times in the past have you volunteered with children who have
   developmental disabilities?
   0  1  2  3  4  5 or more
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to assess the preparedness, willingness, and eagerness of CSUSB social work students to work with children who have developmental disabilities. The study is being conducted by Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon, MSW students under the supervision of Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study is approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine whether students enrolled in the CSUSB School of Social Work program are properly prepared to engage and work with children who have developmental disabilities and whether social work students are willing and eager to work with this population.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked questions regarding their preparedness, willingness, and eagerness toward serving children with disabilities, and some demographic information.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally 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 secured with a password, which only the researchers will be granted access to.

DURATION: It will take 15 to 20 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. Carolyn McAllister at 909-537-5559 (email: cmcallis@csusb.edu).

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu) at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2018.

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

Place an X mark here                        Date

909.537.5301 • fax: 909.537.7029 • http://socialwork.csusb.edu/
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393
The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus
APPENDIX C

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

Researcher(s) ____________________________

Proposal Title ____________________________

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 ____________________________ Date 12/18/2017

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


ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection
   a. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon

2. Data Entry and Analysis
   a. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings
   a. Introduction and Literature
      i. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon
   b. Methods
      i. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon
   c. Results
      i. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon
   d. Discussion
      i. Joint effort: Shauna De Jesus and Mariela Licon