

THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINAS IN MASTER  
OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of  
California State University, Stanislaus

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

By  
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May 2019

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINAS IN MASTER  
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Date

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## DEDICATION

For my daughters who I love and bring me joy

Violet Maria Nevarez

Tiffany Camille Nevarez-Ortiz (Tony)

Andreana Jasmine Estrada (Emmanuel)

For my husband who I love and has my back

Andres V. Nevarez

For my future grandchildren who I already love

Aldine Rose

For my parents who I love

Maria Yolanda Portugal Barrón

And

José Y. Barrón

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all my professors who were very patient with me, who encouraged me to continue when I had no social work experience.

To Dr. Jane Rousseau who I enjoyed the deep conversations in our classroom, it was great to have you as a professor, thank you, I will miss you.

To Dr. John Garcia who was very understanding and for the great advice, thank you so much.

To Dr Pollie Bith-Melander for reading my thesis and returning it in time, thank you.

To Dr. Kilolo Brodie, thank you for being there and encouraging me to continue my research that I am so passionate about. Thank you so very much I could not have done it without you. Thank you for being patient with me, I will miss you.

To my husband for encouraging me to reach for the stars and ensuring that I never gave up; and to continue my education. Thank you.

To my three daughters: Violet, Tiffany and Andreana for understanding the late nights of study. For being patient with me and understanding my dreams of a higher education. Thank you.

To Bettina, my best friend who stood by listening to my rants about graduate school over long hours of coffee, lunch and shopping, you kept me sane, Thank you.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the graduate school experience of Latinas and how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped these students' experiences in college. This researcher examined the educational experiences and struggles of Latinas acquiring higher education. The intent was to gain a deeper understanding of the personal backgrounds and institutional contexts that contributed to academic success in a master of social work program. This research involved in-depth interviews of Chicanas/Latinas and how they experienced a master of social work program in the California State University system. The understudied experiences of Chicanas/Latinas provided a glimpse of what is observed by this particular ethnic group while in the pursuit of higher education at a state-run institution. The five major findings in this study, indicated that (1) graduate school knowledge and (2) financial burden have significantly influenced their perception of social work programs in the central valley. The respondents' (3) ethnic identity, their particular (4) race/ethnicity as a graduate student in an MSW program, and (5) faculty microaggressions have affected participants' perceptions as well. Ultimately, these five overarching themes negatively shaped Chicanas/Latinas experiences in a social work graduate program.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of Problem**

Disadvantaged historically on a number of socioeconomic factors, Chicanas/Chicanos, Latinas/Latinos and Hispanics have the lowest graduations rates from high schools/colleges of any ethnic group in the United States, including the highest high school dropout rate of any group (Tijerina & Deepak, 2014). According to the campaign of college opportunity (2018) in the state of California, 26% of Latinx are high school graduates, with only 2% of Latinx are 19-year old's with a high school diploma. Latinas have written narratives, phenomenologies, ethnographies, autobiographies; while using this dialogue, have explained their experiential knowledge in academia. However, this knowledge has been omitted or distorted by imperial, colonial, and hegemonic feminist discourses, and seems to become invisible in higher education (Huber & Cueva, 2012). Latinas' research has increasingly adopted these qualitative research methods to understand the struggles they face while advancing in academia (Huber & Cueva, 2012; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Throughout this study, the researcher Barron-Nevarez (2018), will be using the terms Chicana/Chicano, Latina/Latino and Hispanic in this study, primarily focusing on Latinas. Two specific terms, namely Chicana and Latina, are highlighted in this research. Latina referred to a woman or girl of Latin American origin or descent, Chicana is a woman or girl of Mexican origin or descent. These two terms are used in

the literature, yet have changed over the decades as a result of the political climate and the Chicano movement in the 1960's. Currently, the new terms of Chicanx and Latinx have become a new generational ideology of Chicana feminism, empowerment and of gender-neutrality (Webster, 2016).

The Latino population is the fastest growing group in the United States. It is crucial that social workers and other mental health practitioners be knowledgeable about this population. Learning about the culture, history, and beliefs about this population can help community mental health clinicians to effectively serve this population. This includes various aspects of social and mental health services (e.g., medication, therapy, medical and housing) (Furman et al., 2009). In addition, some of the barriers of Latinas' reluctance in seeking mental health services include language barriers that can create confusion when completing paperwork, making appointments, and learning about treatment plans. Social workers can play an important part in creating long-term sustainable relationships with the Hispanic communities (Furman et al., 2009). Becoming culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of the Latino community can help a social worker gain access and be effective in treatment delivery. This includes continuous professional development of practitioners, specifically relating to training on cultural sensitivity, awareness, knowledge, and skills about the Latino community (Furman et al., 2009).

It was only after the 1960s that more scholarly work that focused on the intersectionality of class, gender, and race has impacted Chicanas/Latinas in their daily life (Huber & Cueva, 2012). Chicana/Latina educational experiences in

academia provide an informative glimpse of the larger trends on university campuses across the United States, with women of color are underrepresented at the graduate school level (Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Between 1970 and 1980, Chicana/Latina feminist scholars began to address specific issues that affected Chicanas/Latinas as women of color (Garcia, 1989; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Other researchers have also examined the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities in education. Mainly, research focused on K-12 and undergraduate students. A handful of scholars have examined the post baccalaureate experiences of Chicanas/Latinas, for examples, in a Masters or Ph.D. program. However, little research has been done in a master of social work program (Achor & Morales, 1990; Curadraz, 2006; Ramirez, 2011; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). In the 1990s, Achor and Morales (1990) discussed theories and assumptions of in higher education and how some theorists only examine the failure and underachievement of minorities. Achor and Morales (1990) challenged these preoccupations on failure and underachievement of minorities and suggest to look at a more significant question: How and why do Latinas sometimes succeed?

According to Yosso and Solórzano (2001), this descriptive tale of the cracks and leaks in the Chicana/o educational pipeline is broken. “The pipeline represents a system of connecting educational institutions, schooling structures, practices, and discourses facilitate the flow of knowledge, skills, and students along the educational pipeline” (Yosso, 2006, p.4). The aforementioned authors state in their study that out of 100 students starting elementary school, 46 graduate high school, only 26 continue on to postsecondary education, and 8 will graduate with a B.A degree. Of those eight,

only two will receive a master's degree and another two will earn a Ph.D. (Yosso & Solórzano, 2001). According to Barajas (2011), in California, Chicanas/os have the lowest freshman college enrollment rates and the smallest percentage of bachelor or graduate degrees earned (Barajas,2011; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Barajas (2011), examined the populations of Latinas/os, and those of the Mexican-ethnic origin enrollment rates in college. This severely underrepresented population is particularly acute in California, which is home to the largest number of Mexicans in the nation. They constitute close to 40 percent of the state population (Barajas, 2011; Barron-Nevarez, 2014).

The experience of Latino/a and Chicana/o students in higher education is an important concern for all conscientious academics who seek to learn about the reasons for the underrepresentation of minority individuals in politics, education, and in high-ranking administrative positions in business. Oftentimes students are pushed out or alienated in schools by way of linguistic codes and norms that appear to be incongruent with the dominant culture (Reyes & Rios, 2005). One of the main problems is the limited number of scholarly literatures on the Chicanas/Latinas graduate school experience in a social work program. In the research of Barretti (2015), the content for women of color in Social Work journals from 1998-2007 over a 10-year period was analyzed. Barretti conducted an electronic search to find articles on women of color in social work journals using the Social Work Abstracts Database and SocIndex. The limited numbers seem to suggest the lack of representation of this

group in the literature, while seems to conclude that the literature as a whole failed to recognize the importance of women of color in social work.

According to Tijerina and Deepak (2014), factors that have been identified as playing a critical role in Chicana/Latinas' low participation and success in higher education include inequities in primary and secondary education, issues with the transition from community colleges to 4-year universities, limited baccalaureate opportunities, and isolation in graduate level programs (Tijerina & Deepak, 2014).

According to Santos and Cuamea (2010) Hispanics earned 28,574 (4.9%) of the master's degrees awarded in 2004-2005. Of the 87,289 professional degrees awarded in 2004-2005, Hispanics earned only 4,196 (4.8%). Hispanics earned, 1,693 doctoral degrees in 2004-2005, or only 3.2% of the total 52,705 doctoral degrees awarded (Santos Jr. & Cuamea, 2010). In other words, even though Hispanics represented 14.8% of the total U.S population 2006, they earned only 10.7% of associate's degrees, 6.6% of bachelor's degrees, 4.9% of master's degrees, 4.8% of professional degrees, and 3.2% of doctoral degrees awarded in 2004-2005 (Santos Jr. & Cuamea, 2010). According to The Chronicle of Higher Education (2013), the percentage of doctorate degrees awarded to minority group members has grown. From 1989 to 2009, doctoral degrees obtained by Hispanics in the social sciences increased from 3.3 % to 7.3%, however, they continue to be underrepresented when compared to the dominant population (2013).

According to the Counsel of Social Work Education (2016), the average number of Latinas/Latinos, Hispanics and Mexican Americans in the Masters of

Social Work programs nationwide are: Those who identify as Chicano/Mexican American are n=498 (1.2%), those who identify as other Latino/Hispanic n=4,458 (10.8%), compared to their White counter parts, White are n=22,600 (54.5%), which included both female and male full-time students only, from the CSWE annual Survey of Social Work Programs (2016). Demographic Characteristic of Master of Social Work graduation rates from the CSWE annual survey of social work program (2016) indicates that for Chicano/Mexican American are: n=347 (1.3%), Latino/Hispanic: n=2,711 (9.8%) compared to White students n=14,279 (51.6%) (CSWE, 2016).

Paulo Freire suggests that populist dialogue is a necessity to revolutions; that the impeding dialogue dehumanizes and supports the status quo (Freire, 1970). In other words, a set of values never support program needs to accommodate individuals and the approach of analysis of oppression through a convergent theoretical framework where the object of oppression intersects factors such as race, class, gender, culture, language, and our ethnicity (Barron-Nevarez, 2018). According to Freire (1970), in order to understand the meaning of dialogical practice, we must put aside the simplistic understanding of dialogue as just a mere technique. “In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing” (Freire, 1970, p.17). Freire (1970) suggests that the systemic oppressive institutions of education and how we experienced knowledge is a better learning tool than the current educational system. In other words, learning from the different perspectives of the marginalized communities can enhance your knowledge

and not just knowledge from the dominant ideology or the banking theory (Freire, 1970). One of the challenges faced by Chicana/Latina graduate students has been the lack of academic preparation and skills due to unequal access to resources and school segregation for K-12 students. The deficiency of educational attainment among Latinas/os affects their political and socioeconomic status in the United States. Attaining education is one of the primary means of (if not the only means of) upward mobility, particularly for those who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Castellanos and Jones, 2003).

Blea's research study (1992) suggests that Chicanas are affected on many levels of social interaction by the United States dominant culture value systems. Chicanas bring in a multidimensional perspective that can enhance scholarship in the field of social sciences. Scholarship in the social sciences must accept the fact that racial and ethnic minorities and women have something of value to contribute (Blea, 1992).

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the graduate school experience of Latinas and how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped these students' experiences in college. This researcher will examine the educational experiences and struggles acquiring higher education with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the personal experiences and institutional context shaping academic success in a master of social work program (Medina & Luna, 2000; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). The research question guiding this study is: How does race, class, and gender inequality

shape the experiences of Latina graduate students in a master of social work program? Furthermore, this research will involve in-depth interviews of Chicanas/Latinas and how they experience a master of social work program in the California State University system. The data collection from the interviews will shed light on the situations of Chicanas/Latinas' experiences in higher education, inform of the inequalities, and their struggles. This researcher hypothesized that inequities and limited access to resources created a major barrier for Chicanas/Latinas to higher education. Based on previous research, this researcher believes that perhaps Chicana/Latinas from this study will have similar experiences. Therefore, the importance of this research is to bring attention to the underrepresentation of Chicanas/Latinas in higher education.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to contribute to the qualitative research on Latina graduate students' experiences and race, gender, and class inequities in higher education. As social workers we advocate for those without a voice. For too long, Latinas have been underrepresented in graduate programs. The importance of this research will add to the already scarcity of the scholarly literature on Latinas experiences in graduate social work programs. California State University, Stanislaus is located in the central valley of California in the city of Turlock. The University, has 4,840 Hispanics/Latinos (50%) as fall of 2016-which includes all undergraduate and graduate students on campus. This research study will also look at other social work programs in the central valley of California (i.e. CSU Fresno, CSU Sacramento, and

CSU Bakersfield). Social work program faculty and direct practitioners can incorporate knowledge from this study to better understand how Latinas experience social work programs at the graduate level. In order to create solutions or policy, we must first understand the levels of what is shaping their experience of race, class and gender inequalities in a social work program. Therefore, the importance of this research is to bring attention to the limited number of literature and knowledge about the graduate school experience for Chicanas/Latinas in a master of social work program, given their historical underrepresentation in higher education.

CHAPTER II  
LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to explore the graduate school experience of Latinas and how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped these students' experiences in college. The research question guiding this study is: How does race, class, and gender inequality shape the experiences of Latina graduate students in a master of social work program? Furthermore, this research will involve in-depth interviews of Chicanas/Latinas and how they experience a master of social work program in the California State University system. The importance of this research will increase the scarcity of scholarly literature on Latinas' in higher education. This chapter will explain key terms, historical issues, theoretical considerations, practice interventions, researcher findings and outcomes.

**Key Concepts and Definition of Terms**

**Definition of Chicana/o, Latina/o and Hispanic**

Currently, the terms Chicanx and Latinx have become a new generational ideology of Chicana feminism, empowerment, and of gender-neutrality (Garcia, 2017; Salinas Jr. and Lozano, 2017). According to Garcia (2017), these terms are an intersectional identity meant to be used by gender-fluid and gender-nonconforming people, LGBTQIA persons, cisgender men and women, and those taking a political stance that ethnicity and gender exist on a spectrum and are not dichotomous. The

terms Chicanx and Latinx were conceived around 2004 and popularized on social media outlets. This form of identity and has since reemerged, most noticeably around 2014, Afro-Latinx and indigenous-centered Spanish-speaking people (Garcia, 2017; DeGuzman, 2017). The introduction of the “X”, in lieu of gendered-endings, was more of a gradual shift rather than a sudden debut (Garcia, 2017; Salinas Jr. and Lozano, 2017). The evolution of the term began with the common gendered endings of “a” or “o” (Latina/Chicana as feminine and Latino/Chicano as masculine), which moved into collapsing of the two on the end of the word signifying inclusion of both genders (Latina/o and Chicana/o), with one gendered ending placed first based on author discretion (Garcia, 2017; DeGuzman, 2017; Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga, 2018).

Two specific terms, namely Chicana and Latina, are highlighted in this research. These two terms are used in the literature, yet have changed over the decades as a result of the political climate. The term Chicano/Chicana is someone who is native of or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United State (Hipolito-Delgado, 2014). Chicano or Chicana is a chosen identity of some Mexican Americans in the United States. The term became widely used by many Mexican Americans to express a political stance founded on pride in a shared cultural, ethnic, and community identity (Ramirez, 2014; Olive, 2014). The term Chicano is a male Mexican American whose parents or grandparents were born in Mexico, which then the female Mexican American is a Chicana whose parents or grandparents were born in Mexico (Hipolito-Delgado, 2014). The term was appropriated by Mexican

American activists who took part in the Brown Power movement of the 60's and 70's in the U.S. southwest, and has now come into widespread usage, among more "assimilated" Mexican Americans. The term Chicano still retains an unsavory connotation, particularly because it is preferred by political activist and by those who seek to create a new and fresh identity for their culture rather than to subsume it blandly under the guise of any mainstream culture (Rodriguez, 1996; Ramirez, 2014; Hipolito-Delgado, 2014).

The terms Latina or Latino is someone who is native of, or descends from, a Latin American country (e.g. Mexico, Honduras, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela) and excludes those who were born in or descended from Spain. Thus, the term Hispanic refers more to the common language of Spanish, while Latino/a refers more to a distinctive culture (Ramirez, 2014; DeGuzman, 2017; Genial, 2019). In California, generally, the terms Latino/Latina or Chicano/Chicana are most commonly used, while on the East Coast and in the Southwest, Hispanic is more commonly used (Ramirez, 2014; Hipolito-Delgado, 2014; Genial, 2019).

The term Hispanic is someone who is a native of, or descends from Spain or Spanish-speaking counties (i.e., Honduras, Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico). The term hispano/hispana (Hispanic) was not invented in the United States, as some might believe (Hipolito-Delgado, 2014; Salinas Jr and Lozano, 2017). It is a Spanish word that means "belonging or relating to Hispania, Spain," and "belonging or relating to Hispanoamerica (countries in the Americas where Spanish is spoken)", such as Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, and Argentina. Hispanic came in use officially in

the United States in the 1970's during the Richard Nixon presidency. The U.S. government decided to adopt Hispanic to have a universal term that could serve to include all Spanish-speaking groups in the United States. Typically, a person born in or who descends from Spain is referred to as Spanish or a Spaniard (Salinas Jr. and Lozano, 2017; Hipolito-Delgado, 2017; Genial, 2019).

### **Defining Race, Gender, and Class**

Race and its meaning are always subject to reinterpretation, just as racial practices and racialized social structures are subject to reform and reorganization (Glenn, 2002; Ramirez, 2014). Race has been a constitutive element, and organizational principle, a praxis and structure that has constructed and reconstructed world society since the emergence of modernity (Glenn, 2002; Ramirez, 2014). Scholars have been slower to abandon the idea of race as rooted in biological markers, even though they recognize that social attitudes and arrangements, not biology, maintain white dominance (Glenn, 2002). Race was exposed as a social creation—a fiction that divided and categorized individuals by pheno-typic markers, such as skin color, which supposedly signified underlying differences (Glenn, 2002; Ramirez, 2014).

Gender is defined as either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female “a state of” that affects people of both genders, because gender seems to be rooted more firmly than race in

biology in bodies, reproduction, and sexuality (Glenn, 2002; Ramirez, 2014). Social constructionist theory has had somewhat different trajectories with respect to gender and to race. In both fields social constructionism arose as an alternative to biological and essentialist conceptions that rendered gender and race static and ahistorical, but it achieved centrality earlier and has been elaborated in greater detail in feminist scholarship on women and gender than in race studies (Glenn, 2002; Ramirez, 2014).

Class is defined as “who are socially disenfranchised by class, for example we have the poor class who lives in poverty, we have the working class who are the labors (manufacturing, construction, service industry or blue collar workers) the middle class are white collar workers and professionals (the middle class has become a thing of the past since the gap has widen between middle class and the wealthy), and the upper class or wealthy who are 1% of the population in this country (Blea, 1992; Vandrick, 2014). According to Vandrick (2014) that the systems of categorization vary from Marx’s bourgeoisie versus proletariat to the classic much-discussed three levels of upper, middle, and lower class, to a more elaborate schemes such as variations on a six-level division into upper, upper-middle, middle, and lower middle class, working poor, and the underclass (Vandrick, 2014).

### **Historical Issues/Considerations**

#### **Chicano Movement**

The term Chicano/a began in the early 1960’s time coinciding with the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements (Rodriguez, 1996; Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga, 2018). The *Chicano Movement*, had many struggles in different parts of the country.

Chicanos had separate goals and visions and unique stories. Some struggles included: To improve the lives of farm workers (Cesar Chávez and Dolores Huerta); the effort to end Jim Crow segregation and police repression; to improve educational opportunities; and for political representation and self-determination (Rodriguez, 1996; Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga, 2018). Rodriguez stated (1996) “that in time, other movements blossomed, specifically, the struggle for gender equality (Chicana Feminism), access to higher education, immigrant rights, and a literary and artistic revolution which spoke to cultural rebirth and a rediscovery of mestizo/indigenous roots and self-definition” (p. 1).

In the 1960s, the Chicano Movement was both a civil/human rights struggle and a movement for liberation (Rodriguez, 1996, Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga, 2018). In this realm, universities became one of the focal points of protest in the movement. Some of the principal demands were to open up of the doors of universities to people of color and the establishment of Chicano studies (Rodriguez, 1996; Lechuga-Pena, 2018). According to Rodriguez (1996), during this time of social upheaval, political fervor and cultural rebirth, the Chicano movement was hardly unified. The reasons for the lack of unity were the lack of historical memory, regionalism and sectarianism, and also due to the government’s effort to destroy this nascent movement (Rodriguez, 1996, Lechuga-Pena and Lechuga, 2018). With the Chicano movement, one of the main goals was to ensure equal education opportunity for Chicanos/Chicanas and Latinos/Latinas (Lechuga-Pena, 2018). One of the polices, *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), was enacted to desegregate schools and give

equal opportunity to attend public education with white students. This policy paved the way for Chicanos/as and Latinos/as to have the same opportunity of equal education.

### **Policies and Education**

Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) “segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro Children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment” (p. 1). What has changed or improved in the next decades since this ruling? Before the Brown ruling, a California man named Gonzalo Mendez sued the Westminster School District for preventing his children from attending a nearby school for white students. Subsequently, district officials offered to allow Gonzalo Mendez’s two children to attend the whites-only school. However, he decided not to send his children for as long as segregation continued for other families in the community. He would continue the law suit as solidarity to other families whose children could not attend the white only school. This paid off with a 1946 ruling that stated that separate facilities undermined the role of public schools in promoting “social equality”.

### **Chicana/Latinas Experiencing Graduate Education**

Patricia Gandara (1982), uses a storytelling method to study academic success of Chicano students. In doing so, ethnography, story-telling and narratives have been effective in challenging stereotypical and deficit-based perspectives, by giving voice to those at margins of higher education and by illuminating the unfair and

discriminatory practices of hegemonic institutions. While some of these students successfully navigate hurdles of higher education to complete PhD degrees, many more are pushed out as evidenced by the high attrition rates of Chicanas/os in higher education. Research on Chicanas in higher education, subsequently became the focal point of many scholars. In early years, research focused on high school and community colleges; however, there is an ever-growing interest in Chicanas in undergraduate, graduate doctoral schools, but little to no research on master's programs (Gandara, 1982, Ramirez, 2014; Gandara and Mordechay, 2017).

Achor and Morales (1990) discuss theories and the assumptions of Chicanas in higher education, and how theorists only look at the failure and underachievement of stigmatized minorities. Achor and Morales (1990) challenged this preoccupation on failure and underachievement of minorities and suggest that they should look at a more significant question: How and why do they sometimes succeed? Achor and Morales' methodology utilized a convenient sampling technique. They used the snowball method to find Chicana participants in higher education and to examine social reproduction and cultural ecology. Their study yielded 200 Hispanic women from various universities and, professional organizations (Achor and Morales, 1990; Ramirez, 2014; Barron-Nevarez, 2014; Gandara and Mordechay, 2017).

Lango (1995) examined factors that could contribute to the enrollment of Mexican-origin women in graduate studies. Lango at that time noted that (mid 90's) the research has only focused on Mexican American woman who gained admission into a graduate school. The author explored the factors that relate to enrollment in a

graduate program, and sampled Mexican-American women at California State University, Sacramento in 1991. Her exploratory study consisted of 240 senior students and 151 graduate students, both groups are used as comparative samples. Using a structured questionnaire and interviews, Lango analyzed the participants. Lango's (1995) research aimed to determine the characteristics that contribute to Mexican America women's experiences in graduate studies (Lango, 1995, Ramirez, 2014, Barron-Nevarez, 2014; Gandara and Mordechay, 2017).

### **Theoretical Considerations**

#### **Intersectionality**

The theory of intersectionality will analyze how race, class, and gender intersect in the lives of Chicanas/Latinas in higher education in a Social Work graduate program. According to Schriver (2015), intersectionality posits that a person's experience is shaped by the intersections of their multiple subordinate social identities (i.e., race, class, SES, gender and ethnicity). It promotes efforts to capture the complexity homogenizing the experiences of a group or individual. It challenges one to consider how intersecting social inequalities are embedded in many historical, cultural, and institutional practices (Schriver, 2015). When combined with an MSLC perspective, it provides a more comprehensive and integrative approach to advanced social work practice with ethnic and racial minorities (p. 67).

Covarrubias (2011) utilizes the intersectional framework to examine the educational experiences and trends of those who agree of Mexican-origin ancestry. In his words, "Intersectionality refers to the ways in which interconnected systems of

domination based on race, class, gender, sexuality and other social constructions simultaneously impact the lives of all people as they engage in socially mediated relationships and in their interaction with society and its institutions” (Covarrubias, 2011, p. 89).

Intersectionality theory is used to analyze different methods of research for education, ethnographies, and narratives. Kimberle Crenshaw coined Intersectionality in the 1980s. Crenshaw (1993) uses the concept of intersectionality to argue the different ways in which race and gender intersect to shape multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences. Crenshaw’s (1993) objectives were to map out the experiences of Black women and how they are not comprehensive categories from the normalized boundaries of race or gender discrimination, as these boundaries are currently understood. The intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be supported wholly by only looking at race and gender dimensions of their experiences separately. Crenshaw (1993) builds on the observations by exploring the many different dimensions in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of color in her study.

Choo and Ferree (2010) argue about the implications of practicing intersectionality in research and what it means for social workers to practice intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological approach of inequality. Choo and Ferree (2010) discuss and distinguish three styles of understanding intersectionality in practice: Group-centered, process-centered, and system-centered. The grouped-

centered approach places multiple-marginalized groups and their perspectives at the center of the research. The process-centered argues that intersectionality is a process which highlights power as relational, seeing the interactions among variables as multiplying oppressions at differenced points of intersection and illustrating attention to untargeted groups. The system-centered group sees intersectionality as shaping the entire social system and pushing analyses away from associating specific inequalities with unique institutions, instead of looking for processes that are fully interactive, historically co-determining, and complex.

Choo and Ferree (2010) have built on their comprehensive reviews to highlight three theories as to what intersectionality signifies: The importance of including the perspectives of multiple-marginalized people, especially women of color; an analytic shift from addition of multiple independent strands of inequality toward a multiplicity, thus transforming the main effects into interactions; and focus on seeing multiple institutions as overlapping into their co-determination of inequalities to produce complex configurations from the start, rather than “extra” interactive processes that are added onto main effects. Choo and Ferree (2010) state that the utility of an intersectional analysis is to give voice to the perspectives and needs of women of color who often remained invisible as women, even though they were organizing on different paths to express feminist demands. Choo and Ferree (2010) explained that women of color argued their oppression was experience in a qualitative way and their experiences required different attention in order to “how

race, gender, and class, as categories of difference, do not run in parallel but instead intersect and confirm each other” (p. 132).

Therefore, these qualitative differences make achieving their “voice” as a significant political and also an intellectual demand, since only by inclusion of this perspective from these groups could the political issues emerge for their experience and be addressed by movements, law, or policy-relevant scholarship in social work. In other words, using intersectionality to analyze Chicanas/Latinas in a graduate social work program and how race, class, and gender inequalities provide a voice to their stories, narratives and ethnographies of the experience will lead to a better understanding of the oppression, discrimination, and the marginalization faced in universities around the nation. Intersectionality examines multiple forms of oppression: Racism/colonialism, sexism/patriarchy, class oppression, and homophobia/heterosexism. Intersectionality scholars challenge the notion that we live in a postcolonial society in which these socially constructed divisions no longer impact or are impacted by power (Covarrubias, 2011; Ramirez, 2013; Barron-Nevarez, 2014).

Anzaldua (1990) articulates the importance of intersectionality when she states “What does being, a thinking subject, and an intellectual, mean for women of color from working-class origins? It means continuously challenging institutionalized discourse. It means being suspicious of the dominant culture’s interpretation of “our” experience, of the way they read us.... What is considered theory in the dominant academic community is not necessarily what counts as theory for women of color.

Anzaldua (1990) stated that “Necesitamos” made a succinct point regarding this intellectual matter that “theories (we need theories) that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries” -----new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods (p. xxv). In other words, that we need to create new theories that embody our experiences as women of color using race, class, gender, and ethnicity to bring a wealth of cultural knowledge to institutional intellect (Anzaldua, 1990; Barron-Nevarez, 2014).

### **Ecological Theory**

The framework of Ecological perspective combined with intersectional perspective falls under the Multi-System Life Course or MSLC as an advance concertation which integrates all levels of practice, from individuals through communities and global practice concepts (Schriver, 2015). Ecological framework is used for organizing social work knowledge and for conceptualizing approaches using that knowledge in practice. Ecological theory focusses on inter-relational transactions between systems, and stresses that all existing elements within an ecosystem play an equal role in maintaining balance of the whole. This approach can be best understood as looking at persons, families, cultures, communities, and policies and to identify and intervene upon strengths and weaknesses in the transactional processes between these systems (Schriver, 2015). In this framework the caseworker and client must understand the interconnectedness of the client to his or her environment to

effectively assess the problem, design a solution and ensure goal achievement and sustainability.

### **Practice Interventions**

There were four California State University campuses (Bakersfield, Sacramento State, Fresno State, and Stanislaus State) invited to participate in this research study. This researcher looked at campus organizations, clubs, and university-level support designed to benefit Chicanas/Latinas.

All four of the CSU campuses have a Movimeinto Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan (M.E.Ch.A.) chapter. M.E.Ch.A. is a student organization that promotes higher education, culture, and history. M.E.Ch.A. “was founded on the principles of self-determination for the liberation of our [Chicano/a] people”. “We believe that political involvement and education is the avenue for change in our society” (CSU Fresno, 2019). The Preamble of the M.E.Ch.A. club emphasizes the urgent necessity of education in the Chicano community. In order to successfully carry out this task, M.E.Ch.A. will recruit as many Chicano students as possible, and shall emphasize the importance of organizational involvement in educational, cultural, social and political empowerment of our “gente” (my people) (CSU Fresno, 2019). “Mechistas’ (club members) ultimate goal is to become politically conscious and strive for self-determination and liberation” (CSU Fresno, 2019).

Sacramento State has the oldest chapter of M.E.Ch.A. and has existed since 1969, over a 30-year period of fighting for social justice and the keeping the resistance alive (CSU Sacramento, 2019).

Fresno State has a Cross Cultural and Gender Center for their students (CSU Fresno, 2019). In 2015, the Center for Women and Culture, which included the Central Valley Cultural Heritage Institute and the Women's Resource Center, transitioned into the Cross Cultural and Gender Center (CSU Fresno, 2019). Sacramento State, established its Multi-Cultural Center in 1990 as a result of student, staff, and faculty activism and interest in addressing the needs of historically underrepresented students (CSU Sacramento, 2019).

Stanislaus State has a diversity center that was established in 2017 to bring students of together of all diversities and cultural for the advancement of students of all ethnicities. Diversity Center is a space dedicated to unity, diversity, peace, and multiculturalism, and committed to the principle of inclusion (CSU Stanislaus, 2017). The Center was established in direct response to student voices seeking a space where Stan State's diversity could be celebrated, and where greater understanding between university groups could be fostered through education and discussion in a safe and inclusive environment (CSU Stanislaus, 2017).

### **Research Findings and Outcomes**

One pattern remains absolutely clear is that "Chicanas are severely underrepresented in institutions of higher education at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels. Despite three decades of research on barriers to access, retention, and graduation, the progress is minimal at best" (Cuadraz, 2005; Ramirez, 2014; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). One of the challenges faced by Chicana/Latina graduate students has been the lack of academic preparation and skills due to unequal

resources and school segregation for K-12 students. This is compounded by the financial challenges that they encountered while attending graduate school. The two most important factors are the lack of financial support from academic institutions and their struggles to pay for schools themselves due to their poor socioeconomic backgrounds (Ramirez, 2014; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Two more factors are the lack of graduate school knowledge before they entered the graduate program and faculty microaggressions (classroom environment) while Chicanas/Latinas are in a social work graduate program (Ramirez, 2014; Barron-Nevarez, 2014).

The next chapter explains the methodology of this study to explore the graduate school experiences of Chicanas and Latinas. Chapter III will expand on the research design, sampling, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and the protection of human subjects for this study.

CHAPTER III  
METHODOLOGY

**Overview**

The purpose of this study is to explore the graduate school experiences of Chicanas/Latinas and the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. This study seeks to expound upon how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the views of Latinas pursuing a graduate-level education. This researcher will examine the participants' struggles while acquiring higher education. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the personal factors and institutional contexts shaping academic success in master of social work programs (Medina & Luna, 2000; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). The research question guiding this study is: How does race, class, and gender inequality shape the experiences of Chicana/Latina graduate students in a master of social work program?

**Research Design**

This researcher will employ a qualitative exploratory/descriptive research design that will utilize face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Creswell (2008) explains "Alternatively, a qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives or both. It also uses strategies of inquiry, such as, phenomenologies, narratives, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended emerging data with the primary intent of

developing themes from the data” (p. 18). The interview questions posed in this study will be open-ended (Appendix A).

Phenomenological research seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals who are being studied and utilizes descriptive inquiry. This type of design (using perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and experiences from the participants) assists with further understanding a specific population. The understudied experiences of Chicanas/Latinas will provide a glimpse of what is observed by this particular ethnic group while in the pursuit of higher education at a state-run institution. The study can also provide additional knowledge to academic social work departments. For example, California State University (CSU) Stanislaus is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Hispanic-Serving Institutions is defined by federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment. California has 52 HSI graduate programs, with an aggregate number of graduate and undergraduate student at 4,840 (50%) Hispanic/Latino during the Fall of 2016 (CSU, Stanislaus 2016). However, the research on subset of this ethnic group (females/Latinas) is virtually nonexistent in social work scholarly literature. In 2015-2016, only 296 master’s degrees (which included all ethnic groups and academic departments) were awarded at CSU Stanislaus, and it is unknown how many of those graduates were Hispanic/Latino (retrieved from CSU, Stanislaus, 2017).

### **Sampling Plan**

In this study, a purposive, non-probability sample will be utilized to explore Chicanas/Latinas in California State University graduate social work programs. Purposive sampling relies on knowledge of a population or with some predetermined characteristics in mind. In order to be a potential participant in this study, the following criteria needs to be met: 1) Participants must self-identify as Chicana/Latina (Latina is a woman or girl of Latin American origin or descent; Chicana is a woman or girl of Mexican origin or descent). 2) Participants need to be enrolled in a graduate social work program. 3) Participants must be attending a California State University (i.e., Stanislaus, Sacramento, Fresno, or Bakersfield).

### **Instrumentation**

The semi-structured open-ended interview questions are derived from this researcher's anecdotal experience coupled with the extant literature. The questions consist of three areas: graduate school knowledge, graduate school experience, and demographics, (with an emphasis on race/ethnicity, gender, and class/socio-economic status). The interview questions seek to highlight challenges faced by Chicanas/Latinas in social work programs.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher will contact participants by phone, email, or hard copy letter to schedule appointment times for the interviews. The data will be collected in a comfortable safe environment of the participant's choosing. However, a list will be provided that suggests cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, university campuses, or other

public spaces. If participant cannot meet in-person, the researcher will interview the participants by telephone, using Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, or a similar video conference method. This researcher will record the interviews and take handwritten notes while interviewing the participants. The interviews will be organized in a timely manner, ensuring the researcher has time allotted for transcription. The interviews will be no longer than 45 minutes, and if more information is needed, this researcher can contact participants at a later date, provided the participants agree to follow-up interviews. A strength of this study is that it can inform academic social work programs about the inequalities faced by Latinas/Chicanas and expand literature on the subject. One weakness of this study is the risk of cancellations of interview appointments by participants.

### **Plan for Data Analysis**

The researcher will utilize a qualitative data analysis procedure to address the research question. The data will be transcribed from the recordings and notes taken by the researcher from the interviews into a Word document. This process can be done by the researcher independently. The researcher will follow Neuman's five-part plan (2003) and categorize the responses into themes.

The five sections for qualitative analysis are: 1) Sorting and Classifying (data is organized around research questions or interview questions), 2) Open Coding (researcher locates themes and assigns initial codes or labels in an attempt to condense mass data into categories), 3) Axial Coding (begins with a set of initial codes and focuses more on initial codes than the data, which new ideas may emerge

and new themes are created), 4) Selective Coding (scanning data and previous codes, looking selectively for cases that illustrates themes and these major themes and concepts guide the search), and 5) Interpreting and Elaborating (finally put data into themes and categories that are related to the existing knowledge base and find comparisons or contrasts that are drawn from the literature). Visuals, such as, tables and graphs, will display direct quotes form participants and statistical demographic information.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

The participants will be given an informed consent form to sign and read about their rights pertaining to this study (Appendix D). The researcher will also verbally discuss the informed consent form to further ensure understanding prior to receiving their signatures. The participants can email (as an attached Word document) or text (e.g., screenshot or image/jpeg) their signed informed consent form if the interview will not occur face-to-face. The participants can withdraw consent at any point during the interview. The researcher does not anticipate any harm that can come to the participants as a result of their involvement in this study.

The names of the Chicanas/Latinas will not be shared or included in the study. The researcher will ensure the identities of the participant will be kept confidential: numbers will be ascribed to participant data in lieu of their names. The researcher will store hardcopies of all data (i.e., any notes, digital or video recordings) in a secured location, and the data will be locked in a filing cabinet that is only accessible by the researcher. Once the study is complete the researcher will keep the data for six

months and then destroy it (shredded and disposed of properly). This study will be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection and rights of the Chicana/Latinas in the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Overview of Chapter**

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the experiences of Chicana/Latinas by examining how race, class, and gender inequalities shaped their educational advancement in a masters of social work program. The research question guiding this study is: How does race, class, and gender inequality shape the experiences of Latina graduate students in a master of social work program? This study seeks to expound upon how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the views of Latinas pursuing a graduate-level education. The Chapter will explain the overview of the sample (sample size, descriptive characteristics, and observations), major themes (graduate school knowledge, financial burden, ethnic Identity, race/ethnicity, faculty microaggressions [classroom environment]), guiding research questions, and major points of the study.

#### **Overview of Sample**

In this study, a purposive, non-probability sample will be utilized to explore Chicanas/Latinas in California State University graduate social work programs. The sampling plan for this research study was to interview a total of 10 Chicana/Latinas from four central valley California State Universities (Stanislaus, Sacramento, Fresno, and Bakersfield). One of the criteria for this study is that participants must currently be enrolled in a master of social work (MSW) program. The MSW programs were

contacted by way of a formal (electronic) letter addressed to the program directors and department chairs requesting that they share the details of this study with their respective graduate students (Appendix B). Prospective participants responded to this researcher through the contact information provided in the formal letter which allowed for communication through email, phone, or via text message (Appendix C). Of the four central valley universities that were invited to participate, only two gladly encouraged their students to participate in the study.

### **Sample Characteristics**

In order to be a potential participant in this study, the following criteria were met: 1) Participants must self-identify as Chicana/Latina (Latina is a woman or girl of Latin American origin or descent; Chicana is a woman or girl of Mexican origin or descent). 2) Participants need to be enrolled in a graduate social work program. 3) Participants must be attending a California State University (i.e., Stanislaus, Sacramento, Fresno, or Bakersfield).

The researcher was able to contact each participant via email, phone, and text messages. This researcher received 20 emails from those who were interested in participation of this study. Out of the 20 potential participants, 14 replied back showing further interest and wanted more information on the study after the initial contact. This researcher then selected 10 Chicanas/Latinas for the sample. This researcher only chose 10 total participants due to data collection time constraints. This researcher chose respondents from the 3-year and 2-year cohorts from CSU Stanislaus. The participants were first-year students, second-year students, and third-

year students in the CSU Stanislaus social work program. Only second-year students from CSU Fresno, responded to the request for participation in this study.

**Demographics.** The ten participants came from two CSU campuses, three participants (n=3) from CSU Fresno and seven participants (n=7) from CSU Stanislaus. The participants in this study ranged in age from 21 to 45. There were six (n=6) in the range of 21 to 25; three participants (n=3) between ages 26 to 30; and only one participant (n=1) within the age range of 41 to 45. Out of the 10 participants two (n=2) were married and eight (n=8) were single; nine (n=9) had no children. For the employment question, out of the ten participants, five (n=5) worked and the other half were unemployed five (n=5).

### **Guiding Research Questions**

The guiding research question was: How does race, class, and gender inequality shape the experiences of Latina graduate students in a master of social work program? The interview questions consisted of three areas: graduate school knowledge, graduate school experience, and demographics, (with an emphasis on race/ethnicity, gender, and class/socio-economic status). The interview questions sought to highlight challenges faced by Chicanas/Latinas in social work programs.

### **Major Themes and Presenting Data**

Initially, the qualitative data were organized into categories based upon thematic concepts. This was done by arranging similar responses to each question answered by participants. Then open coding was used to assign initial codes/labels in an attempt to condense the data into categories. The next step was axial coding to

primarily review the codes and organize the categories by sequence. Finally, selective coding was used. In selective coding the data and previous codes were scanned and responses were reviewed to illustrate comparisons and contrasts (Neuman, 2003).

### **Graduate School Knowledge**

The participants were asked a number of questions to determine graduate school knowledge. The questions in this section were: a) *What did you know about graduate school before the MSW program?* b) *As a Chicana/Latina, what motivated you to apply to a Master of Social Work Program?* c) *As a Chicana/Latina, has anyone ever discouraged your decision to attend graduate school?* d) *As a woman/female, how does your family feel about your attending a Master of Social Work program?*

Out of the 10 participants, eight shared that their level of graduate school knowledge was very little or non-existent. Their family members' understanding of graduate school process was also non-existent. Out of the 10 participants, eight (n=8), felt that no one had explained the process of graduate school, or encouraged or expected them to attend a graduate program. Family members' understanding of higher education was a barrier in pursuing graduate education. Most participants explained that because their family members did not have higher education, their relatives could not explain the process of graduate school admission and did not possess knowledge of graduate school options. Out of the 10 participants, six (n=6) would be the first to graduate in their families with a master's degree. Out of all the participants, two (n=2) stated that they have siblings who have an undergraduate

degree, four (n=4) stated that they have cousins who went on to pursue higher education. One participant shared:

Just my sister right now...she is graduating with me, but she is getting her bachelor's this semester in education; she wants to be a teacher...and a cousin graduated from UC Davis recently.

Of the 10 participants, eight (n=8) felt that they had no knowledge of graduate school, while two participants (n=2) stated they had some knowledge of the programs. The two participants who were aware of graduate school learned of it from attending a session or conference about graduate school at their undergraduate university. The information received presented an array of graduate programs, not just social work.

Other participants responses listed below:

Table 1.

*What Did You Know About Graduate School Before the MSW Program?*

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Participant 1 I did not have any graduate knowledge. I wasn't planning on attending graduate school.

I did not think I was able to get in, so I did not look into it at all. I thought it was not an option for myself. All I knew was that graduate school was very hard to get into, especially the MSW program here at Stan State, and very expensive.

Participant 2 Ok, um, well, it was really difficult for me to, kind of, understand the process or what really was graduate school, it's just because my parents did not have any knowledge about it, they didn't know anything about schools and being the oldest one it was really difficult.

- Participant 4 Um, I did not know much before, actually I didn't know anything, now that I think about it, I never thought about it, (laughing) um I didn't know much about it, I think, where I started was that I knew, I wanted to keep getting degrees and wanted to go higher up.
- Participant 7 The only thing I knew was that you had to write a thesis, five-chapter thing and another two years if you wanted your masters to graduate, a lot of people encouraged me to get master's degree because you do get payed more, it opens more doors, but that's about it.
- 

One participant shared with researcher that they had some knowledge of graduate school, participant attended information seminars at participants university.

Participant 6 stated:

I was pretty well informed about graduate school because I did attend two different conferences or informationals as an undergrad. So, I did have and an understanding, that it was an additional degree depending on what your interests were and, in some field, it could be helpful to have because its additional knowledge. Like a master degree, I knew a little bit about what to expect. I did have one or two close friends who were in a master's program, when I was an undergraduate. So, I was able to get a sense of what it was from their first hand experiences.

Participant 5 shared with researcher that:

The only thing I knew was that you had to write a thesis, five-chapter thing and another two years if you wanted your masters to graduate. A

lot of people encouraged me to get master's degree, because you do get paid more. It opens more doors, but that's about it.

Participant 9 also stated that, "I did not know much. I actually had to attend the information session for the MSW program at university, because at first, I was like kind of skeptical if I needed a masters or not. So, I did not know anything until I attended the information sessions".

### **Financial Burden**

The participants were asked questions related to graduate school experience.

a) *How does your social-economic class play a part in your social work graduate program experience?* b) *How did your finances encourage or discourage your decision to attend graduate school?* Participants shared that they did not acquire further debt or financial stress while attending graduate school. Many of the participants would not have attended graduate school if they did not receive a stipend (e.g., Title IV-E public child welfare funds or county mental health dollars) to pay for their higher education. Some participants received student loans, and university grants or scholarships. One participant stated:

When I first applied, I was put on the wait list. I did not know, if I was going to get in or not. When I got in, it's was a week or two before the semester was going to start. I was like should I even go; I don't have the money to go, I don't have the money to pay tuition. I had to take a loan; it was not that much. I have to owe that now, luckily when I reapplied for FASFA, I actually got a grant. I still have to pay the

difference sometimes, it was difficult. I had to take money out, and sometimes, I did not have it. I would have to ask my husband or my parents to lend me the money to ensure, I had that money, it was a little bit difficult. I did not receive the stipends I did not qualify for it.

Another participant shared with researcher, she thought that the question about social economic class or status was very important to answer. Participant understands student debt and how some have to work, she says:

This is a good one, LOL...this one is really a good one. So, um, I kind of have two experiences with that one. When I graduated with my B.A., I was fortunate enough to land a full-time job and get benefits and all. Um...so...then half way through my semester, they were not able to be flexible with school schedule, so I had to quit...and then I was unemployed for a good while...and it was just very hard, and I want to say it was the worst time in my life.

Other participant responses are listed below:

Table 2.

*How Does Your Social-Economic Class Play a Part in Your Social Work Graduate Program Experience?*

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Participant 1	A great part, I am currently, this is money wise right? I am currently unemployed; I am on the Title IV-E. I was blessed to have been accepted and awarded that stipend. I help my dad a lot, and my dad depends on me. My siblings also depend on me, so it has been very difficult for me, not be working.
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- Participant 2 So, um you know, it was a challenge, that my father brought up "You know", he said, "how are you going to pay for college"? "How are going to do this?" But, you know, I said 'Dad don't worry about it, you know there is always loans or financial aid'. So, yes, it was difficult for me to, you know. I was really excited that, I got accepted into the program. But on the other hand, I thought about, you know, finances...money wise. How was I able to do this, but it was difficult, it was challenging, but, like I said there are loans or financial aid. There's always a way and you know; money shouldn't be a barrier from stopping you.
- Participant 3 I consider myself the working-class poor. Um, you know to pursue a master's degree level, I had to take out student loans. You know, um, I am definitely not in the upper class. I am a working single parent, so um, it is a struggle to pay for books and tuition at times, but I know it will be worth it.
- Participant 7 I think, well...I am not the wealthiest, but middle class thanks to my parents. So, I see the people that we are to serve, most are born into low economic status. It makes me want to help them more and serve that community. It would have been more difficult to go to master's program if I hadn't received the stipend. I did consider not doing the program, but I did receive the stipend. I was lucky enough to get it, that helped tremendously and not to worry about it. I know if, I needed my parents to help me, I did not want just to put them through that. So, I was very thankful for the stipend, right now...I don't have any debts.
- Participant 8 I stressed about it a lot...money wise, we are not rich, of course we get by. I was going to take a loan, he (dad) is like no, don't take out a loan. We are going to get through this, I don't know how, but we are going to help you pay rent until you find a job. I found a job at Costco but, it was temporary, but I am not working there anymore. I know I don't have the money and I know when it comes to like paying stuff, I am stressing. My parents, are like, "it's okay...stop stressing...we will help you". "You will find a job eventually, we will get through this", but it has been hard on us.
-

Many participants felt, that if they did not receive help or financial aid, it was discouraging. They felt they would not be able to attend the program. They did not want to be in a mountain of debt. The other interview question was: *How did your finances encourage or discourage your decision to attend graduate school?*

Other participants responses are listed below:

Table 3.

*How Did Your Finances Encourage or Discourage Your Decision to Attend Graduate School?*

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- Participant 1 Um, they completely discouraged me. I seriously...got to the point...where I told myself 'if I don't get awarded the stipend, I am not going to continue the program'. I can't afford it and it's been a struggle. Like, financially speaking, I was looking at loans and like...I don't want to add to my student debt. Its either, I get the stipend and attend or I don't get it and don't attend.
- Participant 4 So, my finances before graduate school like I mentioned, if I would not have gotten Title IV-E, I probably would not have done the program. Just because, I know that um...I know that I am not in a place to be able to afford to go. To keep going to school, even though there are student loans options. I don't think I would have continued. The Title IV-E money was barely enough, to like...keep me okay but it was, I was still struggling to the point of where, um...I was like, I am going to drop out this semester.
- Participant 7 So, the stipend made the final decision, whether or not I was to continue to the program. I did not want to take out loans, to be in debt to get a master's degree. I was just hoping...that I would get the stipend to be able to pay for graduate school. Fortunately, I was able to receive the stipend.
- 

Participant 3 shared with the researcher about being in the program and how the finances of attending and stated:

I think it encouraged me because, I knew if I got a master's degree. Then later on it's a plus, even though I am going to struggle now...but down the road it's going to...hopefully help me get more money and get a better paying job. (How are you paying for, do you have students' loans?) Yeah, I have loans and I pay what I can myself.

Participants were asked questions specific to their ethnic background and the degree of support from social work program faculty: a) *Do you identify as Chicana? Why or Why not?* b) *How does your race/ethnicity shape your experiences in a social work graduate program?* c) *Do you believe you had enough support from faculty while in the program to succeed?*

### **Ethnic Identity**

Participants were asked to identify as Chicana or Latina. Out of the 10 participants, seven (n=7) identified as Chicana, and three identified as Latina. Their ethnic identity, was based on their understanding of the term Chicana. For example, one participant shared with researcher that:

I don't identify as Chicana because I am not of Mexican descent. When I think of a Chicana, I think of someone of who was of a Mexican heritage, so, I consider myself either Hispanic or Latina. I am not Mexican.

When asked did they identify as Chicana or Latina, another participant said it was important to know the understanding of what the terms means:

So, I don't um based on my understanding, of the term Chicana. The way I understand it, is someone who identifies as Mexican but was born here. So, I was actually born in Mexico, so that's why I know, it's a little different, but I tell myself "hey I am a proud Mexican", I was born in Mexico, so I call myself a Latina, but not a Chicana.

All participants have their own stories and interpretations with their identity. What it means to be Chicana and what it means to be Latina.

Other responses from participants who identified as Chicana were listed below:

Table 4.

*Do You Identify as Chicana? Why or Why not?*

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Participant 1	I do identify as Chicana; I was born here (USA) but my parents are of Mexican descent. So, I am first generation college student, but like I always say, I am Mexican. I don't say that I am Mexican American, because my blood is Mexican, my heritage is Mexican, my culture and my parents. I just happen to be born in America.
Participant 5	I do identify as Chicana, I feel like...I can't speak for other people, but I feel that I am not American enough, and I am not Mexican enough. I identify as Chicana, but a mixture of both.
Participant 9	Yes, I identify as Chicana, because I come from parents who are Mexican and I was raised here in the USA, a lot of my roots are from them and that's how I identify as Chicana.
Participant 10	Yes, I do identify as Chicana more than anything else. I would say, it just feels that I am the text book definition. A Mexican person living in the U.S. I don't identify as Mexican. I am not fluent in Spanish you know, I only visited Mexico a hand full of times. Even though, here in America, I still feel as 'the other'. I identified Chicana. I just identify with the culture and what it stands for. There is strength in the root of the word. I appreciate the history of the Chicano movement. So, when I was learning about it, it really resonated with me. I think that's when I started identifying as Chicana. I realized, I am Mexican decent, but I live here, I defiantly have a dual identity.

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One participant grew up in the Merced and Fresno areas of California and attends Fresno State. This participant seemed to have acculturated, yet appears to be going into the “veil” as DuBois once stated in his book, “*Souls for Black Folks*” ...having to live in both worlds of your identity. In the Mexican-American or Chicana/o culture, there was a saying, (*ni de aqui, ni de aya*) which means, not from here (USA) nor from there (Mexico). Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os feel that they are in the in-between, not from either side... “where do they belong”.

### **Race/Ethnicity in The Program**

With the following question, *how does your race/ethnicity shape your experiences in a social work graduate program?* participants answered that their race and ethnicity was a plus when helping to relate to most of their clients in field practicum or case management on the job. When acknowledging that race or racism has an effect on their experiences in the graduate program. Some participants felt that their ethnicity and gender played a role in their jobs and the discrimination and inequalities that they felt.

During the interviews some participants expressed some disappointment in their MSW programs. Participants came into the program with certain expectations, such as, feeling very excited about becoming a social worker. The expectation to help others and make changes to the world, with the dream to make it a better place for their families and communities. However, the classroom environment in the program did have an effect on some participants. Responses are listed below:

Table 5.

How Does Your Race/Ethnicity Shape Your Experiences in A Social Work Graduate Program?

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Participant 1	I am not exactly sure how it shapes them, but I am pretty sure that it has influenced them, how I work with certain professors and what they expect from my work. My graduate school experience so far has been very disappointing. Like even, just one instance with a professor, I had throughout the whole semester. I was pretty much told; I don't know how to write and it really shook and baffled me.
Participant 4	We are part of a minority, it has help me out, as well in my classroom. We are in the central valley, we have a lot of Hispanics, I want to say we have more Hispanics in my graduate program then, my white counterparts, so I feel welcome there, but then I really don't. I think my professors have tried to incorporate culture competency as much as possible.
Participant 6	I think it definitely does shape my experiences. Um because you know it would be naive to say that we don't worry about those kinds of experiences. Our cultural background is with us and it's everywhere that we do. Whether it's in our personal lives, academic life and what not and also that other people carry those with them too.
Participant 7	I guess in many different ways, especially now with Trump being the president and I know there is a lot of racism against Hispanics. It encourages me to participate more and try not to let things bother me. All the professors in the program have been encouraging they have not been discriminatory in anyway, so I think we're just a close group that we have helped one another.
Participant 9	I think it's just helps me with all the struggles that I went through. Like social economic class, race, it just helps me understand. I can relate and communicate with people. I can have a bond with other people, who have gone through similar experiences. I think that's how It has help me.

Participant 10      I think, I definitely...I am more aware of privilege, when some of my professors who are white males, the good thing is they are aware of their privilege. I have even called it out on them before. The majority of in my program, I want to say half are Chicanas/Latinas and we have DACA students.

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### **Faculty Microaggressions**

The participants felt that some professors treated them differently or their classroom environment was somewhat difficult. All participants had experiences where the classroom climate was degrading, oppressive, and unresponsive to the student's needs. This major theme was very consistent and frequent among all participants, (experiencing faculty microaggressions in the classroom environment). All ten participants had an experience or saw other students struggle with the professors who seemed unprofessional. The question that had the most significance was: *Do you believe you had enough support from faculty while in the program to succeed?* This had many implications to the experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the graduate program of social work. Some of the participants expressed that they felt they should have had more support from faculty. Faculty microaggressions was somewhat discerning, since it is a social work graduate program. Where social justice and advocating is key for the discipline of social work. All ten participants experienced or discussed what had happened in classroom environment to their cohorts or peers. Responses are listed in Table 6 below:

Table 6.

*Do You Believe You Had Enough Support from Faculty While in The Program to Succeed?*

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Participant 1	This program is a huge contradiction within its self in my eyes, because they talk about oppression and how we are trying to fight that oppression. Yet, I feel so oppressed by some of my professors. They are like “fight for social justice” and this and that. I try too but I just get slapped down but not physically, but you know metaphorically speaking. Like I get slapped down every time I try to question anything at all.
Participant 2	Um, yes well like I said, um, I just, you know, I just completed my first semester so I am really thankful for the faculty that we have in the MSW program.
Participant 3	You know, first semester, we did have some unpleasant experiences, with a certain professor. That was kind of tough. Once I was no longer under the instruction of that professor, it was okay. As a grad student coming in the first year, first class and to experience something like that, was pretty disappointing. Especially, it was a social work class. I felt like, um like we were, a little oppressed, very oppressive which was surprising to me because, particularly, based on it was a social work master’s program.
Participant 4	I wish, ha, ha, um I have had a good amount of support from some professors and its interesting cause there are actually some of the newer professors. The two that come to mind, they are like two years old barely in the program. Um...but the other ones, I don’t feel like I get support from the ones...are already established professors. There, um...just a lot of my peers and I complain, that we don’t think that this program is really focused on the individual.
Participant 5	I think for the most part, I did um...I think two professors were extremely helpful. There was one professor that was not necessarily the most encouraging. I just think that the points of view of that professor were different, then the ones...a lot of us students in that class. So, it was really hard, when that professor took things to heart. Because, then it felt like we were not in a learning environment anymore. We were more like a social environment, there should be a fine line between professionalism and then personal stuff.

- Participant 6 From my class mates I saw...they would kind of express to me "hey I did reach out to this professor" "and they never got back to me" or "they got back to me with this type of responses" that's not the support that they were expecting. Um...but for me personally I really haven't had any issues with that...I think there's only been one or two professors that were, I feel that they focus a lot more on the busy work.
- Participant 8 I feel with some faculty, yes, I just finished my first semester, so I am just getting the taste of it. So, I am going to start my second semester and meet different professors. I don't think I had enough support, like I said previously, we had conflicts with a certain professor, especially in my cohort. We were very strongly opinionated with, like two professors, well one more then, the other one of them.
- Participant 9 There was one comment from a male professor, that made a comment on my paper and told me that it was not graduate school level. So, that has made me feel inadequate. I think... oh I am not writing at that level. It would happen when, I would get a paper back, and it was all red because of my grammar.
- Participant 10 Well...we had an incident, where a professor asked our cohort not to speak Spanish in class. Um, I thought, it was very oppressive. I think there are three faculty, that I say are supportive. But it is hit and miss with some professors. We feel that they don't care. We had a professor one time, a student asked a question, 'Oh, I don't understand this?' and the professor responded 'What's so hard about it? I don't understand why you are not understanding the assignment...because to me its so easy'. I thought it was very oppressive.
- 

Many of the participants felt they were struggling with oppression and classroom environment. Participants stated they felt there was no safe space to express how they felt when discussing assignments, speaking Spanish in class, or the support they needed that professors should have provided. This researcher had great discussions

with the participants during the recordings of interviews and when the recorder was off, participants felt they could speak more openly when they were not being recorded. Some participants did ask to turn off the recording device to socialize and speak freely after the interviews.

### **Summary**

This study indicates that (1) graduate school knowledge and (2) financial burden have significantly influenced their perception of social work programs in the central valley. The respondents' (3) ethnic identity, their particular (4) race/ethnicity as a graduate student in an MSW program, and (5) faculty microaggressions have affected participants' perceptions' as well. Ultimately, these five overarching themes were highlighted in the data analysis, which shaped Chicanas/Latinas experiences in a social work graduate program.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Overview**

In this chapter, the researcher explored the experiences of Chicana/Latinas by examining how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped their educational advancement in master of social work programs. This study expounded upon that scant literature that describes experiences of Chicanas/Latinas pursuing graduate-level education. This Chapter will discuss the major findings of this study, connect resulting themes with the extant literature, articulate the limitations of this study, and offer implications for social work practice, policy, and research.

#### **Major Findings**

The major findings identified in this study provided answers to the overarching research question. The findings illuminated different factors that shaped Chicanas'/Latinas' experiences in master of social work programs. The five major findings were: graduate school knowledge, financial burden, ethnic identity, race/ethnicity in the program and faculty microaggressions. The main purpose of this study was to explore and advance the understanding of Chicanas'/Latinas' graduate school experiences.

#### **Chicanas/Latinas and Graduate School Knowledge**

One of the major findings was *lack of graduate school knowledge*. The participants stated they had no clear knowledge or solid understanding of graduate

school as an undergraduate student. Most of the participants in this study did their own research or attend graduate program information sessions prior to attending their respective social work programs. Through their own initiative, they learned what the requirements were to apply to a master of social work program. This finding (lack of graduate school knowledge) is consistent with existing research studies conducted by scholars on higher education. Research has shown that many students do not know how to apply to graduate school or what the graduate socialization process entails (Ramirez, 2011). Ramirez (2011) documented that Latinos are among the most educationally marginalized groups in U.S. society, have the highest high school dropout rates and are less likely to earn bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees than any other racial/ethnic group in the country. According to Santos and Saenz (2012), one critical trend among entering Latinas/Chicanas college students, which shows a significant disparity relative to their peers, is the level of parental education at college entry. Compared to all other underrepresented groups, Latinas/Chicanas were significantly more likely to come from families where neither parent had attended college (Santos & Saenz, 2012).

### **Chicanas/Latinas and Financial Burden in Graduate School**

Another major finding was due to the *financial burden* for the participants in this study. Participants felt overwhelmed about how they would pay for graduate school. This finding is also consistent with the literature. According to Chankseliani (2013), scholars around the world have held ongoing debates on the inequalities in access to higher education in the last few decades. Participants in this study expressed

if it were not for stipends, they would not be attending a master's program. The cost of higher education, whether 4-year college or 2-year certification programs, is often beyond the ability of Latino families to sustain themselves; yet tuitions, continue to rise beyond the rate of inflation, shutting more and more students out of this opportunity (Gandara & Mordechay, 2017). Spiraling college prices, coupled with low median households' incomes for Latinas/Chicanas, continues to act as a barrier to college access for Latinas/os, and more so disproportionately for Mexican-Americans/Chicanas/os (Santos & Saenz 2012).

The participants in this study were stressed about paying for graduate school and many did not want to ask their parents for help with paying tuition. According to Garcia and Figueroa (2002), many Latino students come from the lower socioeconomic stratum. The majority of Latino students come from families with less than \$30,000 in annual income and 40% are from families whose annual earnings are less than \$20,000. These students readily qualify for, and are highly dependent on financial assistance (Garcia & Figueroa, 2002). According to Gandara and Mordechay (2017), poverty is the major driver behind low educational attainment. It determines to a very large extent where children will go to school, with whom, and by whom they will be taught. The authors stated that one hopeful yet troubling fact is that we actually know what to do to increase the education level of Latinos. However, we have not invested in the solutions.

### **Chicanas/Latinas and their Ethnic Identity**

According to Acevedo-Polakovich et al. (2013), scholars examining the literature on ethnic identity and related phenomena have pointed to relative homogeneity in the designs and analytic approaches utilized by researchers in this area. The developmental influences on Latina/o ethnic identity scholarship center on Erikson's (1998) theory of identity development and Marcia's (1990) operationalization of Erikson's theory, in which exploration and resolution are important processes for the formation and understanding of identity. U.S. Latinas/os who have explored their ethnic heritage and have a clear sense of how they feel about their ethnic group membership are considered to have an "achieved" ethnic identity (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2013). The influences highlight the affective component of ethnic identity, often referred to as ethnic identity affirmation, which captures the positivity or negative feelings that U.S. Latinas/os attach to their ethnic group membership (Acevedo-Polakovich et al., 2013).

### **Chicanas/Latinas and their Race/Ethnicity in the Program**

Ethnic and racial demographic composition is further complicated by the difference in rank between white faculty and faculty of color (Romero & Margolis, 2000). Women graduate students of color reported rarely having the opportunity to work closely with a faculty of color. According to Romero & Margolis (2000), students were not surprised by the under-representation of faculty of color in graduate departments, but they were disturbed at the marginalization of those few who had made it.

### **Chicanas/Latinas and Faculty Microaggressions**

Once graduate school knowledge was obtained and social work program enrollment was addressed, the third major finding emerged—and that is faculty microaggressions towards these students in the classroom. Participants were asked to describe their experiences related to faculty support in the classrooms while in the MSW program. The graduate school experience for the participants in this study was decried as oppressive and dehumanizing. Scholars have struggled to document how students of color navigate and negotiate conditions in their daily experiences of graduate school education (Gildersleeve et al, 2011; Barron-Nevarez, 2014). The participants felt that some professors treated them differently based on the gender or ethnic background, making their classroom environments emotionally challenged for them.

Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative...slights and insults” (Suarez-Orozco et al. 2015, p. 151). This is in agreement with Ramirez (2011) whose research showed that “Chicanos/Latinos often experience racism and sexism in the form of “microaggressions” which communicate demeaning, belittling, or detrimental racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to target person or group” (p. 170). Microaggressions are by their very nature elusive. According to Suarez-Orozco et al. (2015), the sting of the words seems trivial to the perpetrator/initiator...who recognizes neither his or her position of privilege nor the

multiple previous incidents that may have been encountered by the victim over the course of a lifetime (Solórzano et al., 2000). As educational settings increasingly serve students from a broad variety of backgrounds and social circumstances, microaggressions on campuses are a growing concern (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Social justice, advocacy, and cultural competence are key values of the social work profession and MSW programs (NASW, 2008; Tijerina & Deepak, 2014). These values underscore the importance of understanding the unique challenges and strengths of the rapidly growing Latino populations in the United States who currently face a political context of hostility and institutionalized racial profiling (Tijerina & Deepak, 2014). For social work students of all ethnicities, the path to cultural competency is shaped by their educational experiences with faculty. The contributions of an ethnically diverse faculty include offering students a range of ideas, approaches, and multicultural perspectives (Tijerina & Deepak, 2014). Intersectionality theory also draws attention to internal diversity within racial/ethnic groups as a way of challenging essentialist representations that homogenize racial/ethnic groups (Ramirez, 2014). These marginalized voices can illuminate directions for action and justice in various societal institutions, minority graduate students may feel marginalized by faculty and their peers, particularly the more distant they are from the hegemonic norm along the dimensions of race, gender, and class (Garcia, 2005; Barron-Nevarez, 2014).

## **Implications of Findings**

### **Policy**

Ramirez (2011) indicates that higher education institutions can implement areas of policies and practices that can help underrepresented students move smoothly through the graduate school application process. California State University campuses would ideally include systematically providing information regarding graduate school application requirements and procedures to Chicana/Latinas, as well as other underrepresented students. Counselors who can help families understand how to navigate the educational system and help students understand both the demands and rewards of higher education are critical to preparing students to graduate and go on to postsecondary education (Gandara & Mordechay, 2017). However, most of the common-sense solutions to the barriers that Chicanas/Latinas face in education are simply not on the agenda of the policy makers (Gandara & Mordechay, 2017). An increase in the representation of Chicanas/Latinas in the social work academy is critical due to the rapidly increasing size of Latino populations in the United States.

### **Practices**

There is current underrepresentation of Latinas/Chicanas as full-time faculty in social work graduate programs and the profession's commitment to diversity and cultural competency (Tijerina & Deepak, 2014). According to Gandara and Mordechay (2017), we are facing a teacher shortage in the country, especially in those fast-growing states with many Latino students. California has the largest number and percent of Latino students and English learners in the nation (Gandara

and Mordechay, 2017). Today, more than half of the state's students are Latino, but only about 18% of its teachers are of the same ethnic background (Gandara and Mordechay, 2017).

A recommended practice is the continued support for funding of California State University campuses' centers of diversity, as well as student organizations and clubs that are designed to benefit Chicanas/Latinas (for example, the MECHA club, Love Evolution club, and on-campus multicultural resource centers). Strong collegiate mentorship programs that are focused on the success and well-being of Chicanas/Latinas may help to promote increased knowledge of graduate opportunities and garner a better understanding of what is entailed in the pursuit of higher education.

### **Limitations**

This study was based on a relatively small sample of Chicana/Latina graduate students (N=10) who were affiliated with only two California State University campuses in the central valley of California. Therefore, limiting generalizability to the larger population, Additionally, time constraints impeded the ability of this researcher to increase the sample size. Using a larger, more representative sample could have yielded higher data collection results, and perhaps provided additional information regarding academic experience of Chicana/Latina master of social work students. The last limitation of this study was the lack of related articles to draw from. Hence, the importance of this study to contribute to the empirical knowledge base.

### **Future Research**

Further scholarship is needed on the education of Chicanas/Latinas who are in, and are considering, graduate school. This researcher recommends that social work programs hire more ethnically diverse faculty, especially on campuses in areas with a high population of Latinos/as, Hispanics, and Chicanos/as. Increasing the number of faculty of color may help to empower, inspire and encourage Chicana/Latina students to focus on the advancing their education beyond baccalaureate levels. Chicana/Latinas students, activists, and scholars have asserted the need to study Chicanas/Latinas and their statuses in institutions of higher education (Barron-Nevarez, 2014). Overall, findings from this study attest to the need to focus on experiences of Chicanas/Latinas in the master of social work programs in order to be better informed about the importance of higher education and upward mobility.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Has anyone else in your family attended a university? If so, what was the highest degree attained?

Graduate School Knowledge

What did you know about graduate school before the MSW program?

As a Latina/Chicana, what motivated you to apply to a Master of Social Work Program?

As a Chicana/Latina, has anyone ever discouraged your decision to attend graduate school?

As a woman/female, how does your family feel about you attending a Master of Social Work program?

Graduate School Experience

Do you identify as Chicana? Why or Why not?

- How does your race/ethnicity shape your experiences in a social work graduate program?
- How does your social-economic class play a part in your social work graduate program experience?
- What role did your gender play in your social work graduate program experience?

Since being in the MSW program, are there any struggles or barriers you face related to your race/ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic class?

Do you believe you had enough support from faculty while in the program to succeed?

How did your finances encourage or discourage your decision to attend graduate school?

Demographics

Age (What is your age range?) 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51+

Marital status (Are you single or, married?)

Family (Do you have any children? If so, how many and what are their ages?)

Are you employed (full-time or part-time)?

Which is the University you attend?

## APPENDIX B

## LETTER TO MSW PROGRAM

DATE: October 15, 2018

TO: MSW Program Director and Department of Social Work Chair

FROM: Maria Consuelo Nevarez, Stanislaus State MSW Graduate Student

RE: The Experiences of Latinas in Master of Social Work Programs

Dear MSW Program Director and Department of Social Work Chair,

I am requesting your assistance with sharing an opportunity for your students to participate in a qualitative research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the graduate school experiences of Chicanas/Latinas and the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. In order to be a potential participant in this study, certain criteria need to be met.

This study is being conducted as part of the fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of master of social work to be conferred by Stanislaus State University. Please forward this email to your MSW students as they may be interested in participating in this study.

If you would like more information about this study, please call Maria C. Nevarez (209) 695-4340 or email at [mnevarez@csustan.edu](mailto:mnevarez@csustan.edu)

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Maria C. Nevarez,

Stan State MSW Candidate

## APPENDIX C

## LETTER TO STUDENTS

DATE: October 15, 2018

TO: MSW Graduate Students

FROM: Maria Consuelo Nevarez, Stanislaus State MSW Graduate Student

RE: The Experiences of Latinas in Master of Social Work Programs

Dear MSW Graduate Students,

I am requesting your assistance with sharing an opportunity for you to participate in a qualitative research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the graduate school experiences of Chicanas/Latinas and the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. In order to be a potential participant in this study, certain criteria's need to be met. Participants must identify as Chicana/Latina and currently enrolled in master of social work program.

This study is being conducted as part of the fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of master of social work to be conferred by Stanislaus State University. MSW students who may be interested in participating in this study please contact researcher.

Any student requesting more information does not obligate your participation in this study. If you would like more information about this study, please call Maria C. Nevarez (209) 695-4340 or email at [mnevarez@csustan.edu](mailto:mnevarez@csustan.edu)

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Maria Consuelo Nevarez,

Stan State MSW Candidate

APPENDIX D  
CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project “The Experiences of Latinas in Master of Social Work Programs” that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Master’s degree in Social Work at CSU Stanislaus. We hope to learn from this study, the graduate school experiences of Chicanas/Latinas and the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. This study seeks to expound upon how race, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the views of Latinas pursuing a graduate-level education. If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to do face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The interviews will be no longer than 45 minutes, and if more information is needed, the researcher can contact you for more information at a later date, provided that you agree to follow-up interviews. The plan for this research study will be to interview a total of 10 Chicana/Latinas from four central valley California State Universities (Stanislaus, Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield). The participants must currently be enrolled in a master of social work (MSW) program.

There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study.

It is possible that you will not benefit directly 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. The names of the participant will not be shared or included in the study. The researcher will ensure the identities of the participant will be kept confidential: numbers will be ascribed to participant data in lieu of their names. The researcher will store hardcopies of all data (i.e., any notes, digital or video recordings) in a secured location, and the data will be locked in a filing cabinet that is only accessible by the researcher. Once the study is complete the researcher will keep the data for 6 months and then destroy it (shredded and disposed of properly).

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 signing below. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, **Maria Consuelo**

**Nevarez**, at (209) 605-4340, mnevarez@csustan.edu or my faculty sponsor, **Kilolo Brodie** at (209) 667-3126. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the **IRB** Administrator by phone (209)667-3493 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu .

Sincerely,

Maria Consuelo Nevarez  
MSW Graduate Student

I have read and understand the information provided above. All of my questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview *video/audiotape*-recorded.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_