

SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON THE NEED
FOR MORE JUVENILE JUSTICE-CENTERED
CURRICULUM

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of Master of Social Work

By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the two most important people in my life, my parents, James and Delsada Wilson. Thank you for all of the love and support throughout my blessed life.

Daddy, I would have loved for you to have been able to read this but I already know how proud you were of me. (James Wilson, 08/31/1939 – 12/04/2016)

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ABSTRACT

Historically, social workers helped create and were deeply involved in the juvenile justice system. Due to various obstacles, social workers abandoned the field altogether. In recent years, it has been acknowledged that social workers need to return to the field of juvenile justice, but the percentages of social workers entering into the field of juvenile justice have not increased. This thesis explored the opinions and perceptions of MSW students on the areas of their academic programs, their beliefs about the juvenile justice field, and their perceptions of social workers in the juvenile justice field. A 19-question survey was provided to 46 participants. The majority of the participants believed that there is a need for social workers in the juvenile justice field and that their current academic programs have not placed enough focus on the juvenile justice field. Participants also believed that if academic programs provided more courses and field placements in juvenile justice that student interest in the field would increase.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1899, the state of Illinois created the first official juvenile justice system in the United States. Prior to that time, there were probation programs for juveniles in existence in many states but they were all handled in criminal court systems (Peters, 2011). The juvenile justice system was created on the basis that children and adolescent offenders cannot be treated the same as adults because of inherent differences in cognitive, emotional, and moral development (Scott & Steinberg, 2008). Also, during this particular era, social workers dominated the field of juvenile probation. Their purpose was to not only monitor but to become an influencing presence with juveniles and their families (Springer et al., 2011). Casework was performed to identify any social or environmental aspect that may have contributed to the juveniles' criminal acts and to provide assistance in preventing the criminal acts from being committed again (Roberts & Brownell, 1999). These social workers did not manage the juvenile probation field alone; at that time they worked closely with law enforcement officers.

While social workers dealt with the case management and close handling of the juvenile offenders, law enforcement officers focused more on the legal side of the system. Law enforcement officers were mainly responsible for case investigations and legal petitions in the more serious cases (Peters, 2011). Within the next 30 years

after the development of the first juvenile court, probation departments were in every state and legislative initiatives were being passed to provide more funding for programs designed to keep juveniles out of the court system (Roberts & Brownell, 1999). Unfortunately, these improvements did not last. By the 1970s, funding was being diverted from corrections to victim advocacy and child welfare (Springer et al., 2011). This gradual change allowed for the migration of more law enforcement officers into the juvenile justice field as social workers exited. By the 1990s, over the course of 100 years, social workers in juvenile justice became a marginal few (Roberts & Springer, 2007).

With the shift from social workers to law enforcement officers, came a shift in the focus and attitude of the juvenile justice system. No longer were the juvenile courts focused on prevention and rehabilitation, but on punishment and determent (Young & Gainsborough, 2000). Despite this change in focus, juvenile crime rates began to quickly increase. Rather than favoring prevention programs and probation as was done in the earlier years, juvenile courts were ordering more juveniles to serve time for the criminal acts being committed (Young & LoMonaco, 2001). After the loss of funding for rehabilitation programs over time and the mass exodus of social workers to child welfare and the clinical therapy field, the number of social workers in the juvenile justice system fell to less than 10% (Peters, 2011). Throughout the late 1980s to the late 1990s, the drastic increase in juvenile crime rates, combined with the "Get Tough on Crime" initiative promoted by the Reagan administration, enforced

harsher treatment and even led to an increase in the number of juveniles being tried as adults (Roberts & Brownell, 1999).

Even though it may have appeared as though social workers completely abandoned the juvenile justice system, they had not. The social workers who were still dedicated to the juvenile justice field focused their efforts on crime prevention (Roberts & Springer, 2007). Social workers went into the schools to work with at-risk youth and set up community programs that were meant to assist with the many factors that were involved with juvenile crime such as poverty, family and community environments, abuse, etc. Gang culture also became a major focus of neighborhood-based social work due to the fact that more and more juveniles were found to be involved gang activity (Sarri & Shook, 2005).

In the 1990s, there was a nationwide drop in crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1995). Crime was down significantly, but yet juveniles were still being treated harshly by the court systems. In some cases, juveniles were given harsher sentences than an adult who committed the same crime. This disproportionate treatment can be linked to increases in violent and heinous crime committed by youths, and a drastic increase in their recidivism rates (Kurlycheck, 2010). The types of egregious crimes and the cycle of incarceration and release has affected many communities in negative ways. Juveniles held in detention facilities and adult prisons with no rehabilitation or intervention services learned to be better criminals when released back into the community (Jordan & Meyers, 2011). There are little to no services that assist juveniles or former juveniles with their reintroduction into society.

Most are monitored by their probation or parole officers who lack the social and clinical training that social workers possess (Sarri & Shook, 2005). In 2011, Assembly Bill 109 which was considered historic in the State of California was passed. Its purpose is to shift low level offenders out of the state prison system and into programs that would address social needs and recidivism. Unfortunately, under this bill there have been no provisions made for the Juvenile Justice system (California Department of Corrections, 2017).

The NASW noted that, currently, less than 2% of all social workers go into the justice field. Social workers in the juvenile justice arena currently make up about 4% of workers in that field (NASW, 2003; Peters, 2011) The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) stated that probation and parole officers would greatly benefit from social work training to better serve and help adults and juveniles in the justice system (APPA, 2006; Peters, 2011). The call for social workers to return to the justice field is rising but there has been little progression in that direction.

According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) – the accrediting body for social work programs – juvenile justice is not a required course in social work curriculum. Less than 10% of all social work programs offer juvenile justice classes (CSWE, 2014, Epperson et al., 2017). It is unknown how many social work programs offer internship placements in the justice field with so many other competing areas of interest. If there is to be any change in the corrective legal action of our youth, this difference might need to be initiated within advanced-level academic social work courses. In addition to curriculum, social work programs would

need to offer far more field placements within the justice system for students in hopes of generating interest in pursuing a career path in that direction.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the need for social workers in the juvenile justice field. The main research questions for this study are:

- How do participants feel about social workers in the juvenile justice system?
- What do participants think about juvenile justice content in their respective MSW or BSW programs?
- What are participants' opinions regarding juvenile justice field practicum experiences?

It is hypothesized that participants will believe that there is a need for social workers in the juvenile justice system and that an increase of social workers in the juvenile justice system will cause a positive impact. It is hypothesized that participants believe that their respective MSW or BSW programs could do more to support study and possible career preparation in the field of juvenile justice. Also, it is hypothesized that participants will respond positively regarding their juvenile justice field practicum experiences and believe that it has better prepared them for work in that arena.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it is important to be aware of opinions of students in MSW and BSW programs who may find themselves working with the juvenile population after graduation. A majority of social work students choose

careers in the medical, school social work, child welfare, and mental health fields. This means that these future social workers will be working with children and families and possibly have extensive contact with juveniles throughout their career without working directly in the juvenile justice field. Therefore, social workers would be at a disadvantage when faced with juvenile related issues due to a lack of preparation and a lack of knowledge of legal resources. This study also draws attention to the curriculum of social work programs where juvenile justice courses are not a part of the core requirements but an elective, if offered at all (CSWE, 2017). Program curriculum changes emphasizing juvenile justice may lead to well-rounded masters-level social workers for jobs in the corrections field as well as other fields which come in contact with the correctional system or the juvenile offenders themselves. Social workers are charged with the duty of advocating, promoting, and providing awareness for social justice (NASW, 2008). Most importantly, social workers must ensure that social justice is served for all juvenile offenders who are facing issues like racial disparity, being tried as adults for nonviolent crimes, and higher recidivism rates (Jordan & Meyers, 2011). It is imperative for social workers to be prepared to work on the changes needed which would lead to the prevention of and improved treatment of juveniles in the justice system.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief History of the Juvenile Justice System

In 1878, Massachusetts developed the first formal Juvenile Probation department based on the work pioneered by John Augustus, the first voluntary probation officer in the United States. John Augustus believed that most offenders were not dangerous and would be successful with treatment and supervision. He also believed that some offenders were being punished too harshly by the courts based on their crime and background. Augustus began working with offenders in 1841 after his first success and began the practice of assessment. By 1843, Augustus turned most of his focus to juveniles under the age of 16 (Fields, 2012). Over the course of Augustus' 18-year span as a voluntary probation officer, he handled 1,946 cases and had only 10 failures in total. Based on his work, John Augustus has become known as the "Father of Probation" and 19 years after his death, Massachusetts enacted new legislation that required the presence of a probation officer in the courts to investigate the cases of criminals, especially juveniles, to determine if intervention would be appropriate (Fields, 2012).

In the late 1800s, probation began to expand to other states and shined a light on juvenile offenders in particular. The success from the practice of suspended sentencing, addressing social needs, and regular supervision led to the creation of a new court system (Roberts & Brownell, 1999). In 1899, the first Juvenile Court was

created with the purpose of providing treatment as an intervention to juvenile offenders in order to create a change strong enough to prevent the juveniles from continuing on the path of criminal behavior and ending up in prison. In those days, each case was assessed and then assigned to a probation officer, who was essentially a social worker doing casework. Probation officers were charged with the task of assessing the needs of each juvenile and their family, providing appropriate treatment and interventions, and continuous supervision. This was a major shift away from the previous revenge, punishment, and confinement practices of the previous century (Roberts & Brownell, 1999).

During this time social workers were largely involved with the development and progression of the juvenile justice system and probation efforts (Abrams, 2013). Although as the system began to stabilize, social workers began to have an issue with the overall aspect of coercion that was present by having the penal system involved in the equation. Social workers took issue in working with clients who were forced to accept services because it complicated their goal of addressing the client's needs (Peters, 2011). It is noted that other areas of social work involved some form of coercion when working with involuntary clients (Hasenfield, 2000). Types of coercion that were present in the juvenile justice system led to social workers abandoning the field altogether (Peters, 2011).

In addition to the issues with coercion, there were other challenges present that were complicating the social worker's role in the juvenile justice system. Recidivism was an initial concern that in part caused changes in how the juvenile

justice system was viewed. The courts and social workers both searched for ways to correct this problem, which was perceived as a failure (Peters, 2011). The courts changed from an informal approach to a more formal one, providing additional structure and a disciplinary attitude toward the delinquents. Social workers began to try to incorporate psychodynamic theories and deemphasized social factors as a root cause for delinquency. Unfortunately, the psychodynamic approach of changing the individual clashed with the court and its ability to govern that method of practice. The theories being practiced in the social work arena were not effectively translated to probationary interventions (Peters, 2011). Another issue surrounded gender. Most of the initial juveniles were male as well as the probation officers. Social workers were predominantly female which led to a questioning of how effective a social worker's influence would be versus the need for structured male influence and role modeling (Abrams, 2016; Peters, 2011).

By the 1950s, social workers began to turn their focus on prevention efforts rather than rehabilitation, as before. This change in focus began the exodus away from the juvenile justice field and took them out into the community, setting up interventions and prevention programs to better help youth at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents (Mann & Reynolds, 2006; Roberts & Brownell, 1999). By the 1980s and 1990s, social workers were almost nonexistent in the juvenile justice field and the overall climate of juvenile justice turned from rehabilitation to punishment. Juveniles began to get harsher sentences or even be tried as adults for certain crimes (Borkar, 2012). There were federal and state legislations that increased the overall

prison population across the country and allowed for it to be easier to classify juveniles as adults for sentencing. As a result, there were higher incarcerations for juveniles, reports of abuse, substandard care, violence, and substance use; as well as disproportionate involvement for minors of color at all stages of processing, and high rates of recidivism (Shook & Sarri, 2008; Mendel, 2011).

This influx of incarcerations caused a drain on resources and brought nationwide attention to the state of the juvenile justice system and its need for change. Diversion programs were implemented to send juveniles to group homes for treatment rather than into correction facilities. In some states, like California, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have partnered with agencies like Child Protective Services to step in and provide social work services to juveniles in order address social and mental health needs to juveniles who are not just at risk but also incarcerated (Abrams, 2016).

The need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field has been acknowledged over the last decade (Peters, 2011; Roberts & Springer, 2007; Springer et al., 2011). The crime rate has continually declined but despite recent efforts, incarcerations are steady and oftentimes increasing. Approximately two out of three juveniles are people of color which is grossly disproportionate to the population at large. Female juveniles have become an increasing concern and racial disproportionality is also present in their case. Mental health needs have gone overlooked and unaddressed. These factors have led to the high recidivism rates that are still a persistent issue (Abrams, 2016). Another element that has is present is the

fact that probation officers are trained in law enforcement and are not equipped to provide the same services or act in the same role as social workers (Peters, 2011; Springer et al., 2011). Despite these issues, there has been a failure of response by the social work field as a whole. Still, only 2% of social workers enter the field of criminal justice as a career (NASW, 2017; Peters, 2011; Roberts & Brownell, 1999).

Understanding Accreditation and Curriculum Requirements

According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the purpose the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. This purpose is actualized through social and economic justice, ensuring human rights, the elimination of poverty and the enhancement of life. Social work education serves that purpose through baccalaureate, master's, and doctorate level programs that shape the profession's future by providing competent professionals, generation of knowledge, and the exercise of leadership within the community. To ensure this, the CSWE uses Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) to govern the quality of social work programs on a national level based on four features: program mission and goals, explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and assessment (CSWE, 2017).

Within the four areas that the EPAS covers, explicit curriculum maps out the requirements for BSW and MSW programs and how to meet them. There are ten core competencies, measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills, that must be met by each program. Educational Policy 2.1 states that the goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups,

organizations, and communities (EPAS, 2017).

One core competency that applies to the juvenile justice system in particular is EP 2.1.5: Advance human rights and social and economic justice (EPAS, 2017). This competency states that everyone has basic human rights, such as freedom, safety, adequate standard of living, and education. Social workers must understand the forms and mechanism of oppression and discrimination while advocating for human rights. Social workers must also engage in practices that advance social and economic justice. These elements are to incorporate practices in organizations, institutions, and society to ensure these basic rights are equally distributed without prejudice (EPAS, 2017). It is well documented that juveniles are in need of advocates who will fight for social justice and the equal distribution of human rights on their behalf.

Core Competency EP 2.1.4 calls for social workers to engage in diversity and difference in practice. This means that social workers are required to understand how diversity shapes the human experience and is an essential part of identity. Diversity is a broad term that includes age, gender, class, color, ethnicity, disability, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Based on these elements and others that make up diversity, a person may experience poverty, discrimination, marginalization, but also privilege and power. Social workers must not only be able to recognize and understand the importance of difference but also maintain self-awareness to monitor their own personal biases when working within diverse populations. Racial and socio-economic disparity has been plaguing the juvenile justice system almost since its inception. These issues have become commonplace and an almost accepted element of the

judicial system.

Field Placement Policy

Field education is covered in EP 2.3: Signature Pedagogy – which is a central form of instruction and learning where a student is able to perform the role of practitioner with supervision. The intent of field education is to connect the classroom knowledge and learning with the real world setting to ensure a full understanding. Field education provides a format that will contribute to the development of and the ability to demonstrate the required competencies of professional practice. According to Accreditation Standard (AS) 2.1.3 programs are to provide a minimum of 900 hours of field education at the master’s level. AS M2.1 states that the MSW program is to identify the areas of specialized practice and describe how its specialized areas extend and enhance the core competencies to prepare students for practice. The programs determine their own policy and selection process for field settings and placements (CSWE, 2017).

The EPAS Handbook also has policy and procedure that covers the process in which a program can modify or change its curriculum (EPAS Handbook 1.2.4). If there is a change to the program that may affect compliance, then written notification must be given. These kinds of changes include: adding an off-campus program, a dual-degree program, a new distance learning program, changing the mission and goals in a way that calls for restructuring the curriculum, institutional shifts in policy and procedure, faculty workload policy changes, reduction in resources, or even the closure of the program (CSWE, 2016). The EPAS Handbook also defines changes

that can be made that do not affect compliance. Some of these changes include: revisions to the program's mission and goals, changes to the curriculum, changes of concentrations, syllabi, field courses, electives, changes in composition of qualified faculty, students or both; or changes in the programs policy and procedures regarding admission, transfer, grievance or termination. The Handbook also has a policy over changes that will affect communication with CSWE and it states that the program should contact its accreditation specialist in writing as soon as possible to keep communication open (CSWE, 2016).

Based on the information provided by CSWE and its EPAS handbook, it can be concluded that any BSW or MSW program can make changes to its curriculum to offer more juvenile justice courses and that any MSW program can identify Juvenile Justice as a specialized practice or concentration. A study was done to survey all of the MSW programs, nationally, to determine the extent that criminal justice is specifically addressed (Epperson, 2013). It was found that there were a total 192 MSW programs in the United States and of those programs, 22% offered a course specific to criminal justice. Programs that offered a concentration or specialization in criminal justice only made up 5%. According to this study, the opportunities for MSW students to explore interests in criminal justice are very limited (Epperson, 2013).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore MSW and BSW student interests in the juvenile justice field as a career choice. This study explored students' opinions on the kind of impact social workers may have in the juvenile justice field and how their respective program curriculum and field placements relate to potential career paths.

The research questions for this study were:

- How do participants feel about social workers in the juvenile justice system?
- What do participants think about juvenile justice content in their respective MSW or BSW programs?
- What are participants' opinions regarding juvenile justice field practicum experiences?

Research Design

The design of this exploratory study was quantitative, using an electronic survey. The survey was hosted on the Survey Monkey website. The link to the survey was emailed to MSW and BSW students enrolled in a California State University (CSU) social work program during the 2013-14 academic calendar year. This was the only criterion for participation in this study. It was understood that if a qualitative design was used, the responses would potentially be more meaningful and detailed with participants' elaboration and reasoning behind their answers.

Although this researcher had no inclination to use this study as a generalization on a larger population of students, this design also prevents that. It has been argued that surveys, particularly online surveys, do not reach a representative population (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). Also, the response rates for online surveys are relatively low compared to other methods of data collection.

Sampling Plan

MSW and BSW students in the California State University (CSU) system, age 18 and older, were recruited by using purposive non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling was more appropriate in this study because of the near impossibility of being able to gather a true probability sample (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The goal was to recruit at least 500 participants. According to the CSU system website, there are 23 campuses in the system, 18 of those campuses have an MSW program, and six of those 18 also offer a BSW program.

Each social work program's department chair or director was notified via e-mail. The email described the researcher's role, the study that was being initiated, as well as the needed participation of their students. The rationale for requesting the participation of CSU social work students, statewide, was to study a small subset of a larger population while embracing the diversity across campuses and creating a geographic balance that accounts for regional subtleties and nuances. Soliciting participants from all CSU MSW and BSW programs increases the likelihood that the sample would not be homogenous. It was anticipated that there would be varying

opinions reported. Utilizing a sampling frame consisting of social work students provides firsthand responses from emerging professional social workers.

Instrumentation

The instrument consisted primarily of Likert scale answer options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) designed independently by the researcher. At the end of the survey the participants completed a demographic section consisting of their gender/sex, race/ethnicity, age, CSU campus, and their year in MSW or BSW program. Appendix A contains the full set of questions for this study. This survey was pretested with third year CSU Stanislaus MSW students. Those students were able to review the construction of the survey, assess question clarity, and to test for a primacy effect to ensure the non-Likert scale answer choices appear in a random order. These students were not a part of the final survey due to being exposed to the nature of the survey and having examined the survey questions.

An informed consent page was built into the survey itself. Participants had to read this page and provide their consent by clicking a box (indicating a check mark) before being able to proceed with the survey. There were a total of 15 survey questions. Questions rated participants' interest in the juvenile justice field and how their respective program may or may not relate to that interest. Questions about social workers in the juvenile justice system rated the participants opinions on if more social workers are needed, how much social workers are paid in that field, and how much of an impact social workers have. Other questions assessed participants current knowledge about the treatment of juveniles in the juvenile justice system and how

supported the juveniles may or may not be by the community organizations and resources that are currently available.

Data Collection

The online survey was distributed via an email dispersed by California State University MSW and BSW social work department chairs or program directors. The survey was active for two to three weeks on Survey Monkey. On the seventh day a follow up email was sent out to remind participants of the deadline. The email contained the title of the survey, a brief introduction to the purpose of this study, and a link to the survey located on the Survey Monkey website. After clicking on the survey link, the participants were met with an informed consent form that includes a synopsis of the topic (social workers in the juvenile justice system), the anticipated length of time to complete the survey, and the contact information for this researcher. The survey, being short, took about 15 minutes to complete.

Plan for Data Analysis

Data from the survey responses were evaluated using the SPSS program. A univariate/descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret the results of each question. Descriptive statistics, such as central tendency were used to interpret the data collected. A bivariate test (*t*-test) was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences between sample means, such as, differences between CSU campuses, cohorts, and age. Data from certain questions were compared to show possible correlations. Charts were used to present the information gathered from the completed surveys.

Protection of Human Subjects

Each participant was provided a link to the survey by email. Before completing the survey participants were required to respond to the informed consent form which is the first page of the survey before being able to view the actual questionnaire. The informed consent form explained the purpose of the study and the participant's rights and responsibilities. The researcher did not foresee any risk or harm to the participants due to the nature of the survey. The survey requested general opinions of social workers' impact within the juvenile justice system. The informed consent explained the process of keeping all information confidential and the fact that the participant had the right to withdraw from the survey at any point without any consequence to the participant. After completing the survey, each participant was taken to a final page which thanked them for their time. There was no compensation for their participation.

The researcher kept the data collected confidential and protected from any inappropriate disclosure. Participants were informed that the data will be deleted after six months from the Survey Monkey website. The survey did not request any personal information and there is no way to link or identify any data collected to the individual participant. The researcher will also delete all obtained data from any computer to ensure confidentiality is maintained upon analysis of the data and completion of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter discusses results of the 19-item survey obtained from 46 Master of Social Work participants. The survey explored participants' opinions on the kind of impact social workers may have in the juvenile justice field, and how their respective program curriculum and field placements relate to potential career paths. Once gathered, data were analyzed a software program known as SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Services).

Analysis of Participants' Responses

There were a total of 50 participants who began the survey, though four did not fully complete the survey and were not included in the final analysis (n=46). The analyzed sample of participants were all MSW students from the CSU Stanislaus campus and mostly female (n = 36, Table 1). Tables 2-4 show the demographic breakdown of the sample by race, age, and MSW program year.

Table 1

<i>Gender</i>			Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent
Valid	Male	6	14.3	14.3
	Female	36	85.7	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 2

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	African American	3	7.1	7.1
	Asian	4	9.5	16.7
	Latino	12	28.6	45.2
	White Caucasian	18	42.9	88.1
	Other/Undisclosed	5	11.9	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 3

<i>Age</i>		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25	13	32.5	32.5
	26-30	10	25.0	57.5
	31-35	5	12.5	70.0
	36-40	5	12.5	82.5
	41-45	2	5.0	87.5
	46-50	4	10.0	97.5
	51 and over	1	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	

Table 4

<i>Year in Social Work Program</i>		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First	8	19.0	19.0
	Second	20	47.6	66.7
	Third	13	31.0	97.6
	Fourth	1	2.4	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

When asked if participants believed that their program curriculum should place more emphasis on juvenile justice, five participants (11.9%) strongly agreed, 15

participants (35.7%) agreed, and 15 participants (35.7) were neutral. On the dissenting side of the spectrum, six participants (14.3%) disagreed and one participant (2.2%) strongly disagreed (see Table 5).

Table 5

MSW and BSW Curriculum Should Place More Emphasis on Juvenile Justice

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	6	14.3	16.7
	Neutral	15	35.7	52.4
	Agree	15	35.7	88.1
	Strongly Agree	5	11.9	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Participants were asked if their current program offers a juvenile justice course. Twenty-eight participants (68.3%) indicated that their program did offer a juvenile justice course while 13 participants (31.7%) answered that their program did not (see Table 6.). When asked whether they would have taken a juvenile justice course if it was offered by their program nine participants (19.6%) strongly agreed, 13 participants (28.3%) agreed, and 12 participants (26.1%) were neutral. However, two participants (4.3%) disagreed and six participants (13%) strongly disagreed that they would have taken a juvenile justice course if it was offered (see Table 7.). It should also be noted that CSU Stanislaus MSW program does offer one juvenile justice course as an elective (CSU Stanislaus, 2017). Seventeen participants (37%)

reported that they had taken a juvenile justice course in their MSW or undergrad programs, while 25 participants (54.3%) reported that they had not (see Table 8.)

Table 6

My MSW or BSW Program Offers a Juvenile Justice Course

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	28	68.3	68.3
	No	13	31.7	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	

Table 7

I Would Have Taken a Juvenile Justice Course if it Was Offered

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	14.3	14.3
	Disagree	2	4.8	19.0
	Neutral	12	28.6	47.6
	Agree	13	31.0	78.6
	Strongly Agree	9	21.4	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 8

I Have Taken a Juvenile Justice Course

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	40.5	40.5
	No	25	59.5	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Participants were also asked their beliefs about social workers currently working in the juvenile justice system. The areas covered were: salary, impact on the juvenile justice system, and juvenile offender outcomes when receiving services from a social worker. Most participants (67.5%) believed that social workers in the juvenile justice field were paid \$40-\$60,000 a year (see Table 9). When asked if social workers have made a positive impact in the juvenile justice field, there was no disagreement although 22 participants (52.4%) remained neutral (see Table 10). However, when asked whether juvenile outcomes were better when services and support are provided by a social worker, there were two participants (4.3%) who strongly disagreed while the rest of participants remained neutral or in agreement (see Table 11.).

Table 9

Average Salary Range for Social Workers in Juvenile Justice

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	\$40-60,000	27	67.5	67.5
	\$60-80,000	11	27.5	95.0
	\$80-100,000	2	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	

Table 10

Social Workers Have Made a Positive Impact in the Juvenile Justice System

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	22	52.4	52.4
	Agree	11	26.2	78.6
	Strongly Agree	9	21.4	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 11
Juvenile Offender Outcomes are Better

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	4.9	4.9
	Neutral	8	19.5	24.4
	Agree	25	61.0	85.4
	Strongly Agree	6	14.6	100.0
	Total	41	100.0	

Questions were also asked about how social workers are valued in the juvenile justice field, whether juveniles were treated fairly, and on the amount of community programs and resources that are available. Of the 42 participant responses, 21 participants (50%) remained neutral when asked if social workers were valued in the juvenile justice field; eight participants (19%) disagreed and 13 participants (31%) agreed (see Table 12.). Twenty-one participants (50%) disagreed that juveniles were treated fairly in the juvenile justice system, 6 participants (14.3%) strongly disagreed, 11 participants remained neutral, and 4 participants (9.5%) agreed (see Table 13). Participants were mostly in disagreement about there being a sufficient amount of community programs and resources that work with juveniles before, during, and after incarceration. Seventeen participants (40.5%) disagreed, 7 (16.7) participants strongly disagreed, 10 participants (23.8) were neutral (see Table 14).

Table 12

Social Workers are Valued in the Juvenile Justice Field

		Valid		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	8	19.0	19.0
	Neutral	21	50.0	69.0
	Agree	13	31.0	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 13

Juveniles are Treated Fairly in the Juvenile Justice System

		Valid		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	14.3	14.3
	Disagree	21	50.0	64.3
	Neutral	11	26.2	90.5
	Agree	4	9.5	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 14

Sufficient Amount of Community Programs and Resources That Work With Juveniles

		Valid		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	16.7	16.7
	Disagree	17	40.5	57.1
	Neutral	10	23.8	81.0
	Agree	5	11.9	92.9
	Strongly Agree	3	7.1	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Participants were asked directly about whether they believe there is a need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field and were also asked about

preparedness for employment after their program, field placements, and the participants' area of interest in social work. Participants were overwhelmingly in agreement that there was a need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field, with 14 participants (33.3%) strongly agreeing, 19 participants (45.2%) agreeing, and nine participants (21.4%) remaining neutral (see Table 15). Eighteen participants (42.9%) did not believe that their academic program prepared them to work in the juvenile justice field, 16 disagreeing and 2 strongly disagreeing. On the other hand, 15 participants (35.7%) agreed that they were prepared for work in the juvenile justice field and nine participants (21.4%) remained neutral (see Table 16).

Table 15

More Social Workers Are Needed in the Juvenile Justice Field

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	9	21.4	21.4
	Agree	19	45.2	66.7
	Strongly Agree	14	33.3	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 16

My Academic Program Has Prepared Me for Work in the Juvenile Justice Field

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	4.8	4.8
	Disagree	16	38.1	42.9
	Neutral	9	21.4	64.3
	Agree	14	33.3	97.6
	Strongly Agree	1	2.4	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

A majority of participants believed that a field placement in the juvenile justice field would make a student better prepared, overall, for employment opportunities. Four participants strongly agreed and 21 participants (50%) agreed. Fourteen participants (33.3%) remained neutral and only 3 (7.2%) participants disagreed (see Table 17). Participants were largely in agreement (78.5%) that academic programs offering more field placements in the juvenile justice field would increase student interest (see Table 18). When asked what field participants were interested in, a majority of participants were interested in child welfare (31%) and mental health (40.5%). Only four participants (9.5%) were interested in the juvenile justice field (see Table 19).

Table 17

A Juvenile Justice Field Placement Better Prepares Students For Employment

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	2	4.8	7.1
	Neutral	14	33.3	40.5
	Agree	21	50.0	90.5
	Strongly Agree	4	9.5	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 18

Offering More Field Placements Would Increase Student Interest

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	2.4	2.4
	Disagree	3	7.1	9.5
	Neutral	5	11.9	21.4
	Agree	25	59.5	81.0
	Strongly Agree	8	19.0	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Table 19

I Am Interested In...

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Child Welfare	13	31.0	31.0
	Mental Health	17	40.5	71.4
	School Social Work	2	4.8	76.2
	Juvenile Justice	4	9.5	85.7
	Medical	4	9.5	95.2
	Other	2	4.8	100.0
	Total	42	100.0	

Summary

The current study explored students' beliefs regarding social workers in the juvenile justice field and the relation to social work academic programs. It is not surprising that a majority of participants believe that there is a need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field. Despite only four participants being interested in the juvenile justice field, most were in agreement that offering more field placements would increase student interest in that field. It was interesting to find that a majority

of the participants did not feel prepared to work in the juvenile justice field. However, it was surprising that over 30% of participants did not know if their academic program offered a course in juvenile justice. Over 50% of participants would have taken a juvenile justice course if it was, or maybe if they had known, it was offered. Perceptions about social workers currently working in the juvenile justice field were insightful. Participants felt that social workers were paid \$40-\$60,000 a year but were mostly neutral about whether social workers had a positive impact and whether social workers were valued in the juvenile justice system. Conversely, participants overwhelmingly agreed that juvenile offender outcomes were better when services and support were provided by a social worker. This finding, as well as the others, fall in line with previous and current research on the need for social workers to return to the juvenile justice field.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

Previous and existing research indicates that social workers were the driving force behind the creation of the juvenile justice system. Despite being an integral part of changing how the criminal justice system handled juveniles in comparison to adult offenders, social workers ultimately abandoned the juvenile justice system to focus on community involvement and preventative programs. Research has shown that since this departure, the juvenile justice system has shifted to become a punitive system rather than the rehabilitative system that it was originally designed to be, which had greatly contributed to the detriment of juveniles and the community as a whole. In the last decade, there has been a call to have social workers return to the juvenile justice system because those involved in the system itself acknowledge that it is failing our youth and social workers can provide support and services in a way that law enforcement cannot.

Regardless of the call for social workers to re-engage with the juvenile justice field, the percentage of social workers entering the field is still at 2% (Epperson et al., 2013). The present study explored MSW students' opinions of the juvenile justice and their own academic program regarding preparation, field practicum, and their perceptions of social workers working in juvenile justice. Of the number of respondents to the electronic survey, all were from the CSU Stanislaus Master of

Social Work Program. The low response rate may be due to the survey being sent out toward the end of the spring semester when many students are in the process of taking finals and leaving campus. Some schools could have already closed for the semester.

Three research questions were used to guide this study: 1) How do participants feel about social workers in the juvenile justice system? 2) What do participants think about juvenile justice content in their respective academic programs? and 3) What are participants' opinions regarding juvenile justice field placement experiences? The results revealed three major findings from the participants' beliefs regarding juvenile justice arena, but also indicated an overall lack of interest in juvenile justice.

Major Findings

The first major finding was that almost all of the participants believed that there was a need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field. This finding correlates with previous and existing research (Peters, 2011; Springer et al., 2011; Borkar, 2012; Abrams et al., 2016). The participants in this study were students with varying levels of knowledge and experience related to juvenile justice. Some participants may be similar in knowledge to the general public which often is based on propaganda and misinformation (Steinberg & Piquero, 2010). With the curricular training that social work students obtain while earning their degree, they have the appropriate skill set to tackle juvenile justice issues on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Yet, their interest in employment options related to juvenile offenders is still quite low. The participants remaining mostly neutral regarding whether or not social

workers are valued in the juvenile justice could be based on lack of knowledge or it could be based on other opinions that are related. For instance, majority of the participants believed that social workers in the juvenile justice field made between \$40-\$60,000 a year. According to the Government Compensation in California (GCC) website, a majority of social workers in the corrections field make significantly more, \$80-\$100,000 a year and probation officers who work with juveniles make more than \$60,000 a year as well (GCC, 2017).

The second major finding was that over 40% of the participants believed that their respective academic programs should place more emphasis on juvenile justice and also believed that their academic program did not prepare them for work in the juvenile justice field. Over 30% of participants did not know if their program even offered a juvenile justice course. CSU Stanislaus MSW program offers one juvenile justice course as an elective. Current research shows that only 22% of all MSW programs in the nation offer a course in criminal justice (Epperson et al., 2013). This statistic shows that the CSU Stanislaus MSW program is one of the few programs in the nation that not only acknowledges the needs present but also seeks to increase the level of understanding regarding the impact of social work when addressing juvenile justice concerns. Only 5% of all MSW programs offer criminal justice as a concentration (Epperson et al., 2013). In addition, the NASW website does not even list juvenile justice or criminal justice on their career pages as an option (“Practice and Professional Development”, 2017). It is not a surprise that participants would not

feel prepared or even know that there was an option to get involved in the juvenile justice system.

The third and final finding was that most participants believed that offering juvenile justice field placements would increase interest and better prepare students for employment opportunities. According to the CSWE Handbook, it is at the academic program's discretion on how field placements are arranged, including the career areas (CSWE, 2017). Research shows that students value the experience and learning they receive in field placements. Although the majority of social work students, in general, would have wanted to have more time in the field before beginning their careers, there are benefits that field placement can offer to incoming social workers (Tham & Lynch, 2014).

Implications of Findings on Social Work Practice

One of the core ethical principles listed in the NASW Code of Ethics is social justice (NASW, 2008). It states that social workers should pursue social justice on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals. A core competency from the CSWE EPAS is the advancement of human rights and social and economic justice. The competency states that every individual has basic human rights and social workers must be able to understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. Social workers must also engage with and advocate for individuals within organizations, institutions and society (CSWE, 2016). The offenders in the juvenile justice system fit into these core principles and competencies. The juveniles suffer from unmet mental health needs, support, discrimination, racial disparities and

many other needs that are a cause for concern (Shook & Sarri, 2008; Mendel, 2011). CSU Stanislaus' MSW program mission statement states that, "...this education is committed to social change based on an analysis of social, political and economic structures and their impact," and that, "...graduates are prepared to use an advanced integrative practice approach to work with individuals, families and communities to promote personal and collective liberation (CSU Stanislaus, 2017).

The current study's findings conclude that there is agreement on the need for more social workers in the juvenile justice field but there is a lack of action to support the call. More students would possibly be aware of and willing to enter the juvenile justice field if academic programs and the national social work organizations placed more importance on the field as an area of need and a career option. If there was more emphasis on justice for juveniles, and if academic programs offered more support in the form of courses, concentrations and field placements, then future social workers may feel better prepared to create change in this area.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of the study was the small sample size of participants and all of the participants were from CSU Stanislaus even though the survey was sent out to all BSW and MSW programs within the state of California. The results cannot be generalized or representative of a bigger population due to this limitation. This study was also a quantitative study which does not allow for asking how or why participants had certain opinions (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). There is no way using this present format to find deeper meaning. The survey itself is also limited by the manner in

which the questions were asked (not having open-ended options). There is also no way to follow up with the anonymous participants for further explanation.

Future research should include a larger sized sample and encompass some qualitative methods for richer responses. Future researchers should also consider gathering responses from academic programs, faculty, and currently employed social workers to gain a fuller scope of opinions related to justice for juveniles. Broadening the sample can contribute to the extant literature related to this topic. By doing so, it is anticipated that an increase, beyond the current 2%, of graduating social work students will enter into the field of juvenile justice. Some exploration should also be centered on any possible barriers to having more social workers enter the field. Barriers could be legal requirements such as background checks and clearances, negative opinions and biases toward juveniles or the criminal justice system, fear of harm or danger, creation of new positions, etc. Any possible obstacles should be explored and addressed to ensure that there is an increased and appropriate flow of social workers entering the field of juvenile justice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research study regarding social workers in the juvenile justice system. The purpose is to learn more about BSW and MSW students' career interests and the level of academic preparation they feel is needed to support their future professional endeavors. If you decide to volunteer and participate in this study, you will be asked to share your opinions on the juvenile justice system and educational preparation. There are 15 questions on the survey and should take roughly 15 minutes to complete.

The survey will be self-administered online via Survey Monkey. There are no foreseen risks to you for your participation in this study. It is possible that you will not receive any direct benefit by participating in this study. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location under the purview of this researcher and the co-principal investigator. The data yielded by your participation will be confidential with no bearing on your academic standing in the MSW program or your classes. You do not have to complete the survey as a course requirement. Your decision to participate, or not, is completely optional.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by clicking the appropriate box online which indicates that you have read and understand this informed consent form. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Christina Sanchez, at iwilson@csustan.edu or my thesis chair, Dr. Kilolo Brodie, at kbrodie1@csustan.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Officer by phone (209) 667-3794 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Wilson (electronic signature)

Ingrid Wilson,
California State University Stanislaus
MSW Graduate Student

*** Clicking "Yes" indicates your consent and will allow you to proceed with the survey.**

APPENDIX B

SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM SURVEY

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and as honestly as possible. Questions with an asterisk require an answer.

1. Social workers are valued in the juvenile justice field.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

2. More social workers are needed in the juvenile justice field.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

3. I am interested in working in the _____ field.

Child Welfare, Mental Health, School Social Work, Juvenile Justice, Medical, Other

4. Social workers have a positive impact in the juvenile justice system.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

5. Juvenile offender outcomes are better when service and support is provided by a social worker

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

6. What is the salary range for social workers in the juvenile justice system?

A. \$20-40,000 B. \$40-60,000 C. \$60-80,000 D. \$80-100,000 E. \$100,000+, Don't Know

7. My BSW and MSW program offers a juvenile justice elective.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

8. A juvenile justice field placement makes a MSW or BSW student overall better prepared for employment opportunities.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

9. I would have taken a juvenile justice course if it was offered by my program

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

10. I have taken a juvenile justice course in my MSW or undergrad program.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

11. Required curriculum should place more emphasis on juvenile justice.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

12. Offering field placements in juvenile justice settings would increase student interest.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

13. My academic program has prepared me for work in the juvenile justice field.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

14. Juveniles are treated fairly in the juvenile justice system.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

15. There are a sufficient amount community programs and resources that work with juveniles before, during, and after incarceration.

Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know

16. Educational Program

BSW MSW

17. Age

18-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55+

18. Gender

19. Ethnicity

White Black Hispanic Asian Other