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**MSW Reflections on Their Educational Path to Executive  
Leadership in Human Service Organizations**

Stephen Ferrante

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Executive Leadership in Human Service Organizations

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Barry University

### Acknowledgement

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving mother who often expressed that I should have a PhD and who frequently asked when I would be pursuing and obtaining my doctoral degree.

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### Abstract

While there is evidence that leadership capacity is essential for effective management of human service organizations, the lived experience and journey of masters of social work (MSW) graduates with respect to the degree to which their masters level social work educational programs provided them with the necessary administrative leadership and managerial development and preparation is uncertain. This study, through phenomenological qualitative inquiry, explores the leadership development experiences of MSW graduates who are in executive human service administration positions. By interviewing existing human service administrators with MSW degrees, identified within the public domain by the Network for Social Work Management, this research applies thematic analysis focused on the executives' leadership development and transition into administration. Employed analysis investigates leadership experiences and progression within MSW programs along with preparedness for human service executive roles and responsibilities. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis and categorized into identified themes as well as into the collective essence of administrators' experiences. As research, literature, and findings on this topic are limited, dated, and incomplete, this study offers additional detailed information to inform science-based knowledge and future empirical inquiry. Findings from this research reflect MSW program limitations in leadership development, the significance of career trajectory and preparation, and the link between clinical and administrative skills. Potential implications for social work academia are reported, including consideration of incorporating administrative content across MSW curriculum and within field education.

*Keywords:* administration, leadership, social work, social work education

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The chapters within this dissertation report present the research and the research process in its entirety. Chapter I introduces the research topic followed by a full review of the literature presented in Chapter II. Chapter II also covers the theoretical framework associated with the research along with the rationale for a qualitative research design and phenomenological approach and the intended research contribution. Chapter III presents the research methodology including the research question, participant recruitment, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, research rigor and ethical standards, and the researcher's role. Chapter IV covers the research findings with Chapter V discussing the findings implications and study limitations as well as presenting a conclusion regarding this study.

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Historically, American social work was established in response to growing human challenges, social issues, and societal concerns (Herrick & Stuart, 2005). The social work profession was founded by social welfare leaders skilled in establishing effective infrastructures to support and empower vulnerable and at-risk populations (Brilliant, 1986). These founders successfully operationalized their vision to strengthen individuals, organizations, and communities. Today, social workers are less visible in leadership roles within human service structures (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013). Organizational leadership positions in the social work profession seem more often held by professionals from other disciplines such as business, non-profit management, public administration, medicine, and law (Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy, 2004).

A review of empirical research focused on social work administration identified several variables associated with limited leadership competency among advanced degree social workers. These variables include practitioner interest, academic graduate program concentration, and inadequate leadership development. Most masters of social work (MSW) students prefer clinical and/or direct service curricula to macro and administration-focused concentration courses (Wilson & Lau, 2011). Their interests primarily center on mastery of counseling techniques and interventions. MSW students typically seek to develop practical therapeutic skills they can easily apply in client service settings. They are, therefore, less likely to engage in courses and electives focused on macro practice and managerial leadership. Consequently, over the past several decades, MSW students specializing in administration have significantly declined (Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy, 2004). For instance, while in the 1980s and 1990s there was a number of schools of social work offering administrative curriculum tracks, recent data from the Council on Social Work Education (2017) suggests there are only two current accredited schools of social work with administration tracks. Furthermore, empirical literature documents limited MSW student concentration on leadership development and human service administration (Ezell, 1990; Mabrey, Thompson, & Halseth, 1996; Pine & Healy, 1994). Accordingly, the decline in macro-level content in social work curriculum may be associated with state-specific licensing requirements that focus almost exclusively on demonstration of clinical practice-based social work knowledge and skills. Additionally, the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) standards for generalist practice is more micro-focused, and it is less likely that MSW students would be exposed to internship sites that are primarily administrative (Ezell, Chernesky & Healy, 2004; Pine & Healy, 1994).

Schools of social work have de-emphasized administrative leadership as a part of social work education (Brilliant, 1986). Consequently, there are less class choices focused on macro practice and human service administration. Thus, limited academic and experiential opportunities exist for MSWs to develop the competencies required to lead organizations. As a result, MSWs often lack the qualifications to obtain senior executive positions, inhibiting their application and/or promotion. Moreover, when MSWs get promoted into supervisory roles, they can find themselves feeling unprepared for their managerial responsibilities (Bliss, Pecukonis, & Synder-Vogel, 2014).

### **Leadership and Leader Definitions and Concepts**

On the basis of existing research, leadership has been explained in relationship to characteristics, abilities, behaviors, and approaches. Leadership can be defined as a social transaction through which one person influences others (Yulk, 1994). Leadership involves interpersonal and inspirational guidance that unites people around common goals. Leaders forge change by proactively recognizing the need for growth, visualizing a new reality, and bringing their conceptualizations into existence. Leaders reshape and create a future by developing possibilities, maintaining an unwavering vision and commitment to their purposes, and stimulating others to embrace the same (Kerfoot, 1998).

Leaders use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to motivate and empower people to optimize their functioning, keeping them unified and moving forward. In their capacity, leaders develop a cohesive culture around innovation, performance, and attainment (Humphries & Beres, 2000). Leadership is essentially the translation of a vision into goals and accomplishment through initiative, inspiration, trust, and cooperation. Leadership entails a communication



process focused on setting a vision and direction, aligning and inspiring people, anticipating and adapting with change, and facilitating strategies to reach a desired outcome and realize success.

Leadership within an organizational context is associated with the managerial capacity to plan, structure, and implement operations and resources that yield intended results. Leadership involves the development, administration, and evaluation of processes and personnel for achievement. Leadership is defined as the ability to develop a high performance, efficient, and sustainable organization that consistently serves its customers and purpose (Kerfoot, 1998).

Leadership, as described in the literature, (and as outlined above), presents relevance and application for the social work profession, particularly with respect to the administration of human service organizations. Management within human service organizations requires combined conceptual, interpersonal, and technical skills (Moran, Frans, & Gibson, 1995). Social work administrators need to possess the capacity to transfer values and vision into performance and outcomes. Social work administrators with developed leadership capacity can promote a healthy organizational culture that employs effective communication, collaborative relationships, and resource maximization. Social work administrators who are established leaders can synergize organizational strengths and components to attain positive transformation for both the organization and those it serves.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To date, research on this topic has been limited, dated, and incomplete without more recent studies to update knowledge and the literature. Research examining educational, career, and leadership preparation and development is dated 20 to 40 years ago (Biggerstaff 1978; Brilliant, 1986; Neugeboren, 1986; and Neugeboren, 1990) with limited follow-up studies during the 21<sup>st</sup> century evaluating the education of social work managers and administrators (Austin &

Ezell, 2004; Bliss, Pecukonis & Synder-Vogel, 2014; Ezell, Chemesky & Healy, 2004; Goldkind & Pardasani 2013; and Hoefler 2008). In an effort to build upon prior research and currently inform existing literature, this qualitative study explores the lived experiences of MSW graduates who are presently in executive leadership positions within human service administration. By interviewing existing human service administrators with MSW degrees, identified within the public domain by the Network for Social Work Management (NSWM), this research examines administrative leadership development and preparation in advanced social work education. Specifically, this study identifies the leadership journey, particularly within MSW programs as it relates to administration competence development among MSW graduates in post-graduate human service leadership positions. Using a phenomenological approach and applying thematic analysis, this research describes the detailed essence of interviewees' collective experience with leadership development within their MSW programs, answering this study's research question of *what was the lived leadership development and preparation experiences among MSW human service executives while in their MSW programs?*

### **Researcher's Interest in This Research**

This researcher's passion for this research topic and area is generated from personal experience. This researcher possesses an MSW degree and held a human service agency director position for several years following his MSW graduate education. As this researcher worked to meet the demands of this position, he found himself without the leadership and administration training required for this occupation. Although the researcher experienced professional success, he pondered if his MSW education could have better prepared him for human service management. Years later, as an MSW program professor, this researcher recognized the limited amount of curriculum focused on leadership preparation in human service administration.

Subsequently, this researcher's desire to gain an understanding of other MSW degreed human service administrators' lived experience increased and has culminated in the topic of this dissertation. As aligned with the research community, this researcher believes it is vital that social workers possess the competencies required to be effective in executive leadership roles within the human service industry, and schools of social work have a part in this competency building regardless of concentration specialization or state licensure requirements (Austin & Ezell, 2004; Biggerstaff, 1978; Bliss, Pecukonis & Synder-Vogel 2014; Brilliant 1986; Ezell, Chemesky & Healy, 2004; Goldkind & Pardasani 2013; Hoefer 2008; Neugeboren, 1986; and Neugeboren, 1990). The outcome of this research supports this perspective and can positively inform schools of social work MSW curricula to strengthen social work professionals' leadership and executive capacity.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

While the topic of leadership within an organizational context has been empirically researched for decades and attention to leadership and its importance in the public sector is increasing, research on leadership and administration within social work still seems to be in its infancy (Lawler, 2007). Initial references in empirical literature about leadership within the social work profession begin in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time period, focus was on the role of social worker verse manager and preparation of MSW graduates with the addition of an administrative concentration within social work curriculum (Biggerstaff, 1978). In 1983, Dr. Eleanor Brilliant of the Rutgers University School of Social Work presented a paper entitled "Social Work Leadership: A Missing Ingredient" at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the New York State Social Work Education Association. This presentation, which was subsequently

published in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Journal *Social Work* in 1986 and reprinted again in 2001, examined the constructs of leadership, the leadership development gap in social work, perception that schools of social work have minimized leadership development in curriculum and practicums, and strategies schools of social work could employ to strengthen leadership education. Brilliant (1986) discussed how the social work profession and social work values may be viewed opposite the business world and corporate philosophy with leadership, strategic planning, management systems, and accountability processes considered to be part of the business spectrum rather than the human service sector. Accordingly, Brilliant (1986) proposed that MSW students may be disinterested in leadership roles, including based on decreased popularity of public sector practice. This article served as a foundation for further inquiry and this dissertation proposal.

Empirical inquiry into leadership and social work administration in the 1980s further explored the need for management education among human service executives and the educational degree of choice for human service administration (Gummer, 1987; Neugeboren, 1986; Perlmutter, 1984; Turem, 1986). This examination of educational development continued into the 1990s with a focus on aptitude for human service management, application of macro practice education and activities, and advanced career development (Ezell, 1990; Mabrey, Thompson, & Halseth, 1996; Martin, Pine, & Healy, 1999; Mc Nutt, 1995; Neugeboren, 1990; Schwartz & Dattalo, 1990; Taere & Shaefor, 1995). A paper entitled “Social Work’s Anti-management Ideology” that was presented in 1990 at NASW’s Annual Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts by Dr. Mark Ezell, a University of North Carolina School of Social Work professor, offered a proposition of the potential decreasing importance placed on managerial development with social workers. Ezell (1990) proposed that schools of social work may be

inhospitable environments for human service administration education, and within a culture in which micro practice is deemed legitimate social work, anti-management attitudes exist and inadequate preparation for administration is reported. Overall, the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, accumulatively reflect a fairly limited amount of literature associated with leadership competence among social work administrators.

From the early 2000s to present day, empirical literature focused on leadership development among advanced degree social workers, including with respect to human service administration (Austin & Ezell, 2004; Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy 2004; Goldkind & Paradasani, 2013; Rank & Hutchinson, 2000). Empirical inquiry over the last 15 years has encompassed investigation of leadership competence and development as well as managerial preparation for social sector administrators (Callahan, Gardner, Mendonca, & Scott, 2014; Wimpfheimer, 2004). Present day inquiry has included the role of social work education, curricula, and experiential learning in the state of human service administration (Watson & Hoefler, 2014; Wilson & Lau, 2011). Consistently, these studies (Austin & Ezell, 2004; Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy 2004; Goldkind & Paradasani, 2013; Lawler, 2007; Rank & Hutchinson, 2000; Richardson, 2010; Watson & Hoefler, 2014; Wilson & Lau, 2011; Wimpfheimer, 2004; Wuenschel, 2006) have reinforced the value of leadership development designed for social workers. Social sector leaders require business acumen and managerial competence to succeed (Callahan, et al., 2014). Business wisdom and proficiency can be integrated within social work curriculum and alongside the schooling of social work values (Richardson, 2010).

The growing study of leadership requirements and expectations in the social work profession supports some of the empirical conclusions of the past and offers considerations for the future. Research evidence espouses the suppositions that leadership development is essential

for effective human service administration, but infrequently found within schools of social work. To date, empirical inquiry into leadership competence among advanced degree social work administrators has not been exhaustive. Considerable opportunities appear to exist in order to expand evidence-based knowledge associated with social work leadership, particularly within schools of social work.

### **Social Work Values and Human Service Administration**

Although it is important for human service administrators to have management skills, business competencies are not a substitute for the core values, ethical principles, and standards of the social work profession (Watson & Hoefler, 2014). The social work values and ethics to which social workers obligate themselves are critical components of administrative practice (Watson & Hoefler, 2014). As part of the specific qualifications of their profession, social workers would bring this obligation and purpose to the role of human service administrator. These values, principles, and standards would guide their managerial decision-making and leadership conduct. In their administrative practice, social workers would be inclined to perform in a trustworthy and reliable manner, ensuring an organizational structure of sound policies, guidance, and accountability to protect and uphold the well-being and resources of the agency, its workforce, its clients, and the general public.

Social work values can promote a healthy workplace culture conducive to human service delivery. Social work values focus on service; nurturing human relationships; and promoting respect, dignity, and self-worth to empower individuals to achieve their potential. Human service administrators championing social work values would, therefore, be person-centered, customer-driven, and outcome-focused. These values, applied in supervisory interactions and relationships, would inspire an agency's workforce while modeling essential behaviors for quality client care.

Social work ethics encompass integrity, commitment, and competence. These attributes are vital in business management and human service delivery, particularly as they promote a sense of stewardship and accountability. Human service administration frequently involves the governance and allocation of public, grantor, and donor resources. Oversight and distribution of these assets and resources not only require financial prudence, but also uprightness and veracity, which are directly aligned with the ethical standards of the social work profession.

### **Leadership Competencies for Social Work Administrators**

In addition to a value system, successful administration of human service organizations requires an advanced and extensive internal and external relations skill set (Wimpfheimer, 2004). Hence, leadership development and competence are important in administration of human service organizations. Ensuring that existing and emerging social work administrators possess leadership competency is critical to the success of the industry and social work profession (Callahan, et al., 2014). Empirical literature documents leadership competencies deemed vital for social work administrators to effectively manage social service agencies. These leadership capabilities, which are aligned with the multiple and varied organizational challenges found within the social service sector, include executive administration, resource management, strategic operations, and community collaboration. Executive administration encompasses analytical and critical thinking, interpersonal and relationship management, and innovation and organizational growth strategies. Resource management includes administering human capital, finances, internal controls, and continuous quality improvement. Strategic operations involves planning, developing, executing, and evaluating programs and public relations. Community collaborations represents interagency coordination, community practice, and collective impact.

To better understand leadership competence within human services, Callahan, Gardner, Mendonca, and Scott (2014) surveyed 200 social-sector chief executive officers and managers (some professionals with MSW degrees) to identify critical leadership attributes required for their administrative role. This research identified strong consensus (up to 58%) among survey participants regarding the most essential leadership qualities linked to administrative success: possessing the capacity to innovate and implement, assembling talented teams, being a collaborator who can bring multiple stakeholders together, and having the ability to manage outcomes with commitment to continuous quality improvement. This study additionally sought participants' perception of their performance and the performance of their peers with respect to these identified attributes. Less than 40% of respondents rated themselves and their peers as strong in any of these identified leadership competencies. Survey participants further articulated that the leadership competency gap could be bridged with increased investment in impactful leadership development and resources (Callahan, et al., 2014).

To investigate the possible relationship between leadership capacity and academic background, one study obtained completed Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (MLQ) from administrators (N=393) in the human service field (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013). Researchers found statistically significant differences in MLQ scores between those administrators with MSW degrees (35.9% of respondents) and those from other educational disciplines (64.1%). Administrators with an MSW did not score among the highest on most of the leadership components within the questionnaire, but did score second highest on utilization of a transformational leadership style. The researchers concluded that based on social workers' general propensity for clinical practice with few transitioning to executive positions, those that enter administration may see their function as transformational or as positive agents of change



(Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013). Accordingly, developing competencies aligned with a transformational leadership approach would likely benefit social workers engaged in administrative practices (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013).

### **Transformational Leadership and Social Work Administrative Practice**

A transformational leadership skill set is a critical competency for human service administration. Transformational leadership refers to leader behaviors that arouse followers to identify with organizational goals and interests in a manner that promotes their capacity to perform beyond expected levels of work (Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). Transformational leadership is concerned with the development of followers' fullest potential (Mary, 2005). Through transformational leadership, leaders inspire followers through an empowerment approach that enhances their self-efficacy and beliefs. Transformational leaders form a mutual understanding of quality performance with their followers while amplifying levels of motivation and integrity. Understanding the value in investing time and energy in developing the leadership capabilities of their followers, they offer support and guidance to followers in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Transformational leaders generate deeper self-confidence in followers, providing an avenue for innovation and creative problem solving. They increase mission awareness, enable followers to expand their potential and abilities, stimulate creativity, and motivate others to think for the organization rather than just for the individual (Fisher, 2005). Transformational leaders inspire followers to generate enthusiasm and commitment to a vision and a plan (Sims, Faraj, & Yun, 2009). They impact attitudes and behaviors of followers to make the organization's goals their own. Connecting at an emotional level with their followers, transformational leaders motivate them to accept and pursue an organizational direction. Transformational leadership has,

therefore, been linked to high levels of employee motivation, performance, and job satisfaction (Wang & Huang, 2009).

Transformational leadership is aligned with the empowerment approach and strengths perspective employed within social work practice. It focuses on motivations, aspirations, capabilities, and competencies. Social work practitioners can utilize transformational leadership to facilitate progression from follower to leader in others, and in themselves. Furthermore, by bringing transformational leadership to human service organizations, social work administrators can advance employees, strengthen the organization, and ultimately influence positive client and agency outcomes.

### **Leadership Development in Advanced Social Work Education**

In response to the need for leadership development guidance for social work administrators, NSWM established management competencies and practice standards associated with successful leadership of human service organizations (Wimpfheimer, 2004). These competencies include planning, program development and management, financial development, evaluation, human resource management, staff development, governance, public/community relations and marketing, contemporary social and public policy issues, and advocacy (Wimpfheimer, 2004).

Although these standards were established in 2004 in response to a perceived gap in social workers' abilities to administer human service organizations, they have not been applied within MSW programs. To date, there continues to be an absence in leadership development and preparation within MSW programs. Consequently, there are deficiencies in social work professionals prepared to lead social service agencies.

Over the past decades increasing numbers of social work graduate students have become more interested in direct service and individual treatment than in social work administration, choosing clinical training over macro practice (Rank & Hutchinson, 2000). MSW students tend to prefer and be directed toward micro practice curriculum and development of competence in therapeutic modalities, including as licensing requirements focus on clinical social work knowledge (Wilson & Lau, 2011). The number of MSW students specializing in human service administration has steadily declined (Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy, 2004) with a significant majority of graduate students reporting primary interest in clinical specialization (Austin & Ezell, 2004). This minimal prevalence of MSW students engaging in administration and management training in their academic programs suggests limited exposure to leadership development during professional graduate education (Wuenschel, 2006).

Social workers' limited presence in human service management may also be the result of social work academia's failure to provide leadership development and social work administration education that builds the competencies required for lead human service organizations (Moran, Frans, & Gibson, 1995). Social work management literature discusses the importance of leadership development integrating social work values with management skill expertise (Richardson, 2010). It has been further argued that graduate schools of social work have a responsibility to prepare social workers to fulfil leadership roles managing organizations that deliver human services (Teare & Sheafor, 1995). However, social of social work are not assimilating the values and ethics of the social work profession with management of social sector agencies in order to develop social work executives to lead the human service industry (Moran, et al., 1995).

In a study investigating the perception of social work leadership, 75 CSWE and NASW executives along with 75 CSWE-accredited schools of social work deans and directors were surveyed regarding leadership development of social work students. This study found that 98% of survey participants believed that there should be leadership development content in graduate social work curriculum (Rank & Hutchinson, 2000). CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) recommend practice behaviors associated with leadership, organizations, and administrative structures (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). However, leadership development does not consistently appear to be part of the professional foundation for social work education (Rank & Hutchinson, 2000). A current review of CSWE accredited MSW programs yielded only two universities with administrative academic tracks (Council on Social Work Education, 2017). Furthermore, a literature review for research studies associated with leadership content within social work curriculum resulted in lack of empirical inquiry.

### **Social Workers in Senior Executive Roles**

MSWs transitioning into supervisory, managerial, and leadership roles within human service organizations should have some developed capacity for leadership including administrative and management training (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013). However, due to lack of academic preparation, social workers entering social work administration frequently possess little formal training and mastered skills (Moran, et al., 1995). This circumstance may deter advanced degree social workers from seeking promotion, advancing within their organizational structure, and/or becoming strong visible leaders within their profession.

Advanced degree social workers without leadership development and competence may experience difficulty competing successfully and being considered for executive roles with

human service organizations (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013). As a potential consequence, advanced professionals with other educational backgrounds and with developed leadership capacity may be selected as higher qualified candidates. Consequently, there appears to be a significant presence of other advanced degree disciplines (business, non-profit management, public administration, and law) leading human service agencies (Neugreboren, 1990; Watson & Hoefler, 2014).

Prior and present day empirical research indicates that an MSW is less competitive with a masters of business administration and public administration in obtaining top-level executive positions within human service and nonprofit organizations (Watson & Hoefler, 2014). One study examined the opinions of board chairs regarding educational degree and background in hiring a chief executive officer. A total of 49 completed surveys were received in this research study with a large plurality of board chair respondents indicating a masters of business administration was the best degree for a chief executive officer candidate (Watson & Hoefler, 2014). Board chair respondents identified the business leadership competencies of a masters of business administration professional as the prevailing reason for their selection (Watson & Hoefler, 2014).

Research on leadership and administration within social work education is still developing. While existing studies have examined and discussed management education requirements for human service administration as well as reinforced the value of leadership development for advanced degreed social workers, schools of social work have primarily remained focused on clinical and micro practice. And, although social work values and ethics are critical factors for administrative practice, successful administration of human service organizations requires an advanced leadership and managerial skill set. Accordingly, NSWM established management competencies guidelines for successful human service administration,

and CSWE recommends practice behaviors associated with leadership and organizational structures, however, social work academia has not integrated social work and social sector agency management education. Consequently, master's level social workers have been less likely to study and pursue as well as successfully compete and perform in executive roles within human service organization. Development of social workers' self-efficacy for human service administration, therefore, appears critical for their leadership within the human service industry.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Thematic analysis employed in this dissertation research is guided on a self-efficacy theoretical framework. Self-efficacy theory provides context from which an understanding of the connection between education and the perception of ability can be obtained. Through a self-efficacy theoretical framework, human service administrators' educational experiences would play an important role in their sense of competence and mastery.

Education influences self-efficacy development. Self-efficacy, the perception of capacity for learning and performance, influences motivation, self-regulation, and achievement (Wentzer & Wigfield, 2009). Self-efficacy is an essential prerequisite for individuals attempting to establish productive behaviors and attain goals. Self-efficacy theory provides the framework for understanding self-efficacy and its role in human behavior and behavior change.

Self-efficacy theory was originated by psychologist Albert Bandura (1997) from his social cognitive theory of human functioning. Bandura's social cognitive theory describes the interconnectedness between behavior, environment, and cognitive factors that are linked with self-efficacy (Pajares, 2002). According to self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy, which represents an individual's self-belief about his or her ability to accomplish tasks, is a self-regulatory function that evolves over a lifespan affecting all aspects of life including aspirations, choices,

commitments, and actions (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy theory postulates that an individual's perception of his or her capabilities influences his or her course of action and performance (Pajares, 2002).

Self-efficacy theory identifies the primary sources of self-efficacy as mastery experience, performance success, vicarious experience, social modeling, verbal persuasion, and physiological factors (Bandura, 1997). Family, cultural, social, educational, and peer influences and experiences are also associated with self-efficacy development (Wentzer & Wigfield, 2009). Furthermore, self-reflection and evaluation of task complexity can guide self-efficacy impacting individual functioning. Therefore, self-efficacy is a vital part of establishing direction and achieving desired outcomes and change based on their perception of relevance and their sense of potential success (Cameron & Keenan, 2013).

In accordance with self-efficacy theory, students of social work can master leadership, business management, and administrative competencies as part of their education process. The provision of role models, performance opportunities, and motivational coaching can contribute to MSW graduate students' development of executive leadership capacity during their matriculation. In addition, self-reflection and self-evaluation activities can strengthen mastery of the skills required to lead human service organizations. These opportunities and activities can be infused in coursework and practicum experiences.

Self-efficacy theory provides a framework for this qualitative research. Exploration and examination focuses on the lived experiences of MSW degreed human services administrators with respect their MSW education and their perceptions of their ability to function successfully as human service executives. Consistent with self-efficacy theory, MSW students afforded

leadership development and preparation during their graduate education should experience a smoother transition into their administrator role and responsibilities.

### **Research Contribution**

While there is evidence that leadership capacity is essential for effective management of human service organizations, how masters level social work educational programs provide administrative leadership and managerial development for graduate students is uncertain. More research was needed to evaluate leadership development and preparation occurring within MSW programs, and this additional research explores this phenomenon, including as related to MSW graduates experience with human service administration. This research study provides these detailed descriptions through a phenomenological qualitative study that examines and describes the lived experiences.

This qualitative study identifies lived experiences in the leadership journey, particularly within MSW programs as it relates to human service administration competence building among MSW graduates in human service leadership positions post-graduation. This study contributes to the current research literature on the topic (which is limited, dated, and incomplete) as well as provides information has implications for social work academia, particularly as social work academia can play a significant role in developing leadership style and expertise (Goldkind & Paradasani, 2013).

### **Rationale for a Qualitative Research Design**

Qualitative inquiry was selected and employed for this research based on its focus to obtain insiders' experiences and perspectives associated with a phenomenon, including the meaning that the persons who are experiencing or have experienced a particular incident assign to it. A qualitative research design offers an opportunity for research subjects to lend their



personal voice and perspective on the research topic, presenting the ability to capture lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Padgett, 2008). A qualitative research approach provides the means to encapsulate individualized details and make sense of the information and data collected during in-depth interviews as it pertains to leadership development and preparation within MSW programs. Through qualitative methodology, the researcher was able to engage in extensive exploration and understanding of experiences from the detailed perspective of those encountering it. Capturing the lived experiences of MSW graduates who are human service administrators provides unique insights and increases the depth of understanding about their journey and the self-efficacy of leadership ability influenced by their MSW educational experience that quantitative research methods would not be able to achieve. Qualitative methods offered the researcher a method to study the research topic with detail and depth that would not be possible through quantitative procedures and statistical analysis.

### **Rationale for Phenomenological Inquiry**

Phenomenology was the recommended qualitative research method for this study as it specifically involves exploration of the lived experiences of research participants in relation to a particular phenomenon. Phenomenology is the study of individuals' direct experiences and the essence of those experiences (Merriam, 2009). Through a phenomenological approach, the researcher was able to derive common and core meaning as well as the essence of the research subjects' perspectives and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenology, which is compatible with the research question, offered the ability to collect and analyze experience data from in-depth interviews with MSW degreed human service executives. Phenomenology provided a systematic procedure to generate meaningful themes and synopses from analyzed interview data.

In this research, the goal is to understand the lived experiences of MSW graduates in human service administration particularly with respect to MSW education. This is a unique journey for these individuals, and an interpretive phenomenological approach offered a means to examine how the research participants interpret and understand their life experiences as well as to document and describe their leadership transition. Interpretive phenomenology involves studying, gaining insight, and deriving meaning from certain individuals, their specific experiences, and the context of their given experiences associated with a unique situation (Merriam, 2009). Phenomenological approaches offer in-depth data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and as research and literature about this studied phenomenon is limited, dated, and incomplete, a phenomenological methodology presents the benefits of a further detailed description.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

##### **Purpose**

This qualitative study is designed to examine the lived experiences of MSW graduates who are presently in executive leadership positions within human service administration. Specifically, this study explores participants administrative leadership development and preparation in their advanced social work education. This research identifies the leadership journey, particularly within MSW programs, as it relates to administrative competence development among MSW graduates in post-graduate human service leadership positions.

##### **Research Question**

The research question for this study is *what was the lived leadership development and preparation experiences among MSW human service executives while in their MSW programs?*

This study explores MSW degreed human service administrators' experiences with leadership development and preparation within their MSW programs. This study serves to identify leadership development within MSW academic and field experiences as it relates to human service administration competence. This research analyzes leadership development within MSW programs, particularly as it pertains to preparation for human service administration.

### **Phenomenological Qualitative Inquiry Design**

This research employs a phenomenological qualitative inquiry design. The objective of this design is to understand specific circumstances through the study participants' experiences and to elicit meaning from the essence of those experiences. A phenomenological design allows the researcher to explore the participants' lived experiences within their MSW program, within their human service administrator roles, and within their leadership development journey. The aim of this research is to discover the participants' experiences and essence of those experiences.

The researcher specifically employs Max van Manen's combined descriptive and interpretive phenomenological approach and hermeneutic phenomenology methods. This methodology offers commitment to the research concern and question, investigation of the experience as it is lived, written description of the phenomenon, and interpretation of the essential meaning (Kafle, 2011). Hermeneutics phenomenology is concerned with human experiences as they are lived, illuminating the details to create meaning and achieve a sense of understanding (Kafle, 2011). The phenomenon of the experiences and journey of MSW graduates in human services administration will better inform the researcher, the professional literature, the social work profession, and social work academia including regarding curriculum content on administrative leadership.

Customary to a phenomenological study, the researcher utilizes in-depth interviews to gather detailed descriptions of participants' experiences through their oral self-reports. Through in-depth interviews, participants' experiential beliefs and feelings toward the phenomenon can be revealed. As such, the researcher immerses in the participants' descriptions and experiences, expanding understanding of those experiences through reflection, synthesis, and interpretation of the data. Through this process, the researcher documents the description of the phenomenon, analyzes the description generating themes, and interprets the essential meaning of participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon through thoughtful examination.

### **Recruitment and Selection of Participants**

For this qualitative research study, human service executives with MSW degrees were recruited from executive bloggers in the public domain as published weekly by the NSWM. NSWM is an international member organization for social workers and human service professionals that focuses on strengthening and advancing social work leadership and management within diverse health and human service industries (Network for Social Work Management, 2016). NSWM provides a platform for members to professionally communicate, collaborate, and develop (Network for Social Work Management, 2016).

Identified NSWM human service administrator MSW degreed bloggers, who provide their email address within their blog profile, were sent an email asking them to voluntarily participate in an in-depth telephone interview regarding the role of their MSW program in their leadership development, preparation, and transition. Interested and potential participants were informed of the research purpose and offered the opportunity to voluntarily consent to participate in this study. Potential participants consented to research involvement as well as to having their interview responses electronically recorded through an informed, written, and signed agreement.

The sample for this study consisted of 12 executive bloggers obtained in the public domain as published weekly by NSWM. Employing a purposeful sampling strategy, bloggers who are human service administrators with MSW degrees were selected. Blogger executives without MSW degrees and/or not in human service agency executive positions were not included in this research sample. This targeted inclusion criteria ensured a focus on executives administering human service organizations and holding MSW degrees. Based on this study's participant criteria, currently 25 NSWM executive bloggers met these sample guidelines, and all 12 bloggers who responded and qualified for this research were invited to participate in this study.

Twelve human service executives with MSW degrees who met study sample criteria were voluntarily recruited, selected, and consented for this research study. These research participants represented nonprofit agency executives in urban/suburban communities within the United States. This sample was comprised of eight females (67%) and four males (33%). Nine research participants (75%) reported 10 or more years of management experience, and three participants (25%) indicated five to ten years of managerial experience. Eight participants (67%) were licensed clinical social workers.

All research participants were graduates of accredited MSW programs. Participants represented graduates of private and public universities with post MSW graduation social work careers ranging from five to twenty five years. Four participants (33%) reported enrollment in an administrative track during their MSW education. Collectively, they attended twelve separate universities ranging from small to midsize to large institutions.

Study participants were recruited via email as executive bloggers include their email address in their blog profile. Recruitment correspondence and contact provided an explanation of

the research and the voluntary, informed, and consented participation process, including information about any research benefits and risks. As bloggers have already voluntarily shared information about their leadership development and transition in the public domain, they seemed to understand the importance and value of this research and were voluntarily willing to participate in this study. Furthermore, NSWM supported and approved this research based on the researcher's correspondence with the organization (see attached correspondence).

### **Instrumentation**

This research study utilized in-depth interview questions that explore research participants' lived leadership development and preparation experiences within their MSW programs. The interview guide was comprised the following three primary questions: what was your experience with leadership development and preparation within your MSW program?, how do you feel your MSW program prepared you for your role as a human service administrator?, and what recommendations do you have related to leadership development and preparation within MSW programs, particularly as associated with human service administration? These questions, presented to elicit detailed narrative responses, were asked during in-depth telephone interviews with study participants. These interview questions, which are designed to prompt participants to describe their lived experiences and perspective, served as a foundation from which the researcher, as the interviewer, elicited participants' detailed elaboration. The researcher used probes specific to participants' responses such as "can you elaborate on that," "can you tell me more about that," and "can you share some examples with me." This approach, which employs self-report of participants' experiences, journey, and perceptions, was specifically devised for this qualitative research study.

**Data Collection**

The researcher voluntarily recruited study participants from 25 existing NSWAM executive bloggers who are human service administrators with MSW degrees as published in the public domain by NSWAM, meeting the research inclusion criteria. The researcher emailed potential study participants with the study purpose, seeking their interest and recruiting their voluntary written consent to participate in an in-depth telephone interview. Recruitment correspondence explained the aim of the research, voluntary and informed participant consent, voluntary confidential participation in qualitative research interviews, research benefits, and research risks. Potential research participants were able to contact the researcher via email and telephone to seek research study and participation clarification as well as to enroll in the study. The researcher reviewed the research study purpose, the voluntary participation process, the study participant role, study benefits and risks, and the written informed consent with all potential and interested study participants.

In-depth telephone interviews were scheduled with recruited and consenting study participants at their convenience. The in-depth interviews afforded participants the opportunity to confidentially share their experiences in response to each question. Recruited and consented participants were asked open-ended questions that prompt narrative responses associated with the lived experiences of their leadership journey in their MSW program. Research study participants were able to refuse to answer any questions and/or withdrawn from the research at any time without adverse consequences. If a study participant wished to not answer a question, the researcher paused the recording and proceeded to another question, resuming at the participant's discretion. If a participant chose to withdraw from the study, any information the participant provided was immediately destroyed.

Twelve research participants, who met study sample criteria, were voluntarily recruited, selected, and consented for this research. All research participants participated in in-depth interviews answering all research questions and sharing their experiences. There were not any participants who wished not to answer a question and/or withdraw from the study.

All in-depth interviews were conducted via telephone conversation with all research participants. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and 20 minutes. The average interview was 55 minutes. Interviews were conducted over a four month period, and each interview followed the same format of introduction, overview of research purpose and study methodology, review and confirmation of voluntary informed consent, questioning in accordance with and as sequenced in the interview guide, response elicitation and electronic recorded documentation.

With study participants' voluntary consent, the telephone interviews and participants' responses were electronically recorded, collecting research data verbatim as reported by the respondents. Collected data was transcribed verbatim from the recorded interviews. Interviewed participant transcriptions were coded to protect privacy and maintain respondent confidentiality. An aggregated report of all collected narrative data was generated from all completed interviews and interview questions. Collected data was documented within an electronic report organized by questions, respondents, and responses. All individual transcriptions were shared with the corresponding respondents as part of a member checking process to validate the accuracy of collected data.

### **Data Analysis**

Collected, transcribed, and validated narrative interview responses were aggregated by question. Study participants' verbatim responses were initially analyzed, coded, and categorized



by question to identify themes and sub-themes. Categorized themes were carefully analyzed across questions to document phenomenon themes.

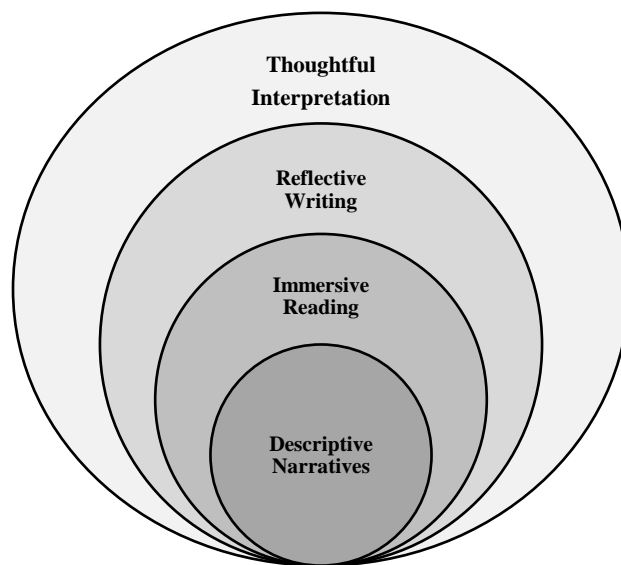
Collected data was analyzed through thematic analysis, which is a reliable qualitative approach to analytically examine narrative and provide a detailed account of data. Thematic data analysis was accomplished through word-by-word reading and sentence-by-sentence examination of the research participants' responses. Collected data was read more than once to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the content as a whole experience. The researcher highlighted words and/or phrases that appear to capture the key respondent concepts and/or thoughts. The data was classified by significant statements and/or quotes and combined into themes. The researcher documented notes based on interpretation of participant response narrative, labeling codes, themes, and subthemes. Codes were defined during the thematic data analysis process as directly derived from research participants' responses. Analyzed data and codes were categorized into emerging and identified themes as well as into the essence of respondents' experiences. Collectively, themes were assessed to determine the essence of the lived experiences and journey of the respondents. Findings were generated based on participants' unique experiences and perspectives as established by the interview narrative response data.

The goal of thematic analysis is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study, and as such, the researcher adhered to a consistent thematic data analysis process and scheme of coding and interpreting collected data. Analysis consistency was accomplished by generating and deriving themes that were directly expressed in the participants' responses. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes within an entire interview as well as across the set of interviews. Data analysis explored respondents' reported lived experiences within their MSW programs and their leadership development and preparation for

their human service administrator role.

Drawing on the phenomenology work of Max van Manen, the researcher applied data analysis that combines descriptive and interpretive phenomenological approaches (Dowling & Cooney, 2012). Data analysis focused on the uniqueness and the depth of the phenomenon from the respondents' experiences and perspectives (Heinonen, 2015). The researcher used phenomenological reflection to derive meaning of the human experiences. Reflective inquiry was utilized to interpret the aspects of meaning and meaningfulness associated with the phenomenon. This was accomplished through the meaning structures embodied in the human experiences at both a micro or detailed level as well as at the macro or whole text level (van Manen, 2007). The researcher incorporated van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology by focusing on the subjective encounters of the study participants to unveil their experiences and the essence or essential meaning of the phenomenon from their life stories (Kafle, 2011). The researcher employed the hermeneutic cycle of reading, reflective writing, and interpreting (Kafle, 2011).

The following diagram outlines the hermeneutic phenomenological method used to analyze the research data:



Attention was paid to the context associated with the research participants' circumstance. Gender, type of university attended, number of managerial experience years, licensure, and method of transition to human service administration were the known contextual variables of the research participants. All of these contextual variables were taken into consideration by the researcher during data analysis. Based on this contextual analysis, there did not seem to be any differences in the findings among research participants.

Table 1 provides a sample transcription excerpt and the associated data analysis.

<b>SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION EXCERPT</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>
I don't think my MSW program prepared me at all for human service administration. I can't remember any course content focused on this topic or any professor covering this material. I don't think my social work education did much for my human service leadership competencies.	The respondent was not exposed to human service administration within the MSW program. The respondent does not believe preparation and competency building associated with human service leadership occurred within the MSW program.

Data analysis findings were shared directly with the respondents for their review, feedback, and validation as part of a member checking process to ensure accuracy and prevent researcher/transcriber bias. Participants were provided with transcripts and summaries of the interviews to allow them to correct any inaccuracies. This data validation process, accomplished through member checking, enabled the researcher to examine participants' responses as intended by the study respondents. Member checking also helped the researcher ensure validity and credibility within this research study. The result of member checking yielded participant feedback reflecting 100% accuracy with what was transcribed.

Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher bracketed himself out of the study through note-taking, memoing, and documenting his own reflections. These documents were reviewed and revisited as part of the data analysis process to maintain an unbiased perspective as the collected data was examined and categorized. The researcher

consciously gained direct information from the study participants and their responses without imposing preconceived experiences, categories, or themes.

Table 2 provides a sample transcription excerpt with the researcher's interpretation and bracketing.

<b>SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION EXCERPT</b>	<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>RESEARCHER BRACKETING</b>
I don't think my MSW program prepared me at all for human service administration. I can't remember any course content focused on this topic or any professor covering this material. I don't think my social work education did much for my human service leadership competencies.	The respondent was not exposed to human service administration within the MSW program. The respondent does not believe preparation and competency building associated with human service leadership occurred within the MSW program.	While I had a similar experience to this respondent, I cannot let my experience overshadow the interpretation and reporting of this research and the findings. I need to continue to obtain, translate, and interpret all participants responses in an unbiased manner.

### **Ethical Standards**

This research recruited study participants who have blogged and published their contact information within the public domain through NSWAM. NSWAM publishes human service executives' profiles and blogs with the professionals' names, education, employment, and related career information as well as their personal leadership development and transition. By voluntarily participating as a NSWAM executive blogger, respondents consented to sharing their professional career and contact information with the general public.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher de-identified collected data by removing respondents' names and any identifiable information. Each participant was assigned a unique pseudonym. Participant responses were carefully examined and associated data collection notes were coded without reference and/or content specific to the respondent's names and/or identifiable information. The researcher stored and maintained collected and analyzed data in a

password protected computer. Publishable research outcome does not contain professionals' names and/or their identifiable information. The researcher is protecting respondents' confidentiality and ensure anonymity by reporting research findings in an aggregated manner.

In preparation to conduct this research, the researcher prepared and submitted a Barry University IRB protocol. IRB review ensured this study does not pose any known risks to human participants and granted appropriate research approval accordingly. There are no known risks to study participants who voluntarily consented to this research, and participants were able to voluntarily withdraw from this research study at any time without negative consequences. Overall, the researcher conducted the study as approved by the IRB.

### **Research Rigor**

This research was conducted with adherence to qualitative research procedures, specifically in alignment with a phenomenological approach. As this research sought to examine leadership development within MSW programs, particularly as it relates to preparation for human service administration, only executives with MSW degrees who work in a human service administrative capacity were selected based on their blog profile description.

This study included a relevant research question and pertinent interview questions that yielded experiential responses and material specific to the overall research purpose. In accordance with interpretive phenomenology, the researcher and research interviews kept to the meaning of the phenomenon as the subject of the research and interview questions (Heinonen, 2015). The researcher sought to understand study participants' from their in-depth individual experiences.

The researcher precisely collected research study participants' responses in the exact manner in which they were presented. Data collection employed electronic recording of the in-

depth telephone interviews, verbatim transcription of the interview recordings, and member checking interview transcriptions with all research participants. All validated transcriptions and responses were read and reviewed verbatim with each phrase and sentence analyzed in detail, individually as well as within the context of the statement, paragraph, and whole response. This methodology was consistently followed with all interviews and interview question responses to capture the details each respondents' individual lived experience. Following individual analysis and categorization of all interview and question responses, the researcher assessed the data for common and core themes as well as subthemes of executives' lived experiences of the phenomenon.

### **Research Trustworthiness**

To ensure research credibility and validity, the researcher bracketed himself from this research study through note-taking and memoing. Bracketing aided in removing assumptions and biases from the research so that the researcher could engage in a conversational relation with the phenomena (Heinonen, 2015). The researcher cross-referenced the analyzed data to ensure his own reflections were not imposed upon the findings, focusing solely and openly on the original sources and depth of respondents' experiences. To foster research dependability and consistency, the researcher consulted and debriefed with his dissertation committee throughout the research process.

Table 3 provides a sample transcription excerpt with the researcher's interpretation, bracketing, and debriefing with the dissertation committee chair.

<b>SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION EXCERPT</b>	<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>RESEARCHER BRACKETING</b>	<b>DEBRIEFING WITH COMMITTEE CHAIR</b>
I don't think my MSW program prepared me at all for human service	The respondent was not exposed to human service administration	While I had a similar experience to this respondent, I cannot	I seem to be hearing participants

<p>administration. I can't remember any course content focused on this topic or any professor covering this material. I don't think my social work education did much for my human service leadership competencies.</p>	<p>within the MSW program. The respondent does not believe preparation and competency building associated with human service leadership occurred within the MSW program.</p>	<p>let my experience overshadow the interpretation and reporting of this research and the findings. I need to continue to obtain, translate, and interpret all participants responses in an unbiased manner.</p>	<p>continually report that their MSW programs did not provide human service administration content nor prepare them for this role. While this was also my experience, I want to remain objective in my interpretation and reporting.</p>
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### Researcher's Role

Some researchers conduct studies based on their interests. As research topics represent areas of interest and/or passion, there is a possibility that researchers may have some existing thoughts, ideas, opinions, and/or preconceptions about their research subject. Research may have been prompted by these ideas and/or by a desire to test an existing belief. Therefore, the strength to which a belief is held could potentially form an unintentional bias.

As the researcher of this phenomenological study, my interest in leadership development and preparation that occurs within MSW programs is based on my own experiences. My initial related experience occurred when I became a human service agency executive director. I entered this role without formal leadership training, development, and/or preparation. I also had limited competencies associated with business management and administration. I mostly had to learn by doing. I had already finished my MSW program a couple of years prior to assuming this position. Frequently, in the process of transition into this role, I pondered the absence of these leadership lessons from my MSW academics.

A subsequent experience occurred while teaching MSW courses, primarily observing limited curriculum and content focused on leadership, particularly as it relates to human service administration. While teaching at a state university, I was assigned to teach the MSW human services administration course, which I approached with considerable appreciation and enthusiasm. Historically, it was a class that faculty were disinterested in teaching, and it was eventually removed from the curriculum.

Additionally, I have had related experiences consulting with human service organizations. Seemingly, there appears to be a small number of professionals with MSW degrees leading and directing human service organizations. Furthermore, there seems to be a limited level of confidence and interest among professionals with MSW degrees to pursue and/or fulfill chief executive roles. Most appear to aspire no further than clinical administrator and/or vice president of programs.

I entered this qualitative research, therefore, with some preconceived notions and beliefs about the extent to which MSW degreed professionals are developed and prepared by their MSW programs for leadership roles. Consequently, I framed my research and interview questions to focus solely on the experiences and perceptions of the research participants. In addition, I regularly checked myself throughout the research process to ensure adherence and consistency in study methodology. Regular bracketing and memoing helped with critical self-awareness and reflection. Ongoing consultation with my dissertation committee was vital in maintaining transparency, reliability, and validity. As I completed data analysis, I was intentional about closely reading and/or re-reading to ensure that I would not miss or misinterpret respondents' references or reflections regarding their MSW programs and their leadership development and preparation. As the researcher, I analyzed, interpreted, and report the data and findings with



accuracy based on the narrative as told by the research participants, honoring their voice. Throughout the study, I paid attention to respondents' tone of voice and inflection in their responses. Overall, themed interpretation of data and data findings was aligned with the overall research question.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

Extensive analysis of the qualitative data collected during the in-depth interviews with the research participants revealed the extent to which interviewed MSW degreed human service executives experienced leadership development within their MSW programs, interviewees' perception of the human service administration preparation they received during the MSW education, and respondents' recommendations for human service leadership development and management preparation within MSW programs. From the research interviews, three primary themes emerged regarding the lived leadership development and human service administration preparation experiences among research participants while in their MSW programs. These themes encompass MSW program limitations, career preparation, and MSW program enhancements. From research participants' experiences, MSW program limitations include minimal exposure to leadership and managerial preparation, a lack of prioritization by schools of social work for this education, and limited faculty interest and expertise. Based on participants' perspective, career preparation involves valuing social workers in the human service executive role, addressing the complete social work career trajectory, and translating the clinical skill set into administrative competencies. On the basis of participants' recommendations, MSW program enhancements encompass embedding administrative content across the curriculum, creating experiential learning opportunities, mentoring and coaching, and professional development.

Table 4 outlines the themes and subthemes that emerged from the twelve verbatim transcripts including the frequency with which each theme and subtheme was referenced by research participants:

Table 4: Themes and Subthemes

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
MSW program limitations		27
	Minimal exposure	11
	Lack of priority	11
	Faculty capacity	7
Career preparation		24
	Value of social worker executives	6
	Social work career trajectory	11
	Translation from clinical to administration	7
MSW program enhancements		38
	Embedding administrative content across the curriculum	10
	Creating experiential learning opportunities	6
	Mentorship and coaching	6
	Professional development	6

### **MSW Program Limitations**

Consistently, research participants reported “minimal exposure” to leadership development and human service management education. Their experiences included their sense of “a lack of priority” within their schools of social work for this content. In addition, participants conveyed a perception of “marginal faculty capacity” to teach this subject matter.

#### **Minimal Topic Exposure**

Research participants discussed limited to no leadership development and human service administration preparation in their social work education. This experience was also described among those interviewees who reported they participated in administrative tracks within their MSW programs. The following quotes represent research participants’ experiences: “Did not have any leadership preparation in my MSW program.” “Not sure we ever discussed or covered

these topics.” “Administrative issues were not part of my MSW program.” “I was in an administrative track where only 10% had anything to do with leadership and managerial development.” “I don’t think that how to lead was ever discussed.” “Whatever I learned in my administrative track was quite simple and minor.” “Very basic even in my administrative track.” “Definitely no particularly coursework was directed toward leadership and administration.” “What I learned was not enough to have a lasting impact.” “There were not any opportunities to get administrative experience.” “I don’t think my MSW education did much for my human service leadership competencies.”

### **Lack of Priority**

Several research participants conveyed that their schools of social work did not emphasize leadership and human service administration. Research participants stressed their schools’ emphasis on clinical practice, coursework, and field experiences. Participants discussed little to no effort directed toward preparing MSW graduate students with administrative leadership competencies. The following quotes reflect participants’ experiences: “Everything focused on clinical.” “So much was related to clinical.” “My school was about clinical and social services.” “Majority of the concepts were for the clinical setting.” “Macro practice all together seemed to be missing.” “It seems like the faculty were not allow to cover administrative concepts and topics.” “I was in advanced standing, and all classes were clinically-based.” “I was well prepared for clinical practice, but not much more.” “My social work education prepared my clinical skills, not my leadership or anything else.” “I have worked with several different schools of social work as a field educator, and it is rarely discussed or developed.” “Social work schools are functioning as if social workers will not go into management.”

### **Faculty Capacity**

A majority of research participants discuss their perception of MSW faculty lacking the expertise to teach business operations and management despite its significance to human service administration. Research participants who mentioned schools of social work faculty expressed their belief that faculty were disinterested and/or unskilled to teach leadership and/or administration. Participants identified this topic area as not among faculty proficiencies. The following quotes represent research participants' experiences: "Don't know if any of my professors were knowledgeable about the administrative aspect." "My professors didn't seem interested or experienced to teach this." "Many professors had their own specialization, and this was not it." "Most of the professors in my administrative track were adjuncts not full-time faculty."

### **Interpretation of Lived Experience**

According to research participants, the primary emphasis within their MSW programs was on clinical practice. Human service administration was not part of their MSW program curriculum, course content, and/or field education. For those participants who selected an administrative track, they reported that their educational and competency building expectations were not fully met through this specialization. Participants indicated that faculty interest and expertise highly influence curriculum development, content, and delivery, and from their experience, faculty within their schools of social work did not possess competence related to human service administration. As such, participants did not believe human service administration was a priority within their schools of social work, and consequently, they developed their executive leadership skill set outside of and often after completion of their MSW program.

### **Career Preparation**

Research participants conveyed the potential and importance of MSW degreed professionals becoming human service agency executives and discussed the value of MSW degreed professionals leading human service organizations. Participants described this recognition developing post MSW graduation through professional experiences. Research participants indicated that the complete career trajectory for social workers from direct service to executive management was not presented during their MSW education, and that they were not taught roles and activities of leaders in the social work profession. Participants discussed the translation of an interpersonal and clinical skill set to administration as an on-the-job pursuit rather than an academic occurrence.

### **Value of Social Worker Executives**

Research participants discussed the potential for MSW graduates to eventually become human service executives. Participants stressed the importance and value of having human service organizations lead by MSW degreed professionals. As such, they conveyed the significance of leadership development and administration preparation. The following quotes reflect participants' experiences: "If you are successful in this profession, you can advance to a leadership role." "I think MSWs can be effective administrators." "MSWs know how to work with people, and this is definitely required to run an agency." "Social workers build relationships and transform situations. This makes organizations succeed." "Clinicians can get promoted with or without the required skill set, so you are better to have the skills." "When I was promoted into a leadership position, I would have benefitted from having business competencies."

### **Social Work Career Trajectory**

Research participants indicated that schools of social work do not address the complete career trajectory with MSW students. Participants conveyed that they did not realize the extent of available career opportunities until post MSW graduation and entering the workplace. Research participants stressed that schools of social work should teach social work leadership roles and activities. The following quotes represent participants' experiences: "I did not realize an executive position was possible for an MSW." "We were never presented with all the jobs we could enter, especially at the administrative level." "I did not know all the career options available to social workers." "There is more strength with an MSW degree than I initially knew." "I wasn't aware there would be opportunities to be in an executive position." "I never knew I would be in the role I am in today." "No way I thought I would be the executive director of a nonprofit." "Many MSW students and professionals see themselves working clinically and not administratively." "Schools of social work should help to further professionalize our career." "Social work schools need to cover all the different career options." Schools of social work should teach the roles and activities of professional social work leaders."

### **Translation from Clinical to Administration**

Research participants discussed the alignment of a clinical skill set with executive leadership and administrative activities. This included employing effective communication and positive interpersonal and relational skills. Participants also presented the connection between analytical and critical thinking as well as participatory facilitation, decision-making, and problem solving utilized in both clinical and administrative work environments. Research participants indicated that schools of social work could translate clinical instruction into managerial education. The following quotes reflect participants' experiences: "Much of administration can

be related to clinical fundamentals.” “Leaders and administrators need to use clinical skills.” “There are both clinical and administrative aspects to human service leadership.” “I relied on the clinical concepts of my MSW education to develop my managerial skills.” “My knowledge of human behavior and development helped me as a leader.” “Being trained in engaging people is necessary to lead and run organizations.” “There’s lots of application in the transfer from clinical to administrative.”

### **Interpretation of Lived Experience**

Based on research participants’ responses, their MSW programs did not present the executive career options within the social work profession. Their MSW programs focused on direct and clinical practice roles. As such, participants indicated that they felt they were at a disadvantage for executive level promotion and performance. Research participants reported that they learned human service leadership and management on the job, including the application of clinical skills to administration. Participants felt that social work schools were missing the merit of social workers leading the industry.

### **MSW Program Enhancements**

Research participants shared their recommendations for MSW programs that would enhance leadership development and human service administration preparation. In addition to translating clinical practice into administrative management, participants discussed embedding administrative content across the MSW curriculum. While many interviewees thought a specific course, elective, track, and/or certification was beneficial, the theme of adding an administrative component in each course resonated among respondents. Research participants conveyed the importance of experiential learning through administrative related assignments and projects, if “even an option for MSW graduate students.” Participants indicated some field hours and/or

shadowing could be focused on human service management, including as many respondents indicated developing their leadership and managerial components through coaching and mentorship. Research participants also identified professional development, training, training series, and certification programs (pre and post graduate education) as valuable additions to MSW academia.

### **Embedding Administrative Content Across the Curriculum**

While a few research participants mentioned a specific administrative course, elective, or track, the majority discussed incorporating administrative content across the curriculum. This includes those participants who completed an administrative track during their MSW education. Research participants recommended integrating clinical and administrative aspects of social work practice as it occurs in the professional work environment. Research participants suggested course activities, assignments, and projects can accomplish this integration. Some participants specifically proposed accessing faculty from university business colleges and nonprofit management programs to leverage the required expertise and resources needed for an integrated education. The following quotes represent participants' recommendations: "Administrative should not be separate. It should be joined with the clinical." "Leadership and administration can be discussed in most courses." "Courses can include assignment or project options that have with an administration focus." "Teach program operations and implementation when teaching interventions." "It's critical to understand both clinical and administrative concepts and their connection. It's important to understand all facets of an organization." "Teaching accountability requires development of leadership and organizational skills." "Even MSWs who only engage in clinical practice need to know about the business aspects of their agency and industry." "Understanding the management of finances and human resources is important for all social



workers regardless of their practice setting.” “Many universities also have business colleges, and faculty from those colleges can assist with leadership and managerial course instruction and content.” “If a university has a nonprofit management program, that program can be linked to the MSW program.”

### **Creating Experiential Learning Opportunities**

Research participants discussed increasing experiential learning opportunities focused on leadership development and human service administration preparation. Participants suggested field education as a means through which leadership and managerial skills can be developed. Research participants specifically proposed requiring a certain number of field hours shadowing an agency administrator or executive. Participants also suggested a specific number of field hours engaged in an administrative task. The following quotes reflect participants’ recommendations: “Incorporate leadership development within field education.” “Require a number of field hours spent with the agency director or administrator.” “Dedicate some field education time for an administrative assignment or project.” “Expose interns to the business aspects of the agency.” “I wish my internship included human service management training.” “Offer experiential learning with social workers in executive roles.” “Spending time observing an organization operate could be a great educational experience.”

### **Mentorship and Coaching**

Research participants stressed the importance and value of mentors as a significant factor in their leadership and managerial development. Participants defined mentors as professionals, often superiors, who invested in coaching and developing their potential, confidence, and skills. For research participants, mentors served as role models who offered encouragement and increase motivation. As such, participants recommended schools of social work offer mentoring

and coaching by human service executives to MSW students. The following quotes represent participants' recommendations: "Add a mentorship component to the MSW program." "Engage human service executive as mentors for MSW students." "Look to school alumni in leadership positions to coach MSW students." "I wish I had a mentor during my MSW education. I would do that for an MSW student today." "Receiving good coaching and learning how to effectively coach others is critical for a leadership position." "I learned my leadership skills by paying attention to other leaders."

### **Professional Development**

Research participants discussed the benefits of professional development training during and following their MSW program. Participants indicated specific courses and training series proved valuable in building their leadership and managerial competencies. Research participants also referenced special certification programs as contributing to their knowledge and abilities. Participants recommended these supplemental educational initiatives as MSW Program enhancements. The following quotes reflect participants' recommendations: "I had to engage a significant professional development post-graduation. It would have been nice if my MSW program provided that." "MSW programs can offer a training series to help student develop leadership and management skills." "The National Network for Social Work Management has a human service administration certification program that schools of social work are starting to adopt." "Topics such as human resource management, budgeting, and grants would be important professional development seminars." "If schools of social work offer specialized leadership training, it should be available for all students." "An MSW program can jump start lifelong learning."

### **Interpretation of Lived Experience**

Research participants stressed that effective competency building happens more often through repeated exposure rather than by single episode or incident. Participants believe that schools of social work possessed the foundation and structure for a comprehensive advanced social work education and within which human service administration could be embedded. Research participants indicated that human service leadership and management could be integrated across the curriculum and within field education, including with existing resources at most universities (i.e. business programs). Participants recommended connecting administrative content with clinical content as it best occurs in practice. Participants suggested that administrators at internship sites as well as alumni in human service executive positions could serve as role models. In addition, participants stressed the importance of lifelong learning as a professional standard and the role schools of social work could play in providing continuous professional development.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

#### **Summary of Findings**

Findings from the in-depth interviews conducted in this research study support prior empirical literature focused on social work academia and human service administration. Based on research participants' responses, it appears that macro-focused content remains limited in social work curriculum particularly as related to the management of social sector agencies, a finding similar to that of Brilliant (1986) and Ezell, Chernesky & Healy (2004). According to research participants, schools of social work continue to de-emphasize administrative leadership within social work education and as originally reported by Brilliant (1986).

Research participants did not describe their graduate social work education developing the leadership and managerial competences they required to lead their human service organizations. According to participants, the executive business operations acumen necessary for their leadership roles was not obtained during their MSW program tenure. Without adequate preparation, MSWs lack the competencies necessary to compete for, obtain, and succeed human service executive positions. If MSWs are not adequately prepared to fulfill these administrative roles, organizational governing bodies and hiring authorities might seek other advanced degree disciplines to lead human service agencies as Neugreboren (1990) and Watson & Hoefler (2014) indicated in their studies focus on social work education and social work administration.

Research participants conveyed that graduate schools of social work have a role in preparing social workers to lead and manage human service organizations. This finding mirrors Teare & Sheafor's (1995) empirical analysis of social work education, and it aligns with Rank & Hutchinson's (2000) study surveying CSWE and NASW executives as well as CSWE-accredited social work school deans and directors with 98% of respondents indicating there should be leadership development content in graduate social work education. As research participants discussed, preparing social workers for administrative positions begins with understanding the importance of MSWs leading human service organizations and teaching the complete career trajectory for the advanced degree social work professional.

According to research participants, there is an important connection between social work values, clinical approaches, and human service administration. As Moran, Frans & Gibson (1995) similarly reported in their comparative research, human service management requires combined conceptual, interpersonal, and technical competencies. Richardson (2010) supported this same proposition indicating the teaching of social work values can be coupled with business

wisdom and proficiency. Social work values and ethics align with the integrity and service-centric focus required for effective human service operations and organizational success. Schools of social work train practitioners in transformational interventions, and as Sarros, Cooper & Santora (2008) described transformational leadership is a critical skill set for human service administration. Schools of social work could add the translation of social work values and clinical skills to administrative leadership within graduate social work education as research participants proposed.

Incorporating human service leadership and administrative content within curricula would seem to require schools of social work and faculty to place a greater priority and recognized value on this subject matter, as noted by research participants. Professional development and technical assistance for social work school administrators and faculty might increase their interest and capacity to embed and teach this content. Furthermore, as research participants mentioned, field education within MSW programs offers opportunities to provide leadership and administrative development. Field education hours and tasks could include those associated with learning the business and managerial aspects of social sector programs and organizations. Field education experiences could encompass job shadowing, professional coaching, and mentorship options. Additionally, as schools of social work align their MSW curriculum with CSWE EPAS as well as with practice licensure criteria, working with CSWE and licensure boards on the incorporation of administrative knowledge and competencies, particularly within licensing examinations and requirements, may increase its importance and presence within graduate social work education.

Sources external to schools of social work might provide the necessary expertise and resources to support embedding administrative leadership development within social work

academia. As research participants mentioned, universities with business colleges and nonprofit management programs have opportunities for inter-professional education. In addition and as reported by research participants, NSWM has begun partnering with schools of social work through their human service administration certification initiative. These external sources may offer the resources require to add leadership and managerial focused professional development, seminars, and training series to social work academic programming as suggested by research participants.

### **Essence of Lived Experience**

While research participants found themselves unprepared for their role as human service administrators based on their MSW program, they recognized the connection between translating clinical skills into leadership competences. As such, participants believe that opportunities exist for MSW programs to teach the career trajectory of the social work profession, to help graduate students understand how their clinical skill set can be applied in leadership and executive roles, and to incorporate administrative content across the curriculum and within field education. It is likely that this approach would not require considerable resources to implement and would afford MSW students a more comprehensive and practical advanced degree education. Additionally, this would increase career competence, confidence, and prospects for MSW graduates within the social work profession and human services industry.

### **Value of Advanced Degreed Social Workers in Human Service Administration**

Advanced degreed social workers graduate from schools of social work with a commitment to core values and a code of ethics. These values and ethics are significantly aligned with human service administration. Social workers commit to service; nurturing human relationships; promoting respect, dignity, and self-worth; and empowerment. These values

positively contribute to a supported and resilient workforce, a healthy and conducive workplace culture, and a standard of quality client care.

Social workers' code of ethics includes integrity, commitment, and competence. These characteristics are essential for business management, stewardship, and accountability. Human service administration involves the oversight of resources, including those from public, grantor, and donor sources. In their administrative role, advanced degreed social workers would be inclined to perform in a trustworthy manner, ensuring a structure of sound organizational policies and practices to sustain the agency, its assets, its clients, and the general public.

Advanced degreed social workers possess an extensive clinical skill set aligned with executive administration, resource management, strategic operations, and community collaboration. Social workers are competent in analytical and critical thinking as well as interpersonal and relationship management required for executive administration. Clinical social work practice encompasses planning, developing, executing, and evaluating as does resource management and strategic operations. The clinical social work foundation is a collaborative alliance as is required for intra and interagency collaboration for collective impact.

### **Relationship to Social Work Grand Challenges**

While human service administration is not among the Grand Challenges for Social Work established and led by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, the 12 grand challenges require leadership capacity. The 12 Grand Challenges for Social Work comprise a social agenda to improve individual, family, and societal well-being. They include ensuring healthy development for all youth, closing the health gap, stopping family violence, advancing long and productive lives, eradicating social isolation, ending homelessness, creating social responses to a changing environment, harnessing technology for social good, promoting smart

decarceration, reducing extreme economic inequality, building financial capability for all, and achieving equal opportunity and justice. Addressing these challenges requires extensive leadership competencies and the ability to successfully plan and administer human services. In addition, creating positive change within these grand challenges entails vision, innovation, influence, and transformation, the attributes of a leader. Developing advanced degreed social workers as leaders and administrators within their profession positions them to best handle society's complex human service conditions.

### **Study Limitations**

The sample size of this study presents a limitation. Although research participants discussed similar experiences and perceptions and saturation was attained, this sample was a small representation of human service executives with MSW degrees. Future research could expand the sample population to increase generalization.

Another research study limitation is associated with research participants representing individuals graduating from their MSW program at least five year ago and up to twenty-five years ago. Some research participants, therefore, were recalling experiences that occurred decades prior. Future research could focus on more recent MSW graduates who attain human service executive positions following their graduation.

### **Conclusion**

Leadership, which encompasses influential transactions between individuals, unifies people around a common cause (Yulk, 1994). Organizational leadership involves a managerial capacity to direct resources and operations for intended results (Kerfoot, 1998). Leadership competence is essential for effective human service administration, and as self-efficacy theory



postulates, an executive's perception of his or her capability influences his or her leadership performance.

According to self-efficacy theory, primary sources of self-efficacy include education, modeling, experiential learning, performance success, and mastery experience. As such, this research examined the lived experience of MSW graduates in human service executive positions with respect to the leadership development and human service administration preparation provided by their MSW programs. With commitment to this research question, the researcher specifically employed a combined descriptive and interpretive phenomenological approach and hermeneutic phenomenology methods to investigate the research participants' experiences as they were lived. Through thematic analysis of transcripts from in-depth interviews with research participants, this research offers additional information on leadership development and human service administration preparation occurring within MSW programs.

Research findings indicate limited to no leadership development and human service executive preparation in social work education. This includes among those MSW graduates who participated in MSW administrative educational tracks and based on research participants' perception of limited expertise among MSW faculty. Recognizing the potential, importance, and value of MSWs leading social sector organizations, research participants conveyed the significance of teaching professional social work leadership roles and activities including through the translation of a clinical skills set to human service administration. Based on research findings, current opportunities exist for schools of social work to embed administrative leadership content in curriculum, offer experiential learning in field education, promote mentorship and coaching opportunities, and increase professional development and certification. As directly stated by a research participant, "social workers can commitment to becoming

competent leaders of their own profession and industry or follow whatever discipline outperforms them.”

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**Appendix A**

**Network for Social Work Management Approval**

From: Lakeya Cherry <lakeya@socialworkmanager.org>

Sent: Monday, February 8, 2016 3:15 PM

To: Ferrante, Stephen

Cc:

Subject: Monday Morning Manager Analysis

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your outreach and interest in our Monday Morning Manager profiles. We would gladly welcome your efforts. Please let me know how we may assist with this process.

Warm regards,

Lakeya

**Lakeya Cherry, MSSW**

Executive Director

[lakeya@socialworkmanager.org](mailto:lakeya@socialworkmanager.org)

905 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St.

Los Angeles, CA 90021

Office: 213-234-2804

Cell: 619-490-5700

[socialworkmanager.org](http://socialworkmanager.org)



## Appendix B

### Research Recruitment Correspondence

#### Barry University Research Recruitment Email Correspondence

Dear

I am emailing you based on your published Network for Social Work Management executive blog, leadership experiences, and your provided contact information listed in the public domain. Your participation in a research study entitled *MSW Reflection on Their Path to Executive Leadership in Human Service Organizations* is requested. The aim of this research is to understand the lived experience with leadership development and preparation within MSW programs among MSW degreed human service administrators. In accordance with this aim, the following procedures will be used: in-depth telephone interview (initial interview for approximately 60 minutes and member checking follow-up for approximately 30 minutes). The anticipated number of participants is 25.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: Contact the researcher by email or telephone to schedule the interview date and time. The researcher will call you and conduct a 1 hour interview that will be audio recorded.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on you.

There are no known risks associated with your involvement in this study. Although there are also no direct benefits for your involvement in this study, your participation will help in understanding human service administration leadership development and preparation in MSW programs.

As a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. No names will be attached, and any published research results will be organized by findings and themes. Furthermore, data will be kept in a password-protected computer and locked file.

By voluntarily signing a research consent, you will show your agreement to participate in this research study.

**For more information and/or to participate in this research study, please contact Mr. Stephen Ferrante at (954) 249-2323 or [sferrante@barry.edu](mailto:sferrante@barry.edu).** Stephen Ferrante can address any questions or concerns regarding the study and/or your participation.

Additional information can be obtained from the faculty sponsor, Dr. Sharron Singleton, at 305-899-3930 or [ssingleton@barry.edu](mailto:ssingleton@barry.edu) or Ms. Barbara Cook of Barry University's Institutional Review Board at 305-899-3020 or [bcook@barry.edu](mailto:bcook@barry.edu).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen Ferrante, MSW, Doctoral Student  
Barry University - School of Social Work - PhD Program  
Email: [sferrante@barry.edu](mailto:sferrante@barry.edu)  
Telephone: 954-249-2323

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

#### Barry University Informed Consent Form

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of this study is *MSW Reflections on Their Path to Executive Leadership in Human Service Organizations*. This research is being conducted by Mr. Stephen Ferrante, MSW, Barry University School of Social Work doctoral student. The aim of this research is to understand the lived experience with leadership development and preparation within MSW programs among MSW degreed human service administrators.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following: contact the researcher by email or telephone to schedule the interview date and time. Contact information is provided on the recruitment flyer and this consent form. The researcher will call you and conduct an in-depth telephone interview (initial interview for approximately 60 minutes and member checking follow-up for approximately 30 minutes) that will be audio recorded. Interview questions will ask about your experience with leadership development and preparation within your MSW program including associated with human service administration. The anticipated number of participants is 25.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary and should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects on you. Should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, any information you have provided will be destroyed. There are no known risks associated with your involvement in this study. Although there are also no direct benefits for your involvement in this study, your participation will help in understanding human service administration leadership development and preparation in MSW programs.

The interview will be audio recorded, however, your name will not be recorded on the audiotape or transcription. You have a right to refuse to answer any questions presented to you or not answer one or more questions posed. The recording can be paused and resumed at your discretion. As a research participant, information you provide will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Any published results of the research will not include any personally identifiable information, and no names will be used in the study. All other data will be kept in secured file cabinets, a password-protected computer, and locked files. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the data. All audio recordings will be destroyed 72 hours after transcribed by the researcher. All data will be destroyed after 5 years.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact Mr. Stephen Ferrante at 952-249-2323 or [sferrante@barry.edu](mailto:sferrante@barry.edu). You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Sharron Singleton, at 305-899-3930 or [ssingleton@barry.edu](mailto:ssingleton@barry.edu) or Ms. Barbara Cook of Barry University's Institutional Review Board at 305-899-3020 or [bcook@barry.edu](mailto:bcook@barry.edu). If you are satisfied with the information provided and are willing to participate in this research, please signify your consent by signing this consent form.

#### Voluntary Consent

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this experiment by Mr. Stephen Ferrante and that I have read and understand the information presented above, and that I have received a copy of this form for my records. I give my voluntary consent to participate in this experiment.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix D**

### **Research Interview Guide**

#### **Barry University Interview Guide**

MSW Reflections on Their Path to Executive Leadership in Human Services Organizations

1. What was your experience with leadership development and preparation within your MSW program?
2. How do you feel your MSW program prepared you for your role as a human service administrator?
3. What recommendations do you have related to leadership development and preparation within MSW programs, particularly as associated with human service administration?

**Appendix E****IRB Approval Letter****Barry University**

Division of Academic Affairs

Institutional Review Board  
11300 NE 2nd Avenue  
Miami, FL 33161  
P: 305.899.3020 or 1.800.756.6000, ext. 3020  
F: 305.899.3026  
[www.barry.edu](http://www.barry.edu)

Research with Human Subjects  
Protocol Review

Date: July 10, 2017

Protocol Number: 170611

Title: MSW Reflections on Their Path to Executive Leadership in Human Service Organizations

Meeting Date: June 21, 2017

Name: Mr. Stephen Ferrante  
Address: Barry University School of Social Work

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sharon Singleton

Dear Mr. Ferrante:

On behalf of the Barry University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have verified that the specific changes requested by the convened IRB on June 21, 2017 have been made.

It is the IRB's judgment that the rights and welfare of the individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with requirements and that the potential benefits to participants and to others warrant the risks participants may choose to incur. You may therefore proceed with data collection.

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved by the IRB. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form.

It is a condition of this approval that you report promptly to the IRB any serious, unanticipated adverse events experienced by participants in the course of this research, whether or not they are directly related to the study protocol. These adverse events include, but may not be limited to, any experience that is fatal or immediately life-threatening, is permanently disabling, requires (or prolongs) inpatient hospitalization, or is a congenital anomaly cancer or overdose.

The approval granted expires on July 30 2018. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request a progress report from you approximately three months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB point of contact, Mrs. Barbara Cook at (305)899-3020 or send an e-mail to [dfeldman@barry.edu](mailto:dfeldman@barry.edu). Finally, please review your professional liability insurance to make sure your coverage includes the activities in this study.

Sincerely,



David M. Feldman, PhD  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Barry University  
Department of Psychology

Cc: Dr. Sharon Singleton

\*\*\*\*\*  
Note: The investigator will be solely responsible and strictly accountable for any deviation from or failure to follow the research protocol as approved and will hold Barry University harmless from all claims against it arising from said deviation or failure.