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EXAMINING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG STUDENT EMPOWERMENT, SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND
THE IMPLICIT CURRICULUM: A MULTIGROUP ANALYSIS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This secondary data analysis considers the mediating role of sense of community in the context of social work education among a diverse group of social work students. Specifically, this study focuses on aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education, as social work educators are now mandated to assess and address the implicit curriculum's impact on students (CSWE, 2015). Yet, no standard set of measurements or assessment tools have been provided for this purpose. Therefore, researchers within schools of social work have begun adopting their own theoretical frameworks and measures to test the implicit curriculum in social work education. One strand of research has employed an empowerment framework to the process of evaluating the impact of aspects of the implicit curriculum on students' professional empowerment. This study seeks to understand the mediating influence of sense of community (measured by the Brief Sense of Community Scale [BSCS], Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008) on the relationship between factors of the implicit curriculum (i.e. supportive faculty, administrative functioning, and opportunity role structure) and students' professional empowerment as assessed through leadership competence and policy control. In addition, through a multigroup path analysis, this study explores whether these mediating subscales have a different impact for White, non-

Hispanic students versus non-White students. Findings from this study include significant differences between White, non-Hispanic students and non-White students on measures of the BSCS subscales Influence and Emotional Connection; these subscales mediate the relationships between Supportive Faculty and Leadership Competence for non-White students only. In contrast, Influence mediates the relationship between Administrative Functioning and Policy Control, as well as the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and Policy Control for both groups of students. Only White, non-Hispanic students have significant direct pathways from Supportive Faculty to Leadership Competence and from Administrative Functioning to Policy Control, suggesting the need for further investigation of the factors that could mediate these students' experiences of the implicit curriculum in social work education.

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and the Community at 58 Atherton, who taught me most.

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Beloved Grandfather

(May 25, 1917 – September 10, 2008)

and

Sgt. Joseph Michael Nolan

Rogue Cousin; Presente!

(March 10, 1977 – November 18, 2004)

Sentinels, both, on the long night rides.

“Heaven in a banquet, and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that

love comes with community.”

~ Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*

May we treasure our friends.

May they bring us all the blessings, challenges, truth and light that we need for our journey.

May we never be isolated.

May we always be in the gentle nest of belonging.

~ from the *Book of Celtic Wisdom* by John Donohue

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1974, Dr. Seymour Sarason published *The Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology*, a book that set out to describe not only what was then a relatively recent development in psychology—the focus on the individual in the context of the larger community or community psychology—but also to articulate the critical role that sense of community plays in the fabric of U.S. society. In it, Sarason asked, “Could I write a book about community psychology without putting into center stage my belief that the dilution or absence of the psychological sense of community is the most destructive dynamic in the lives of people in our society?” (1974, p. viii; emphasis added). Sarason describes how he actually kept a list of publications on the themes of lack of belonging, rootlessness, alienation, and loneliness; many of his contemporaries (researchers, journalists, and other authors) shared his sense of urgency regarding the need to explain, predict, and describe the conditions under which human flourishing occurs, in the context of meaningful and supportive communities.

While Sarason’s research was concerned primarily with speaking to fellow community psychologists about the future of their field and work together, his insights are likely to resonate with social work scholars, not only because his writing parallels social work’s critical emphasis on the person in their environment, but also because he is explicit that no field is value-free. Social work, in fact, is an explicitly value-laden field (Miller, Tice, & Hall, 2011) and as such, sense of community reflects social work’s emphasis on building communities characterized by

belonging and well-being for all people, as well as a commitment to social justice for the most marginalized members of society.

A review of the websites for the top 10 schools of social work in the U.S. (as ranked by U. S. News & World Report) reflects the value of sense of community in the context of social work education (see Appendix). Each school's website, a key marketing tool and conveyor of information to stakeholders of the school and visitors alike, includes at least one reference to sense of community. These references to the importance of sense of community range from student testimonials about how the school of social work they attended fosters sense of community, to school fundraising/"fun-raising" events, faculty research, and information about the value of particular field education placements. It is noteworthy that one of the deans of a school on this list, Alberto Godenzi, is quoted on the school's website remarking on the value of sense of community within the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work, "Sometimes it's only rhetoric to say there is a 'sense of community,' but I truly sense it here. I [see] colleagues who truly care for one another, who want to help one another to do a good job" (Smith, 2001). The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the role of sense of community within the context of social work education as an important mechanism through which aspects of the implicit curriculum impact social work students' professional empowerment (Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014). To build these kinds of school environments in which sense of community serves as the social "glue" between the school's culture and outcomes among racially and ethnically diverse students, it is important to examine the implicit curriculum as a starting point for understanding how social work students experience social work education at present and what is needed for social work education in the future.

The implicit curriculum, or the learning environment in which students find themselves, has been recognized as a critical component of the social work curriculum in the *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS) put forth by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008, 2015). CSWE recognizes the implicit curriculum as distinct from the explicit curriculum (including classes, field experiences, and behaviors). Together the explicit curriculum and the implicit curriculum influence students' educational experiences, acculturation to the social work profession, and ultimately, shape the potential of social work students to become leaders in the profession and beyond. The components of the implicit curriculum identified by CSWE include the equity and transparency of schools' policies and procedures, support for diversity, the degree to which students are invited to participate in school governance, and other factors that shape the social environment and, in turn, affect students' learning.

The implicit curriculum has a significant impact on students' educational experiences and professional identity development. Moreover, an awareness of the role of the implicit curriculum in social work education supports an educational environment that is consistent with "the values of the profession and mission, goals, and context of the program (CSWE, 2015, p. 14)." While other disciplines, such as medicine, nursing, and education, have closely examined the impact of the implicit curriculum on students, in the field of social work, there is a paucity of research about the impact of the implicit curriculum on students. The changes to the EPAS for social work education have provided a critical opportunity to better understand the mechanisms in the social work learning environment that empower students.

The 2008 and 2015 EPAS both promote the view of students as learners embedded in an environment that supports transparency, "human interchange," and the promotion of core social work values (Holosko, Skinner, MacCaughelty, & Stahl, 2010; CSWE, 2008, 2015). In the 2008

and 2015 EPAS handbooks, the implicit curriculum is identified as one of four key features of integrated curriculum design within the context of social work education. The implicit curriculum includes many aspects of the educational environment, such as commitment to diversity, admissions policies, policies pertaining to retention and dismissal, students' participation in program governance, administrative structure, resources, and the faculty. The aim of these elements is to ensure an educational environment that is consistent with social work ethics (CSWE, 2008, 2015). According to CSWE,

The implicit curriculum is as important as the explicit curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program's graduates. Heightened awareness of the importance of the implicit curriculum promotes an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession. (CSWE, 2015, p. 14).

Yet, despite the 2015 EPAS expectation that schools of social work will assess their implicit curriculum, CSWE does not provide any validated measurement instruments to facilitate this process. Moreover, the dimensions of the implicit curriculum outlined in the EPAS were not empirically tested when the revised 2008 EPAS was released (Peterson, Farmer, Donnelly, & Forenza, 2014). CSWE asks that social work schools not only use assessment data to acknowledge the importance of the implicit curriculum, but also that social work schools make use of assessment data to improve the implicit curriculum. For this author, a focus on improving the implicit curriculum is critical for shaping the professional identity and training of social workers. A commitment to measuring the implicit curriculum can improve students' experiences, invite feedback from key constituents, including the faculty, students, and advisory boards, and provide social work schools with standardized measures for evaluation and program improvement. Because CSWE does not provide a particular framework and measures that

schools must implement to measure the implicit curriculum, schools of social work are currently developing and testing their own measures to assess the implicit curriculum and its effects on students.

To date, empirical studies designed to test the components of the implicit curriculum and outcomes such as professional competence and student empowerment are extremely limited. One conceptual model was tested by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014). Their study employed an empowerment framework and examined students' professional empowerment in the context of the implicit curriculum of social work education. In order to measure the implicit curriculum, their study focused on Administrative Functioning, Supportive Faculty, and Opportunity Role Structure as key aspects of the implicit curriculum. Due to the lack of systematic research in this area, they drew on literature both from the social work field and other disciplines, as well as social work research within organizational contexts, to develop a proposed set of measurements that would predict professional empowerment among social work students in order to establish not only a framework, but also reliable and valid measures of the implicit curriculum.

Empowerment is not only the central outcome variable in the parent and present studies alike, but empowerment is also a core value of the social work profession and education (Huff & Johnson, 1998, cited in Van Voorhis & Hotstetter, 2006). Gutiérrez (1990) describes empowerment as “a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations (p. 149).” In the same article, she also explains that because empowerment theory and practice share a variety of origins, including adult education, community organizing, and feminist theory (as well as community psychology), definitions of empowerment are sometimes vague. Just as Gutiérrez is combining empowerment as a personal feeling of increased control with the process of increasing collective political power

in her research, so this study and the parent study from which it is derived employ an empirically validated measure of empowerment that applies this sense of personal power and political efficacy to the context of social work students' professional empowerment within schools of social work.

The current study, a secondary data analysis, will contribute to the literature by extending Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay's 2014 study of the implicit curriculum, which includes data collected from students in a school of social work in the northeastern U.S. A self-report survey was used to measure elements of the implicit curriculum, empowering outcomes for students, and the role of sense of community in mediating the relationships between these variables. My framework originates from and extends the Peterson et al. conceptual model by specifying all domains of Sense of Community as a mediator and by adding Racial–ethnic Category as a moderator to the conceptual model. In addition, the present study aims to contribute to the empirical literature on the implicit curriculum in social work education by testing whether these mediated relationships differ on the basis of students' race and ethnicity. CSWE's 2015 EPAS states simply that social work schools' commitment to diversity ought to be evident in aspects of the implicit curriculum. According to the standards, respect for diversity and difference including diversity within racial–ethnic category, gender identity, gender expression, religion, immigration status, class, political ideology, and ability, can be expressed in the implicit curriculum through measures such as the composition of search committees, selection of field education sites, diversity of the faculty, and allocation of resources (CSWE, 2015). Within the context of the implicit curriculum, the 2015 EPAS Accreditation Standard 3.0 requires schools of social work to specify efforts to make the learning environment a space in which diverse identities are respected. Additionally, schools must explain the ways these efforts contribute to an inclusive

and supportive learning environment. As well, schools must be able to explain their plans for continued improvements to the learning environment that will support diverse identities (CSWE, 2015). This program requirement includes the expectation that schools will both describe how their program provides a learning environment that models respect for diversity and articulate a meaningful plan to improve the environment for diverse students. Under the 2015 EPAS, schools of social work are required to identify which aspects of the implicit curriculum they will assess and to conduct assessments of the implicit curriculum accordingly. This assessment must include ways in which schools provide learning environments in which respect for diversity is modeled, as well as providing a meaningful plan to improve the school environment for diverse students.

While research has found that racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other forms of diversity enhance students' experiences by providing a rich environment for learning and preparation to live in a diverse world (Hurtado, 2007; Umbach & Kuh, 2006), colleges and universities exclude Non-White students from entry (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013), even as the ratio of college-age Non-White students to White, non-Hispanic students in the population increases (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Ramani, 2010). Institutions that lack diversity create unnecessary challenges for Non-White students, who may need additional support to feel a sense of belonging (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Studies have shown that students (as well as faculty and staff) of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds often perceive the climate of a campus differently (and often more negatively) than their White, non-Hispanic counterparts (Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Loo & Rolison, 1986). For Non-White students, experiences of discrimination on campus create a greater sense of alienation from the campus community (Cabrera & Nora, 1994). Given CSWE's commitment to diversity as part of the implicit curriculum, it is critical to gauge whether social

work education is effective at creating pathways that develop a sense of belonging and empowerment for all students, especially those who are marginalized within the academy and in society.

Conceptual Framework of the Current Study

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among aspects of the implicit curriculum, students' Professional Empowerment, Sense of Community and Racial–ethnic Category. As stated previously, this framework originates from and extends Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay's 2014 model by specifying all domains of Sense of Community as a mediator and by adding Racial–ethnic Category as a moderator to the Peterson et al. conceptual model. While mediation effects explain how independent variables affect outcome variables, moderators indicate how these effects differ by group, in this study, by race-ethnicity. Mediation “transmits” the effect of X to Y while moderation indicates that the relationships between X and Y vary across a third variable Z (MacKinnon, 2011; Magill, 2011). Moderated mediation, which is present in the current study, involves a mediator effect (Sense of Community) that varies across the levels of a moderator (Racial–ethnic Category) (Edwards & Schurer Lambert, 2007).

The purpose of this framework is to provide a broad overview of the variables under study and the proposed relationships among these variables based on theory and past research (which is examined in great detail in the literature review in Chapter II). Unlike the Peterson et al 2014 study, the current study examines all aspects of the Sense of Community Scale, as the proposed mediator in this study, as sense of community matters to individuals who are in the “target position,” those who are in the position of having experiences of dehumanization in our society (Freire, 2000). Within the context of social work education, the 2015 EPAS document

articulates a commitment to social justice (CSWE, 2015). If this commitment is to be realized, then not only social workers in the field, but those in the classroom as well, are called upon to question who matters, whose voices are included/excluded, and in whose liberation (actualized through the humanizing experience of being welcomed and heard and seen in our particular social location in communities and schools of social work alike) we are interested. Social workers cannot profess allegiance to clients facing dehumanization on the basis of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and religion without simultaneously committing to the task of building schools of social work that exemplify these commitments to the social work values of inclusion, fairness, and social justice. As Miller et al. eloquently state,

Although social work has historically claimed that students are “change agents,” the argument can now be made that social work education has an integrative curriculum design that examines and critiques society so as to understand who gains and who loses from a certain perspective, and from related efforts toward change. Indeed, this differentiates social work from other professions. (2011, p. 36).

For the purpose of this study, social work values are not being measured, but rather, presumed. Therefore, the conceptual basis for this study focuses on the kinds of communities social work schools are creating to support students as students and as social workers.

<**Figure 1.** *Relationships among variables in the implicit curriculum with Empowerment as the outcome (adapted from Peterson, Farmer & Zippay, 2014)*>

Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual model for this study. Building on the work of Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014), this figure illustrates the relationship among variables in

the parent study and in this secondary data analysis. The arrows and text in black reflect the original conceptual model from the parent study, while those in red indicate additional elements in the model added in the current study. Data collected for the parent study include three key aspects of the implicit curriculum: Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure. These constructs represent critical aspects of a school's climate or implicit curriculum. These three factors influence the outcomes that social work students experience as a result of their contact with aspects of the implicit curriculum (Peterson, Farmer & Zippay, 2014). While a researcher may choose a variety of outcomes, Peterson and colleagues (2014) chose Empowerment, which is a social work value and ought to be reflected in social work education as well. The relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum and students' professional empowerment was mediated by the Brief Sense of Community scale Emotional Connection subscale in the 2014 study by Peterson et al. This dissertation extends their study and model of the impact of the implicit curriculum on social work students' professional empowerment by considering both the role of Sense of Community as mediator and the role of race-ethnicity as a possible moderator among these relationships of the implicit curriculum, sense of community, and empowerment.

Theoretical Perspectives

The frameworks employed in the present study are derived primarily from the parent study by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014). In this, the authors employ empowerment as the central conceptual framework for predicting and explaining students' professional empowerment outcomes as a result of potentially empowering characteristics of the implicit curriculum. They note, "Empowerment represents a vital theoretical orientation for social work" (p. 633) because empowerment informs students' sense of meaning and identity, as well as the extent to which

these students believe they have the capacity to demonstrate confidence in their social work practice. Additionally, these scholars develop a conceptual model that links organizational characteristics such as opportunity role structure to empowerment directly and indirectly through mediators such as sense of community (Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014).

Therefore, the current study relies heavily on this empowerment framework. In addition, because the current study extends Peterson et al.'s work by using all four factors of the Sense of Community scale and by considering the role of Race-ethnicity as a moderator, additional theoretical frameworks are employed. In order to better understand the complex interplay among aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education, social work students' sense of community, and their levels of empowerment, which may differ on the basis of racial-ethnic category, the following theories will be looked at in concert to provide a meaningful framework of inquiry: critical theory, empowerment theory, and sense of community theory. Critical theory is employed here primarily as a framework that reminds us that any educational endeavor, within the field of social work and beyond, is not a neutral endeavor. Rather, the implicit curriculum is a value-laden endeavor fraught with the legacy of power differentials on the basis of race, ethnicity, class, gender and other "target" categories that shape our educational system and broader society. This study focuses in particular on Racial-ethnic Category as a critical aspect of the impact of the implicit curriculum on student empowerment outcomes. Within the context of this study, consistent with the broader theoretical literature on empowerment, empowerment operates at multiple levels of the social ecology (e.g. the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational levels) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Because the focus of this study is on the intrapersonal level of empowerment, the other aspects of empowerment are considered within the context of the individual. In addition to empowerment theory, sense of community, as a

theory and in the empirical literature, is considered an intraorganizational process that facilitates the relationships among empowerment at all levels, and in particular, at the individual level.

Critical Theory and the Implicit Curriculum

Salas, Sen, and Segal (2010) trace critical theory to its origins in the Frankfurt School, a group of philosophers whose work developed in response to the rise of totalitarian thought and activity in Europe during the early twentieth century. Critical theory is based on the understanding that human progress and liberation were rooted in the development of knowledge, which in turn required reflexivity, the willingness to question the social order and distribution of power in society (Salas et al., 2010). Their framework was eventually deepened by social theorists such as Paulo Freire (2000) and bell hooks (1994), who have been applying critical theory to questions of race and gender with respect to power and social structures. Critical theory calls into question societal structures and systems that deny or ignore marginalized groups and suggests that individuals' awareness of inequity can lead to greater empowerment, a key theme in this study.

Miller, Tice, and Hall (2011) point out that social work is a value-laden field, and if we assume that social work students should be able to work toward individual empowerment and social justice, then, social work education offers a space where students may question tightly held beliefs, and the very structures in which these transformations take place must support this transformation for all students. This, in turn, requires an ongoing commitment to critical examination of the elements of social work education, including the implicit curriculum.

Luconi (2008) makes a compelling argument that the implicit or "hidden" curriculum can actually serve as a barrier to the kind of learning that ought to take place in schools of social

work—namely, inquiry-driven learning, which emphasizes problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflection in discussion. This author points out that the positivist paradigm that has historically informed studies of the classroom and educational instruction relies on the notion that research is “neutral, objective, and universal” (p. 272). This perspective inherently silences the multiplicity of voices, contexts, and experiences that students bring to the classroom on the basis of factors such as racial–ethnic category, gender, and class because it is not truly objective, but rather a reflection of the dominant culture in which the positivist paradigm was created (i.e. by educated White males with significant social privilege). Because the implicit curriculum provides the norms, verbal and nonverbal messages, and effects of cultural differences as they are made manifest in the classroom, it is critical to understand the broad impact of the implicit curriculum on students’ learning, and to carefully attend to the contradictory messages and values transmitted through aspects of the implicit curriculum that may unwittingly re-inscribe racist or other hegemonic discourses. This is critical in all disciplines, but in social work education, the consequences of failing to do so are dire, because social work education must attend to the connection between the education we provide and the larger social structures within which social work students (and their clients) function.

Critical theorists such as Giroux (1981) emphasize the importance of considering the social context in which educational endeavors occur. In his “Schooling and the Myth of Objectivity: Stalking the Hidden Curriculum” (1981), Giroux expressed concern that schools have turned away from incorporating progressive feedback into education. He argues that schools in the early 1980s, largely due to economic factors, began focusing on discrete competencies rather than critical inquiry. He acknowledges a critical interplay between not only economic forces, but also social and political ideologies, and the development of school practices

and what constitutes knowledge. Further, because of a school's role in socializing individuals, Giroux emphasizes that it is imperative to investigate the implicit curriculum with a careful eye toward these large social, political, and historical factors that shape the school environment. He argues that the implicit curriculum must be examined not simply as tool for understanding unexamined assumptions about the school curriculum and practices, but it must also be "linked to a notion of liberation, grounded in personal dignity and social justice" (p. 295). Thus, Giroux asserts, a theoretical framework of the implicit curriculum must consider both human transformation and structural analysis as integrated and mutually illuminating factors.

This insight inspires questions; such as, by what processes or interactions will the implicit curriculum fulfill its potential to support empowered growth among students? How does the implicit curriculum reflect and strengthen critical thinking among diverse students? According to Miller et al. (2011), while the explicit curriculum provides the learning content, the implicit curriculum provides the context in which learning takes place. Moreover, it is this context that shapes learning and, because all knowledge is open to question, critical reflection on both the content and context is necessary "because knowledge can be influenced by the distribution of power in society and may not be reality but idea; knowledge is context bound" (Miller et al., 2011, p. 37). Attention to critical theory in the production of knowledge and practice within the field of social work facilitates students' awareness of individual clients' lives and structural issues of oppression. In turn, connecting individuals' experiences with environmental factors generates critical thinking among students that can lead to emancipatory practices (Miller et al., 2011).

In the confrontation that social work students may have with their own worldviews and their clients' experiences of inequality, emancipatory thought and action require that students

and clients alike confront personal circumstances and larger issues of social justice (Miller et al., 2011; Salas, Sen, & Segal, 2010). To do so successfully requires an increased sense of internal power and the ability to have control over one's fate or empowerment. Because sense of community has been found to be a distinct characteristic that cultivates empowerment in organizations, sense of community is one potential mechanism through which aspects of the implicit curriculum can be known and experienced by students as empowering (Ohmer, 2008; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004). To better understand the ways in which sense of community can enliven the implicit curricula and lead to empowerment among students, it is important to first define sense of community.

Sense of Community

McMillan and Chavis define sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (1986, p. 9). They identify four dimensions of Sense of Community: 1) Membership, a feeling of belonging and a sense of personal relatedness; 2) Influence, a sense of mattering to the group; 3) Needs Fulfillment, a feeling that members' needs will be met because of their group membership; and 4) Shared Emotional Connection, a belief that members share a common history place, time together, and similar experiences. Membership describes the feeling of belonging to a group with a shared history, common boundaries, sense of safety, and the sense of personal commitment to community life. Influence means that individuals can both make contributions to the decisions made collectively as well as be influenced by the group in one's own decision-making. With regard to professional socialization of social work students, it becomes clear that this aspect of influence is critical. As students become acculturated to the profession, ideally they allow

professional guidelines such as the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) Code of Ethics to guide individual decision-making rather than personal biases or stereotypes about groups who are receiving social services (Workers, 2008). Needs Fulfillment is the belief members have that their needs will be met as a result of membership in the community. Finally, Shared Emotional Connection is based on past common experiences meant to strengthen social ties among community members (Talo, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2013). Taken together, it is clear that these aspects of sense of community, when thoughtfully integrated into the fabric of schools of social work, provide a pathway through which positive aspects of the implicit curriculum can be communicated to social work students, likely resulting in a climate in which students are empowered agents of their own learning and for the communities they serve.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment is an active process through which individuals and communities develop a greater sense of self-efficacy and social justice (Rappaport, 1987; Solomon, 1976, cited in Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 129). Within a social work context, empowerment is a long-standing conceptual model and professional orientation (Peterson & Hughey, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1983; Solomon, 1976). Gutiérrez (1995) explains that empowerment theory is focused on how beliefs about the self can contribute to change at the individual, community and societal levels. Gutiérrez suggests that in order for social change to happen, empowered individuals must experience the development of a critical consciousness that includes group identification, group consciousness, and a sense of personal and collective efficacy. Gutiérrez, GlenMaye, and DeLois (1995) recognize empowerment in social work practice as a process occurring at multiple levels of the social ecology measured by increases in power for marginalized individuals, groups and communities. Hardina (2005) traces the history of the term

“empowerment” in social work organizations, highlighting Solomon’s 1976 definition of empowerment as “a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles” (p. 6), a definition developed out of Solomon’s contact with the Black Power Movement. Within the context of social work organizations, Hardina (2005) discusses the importance of empowerment as the mechanism through which social work agencies increase the power of both workers and clients. While much of the literature on empowerment focuses on social work practice and organizations, empowerment theory has also been more recently applied as a theoretical framework through which to understand social work education and the implicit curriculum in particular (Peterson, Farmer, Donnelly, & Forenza, 2014; Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014).

As a central empowerment theorist, Zimmerman (2000) points out empowerment is often theorized as a phenomenon that occurs at the level of the individual. Thus, empowerment theory has generally focused primarily on individual experience rather than accounting for the complex person-in-environment interplay that is central to social work education and practice. There have also been efforts to capture empowerment at an organizational level (Zimmerman, 2000). Organizational empowerment (OE) refers to organizational effectiveness to achieve goals, and the organizational efforts that foster a sense of empowerment among members (Zimmerman, 2000). However, there is not a single unifying empowerment framework to describe or explain the complex interplay between individuals and organizations in generating empowered members. Therefore, it is necessary to consider both empowering organizations and empowered members in applying an empowerment framework (Powell & Peterson, 2014). In the case of social work education, organizational empowerment is the effort made by schools to create environments in

which students flourish and acculturate to the field with a sense of self-efficacy, social justice commitment, and an ability to work collaboratively with clients using an empowerment lens. Empowerment is the mechanism by which social workers shift their thinking and practice from a deficit model to a strengths-based approach, as well as approach social work practice with an eye toward not only individuals' experiences, but also the relationships, systems, and structures that set the conditions for social inequities and social justice (Peterson & Hughey, 2002).

This study focuses on empowerment at the individual level, as well as exploring the organizational processes that facilitate individual empowerment. Psychological empowerment at the individual level (PE) includes three elements: 1) intrapersonal, 2) interactional, and 3) behavioral (Zimmerman, 1990; 1995). The intrapersonal component of PE pertains to issues of individuals' competence, efficacy, and even mastery. This aspect of PE has been used to measure outcomes such as individuals' outcomes in larger processes and programs such as tobacco prevention and disease prevention efforts designed to be empowering (Holden, Crankshaw, Nimsch, Hinnant, & Hund, 2004).

Empowerment theory and research have an explicit focus on the nature of transformative power and social change (Christens, 2012). Therefore, sociopolitical control is considered a key element of the intrapersonal aspect of PE (Zimmerman, 1990; 1995), and refers to individuals' beliefs that they are able to impact the social and political systems that affect their lives (Paulhus, 1983; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Most previous studies have focused on the intrapersonal component of empowerment; this study is also focused on the intrapersonal component of empowerment.

Empowering Organizations

Many theorists suggest that individual level development of empowerment is preceded by participation in community groups and other activities (Itzhaky & York, 2000; Lee, 1994; Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino & Schneider, 2005; Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Community and organizational settings such as schools provide an important contextual frame in which individual empowerment may develop. Therefore, it is critical to understand the empowering role organizations may play in shaping individual experiences of empowerment.

Maton and Salem (1995) suggest that empowering organizations are those that help members to experience an increased sense of control over their lives, achieved through an active, participatory process in which the organization helps its members attain important life goals. To this definition, Zimmerman (1995) adds that empowering organizations provide members with support and skills needed to effect community-level change. Peterson et al. (2005) point out that individual empowerment is heavily influenced by complex person-in-environment interactions such that organizational and community processes shape the extent to which individuals experience empowerment and take control of their own lives. Therefore, it is critical to understand the context in which individuals are operating, as those social structures make a profound contribution to individuals' development.

Within the context of the social work field, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) and Hardina (2011) suggest that empowerment is an increase in the power of the client or community for the purpose of taking collective action to change or prevent problems experienced by the group, requiring change on multiple levels of the social environment; so change within the self is part of a change process occurring among individuals, groups, and communities seeking empowerment. Similar

to Maton and Salem (1995), Gutiérrez et al. (1995) emphasize the importance of organizational processes and practices that promote empowerment among clients, such as the use of participatory management techniques. In a survey of social work agency managers, Hardina (2011) finds that social work managers often employ empowerment approaches to improve organizational functioning (such as training on cultural competence), but are less prone to engage in participatory practices that invite clients' leadership (such as having clients serve on an agency's board). Hardina concludes that social work organizations' functionality as empowering to staff and clients hinges largely on social work managers' philosophy and approach, underscoring the need for social work education that models distinct practices that increase students' understanding of how to operationalize empowerment in organizational settings.

While a variety of constructs have been drawn upon to elucidate the nature of empowering organizations, in the context of the current study, the empowering organizational characteristics measured include aspects of the implicit curriculum: Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure. These processes represent the organizational characteristics that can be measured and intervened upon to better support empowerment at all levels of the organization. Maton and Salem (1995, p. 631) make an important distinction between "ecological specificity" and "ecological commonality," whereby the former concerns those empowering organizational characteristics in a particular setting, while the latter refers to organizational features of empowerment that are vital across organizations. The current study focuses on empowering organizational variables and examines the ways in which aspects of the implicit curriculum—Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure—represent the organizational characteristics that may optimize the participants' (in this case, students) lives and educational training experience.

Empowered Members

Individual empowerment is theorized as a dialectical relationship between an individual's own characteristics, in concert with the organizational processes and contexts in which they may develop a sense of empowerment (Itzhaky & York, 2003; Peterson & Speer, 2000). This perspective is consistent with systems theory, which suggests that individual empowerment is shaped by both one's own internal resources and through interactions with the external social environment. Individual empowerment is supported by four organizational processes: Opportunity Role Structure, Leadership, Social Support, and Group-based Belief Systems (Maton & Salem, 1995; Maton, 2008). Empowered individuals possess a critical consciousness of their own environment and the ability to understand social and political processes. According to Hardina (2005), empowered members of a group or employees in an empowering organization experience development of a positive self-concept, a sense of self-efficacy that one has the necessary skills to impact events, a sense of one's ability to take action, and a sense of group identity with others in the organization, as well as in the larger social systems these group members may be a part of. This notion of "empowered members" is virtually synonymous with psychological empowerment.

Empowered individuals are characterized as possessing not only personal competence, but also a desire to exert control in their own lives (Kieffer, 1984; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1987, cited in Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991) conclude that empowerment is at least in part formulated by individuals' sense of control over their environment. They also note that while an individual may feel a sense of control and self-efficacy in one context, this feeling might not carry across contexts (e.g. a homemaker who feels a sense of control at home but does not feel able to influence the local city council's policies).

Therefore, these authors argue for the need to examine individual empowerment in ways that are context-specific, integrating cognitive, personality, and motivational domains into a single construct of perceived control (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Yet, due to these complex mechanisms at play in empowerment at the individual level, Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991) suggest the need for two subscales to reflect both perceived competence and self-efficacy. Because we live in social environments, these researchers argue, a measure of one's perceived control must function in a sociopolitical context, as well as account for personality, cognitive and motivational domains. While Leadership Competence accounts for a set of skills that a person uses to provide leadership, Policy Control measures "participatory expectations" (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). These measures will be discussed further in the Literature Review section.

Within the context of social work, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) emphasize the importance of empowering organizations as communities that can be used in the service of helping individual clients take control of their own lives and experience a sense of personal and collective efficacy, especially in the face of injustice and inequity. Schools of social work play a role in shaping the values and behaviors that guide budding social workers through their classes, field placements and growing professional relationships (Miller, 2013). While social work schools ultimately have an important but limited role in social work students' overall professional socialization, Miller (2013) and Miller et al. (2011) emphasize the need for social work schools to support and guide students' ability to cope with uncertainty, think critically, and make ethical decisions in order to cope with practice challenges and maintain a focus on social justice. Therefore, it is critical that social work educators understand and strengthen aspects of the explicit and implicit curricula that support students' sense of self-efficacy and professional empowerment. This study seeks to

empirically demonstrate the relationships between the implicit curriculum in a social work school, sense of community, and empowerment among diverse social work students.

Purpose of the Study

Building on the conceptual framework and empirical approaches of Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014) in their parent study, this study sets out to explore how all aspects of sense of community mediates the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education and the outcome of students' professional empowerment among students of different racial-ethnic identities. The current research study, which relies on secondary data analysis, begins with several preliminary analyses, including an exploration of whether the hypothesized four-factor model of the Brief Sense of Community Scale fits the data in this sample of social work students. The purpose of this starting point is in large part because there is still debate among researchers regarding the meaning of sense of community and consequently, the most parsimonious and efficacious ways to measure sense of community, a concept that can at times seem broad but does involve distinct measurable constructs (Nowell & Boyd, 2010). Therefore, preliminary analysis was conducted to assess the goodness of fit of the sense of community scale to the data collected in this school of social work. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify the factor structure of the sense of community scale used in this study.

In "The Implicit Curriculum in an Urban University Setting: Pathways to Students' Empowerment" study, Peterson et al. (2014) find that sense of community, using only three items from the Brief Sense of Community Scale Emotional Connection subscale to assess students' feelings of attachment to the school, does indeed mediate the relationship between various aspects of the implicit curriculum—Supportive Faculty, Opportunity Role Structure, Access to Information, Diversity of Faculty and Staff—and students' sense of empowerment. In

addition, they find that sense of community has a direct effect on professional empowerment. This direct effect is confirmed by Cheryomukhin and Peterson (2014) in their study of 350 adults in several regions of Azerbaijan. Their study includes the Empowerment subscales used in the current study. They find that the scale mean of the four-dimensional Brief Sense of Community Scale shows that individuals with a higher sense of community have higher scores on both Leadership Competence and Policy Control scales.

However, these studies have not yet examined all of the factors of the four-factor Brief Sense of Community Scale with the complete set of four subscales (Needs Fulfillment, Membership, Influence, and Emotional Connection) to account for the mediational effect. Understanding these factors will aid schools of social work in further elucidating the areas of emphasis they ought to include in any approach to assessing and improving the implicit curriculum. Aside from a pure measurement perspective, it is critical to understand these factors so that schools of social work can design and test interventions on sense of community to improve the school climate or implicit curriculum for social work students.

This study builds on the empowerment framework and assessment that has recently been proposed in the literature by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014) and extends their work on three fronts. Unlike the Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay study (2014), which only includes the Emotional Connection subscale of the Sense of Community scale, this study will include all of the subscales. Second, this study examines whether and to what extent the different dimensions of sense of community mediate the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum and students' professional empowerment. Third, this study contributes to the literature by examining not whether sense of community and diversity can co-exist, but rather how students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds may experience empowering outcomes through a sense of

community, and whether there are group differences in the mediating role of sense of community.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Implicit Curricula in Professional Education

In the parent study, Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay recognize the implicit curriculum as an important component of professional education across disciplines such as nursing, medicine and other health-related fields (2014). They note that the implicit curriculum can be defined as the values, climate, and culture that make up the learning environment. Relatedly, Miller (2010) identifies medicine and nursing as fields that are similar to social work in that all are “praxis-based and competency-based disciplines inclusive of practice skills and knowledge, practice wisdom, and reflexive choices (p. 929).” Therefore, the extant literature from these allied fields can be useful points of reference as the study of the implicit curriculum is in its nascent stages in social work (Miller, 2013).

There are wide-ranging views among scholars about the role of the implicit curriculum in shaping the learning environment and student learning without a standard definition or measurement, however. For example, Sambell and McDowell describe the implicit curriculum as “an apposite metaphor to describe the shadowy, ill-defined and amorphous nature of that which is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction” (1998, p. 391). Historically, the concept of the implicit curriculum, or the environment in which students learn and in which they may receive messages and values that may be in conflict with the explicit curriculum, has only been found in the literature on schools of education, medical schools and professional socialization of doctors and, to a lesser extent, nurses (Balmer, Master, Richards, & Giardino,

2009; Bennett, Lockyer, Mann, Batty, LaForet, Rethans, & Silver 2004; Cribb & Bignold, 1999; Wear & Castellani, 2000).

In the context of professional training, a small body of studies focuses on the positive aspects of the learning environment, including reviews of role models, norms, and school cultures that affirm students' intrinsic motivation and sense of common purpose, as well as reinforcing professional practice standards (Jones, Hanson, & Longacue, 2004; Karnieli-Miller, Vu, Holtman, Clyman, & Inui, 2010; Maudsley, 2001; Weissmann, Branch, Gracey, Haidet & Frankel, 2006).

Within the field of education, the implicit curriculum is understood as the values, culture, and climate that comprise the unseen but powerful learning environment (Eisner, 1985; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Rennert-Ariev, 2008; Wren, 1999). Wren provides a brief historical overview of the implicit curriculum in educational settings, suggesting that in the U.S., from the colonial period through the late nineteenth century, there was very little distinction between the explicit and implicit curricula in educational settings. However, this began to shift with the leadership of progressive educators from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. It is notable that this period was characterized both by a move to separate religion and explicit teaching of values from the overall educational endeavor, and that, in Wren's view, progressive teachers became uncomfortable with transmitting values as "inculcators" and looked to the broader school environment to aid in the socialization of students (1999). In order to attain a greater understanding of the implicit curriculum in a given educational institution, Wren recommends a careful analysis of the school's routines, ceremonies, and rituals in conjunction with careful document analysis to better grasp the school's climate and culture, particularly as these aspects of the implicit curriculum shape students' learning experiences.

In his examination of a performance-based teacher education program, Rennert-Ariev (2008) conducted a qualitative research study of students and faculty to understand the operative implicit and explicit curricula. He points out that the messages in the implicit or hidden curriculum may contain stronger or more persuasive ideas about teacher education than the explicitly stated goals of the teacher education program. Thus, the effects of the implicit curriculum on students and faculty may be subtle yet powerful. Using interviews, document analysis, and field notes, Rennert-Ariev finds that among students enrolled in this particular teacher education program, one thing over all others was learned through the implicit curriculum: Compliance with the technical aspects of an external performance-based review trumped intellectual engagement. Without a robust intellectual commitment by the faculty as a whole, students believed that only their social work practice experience contained value. Without a central theme to “catalyze their intellectual efforts” (p. 132), the messages embedded in the implicit curriculum left students with the belief that they had only to pass a rote test, rather than become critical seekers and purveyors of knowledge.

As Rennert-Ariev’s study illustrates, the implicit curriculum can profoundly impact student outcomes including their conduct and professional character (2008). Looking at medical education, Cohen (2006) emphasizes that professionalism among doctors is the cornerstone of maintaining patients’ trust and ensuring that ethical practice prevails over the temptations of financial gain offered by the marketplace. He points out that the implicit or “hidden” curriculum of medical schools is the most powerful transmitter of values in the profession:

It is not what students hear in the classroom that makes the most durable impression. It is what they see and experience in the everyday practice of faculty members, residents and

fellow students that etch their attitudes and harden their perceptions about the real expectations of the profession (p. 612).

In narratives of 272 medical school residents, many of the stories centered on professional values learned from residents' interactions with the implicit or informal curriculum (Karnieli-Miller, Vu, Holtman, Clyman, & Inui, 2010). In particular, students' narratives included comments about the quality of relationships and interactions in the educational and clinical environments, the degree to which people's needs were met, and the attitudes people communicated through their words and actions. These narratives reflect the powerful, rich, and complex impact of the implicit curriculum on student learning and the development of professional values. Importantly, one of the key themes to surface was the perceived importance of emotional control. The authors observe that students who were able to blunt their emotions were actually in danger of developing callous attitudes that were counter to the professed values of the profession. (The importance of emotional connection within the context of the implicit curriculum is a sub-theme that will be examined empirically in this study through the Sense of Community scale.)

Similarly, Haidet and Stein provide examples of assumptions embedded in the implicit curriculum of medical school training, such as "uncertainty and complexity are to be avoided" and "doctors never admit to not knowing something" (2006, p. S17). Reisman refers to the implicit curriculum as "the unofficial rules of survival and advancement" (2006, p. 9) in the context of medical school, suggesting that while the explicit curriculum conveyed in course syllabi is important, it is by no means the only source of information students receive about what it means to become a member of the medical profession. For example, when medical students are explicitly taught the importance of patient confidentiality, but then witness medical educators

violating this confidentiality, there is a gap between the explicit and implicit curricula (Holosko, Skinner, MacCaughelty, & Stahl, 2010). Brainard and Brislen suggest that this gap might cause students to become “professional and ethical chameleons” (2007, p. 1012). Clouder (2005) points out that among nursing students, the explicit curriculum emphasizes the professional identity of caring for others, yet there are times when patients cannot be treated or cured, leaving students to experience a negative gap between what has been taught and their experiences in the practicum setting. In order to support students, Clouder argues that it is critical to address this gap cogently—to make the implicit explicit—in order to bolster students’ professional identity development and adherence to ethical practice.

Clearly, the implicit curriculum is just as critical to a successful educational endeavor as the explicit curriculum, yet, as Flutter (2007) notes, the educational environment itself is often left out of the design of learning environments. Learning environments include both the explicit curriculum (e.g. the content of courses, curriculum, competencies, etc.) and the implicit curriculum (e.g. the role of faculty, commitment to diversity, opportunities for student leadership, and administrative structure). Within these learning environments, discussion has focused on both the positive and negative messages students receive, and in particular, the effects of the implicit curriculum on students’ development (Deon, Lear, Turneu & Jones, 2007; Holosko et al., 2010; Miller, 2010; Wren, 1999).

Thomas (1991) describes the implicit curriculum as “the routines and assumptions that shape school policies and programs” (p. 51). In other words, the implicit curriculum is the milieu in which the expressed or formal learning (e.g. the explicit curriculum) unfolds. To this definition, Turbes, Krebs, and Axtell (2002) add that it also includes attitudes, behaviors, and skills that may be learned but are not necessarily intentional. This is perhaps what makes the

implicit curriculum so powerful—it opens a space in the learning environment for hidden biases to be transmitted without awareness.

CSWE's EPAS describe the implicit curriculum as the learning environment, including fair policies, commitment to diversity, faculty, administrative structure, and opportunities for student participation in governance (CSWE, 2015). This description of the implicit curriculum informs the current study and the parent study from which this secondary data analysis is drawn. This definition of the implicit curriculum embodies the aspirant goals of fairness, inclusion, and the incorporation of social work values such as social justice into the fabric of the implicit curriculum in social work education. Thus, the studies reviewed in this section from other areas of professional education such as nursing, medicine, and education provide a contrasting and complicating view of the implicit curriculum as it is observed in practice through research. Thus, while the implicit curriculum as the “learning environment” is relatively clear and concise, one of the challenges of understanding, operationalizing, and measuring it can be that the experience of the implicit curriculum may not be as clear as the conceptualization of it. This conflict between concept and experience of the implicit curriculum in the extant literature strongly suggests the need to carefully measure the implicit curriculum in an interactive process that is continually strengthened by both quantitative and qualitative approaches, as well as attending to possible mediators that help to explain the mechanisms by which aspects of the implicit curriculum impact outcomes for students' learning.

The Implicit Curriculum and Diversity

In preparation for this study, there was not any social work literature that specifically examined the impact of the implicit curriculum on questions of diversity and inclusion.

Meanwhile, the field of higher education has dedicated significant time and energy to better

understanding the role of the school climate or implicit curriculum on outcomes for students of diverse backgrounds (see Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013, for an excellent overview). Researchers have found that in educational settings in which diversity is asserted as valuable in the explicit curriculum, but where a lack of diversity is present among the faculty and staff (an aspect of the implicit curriculum), students experience an inherent contradiction in values (Adams, 1992; Brayboy, 2003; Turbes, Krebs, & Axtell, 2002). Brayboy (2003) pointedly noted that predominantly White, non-Hispanic colleges and universities might implement diversity initiatives (such as highlighting the work of faculty of color) without actually attending to the larger systems and structures of the institution that maintain the status quo. A professed commitment to diversity is equivalent to “window dressing” (Brayboy, 2003, p. 74) rather than a true commitment to addressing aspects of the implicit curriculum, which, if changed, would promote diversity in the context of justice-seeking, rather than relying on faculty of color to represent the value of diversity to the campus. Using case examples from a medical school, Turbes, Krebs, and Axtell (2002) found that patients’ race was often not mentioned (in a context in which White, non-Hispanic racial identity was assumed). However, when patient cases were found to have negative attributes, their racial identity (as Black) was often included. This suggests a strong bias against subjects on the basis of race, as well as an emphasis on White, non-Hispanic patients as the norm and non-White patients as other. These findings suggest there is a strong need to carefully examine aspects of the implicit curriculum for subtle yet pervasive forms of bias that unwittingly reinscribe racial and ethnic hierarchies in teaching and learning.

While there has been an overall increase in the racial and ethnic diversity of college students, faculty members remain a homogenous group. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 79% of full-time instructional faculty members are White, non-Hispanic

and 84% of full-time professors are White, non-Hispanic (Kena et al., 2014). In contrast, between 1976 and 2008, total undergraduate fall enrollment increased for each racial-ethnic group, with Latinos and Asians/Pacific Islanders showing the fastest rates of increase in college enrollment and White, non-Hispanics showing the slowest rate of increase (Aud, Fox, & Kewal-Ramani, 2010).

Furthermore, studies demonstrate that the campus climate, arguably a term that is synonymous with the implicit curriculum, can have a significant impact on students' social and academic success (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999). Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993) have found that Latino students at predominantly White, non-Hispanic colleges and universities experience specific stressors related to their identity as minority students, including tension with peers and faculty due to experiences of both perceived and actual discrimination. Hurtado and Carter (1997) reviewed five studies that examine aspects of campus racial climates' impact on learning outcomes for students of diverse backgrounds. All of the studies include racially diverse students' experiences with negative aspects of the campus climate, including discrimination. Succinctly stated: "Taken together, these studies suggest that students are educated in racial climates that influence psychological processes, intergroup relations, and group cohesion" ((Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 330). The authors further hypothesize that the campus climate would directly impact students' sense of belonging on campus. For Latino students, who are the focus of Hurtado and Carter's study, the students' perceptions of a negative campus climate in their second year had an adverse effect on their sense of belonging in the third year.

Thus, in addition to the need for careful attention and critical reflection on the implicit curriculum due to gaps in expressed values and implicit messages, this body of higher education

research, which examines aspects of the campus climate or implicit curriculum also catalogs the tangible toll that perceived and actual discrimination by peers and faculty alike can have on diverse students' academic achievement, sense of belonging, and psychological well-being. These studies prompt questions about whether or to what extent social work students may encounter similar forms of implicit discrimination and adverse personal or professional outcomes, even with social work's expressed commitment to respect for diversity (CSWE, 2015). Indeed, the parent study in this current study (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014) finds that Supportive Faculty, an aspect of the implicit curriculum, predicts students' professional empowerment in a sample of social work students indirectly through Supportive Faculty's effect on students' feeling of being valued by the school.

Aspects of the Implicit Curriculum and Diversity: Supportive Faculty

Because interaction with faculty is an important aspect of students' successful learning, the role of faculty is highlighted in the EPAS standards (CSWE, 2015) as a critical component of the implicit curriculum. Relatedly, research finds that having a strong support person—such as a faculty member mentor—is key to the success Non-White students experience in college settings (Fries-Britt, 2000; Sedlacek, 1999; Wawrzynski & Sedlacek, 2003). In a qualitative study with 12 Meyerhoff scholars (a national merit-based program to support participation of African American students in the STEM fields), Fries-Britt (2000) describes how the Meyerhoff Program was designed to prime faculty so that they were aware of these students' significant academic abilities, a structure she credits with the very positive support many faculty provided to these students, who in turn, described how these faculty members acknowledged their intelligence and contributions, removing a barrier to students' participation by assuming these students had worthwhile contributions to make to their field of study. Additionally, research in higher

education finds that African American students may find it difficult to share information with faculty members who do not share their racial-ethnic background, as a result of fear of reprisal based on negative stereotypes about African Americans (Schweitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999). Therefore, both generally supportive faculty and a diverse faculty that mirrors the diversity of the student body is a critical component of the implicit curriculum.

In their study of 4,501 college students, Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) find that faculty interaction plays a key role in learning for students of all ethnic groups in the study (they list seven groups), and faculty interaction contributes more to student learning among Non-White students than White, non-Hispanic students. African American students have more frequent but less satisfying interactions with faculty than their White, non-Hispanic counterparts. This difference raises questions about these interactions and the possible negative biases faculty members hold toward African American students. These faculty biases may have resulted in negative appraisal of these students' abilities and left these students feeling less positive about their interactions with faculty. Again, this study affirms the need for diverse faculty and for all faculty, regardless of race-ethnicity, to be sensitive to students' social location in order to support positive learning outcomes for all students.

In a study using data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) 1994 Student Information Form and its 1998 College Student Survey, Kim (2010) examines student contact with faculty in two different forms—personal and academic. This author finds that White, non-Hispanic and African American students interacted more frequently with faculty in personal and academic contexts than their Asian or Latino peers. However, only White, non-Hispanic students experienced a bidirectional benefit of interaction with faculty and the variable educational aspiration. Both findings suggest that there are important differences in the ways that

students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds benefit from interactions with faculty and these differences require attention in the development of a learning community that meets the needs of all students.

Considered together, the above studies suggest that meaningful interactions with faculty members benefit non-White students significantly by improving their learning outcomes. This is especially salient to the current study, as one of the hypotheses pertains to whether or to what extent non-White social work students' interactions with supportive faculty (an aspect of the implicit curriculum) increase social work students' professional empowerment, which includes their professional identity and competence. Although the current study does not include variables pertaining to perceived or actual faculty diversity, the studies outlined in this section also suggest that students, particularly non-White students, not only benefit from the presence of diverse faculty, but their personal and academic success, to some extent, hinges on these mentoring relationships.

Aspects of the Implicit Curriculum and Diversity: Administrative Functioning

Gilliard (1996) finds that among African American students, the greatest measure of students' perception of the campus climate was based on students' perceptions of racial discrimination by college administrators. Unfortunately, as Mayhew, Grunwald, and Dey (2006) point out, empirical research on questions of campus climate and issues of diversity frequently excludes staff (e.g. administrators) from study. To counter this, Mayhew et al. (2006) conducted a survey of 1029 staff members at a large, predominantly White, non-Hispanic Midwestern U.S. university. They found that women were less likely than men to believe the institution had established a welcoming environment supportive of diversity, and staff members of color were less likely than White, non-Hispanic staff members to believe that the institution was supportive

and welcoming of diversity. They found that staff members' perceptions of the campus climate could be influenced by recent experiences of discrimination as well as by messages they received from senior administrators about the value of diversity to the institutional mission. Taken together, these findings suggest that there is much more work to do to understand the role of administrators in both students' and staff members' perceptions of the campus climate for diversity.

Aspects of the Implicit Curriculum and Diversity: Opportunity Role Structure

Opportunity Role Structure (ORS) has been identified as an empowering characteristic of the learning environment. Maton and Salem define ORS as “the availability and configuration of roles within a setting which provide meaningful opportunities for individuals to develop, grow and participate” (1995, p. 643). Using a cases method to assess the effectiveness of the Meyerhoff Scholars' Program, they found that ORS was a central feature of the program and contributed to a sense of belonging among participants. Meyerhoff student scholars were encouraged by the program staff to participate in study groups, take on summer internships at prestigious academic and corporate centers of industry, and to engage in mentoring young African American youth from at risk communities. ORS supported these African American students' professional development and psychological empowerment (Maton, 2008; Maton & Hrabowski, 2004; Maton, Pollard, McDougall Weise, & Hrabowski, 2012; Maton & Salem, 1995).

Measuring the Implicit Curriculum

Despite the existence of these broad-ranging studies of the implicit curriculum, there is no standardized way to measure this construct within or across disciplines, nor is there a commonly accepted approach to assessment of the implicit curriculum (Cohen, 2006; Harden,

2002; Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Van der Vleuten, 1996). While there are a few published studies of the connection between the implicit curriculum and student outcomes in professional schools, researchers have asserted the need to fill this gap (Allan, Smith, & O' Driscoll, 2011; Billings, Engelberg, Curtis, Block, & Sullivan, 2010; Miller, 2013). Some researchers have examined the effects of the implicit curricula on students in medical and nursing schools (Billings, Lazarus, Wenrich, Curtis, & Engelberg, 2011; Fitz, Homan, Reddy, Griffith, Baker, & Simpson, 2007; Jones, 2007; Jones, Hanson, & Longacre, 2004), while others have tested and validated measures (Haidet, Kelly, & Chou, 2005; McNeil, Hughes, Toohey, & Downton, 2006), and a few have connected implicit messages conveyed in teaching style with students' interpretations of course content (Lempp & Seale, 2004; Tarshis, 2008). The lack of standardized measures of the implicit curriculum is an important consideration in this study. As the next section discusses, because social work education contributes to professional socialization in a value-rich field with a commitment to social justice, it is essential to be able to measure the implicit curriculum to understand more fully the role of implicit messages, assumptions, and actions that support or hinder students' growth and development as empowered social workers.

Assessment of the Implicit Curriculum in Social Work

The 2015 EPAS document defines the implicit curriculum as,

...The learning environment in which the explicit curriculum is presented. It is composed of the following elements: the program's commitment to diversity; admissions policies and procedures; advisement, retention, and termination policies; student participation in governance; faculty; administrative structure; and resources. The implicit curriculum is manifested through policies that are fair and transparent in substance and implementation,

the qualifications of the faculty, and the adequacy and fair distribution of resources.
(CSWE, 2015, p. 14).

This definition gives a concise summary of the implicit curriculum as the learning environment, yet the implicit curriculum in social work education is still in its early stages of development and is therefore conceptually idiosyncratic to individual schools of social work (Holosko et al., 2010; Miller, 2013). The 2015 EPAS emphasizes the importance of transparency and fairness in policies and practices, as well as attention to the distribution of resources within social work schools (CSWE, 2015). This focus on issues such as fairness raises the question of the implicit curriculum's significant role in student learning and acculturation to the social work profession (Holosko & Skinner, 2009, cited in Miller, 2010; Inlay, 2003), now an issue at the forefront of social work education due to the changes to the 2008 standards and the EPAS emphasis on the implicit curriculum in social work education. Thus, it is helpful to consider the EPAS definition of the implicit curriculum alongside some other definitions that challenge and complicate the meaning of the implicit curriculum and its potential impact on student learning and outcomes. Distinct from the implicit curriculum in professions such as medicine, the implicit curriculum in social work education unfolds in the context of a profession that is expressly value-laden (Miller et al., 2011). This difference arguably means that the consistency and clarity of both the explicit and implicit curricula are profound. Within the U.S., the NASW social work code of ethics includes a commitment to social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, and social and political action (Workers, 2008). Thus, the implicit curriculum can play an important role in supporting the development of social workers' identity as ethical leaders by providing a learning environment that embodies our professional ethics. Social work shares similarities with fields such as nursing and education, praxis-based fields in which technical competence and

compliance with external standards and requirements are required. Unfortunately, over-focus on standards without careful attention to the climate and school culture can lead to a form of compliance without engagement, or what Rennert-Ariev calls “bureaucratic ventriloquism” (2008, p. 111). Social work education requires vigilant attention to the need for congruence between the professed values and practice, beginning with social work education.

Within the field of social work, frameworks for and assessments of the implicit curriculum are beginning to emerge. For example, Grady, Despard, Powers, and Naylor (2011) conducted the first study to quantify the 2008 EPAS, which call for schools of social work to assess the implicit curriculum. The study used a newly developed instrument, the Implicit Factors Survey, to examine community variables in the implicit curriculum in social work education. The authors explored six categories: Academics, Fieldwork, Community, Diversity, Faculty Advising, and Support Services. The study included questions about the overall safety and comfortableness of the school of social work environment, as well as the degree of welcome felt as a result of aspects of the physical building in which the school itself is housed; administrators’ and staff members’ responsiveness to students’ concerns; and opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities. The quantitative results consisted of responses about the school as a safe place, one in which the building was welcoming and where students felt they had opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities. While the study reported the Likert-type responses to these questions, they did not compare these findings to those of other variables to look for relationships among Sense of Community and other variables in the study, such as students’ experiences with Support Services or Faculty Advising.

The qualitative feedback provided by respondents about the community included the need for increased diversity, student integration, and issues with course scheduling.

Unfortunately, while the measures used in this survey do provide some clues regarding the factors that contribute to a sense of community (or lack thereof), without the use of validated measures, it is difficult to compare the role of community as it was examined in this study to the larger body of empirical literature on sense of community. In fact, the research article on the study does not provide any of the measures used, and the article does not demonstrate the use of any validated measures. Because general measures “that undergraduate programs have used to evaluate good practices” (Grady et al., 2011, p. 464) appear to be the only mention of the measures used, the efficacy of this study as a foundational framework for understanding elements of the implicit curriculum in social work education, particularly for graduate programs, appears to be limited. In addition, while the Grady et al. study represents a solid effort to respond to CSWE’s 2008 standards that suggest evaluation of the implicit curriculum through their Implicit Factors Survey, the study lacks a strong theoretical or conceptual framework to guide the questions, many of which seem to reflect program satisfaction rather than addressing critical challenges that students may experience as they engage with aspects of the implicit curriculum, from diversity in the classroom to advising in the field.

Miller (2010) notes that professional socialization is an integral aspect of social work education, but that it has not yet received significant systematic research attention. In his article, Miller presents a conceptual framework for understanding the professional socialization of social work students that accounts for the importance of the field experience, and pays careful attention to the role of the implicit curriculum in shaping social work education, and in turn, professional socialization. To capture the complexity of the professional socialization of social workers, Miller’s later study (2013) calls upon a framework of structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism—the structural functionalism to explain aspects of the explicit curriculum (such

as content) and the symbolic interactionism for the implicit curriculum (e.g., culture)—which includes three stages: pre-socialization, formal socialization, and practice after formal socialization. Building on this theoretical framework, Miller uses a purposive sampling strategy with 489 students in seven cohorts of social work students and alumni of a social work program to examine factors that predict the professional socialization of social workers. Outcomes of the process of professional socialization include attitudes, values, and professional identity. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine which predictors of professional socialization found in theoretical and other social work literature was statistically significantly related to professional socialization. The participants were invited to consider where social work values had the greatest impact on their learning. In this study, Miller finds that professional socialization is multidimensional, begins before formal social work education and extends beyond the educational context; socialization to the social work profession is a nested rather than merely linear process that starts before enrollment in formal social work education, continues during participation in a social work education program, and extends over the course of social work careers. Among the key findings, Miller finds that students in the sample who reported social work values were emphasized in their classes and not in their field placements were more committed to social justice (2013). This finding points to a critical aspect of the implicit curriculum; namely, while field education is the “signature pedagogy” (CSWE, 2015) of social work education, aspects of the explicit and implicit curriculum in classroom settings also play a critical role in the socialization of social work students.

Holosko et al. (2010) describe how an implicit curriculum was “developed” at one large, public Southern university. In the authors’ effort to establish this implicit curriculum, the focus was on values rather than competencies. The School of Social Work staff articulated a core set of

assumptions and values to guide the development of the implicit curriculum, created a glossary of terms to inform students about social work terminology, and organized a FAQ for BSW students that covers academic advising and field issues. While their framework for the implicit curriculum includes current knowledge as a component, one of the shortcomings of the study is the assumption that the school does not already have an implicit curriculum or environment in which current students are learning.

Petracchi and Zastrow, upon reviewing the 2008 EPAS standards, suggest different options in assessment, specifically tools such as course evaluations and exit surveys for students (2010). Holosko et al. (2010) outline a process to actually develop an implicit curriculum within a school of social work, while Grady et al. (2011) created their Implicit Factors Survey, which was piloted with a group of MSW students to assess students' understanding of four aspects of the implicit curriculum: diversity, community, faculty advising, and school support services. However, the Grady pilot study did not include empirically tested scales, so it is not possible to know whether the instruments are reliable and valid. In addition, the researchers did not test any relationships between aspects of the implicit curriculum and student outcomes.

More recently, Quinn and Barth (2014) have operationalized aspects of the implicit curriculum in the context of MSW distance education. They developed a survey that includes questions about demographics, diversity, faculty and administration, resources and student development. Their measures of diversity included Race–ethnicity, Status as a Traditional/Non-traditional student, and Gender. Faculty was operationalized as Faculty Training (to teach distance education courses) and Administrative Structures considered responsibilities of the distance education coordinator. These measures didn't examine students' interactions with faculty or administrators but focused on the mechanics of program development and delivery for

MSW distance education programs. The Student Development category refers to the following: 1) how online social work programs delivered program information and policies to students; 2) students' access to advisors via various forms of technology (e.g. email, Facebook, etc.); 3) use of technology in field work; and 4) the use of face-to-face interactions vs. virtual communication concerning issues of student retention and dismissal. In the EPAS document the implicit curriculum is cited as including,

the culture of human interchange; the spirit of inquiry; the support for difference and diversity; and the values and priorities in the educational environment, including the field setting, [that] inform the student's learning and development.

The implicit curriculum is as important as the explicit curriculum in shaping the professional character and competence of the program's graduates. Heightened awareness of the importance of the implicit curriculum promotes an educational culture that is congruent with the values of the profession and the mission, goals, and context of the program. (emphasis added; CSWE, 2015, p. 14).

According to this definition, student learning and development extends far beyond the mechanics of program administration to include the transmission of social work values, an exchange of ideas, and support for diversity in all its forms. This understanding is much more holistic and is also consistent with the extant literature on college student development. Student Development is a commonly used term in student affairs in higher education literature and practice (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Wren, 2010), defined as "the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her *developmental capabilities* [emphasis added] as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education" (Rodgers, 1990, p. 27). As defining and measuring aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education are emerging out of EPAS and subsequent

research efforts, it's important these efforts not be confined to the mechanics of program administration, but also extend to consider students' learning and development as central to understanding the impact of the implicit curriculum on student outcomes such as professional empowerment.

While a more complete discussion of the history of student development theory and practice is beyond the scope of the present study, Miller et al. (2011) also draw on this extant literature in their examination of critical thinking as a bridge between the implicit and explicit curriculum in social work education. They note that “the ability to think critically has been viewed as a developmental process” (Miller et al., 2011, p. 38), referring to the work of Baxter Magolda, a higher education researcher who theorizes four developmental domains of student learning. Whether teachers are facilitating critical thinking or professional empowerment among social work students, Miller et al. (2011) stress that it is important for social work educators to not only be aware of students' developmental stages (especially among BSW students), but also to facilitate students' movement through these stages to encourage critical thought and the ability to challenge personal biases within the context of the implicit curriculum.

The limitations of the above-mentioned studies together suggest that there is a significant need for ongoing attention to frameworks that orient schools of social work in their mission and identity, coupled with validated measures that capture the omnipresent but intangible aspects of the implicit curriculum. Rather than a focus on student satisfaction or program improvement, evaluation of the implicit curriculum in schools of social work will require operationalization of aspects of the implicit curriculum, as well as other conceptual and measurable constructs to support learning among diverse social work students. One such construct is sense of community. While consideration of sense of community is in its nascent stages in the context of schools of

social work, preliminary research has demonstrated that sense of community may mediate the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum and social work students' professional empowerment (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014). Therefore, sense of community ought to be considered as a possible bridge between the implicit curriculum and empowerment in the context of social work education.

Sense of Community

Sense of community has been described as an “emotion-laden” construct that “captures the complex and subtle social processes which lead to cohesive and supportive communities” (Cantillon, Davidson, & Schweitzer, 2003, p. 324). Sense of community has been found to be a mediator between variables in criminal justice, community psychology, education and social work research. Within the field of community psychology, sense of community is a key construct, as well as a value, one which is relied upon as a mechanism for increasing well-being in communities (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002). Sense of community plays a key role in healthy communities by enhancing community development (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Sense of community has been found to increase political participation (Anderson, 2009; Davidson & Cotter, 1986; Xu, Perkins, & Chow, 2010; Talo, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2013) and community participation (Brodsky, O'Campo, & Aronson, 1999; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Florin & Wandersman, 1984). Moreover, scholars agree that sense of community has a positive impact on both communities and the individuals whose lives are shaped by participation in those communities (Long & Perkins, 2007).

Yet, sense of community can be a difficult concept to operationalize; thus, a great deal of the literature to date on sense of community concerns itself with defining and measuring sense of community. McMillan and Chavis's (1986) sense of community definition and theory are widely

considered to be most deeply grounded in the psychology literature and hence are the most widely applied in psychological research (Wombacher et al., 2010). The sense of community theory and subsequent empirical validation by Chavis, Hogge, McMillan, and Wandersman (1986) resulted in a four-factor model of Sense of Community, comprised of the following components: Membership, Influence, Needs Fulfillment, and Emotional Connection.

Although Chavis et al.'s intent was to develop a theory and a measure of community that would be applicable across types of communities, subsequent studies have failed to replicate this four-factor structure of Sense of Community (see Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Long & Perkins, 2003; Obst & White, 2004; Proeschold-Bell, Roosa, & Nemeroff, 2006; Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005; Wombacher et al. 2010; Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008). In order to empirically validate McMillan and Chavis's theory of sense of community (1986), Chavis and colleagues developed the SCI (Sense of Community Index) based on the McMillan and Chavis model (Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990). Subsequent to McMillan and Chavis's Sense of Community scale, there have been efforts in the field to develop measures of sense of community that reconciles the problem of sense of community as a multidimensional construct with unidimensional measurement. The SCI was first published in the index of an article by Perkins et al. (1990) to provide a brief assessment of McMillan and Chavis' Sense of Community model. According to Peterson, Speer, and McMillan (2008), several studies have questioned the validity of the SCI and other sense of community measures (Chipuer & Pretty, 1999; Long & Perkins, 2003; Obst & White, 2004; Proeschold-Bell, Roosa, & Nemeroff, 2006; Tartaglia, 2006).

Consequently, Peterson, Speer and McMillan (2008) developed an eight-item Brief Sense of Community Scale that corresponds with the framework laid out by McMillan and Chavis

(1986). Peterson and colleagues used the Brief Sense of Community Scale to confirm McMillan and Chavis's theory and to test the validity of this measure. They provided empirical evidence for the multidimensional model of Sense of Community first proposed by McMillan and Chavis. This eight-item Brief Sense of Community Scale has been tested in a variety of settings as diverse as the German military, an Iranian community council, and in Azerbaijan, and the scale holds up empirically (Barati et al., 2012; Cheryomukhin & Peterson, 2014; Wombacher et al., 2010). These studies all provide support for the hypothesized multi-dimensional model of the Brief Sense of Community Scale.

Sense of Community as Mediator

In the context of community organizations, sense of community has been found to operate as a distinct empowering characteristic. Using the Community Organization Sense of Community Scale, Hughey, Peterson, Lowe, and Oprescu (2008) conducted a confirmatory factor analysis that demonstrates sense of community's role as a distinct catalyst of intrapersonal empowerment within organizations. Their findings suggest a strong need for organizations to attend to sense of community in the design of interventions to promote member participation and empowerment. This finding is relevant to schools of social work as organizations that are accountable for training students who will ultimately lead organizations with the aim of promoting participation and empowerment among the individuals and communities they serve.

According to the conceptual framework and assessment of the implicit curriculum in social work education proposed by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014), Sense of Community is a mediator between organizational characteristics and individuals' level of empowerment in a university setting. Peterson, Farmer and Zippay (2014) found that the diversity of faculty and staff in a school of social work actually predicts students' professional empowerment through

students' sense of community and feeling valued by the school. In that model, Sense of Community mediated 50% of the effect of faculty and staff diversity on students' professional empowerment. While this study does not explicitly address the role of racial and ethnic diversity of students in the empowerment process, the authors do recommend that future research investigate the role of Racial–ethnic Category and other demographic variables in student outcomes.

Table 1, organized by publication date, summarizes literature from the past 15 years in which Sense of Community has been found to mediate community factors and important individual outcomes such as empowerment. As Table 1 demonstrates, understanding Sense of Community as an important mediator in community and school contexts demonstrates efficacy and invites further inquiry into the ways that this important construct may be used to improve community members or students' experiences in and beyond the classroom setting.

[**Table 1.** Studies Demonstrating Sense of Community as Mediator]

Sense of Community and Diversity

There is debate among scholars about whether sense of community and diversity, two values of social work, are complementary or contrary values. Neal and Neal (2014) suggest that sense of community and a commitment to diversity are diametrically opposed, as the former relies on close personal ties with similar individuals, or homophily, and proximity, while the latter entails respect for differences that promote respect for diversity. Their model suggests that it would be highly unlikely, in a world where ties are formed by homophily and proximity, for members of a given community to experience both a sense of community and an experience of respectful diversity. Sense of community has been found to improve perceptions of belonging

(Sonn & Fisher, 1996), increase psychological well being (Pretty, Conroy, Dugay, Fowler, & Williams, 1996; Prezza, Amici, Roberti, & Tedeschi, 2001), and even increase participation in community life (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). However, the focus on community can also establish boundaries in which group members are similar to one another and those who are different are considered “other” (Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Townley, Kloos, Green, & Franco 2011). This tension becomes significant when one considers whether sense of community and diversity are not only inverse, but even more importantly, whether the sense of community mechanisms that support empowerment are also different for different subgroups of a population on the basis of factors such as racial–ethnic category, age, and gender.

However, schools present unique environments in which to examine both of these values. Schools of social work are designed to train professionals who will work in diverse communities. In addition, social workers strive to promote well being within individuals and communities (of which sense of community is a key component). As a result, social work schools can provide an important opportunity to explore the mechanisms by which sense of community and diversity can co-exist in these learning environments.

Berryhill and Bee (2007) have summarized findings that suggest psychological sense of community and racial climate on college campuses are commonly correlated, and a negative racial climate is associated with lower levels of psychological sense of community for Latino students. For Non-White students, Berryhill and Bee (2007) find that higher psychological sense of community was related to racial climate and being a student athlete. For White, non-Hispanic students, racial climate was not statistically significant.

In their 2011 article, Schreiner, Kammer, Primrose, and Quick examine the Thrive Quotient, a measure of students' ability to thrive in college based on a variety of institutional and intrapersonal factors including the institution's status (e.g. public vs. private), campus involvement, and students' sense of spirituality. They find that, across all ethnic groups, students' psychological sense of community was the only significant factor, and sense of community has the most significant impact on thriving at college with direct effects ranging from .56 (for Asian students) to .75 (for Latino students). Their path model also shows that student-faculty interaction has a direct effect on thriving for White, non-Hispanic, Asian, and African American students, but for Latino students, student-faculty interaction only has an indirect effect. Their research confirms previous findings that affirm the importance of sense of community for Latino college students' success (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Finally, their model finds that for White, non-Hispanic students, interaction with faculty has the strongest impact on their sense of community (as opposed to other factors such as campus activities, spirituality, or certainty of major).

Empowerment

Several researchers have examined organizational empowerment in ways that may be used to inform thinking about aspects of empowerment in this study and beyond. Using a multiple case study approach, Maton and Salem (1995) identify the following empowering characteristics of the organizations in their studies: belief systems, opportunity role structure, support systems, and organizational leadership. They define opportunity role structure as the availability of diverse roles within a given setting that allow individual growth and change, as well as the ability to actively participate to increase competencies, self-efficacy through skill-building, and contributing to goal-setting. In the empowering organizations they studied,

opportunity role structure includes a large number of roles for members, multifunctional or many opportunities for skill development and responsibility among members, and opportunities that are highly accessible to group members at all levels of the organization. Opportunity role structure is also found to increase empowerment of members by encouraging them to participate in various organizational functions and to assume multiple roles within an organization (Peterson & Hughey, 2002).

Spreitzer (1995), in a study of middle managers in nearly 400 Fortune 500 companies, finds a direct connection between individuals' feelings of empowerment and the empowering characteristics of the organization, such as lack of role ambiguity, wide supervisory roles, access to information, participatory power structures, and sociopolitical support from others at all levels of the organization. In a multiple case study of 27 social work agencies, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) find that information and power-sharing at all levels, including peer supervision and peer support among staff members, contributes to an overall sense of empowerment at an agency. Like Maton and Salem (1995), Gutiérrez et al. also find that a shared sense of philosophy or a shared belief in an empowerment approach creates conditions in which staff members can thrive. Similarly, the vision and leadership of the senior administration is a catalyst for staff to take positive risks and to commit to the empowerment approach adopted by the agency. These findings illustrate the importance of organizational context in the development of empowered members.

Exploring the connection between empowerment and individuals in an organization, Hardina (2005) notes that, within social work, there is a dual commitment to empowerment that involves empowering workers and also clients. Hardina identifies 10 attributes of "empowerment-oriented organizations" (p. 27). Among these attributes, the author explains that such organizations provide specific mechanisms for clients to participate in decision-making

processes, as well as including clients in program development, minimizing power differences between administrators, workers, and clients. Hardina specifically states that empowerment-oriented organizations work to empower their employees because this individual empowerment results in an increased sense of self-efficacy at work, which in turn makes employees more productive. Hardina also finds that agency leaders who are truly committed to the empowerment of staff and clients play a significant role in whether an organization is actually able to empower its members, exemplified by the leader's ability to create opportunities for participation among agency staff and beneficiaries. Finally, by helping clients and communities to gain access to political power, empowering organizations reduce feelings of alienation and improve the conditions for marginalized people and communities.

One of the key challenges in the empowerment literature, particularly within social work research, has been how to measure empowerment. This challenge is due, at least in part, to the reciprocal nature of empowerment, rooted in the individual but in relation to "processes and outcomes at other levels of analysis" in the social ecology (Christens, 2012, p. 115).

Consequently, empowerment does not have a single unified definition (Powell & Peterson, 2014). In this study, empowerment is measured through the Sociopolitical Control Scale, which contains two subscales, Leadership Competence and Policy Control, and refers to individuals' beliefs about their abilities in social and political spheres (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991).

Empowerment conceptualized as Sociopolitical Control

Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991) explore the theme of perceived control as an empowering outcome. They argue that perceived control is easily conceptualized as involving cognitive components as well as personality traits and motivational aspects. In order to clarify the confusion in previous research regarding the role of perceived control in sociopolitical

contexts, they propose a specific measure of perceived control within the context of an introductory undergraduate psychology class, cross-validated with a sample of community residents. Zimmerman (1989) had previously argued that sociopolitical control could be a key aspect of empowerment, as empowered persons may report a sense of control over their lives, yet specific empirical measures of empowerment had not yet been developed. To develop this measure, they conducted three studies: one to identify relevant items from the various domains (e.g. personality, motivational and cognitive); a second one to test the factor structure of the proposed measure of Sociopolitical Control; and a third to test the measure in a sample of community residents.

The results of Zimmerman and Zahniser's 1991 factor analysis of the Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS) determine that the construct SPCS includes two subscales, Leadership Competence and Policy Control. The former, Leadership Competence, refers to an individual's confidence in one's leadership skills. The latter, Policy Control, refers to one's sense of ability to influence policy decisions. Itzhaky and York (2003) have urged researchers to examine both subscales together to understand these different aspects of empowerment for each individual. Peterson, Lowe, Hughey, Reid, Zimmerman and Speer (2006) removed the negatively worded items in the Sociopolitical Control Scale and conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the items using two samples, a group of 316 residents in the Midwest and a community sample of 750 residents from a large Northeastern city in the U.S. They found that the two-factor model of the Sociopolitical Control Scale was valid and the revisions of negatively worded items improved model fit.

In the development of the Sociopolitical Control Scale, which contains the subscales Leadership Competence and Policy Control, Zimmerman and Zahniser specifically note that one

of the limitations of the SPCS is that it was developed using three studies that used only “White, non-Hispanic middle-class samples” (1991, p. 201). They also note that this reduces the validity of the scale, and thus the scale requires further testing in more diverse groups to ensure structural equivalence across diverse racial and ethnic groups (e.g. assuring that the concepts captured in the scale have the same dimensions across groups).

Since then, the Sociopolitical Control Scale has been tested in a variety of social contexts and geographic locations. Peterson, Peterson, Agre, Christens and Morton (2011) tested a version of the Sociopolitical Control Scale (SPCS-Y) with urban youth, a sample that was 55% Latino and 37% African American. Their study finds empirical support for the validity of the scale in a bi-dimensional model of SPC. As well, they find that Policy Control is an important factor in higher levels of neighborhood attachment. Wang, Chen and Chen adapted the Sociopolitical Control Scale for an urban Chinese community. This entailed testing additional original items designed to capture a Chinese concept of empowerment that includes “personality-oriented, self-motivated, and proactive control” (2011, p. 202) to increase community participation among citizens. This study also finds evidence for the reliability of the Sociopolitical Control Scale. In a study of 400 adults in Poland, Kaniasty and Jakubowska (2014) use Peterson, Lowe, Hughey, Reid, Zimmerman, and Speer’s (2006) Sociopolitical Control Scale—Revised as a measure of political self-efficacy. Their study yields support for the validity of the scale and also notes the importance of sociopolitical control or political self-efficacy as contributing factors to life satisfaction and personal well-being among their survey respondents. These findings from diverse communities and geographic locations suggest that the Sociopolitical Control Scale and Sociopolitical Control Scale—Revised have great utility as measures of empowerment at the individual level.

The Implicit Curriculum, Sense of Community and Empowerment

It appears that only one empirical study in social work has examined how the implicit curriculum impacts students' sense of professional empowerment. In their study of 423 MSW students at a school of social work in the Northeast, Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay (2014) propose a path model to predict students' professional empowerment (including students' sense of professional competence and identity) using four predictor variables (Faculty and Staff Diversity, Supportive Faculty, Opportunity Role Structure, and Access to Information) as well as three mediators (students' Sense of Community, Sense of Being Valued by the School, and Participation in Extracurricular Activities). They tested this path model to understand the impact of characteristics of the implicit curricula on students' professional empowerment.

The Sense of Community scale used in their study focuses on the Emotional Connection dimension of the overall construct of Sense of Community. The Cronbach's alpha for the Sense of Community scale used in this study was .94; the scale contained three items using a 7-point Likert scale with response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Dimensions of the construct Sense of Community include: 1) Needs Fulfillment, 2) Membership, 3) influence, and 4) Emotional Connection. The Sense of Community scale was a mediator and represented 8.4% of the variance in the factor analysis. The model accounted for 28% of the variability in students' Sense of Community. They found that Sense of Community had the strongest direct effect on students' professional empowerment. Diversity of the faculty and staff had a strong total effect on Sense of Community. The significant effect of Opportunity Role Structure on students' Sense of Community was direct and also had a standardized indirect effect of .12 through its effect on students' feeling that they were valued. Opportunity role structure and access to information had the strongest total effects on students' professional empowerment.

The Peterson, Farmer, Donnelly, and Forenza 2014 study examines the implicit curriculum or learning environment to understand more about differences in students' experiences. While the outcome variable of interest is professional empowerment (defined as students' sense of professional competence and identities as social workers), the study represents important empirical examination of measures designed to assess the features of the implicit curriculum identified in EPAS. Their pilot study focuses on four variables in the implicit curriculum: Supportive Faculty; Diversity of Faculty and Staff; Access to Information; and Opportunity Role Structure. Through a good model to data fit, they are able to demonstrate that the four dimensions are indeed related to students' professional empowerment.

After that pilot study had been completed, Peterson, Farmer, Donnelly, and Forenza then tested further characteristics of the implicit curriculum in both the academic and field placement settings (2014). The study, which employs a cross-sectional design, included 534 BASW and MSW students at a large public university in the Northeast. To measure the implicit curriculum, the researchers used four domains. First, they assessed students' perceptions of diversity of the faculty and staff. Then, they reviewed student development, including students' perception of support from staff, the extent to which students were involved in the school's decision-making processes, the adequacy of school-based extracurricular activities to meet students' needs, and the transparency of the school's policies regarding admissions and academic life. Further, they included students' perceptions of the faculty and the learning environment. Finally, the study reviewed resources to meet students' needs such as adequate classroom spaces and common areas for socializing.

Using latent profile analysis, the researchers found four different groups of students who could be identified based on their experiences with the school and field contexts. The four groups

included students with positive school and field environments (35.58%), students with positive school and negative field environments (10.67%), students who had negative school experiences, but positive field environments (42.13%), and students who experienced both school and field as negative environments (11.61%). The authors recommend that future studies include an examination of differences in student perceptions and outcomes with regard to race, gender, and other characteristics of individual students and programs (Peterson, Farmer, Donnelly, & Forenza, 2014).

The Effects of Demographic Factors on Empowerment

However, what remains to be understood is whether the aspects of sense of community that connect students' experiences with the implicit curriculum to their sense of empowerment is different for different groups of students, such as students with diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds. No prior research in the empowerment literature has specifically tested the moderator effect of Racial–ethnic Category. This is an important consideration because research in higher education suggests that Non-White students often have negative experiences with aspects of the implicit curriculum that adversely impact their learning experiences and, ultimately, limit their ability to flourish in the very contexts in which they should feel empowered as students (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013).

Researchers have investigated other moderators in the context of empowerment-related processes and outcomes, including social class (Christens, Speer & Peterson, 2011; Peterson & Hughey, 2002; Speer, Peterson, Armstead & Allen, 2013) and gender (Peterson & Hughey, 2004; Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino & Schneider, 2005). These research studies each provide insight into the critical differences that demographic variables such as gender, income, and class can have on intrapersonal empowerment.

Peterson and Hughey (2002) examined the interactional effects of organizational characteristics and socioeconomic status (SES) on empowerment. Participants included 146 members from two different faith-based organizations. Using hierarchical regression analyses, they find that SES is a significant predictor of empowerment; perceived organizational characteristics are more strongly linked to empowerment for members with lower SES. Recognizing the importance of context, their research findings strongly suggest that there is a need for organizational processes to attend to differences in members' life circumstances, fostering greater empowerment among all members, and particularly those with the possibility of greater need for support due to economic circumstances. Importantly, the authors point out that these results underscore the need for empowerment-related interventions that are tailored for participant characteristics.

In their 2013 study, Speer, Peterson, Armstead, and Allen also looked at the moderating effects of income on the relationship between organizational sense of community and empowerment. Participants were 562 randomly selected members in a national organizing initiative in five communities across the U. S. They found statistically significant differences among participation, gender, organizational sense of community, and empowerment variables based on the moderator of income. Attention to the role of income as a moderator, in addition to the role of gender in these empowerment processes, illustrates the importance of attending to moderator effects.

In the context of gender as moderator, Peterson and Hughey's 2004 study of randomly selected residents in an urban setting in the Northeastern U.S., examined gender differences in intrapersonal empowerment (measured as Perceived Leadership Competence). They discovered that community participation predicts intrapersonal empowerment for women with a higher

sense of community and for men with a lower sense of community. Importantly, their findings indicate that empowerment processes are not only multifaceted and complex, but also vary based on an individual's gender. Extending this study, Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino, and Schneider (2005) examined both the intrapersonal and interactional aspects of empowerment in a sample of 408 residents from a rural area in the Midwestern U.S. They used an abbreviated version of the Sociopolitical Control Scale (Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991) to measure intrapersonal empowerment. They find that gender has a significant main effect on perceived leadership competence, suggesting that gender plays an important role in explaining differences in individuals' experiences of processes related to empowerment. Speer, Peterson, Armstead and Allen found that among 562 participants in a national organizing effort, income moderated the mediated relationships between participation, gender, and sense of community on empowerment (2013).

In summary, a similar exploratory analysis, as was conducted by Speer et al. 2013, will be performed in this study to ascertain the moderating role of racial-ethnic category on the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum and empowerment, as those relationships are mediated by sense of community. As the research questions below indicate, the current study will examine the role of all aspects of sense of community, as defined by Peterson et al. (2008), as a mediator between the relationship between the implicit curriculum and students' professional empowerment and racial-ethnic category as a moderator of the impact of the implicit curriculum on social work students' professional empowerment as mediated by sense of community. In this study, empowerment is operationalized through the two subscales of the Sociopolitical Control Scale, Leadership Competence, and Policy Control.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study includes two central research questions and corresponding hypotheses, which are outlined below. These questions build on the findings of research by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014) regarding aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education, the role of sense of community as a mediator between these factors and students' professional empowerment, as well as the moderating role of Racial–ethnic Category in understanding how students may be differentially impacted by aspects of the implicit curriculum, requiring unique interventions to support their development as empowered learners and future leaders.

Research question 1: Do the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale mediate the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum (e.g. Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure) and empowerment, represented through two subscales, Leadership Competence and Policy Control?

H1-1: The four factors of the Brief Sense of Community Scale will mediate the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and students' professional empowerment, represented by the Leadership Competence (Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014).

H1-2: The four factors of the Brief Sense of Community Scale will mediate the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and students' professional empowerment, represented by the Policy Control subscale (Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay, 2014).

Because there is a paucity of literature to date that has examined the relationship between various aspects of the implicit curriculum and empowerment through the mechanisms of sense of community, the sub-hypotheses in this section are exploratory and based on extrapolations from literature on diverse students' experiences of thriving in college, as well as prior research in

community settings regarding the importance of demographic characteristics such as racial–ethnic category, class, and gender on the relationship between sense of community and empowerment (see Speer et al., 2013, for example).

H1-2a: The effect of Supportive Faculty on students’ professional empowerment (subscales Leadership Competence and Policy Control) will be mediated by Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales Emotional Connection and Needs Fulfillment.

H1-2b: The effect of Administrative Functioning on students’ professional empowerment (subscales Leadership Competence and Policy Control) will be mediated by Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales Membership, Influence, and Needs Fulfillment.

Research question 2: Do students’ racial-ethnic backgrounds moderate the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum and students’ professional empowerment, as it is mediated by students’ Sense of Community?

No prior research has tested Racial–ethnic Category as a moderator in the context of empowerment. Therefore, this study represents an exploratory analysis to see whether the path model outlined above operates differently for individuals in different racial-ethnic subgroups.

H2: Students’ racial-ethnic backgrounds will moderate the mediational relationships above.

H2-2a: For Non-White students, the relationship between Supportive Faculty and Leadership Competence will be mediated by the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale.

H2-2b: For Non-White students, the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and Empowerment will be mediated by the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale.

H2-2c: Supportive Faculty will have both a direct effect and indirect effect on White, non-Hispanic Students' sense of empowerment (Leadership Competence). Among White, non-Hispanic students, Supportive Faculty will have a significant direct effect and a significant indirect effect on Leadership Competence. Among non-White students, Supportive Faculty will have no direct effect on Leadership Competence.

H2-2d: Among White, non-Hispanic students, Administrative Functioning will have both a direct effect and indirect effect on Policy Control through the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale. Among non-White students, Administrative Functioning will also have both a direct effect and indirect effect on Policy Control through the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Description of the Parent Study

The parent study is an assessment of the implicit curriculum at a school of social work in the Northeastern United States as a result of that school's reaffirmation project, which was proposed during the school's most recent CSWE reaffirmation. Through this project, the school has been able to develop an empirically based understanding of the impact of the implicit curriculum on social work student outcomes.

Data collection. The parent study was developed in response to the *2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* for BASW and MSW programs (CSWE, 2008), and was designed to assess the implicit curriculum in the school of social work at this institution, with a combination of previously validated measures and measures that could be generalized for use in other schools (described in detail below). In this study, cross-sectional data were collected from a sample of BASW and MSW students (N = 557). The purpose of including both undergraduate and graduate students was to enhance the external validity of the research project (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014). Data were collected in March 2013 using paper and pencil surveys in BASW and MSW classes. The response rate for this survey was approximately 38% for the combined sample of BASW and MSW students.

Sample design. This cross-sectional survey was conducted as a census of the BASW and MSW students at this school of social work. Students had 20 minutes during class to complete the pencil and paper survey.

Identification of the Study Sample. This secondary data analysis draws on data collected in a school of social work at a large public university in the Northeastern United States in 2013. At

that time, all BASW and MSW students were invited to participate in the parent study, a program-wide study of the implicit curriculum. Table 2 presents the descriptive demographic information of the sample used in this study, including students' age, gender, race-ethnicity, enrollment status, and campus most attended. Students were asked about their racial-ethnic backgrounds, and were given the following options: Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, Caucasian or Other. Those who selected Other were invited to provide more information about that selection. This resulted in a sample that includes approximately 58% Caucasian students, 19% Black/African American students, 14% Hispanic students, and 5% Asian students. Approximately 4% of survey participants self-identified as Other in the Racial–ethnic Category. These demographic data are divided by BASW and MSW status, and include frequencies and percentages of each characteristic for the sample.

[**Table 2.** *Comparative Demographic Information for Sample vs. School Population*]

Measures

All of the measures used in the survey version of the parent study and to capture the data analyzed here include a phrase completion format, which was developed in order to avoid some of the challenges with Likert scales, such as the confounding of direction (agree/disagree) with intensity (strongly/not strongly) (Hodge & Gillespie, 2003, 2007). Similarly, phrase completion, unlike Likert scale formats, avoids the neutral or “neither agree or disagree” that can further confound survey responses (i.e., if the respondent selects the “neutral” response, are they undecided or is this selection meant to indicate some level of increasing intensity with regard to the scale response options?) (Hodge & Gillespie, 2007). In phrase completion, the respondent is presented with a phrase that introduces part of a concept, which is then completed by the selected

response option. Below, each scale used in the analyses is presented to demonstrate the phrase completion format and to show how each scale was coded.

Predictors

Factors pertaining to the Implicit Curriculum. The following three scales pertain to aspects of the Implicit Curriculum, or organizational characteristics, that could increase students' sense of community in the social work program. The parent study included questions addressing three domains of the implicit curriculum: Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure. The above-named domains will be assessed in this study.

Supportive Faculty. This scale uses a sentence completion format and contains four items that address the learning environment, including faculty support for students' overall success, students' use of research to inform practice, as well as professors to whom students feel they could go to with personal issues and who understand students' points of view. The Supportive Faculty scale uses a sentence completion format. Responses range from "not supportive of my success" to "very supportive of my success." The items are scored on a 1 to 7 scale, where a score of 7 means very supportive. When the four items are summed, the scores range from 6 to 28. In previous research, Supportive Faculty has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .71 (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014). In this study, $\alpha = .72$. The skewness = -0.624 and kurtosis = -0.483. The items that make up this scale along with their means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

[Table 3. Supportive Faculty Scale]

Administrative Functioning. This scale also contains 4 items that assess the role of the SSW administration in response to students' needs. The scale includes items about

administrative responsiveness, accessibility, and support for students through the learning environment. In addition, this scale measures students' perceptions of the degree to which they feel they can impact SSW policies. The scale uses a sentence completion format: *The SSW administration is _____ when students want to address a concern.* Response options range on a 7-point scale from "not accessible" to "easily accessible." When the four items are summed, the scores range from 4 to 28. Another example of a question from this scale is *The SSW Office of the Dean is _____ to issues that are important to me.* Response options again range on a 7-point scale from "very unresponsive" to "very responsive." Prior research (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014) has found this scale to have a Cronbach's alpha of .94, while in the current study, $\alpha = .82$. The skewness = -0.250 and the kurtosis = -0.239. The items that make up this scale along with their means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.

[**Table 4.** *Administrative Functioning Scale*]

Opportunity Role Structure. This three-item scale assesses students' perceptions of the extent to which the SSW offers extracurricular activities to meet their needs and the extent to which they were involved in the decision-making processes of student organizations. Response options in this sentence completion format scale range from "very few" to "a large number of" on a 7-point scale. *I am _____ aware of how I can be involved in the SSW student organizations.* Response options on this 7-point scale range from "almost never made aware" to "almost always made aware." And finally, *I feel like I _____ in the decision-making process about what activities the SSW student organizations will engage in.* Response options on the 7-point scale range from "cannot be very involved" to "can be very involved." When the three items are summed, the scores range from 3 to 21. In prior research, ORS has had a Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$ (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014) and in this study, $\alpha = .80$. The scale's skewness = -0.163

and the kurtosis = -0.631. The items that make up this scale along with their means and standard deviations are presented in Table 5.

[**Table 5.** *Opportunity Role Structure Scale*]

Mediator.

Sense of Community. The Sense of Community Scale used in this study includes eight items and is based on the Brief Sense of Community Scale developed by Peterson, Speer, and McMillan (2008). The scale includes four subscales that measure Needs Fulfillment, Membership, Influence, and Emotional Connection. Membership describes the feeling of belonging to a group with a shared history, common boundaries, sense of safety, and the sense of personal commitment to community life. Influence means that individuals can both make contributions to the decisions made collectively as well as be influenced by the group in one's own decision-making. Needs Fulfillment is the belief members have that their needs will be met as a result of membership in the community. Finally, Emotional Connection is based on past common experiences meant to strengthen social ties among community members (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008; Talo, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2013). The Brief Sense of Community Scale was designed to measure sense of community in a neighborhood context and so in the parent study of the implicit curriculum, the term "SSW" was used in lieu of "neighborhood." Response options ranged from "1" to "7," with "1" as the negative anchor (e.g., I cannot get what I need) and "7" as the positive anchor (e.g., I can get what I need). When the eight items are summed, the scores range from 9 to 56. In the study used to develop the Brief Sense of Community Scale, the Cronbach's alpha was .92 (M53.81, SD 5.79) (Peterson, Speer & McMillan, 2008). Other recent studies (Barati, Abu Samah, & Ahmad, 2012; Cheryomukhin & Peterson, 2014) have employed versions of the Brief Sense of Community Scale that have

Cronbach's alphas that range from .78 to .83.). In the current study, the reliability was $\alpha = .91$. For the subscales, reliability measures were as follows: Needs Fulfillment = .88; Membership = .91; Emotional Connection = .90; and Influence = .65. Table 6 outlines the changes to the wording of this scale. Each of the above subscales will be used as mediators in the analyses. The BSCS skewness = - 0.436 and the kurtosis = 0.030. The changes to the wording of the scale items are outlined in Table 6.

[**Table 6.** *Brief Sense of Community Scale (original and in this study)*]

Racial-ethnic Category (Moderator)

Students were asked about their racial-ethnic backgrounds, and were given the following options: Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, Caucasian or Other. Those who selected Other were invited to provide more information about that selection. For analysis purposes, White, non-Hispanic participants were coded as *0*. Black/African American, Hispanic, Asian, and self-identified "Other" racial ethnic participants were coded as *1*. This allowed for a dichotomous race-ethnicity moderator variable.

Dependent Variable

Empowerment. Empowerment is measured by the Sociopolitical Control Scale and its revised version, the SPCS-R (Peterson et al., 2006). The Sociopolitical Control Scale is comprised of two subscales, Leadership Competence and Policy Control. Peterson and colleagues cite a variety of sources that recognize sociopolitical control as individuals' beliefs about their abilities within the social and political systems that govern them, as well as individuals' abilities to organize groups, and to influence policy decisions in their respective communities (Itzhaky & York, 2003; Paulhus, 1983; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman &

Zahniser, 1991). The Sociopolitical Control Scale contains 17 items, 9 of which were revised in the Sociopolitical Control Scale-Revised to reverse negatively worded items. Revised items included, *I find it very easy to talk in front of a group*, *Most leaders in the SSW would listen to me*, and *Many activities in the SSW are important to participate in*. The original Sociopolitical Control Scale yielded coefficient alphas between .75 and .78 in a variety of field tests (Peterson, Lowe, Hughey, Reid, Zimmerman, & Speer, 2006). In a related study, the Sociopolitical Control Scale-Revised Leadership Competence subscale yielded an alpha of .78 and Policy Control had an alpha of .81 (Peterson et al., 2006). In the current study, the reliability figures are as follows: Policy Control $\alpha = .78$ (skewness = -0.051 and kurtosis = 0.177), and Leadership Competence $\alpha = .86$ (skewness = -0.600 and kurtosis = 0.361). When the 9 items of the Political Control Subscale are summed, the scores range from 4 to 63. When the 8 items of the Leadership Competence Subscale are summed, the scores range from 14 to 56. The items that make of this scale along with their means and standard deviations are presented in Table 7.

[Table 7. Sociopolitical Control (Empowerment) Scale]

Analytic Approach

SPSS Amos 23, the software program that was used in the analyses that follow, employs Maximum Likelihood estimation to manage missing data (Arbuckle, 2014). While this method means that it is not possible to obtain modification indices for a given model, it is possible to make changes to the proposed model and to compare fit between models using the Chi-square difference test in order to determine the best model fit. In order to answer the hypotheses of this study, several analyses were required and are outlined in the following paragraphs. They include Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Path Modeling, and Path Modeling with Multigroup Analysis.

Path Model.

To address the first research question, a path model, within the framework of structural equation modeling, was performed using SPSS Amos 23 (Arbuckle, 2014; Bryan, Schmiede, & Broaddus, 2007). Path modeling is a special case of structural equation modeling in which each variable in the model is directly observed or measured. This method is extremely useful in the context of a limited sample size, as is the case in this study, as path analysis allows for parsimonious testing without the need for large sample sizes (in contrast with structural equation modeling, which includes models with latent constructs and hence requires a larger sample size to provide meaningful results). In addition, because the path model uses observed variables, it is possible to obtain an acceptable participants-to-parameters ratio without the additional errors that are introduced with the use of a series of regressions to get the same results. Finally, the path model allows researchers to examine the total effects as well as the direct and indirect effects of variables simultaneously in a single model (Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014). This model will demonstrate the relationship between Sense of Community (measured by the Brief Sense of Community Scale) and conceptually relevant variables.

The relationships tested in this study are similar to previous empirical models that have demonstrated a significant relationship between sense of community and empowerment, involvement, and participation (Peterson, Speer, & Peterson, 2011). The path analysis predicted that some elements of the implicit curriculum (i.e. Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure) led to the four dimensions of Sense of Community, which in turn predicted empowerment (represented by Leadership Competence and Policy Control). The fit of the path model was analyzed using several commonly used and robust measures of fit: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index

(NFI), the Root Mean Square of Error Approximation (RMSEA), and the discrepancy Chi square (χ^2). Interpretation of the model using these fit indices includes the following guidelines for good model-to-data fit: CFI and TLI values greater than .95; RMSEA values below .05; and non-significant χ^2 values. Figure 2 illustrates the proposed path model that was tested using SPSS Amos 23:

[Figure 2. Path Model of the Implicit Curriculum's Impact on Students' Professional Empowerment as Mediated by Dimensions of Sense of Community]

Testing the Mediation Effect in the Path Model. Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) emphasize the need to test mediation effects, particularly to determine whether or not those effects are constant across different groups. Preacher and Hayes (2008) point out that there are over a dozen methods that may be employed in regression and structural equation modeling to test hypotheses about mediation. Two of the most common methods for testing mediation in models are the “causal steps strategy” and the “product-of-coefficients” approach, also known as the Sobel test. According to the causal steps strategy, proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation is present when the following relationships are intact: 1) the independent variable accounts for significant variability in the mediator; 2) the independent variable accounts for variation in the dependent variable; 3) the mediator accounts for significant variability in the dependent variable when controlling for the independent variable; and 4) the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases significantly when the mediator and independent variable are entered simultaneously as predictors of the dependent variable.

However, other researchers argue that a significant total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is not required for mediation to occur (Preacher & Hayes,

2008). Rather than focusing on the individual paths, the Sobel test and others like it focus instead on the product of the pathways from the IV (a) to the mediator and from the mediator to the DV (b), with the understanding that this represents the difference between the total and direct effects, and is achieved by calculating the ratio of pathways ab to its standard error. If the p value that is computed for this ratio is significant, there is support for mediation. Unfortunately, this method relies on a standard normal distribution, which is generally only evident in large samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

For simple mediation, Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes (2007) suggest that the “distribution of the product” strategy is the most effective for determining significance and confidence intervals in structural equation models. However, if the sample size is not large enough, they recommend the use of bootstrapping to assess the significance of indirect effects in a model. In fact, MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West and Sheets (2002) and MacKinnon, Lockwood and Williams (2004) assessed Type I errors in the distribution of the product approach, bootstrapping, the casual steps approach, and the Sobel test and found that the former two maintained higher power and more reasonable Type I error rates than either the causal steps approach or the Sobel test. Unlike the “distribution of the product” method, bootstrapping uses a resampling strategy and does not assume normality in the distribution of the sample. In addition, because there is not an assumption of symmetry in the sampling distribution, the confidence intervals (CIs) can be used in hypothesis testing; when 0 is outside of the α level of significance, the null hypothesis of no indirect effect is rejected (Preacher et al., 2007).

MacKinnon et al. (2002) examined 14 different tests of mediation and found that the Test of Joint Significance (TJS) provides the best balance between statistical power and the threat of Type I error. This straightforward test of significance in mediation effects entails reviewing the

regression results of the coefficients of the paths from the IV to the mediator and from the mediator to the DV (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei & Russell, 2006). When both coefficients are statistically significant, this indicates a significant indirect effect (e.g. mediation). Mallinckrodt et al. (2006) suggest that the TJS may actually perform better than bootstrapping because, depending on the population parameters, errors are likely when the indirect effect's component paths are not equal to zero in the sample data. As a result, bootstrapping may result in elevated Type I errors, whereas the TJS does not rely on rejecting the null hypothesis when the pathways from the IV to the mediator and/or from the mediator to the DV are not significant.

Recent research (Leth-Steensen & Gallitto, 2015) has raised concerns about even bias corrected bootstrapping approaches to test mediation, as programs such as SPSS Amos provide only bias corrected confidence intervals for total indirect effects rather than for specific indirect effects. In their simulation of a structural equation model representing two different hypothetical populations, the authors find that TJS is both more parsimonious than bias-corrected bootstrapping (as it only requires the researcher to examine the model fit) and less prone to Type I error. However, Valente, Gonzalez, Miočević, and MacKinnon (2015) have challenged Leth-Steensen and Gallitto's findings because the latter tested the significance of mediation effects in their structural equation model using the bias-corrected bootstrap standard error instead of the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals, which is the standard approach to testing mediation with this method. Tests of mediation that rely on the standard normal distribution have less power than tests that do not do so (Valente et al., 2015). In addition, the mediation effect in the model may be impacted by whether the a and b path coefficients are correlated. They found that bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were more powerful than TJS, but also had higher Type I error rates. They recommend selecting a method to test mediation that accounts for

possible correlation between the a and b pathways, and also caution that care must be taken when using bootstrap methods such as the bias-corrected confidence intervals to assess mediation effects under the following conditions: 1) when either the a or b path is small; 2) either a or b path equal zero and the sample size is greater than 500; OR when 3) either the a or b path is moderate or large, the other path is zero, and the sample size is less than 500 (Valente et al., 2015; see p. 4 for discussion).

Yet, because of these complex parameters, lack of statistical power and Type I error rates associated with bootstrapping, the TJS remains a more parsimonious test of mediation (Krause, Serlin, Ward, Rony, Ezenwa, & Naab, 2010). Therefore, TJS was used to test the mediation effects in the path model examined in this study.

Multigroup Analysis. Once the path model was examined, a multigroup analysis was conducted in SPSS Amos 23 (Arbuckle, 2014). The purpose of the multigroup analysis was to determine whether the mediating role of Sense of Community in the context of the implicit curriculum's impact on students' levels of empowerment is the same across different ethnic and racial groups. The multigroup analysis was conducted in SPSS Amos 23 using the fit indices described in the path model analysis, with an addition of the Chi-square difference test to determine whether the multigroup model would be significantly different from the baseline model.

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects in the Multigroup Model. A further examination of the decomposition of effects in this model may elucidate their strength (Alwin & Hauser, 1975). Because the strength of effects can be difficult to determine, it is sometimes helpful to understand the difference between a variable's indirect effect and total effect; a ratio of these effects may be used (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). Hayes (2009) argues persuasively that when scales lack inherent quantitative meaning, standardization of effects is irrelevant. Therefore, unstandardized estimates were used in this study to calculate effect sizes.

Missing Data Analysis

To address questions about missing data, a Missing Values Analysis was conducted in Amos 23. Missing data analysis demonstrated that 196 cases contained missing data. Of the 557 total cases in the dataset, 31 had responses that include 5% or more missing data. Missing data may be missing at random (MAR), missing completely at random (MCAR), or missing not at random (MNAR). MAR is when the missing data for a given variable differ from observed scores on that variable by chance (and thus does not depend on unobserved data). If this is true and the absence of the data for the given variable is unrelated to any other variable in the dataset, then the missing values are considered MCAR (Kline, 2005). In contrast, MNAR data depends on unobserved variables (Graham, 2009). While researchers may consider MAR and MCAR missing data as "ignorable," MNAR data are not ignorable because the presence of MNAR missing data results in biased parameter estimates (Graham, 2009; Kline, 2010).

In order to determine whether the missing data were missing at random (MAR), missing completely at random (MCAR), or not missing at random, Little's MCAR test was used. The Little MCAR's test found that the Chi-square was significant ($\chi^2 = [df = 1365] 1614.051, p = .000$). Upon closer inspection, it became clear that the largest pools of missing data were related

to age and the number of semesters enrolled (see Table 8 below for item non-response rates), two variables that were not specifically entered into the path model and to which participants may have chosen not to respond due to students not wishing to share their ages and due to confusion about the question (e.g., how to calculate the number of semesters a student has been enrolled).

[**Table 8.** *Item Non-response Rate Totals*]

There are a variety of methods for dealing with missing data. According to Graham (2009), “modern” missing data procedures include 1) the EM algorithm 2) multiple imputation and 3) maximum likelihood (FIML) methods. He points out that EM does not provide standard errors, making it a poor choice for hypothesis testing. Multiple imputation requires multiple random draws from the sample population; because this is not possible in a single sample, the error variance that is lost in single imputation must be addressed either by using bootstrap procedures or data augmentation to simulate random draws and avoid lack of variance in the regression equation used in a single draw (Graham, 2009). In contrast, FIML methods address missing data, parameter estimation, and estimate standard error in a single step. Statistical software packages, including SPSS Amos 23, are equipped with technology that facilitates use of this method. As such, in this study, missing data was addressed using procedures of SPSS Amos 23 program software, which utilize a maximum likelihood estimation method.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter summarizes the results of the statistical analyses performed to determine the hypothesized relationships among key aspects of the implicit curriculum in social work education, students' sense of community, and their resulting personal empowerment in a sample of BASW and MSW students at a large public university. This chapter also includes a path model to examine the mediating role of Sense of Community, and a multigroup path analysis to examine differences among students' experiences of the implicit curriculum, sense of community and empowerment on the basis of race-ethnicity.

Preliminary Analysis

Study Sample vs. School Population

Table 9 outlines the differences and similarities between the sample and the population of students at this school of social work. To determine whether the study sample was proportionate to the population, several Binomial Tests of Equality and t-tests were performed. The Binomial Tests were conducted in lieu of t-tests because the data for two key categories –gender and race – were categorical and nominal as opposed to continuous and interval or ratio, which are required assumptions for t-tests (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2011). Age can be treated as continuous and therefore was analyzed using t-tests.

[Table 9. *Comparative Demographic Information for Sample vs. School Population*]

Because the BASW and MSW program administrators provided the demographic data for this population of social work students separately, the data reflect this division by program. Therefore, the reports for age, gender, and race are further divided into BASW and MSW student groups. Among BASW students in the sample, the category Gender was not significantly

different from the population ($p = .228$). In order to match the Racial–ethnic Category to fit the path model, which uses a dichotomous Racial–ethnic Category variable due to the limitations of the participants to parameters ratio, the Binomial Test of the dichotomous race variable did show a slightly significant difference between the BASW sample and the BASW population. The binomial test indicated that the proportion of non-White students in the sample was .41 versus the population proportion of .56 ($p = .000$). Regarding BASW students' age, the program director provided students ages in ranges (such as “under 25”) rather than providing a complete list of each student's discrete age, so a mean age for the population could not be calculated.

Among the subsample of MSW students, the variable Gender was significantly different than the MSW population ($p = .000$), with 83.4% of the sample identifying as female and 16.6% as male while in the MSW population, 89.7% are female and 10.3% are male. The binomial test indicated that the proportion of female students in the sample was .834 versus the population proportion of .834 ($p = .000$). Racial–ethnic Category was dichotomized into White, non-Hispanic and Non-White, consistent with the structure of the Racial–ethnic Category moderator in the path model. This aspect of the sample was also significantly different than the population ($p = .001$). While 45% of MSW students in the school's population are non-White, only 37% of the sample data included non-White MSW students as respondents. Among the MSW student population, the mean age is 34. Only the mean age of the MSW population was provided, which is reflected in Table 9 (as opposed to the age ranges presented in the BASW population information in the table). This is significantly different than the mean age of MSW students in this sample ($t = -8.615 [371]$, $p = .000$), which was 30 years of age.

Structure of the Brief Sense of Community Scale

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). To provide support for the research questions, a CFA was performed using SPSS Amos 23 to test the four-factor Brief Sense of Community Scale to determine whether the model indices indicated an acceptable fit to the data in this sample of social work students. The Brief Sense of Community Scale has been empirically investigated previously in a variety of settings to determine whether the scale, originally developed by Peterson, Speer, and McMillan (2008), is valid in different settings (Barati et al., 2012; Cheryomukhin & Peterson, 2014; Wombacher et al., 2010). Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c illustrate the different hypothesized Sense of Community models, employing the Brief Sense of Community Scale items.

[**Figure 3a.** *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Unidimensional Model*]

[**Figure 3b.** *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Multidimensional Model*]

[**Figure 3c.** *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Second Order Model*]

Table 10 presents the fit indices for the three models tested. As Table 10 demonstrates, the four-factor solution (Figure 3b) for the Brief Sense of Community Scale provides a better fit to the data than the single factor solution (Figure 3a) or the second order solution (Figure 3c). In fact, the non-significant p-value in the four-factor model is a strong indicator of excellent model fit. In addition, the NFI and the CFI were above .90 for Model 2, indicating a strong model fit to the data, while Model 1 has NFI and CFI scores in the .7 range, a marginal fit to the data. The

RMSEA and the Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) follow the same trajectory. The higher ECVI scores in Model 1 reflect a poorer fit to the data, scores that improved greatly in Model 2. RMSEA scores below .05 show an excellent model fit. Additionally, the 90% Confidence Intervals (CI's) indicate significant differences among the three models. The CI's for the ECVI and RMSEA in Model 1 and Model 3 do not overlap at all with those in Model 2, which indicates that these models provide a different fit to the data. Model 2, which maintains significantly lower CI values than Model 1 or Model 3, is a much better fit to the data.

[**Table 10.** *Overall Fit Statistics for the Brief Sense of Community scale (BSCS) Confirmatory Factor Analyses*]

Multicollinearity

To explore the possibility of multicollinearity among the predictor variables, Leech et al. (2011) suggest beginning with testing correlations among key variables of concern. Values with high correlations (above .60) may indicate possible issues with multicollinearity (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2011). Additionally, Kline (2005) and Field (2005) separately recommend conducting squared multiple correlations in several multiple regressions, alternating one independent (predictor) variable as the dependent (criterion) variable and leaving all other independent variables as predictors. When the R^2 for a given variable is greater than .90, there is an issue with multicollinearity (Kline, 2005). It may also be helpful to review the Eigenvalues in the regression output, with Eigenvalues close to 1 being preferable, as well as the Condition Index, which should be under 15 (15–30 indicates possible or weak collinearity and scores above 30 indicate problematic collinearity) (Leech et al., 2011). Additional collinearity diagnostics include the variance inflation factor (VIF) with a cut-off value of 10 and the tolerance statistic,

for which values below .2 are of concern (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990, as cited in Field, 2005; Myers, 1990).

In the current study, the variables that may have problems with multicollinearity are the independent variables (Administrative Functioning, Faculty Support, and Opportunity Role Structure) and the mediator (the Brief Sense of Community Scale). To address this concern about possible multicollinearity, correlations and several multiple regression models were run. The results appear in Tables 11 and 12. Table 11 includes correlations among the independent variables and the mediator. Because the Brief Sense of Community Scale is correlated with both the Supportive Faculty Scale and the Administrative Functioning Scale at levels above .60, this suggests possible multicollinearity and requires additional analysis in the form of multiple regression.

[Table 11. *Correlations Between Three Independent Variables and Mediator*]

Table 12 shows the results of the multiple regressions conducted by alternating the various scales of concerns through the regression as dependent variables. The R^2 values for each model are well below the .90 cutoff indicated by Kline (2005); the VIF scores are all well below 10 (Field, 2005); and the tolerance statistic never fell below the .2 threshold of concern (Menard, 1995, as cited in Field, 2005). However, the Eigenvalues were weak (with stronger values closer to 1) and the all of the Condition Indexes ranged between 15.1 and 18.2 at the high end of each set of values. These figures suggest that while the conceptually related scales Administrative Functioning, Supportive Faculty, and the Brief Sense of Community are strongly correlated, it is not likely that there is problematic multicollinearity that would ultimately interfere with analysis.

[**Table 12.** *Results of Multiple Regressions to Test for Multicollinearity Among Key Predictors in the Model*]

Path Model: Mediation

Figure 4 presents the path model tested in this research study. In order to establish a baseline model using a theory-testing approach, a fully saturated model was specified. Non-significant pathways were reviewed and based on the highly non-significant beta weight and the lack of any theorized relationship between Administrative Functioning and Leadership Competence, this pathway was removed and resulted in an excellent model fit ($\chi^2 [1] = 0.013$, $p = .909$, NFI = 1, CFI = 1, RMSEA = .000). Subsequent adjustments of the model based on removal of additional pathways actually worsened the model fit, as evidenced by the change in χ^2 and decrease in both NFI and CFI scores. As Loehlin (2004) emphasizes, it is not necessary to eliminate from the model every single non-significant pathway. Therefore, all remaining non-significant pathways were retained in the final model fit. The final model accounted for 11% of the variance in Leadership Competence and 40% of the variance in Policy Control, 30% of the variance in the Brief Sense of Community subscale Emotional Connection; 57% of the variance in the Brief Sense of Community subscale Needs Fulfillment; 45% of the variance in the Brief Sense of Community subscale Membership and 43% of the variance in the Brief Sense of Community subscale Influence. Figure 4 shows the path coefficients with statistically significant beta weights.

[**Figure 4.** *Standardized Parameter estimates for the Final Path Model.*]

Based on previous research, this study hypothesized that the four factors of the Brief Sense of Community Scale would mediate the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure

and both empowerment subscales, Leadership Competence and Policy Control. There were significant pathways from Opportunity Role Structure to all of the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales, but the results of the path model indicate that only the Brief Sense of Community subscale Influence mediated the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and Policy Control ($\beta = .116, p < .001$). This finding suggests that there was a positive connection between students' opportunities to be involved, their sense of being able to have influence within the school of social work community, and the outcome of being empowered to impact the policy decisions made at the school.

It was hypothesized that the effect of Supportive Faculty on students' professional empowerment, represented by the subscales Leadership Competence and Policy Control, would be mediated by the Brief Sense of Community subscales Emotional Connection and Needs Fulfillment. This hypothesis was not supported by the model, which showed that only the Brief Sense of Community subscale Influence mediated the relationship between Supportive Faculty and only one of the empowerment subscales, Policy Control ($\beta = .060, p < .001$). Students who perceive faculty as creating a learning environment that is supportive of their success; as encouraging their use of research to inform their practice; and as understanding their point of view reported having greater ability to influence others and what happens at the school of social work, and tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Policy Control Subscale. In other words, Supportive Faculty leads to students feeling that they have influence in their environment, which in turn leads them to perceive that they can affect policies and decision-making at the school.

This study hypothesized that the relationship between Administrative Functioning and students' professional empowerment (represented by the subscales Leadership Competence and

Policy Control) would be mediated by Brief Sense of Community subscales Membership, Influence, and Needs Fulfillment. However, only the Brief Sense of Community subscale Influence mediated the relationship between Administrative Functioning and Policy Control ($\beta = .134, p < .001$). Thus, students who experienced positive administrative support felt a sense of ability to influence the school's environment and had higher levels of empowerment evidenced through the positive Policy Control outcome variable. In addition, Administrative Functioning had a direct effect on Policy Control ($\beta = .171, p < .001$). This finding suggests that those students who scored higher on the measure assessing Administrative Functioning reported that they are able to affect policies and decision-making at the school. While only the Brief Sense of Community Scale Influence subscale served as a mediator between the Implicit Curriculum predictor variables Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure, and the outcome variable Policy Control, all of the pathways from these predictor variables to each of the subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale were statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Testing the Mediation Effect in the Path Model

As noted in the Analytic Approach section, TJS was used in this study to test the mediation effects in the path model examined in this study. Pathways from all of the independent variables (Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure) to the Brief Sense of Community Scale Influence subscale were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ and the pathway from the mediator Influence to Policy Control was also significant at the $p < .001$ level, indicating the presence of mediation in the model.

Path Model: Moderated Mediation

To test whether or not race moderated the relationships among the variables in the model,

this study compared a multigroup model in which all parameters were constrained to have an equal value across racial groups (White, non-Hispanic [N=314] vs. non-White [N= 221]) ($\chi^2[27] = 43.854, p = .021; CFI = .993, NFI = .982, RMSEA = .034$) and an unconstrained model in which parameter estimates were allowed to differ across the groups ($\chi^2[2] = 1.103, p = .576; CFI = .1.000, NFI = .1.000, RMSEA = .000$). Model comparison demonstrated that the unconstrained model was a better fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2 = 42.752; \Delta df = 25; p = .015$) indicating that racial-ethnic groups had differences in the hypothesized connections among aspects of the implicit curriculum, sense of community, and empowerment.

Figure 5 shows the parameter values for both racial-ethnic groups; the values indicated are unstandardized regression weights because the comparison is across racial-ethnic groups (White, non-Hispanic vs. non-White) and groups may have different variances (Kline, 2005).

[Figure 5. Path diagram for multigroup structural equation model of White, non-Hispanic students (N = 314) (indicated by numbers in parentheses) and non-White Students (N = 221).]

This study hypothesized that students' racial-ethnic backgrounds would moderate the relationships in the path model, and this hypothesis was confirmed by differences in the strength of pathways in the model. This study first hypothesized that for non-White students, the relationship between Supportive Faculty and Leadership Competence would be mediated by the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale. The results of the path analysis showed that this relationship between Supportive Faculty and Leadership Competence among non-White students was mediated only by two of the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales: Emotional Connection ($\beta = .134, p < .001$) and Influence ($\beta = .078, p < .001$). Non-White students who perceived that faculty created a learning environment that was supportive of their success,

encouraged their use of research to inform their practice, and understood their point of view reported feeling emotionally connected to others in the school and having greater ability to influence others and what happens in the school of social work, and also tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Leadership Subscale. In other words, Supportive Faculty leads to students feeling that they have influence in their environment, which in turn, leads them to perceive that they have greater leadership competence.

The hypothesis that Supportive Faculty would have both a direct effect and indirect effect on White, non-Hispanic students' sense of empowerment represented by the subscale Leadership Competence was only partially supported. For White, non-Hispanic students, Supportive Faculty did have a direct effect on Leadership Competence (which was not the case for non-White students) ($\beta = .223, p < .001$). The direct effect suggests that White, non-Hispanic students with more positive appraisal of the support they received from faculty had a greater sense of their leadership skills and abilities. However, there was no indirect relationship between Supportive Faculty and Leadership Competence for White, non-Hispanic students.

In addition, the relationship between Supportive Faculty and Policy Control was mediated by the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Influence for non-White students only. Non-White students who perceived that faculty created a learning environment that was supportive of their success, encouraged their use of research to inform their practice, and understand their point of view reported having greater ability to influence others and what happens in a school of social work also tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Policy Control Subscale. In other word, Supportive Faculty leads to students feeling that they have influence in their environment, which in turns, leads them to perceive that they can affect policies and decision-making at the school.

Relatedly, this study hypothesized that for non-White students, the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and the empowerment subscales Leadership Competence and Policy Control would be mediated by the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale. In fact, only the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Emotional Connection mediated the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and Leadership Competence for non-White students ($\beta = .035, p < .001$). Therefore, non-White students with higher scores on Opportunity Role Structure had a greater sense of Emotional Connection to the school community that resulted in a positive sense of their leadership skills and abilities, operationalized through the Leadership Competence subscale of Empowerment.

This study further hypothesized that Administrative Functioning would have both a direct effect and indirect effect on Policy Control through the four subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale for both groups of students. In fact, Administrative Functioning had a direct effect on Policy Control for White, non-Hispanic students only ($\beta = .190, p < .001$). This finding means that White, non-Hispanic students who perceived the school's administration to be responsive, accessible, and supportive reported higher Policy Control scores. This direct relationship between Administrative Functioning and Policy Control was non-significant for non-White students.

As noted above, for non-White students, the effect of Administrative Functioning on Policy Control was indirect only, mediated by Influence. This finding means that non-White students who perceived the school's administration to be responsive, accessible, and supportive reported having greater ability to influence others and what happens in school of social work tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Policy Control Subscale. In other words, Administrative Functioning leads to students feeling that they have influence in

their environment, which in turns, leads them to perceive that they can affect policies and decision-making at the school.

The Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Influence mediated the relationship between Opportunity Role Structure and Policy Control for both groups of students. This finding suggests that both non-Hispanic Whites and non-White students who are aware of the extracurricular activities within the school and how they can be involved in the school's student organization and involved in determining what activities the student organization will engage in report having greater ability to influence others and what happens in the school of social work and tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Policy Control Subscale. In other words, Opportunity Role Structure leads to students feeling that they have influence in their environment, which in turn leads them to perceive that they can affect policies and decision-making at the school. Another important pathway for all students in the multigroup model was the indirect pathway from Administrative Functioning to Policy Control through the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales Influence. For White, non-Hispanic and non-White students, the indirect path from Administrative Functioning to Influence and then to Policy Control was positive and statistically significant at the .001 level. This finding means that both groups of students who perceived the school's administration to be responsive, accessible, and supportive reported having greater ability to influence others and what happens in school of social work and tended to have higher scores of empowerment, specifically on the Policy Control Subscale. In other words, Administrative Functioning leads to both groups of students feeling that they have influence in their environment, which in turn, leads them to perceive that they can affect policies and decision-making at the school. Table 13 provides a summary of the significant pathways found in the mediational path model and the moderated mediational path model.

[**Table 13.** *Summarizing the Significant Pathways Found in the Mediation Path Model and the Moderated Mediation Path Model*]

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects in the Multigroup Model

As discussed in the Analytic Approach, examining the decomposition of effects in the model is way to understand the difference between a variable's direct, indirect effect and total effect using a ratio for comparison (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). Table 14 presents an analysis of the effects shown in Figure 5. The table includes direct effects, as well as indirect effects, and a ratio of the indirect to total effects. In addition to the direct effects, Table 14 shows the computation of indirect effects (the product of the path from the predictor variable to the mediator and from the mediator to the outcome variable) and total effects (the sum of the direct and indirect effects for each significant set of pathways in the model). As Table 14 indicates, there are very few pathways in the model that contain both direct and indirect effects for each group.

[**Table 14.** *Decomposition of Effects by Group*]

As Table 14 shows, Opportunity Role Structure had no significant effect on Leadership Competence for White, non-Hispanic students, but for non-White students, Opportunity Role Structure had an indirect effect on Leadership Competence through the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Emotional Connection. For both groups of students, 100% of the effect of Opportunity Role Structure on Policy Control was through the indirect effect Opportunity Role Structure had on the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Influence.

Administrative Functioning had no direct or indirect effects on Leadership Competence in either group of students. Among White, non-Hispanic students, 46% of the effect of

Administrative Functioning on Policy Control was indirect through the Brief Sense of Community Scale Influence subscale. This is the only relationship in the model that presents both direct and indirect effects from a predictor variable to an outcome variable. In contrast, among non-White students, 100% of the total effect of Administrative Functioning on Policy Control was indirect through the Brief Sense of Community Scale Influence subscale.

The total effect of Supportive Faculty on Leadership Competence was a direct effect for White, non-Hispanic students only. This was the only set of variables that had only a direct effect between the criterion variable and the outcome variable in the entire model and across both groups of White, non-Hispanic and non-White students. Among non-White students, 100% of Supportive Faculty's effect on Leadership Competence was indirect via the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Emotional Connection. Supportive Faculty had no effect on Policy Control among White, non-Hispanic students. Among non-White students, Supportive Faculty's effect on Policy Control was only indirect through the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscale Influence.

It is important to note that among non-White students, five of the pathways in the model showed criterion variables with only indirect effects on outcome variables. In contrast, among White, non-Hispanic students, only one pathway, from Opportunity Role Structure to Policy Control, showed a 100% indirect relationship. Meanwhile, direct effects were only significant in two pathways, both among White, non-Hispanic students. These differences in effect type will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The 2015 CSWE Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards require schools of social work to assess the implicit curriculum. Although it's understood that the implicit curriculum contributes to social work students' professional development, no standardized measures currently exist to benchmark the impact of the implicit curriculum's role in shaping students' social work competence and professional character. This study extends the framework proposed by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014), which considers the implicit curriculum's impact on students' professional empowerment through the mediator Sense of Community. Extending this framework to include all subscales of the Brief Sense of Community Scale and the moderator Race-ethnicity, the present study operationalized aspects of the implicit curriculum as Administrative Functioning, Faculty Support, and Opportunity Role Structure. By looking at all subscales (e.g. Membership, Influence, Needs Fulfillment, and Emotional Connection) of the Brief Sense of Community Scale, the current study was able to investigate more deeply the potential role of sense of community in mediating the relationship between these aspects of the implicit curriculum and the outcome variable of students' professional empowerment. For the sample studies in the present study, aspects of the implicit curriculum were associated with students' professional empowerment directly and through the mediator Sense of Community. Students' professional empowerment was operationalized using the Sociopolitical Control Scale – R, and included students' beliefs about their ability to take on leadership within the school and to influence policies and practices in the school. Results of both the mediational path model and the multigroup path model demonstrated a good fit to the data in this sample.

Findings from the path models confirmed the hypothesis that Sense of Community mediates aspects of the implicit curriculum's impact on students' professional empowerment. Specifically, the Brief Sense of Community Scale subscales Influence and Emotional Connection were important mediators. Influence was the only subscale that was statistically significant as a mediator in the meditational path model, while both Influence and Emotional Connection were statistically significant mediators in the multigroup model, with Influence acting as a mediator for both groups of students and Emotional Connection serving as a mediator for non-White students. Influence means that individuals can both make contributions to the decisions made collectively as well as be influenced by the group in one's own decision-making. Emotional Connection is based on past common experiences meant to strengthen social ties among community members (Peterson et al., 2008; Talo, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2013). In Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay's 2014 study, they also found that the Emotional Connection subscale was similarly positively related to the outcome variable of students' professional empowerment.

Findings from the path model indicated that, among the characteristics of the implicit curriculum included in this study, Administrative Functioning and Supportive Faculty had the strongest total effects on students' professional empowerment for both groups. However, there were significant differences in the type of effect by group. Specifically, among White students, the effects of Administrative Functioning and Supportive Faculty were largely direct. At the same time, the effects of Administrative Functioning and Supportive Faculty were solely indirect for non-White students in the sample.

The parent study by Peterson et al. (2014), which used a version of the survey that included access to information as a predictor variable, found that opportunity role structure and access to information were had the strongest total effects on students' professional empowerment

(Peterson et al., 2014). They also found that Supportive Faculty had a weaker overall effect on students' professional empowerment, whereas the current study found that Supportive Faculty had a strong overall effect. Similar to the parent study, the indirect effects of these variables were through Sense of Community. While the parent study used only the Emotional Connection subscale, this study employed all four subscales. In the present study, the indirect effects of Supportive Faculty and Administrative Functioning were strongest through both the Emotional Connection and Influence subscales.

The 2014 study by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay is the only other empirical study that has tested the direct and indirect relationships in the present study. In this study and the parent study, Supportive Faculty is operationalized to address students' perceptions of faculty as fostering a supportive learning environment, encouraging students to use research to inform practice, providing support for personal issues, and understanding students' point of view. However, other studies have examined Supportive Faculty as an empowering characteristic within learning environments in higher education. Kim, Chang, and Park (2009) studied the role of Supportive Faculty in Asian American students' learning outcomes (e.g. academic success, intellectual and social ability, and political engagement). Based on previous studies that have found that successful faculty-student interaction or faculty support significantly impacts' students learning outcomes, they operationalized faculty support as student-faculty engagement. This measure included students' perceptions of faculty as respectful (e.g. treated students like a colleague or peer), able to provide encouragement and emotional support to students, willing to offer advice about academic programs, as well as giving students honest feedback about the students' abilities, and offering a stimulating learning environment while still demonstrating a personal interest in students' progress (Kim et al., 2009). They found that Asian American

students who had more frequent and positive faculty-student interaction had stronger outcomes, including political engagement, a construct closely aligned with policy control.

Building upon the study by Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014), this study contributes to the developing knowledge base about the implicit curriculum in social work education by testing a model that included predictors of social work students' professional empowerment as a result of students' experiences with aspects of the implicit curriculum. In addition, this study empirically tested Sense of Community as a mediator between these variables, as well as examining differences in empowerment outcomes by students' race-ethnicity. The findings of this study suggest that an empowerment approach to measuring and improving the implicit curriculum may be useful to schools of social work. Based on the findings from this sample, social work schools might focus attention on (a) supportive faculty, which could initiatives to encourage increased faculty-student interaction in mentoring, guidance in translating research to practice, and advising; (b) administrative functioning, which could entail structured opportunities for students to have input into shaping the policies of the school, an increased visible presence of social work administrators at student forums and other ways of creating accessible conduits for students to share school-related concerns with administrators; and explicit communication to students about the social work administration's commitment to creating a learning environment that is supportive of student success.

Among students in this sample, non-White students who had faculty support and a greater sense of ability to influence the school's policies had a greater sense of understanding the important issues at the school and recognized the value of participating in school governance. Similarly, for non-White students who found faculty supportive, opportunities to participate, and felt a bond with others in the school had higher leadership competence.

Given that there were statistically significant differences in the pathways to empowerment for White, non-Hispanic and non-White students in this sample, other schools of social work may also want to include race-ethnicity as a variable in assessments of the implicit curriculum. Schools of social work may also look for ways to intentionally increase all students' perception of ability to have a say in what happens in the school's policies, programs, and activities. Doing so may enhance students' experience of the learning environment, both the implicit and explicit curricula.

On a related note, the findings in this study raise questions about direct and indirect effects that were found in the multigroup path model. For example, what does it mean that the effect of supportive faculty on leadership competence was only direct for White, non-Hispanic students and only indirect for non-White students? When considering the impact of the implicit curriculum on outcomes such as students' professional empowerment, schools may think about these questions in the context of interventions to improve the learning environment. In this vein, MacKinnon (2011) pointed out that social work researchers may ask, "How does this intervention work?" and "For whom?" (p. 675). To answer such questions, mediators (how) and moderators (for whom) are very useful. Magill (2011) also discussed the value of testing direct and indirect effects in social work research in order to address the complexity of the contexts in which social workers learn and work. In this study, indirect effects are the processes through which aspects of the implicit curriculum could impact students' professional empowerment. I hypothesized that the mediational mechanisms in this sample would involve students' Sense of Community, operationalized as Membership, Influence, Emotional Connection, and Needs Fulfillment. The findings of this study suggest that while not all hypothesized subscales of the Sense of Community scale were significant mediators, Influence and Emotional Connection were

explanatory variables for aspects of the implicit curriculum (e.g. Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure), particularly among non-White students. This explanatory role of the mediators Influence and Emotional Connection was reflected by these variables' strong ratios of indirect to total effects. However, among White, non-Hispanic students in this sample, the effect of Supportive Faculty on Leadership Competence was solely direct and the effect of Administrative Functioning on Policy Control was predominantly direct. Thus, the Sense of Community subscales did not provide a very good explanation of how Supportive Faculty and Administrative Functioning influenced students' professional empowerment. These findings underscore the need for additional mediators beyond those considered in this study to better understand the processes through which Administrative Functioning, Supportive Faculty, and Opportunity Role Structure are related to empowerment, particularly among White, non-Hispanic students. Extending the work of Peterson, Farmer, and Zippay (2014), which called for the inclusion of student characteristics as moderators, this study tested the moderator race-ethnicity, which was statistically significant in the multigroup path model. Additional students characteristics that could be tested include students' age, gender, enrollment status (full-time vs. part-time; undergraduate vs. graduate), or campus affiliation (if the social work school runs programs on more than one campus). These moderators may provide useful information about different students' experiences of the implicit curriculum and highlight additional possibilities for ways to improve the learning environments for specific groups.

Limitations

While this project contributes to the current body of literature that focuses on providing a framework for understanding and assessing the impact of the implicit curriculum on important outcomes such as students' professional empowerment, there are several important limitations

that inform directions for future study including the sampling method, systematic error, and the limitations of the key demographic variable Racial–ethnic Category. As a secondary data analysis, this study uses cross-sectional data from the parent study. This parent source governs the availability of measures and represents a somewhat different set of research questions from the present study.

The design of the parent study was cross-sectional in nature. Thus, it is difficult to infer causality, which requires not only the demonstration of relationships between variables, but also temporal sequence and the ability to rule out rival explanations for the observed relationships in the model (Kundi, 2006). Causal inference is the establishment of a link between perceived or actual causes and perceived or actual outcomes or effects; and in social work research, determining causality is often linked to quantitative research and specifically, randomized controlled trials (Palinkas, 2014). Further, the ability to infer causality is best under the conditions of an experimental design with random assignment.

Rather than using random assignment, the parent study employed a census approach. Although a census approach can be more inclusive, less costly, and may provide benefits such as raising students' awareness about the impact of the environment on their learning, and educating the school community about areas of improvement (McMahon, Stapleton & Cusano, 2014), the census approach also lacks the predictive ability of an experimental design. As Mathieu and Taylor (2006) assert, experimental designs provide a solid foundation from which researchers may refer causal inferences. Therefore, it is critical to avoid certainty in claims of cause and effect in this study due to the data collection approach.

With regard to the measures included in the study, as Farmer and Farmer (2014, p. 21) point out, conceptual equivalence or how diverse groups may conceptualize measures differently is a critical component of research design. In future studies, it will be useful to test measures of the implicit curriculum for conceptual equivalence across groups prior to implementing these measures in an assessment of the impact of the implicit curriculum in order to avoid both Type I errors (e.g., finding differences among groups where none actually exist) and Type II errors (e.g., missing differences between groups when they are actually present).

Yet another limitation of the study was the use of a dichotomous variable, White, non-Hispanic/non-White to represent a racially and ethnically diverse body of students. Knight, Roosa, and Umana-Taylor (2009) explain that within-group diversity can be a source of error in research because researchers may overlook important distinctions in opportunities to craft interventions that account for differences in subpopulations (as cited in Farmer & Farmer, 2014). Moreover, while collapsing demographic variables may be useful for statistical power, as in this study, the result may be that the homogeneity of “non-White” students is overstated, resulting in oversimplified findings (Alfredo, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005).

With regard to student characteristics, among participants in this combined sample of BASW and MSW students, there were statistically significant differences on several variables that indicate that the sample was not fully representative of the student population. Most relevant to this study, the demographic factor race–ethnicity was statistically significantly different in the sample of both BASW and MSW students compared to these student populations. While all students enrolled in the BASW and MSW programs were invited to participate and the same procedures were used to collect data from both groups, it is still important to consider whether procedural equivalence was established. According to Schaffer and Riordan (2003, cited in

Farmer & Farmer, 2014), procedural equivalence is established when the surveys are administered across groups in the same manner. Although one aspect of procedural equivalence was established, that is the administration of the surveys across the groups in the same manner, one cannot say with confidence that the *conditions* under which the surveys were administered were the same. Ensuring that the conditions under which the surveys were administered are equal is yet another way to established procedural equivalence. Given that it is uncertain that this aspect of procedural equivalence was established, the possibility exists that some persons from diverse backgrounds might have self-selected to not participate in this study, a source of systematic error in the study.

In addition, differences in the factor structure of the Brief Sense of Community Scale in this study (e.g. a first order model) compared to previous studies (which found a second order model to be the best fit to the data) invite further exploration of common method biases. For example, the current study used a phrase completion response format, which is one example of potential method variance: Podsakoff et al. (2003) identify several sources of common method bias. One is the simple fact that the survey respondent is providing responses to both predictor and criterion variables. This within-person bias includes respondents' tendencies to want to maintain consistency between attitudes and cognitions, respondents' tendencies to maintain consistent responses to similar questions (this is especially problematic when respondents are asked to provide accounts of attitudes and behaviors retrospectively), and respondents' implicit theories about relationships between measurement constructs (one example they provide is the attributions of the causes of group performance). True relationships between variables may be further biased or obfuscated by social desirability or the respondents' need for social acceptance (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Finally, there are limitations due to the selected mediators and moderators in the model. While the version of the parent study used in this analysis does not include a measure of faculty-staff diversity nor a measure of access to information, both of these factors were found to be statistically significant predictor variables and should be included in future studies (Peterson et al., 2014). Additionally, the parent study calls for testing moderators of student characteristics, which the current study does by testing the moderator race-ethnicity. However, additional moderators including students' age or developmental stage, campus location, status as a full- or part-time student, graduate or undergraduate student may yield new information about which students benefit from the current implicit curriculum in a given school of social work.

Relevance to Social Work Education

The implicit curriculum, as part of the “tripartite” structure of social work education (i.e., the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum and field education), is an integral part of social work students' learning and acculturation to social work values such as a commitment to social justice work (Miller, 2013). Because social work scholars are still in the early stages of defining and measuring these constructs within social work education and because the implicit curriculum may be understood and operationalized idiosyncratically by individual schools of social work, there is an opportunity to bring a critical lens to the understanding and interpretation of the role of the implicit curriculum within social work education. Specifically, because the education system is part of a larger hegemonic structure that maintains power relations in society, aspects of the implicit curriculum must be scrutinized using a critical theory lens, in order to make evident structural inequities, such as racism, that may be woven into the fabric of social work education as part of the larger academy. Recognizing that knowledge is only partial and the traditional system of higher education in the U. S., particularly professional education, has been

profoundly shaped by policies and practices that privilege individuals and groups on the basis of characteristics such as race, class, and gender, evaluation of the implicit curriculum must account for the ways in which our structures can be both liberatory and oppressive for our students.

Once this challenge is recognized and named, empowerment theory provides a framework in which to explore the ways in which the implicit curriculum can promote empowerment among social work students. Because aspects of the implicit curriculum can be part of an empowering organization, empowered members emerge as a result of the complex person and environment interplay according to which empowering aspects of the school environment influence the development of empowered students (Peterson et al., 2014). This relationship between empowering organizations and empowered members can become reciprocal and self-reinforcing. It is also a relationship that is enhanced by greater sense of community among members (Peterson et al., 2014).

In social work practice, empowerment has been integral in informing policies and practices that support clients' increased power to make decisions about how these policies and practices shape their lives (Gutiérrez, 1995; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman, 1995). Christens, Peterson, and Speer (2014) outline a variety of research-based interventions grounded in the value of empowerment that may be applied to the context of schools of social work to enhance aspects of the learning environment or implicit curriculum in order to promote a greater sense of influence and leadership skills among social work students. These interventions include increasing opportunities for students to take on leadership roles that allow them to participate in different aspects of the school's functions and to connect with other students through clearly identified roles and responsibilities. Because the current study demonstrates that Opportunity Role Structure is an empowering characteristic of the implicit curriculum among this sample of

social work students, interventions that help to increase opportunities for leadership, particularly those that increase students' sense of being able to influence the school and students' feelings of being connected would be likely to increase students' sense of professional competence, character, and abilities in the school and beyond.

As previously noted in the statement of the problem, there is a clear imperative in social work education to assess the impact of the implicit curriculum on student outcomes (CSWE 2008, 2015). While individual schools have somewhat idiosyncratically conceptualized the implicit curriculum (Holosko et al., 2010), this study demonstrates that Supportive Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure represent critical aspects of the implicit curriculum that can be intentionally crafted to support positive outcomes for social work students. This study makes a contribution to this aim by extending the work of Peterson et al. (2014), who provide a framework for the study of the impact of the implicit curriculum on social work students' professional empowerment as a key outcome. This study asks to what extent various aspects of Sense of Community (Emotional Connection, Influence, Needs Fulfillment, and Membership) facilitate the relationship between aspects of the implicit curriculum (e.g. Support Faculty, Administrative Functioning, and Opportunity Role Structure) and Empowerment among racially and ethnically diverse social work students.

Findings from this study may inform schools of social work as they develop interventions to facilitate students' professional empowerment. Because the findings from the current study suggest that the Sense of Community subscales Emotional Connection and Influence are meaningful mediators between aspects of the implicit curriculum and students' professional empowerment, interventions ought to focus on opportunities for all students to partner with

administrators to create connections and opportunities for students to have a meaningful say in the development of school policies.

In their 2011 study, Miller et al. (2011) recommend service learning as an application of critical theory and critical thinking in social work education, combining action and rigorous reflection. They suggest a developmentally appropriate approach, incorporating Baxter Magolda's student development theory into an approach to service learning that takes seriously the profession's values, ethics, history, and context. As well, they recommend reflective activities for students' service learning, including double-entry journaling, research papers, directed readings, and ethical case studies. A similar intervention could be developed to address aspects of students' professional empowerment in social work education by making explicit aspects of the implicit curriculum such as values regarding diversity. Students could be invited to conduct resource audits at their respective schools and field sites to see what campus and community resources provide support for diversity and inclusion. As well, students might do a class-wide genogram of their relationships with faculty and staff, to better understand how students experience themselves as change agents (or not) based on the degree to which they feel able to influence faculty and administrators regarding practices such as diversity in hiring, attention to issues of bias, racism, and xenophobia in course syllabi, and school-wide (and agency-wide) trainings on diversity and inclusion. This activity could be especially useful in supporting Leadership Competence and Policy Control.

The current study extends the theoretical framework employed by Peterson et al. (2014) to include critical theory, in addition to empowerment and sense of community theories, as part of an explanatory framework of the implicit curriculum in social work education. This study provides an example of how these three theories can be applied to evaluate the implicit

curriculum in social work education on students' professional empowerment, reflecting social work education's emphasis on the importance of empowerment as a key value in social work organizations and among the individuals whom social workers serve.

Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study and the limitations, there are several suggestions regarding future research. These suggestions pertain to issues of systematic sampling strategy, systematic error, research methods, and selection of measures.

With regard to study design and sampling strategy, in lieu of cross-sectional data collection, a longitudinal study that allows for the collection of data at multiple points in time over the course of students' social work education careers may yield important findings in reference to empowerment as a desired outcome of social work education. Similarly, the use of a random sample would provide opportunities for stronger causal inference. In social work research, determining causality is often linked to quantitative research and specifically, randomized controlled trials (Palinkas, 2014). However, a randomized controlled trial does not meet the implicit curriculum assessment needs of individual social work schools due to issues such as the inability to address external validity concerns, sample size, the costs of implementation and follow-up, and the ethics of an intervention for one group of student versus another (Palinkas, 2014). Therefore, Palinkas (2014) argues persuasively for the use of a mixed methods design to establish causality in the context of social work research. Because research on the impact of the implicit curriculum in social work education is still in its early stages, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011; cited in Palinkas, 2014) suggest Triangulation Design, which is used "when there is a need to compare results from different sources of information regarding the hypothesized same phenomenon or parameter to seek corroboration" (p. 7). Creswell and Plano

Clark (2006) explain that this method allow researchers to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research. This design may support social work schools by being able to compare current assessments of the implicit curriculum across institutions. It would also allow each individual school to gather different kinds of data to support their assessment efforts. Thus, while a quantitative survey will provide schools with general data on the implicit curriculum, a qualitative component would allow for deeper inquiry into mediating and moderating mechanisms that facilitate the implicit curriculum's effect on students' professional empowerment. Qualitative research would also allow social work researchers to better understand aspects of the implicit curriculum that are idiosyncratic to individual schools and may differentially affect (Holosko et al., 2010; Miller, 2013) students' experiences of the implicit curriculum.

With regard to the sampling approach, if a census approach is desirable because it allows all students the opportunity to provide feedback, a nonresponse bias analysis could be conducted after the census is concluded. This would entail comparing respondents versus non-respondents on key demographic variables, and adjusting sample weights accordingly to increase the sample representativeness (see Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2009, for an example).

Given the concern about possible hidden within-group differences, future research among diverse groups of students ought to include approaches such as latent class analysis in order to more fully understand the differences among students from a range of racial and ethnic groups that are much richer than the "non-White" binary label applied in this study (Farmer & Farmer, 2014). The confirmatory factor analysis of the Brief Sense of Community Scale in this study does not include a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis. Future research ought to consider how items function across diverse groups of students.

Using the approach that Farmer and Farmer (2014) recommend, studies of potential differences between groups on measures such as the Brief Sense of Community Scale may use the MG-CFA model, testing nested models in which parameters are tested within one another in a hierarchical format. Farmer and Farmer strongly urge a nested approach that includes CFA models that must test for configural invariance, weak metric invariance, scalar invariance, and preferably also strict metric invariance, equivalence of latent means, factor variance, and factor covariances. This approach would ensure that researchers are indeed measuring the same construct across diverse groups in the study.

On a related practical note, schools of social work may wish to adopt a standardized measure of race–ethnicity that can be applied across all programs and students. While not ideal, the National Center for Education Statistics (NECS) uses racial–ethnic categories that were developed by the Office of Budget Management and are often used by institutions of higher education in order to be able to compare data. They acknowledge that these categories are not scientific definitions, but do provide one standardized way to report demographic data (see <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/reic/definitions.asp>).

To address these forms of method bias, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) recommended procedural remedies such as obtaining predictor measures from person A and criterion measures from person B, or one set of measures from person A and the other measure from a secondary data source. They note that this technique might not be appropriate when measuring individuals' feelings, beliefs, or perceptions. An alternative here would be to introduce a temporal delay between the introduction of the predictor and criterion variables in order to reduce the likelihood that respondents would use previous answers to respond to current questions (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

To reduce the possibility of method bias as a rival explanation for the relationships between variables in this study and specifically to address the concern about possible method bias as an explanatory mechanism for the differences in the factor structure of the Brief Sense of Community Scale between this study and others, future research should compare the two versions of the Brief Sense of Community Scale in a sample by testing their respective Cronbach's alphas, factor scores, and inter-item correlations (Hodge & Gillespie, 2007). Further, a structural equation model can be used to test validity and reliability coefficients. Because of the differences in metrics between the Likert and phrase completion formats, Joreskog (1990) recommends the use of a standardized matrix in order to produce standardized coefficients that can be used to compare the two scale formats.

Given the discrepancy between the model fit for the Brief Sense of Community Scale in the present study—a first order factor—and previous studies—a second order factor—future research also ought to investigate whether this is a true difference or whether the multidimensional model of the Brief Sense of Community Scale is a methodological artifact. Johnson, Rosen, and Chang (2011) recommend the following steps in ruling out alternate explanations for higher order constructs: 1) addressing common method variance during data collection and analysis at the indicator level rather than at the level of the construct (as discussed above); 2) addressing model specification errors by demonstrating that higher order constructs remain in the presence of confounding variables; 3) testing for criterion-related validity through structural equation models that includes pathways from the construct itself and from the indicator variables to the outcome variable (if the path from the construct remains significant, then it is worth retaining the higher order model); and assessing the relative importance of the construct by examining the higher order construct's overall contribution to the R^2 compared to its indicators.

There are opportunities throughout data collection and analysis processes to use both procedural and statistical methods to assess the validity of a higher order construct of the Brief Sense of Community Scale.

With regard to potential data collection and selected measures, future studies should be sure to include faculty-staff diversity and a measure of access to information, as both were found to be statistically significant predictor variables (Peterson et al., 2014). Additionally, moderators including students' age or developmental stage, campus location, status as a full-time or part-time student, graduate or undergraduate student may yield new information about which students benefit from the current implicit curriculum in a given school of social work.

Finally, because the current study does not examine additional mediators beyond Sense of Community, future studies will need to do so in order to better understand the mechanisms by which empowering aspects of the implicit curriculum support students' professional empowerment. Miller et al. (2011) identify critical thinking as an important point of connection between the implicit and explicit curricula. Critical thinking skills may also be an important mediator between aspects of the implicit curriculum and students' professional empowerment, as the ability to think critically about the institutions in which social work students' learning is taking place may increase sense of professional empowerment in students who experience faculty support to challenge the structure of the school.

In summary, this study represents a small step forward in the development of a conceptual and empirical model for an approach to measuring the implicit curriculum in social work education. This study focuses on aspects of sense of community, a useful but partial explanatory mechanism for understanding how the implicit curriculum affects social work

students' professional empowerment, particularly for non-White students. While this study is one small piece in a much larger investigation of the implicit curriculum's critical role in shaping social work education, it does suggest the importance of making explicit and transparent those seemingly slippery aspects of the implicit or hidden curriculum: the role of faculty, administration, and opportunities for leadership in shaping students' professional empowerment. In particular, this study asks that schools of social work attend to potential inconsistencies between the explicit and implicit curricula in social work education, in part by creating the optimal conditions to support non-White students in their professional development through building supportive emotional connections and welcoming these students' influence in shaping school policy, practice, and culture.

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Table 1. *Studies demonstrating sense of community as mediator*

Study	Basic Description	Basic Results
Cantillon, Davidson, & Schweitzer (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates model of social disorganization theory by empirically investigating neighborhood effects on youth outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community mediates the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and youth outcomes (includes levels of delinquency, grades, and conventional activity)
Peterson & Reid (2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines sense of community as a mediator between criterion variables Alienation and Substance Abuse problems and the outcome variable of Empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community mediates the awareness of neighborhood substance abuse issues and psychological empowerment. Individuals with greater sense of community are more likely to participate in initiatives and have higher empowerment levels.
Hughey, Peterson, Lowe, & Oprescu (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tests a community organization version of the sense of community scale (COSOC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finds that the Community Organization Sense of Community Scale represents a distinct empowering organizational characteristic separate from organizational characteristics such as Opportunity Role Structure
Wilke & Speer (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tests the influence of empowering organizational characteristics, including sense of community, on the outcome of psychological empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering characteristics of an organization predict sense of community within this mediational model of empowerment
Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines sense of community as a mediator between aspects of the implicit curriculum and the outcome variable of students' professional empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of community mediates the relationships between criterion variables Opportunity Role Structure and Diversity of Faculty and Staff, and the outcome measure of Professional Empowerment

Table 2. *Comparative Demographic Information for Sample vs. School Population*

Students' Age	BASW Sample Frequency	BASW Sample Percent	BASW Population	BASW Population Percent
Under 25	86	56.2%	167	57%
25-34	42	27.6%	69	23.5%
35-44	11	7.3%	19	6.5%
45+	8	5.4%	29	10%
Unknown	-	-	9	3.1%
Total	153	100%	293	100%
Missing	6	-		
Mean Age of BASW Students	26		-	-
Students' Gender				
Female	135	89.4%	254	87%
Male	16	10.6%	38	13%
Unknown	-	-	1	
Total	151	100%	293	100%
Missing	2	-		
Students' Ethnicity-Race				
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	3.3%	4	
Black/African American	32	21.2%	75	25.59%
Caucasian	74	49.0%	129	44.03%
Chicano/Mexican American	-	-	1	
Hispanic	33	21.9%	34	11.6%
Multiple Race-Ethnicity	-	-	19	
Puerto Rican	-	-	13	
Other	7	4.6%	12	
Unknown	-	-	6	2.02%
Total	153	100%	293	
Missing	2	-	-	-

Students' Age	MSW Sample Frequency	MSW Sample Percent	MSW Population	MSW Population Percent
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Under 25	128	34.4%	-	-
25-34	160	43%	-	-
35-44	45	12.1%	-	-
45+	39	10.5%	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-	-
Total	372	100%	-	-
Missing	10		-	-
Mean Age of MSW Students	30 years old	-	34 years old	-
Students' Gender				
Female	317	83.4%	1010	89.7%
Male	63	16.6%	116	10.3%
Unknown	-	-	-	-
Total	380	100%	1126	100%
Missing	2			
Students' Ethnicity-Race				
Asian	17	4.5%	52	4.6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3	.8%	-	-
Bi-Racial	-	-	39	
Black/African American	69	18.1%	252	22.8%
Caucasian	236	62.8%	619	55%
Hispanic	43	11.4%	103	9.1%
Other	8	2.1%	35	6.2%
Unknown	-	-	26	2.3%
Total	376	100%	1126	100%
Missing	6	1.6%	-	-
Campus Most Attended				
Camden	71	19.0%	222	19.7%
Newark	108	28.5%	374	33.2%
New Brunswick	191	50.4%	530	47.1%
Parsippany	8	2.1%	-	-
Total	382	100%	1126	100%
Missing	4	-	-	-
Time				
Full-time	302	79.5%	642	57%
Part-time	78	20.5%	484	43%
Total	382	100%	1126	100%
Missing	(2)	-	-	
All Student	Sample All	Sample	Population	Population

Status	Student Status	Percent All Student Status	Student Status	Percent Student Status
Undergraduate	153	28.5%	293	20.65%
Graduate	382	71.3%	1126	79.35%
Total	536	100%	1419	100%
Missing	21	(3.8)	-	-

Table 3. *Supportive Faculty Scale*

Item Number	Supportive Faculty	Response Options	Mean	SD
Q1a_SF	The SSW faculty fosters a learning environment that is _____.	1 (<i>not supportive of my success</i>) through 7 (<i>very supportive of my success</i>)	5.44	1.20
Q2a_SF	My SSW professors _____ me to use research to inform my practice.	1 (<i>do not encourage</i>) through 7 (<i>greatly encourage</i>)	5.73	1.15
Q3a_SF	I feel _____ there are professors in the SSW that I could go to if I have personal issues.	1 (<i>very uncertain</i>) through 7 (<i>very confident</i>)	5.12	1.63
Q4a_SF	I believe that many SSW faculty members _____ my point of view.	1 (<i>do not understand</i>) through 7 (<i>completely understand</i>)	5.27	1.21

Table 4. *Administrative Functioning Scale*

Item Number	Administrative Functioning	Response Options	Mean	SD
Q1b_AF	The SSW administration is _____ when students want to address a concern.	1 (<i>not accessible</i>) through 7 (<i>easily accessible</i>)	4.47	1.59
Q2b_AF	The SSW Office of the Dean is _____ to issues that are important to me.	1 (<i>very unresponsive</i>) through 7 (<i>very responsive</i>)	4.51	1.49
Q3b_AF	I feel that I have had _____ to provide significant input into shaping the policies of the SSW.	1 (<i>almost no opportunity</i>) through 7 (<i>a great deal of opportunity</i>)	3.46	1.60
A4b_AF	The SSW administrators create a learning environment that is _____.	1 (<i>not supportive of my success</i>) through 7 (<i>very supportive of my success</i>)	5.09	1.39

Table 5. *Opportunity Role Structure Scale*

Item Number	Opportunity Role Structure Items	Response Options	Mean	SD
Q1c_ORs	There are _____ extracurricular activities within the SSW to help me meet my social needs.	1 (<i>very few</i>) through 7 (<i>a large number</i>)	3.93	1.64
Q2c_ORs	I am _____ of how I can be involved in the SSW student organizations.	1 (<i>almost never made aware</i>) through 7 (<i>almost always made aware</i>)	4.74	1.73
Q3c_ORs	I feel like I _____ in the decision-making process about what activities the SSW student organizations will engage in.	1 (<i>cannot be very involved</i>) through 7 (<i>can be very involved</i>)	3.93	1.64

Table 6. *Brief Sense of Community Scale (original and in this study)*

Item Number	Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)	BSCS adapted for the Parent Study	Domain	Mean	SD
BSCS1	I can get what I need in this neighborhood.	In the SSW, I _____ (<i>can get what I need/cannot get what I need</i>).	Needs Fulfillment	5.13	1.27
BSCS2	This neighborhood helps me fulfill my needs.	The SSW _____ (<i>helps me meet my needs/does not help me meet my needs</i>).	Needs Fulfillment	5.11	1.29
BSCS3	I feel like a member of this neighborhood.	I feel like _____ (<i>a part of the SSW/an outsider in the SSW</i>).	Membership	5.08	1.55
BSCS4	I belong in this neighborhood.	In the SSW, I _____ (<i>feel like I belong/feel like I do not belong</i>).	Membership	5.27	1.45
BSCS5	I have a say about what goes on in my neighborhood.	I have _____ about what goes on in the SSW (<i>a strong say/almost no say</i>).	Influence	3.64	1.51
BSCS6	People in this neighborhood are good at influencing each another.	People in the SSW have _____ (<i>a great deal of influence/almost no influence</i>) on each other.	Influence	4.97	1.26
BSCS7	I feel connected to this neighborhood.	I feel _____ (<i>very connected/very unconnected</i>) to others in the SSW.	Emotional Connection	4.89	1.51
BSCS8	I have a good bond with others in this neighborhood.	I have a _____ (<i>strong bond/weak bond</i>) with others in the SSW.	Emotional Connection	4.94	1.50

Subscales of the BSCS in this study	Items in each subscale			Mean	SD
BSCS Needs Fulfillment Subscale	BSCS1 – BSCS2	-	-	5.12	1.21
BSCS Membership Subscale	BSCS3 - BSCS4	-	-	5.17	1.44
BSCS Influence Subscale	BSCS5 – BSCS 6	-	-	4.29	1.23
BSCS Emotional Connection Subscale	BSCS 7 – BSCS 8	-	-	4.92	1.43

Table 7. *Sociopolitical Control (Empowerment) Scale*

Domain	Item Number	Sociopolitical Control Scale	Response Options	Mean	SD
Policy Control	Q1e_PEPC	It is _____ for me to have a say in the SSW.	1 (<i>not important</i>) through 7 (<i>very important</i>)	5.39	1.36
Policy Control	Q2e_PEPC	People like me can _____ what's going on with the SSW.	1 (<i>not really understand</i>) through 7 (<i>completely understand</i>)	5.05	1.32
Policy Control	Q3e_PEPC	I feel like I have _____ of the important issues which affect the SSW.	1 (<i>no understanding</i>) through 7 (<i>a good understanding</i>)	4.93	1.44
Policy Control	Q4e_PEPC	People like me have _____ to participate effectively in activities and decision making in the SSW.	1 (<i>very little ability</i>) through 7 (<i>a great deal of ability</i>)	4.43	1.59
Policy Control	Q5e_PEPC	My opinion _____ in the SSW.	1 (<i>can make no difference</i>) through 7 (<i>can make a big difference</i>)	4.57	1.63
Policy Control	Q6e_PEPC	There are _____ for people like me to have a say in what the SSW does.	1 (<i>very few ways</i>) through 7 (<i>plenty of ways</i>)	4.12	1.58
Policy Control	Q7e_PEPC	It is _____ to me that I actively participate in addressing SSW issues.	1 (<i>not important</i>) through 7 (<i>very important</i>)	5.04	1.42
Policy Control	Q8e_PEPC	Most leaders in the SSW would _____ listen to me.	1 (<i>almost never</i>) through 7 (<i>almost always</i>)	4.51	1.37

Policy Control	Q9e_PEPC	Many activities in the SSW are _____ to participate in.	1 (<i>not important</i>) through 7 (<i>very important</i>)	4.74	1.38
Leadership Competence	Q1f_PELC	In groups, I am often a _____.	1 (<i>follower</i>) through 7 (<i>leader</i>)	5.40	1.32
Leadership Competence	Q2f_PELC	I would prefer to be a _____.	1 (<i>follower</i>) through 7 (<i>leader</i>)	5.61	1.25
Leadership Competence	Q3f_PELC	When I'm involved in a group project, I would rather have _____.	1 (<i>no leadership role</i>) through 7 (<i>a major leadership role</i>)	5.39	1.29
Leadership Competence	Q4f_PELC	I can _____ organize other people to get things done.	1 (<i>almost never</i>) through 7 (<i>almost always</i>)	5.60	1.13
Leadership Competence	Q5f_PELC	Other people _____ follow my ideas.	1 (<i>almost never</i>) through 7 (<i>almost always</i>)	5.34	1.00
Leadership Competence	Q6f_PELC	I find it _____ to talk in front of a group.	1 (<i>very hard</i>) through 7 (<i>very easy</i>)	4.87	1.74
Leadership Competence	Q7f_PELC	When trying to solve a problem, I like to _____.	1 (<i>wait and see if others will deal with it</i>) through 7 (<i>work on the problem right away</i>)	5.59	1.186
Leadership Competence	Q8f_PELC	I _____ trying new things that are challenging to me.	1 (<i>really dislike</i>) through 7 (<i>really enjoy</i>)	5.58	1.22

Table 8. *Item Non-response Rate Totals*

Item Non-response rate (percent) n= 557	
<u>Demographics</u>	
Age	5.6
Gender	3.2
Racial–ethnic Category	3.9
Campus	3.1
Status (Graduate/Undergraduate Student)	3.8
Enrollment (Full-time/Part-time)	2.9
Semesters	5.7
<u>Implicit Curriculum</u>	
Supportive Faculty (4 items)	.4
Administrative Functioning (4 items)	.9 – 3.6
Opportunity Role Structure (3 items)	.5 – 1.6
<u>Sense of Community</u>	
<u>Empowerment</u>	
Leadership Competence (8 items)	.7 - .9
Policy Control (9 items)	.7 – 1.8
<u>Additional Scales: Participation</u>	
Extracurricular Activities inside the SSW (11 items)	1.6 – 2.9
Other SSW Activities (7 items)	1.4 – 2.3
Community Activities/Actions outside the SSW (8 items)	2.7 – 5.0
Involvement in Outside Community Groups (3 items)	2.5 – 3.4

Table 9. *Comparative Demographic Information for Sample vs. School Population*

Students' Age	BASW Sample Frequency	BASW Sample Percent	BASW Population	BASW Population Percent
Under 25	86	56.2%	167	57%
25-34	42	27.6%	69	23.5%
35-44	11	7.3%	19	6.5%
45+	8	5.4%	29	10%
Unknown	-	-	9	3.1%
Total	153	100%	293	100%
Missing	6	-		
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Female	135	89.4%	254	87%
Male	16	10.6%	38	13%
Unknown	-	-	1	
Total	151	100%	293	100%
Missing	2	-		
Students' Ethnicity-Race				
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	3.3%	4	
Black/African American	32	21.2%	75	25.59%
Caucasian	74	49.0%	129	44.03%
Chicano/Mexican American	-	-	1	
Hispanic	33	21.9%	34	11.6%
Multiple Race- Ethnicity	-	-	19	
Puerto Rican	-	-	13	
Other	7	4.6%	12	
Unknown	-	-	6	2.02%
Total	153	100%	293	
Missing	2	-	-	-
MSW				
Students' Age	Sample Frequency	Sample Percent	Population	Population Percent
Under 25	128	34.4%	-	-
25-34	160	43%	-	-
35-44	45	12.1%	-	-

45+	39	10.5%	-	-
Unknown	-	-	-	-
Total	372	100%	-	-
Missing	10		-	-
Mean Age of MSW Students	30 years old	-	34 years old	-

Students' Gender

Female	317	83.4%	1010	89.7%
Male	63	16.6%	116	10.3%
Unknown	-	-	-	-
Total	380	100%	1126	100%
Missing	2			

Students' Ethnicity-Race

Asian	17	4.5%	52	4.6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3	.8%		
Bi-Racial	-	-	39	
Black/African American	69	18.1%	252	22.8%
Caucasian	236	62.8%	619	55%
Hispanic	43	11.4%	103	9.1%
Other	8	2.1%	35	6.2%
Unknown	-	-	26	2.3%
Total	376	100%	1126	100%
Missing	6	1.6%	-	-

Campus Most Attended

Camden	71	19.0%	222	19.7%
Newark	108	28.5%	374	33.2%
New Brunswick	191	50.4%	530	47.1%
Parsippany	8	2.1%	-	-
Total	382	100%	1126	100%
Missing	4	-	-	-

Time

Full-time	302	79.5%	642	57%
Part-time	78	20.5%	484	43%
Total	382	100%	1126	100%
Missing	(2)	-	-	

All Student Status	Sample All Student Status	Sample Percent All Student Status	Population Student Status	Population Percent Student Status
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Undergraduate	153	28.5%	293	20.65%
Graduate	382	71.3%	1126	79.35%
Total	536	100%	1419	100%
Missing	21	(3.8)	-	-

Note: MSW students' age, the program director provided only the mean age of MSW students, not a range nor discrete ages of students, so this information is not available for the MSW population in this table.

Table 10. Overall fit statistics for the Brief Sense of Community scale (BSCS) confirmatory factor analyses.

	Model 1: First order single factor BSCS	Model 2: First order Four-factor BSCS	Model 3: Second Order BSCS
Measures of fit:	(N = 557)		
χ^2	682.896	31.944	90.684
<i>df</i>	20	14	16
<i>p</i> -value	.000	.004	.000
NFI	.773	.989	.970
CFI	.777	.994	.975
ECVI (90% CI)	1.315 (1.168, 1.475)	.165 (.142, .202)	.264 (.217, .325)
RMSEA	.244	.048	.092
(90% CI)	(.229, .260)	(.026, .070)	(.074, .110)

Table 11. *Correlations Between Three Independent Variables and Mediator*

Measure	1	2	3	4
1. Supportive Faculty	-			
2. Administrative Functioning	.59	-		
3. Opportunity Role Structure	.33	.48	-	
4. Sense of Community	.65	.68	.52	-

Table 12. *Results of Multiple Regressions to Test for Multicollinearity Among Key Predictors in the Model*

Model (by Dependent Variable)	R²	VIFs	Tolerance Statistics	Eigenvalues	Condition Indexes
Sense of Community	.60	1.30 – 1.77	.57 - .77	.01 - .06	7.9 – 17.2
Supportive Faculty	.47	1.42 – 1.93	.49 - .70	.02 - .06	8.3 – 15.1
Administrative Functioning	.52	1.36 – 2.13	.47 - .73	.01 - .06	7.9 – 18.5
Opportunity Role Structure	.30	1.87 – 2.27	.44 - .53	.01 - .04	10.1 – 18.2

Table 13. Summarizing the Significant Pathways Found in the Mediation Path Model and the Moderated Mediation Path Model

<u>Mediation Model</u>	<u>Multigroup Model</u>		
		Whites, Non-Hisp.	Non- Whites
Direct Effects:	Direct Effects:		
Supportive Faculty → Leadership Competence	Supportive Faculty → Leadership Competence	X	
Administrative Functioning → Policy Control	Administrative Functioning → Policy Control	X	
Indirect Effects:	Indirect Effects:		
Supportive Faculty → BSCS Influence → Policy Control	Supportive Faculty → BSCS Influence → Policy Control		X
-----	Supportive Faculty → BSCS Emotional Connection → Leadership Competence		X
Administrative Functioning → BSCS Influence → Policy Control	Administrative Functioning → BSCS Influence → Policy Control	X	X
Opportunity Role Structure → BSCS Influence → Policy Control	Opportunity Role Structure → BSCS Influence → Policy Control	X	X
	Opportunity Role Structure → BSCS		

Table 14. *Decomposition of Effects by Group*

<i>Among White, non-Hispanic Students:</i>						
<i>Criterion Variable</i>	<i>Predictor Variable</i>	<i>Total Effect</i>	<i>Indirect Effect via</i>			<i>Ratio of Indirect to Total Effect</i>
			<i>Direct Effect</i>	<i>Emot. Conn.</i>	<i>Influence</i>	
Leadership Competence	Opportunity Role Structure	-	-	-	-	-
	Administrative Functioning	-	-	-	-	-
	Supportive Faculty	.22	.22	-	-	-
Policy Control	Opportunity Role Structure	.10	-	-	.10	1
	Administrative Functioning	.29	.19	-	.10	.46
	Supportive Faculty	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Among Non-White Students:</i>						
<i>Criterion Variable</i>	<i>Predictor Variable</i>	<i>Total Effect</i>	<i>Indirect Effect via</i>			<i>Ratio of Indirect to Total Effect</i>
			<i>Direct Effect</i>	<i>Emot. Conn.</i>	<i>Influence</i>	
Leadership Competence	Opportunity Role Structure	.04	-	.04		1
	Administrative Functioning	-	-	-		-
	Supportive Faculty	.13	-	.13		1
Policy Control	Opportunity Role Structure	.06	-	-	.06	1
	Administrative Functioning	.13	-	-	.13	1
	Supportive Faculty	.08	-	-	.08	1

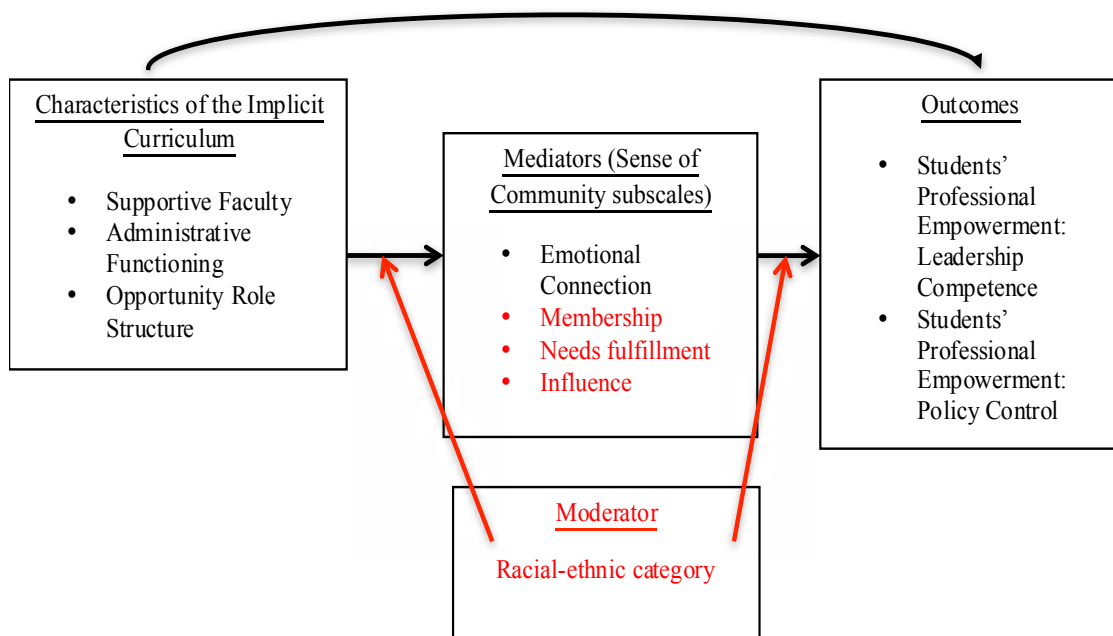


Figure 1. Relationships among variables in the implicit curriculum with Empowerment as the outcome (adapted from Peterson, Farmer, & Zippay, 2014)

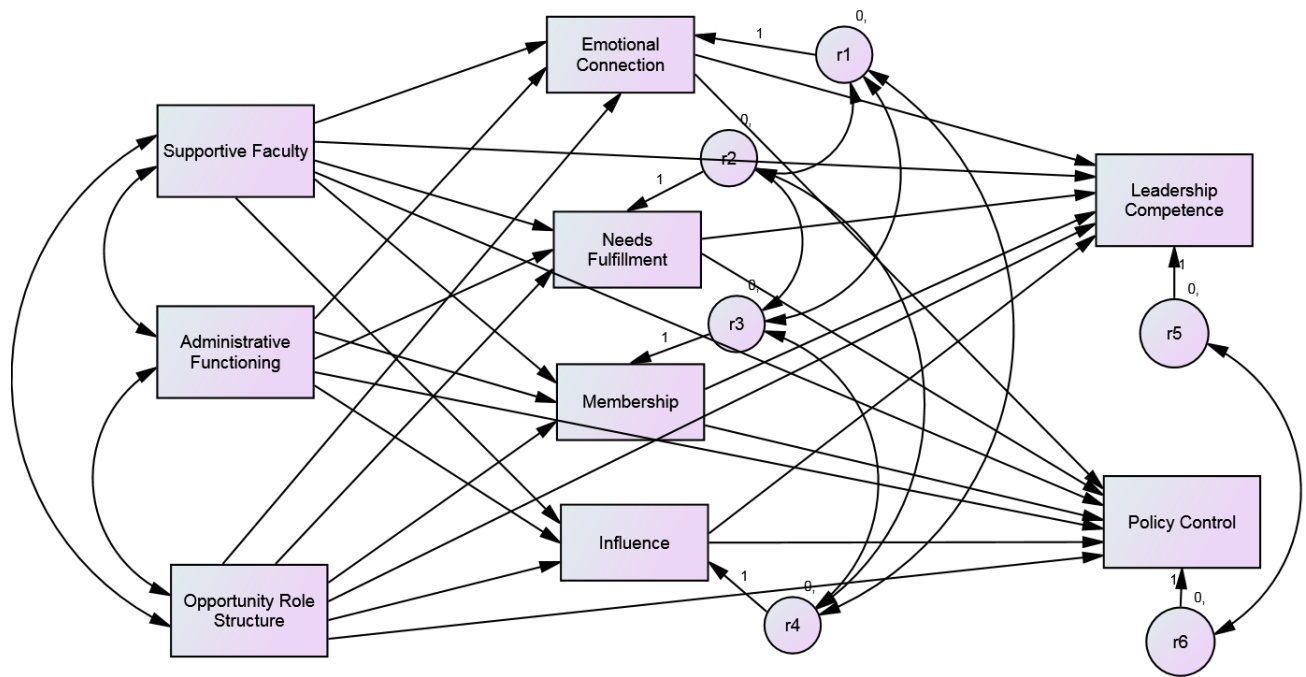


Figure 2. Path model of the implicit curriculum's impact on students' professional empowerment as mediated by dimensions of Sense of Community

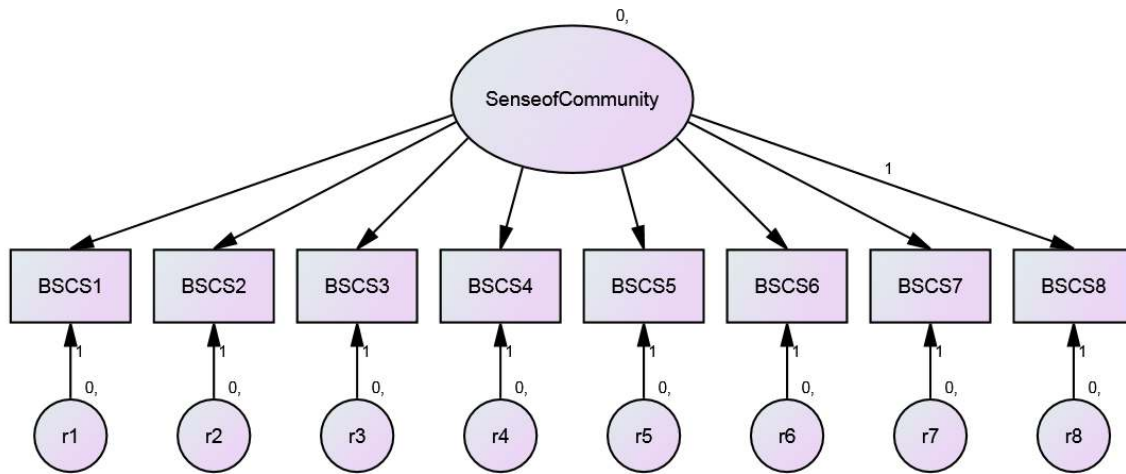


Figure 3a. *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory factor analysis of unidimensional model*

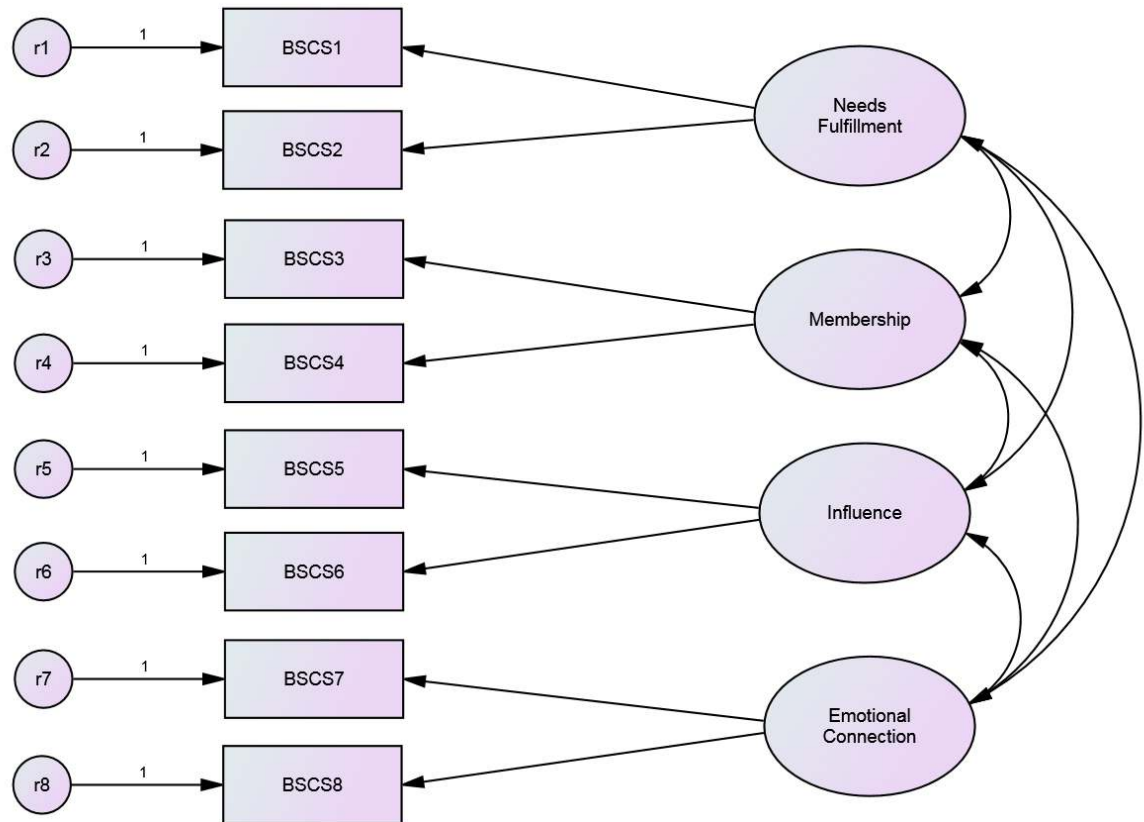


Figure 3b. *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory factor analysis of multidimensional model.*

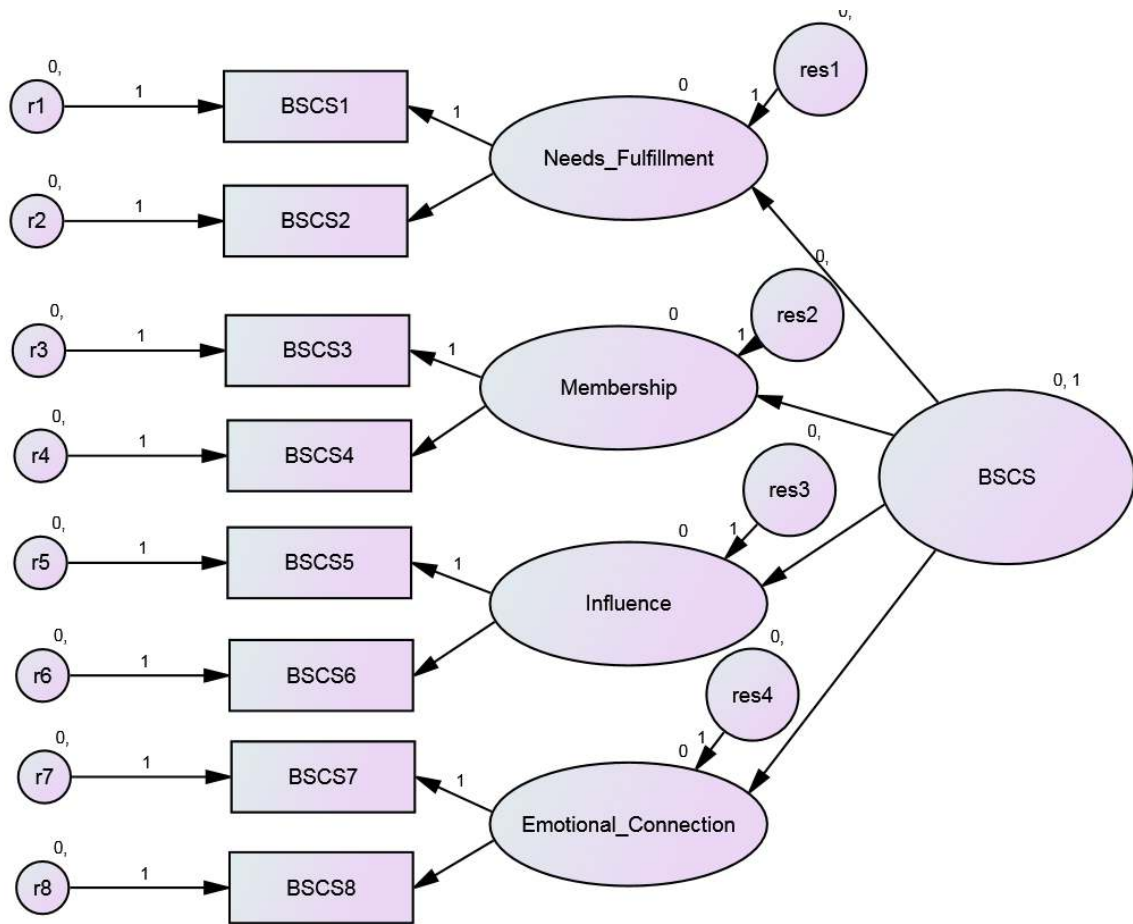


Figure 3c. *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)—Confirmatory factor analysis of second order model*

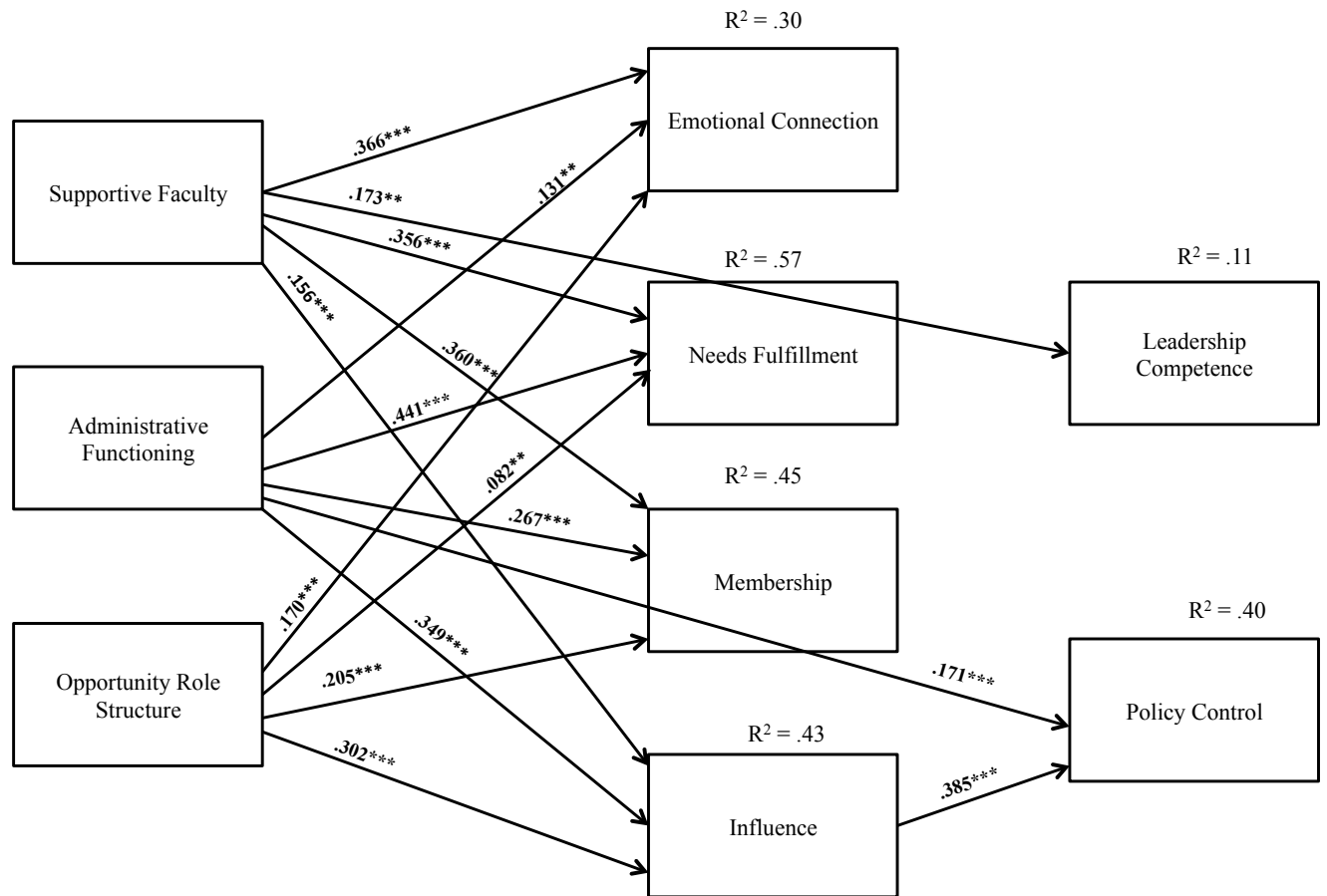


Figure 4. Standardized parameter estimates for the final path model
 ($N = 557$. Non-significant paths, correlations among the exogenous variables,
 and error variance estimates are not shown. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$)

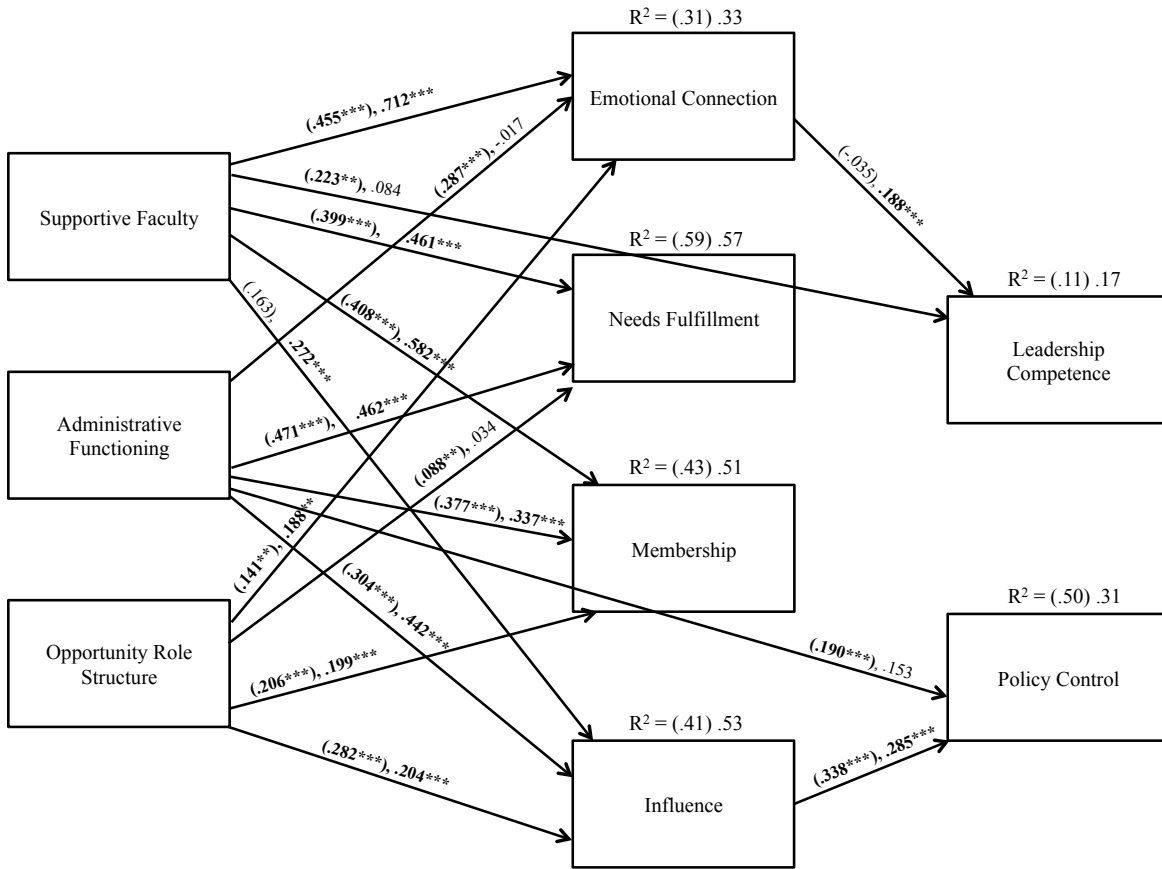


Figure 5. Path diagram for multigroup structural equation model of White, non-Hispanic students (N = 314) and non-White Students (N = 221).

(Non-significant paths, intercorrelations among the exogenous variables, and error variance estimates are not shown. Pathways in bold indicates beta weights that are significant at **p < .01, or ***p < .001)

APPENDIX

A review of the top social work schools' websites and sense of community (school rankings from U.S. News & World Report: <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-health-schools/social-work-rankings>)

School	Ranking	Sense of Community
University of Michigan	#1	Sense of community is noted in the context of testimonials of student learning; award to a faculty member for promoting sense of community among women of color within the school; and in the description of a multicultural School of Social Work event, the purpose of which was to “foster a sense of community”
Washington University in St. Louis	#1	Their website refers to the student cohort, faculty, and other resources as “Your Community” and there are student testimonials about the support of the community to obtain the MSW.
University of Chicago	#3	Sense of community is referenced in faculty profiles of research including sense of community among torture victims and in other global contexts; in MSW student testimonials about their field work and building sense of community in neighborhoods; in the school’s fundraising testimonials, sense of community is cited by a donor as a reason to give to the school; and as a descriptor of a community mental health center run by an alumnus where MSW students are learning to treat clients without pathologizing them.
University of Washington (Seattle)	#3	Sense of community is referenced in a faculty member’s teaching statement; as a descriptor of the mentoring component of the School’s Prevention research program; sense of community is also noted in a School report “Assessment of MSW Foundation Curriculum: Educational Outcomes. 2008-2009 Academic Year” in which the authors state that sense of community among cohort members needs to

		among students, faculty, field instructors, and staff).
Columbia University	#5	Sense of community is included in a student’s testimonial about why he donates money to the School.
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	#5	Sense of community is included in several job descriptions at community agencies posted to their website; and as a descriptor of one of the goals of the School’s orientation programs for Advanced Standing and MSW students.
University of California, Berkeley	#7	Sense of community is included in a faculty member’s publications list in which she examines sense of community, social capital, and other related constructs; and in the context of alumni testimonials about their experiences at the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare.
University of Texas, Austin	#7	Sense of community is identified as one of the core themes in a research project by two faculty members that examines sense of community and other factors in the context of Prop. 2 and LGBT activism in Texas.
Case Western Reserve University	#9	Sense of community is included in a faculty member’s new book on housing and in his role as Director of the National Initiative on Mixed Income Housing, and in a faculty study of improvements to low-income housing in Cleveland.
Boston College	#10	Sense of community is referenced in an article about Social Work and Nursing faculty collaborating, in the spirit of Jane Addams, to “foster a sense of community” by bringing health and mental health services into the local community; a learning lab in which social work students worked with clients in a yoga class that included sense of community as one of its goals; in an interview with Alberto Godenzi, Dean of the School of Social Work, he is quoted as saying, “Sometimes it's only rhetoric to say there is a ‘sense of community’ but I truly sensed it here. I saw colleagues who truly care for one another, who want to help one another to do a good job.”(http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/rvp/pubaf/chronicle/v9/s21/godenzi.html)