



PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

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WHITLOWE R. GREEN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Defense Announcement

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE CURRICULA AND STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ELDER MISTREATMENT IN TEXAS

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James Grant Booker

B.A., University of Texas, Austin;

M.A., Prairie View A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Lisa K. Thompson, Ph.D.

The growth of elder mistreatment cases in the United States is a phenomenon with severe negative consequences for older adults and society. Elder mistreatment affects the lives of older adults in all social classes, educational levels, economic statuses, races, and ethnic backgrounds (Brandl, 2007). The problem is a significant public health matter given that almost 80 million individuals are projected to be 65 or older by 2050 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The effects of elder abuse have proven to be costly with regard to poorer health outcomes and social wellbeing and significant increases in the risk for pre-mature mortality.

Unfortunately, this trend is expected to continue and thus, many of our nation's seniors will also continue to suffer from reduced quality of life and increased risk for early mortality (Dong,

2009). In the state of Texas, where by law everyone is a mandatory reporter, it is critical that college graduates who enter *helping professions* (e.g. counseling, social work, and/or medicine) know how to recognize and report elder mistreatment.

The purpose of this mixed methods research was to: (a) explore whether or not students enrolled in social science programs have basic awareness of the different types of elder mistreatment and the reporting guidelines, (b) describe the level of curriculum, instruction, and the content dedicated to elder mistreatment in social science undergraduate degrees among accredited undergraduate educational programs in a large metropolitan city and (c) to identify important learning objectives necessary for preparing undergraduate social science students to address elder mistreatment.

The following research questions undergirded this study:

Quantitative

1. Are students enrolled in undergraduate social science programs in a large metropolitan city able to correctly identify the different types of elder mistreatment and mandatory reporting laws in Texas?
2. What is the impact of lectures covering the different types of elder mistreatment and the mandatory reporting laws in Texas on undergraduate social science students' recognition of elder mistreatment types and reporting laws?
3. At the program level, is there a difference in the social science course offerings devoted related to child abuse as compared to elder mistreatment at three 4-year universities within a large metropolitan city?
4. At the course level, is there a difference in the social science course offerings devoted related to child abuse as compared to elder mistreatment at three 4-year universities within a large metropolitan city?

Qualitative

1. What concepts do students enrolled in undergraduate social science programs need to know about elder mistreatment?
 - a. What do undergraduate social science majors entering helping professions need to know about recognizing and reporting elder mistreatment?

- b. What impact does lack of instruction in recognizing and reporting elder mistreatment have on undergraduate social science majors graduating and entering helping professions?
 - c. How can educational leaders increase the efficacy of undergraduate social science students entering helping professions and their knowledge base about elder mistreatment?
2. What barriers prevent undergraduate social science majors from learning to detect and report elder abuse?
3. What strategies can be employed to impact education, policy and practice, to ensure social science graduates in helping professions detect, report, and prevent elder abuse?

Results

H1: One-hundred and fifteen people provided complete baseline surveys. A one-sample t-test was conducted to assess baseline knowledge of elder mistreatment types and state reporting laws. Respondents scored significantly higher than chance.

H2: A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare pretest and posttest scores. There was a statistically reliable difference in the scores.

H0₃: A chi-square test was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference in the course offerings related to child abuse compared to elder mistreatment at the three participating universities. Chi-square results showed differences were not significant.

H0₄: A chi-square test was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference in the number of lecture hours related to child abuse when compared to elder mistreatment at three participating universities. Chi-square results showed differences were not significant.

For the qualitative section of this mixed method study ethnographic interviews were conducted with four elder abuse experts across the country. Data gathered from the qualitative interviews identified common themes gathered from all four experts regarding the need for elder

mistreatment education to social science students, social work students and students of other disciplines entering the helping professions

References

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Dissertation Chair: Lisa K. Thompson, Ph.D.

Committee Members: Jason Burnett, Ph.D.

Laurette B. Foster, Ed.D.

Patricia Hoffman-Miller, Ph.D.