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**WAITING TO EXHALE: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN AN URBAN
ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM**

by

LISA HALE ROSE

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare, The City University of
New York**

2000

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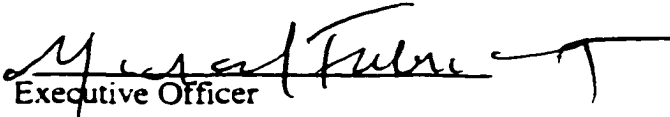
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare.

April 17, 2000
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Chair of Examining Committee

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract**WAITING TO EXHALE: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN AN URBAN
ADVANCED STANDING PROGRAM**

by

Lisa Hale Rose**Adviser: Professor Irwin Epstein**

The concept of "Advanced Standing" in Graduate social work education, was developed in the early 1970's as an accelerated pathway for Baccalaureate Social Work Degree holders to attain a master's degree in less than the traditional two years. Accelerated programs exist in many universities. Nonetheless educators have disagreed over whether the practice promotes redundancy; if BSW students are ill-prepared for the 2nd year of graduate school, both academically and in the field and; if accelerated students have time enough to become adequately socialized into the profession. An advanced standing program was piloted in a large public urban university during the 1997-98 academic year, intended to promote access to undergraduates from the university, who are primarily African-American and Latino. This study explored the experience of the 15 Advanced Standing students as they progressed towards their degree. All of the students were women, and the majority were African-American and Latina. Through group and individual interviews with students, faculty, and field supervisors, a number of issues were illuminated. The students' tenure in graduate school was marked by a sense of urgency, with most students expressing feelings of stress along the way. The stress appeared to stem from a variety of origins, most significantly from the convergence of roles that included mother, spouse, provider, and accelerated graduate student, all 15

students performed at least adequately academically and in the field. All 15 obtained social work employment within four months of graduation, thus providing a new pathway to professionalism for inner-city students. While students appeared to coalesce into a group that provided much needed socio-emotional and instrumental support, students' relationships with faculty, field instructors, and students from the larger cohort were also explored and found to be meaningful to the graduate school experience. Significantly, graduate student members of the Latino Students Alliance and the Black Student Alliance were instrumental in facilitating integration with the 2nd year cohort for the Advanced Standing students. Finally, the concept of theory-practice synergy, that concomitantly occurred in the classroom and field, was explored as it relates to the continuum of social work education and professional socialization.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank almost everyone I know for unequivocally supporting my efforts to complete this dissertation. My family, friends and colleagues have fortified me constantly, offering encouragement and gently pushing me to "get it done". Because of the enormity of this project, however, there are many people that I must specifically say thank you to.

The faculty at the Hunter School of Social Work, particularly the Advanced Standing Committee, including Elaine Marshack, Joanne Ivry, Carmen Hendricks, Yvonne Asimoah, Tony Sainz, Roger Sherwood, Dean Bogart Leashore, and Irwin Epstein provided me with access to information, and hours of their valuable time and expertise. Their capacity to be both forthcoming and sympathetic was essential to the development and completion of this project. Harold Weissman, former Executive Officer of the Doctoral Program in Social Welfare was extremely helpful in providing the support necessary to complete this project. I must also thank Michael Fabricant, the present Executive Officer, for teaching me the artful skill, or skillful art, of qualitative research.

The fifteen advanced standing students whom I got to know over the year that I conducted this study, were inspiring in their steadfast ability to overcome countless hurdles and reach inestimable intellectual and professional heights. I thank them, from the bottom of my heart, for giving me the privilege of allowing me to get to know them.

I hope that I've conveyed their experiences with the same honesty and thoughtfulness with which they were relayed to me.

My dissertation committee, Elaine Marshack, Dean Bogart Leashore, and Irwin Epstein, have provided intelligent and practical suggestions, and only the gentlest criticism, without ever being overbearing.

I've sometimes threatened my husband Hal, and my children, Max and Maya, that I wouldn't acknowledge them if they continued to interrupt me while I was trying to work. The truth of the matter is that they are my heart and soul, and their unconditional love, support, and encouragement was more than anyone could ask for. And...boundless thanks to my mom, Barbara Matthews, for running interference for me, whenever I needed her to.

Finally, I must singularly acknowledge the Chair of my committee, Irwin Epstein. It was he who encouraged me to take on this project, and prodded me with his intelligent, pragmatic and subdued sense of humor, to complete it. He is one of the busiest, yet most organized and caring people I've ever known, truly someone to emulate. I honestly couldn't have done this without his clearheaded and always sensitive guidance.

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Chapter 1--Introduction/History

In the fall of 1996, a faculty committee at the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York, spearheaded by Dean Bogart Leashore, began formulating a plan to implement an Advanced Standing Program. The concept of "Advanced Standing" in Graduate social work education was developed in the early 1970's as an accelerated pathway for Baccalaureate Social Work Degree holders to attain a master's degree in less than the traditional two years. A pilot program won approval by faculty in the spring of 1997 began in the 1997-98 academic year. This study explores the experience of the Advanced Standing students as they progress towards their degree and serves as an evaluation tool that can inform programmatic decisions regarding the direction and nature of the program in the future.

A seemingly uncomplicated administrative academic maneuver, Advanced Standing is in fact steeped in controversies that are rooted in ideological fissures that originated very early in the history of the social work profession (Abbott, 1934). They include: non-professionalism vs. professionalism (Lowe, 1985), undergraduate education vs. graduate education (Leighninger, 1984); and generalist education vs. specialist education (Gibbs, Locke, & Lohmann, 1990).

The debate over the educational and professional value of granting BSW holders

Advanced Standing in graduate education has been fueled by these schisms and merits elaboration.

The formal activity of Social Work began as a response to what in the 1880's were very urban problems related to poverty and the influx of new immigrants. It is common knowledge that the Charity Organization Societies were associated with the development of casework methodologies and the settlement house movement with group work and community organization. Meeting the needs of client groups through the utilization of different methods was workable in cities where method specific agencies co-existed in close proximity (Lowe, 1985). As social work became an increasingly professional and specialized endeavor in the early part of this century, decisions needed to be made as to whether social workers should be trained within social service agencies; in undergraduate or graduate university programs; or at independent schools of philanthropy. It was believed that agency-based training was less than optimum, as it didn't train individuals to work in the broader field. Therefore, in the early part of the century, schools of Philanthropy, and later of Social Work, were developed in urban centers like Chicago, New York, and Boston to train social workers. In a short time those schools merged with universities, acknowledging the profession's knowledge base rooted in the academic disciplines (Leighninger, 1984).

The drive towards professionalism had been in gear since the famous Flexner report of 1915 urged the social workers to adopt the paradigm of medical professionalism. But it

was during the 1930's, that the concerted push towards professionalization thrust casework into the defining role as the paramount social work technology.

Simultaneously, the American Association of Schools of Social Work (AASSW) ruled that "the two-year post-baccalaureate Masters degree should be adopted as the only recognized professional credential" (Lowe, 1985).

Graduate education was then canonized as the arena for professional training, yet undergraduate social work programs that had simultaneously existed since the 1920's were not abandoned. The graduate schools were firmly established in the older urban centers where many of the social work agencies existed. However, as the population moved westward and to more rural areas, there was an emerging requirement for trained social service workers in those areas. It was clear that what had happened was that many people, particularly in rural areas and small cities and towns in the south and the west, were in social work occupations having received little or no training. Lowe (1985) points to a critical paradox that was becoming increasingly apparent:

"In effect, what social work accomplished with the 1937 graduate-only decision was a severing of its head from its supporting and still developing body. The status of graduate education had been asserted by the graduate-only policy, but the status was attached to the educational level only and not to the content of social work activity, nor to a realistic assessment of the public welfare occupation/job market" (p.197).

As the need for social service workers, particularly in the public sector, continued to expand during the 1940's, the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA) was organized to promote undergraduate social work education. Although

undergraduate programs would prepare beginning professionals for practice, NASSA always supported undergraduate social work education as a foundation for graduate study. However, the two professional social work organizations, AASSW with its graduate only stance and NASSA, were locked in a turf battle that raged through the 40's and early 50's.

The struggle culminated with the publication of the 1951 Hollis-Taylor study funded by the Russell Sage Foundation which reaffirmed graduate school as the only route to professional stature. In spite of its endorsement of graduate training, Hollis urged the profession to strengthen its undergraduate foundation to follow the medical model in requiring a mandatory "undergraduate pre-professional base" (Leighninger, 1984:pg 75).

As a consequence of the heated debate between the two organizations, as well as the conciliatory efforts evident through the Hollis-Taylor report, both organizations were disbanded in 1952 and replaced by one organization, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). CSWE has since been the accrediting organization in social work education for both BSW and MSW programs (Lowe, 1985, Leighninger, 1984, Anderson, 1985).

The need to prepare workers to meet the needs of the poor in smaller cities and rural areas persisted. Undergraduate social work programs, which could be readily housed within departments of sociology, continued to be developed in rural areas, in particular, within

the land grant colleges. They "reemerged with vigor" (Leighninger, 1984:pg76) in the late 1960's when the need for social service workers burgeoned and funding for BSW programs became available as a result of President Johnson's War on Poverty.

In 1969, acknowledging the necessity to create educational standards for the growing number of BSW programs, CSWE formally announced an accreditation policy. Actual accreditation of undergraduate programs began in 1974. As a consequence, an even more protracted debate between proponents of graduate and undergraduate social work education than had raged in the 40's and 50's ensued (Leighninger, 1984, Lowe, 1985).

A major focus of the controversy was whether or not undergraduates were cognitively and socially mature enough to take on the role of professional. This was not a new concern. Edith Abbott, in the 1940's, had suggested that undergraduates were not mature enough for the demands of the profession (Lowe, 1985). The debate reached a crescendo in the late 1970's and early 80's when resources for graduate social work programs were shrinking and there was deep concern about the future of the profession (Kolevzon, 1977). Harold Lewis, the former Dean of the Hunter College School of Social Work, questioned the "quality of the products of this expanded (undergraduate) professional education" (Leighninger, 1984:pg.66). Harry Specht, the late dean of the School of Social Work at University of California at Berkeley, published a controversial study in support of the perspective that the BSW degree was less than adequate preparation for the profession, or for graduate work. Specht et.al. (1984) asserted that MSWs who had an

undergraduate social work degree were less likely to demonstrate professional achievements than were MSWs who did not have a BSW.

Along with the increasing need for social workers, and fueling the undergraduate/graduate debate, was the emergence during the 1960's of a new social work technology, known as generalist practice. Similar to a country doctor's medical school training, it allowed for students to become versed in a multitude of practice methods. Generalist practice, like undergraduate social work education, also has roots in rural practice. Focusing on problems as targets for change, generalist practice requires practitioners to be knowledgeable in a range of methods that could be utilized in problem-solving.

As the generalist technology became more sophisticated and utilized, it became apparent that "many of the insights of this approach also could be applied usefully to practice in certain inner-city and international contexts as well" (Gibbs, Locke & Lohmann, 1989: pg.234). This broad-based "transactional" perspective was adopted as the educational core of BSW education but represents the foundation taught in the first year of graduate education as well (Kolevzon, 1977, Anderson, 1985, Gibbs, et al, 1990, Gross, 1992). Thus the term "Continuum" in social work education can be understood not only in the context of the undergraduate/graduate debate, but also in the educational journey taken by many students from generalist to specialist. There is controversy here as well between the proponents of BSW programs and graduate only education as to whether the

substantive learning of generalist practice in the undergraduate programs can be equated with the foundation, or first year of graduate school (Harrison & Atherton, 1990).

The focus of the undergraduate/graduate-generalist/specialist controversy, then, that is specific to the construct of Advanced Standing lies in the issue of articulation or linkage between BSW and MSW programs (Raymond & Atherton, 1991):

This seems simple at first glance. If a person has a degree in accounting, for example and decides to specialize by taking a graduate degree in tax accounting, he or she should not expect to have to repeat basic accounting courses. The graduate work should build, but not duplicate (beyond a quick review perhaps) the work taken as an undergraduate. The student should step up to the next level of knowledge and skill.

In social work education, this simple paradigm is complicated by the offering of the foundation content at either the graduate or undergraduate level (pg.299).

By offering Advanced Standing to BSW degree holders, redundancy is avoided. As the continuum debate continues, questions over the efficacy of Advanced Standing remain. For example: Even if the same content is covered on the undergraduate level and the first year of graduate school, is it covered with the same intellectual breadth, depth and sophistication to insure parity between advanced standees and graduate students beginning their second year of study (Gross, 1992)? Without the full two years of graduate study will students reach a level of maturity necessary for professional practice? If professionalism is acquired through graduate study, is less than two years enough time for socialization into the profession (Hoffman, 1992)? Finally, if CSWE accreditation

insures educational standards on the BSW and MSW levels, and it is assumed that both undergraduate and graduate programs are unique and responsive to surrounding community and population and reflect distinctive educational and practice perspectives, how then can undergraduate and graduate programs uniformly and seamlessly link with one another (Kolevzon, (1992), Anderson, 1985)? These struggles within the profession are the issues that are grappled with through the empirical studies that will be discussed in the following review of literature.

In addition to these controversies in social work education, another perhaps more subtle, less articulated issue also provides fodder for the debate over Advanced Standing. That is the issue of access to professional social work training for students of color (Icard, et al, 1996, Berger, 1989). Braddock and Trent (1991) note that "[i]ssues of access to graduate and professional schools are important because African Americans continue to be under-represented in advanced degree programs..." (pg. 161). This is a particularly pointed issue in the social work continuum debate. Ginsberg (1992) states:

Ethnic minority students make up a large proportion of the undergraduate [social work] enrollments...In 1989-90, they were almost one fourth of all students, a much larger percentage than that of the MSW level" (pg. 31).

Berger (1989) notes that social work undergraduate programs, particularly those in inner cities, are often predominantly black and Latino. "Undergraduate social work programs can introduce the possibility of graduate education and counsel students how to reach this goal" (pg.348). The issue of access to graduate education as it relates to Advanced Standing has yet to be explored, yet it is one that is central to this study.

The City University of New York has two Bachelor of Social Work Programs, at Lehman and York Colleges, and one at the College of Staten Island was, at that time, in the process of accreditation. The Hunter College School of Social Work, then ranked one of the ten best graduate social work programs in the country (US News and World Report, 1994), did not have an Advanced Standing program until the present pilot project was initiated in July 1997. This project was developed, in part, as a response to the need to promote access to graduate education for City University of New York students, who are for the most part black and Latino. In fact, HCSSW had prepared a proposal to establish a multi-campus Social Work Advanced Standing Collaborative Research Initiative. Although the proposal was not funded it was stated within the text that “[a] compelling mission of the School of Social Work is to offer qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds with limited financial means, particularly minority students, for whom CUNY has been the traditional route for undergraduate and graduate education.” Yet in spite of the fact that minority access to professional education is a goal that is consonant with the practice and values of the social work profession as well as with the mission of the school, the project was not overwhelmingly endorsed by faculty. Instead, reflective of the controversy in social work education at large, the faculty at Hunter was divided over the issue of Advanced Standing. A spirited debate over the efficacy of Advanced Standing lasted for over six months before the faculty agreed to pilot the project. Discussions among faculty revolved around issues of preparedness for second-year course and field work and transition from a generalist-based educational experience to a

methods based approach. When, in the eleventh hour, the faculty agreed to endorse the pilot program, approval of the project was not unanimous. One purpose of this study was to provide evaluative data to the school, so that decisions could be made as to whether the pilot program should continue as a more permanent educational option. Therefore, in addition to addressing the issues reflected throughout the historical and empirical literature on Advanced Standing, this study also looks at the practice of Advanced Standing and HCSSW's effort to encourage minority access and enrollment in graduate school through the project.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

As was stated previously, the issue of Advanced Standing is couched in the larger debate regarding the BSW/MSW continuum. In spite of the fact that undergraduate social work education had historically been considered the stepchild of social work education (Ammons, 1975), CSWE began accrediting BSW programs in 1974 and, in spite of concerns that lingered, approved Advanced Standing status for graduates of BSW programs in 1978. According to CSWE guidelines, Advanced Standing is to be granted based on the premise that the BSW curriculum is so similar to the foundation year of the MSW curriculum, that to ask BSW graduates to take first year MSW courses would be repetitive. CSWE standards clearly insist that students should not repeat course work. Avoiding redundancy is a particular concern, "specifically, BSW graduates who enter MSW programs should not repeat professional foundation material that has been mastered in a BSW program" (Aguilar, 1997, p.61).

It should be noted here, that although CSWE approved the concept of Advanced Standing, it was not mandatory that graduate schools of social work adopt such programs.

As is evident by the opinions articulated by the two distinguished Deans discussed previously, a 1984 report by the National Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Schools of Social Work, Toward Excellence in Graduate Social Work Education in the United States, reflected the position that Advanced Standing programs should not be recommended practice for graduate social work education. This was due to the absence

of empirical evidence demonstrating comparability with two-year graduate study" (Siegal & Baskind, 1990:pg.53).

In the same vein as the long standing debate regarding the academic and professional value of the BSW degree, the process of awarding Advanced Standing has been a point of contention in social work education. As the "Continuum" has been hotly debated in the conceptual literature (Hoffman, 1992; Kolevzon, 1992), Advanced Standing has become the empirical distillation of that same debate and has been the subject of a number of studies over the last two decades.

The studies of Advanced Standing can be divided roughly into three areas that mirror the larger theoretical continuum debates. The first two, 1) whether BSW graduates are prepared to enter the 2nd year of graduate school (input), and then 2) perform as well while there (thruput), are linked to the debate over the merits of undergraduate social work education. As was discussed in the previous section, questions revolve around whether or not undergraduates are academically and developmentally prepared for the conceptual and theoretical rigors of social work training. If, as the nay sayers assume, that BSW curriculum is less theoretically and academically rigorous and more practice oriented than foundation MSW curricula (Harrison, W.D. & Atherton, C.R.,1990; Harrison, W., Kwong, K.,& Cheong, K.J.,1988), would BSW graduates be prepared for the second year of graduate school, and then, would they perform as well, academically and in the field, as MSW students in their second year?

The third issue, which dovetails with the first two, focuses on the question of the adequacy of the truncated graduate school experience in preparing Masters level professionals (output). If a traditional two-year graduate educational program is necessary in training professional social workers, are students who receive their graduate degree in less time equally prepared to enter the field? Have they had enough training? Have they had adequate time to become socialized into the profession? Do they fare as well as traditional MSW graduates in the job market? These are the major emphases for the small, but nonetheless significant, body of empirically based literature on Advanced Standing which will be discussed here.

It can't be overstated that the schema for categorizing these studies is not monolithic but rather is done so to explore and emphasize what is known about the issue of Advanced Standing and where the gaps in knowledge exist. There are not always clean delineations in thematic focus and often emphases overlap. There are other ways that these same studies could have been classified; for example, those concerned with comparative skill acquisition, professional socialization, and success in the workplace. It was felt, however, that an input-thruput-output matrix would serve to concretize the issues and concerns over Advanced Standing as well as the continuum of social work education.

Input: Educational Preparedness

A small number of studies narrowly focus on the preparedness of BSW graduates upon

entering the second year of a graduate social work program (Ammons, 1975; Carrillo & Thyer, 1994; Thyer, Vonk & Tandy, 1996). Each one is quite limited as they all utilize small samples, but each has strength in pointing to issues and directions in the study of Advanced Standing.

Ammons (1975), writing almost a quarter of a century ago, was considering the genesis of an innovative educational option in social work, Advanced Standing. Also at that juncture, CSWE accreditation for BSW programs had just begun. The BSW's utility as a professional degree in and of itself was being questioned. In addition, the value of the BSW degree as preparation for two-year graduate social work was being debated.

Ammons chose to cover these three areas of conceptual ground in his small study, and consequently the potency of his findings was somewhat diluted. However, as one of the pioneering studies in the area of Advanced Standing, it merits further discussion.

Ammons cites a 1965 NIMH study written by Thomas Walz that identifies three areas of competencies of Bachelors level social workers: social sensitivity; the ability to identify problems within the service continuum; and learning to define those problems (Ammons, 1975,pg.13). He groups these within a label called "social insight" and utilizes an already existing instrument, the Chapin Test of Social Insight, to test four distinct groups of students: BSW's from a non-accredited, church- affiliated college (n=15); BSW's from a non-accredited mostly black state university (n=12); a CSWE approved BSW program at a major state university (n=8); and a group of first year graduate students at an accredited

school of social work (n=6). After administering the test which contained 25 situations that students were asked to analyze by choosing one of four answers, he found that "students from the CSWE-approved program achieved significantly higher scores than the average of both non-approved programs" (pg.14). He also found that there was "no significant difference between the students from the CSWE program and the first-year graduate students" (pg.14).

Clearly the external validity of this study is limited by its reliance on small n's. In addition, as Ammons himself points out, it compares bachelors level students with first-semester graduate students, so its usefulness in comparing the educational value of the BSW with the first of graduate school is lost. However, the study is important as it paved the way for the studies that succeeded it.

Carillo & Thyer (1994) address an issue raised by the Ammons study when they state the purpose of their research, which compares the interviewing skills of Advanced Standing students and third-quarter MSW students:

Currently available studies have measured student outcomes at various points on the social work continuum. None however, has compared students as they begin the Advanced Standing portion of their education (pg.380).

The authors compared the interviewing skills of 15 Advanced Standing and 23 two-year full-time students through simulated interviews in which a doctoral student (who was not told the purpose of the study) posed as a client. The students were not randomly selected;

rather, they volunteered to be part of the study. The interviews were videotaped and coded by two trained observers. The observers indicated the presence or absence of selected interviewing skills during 10 second intervals of the ten minute interview. Skills included facilitation, questioning/clarification, and support/empathy. Instrument reliability was established by calculating the rate of interrater agreement, which was over 86% for each of the three skill areas. The findings indicated that both groups used the various skills at similar rates and "support[ed] the appropriateness of Advanced Standing policy and the practice of exempting qualified BSW students from portions of the MSW foundation course work" (pg.385).

The authors cautioned readers about the limitations of the study with regards to the use of a non-random, small sample from just one graduate school and commented that it lends "modest" support for Advanced Standing policy and practice (pg. 386). The study demonstrated, albeit narrowly, that there is equivalent mastery of foundation level social work skills on the BSW and first year MSW levels.

Thyer, Vonk, and Tandy (1996) attempted to shed a brighter light on the issue of preparedness in a study comparing BSW licensure examination scores of BSW Advanced Standing students and third quarter MSW two-year program students. A practice examination was administered to a class of Advanced Standing students (n=20) entering a graduate social work program and to 32 two-year program students at the beginning of their second year. The two groups were similar in gender, race, and work experience, but

the Advanced Standing students were, on the average, four years younger. Results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the scores of the two groups and suggested that the two types of students were "equivalently prepared at the point where they typically converge" (pg.45).

Knight (1993) studied the issue of preparedness from a slightly different perspective, just after the point of convergence, and from the viewpoint of field work performance. After six weeks in field placement, field instructors supervising students from five mid-Atlantic, participating schools of social work with Advanced Standing programs were given questionnaires that asked them to rate the field performance of their second-year students (n=482). They were asked to evaluate their students along 33 different dimensions (i.e. student's ability to: engage client system; assess client's situation; understand advocacy skills and understand social work values and; work with families groups and communities). Five-point Likert scales were used for each question. With a response rate of 64.1%, few differences emerged between advanced standees and traditional two-year MSW students. "There were several exceptions (maintenance of case records, collaboration with colleagues, and self-awareness), however, and in these cases advanced placement students were assessed more favorably" (p.314).

With a larger sample than previous studies focusing on preparedness, Knight confirmed the findings that suggest that BSW students in Advanced Standing programs are adequately prepared for the rigors of the second year of graduate school.

Thruput: How does the Advanced Standees Graduate School Experience Compare With the Two-year Student's Experience?

Fortune, Greene and Kolevzon's study (1987) acts as a segue between the preparedness studies and those that explore the comparative academic, socialization, and employment outcomes of Advanced Standing and traditional two-year students. The authors studied the school experiences of three distinct cohorts of students: BSW (n=34) and non-BSW students (n=118) entering in the first year of graduate school, and Advanced Standing students (n=42) in the second year. The study is quite complex as it measures four variables, GPA (undergraduate and graduate), psychosocial adjustment, educational program satisfaction, and social work commitment, for two successive years at one university. This enabled the authors to enlarge their sample and to note changes for students entering in the first year. For the advanced standees entering in the second year, the questionnaire was only administered once, therefore changes in GPA, psychosocial adjustment and program satisfaction were not measured for that particular group.

The authors used a combination of pre-existing instruments that measure psychological well-being and scales measuring program satisfaction and stress as a student, which were constructed by one of the authors. In addition, data on background characteristics such as sex, race and social work experience were compiled.

It is significant to note that the undergraduate GPA was lower for BSW students in the

first year of graduate school than for BSW's who were advanced standees. The first year BSW students did not perform as well academically as non-BSW's in their first year, although their grades improved and compared favorably with non-BSW's in the second year. Advanced standees performed as well as their non-BSW counterparts in the second year.

The results of the study suggest overall that graduate students with BSW's or other undergraduate degrees perform equally well, are equally committed to the profession and were equally satisfied with their graduate education. However, the advanced standees experienced more psychological stress as students than did the other groups. The authors attribute the difference to the "increased demands of the accelerated program" (pg.186), as the Advanced Standing students were in class and field for the summer preceding the second year and were taking a heavier course load than other students.

This study, like many that preceded it, was limited to one school. In spite of its narrow scope, it further demonstrates the evidence of academic parity between traditional two-year graduate students and advanced standees. It also indicates that advanced standees may be under more pressure than their counterparts. In addition, it is quite significant as it paves the way for a different area of inquiry, that is, the experience of students, specifically advanced standees in a traditional two-year program. Although the authors point to potential reasons why Advanced Standing students may experience more stress, the constrictions of a quantitatively constructed survey do not necessarily lend themselves

to mining the reasons why that may be so.

Bogo, Michalski, Raphael & Roberts (1995) focused on the student experience in graduate school when they asked the specific question: "Do social work students' professional identity and practice interests change through the course of their social work education" (pg.228)? They compared three cohorts from a Canadian school of social work: beginning MSW students, second-year MSW students, and BSW Advanced Standing students entering the second year of graduate school. The authors used a questionnaire that they had constructed for a previous study that asked respondents to rank or identify employment, practice choices, and self-identification terms. Each group was surveyed at two time intervals, thereby measuring changes in professional identification and practice interests. Some background characteristics were also explored. Interestingly, this group of advanced standees, unlike previous groups studied by Ammons (1976), Thyer & Carillo (1994), and Fortune (1987), were older than the traditional two-year students.

Bogo found that for the particular groups studied, the advanced standees were least likely to change their social work interests from their first semester of graduate study to the second. More than the other cohorts, from the beginning of their graduate education they identified with traditional social work roles, "Social Worker" and "Clinical Social Worker", rather than "Therapist" or "Analyst". Also unlike the other cohorts, there was relatively little change from T1 to T2 in their self-identification, although self-

identification as "Social Worker" declined and "Clinical Social Worker" increased.

The Bogo et. al. (1995) study also addresses the "one foundation" and generalist/specialist controversies. The authors note the impact of the curricula that students were exposed to as undergraduates in BSW programs that apparently solidified their professional identities:

As BSW graduates they have developed a stable social work identity and a foundation from which to develop a more specialized self-identification and set of practice interests (pg. 244).

With the foundation material firmly under their belts, the authors suggest that these students have been socialized toward the traditional social work mission and are focused on "pursu[ing] graduate education to develop a more specialized practice competence"(pg. 244).

Output: Is the Truncated Graduate School Experience Sufficient?

Rather than focusing on the preparedness of BSW's for Advanced Standing in graduate school, or their comparative performance and experience in the process of graduate study, a group of studies explore the question of length of time necessary to produce effective Master's level social workers. O'Neil (1980) was the first to do so and asked a number of very specific questions:

Can accelerated or advanced graduate programs provide sufficient preparation for quality practice at the MSW level? How long does the socialization process take for a social worker to acquire competence and confidence in a particular professional role? Would there be a significant correlation between the length of time one spends in graduate education and assessment of one's professional

practice after graduation? (pg.75)

O'Neil was particularly interested in the concept of professional socialization and whether or not one year of professional graduate work was sufficient in developing a professional self-concept. Interestingly, Bogo et al (1995) made no reference to O'Neil's findings in their study of self-identification among graduate social work students even though both studies were concerned with the process of professional socialization. In fact, Bogo's findings were not in accord with O'Neil's.

Incorporating the ideas of Merton, Teiderman, Towle, and others, O'Neil conceptualized the process of professional socialization in social work as having three phases: the initial, somewhat idealistic stage; a second stage in which the student faces the often painful realities regarding self and profession; and the final stage of integration and identification (pg.77). Her assumption was that if the process of socialization was incomplete, that graduates would not be evaluated as highly in the professional workplace, nor would they assess their own practice as highly.

The study was ambitious as graduates from 8 programs were surveyed. Yet only a total of 73 students completed the survey and only 34 supervisors returned completed questionnaires. For the graduates, a multi-dimensional questionnaire that contained scales to assess practice, vocational self-actualization and self-concept was used. The scales used for graduates and supervisors to assess their practice were similar.

Background data was also collected and in this study, Advanced Standing students were

younger and less experienced than the traditional two-year students. They also had higher GPAs (a finding consistent with most other studies, although Hepler and Noble, (1993) attribute this to grade inflation in undergraduate social work programs) and had a greater sense of competence than two-year students. Most significantly (at the .05 level), "the accelerated group received lower supervisor practice assessment scores than those of the traditional group" (pg.79), and this finding held constant when controlled for age and experience of both student groups. Self-assessments indicated little difference at all.

From her results, O'Neil concluded that "timing and content of graduate social work education programs need to be reconsidered [as] [s]upervisors continue to assess the practice of accelerated programs lower than those of traditional programs" (pg.80). The author attributes this to the incomplete process of professional socialization for accelerated students. However, that connection is never empirically fortified. Were accelerated graduates evaluated less favorably because they were less professionally socialized, or could it have been perhaps that their skills training was less than adequate, or some other reason? These possibilities were not addressed: rather we are left with the vague assumption that the differences were due to variance in the professional socialization process.

Richman & Rosenfeld (1988) continued exploration of the issue of professional socialization in their study on employment outcomes for Advanced Standing students. Citing O'Neil's study (1980), the authors suggest that proper socialization into the

profession is necessary for securing professional employment. The authors were also concerned with graduate program satisfaction and its relationship to employment. Additionally, they were concerned with the issue of generalist vs. specialist social work education and how those students with an initial generalist orientation (those with BSW undergraduate training) would fare in the work world in comparison to those who had a more developed specialist perspective (those with traditional MSW training).

The authors surveyed graduates from one southeastern university, 49 advanced standees and 51 traditional two-year graduates. The sample represented every graduating class between 1979 and 1985. The respondents completed a questionnaire in which they: completed demographic information; rated their graduate education experience; and answered a series of questions about post-graduation employment. The questionnaire also covered perceived relationship between graduate school education and employment, through semantic differential scales: relevant/not relevant, adequate/not adequate, and on target with competencies and not on target with competencies (pg.16).

The authors found that advanced standees and traditional two-year program graduates rated their graduate program satisfactorily although two-year students were more likely to evaluate their program as being too long. Students from both groups found professional employment at the same rates, their salaries were similar, they stayed on their jobs the same amount of time and found second jobs in comparable time frames. They belonged to the same professional organizations and read the same number of journals.

There was one difference between the two groups: "While MSW area of specialization and subsequent employment are congruent for two-year graduates' first and second jobs, and for Advanced Standing graduates' first jobs, for Advanced Standing graduates' second jobs, the relationship is less congruent" (pg.18). And here again, the authors make the empirically unsubstantiated suggestion that this may be associated with "O'Neil's (1980) concern for proper socialization of graduate students." The authors assert that "it is possible that Advanced Standing students change from one area to another because of insufficient exposure or guidance on concentration and specialization selection" (pg.18). However, since the authors do establish that both groups of students change from first to second jobs at the same rate and are equally satisfied with their job choices, it may be that the generalist foundation prepared students sufficiently for more than one area of specialization and/or concentration. However, the latter assumption is not addressed.

Although not focusing on advanced standees specifically, Meinert & Dubansky (1989) looked at comparative employment outcomes for accelerated and traditional MSW students twenty years after graduation. The authors tracked down graduates from an experimental graduate social work program that was conducted at the University of Missouri-Columbia in the mid 1960's. These students attended school and field for an entire calendar year, thereby condensing the traditional four semester graduate program.

The authors analyzed data from questionnaires completed by the experimental group (n=26) and the traditional two-year group (n=38). Students were asked to provide demographic data including age, social work experience prior to graduate school and annual salary. The accelerated group was older, had more experience, and had an average salary of \$6,000 more than the traditional group. In addition, students were asked to rate the relevancy of curriculum content to employment opportunities, and whether or not they maintained contact with students and faculty from graduate school. The authors found that "in terms of their professional characteristics or practice abilities, the former group did not exhibit deficits after two decades" (pg.165). In fact, [o]ver the last two decades, well over 50% of the experimental group maintained personal contact with at least one other student and one faculty member, whereas 50% of the traditional group maintained contact with students but only 30% with faculty. The authors comment that this can be attributable to the "climate that by design and structure enables a high degree of intense student-faculty interaction to take place and is an important educational component" (pg. 166). The authors also noted that the accelerated group published more, had a higher number of professional memberships, and, on the average, attended more professional conferences.

Meinert and Dubansky's findings are particularly relevant to the socialization discussion in accelerated learning, as the experimental group they studied did not hold a previous social work degree. Since the only difference between the two groups was time spent in graduate school, and no significant differences between the outcomes for the two were

unearthed, the inference can be made that adequate socialization can occur in less than two years of graduate social work education.

Input-Thruput-Output Studies

In the late 1960's and early 70's, the National Institute of Mental Health funded a number studies that focused on the issue of accelerated social work education. Kadushin and Kelling (1977), researchers from University of Madison-Wisconsin, as well as teams from Adelphi University, San Diego State College and the University of Missouri, were awarded grants to study the experimental programs at each of the schools over two years.

The methodology used at each was comprehensive. Advanced standing was not the only form of acceleration studied. For example, Kadushin and Kelling (1977) looked at 98 specific measures that compared two groups of students: traditional 2-year students, and "3-2" students, or students who entered a graduate program after their junior year.

Student data were compared for the traditional and experimental groups upon entry. Their performance was elaborately compared while in the respective programs, and quantitative outcome measures were designed and evaluated. Previously constructed skill assessment scales were used as well as client supervisor assessments of worker competence. In addition, students were asked to make a tape recording of an interview with a long-term client, then to transcribe it and then to provide an autocritical analysis along with it. After the two-year study, the authors concluded that there was little difference between accelerated and two year students:

[T]he general conclusion to which the measures used in this study pointed was

that the graduates of the 3-2 experimental program were indistinguishable from the 4-2 program in level of social work performance (pg.74).

Kadushin and Kelling's findings were confirmed by the other NIMH research teams as well: "In every instance, graduates of the accelerated innovative programs tested out as being of equal competence to graduates of the traditional programs (pg.74)."

Advanced Standing: Program and Policy

In spite of empirical findings that pointed to parity between traditional and accelerated students, discomfort with Advanced Standing practices was evidenced by the continued focus on the issues in the research and conceptual literature of the 70's, 80's and 90's. Nonetheless, by 1990, a clear majority of social work programs had an Advanced Standing option (Siegal & Baskind, 1990). By 1994, the practice of Advanced Standing seemed to have become a regular practice, with 81% of schools of social work polled in a national survey having Advanced Standing practices and more than three-fourths of surveyed Deans and Directors favoring such practices (Aguilar, et.al, 1997).

Extraordinary variability in admissions practices is evident. According to the most recent compilation, Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States:1997 (Lennon, 1998), the majority of programs offering Advanced Standing enable BSW students to attain their MSW in one calendar year (one academic year and a summer). Some however require BSW students to attend the MSW program for at least three semesters. Admissions policies vary, minimum GPAs range from 2.75 to 3.5. Small numbers of

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programs (less than 5) insist that the BSW be attained within the last five years, that the applicant have paid social work experience, or require admissions exams. The variety of forms that Advanced Standing has taken, with very few schools having identical admissions requirements or program completion requirements, is perhaps a reflection of the internal debates going on among faculty at schools of social work as to how to assure the admission of students prepared for the rigor of graduate education, and what to portion of a MSW a BSW is actually equivalent.

Discussion

Whether researching preparedness, performance, or outcome, most studies seem to suggest that few differences are evident between advanced standees and traditional two-year social work students. Most of the studies conducted have been done at single schools. although Ammons (1976), O'Neil (1980), and Knight (1993) surveyed students from a number of programs. Fortune (1987) noted, without much explanation as to causation, that advanced standees experienced more stress than 2-year students, and O'Neil, although drawing her conclusions from a small number of supervisors, concluded that advanced standees were rated less favorably than 2-year graduates. This was attributed to less than adequate socialization into the profession; however, "socialization" seemed not to be operationalized, therefore the connection was tenuous. The issue of socialization continued to loom large. Richman and Rosenfeld (1988) also attributed their finding that accelerated students' second jobs after graduate school was less congruent with graduate training as was traditional students, as being associated with

having a less significant connection to professionalism.

In each of the studies reviewed here, it is clear that painstaking effort was involved in developing exact, indisputable, quantitative measures that would compare the preparedness, experience, or, outcome for accelerated and traditional MSW students. By attempting to put to rest the controversy between proponents and adversaries of Advanced Standing and perhaps even the larger continuum debate in graduate social work education, we end up knowing very little about the Advanced Standing students themselves: How well prepared and trained do they perceive themselves to be? What is the process of social integration for students who enter in the second year of a two-year program? How easy or difficult is it to develop relationships with other students and with faculty? Do these students perceive that there are gaps in their undergraduate training? How, if there are gaps, do they attempt to catch up? What of their generalist background: does it put them at an advantage, or at a disadvantage as they enter their specialized courses? What is it like to feel as though graduate study is more compressed than it is for other students? If the process is stressful, what are the conditions that make it so? Clearly, exploring the depth and breadth of the experience is suited to the malleability of a qualitative study. It is this multi-dimensional exploration that has yet to be undertaken in the area of Advanced Standing.

In addition to addressing a gap in the Advanced Standing literature, one must bear in mind that one purpose of this study was to evaluate a pilot program. A study that is

methodologically flexible could respond to the exigencies that can emerge when a new program is piloted and the data-filled fruit that a qualitative study can bear can be

used to inform future programmatic directions.

Chapter 3-Goals and Intellectual Framework

This was a two-pronged study: First, it provided an opportunity to contribute to the field of social work regarding the practice of Advanced Standing in social work education; second, it was intended to provide evaluative data to the Hunter College School of Social Work as it implements a pilot Advanced Standing program. There is a critical gap in the literature regarding Advanced Standing. As was noted in the previous section, none of the studies thus far has been qualitative in nature. Most have been comparative studies that have attempted to measure parity among advanced standees and traditional MSW students, either in preparedness for second year graduate work, progress while in graduate school, or outcomes after graduation. A modest but significant number of distinctions between advanced standees and traditional MSW students were evident in the empirical literature, such as stress experienced as a student, or variance in the socialization process as indicated by supervisor evaluations.

Although some differences have emerged between Advanced Standing and traditional students, none of the studies conducted thus far has condemned the practice of granting Advanced Standing. The educational practice of granting Advanced Standing to BSW graduates has, in fact, been adopted by over 80% of graduate schools of social work nation-wide. Yet doubts over its efficacy remain, and support for Advanced Standing programs by deans and directors of social work programs is not unanimously positive

(Aguilar et al., 1997).

This study did not attempt to tip the scale one way or the other as its focus was to continue to unearth and understand measures of comparable success among graduate students of social work. It attempted to illuminate the experience of the advanced standees enrolled in the Hunter College School of Social Work Pilot Advanced Standing Program, as they progressed toward their degree. It was hoped that the experience of being educated in an Advanced Standing program, as it was perceived by students, could be further understood through the less structured, more open-ended process of qualitative inquiry. Variables that have emerged as significant in the literature such as academic preparedness and progress, field work readiness and practice experience, professional socialization and progress toward specialized practice were used as springboards for channels of inquiry.

Emphasis was placed on the issues of stress and adjustment, social integration, and professional socialization. These were particularly significant discussions for study as they appeared as problem areas for advanced standees. Yet because the studies previously undertaken were quantitative in approach, these issues were not explored in depth. For example, Fortune et.al.(1987) found that Advanced Standing students experienced more stress as students, yet Advanced Standing students performed as well as traditional students. Why and how they experienced more stress, what it was like to operate under stressful conditions and what, from their perspective, can be done to

alleviate such stress were not explored. O'Neil (1980) attributed less favorable supervisor evaluations for Advanced Standing graduates to lack of professional socialization opportunities for accelerated students. However, the socialization process, as it is perceived by students, was never thoroughly explored. For example: How does the Advanced Standing student experience such a journey, and does it begin in graduate school, or in undergraduate BSW programs? How, from the point of view of students, is professional socialization "operationalized"? Is it taught in courses or is it learned in the field? Is it passed on informally through interaction with students or faculty? Through open-ended inquiry much can be learned as to how to encourage or, if necessary, to hasten the process of professional socialization.

It was anticipated that the majority of advanced standees in the pilot program will be graduates from CUNY BSW programs. Consequently, it was further anticipated that the large majority of those students would be African-American and Latino. As was stated previously, a focus of this study was the educational practice of granting Advanced Standing as a pathway to graduate education for minority students. There is a significant body of literature concerning African-American students and correlates of academic success. For example, Matthews and Jackson (1991) reported that African-American students enrolled in graduate and professional schools were more likely to succeed if they were older and were married rather than single. Among the predictors of success noted by Davis (1991) are "socio-emotional support" from faculty. His operationalization of the concept of social integration and its impact on the success of black undergraduates was

particularly salient to this study:

"The college experiences of Black students are also influenced by how other actors in the college setting interact and relate to them. Significant others in the university setting (such as students, faculty, and staff) on whom black students rely for socio-emotional support (for example sympathy and understanding) or the provision of instrumental support (such as help with academic problems and financial aid) make up their social support system. Thus, the way in which professors relate to black students, the manner in which library or dormitory personnel respond, or the character of interpersonal relationships with other students influence the college outcomes for Black students"(pg.156).

These and other variables that emerged, pertaining to social integration, such as

interaction with other students or involvement in school committees, were explored.

Special attention then was paid to the presence or absence of such variables as they exist for advanced standees. It was anticipated that if, in the Advanced Standing program, socio-emotional and instrumental support existed for students, then access to graduate social work education would have been affirmatively encouraged.

As stated earlier, the other "prong" or purpose of this study was to provide evaluative information to the Hunter College School of Social Work during the pilot Advanced Standing program. The research was conducted throughout the pilot period, June 1997-May 1998.

It was hoped that while ardently protecting the confidentiality of individual students, a feedback loop would be developed so that formative evaluative data could be provided to the administration and faculty. In so doing, informed programmatic decisions could be considered. For example, the faculty was particularly interested in the issue of

preparedness for methods classes. Hunter College School of Social Work, unlike most graduate schools, does not have a generalist first year. Instead, students must choose to concentrate on casework, group work, community organization, or administration before they begin their graduate education. Many faculty members were concerned that Advanced Standing students would not have had the appropriate preparation in each method to join their cohort in the second year. In response to that concern, the Casework Methods Committee decided that Advanced Standing students would be required to enroll in a specifically tailored Casework I and II course in the fall semester, and then take Casework III and IV (a choice of elective practice courses). Group Work and Community Organization students would also have to take all of specific methods courses while at Hunter. A number of questions emerged from those curricular decisions: Will the students find this redundant? Would they have been adequately prepared to take more advanced methods courses? Will their preparation, or lack of it, be evident in how well prepared they feel for second year field experience? In order to get a more comprehensive view of these issues, faculty and field instructors were interviewed, and available data (course grades and field evaluations) was examined.

Clearly, the findings of this study in the purest scientific sense could be perceived as contaminated because, programmatic changes may have been made along the way in response to information fed back to faculty and administration. But the purpose of this study was simultaneously to "learn" (to intellectually contribute to the field) and to "learn from" (provide formative and summative information). These were not laboratory

conditions; actual students were studied as they participated in an educational program that was intended to provide them with a Masters degree in Social Work if they successfully completed it. Ethically, and in the spirit of the values of the social work profession as well as the mission of HCSSW, information that may impact on student success in the program is not shared. Through the process of that sharing, there would have been the possibility that in response to formative data the actual program may have been altered or changed along the way. However, there was an abundance of data generated, therefore neither effort was compromised. Rather, I would suggest, both goals were met.

Chapter 4- Research Methodology, Design, Time frame, and Additional Considerations

Methodology

As was stated previously, this was primarily a qualitative research project. None of the prior studies of Advanced Standing have explored the student experience in such a program. As this was a pilot project with a fairly small cohort (n=15), it lent itself well to this type of inquiry. Patton (1990) states: "Qualitative inquiry is highly appropriate in studying process because depicting process requires detailed description...the process is fluid and dynamic; and participants' perceptions are a key in process consideration" (pg.95), and Padgett (1998) notes that "qualitative program evaluation has a long and honorable history..." (pg. 9). Keeping in mind that this project had the dual purpose of augmenting what is known about Advanced Standing and providing evaluative information to HCSSW, a qualitative study is well suited to meet both goals.

The study is primarily inductive, the purpose being to learn from the experiences of the students as they are in the process of attaining their degree. Padgett (1998) calls this capturing "the lived experience" (pg.8). Towards that end, the concept of "grounded theory" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) is particularly salient. Strauss and Corbin, (1990) discuss the relationship of theory to practice, which for purposes of this study can be interpreted as the practice of granting Advanced Standing in a graduate program. In this light the notion of pursuing the grounding continuously through the process of seeking to

know is instructive. Strauss and Corbin urge the researcher to "start with a point of view regarding the practice problem and the related theory; then suspend it" (pg.15). Bernstein (1989) reviews the literature on ethnography and discusses the process of letting concepts and theory emerge from the data.

Bernstein (1989) also discusses her passionate connection to her research. Similarly, it should be noted here that I came to this study with a point of view that has emerged through years of being first an adjunct and then full time faculty member at a CUNY community college, where I teach Human Services: CUNY students who succeed, do so because they are committed to obtaining higher education and do so while struggling with such intractable social problems such as discrimination, poverty, and single parenthood. I should add that this point of view is corroborated by an extraordinary and thorough empirical study on open admissions and the successes of minority students in the CUNY system, conducted by Lavin and Hillegard (1996). I have, on behalf of my students, called battered women's shelters, made referrals for incest counseling, written letters to welfare workers begging for work requirement waivers, and tried to locate housing options for students living in homeless shelters. During the first semester that I taught full time, three students missed class because they had been arrested and held without bail. Each of those conscientiously made up the work they missed and asked for extra work to compensate for their absences. In that same semester, one student dropped out because she and her daughter were living in a homeless shelter in Queens and it was too difficult to commute to school, and one dropped out because her apartment had been

robbed, the landlord refused to repair the front door, forcing her to stay home to protect her belongings. But overwhelmingly, students came to class, handed in assignments on time, and actively sought remedial help when necessary. This kind of unfettered determination to do well, and to finish college, continually astounds me.

It was my assumption that the Advanced Standing program at Hunter would, in a sense, be a beacon for undergraduate students like those whom I teach, and would create a new and critical pathway towards graduate education and professionalism within CUNY. I further anticipated that my colleagues at Hunter would be similarly moved by their perseverance and wisdom. And finally, based on what the literature suggests, and on my experience with CUNY students, I predicted that they would do well academically. Having said this, I was prepared to put my assumptions aside and to immerse myself in the data and "live with its complexity" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Janesik (1994) cautions against methodolotry or the "preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told" (pg. 215). Although the primary method of research was qualitative and exploratory inquiry, there were several reasons why some quantitative data have been collected and analyzed as well. Although the literature points to parity between advanced standees and traditional two-year students, this was an evaluative study that must, to fulfill that purpose, document the progress of the students in the pilot program. HCSSW regularly collects student data, some of which are essential to look at. When exploring Advanced

Standing students' preparedness for the rigors of graduate school, undergraduate GPA was a significant variable and easily accessible. When looking at how students fared academically while in the program, a closer look at course grades punctuated the analysis.

The following chapter, which focuses on demographic information, provided the opportunity to explore relevant quantitative data that emerged during the study as particularly relevant.

Time and resources were limited; therefore, whatever quantitative variables were analyzed were those that were made available through the school's already existing methods of student performance valuation and data collection. No new quantitative instruments were created for the purposes of this study.

Study Design and Strategies

Although the study was ethnographic, solely utilizing a strategy of naturalistic inquiry would have required me to linger, observe, and take copious notes. Clearly the scope of this study did not make that possible. Access to the "field" was limited. Observing an activity that is phenomenological would have required me to be a permanent fly on the wall, with radar at the ready to pick up indications of pertinent information. Instead, strategic choices had to be made as to how to collect data in spurts and at regular intervals.

Again, it needs to be reiterated that there was a dual purpose to this study: one concerning

scholarship and the other, program evaluation. Methodological choices had to accommodate both. Early in the conceptualization process, it was clear that studying the entire cohort of 15 Advanced Standing students would be the optimum choice. It is a rather small "n", but appropriate for a qualitative study (Patton, 1990). Yet for purposes of capturing both the depth and breadth of the experience, each student had to be interviewed more than once during the course of the academic year she would spend at Hunter. Considering limitations of time and resources, utilizing group interviews seemed appropriate. This is clearly supported by Taylor (1993): "[The focus group] provides rich data in a short time" (pg.72). In addition, the focus group is well suited to accommodate both purposes of the study as Kreuger (1994) suggests:

Non-profit organizations regularly perform services or conduct programs that touch the lives of a number of people. At times decision makers in an organization seek to get a reading of how these activities are perceived by a variety of parties: staff, volunteers, program users...and so on. Focus groups can be used to provide information to decision makers about these opportunities at three different points in time: before, during, or after the program or service are provided. (Kreuger, 1994: 21)

In order to obtain information regarding issues that were evident in the literature, it seemed logical to plan to interview students at distinct time intervals: at the very beginning of their program, after the first semester is completed, and then again at the end of the process. Nearly thirty hours of interviews were recorded and transcribed

In addition to studying the student experience, it was informative to look at their year at Hunter from a number of viewpoints. Padgett (1998) notes that "support for the

multimethod approach has come from both quantitative and qualitative researchers...” (pg.126). Multiple sources of evidence can be utilized to construct a multi-dimensional picture of the case (Yin, 1994, pg. 93). This view from many perches was essential to the design of this study. A triangulated approach (not in the methodological sense that Jick (1983) describes, but rather one that uses multiple sources of data) also enabled me to explore the perceptions of faculty and field advisors regarding issues such as academic preparedness and performance of the Advanced Standing students.

Guide Construction/Time frame for Conducting Research

The first group interviews were conducted in the summer of 1997, as the Advanced Standing students began their course work at Hunter (appendix A). Another group interview was scheduled at the beginning of the Fall '97 semester (appendix B). During the break between semesters in January of '98, individual interviews were arranged with each of the 15 students. It was felt that in addition to group interviews, crucial data could be gathered in a more intimate forum, where students could explore their thoughts and perceptions about the Advanced Standing program (appendix C).

A preliminary focus group guide was developed, yet it should be noted that the essence of qualitative discovery is that as the "story" unfolds, new questions emerge. Therefore guide construction required flexibility. For the development of guide questions, Kreuger's (1994) schema was instructive: Opening Question, a round robin question that everyone answers; Introductory Questions, providing participants to reflect on past

experiences and their connection with the topic; Transition Questions, that move the conversation into the key areas that drive the study; Key Questions, usually the first to be developed and the ones that require the greatest attention in the subsequent analysis; Ending Questions, including 'all things considered questions', and 'have we missed anything' types of questions.

Guide construction for the individual interviews relied heavily on the discovery process and concepts and themes that emerged from the group interviews. Although the group process can lend itself to getting a feel for the "range and diversity of perceptions" (Taylor, 1993:73), it was my assumption that sensitive information that could be relevant to this may be easier to discuss within the more personal parameters of an individual interview.

The final group interview took place as the semester came to an end in June of 1998 (appendix D). This allowed participants to reflect upon the process and provide some information on future plans. Although this was, by design not an outcome study, peering through that window provided the opportunity to augment its evaluative purposes.

After the Fall of '97, during January of '98, I scheduled and conducted a faculty focus group. Selection for this group was handled with the assistance of the director of the MSW program and the coordinator of the Advanced Standing committee in order to insure both variation and knowledge of the Advanced Standing cohort. The guide was

constructed similarly to the student guides, in an effort to maintain a consistent and coherent focus (appendix E).

As field instructors are understandably difficult to meet with in a group, it was decided that the most efficient and convenient method would be to arrange telephone interviews. These were conducted during the summer of 1998. Again, a guide was developed (appendix F), yet it was flexible enough so that new themes could be explored as they emerged.

It should be noted here that my access to the field was made easier by the fact that HCSSW administrators supported my effort and were committed to assisting me wherever possible.

Analysis

Although much of the analysis was carried out on an ongoing basis throughout the 1997-98 academic year, a major portion of it was completed during the summer of 1999. Individual and group interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded based on emergent categories and themes. A case-level meta matrix was utilized in order to manage and analyze data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

During the academic year, as well as during the year before the pilot program, I attended numerous meetings of the Advanced Standing committee of the faculty. Important data

relevant to this study emerged from those meetings and was utilized to enhance understanding of both the mechanics of the program, as well as the perceptions of faculty members toward program implementation. During the actual pilot period, these meetings served both as an opportunity for the faculty to have access to formative evaluation information, and to continue to collect data that would be relevant for the study.

Initially, interview guide categories such as academic preparedness, academic performance, socialization, social integration, and stress were quite relevant to the coding and conceptualization processes. As part of the "grounding" process, various unanticipated themes emerged, and additional relevant theoretical literature was reviewed as part of the journey toward understanding and creating meaning. These will be discussed in depth in subsequent chapters.

During preliminary stages, it was anticipated that much of the data would be analyzed by hand and that, wherever practical and possible, the assistance of computer programs would be considered. Ultimately, no computer programs other than Microsoft Word '97 and Excel were used to organize and analyze data. Interviews were transcribed and word processed as were the subsequent iterations of coding notes, memos, categories and themes.

Analytical Obstacles, Dilemmas, and Decisions

A caveat is necessary at this point. At this particular school of social work, students must

decide on a methodological area of concentration; casework, group work, community organization and planning, or administration. Thirteen out of the fifteen Advanced Standing students came in as casework students, one as a group work student, and one as a community organizing student. The fact that there were “singletons” in the two latter methods concentrations posed some organizational and research dilemmas. The administration and faculty had decided beforehand that, because the school focuses on methods based learning, advanced standees would have to take the entire methods sequence while enrolled in their one year of graduate study. For the casework students, a combined Casework I and II course was developed in order to partially satisfy this requirement. Logistically this was possible as a course could be created with an enrollment of 13 students. In their last semester, students were able to enroll in Casework III, and an elective course which satisfied the Casework IV requirement (appendix G). However, the other two students had to be enrolled in groupwork and CO methods classes I and III in the fall semester and II and IV in the spring. What this meant then was that some of their experiences would be distinctly unique from the rest of their cohort, and that some of their responses could contain data that would make it difficult to protect their anonymity. Consequently, while the findings reflect the voices of all 15 students, for the findings reported here that deal with methods based course content and related experiences, the responses were usually restricted to those concerning social work practice with individuals or casework.

There may be concerns that because the students were fully aware that they were being

“studied” that my presence in the field would affect their experience and would, for lack of a better term, contaminate the findings. In fact, when I presented preliminary findings of this research at the CSWE 1999 APM, that suggested that the Advanced Standing students had successfully completed their graduate training, one attendee raised proverbial bugaboo-“The Hawthorne Effect”: Were the Advanced Standing students performing as they did because they were being observed? Was my presence in the field influencing how they were experiencing their year as graduate students? After reading a number of qualitative research studies, I found that quite often the researcher immerses him or herself in the field, much more in depth and for a longer period of time than I did. In many studies, those being investigated were clearly aware that their responses and/or behavior might have the end result of somehow impacting upon future policies or decisions (i.e. Newman, 1999, Liebow, 1993). I came to the conclusion that a researcher strikes a delicate balance; she makes an unwavering commitment to being neutral, yet can’t avoid being relevant. In order to “capture the lived experience” one must engage the respondent in a meaningful discussion, by establishing rapport. This process is not dissimilar to how a social worker engages a client (Padgett, 1998). The distinction Padgett makes between role of researcher and social worker is instructive here:

The paradigmatic assumptions of the practitioner assume a normative state of health; her role is to identify pathology and to restore health...In contrast, qualitative researchers seek to avoid normative assumptions and even go to great lengths to identify these as threats to the integrity of the study. Whereas pre-existing theories may influence the study, the approach is one of theory generation and emergent, rather than preexisting conceptual frameworks (pg.14).

As a qualitative researcher it was incumbent upon me to establish a relationship, fleeting,

but nonetheless, meaningful and honest. Yet I made every attempt, as other researchers have successfully done, to maintain a tone of neutrality, acceptance, and ‘wanting to know.’ One could conceivably discredit qualitative research by assuming that the researcher becomes an actor in the world she is trying to give voice to. Yet, as Padgett (1998) suggests, prolonged engagement “helps ameliorate the effects of reactivity and respondent bias” (pg. 94). In this particular study, the students in the pilot year of the Advanced Standing program became accustomed to my periodic meetings with them and perhaps looked forward to the opportunity to shaping the future of the Advanced Standing program. Clearly, they were aware of their importance as the first cohort , as one student remarked during the first group interview:

We're gonna make history right? The first graduating class!

Another student stated at the end of an individual interview when I asked if there was anything else she wanted to say:

“I think I’ve basically covered everything. [Because] anytime anything happens to me in this program, I think, ‘I’m going to remember this when I speak to Ms. Rose because she needs to know this!’”

Although students were aware of their “pioneer” status, and, as will be reported in the findings, had pertinent criticisms and suggestions resulting from their maiden voyage, it will also become pointedly evident to the reader that these students were very much engaged in their own extraordinarily busy lives in which I, and this study were, for the most part, on a remote periphery. Thus, I think the findings capture both the rhythm and cadence of their experiences, as well as their more formally composed evaluative criticisms and suggestions for the future direction of the Advanced Standing program.

Chapter 5- The Advanced Standing Students: A Closer Look

Twenty-four qualified students applied and 15 students were admitted to the Advanced Standing program for June 1997. In addition to fulfilling standard M.S.W. admissions criteria, program applicants were expected to have graduated within the past 5 years from an accredited BSW program. Applicants had to have achieved a minimum overall GPA of 3.0, and a 3.2 in the social work major. Further, they were required to provide a written example of a social work intervention that they had performed, and to submit references from both a BSW faculty advisor and a field instructor.

All 15 of the admitted students received their BSWs in June, 1997: 10 from Lehman College, another unit within the City University of New York, three from state universities, and two from private liberal arts colleges. Nine of the 15 admitted students began their college careers in community colleges. This is particularly significant as it implies that the post-secondary educational journey for the majority of students was not the traditional four years at university. Six of those who began in community colleges majored in Human Services; the others switched into Social Work when they entered the four-year institution. For those who began their Human Services training in community college, it should be noted that issues of revisiting, reinforcing, and redundancy were perhaps more keenly experienced:

I got my BSW at Lehman, I'm majoring in casework, prior to Lehman I went to BMCC (Borough of Manhattan Community College) where I majored in Human Services, ...I believe that we formed a strong foundation, that's where it began and I believe they prepared me very well for Lehman and Lehman prepared me very well for Hunter. My experience at BMCC and Lehman was great.

I took a disabilities course at BMCC, and I still have materials from that course that are very relevant.

I went to Hostos first, and then to Lehman...I started in 1991, it's been a long journey...they offer social work classes at Hostos, just the beginning, like the introduction to Social Work, and some other Human Services...and I enjoyed it and I decided to go into social work then...So it's been a long trip, but I think it's really paid off.

Typically a student begins in Community College because he or she did not have the GPA required to enter a 4-year institution. In fact, the majority of students indicated that they were required to take at least one remedial course upon entering college. However, this was not limited to the students starting their educational careers in community college. Two of the six students who began at four-year colleges also needed to complete at least one remedial course.

All admittees were female: 7 African-Americans, 6 Latinas, and 2 Caucasians. Ten of the 15 have families of their own, each with 3-5 children. Three are single parents. Five students, including 2 of the single parents are presently living with parents. Twelve out of the 15 reside within New York City, in either the Bronx or Brooklyn. The other three live in the surrounding suburbs of New York City.

Five of the students were under 25 years of age. The others ranged between 28 and 44. Again, as they all graduated in May of '97, literally two weeks before they began their graduate course work at Hunter. The fact the majority of students are older is an indication that their journey through college was not necessarily the traditional full-time

four years, rather it was non-traditional, with many of the students working and caring for families along the way.

Financial concerns were preeminent for the majority of students. This concern was first articulated by perspective Advanced Standing students at an Open House meeting sponsored by the school of social work in the spring of '97. One faculty member commented that students seemed to ask the collective question "will there be time in the schedule that will enable us to hold down a part-time job?"

The majority of students who were subsequently admitted to the program requested either loans or financial aid in order to attend graduate school, and 8 reported that they needed to work at least part-time while attending graduate school. One managed to hold a full-time, swing shift job, and the other seven worked part-time, either on weekends, evenings, or both. Of those working, six were employed in the area of health and human services, three part time at agencies where they had done their BSW placements.

Although the information was inconclusive, at least four students reported that they had received public assistance (either Medicaid, AFDC, or SSI) at some point in their adult lives. Two of those indicated that at least one member of their household was presently receiving assistance.

There was a palpable enthusiasm about entering graduate school, particularly at Hunter. During group interviews conducted just as summer courses began, students spoke of their

reasons for coming to Hunter. There were a number of reasons why students felt that Hunter was where they wanted to go. It should be noted here that this particular group of students, with their solid GPAs and recommendations, had choices. All were accepted to more than one graduate social work program with an Advanced Standing option. As part of the public university where most had done their undergraduate work, they anticipated that Hunter would have a diverse student body where as women of color, they would feel both comfortable and welcomed. This was coupled with the sense that Hunter was prestigious and highly rated. Finally, financial concerns were also noted:

I liked that Hunter has a culturally diverse student body. As opposed to other universities like NYU or Columbia, where basically their focus is on the American culture. Their student body isn't that diverse. I wanted to share my experiences, and we can all grow from that..And also, in my field placement, there were students from all the schools. It always seemed that the students who came from Hunter were the most respected, that were listened to more, and seemed to know more in terms of social work.

I wanted to say, that the day I came to the open house, I felt like I was home, like at Lehman, exactly, no change .To me that was very, very important. And also, coming from the backgrounds that we do, as minority students, and different countries, it was very important that I can express myself and that I would be respected. And when I was thinking in terms of the private schools I thought that I might be an isolated person. Because how can I relate to the majority students who come from wealthy backgrounds. I always thought about that. That being a minority student, we want to share ideas, in order to get... at least some power some times. That was the main reason for coming to Hunter

It has such a high reputation among social workers. A lot of other people said 'go to NYU! It has such a good reputation!', but then when I spoke to social workers, they said go to Hunter. And when I looked at the cost, it would have cost a lot of money there.I got into both NYU and Fordham, and I thought "great, they want me!", and then I got into Hunter, and I thought.."even better!".

Well you know it was kind of a last minute thing, but when I came here to pick up the catalog, I looked at the back and the faculty all had PHDs from good schools and I was amazed by their credentials.

Yeah, (they offered scholarships) but not enough to make a difference, about \$5,000. And then I was told, "take a 15,000 loan".

Here, one student notes Hunter's highly touted reputation for academic quality, and also comments on the schools' non-clinical focus. This particular strategy for deciding on which offer to accept was not noted by any of the other students:

I looked on the internet and found out that Hunter was rated as one of the top ten schools in social work, and I didn't want to go far. First I applied to the 2-year program here, then I received the information that they were having the Advanced Standing program here. I had been debating whether I would attend Hunter's 2-year program, if I got in, or go to Columbia or NYU's advanced standing program since Hunter had such a great reputation, then when I heard they were having an Advanced Standing program here, I went out for it and was accepted. It was perfect... My field supervisor at my last field placement was describing the differences between the schools, and he was telling me how Hunter was more urban, you know for social work practice, and the other schools were more clinical in their approach like individual clients. And then I met a woman who graduated from here, and she said well Hunter's not the place to go if you want to hang out your shingle. They [Hunter] want you to get out there for social justice and social change, which is what I was interested in, so that was another reason for me coming here.

If one were to create then a composite picture of the typical student in this Advanced Standing cohort, she would be a working class woman of color, married, with children, residing in an outer borough of New York City, whose journey to graduate school was an arduous one. For her, enrolling in an Advanced Standing MSW program, in an affordable public, urban university with a reputation for excellence, was an opportunity that had not existed before, and one that she was most eager to take advantage of. The issues of race and ethnicity, the significance of the school's emphasis on social justice, and Advanced Standing vs. two-year programs continued to emerge in the data, and will be revisited in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6- Waiting to Exhale

The metaphor for this study was inspired by one respondent's comments during a group meeting early in the process. She was remarking about how she and the others would feel a sense of both relief and accomplishment when they graduated:

We're going to exhale in May, and say we did it!

It occurred to me that the metaphor, taken from the title of Terry McMillan's popular novel, about a group of African-American women who are close friends, and are engaging, funny, smart, upwardly mobile, and who support each other through some very difficult times, might very well have multiple layers of meaning for this study. The concept of "waiting to exhale", means just that—that if you hold your breath long enough, the rough times will not only pass, but life will be better as a result of the struggle. The symbolism seemed, first in its most literal sense, to resonate through the entire study. All fifteen students (who happened to be women) graduated from BSW programs in May 1997, and began their MSW coursework in June. As one student commented:

You know, we finished our BSWs, so we never got a break, we never got a chance to breathe. And now, we're into the graduate program.

During the break between semesters, the majority of interviews were characterized by a sense of rushing, and not having enough time for coursework, placement, work or family.

Again, the metaphorical need to take a breath was evident:

[I]t's like you finish one paper, and the next one is due the next week...so it's like, you don't have oxygen in the middle of the semester, at the minute you start, you don't have a rest anymore...and toward the end {of the semester}, you feel burnt out.

It was just very overwhelming...I went from mid-term, handling all those papers and went straight into finals, so it was like, OK, you finish writing this paper, you print it out, OK research, research, just study for the other paper, so it was like we didn't have any time to breathe in between...

Finally, as the spring semester came to a close, another student remarked with great relief:

I'm not used to breathing!

The sense of rushing, not having enough time, of 'just getting through' is one that resonates through the study, and will be reiterated in subsequent chapters.

Many of the students cultivated strong bonds and supported each other emotionally and instrumentally, expanding the metaphorical significance of McMillan's Waiting to Exhale(1995). As was stated earlier, the students in the cohort were all women, ten of whom were from the same undergraduate program. Many of them knew each other, although not well. And those who didn't know each other before, were in a number of classes together. In McMillan's book, the camaraderie between the characters was fundamental to the story. It was clear that the strong bond between the women was an invaluable source of strength and support, without which, many would not have prevailed. It was this same sense of "sisterhood" that was evident among most of the Advanced Standing students:

We call each other, we see each other, we spent time together, we just bonded—

talked about each other's families, issues and problems—they were a great help to me.

We were all supportive to each other. And I don't think we could have made it through without each other.

[W]e're like a family...because we have so many things in common. We all have families, children...we know this is a big strain...we have so many things in common, family, our undergrad experience. You know we are straight from undergrad, if we are anxious about something, we support each other, and we try to help each other through. I feel comfortable calling them when something is really bothering me...a lot of this is overwhelming for us.

Cohesion among the Advanced Standing cohort was a complicated issue. Just as the characters in MacMillan's novel had complex relationships that were characterized by both periods of harmony and discord, the relationship among the women of the Advanced Standing cohort was multi-faceted. These relationships are explored in more depth in Chapter 9.

Chapter 7- Stress: An insurmountable obstacle or a barely tolerable reality?

Once enrolled and attending graduate school, the majority of student's lives were characterized by the sense that there simply was not enough time in the day to get everything done. It was also painstakingly clear that the compression of time took its toll.

The stress noted in the Fortune, et. al. study (1987) is quite evident here. Briefly re-stated, the students in the accelerated program, in that study, experienced more psychological stress than did the traditional 2-year MSW students. The stress was attributed to the increased demands of the accelerated program which included field work and course work over the summer, as well as a heavier course load in the spring and fall semesters.

There seem to be few similarities between the advanced standees studied by Fortune, et al. and the cohort under investigation here. In the former study the BSW degree holders were "more likely to be single than non-BSW second year students, and there tended to be more females and a younger average age among BSW holders" (pg.180). In the group of students attending this pilot Advanced Standing program, although all were female, one half of the students were over 30, and two thirds were married with children. The stress they experienced appeared closely connected to their multiple roles -as mothers and caretakers, partners and providers, and full-time graduate students, none of whom had the financial resources for housekeepers or nannies. Here, two single mothers discuss their typical days:

I get up at 5:30, and then by 6:30 I wake [my son] up. His bus comes at 7:45...His school is in [one neighborhood], but his after school program is in [another section of the city], so after I finish my day at the hospital, I have to take the train, then a bus to get there. Then we have to take the bus to the train...It's like a 45 minute ride...when we get home, I cook, after dinner I clean up the kitchen. After dinner I work with my son on his homework, and then we read stories. At 10 o'clock I put him to bed, and then I take my shower and I sit down to study. And in this semester, I became a person that sleeps for 3 hours, or on my greatest days, I sleep for five hours. Since I was working Saturdays, the only time I had to go to the library was on Tuesdays.

[Life] is very hectic. Because I have a daughter...I need primarily to find time to spend with her. My placement is very hectic because it's not a normal 9-5... there's no way that I can leave at 5:00pm. So I try to schedule extended hours...I've had a night course from 6-8 too. And that was hard...I'm not getting home until 9pm sometimes and that's almost bedtime for my daughter...She's 8. You know it's really tough. And then because the assignments...I just bought a computer by the way, because it was really difficult for me to try to do my coursework here or at 68th street...then printing...here it's a dot matrix...so you have to run to 68th street, so, you know it was really hard. So I got a computer and a printer, so that I'm hoping that next semester will be much better for me.

These women were trying to fulfil multiple roles as graduate students, caregivers, at times disciplinarians, and providers. Those students who were mothers with spouses appeared to experience no less stress than their single counterparts. Most husbands seemed emotionally supportive, yet because of work obligations, were not able to substantively share in the multiple responsibilities that the mothers carried. For example I asked one student what time she got up in the morning:

Get up? I don't get up! I work 5 nights per week in a nursing home...I had to keep my job you know. I looked at different options, I had recently had an accident and I had to keep my medical insurance...So I changed my shift to come to school...so I come in the morning, my kids are big, they're able to manage on their own...My husband doesn't have health insurance, his company doesn't have health insurance. And it's not predictable in terms of income.

Here other married students discuss their multiple responsibilities:

I have 2 children, a husband, and my problem is that I work. I really don't have enough time to dedicate to my school work...I work on the weekends. I am in placement 3 days, have classes two days, and work the weekends, so I really don't have any time for myself. My children are young, 8 and 5. And they need a lot of attention. Finding time to make doctors appointments, reading my process recording, keeping up with my assignments—it's been a lot—it's been strenuous for me...

I have three kids, the oldest is 13. ...so it is very difficult with the amount of work you have to do...with so much reading and so many papers, I'm constantly locked in my room trying to write a paper...at times I would feel neglectful towards the children, they would come knocking on the door saying "Mom, Mom" and I'd have to say "Don't bother me now"...that was a strain...My husband, I have a husband thank god, works late He gets home at 9 PM. By the time he gets home and has dinner, it's very late. We don't have other family around us. The majority of my family lives in Massachusetts and his family lives in another part of the Bronx, so it's really difficult. ...but my husband is supportive, on Sundays he takes the kids out.

Well normally I get up in the morning --I have to get my 5year old and my 7 yr. old ready, and I have my older daughter too, at 13 is at the age of worrying about her hair, and do the clothes match, and I have to push her out the door. "Don't worry about your hair, did you eat breakfast?" So it's a struggle in the morning. Then I have to get them ready. I have to make breakfast, and I have to wait until my mother comes to baby-sit my 3 year old...And my oldest daughter drops my other 2 off, because they all go to the same school-the school they're at offers K-8th grade...then my other daughter attends another school, and that's where I come in. I have to drop her off and I have to take the train to go to school.... I'm married now. My older three are from my previous husband. But my husband at this point really can't help because his schedule is really hectic-he works overnight. And normally he doesn't get home until 9:30 in the morning, by then I'm gone.... Then when I get home, I have to cook, I have to help with homework, I have to bathe my two little ones. I have to clean up a bit, then I start my schoolwork. By then it's 9:30, 10 o'clock. I may read for a couple of hours, then I'm drained. Then normally at night, that's when I press the [school] uniforms for my two young ones- the older ones do their own clothes, which is really a big help. Then I go to bed, maybe 2 in the morning. Then I have to get up at six, the same routine, over and over.

[I]t's like I'm just throwing every body around! I'm on a regimen. I get up about 45 minutes before the kids, because you want to take your shower without nobody banging in the door—at 5:30. Then I'll get up. I always iron for the whole

week—and everyone has cereal. And my son can travel by himself, not that I'm crazy about it. I'll take my younger one to school.

I asked this same student if she was a single parent and she responded:

No, but by the time I get up he's gone already. He's an electrician and gets off from work early. So by the time I get home, he may not have dinner ready, but it's warming up on the stove. He's really good like that. He's really been supportive. But my house is a mess. But the kids are really good about it. I have a rule with my kids. From Monday to Thursday there is no TV after school. I bought a lot of work books—because the public schools are terrible—and the classes are overcrowded and I know that a lot of teaching is going to have to come from home.

It should be reiterated here that Matthews and Jackson (1991) reported that African-American students enrolled in graduate and professional schools were more likely to succeed if they were older, and were married rather than single. Therefore, considering the ultimate academic success of the Advanced Standing students, perhaps the support from spouses may have been subtle, but significant nonetheless.

One student, married and a mother, who was able to take a leave of absence from her full time job, had to make the painful decision to send her child to live temporarily with relatives in another state. She was very aware of the difficulties others were experiencing:

I'm not working, I had a lot of time in the evening to do what I need to do...I would say that I made a good decision to send my daughter away. I know that it's difficult for the students that have their children here, to give time to them.

She was clearly not alone in her capacity to sympathize with her fellow students:

I don't have children, I hear a lot of students say they're going crazy, and that it's overwhelming. I don't think it's overwhelming for me. It may be that I don't have children to attend to. My day is that I go to placement and go home. I don't have

children, just a husband and a dog. On the weekend, I work at my undergraduate placement. They hired me over the summer and kept me on Saturdays.

I have no kids and I have no time! If I had five kids, I don't know what I'd do!

The pressure students experienced was most certainly compounded by being in graduate school, both in the classroom and in the field. More than one student experienced what appeared to be almost unbearable stress manifested by a number of somatic symptoms and/or feelings of depression:

I write [papers] by hand, then I'll come home and type them, because I have a word processor at home. ...so normally I would try to do papers within like two weekends...at the end it became such a rush that I was doing two papers in a week, so that's when I became stressed, very stressed...I started getting headaches, really bad head aches. The stomach began. I was always having really bad stomach problems. my appetite decreased. I wasn't sleeping right, I was becoming very cranky. I was constantly fighting, arguing – and my husband would get most of it- everything was bothering me. If I came home and the place was a mess, I would get on my daughter's case- I would get on my husband's case. I would just isolate myself- I didn't want to be bothered with anyone. I couldn't stand noise, I couldn't stand any questioning started breaking out on my face...that's when I knew I hit rock bottom....Once I actually completed that research paper, and I handed it in, a whole load lifted off me. I became more carefree, I would just sit back and say "This is it, I don't have to rush to cook, I don't have to do anything!" I'm eating better, my headaches went away...even my kids are telling me, "Hey mom, you're much better now" ...

Here two students note how faculty and field instructors helped them through some enormously stressful periods. The relationships with faculty and field instructors carried untold significance and will be explored in the next chapter in greater detail.

I was so worried about completing my papers on time, and I was so stressed out, like with the midterm--I was so stressed at that point, that I saw myself becoming depressed and everything—and, you see I'm getting teary eyed just thinking about it—but they(faculty members) were really great, I was able to talk with them, they gave me different options—incompletes, withdrawing from courses—I hate having incompletes, but I had to take one in research... They were very flexible. You could talk to them.

In the beginning of the semester, I would say to my field instructor, I am just so overwhelmed, and tired. And she'd say to me... '[B]ut you're not really doing much, you're just starting and you're coming to me and saying you're overwhelmed. I'd used up my sick days, and I needed to take a day off to do some things, and she asked me if everything was ok. She said I looked pale—I sat down and told her what was happening. And she said 'I'm glad you shared that with me.'

Because the graduate program was compressed into one summer and two semesters the students seemed to experience almost unbearable stress. Yet, the pressure appeared to be tolerable. Two out of the three students who seemed to experience the most pressure commented however, that perhaps they would not have felt so stressed had they enrolled in the two-year program instead of Advanced Standing:

I had a lot of struggle last semester in my personal life and it impacted on my academics. The experience certainly is a rush.. I feel that everything is crammed into 2 semesters. I wish I had the opportunity to go into the 2 year program.

I don't know how I completed my final papers, I don't know...I t was very stressful, it was awful, and for that reason I am looking to be very organized with my time. I don't want to go through the same experience, it was too much...sometimes, I was thinking, I should have taken my courses in two years instead of one—because you know when you have a family...

As often as the students remarked about the “rushing,” the lack of time, and the sense of being overwhelmed, most commented that were it not for an Advanced Standing option, they would not have gone to graduate school. This speaks to the import of opening this critical pathway to graduate school for CUNY undergraduates, in spite of the truncated time period and the stress that it incurred:

I don't know if I even would have started if it was a two-year program...it was so good that it was a year...I would have had to wait until I got a job and then figured out my finances, save up some money and then probably go for my masters.

I applied only to Advanced Standing Programs, because I knew I had the ability and the experience.

I would have gone to one of the other schools. I always wanted to come to here but if they didn't have an Advanced Standing program, I would have said 'that's it, forget it'.

If I had not gone to [this school], I would have gone to another Advanced Standing program...because we know we are prepared.

Most of these students had been enrolled full time in undergraduate programs while working at least part time and caring for children. Nonetheless, it appears that graduate school was far more stressful than undergraduate study. At least in part, this was due to the three day field work schedule that is integral to MSW training at this university. This marked a significant change for those with families as well as those without, as undergraduate field work had been a two day per week activity:

In undergrad we were in placement only 14 hours a week, now we're in placement 21 hrs a week. So it's hard...now I try to schedule at least a half a day free and I'm getting home early. Like Friday this semester coming up, will be my day at school from 9-1 and then I have nothing else.

I think it was more rigorous for me doing the internship 3 days a week, commuting here two days a week, plus I work 2 other jobs—so that was hard.

Undergrad wasn't as much of a strain on my family because I went to the field only 2 days a week and I had 2 days that I went to school. So I had one day in the week that I could schedule appointments to take care of my children...to take them to the doctor...so that was pretty difficult because now it's like OK, now I have to take a day off whenever one of them gets sick or if they have an appointment.

What I found to be difficult was the intensiveness of the placement. Adjusting to a three day placement. As compared to the BSW internship... It wasn't the work itself, it was the amount of work. I could have handled it fine if I'd had more time. I felt like I had no time for myself.

Interestingly, and perhaps presciently, the stress experienced did not take them totally unawares. In fact at the initial group interview, the students appeared to anticipate the stress they'd be under and seemed to be beginning to formulate strategies for coping:

I would say [we will need] a support group, you know when you're feeling overwhelmed. There was a woman at the orientation, (advocate for persons with disabilities,) I think that would be very helpful, because I know there will be times when we feel overwhelmed and if there was someone like that who we could speak to. to give us the extra push and say yes you can do it...

[W]e need this type of emotional support, because of our anxiety. and nervousness, especially before September.

We need a social worker! (followed by agreement and laughter)

Although there was clearly nervous anticipation about what was to come, the group demonstrated an ability to maintain their humor in light of their anxiety. This capacity seemed to stay with the group and was perhaps a resourceful coping strategy.

As in the Fortune et al. study (1987), there appeared to be no significant correlation between stress and success in the MSW program. None of the students dropped out, none failed any courses, and only one graduated later than one year after the implementation of the program. How they 'got through,' what supports were available and utilized, formal as well as informal, planned for and unanticipated, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8-Providing a Supportive Atmosphere-Instrumental/Emotional- Formal/Informal: What Worked and What Didn't

The strength and resourcefulness of the Advanced Standing students as individuals was clearly a crucial element to their success. Yet their internal fortitude was but one ingredient. They also received instrumental and emotional support from faculty, staff and administration, and field instructors, provided through both formal as well as informal mechanisms.

Davis's (1991) conceptualization of "socio-emotional" support (sympathy and understanding), in conjunction with "instrumental support" (such as help with academic problems and financial aid) as predictors of success for black students, is quite significant. As was mentioned earlier, he noted that "the way in which professors relate to black students, the manner in which library or dormitory personnel respond, or the character of interpersonal relationships with other students influence the college outcomes for Black students"(pg.156). Although the students in this study are not African-American undergraduate college students, but African-American, Latina, and white graduate students, the concepts of socio-emotional and instrumental support and their significance vis-à-vis outcomes seem to be salient. Their importance is even more pronounced when their meanings, to these students, are explored.

With the endorsement of the Dean, and approval by faculty-at-large, a faculty committee on Advanced Standing was established, more than one year before the pilot program began. As was stated earlier, the road to the program's implementation was a bit bumpy. Reflecting the larger debate in social work education surrounding the effectiveness of accelerated MSW programs, the faculty at the Hunter College School of Social Work articulated concerns about Advanced standing programs. Specifically there was discussion over the preparedness of BSW graduates for the rigors of graduate social work education, as well as the efficacy of accelerated learning on the graduate level.

In the academic year prior to the implementation of the pilot Advanced Standing program, the faculty committee met regularly, often enlisting the expertise of both local BSW educators, and the graduate school faculty at large. There were numerous discussions about assessing competencies, admissions requirements and processes, courses that should and should not be required, and number of hours and length of field work necessary to ensure that Advanced Standees would receive comparable training to traditional 2-year students. Once it was apparent that the school would in fact implement the pilot program, the group focused its efforts on insuring that the students enrolled would be provided with the support they needed to become integrated into the 2nd year of the MSW program and be successful in their academic and field work. They attempted to anticipate the needs of the students and discussed the support staff necessary for: developing and expediting field placements; connecting students with 2nd year students to create a mentor or a buddy system; orienting students to the library and computing

resources available and; insuring that financial aid concerns were met. These plans were supported institutionally, and administrative staff was assigned to assist in the effort.

It was decided that the Assistant Director of Field Work would be assigned to assessing their field experiences and needs, and placing the members of the Advanced Standing cohort at appropriate human service agencies. It was also planned that one faculty member should advise them, and that this should be someone who was knowledgeable about the pilot program and the concomitant educational concerns that might emerge. The chair of the Advanced Standing committee agreed to take on this responsibility. In an effort to informally orient students and make them feel comfortable at the school, this faculty member also took on the task of identifying and assigning a student mentor or "buddy" to each Advanced Standing student. The Advanced Standing committee also agreed that an orientation for advanced standees would be held before the students were to begin their summer courses. The purpose of this meeting would be to introduce the students to key faculty and administrators and to familiarize the students with library and computer resources, as well as with financial aid procedures.

It is important to note that instructors' endorsement of Advanced Standing as an effective educational concept, or lack thereof, did not go unnoticed by the Advanced Standing students:

It's been a combination of responses, from professors as well. Even when I spoke with [my Methods Instructor] and I told her my situation ... She was like, "that's my problem with the Advanced Standing program, the students are just rushed in

and out in one year. They don't have an opportunity to reflect upon what they're doing, what they're learning, and how it's being applied." She just went off on a tangent on how she was against the program. Some professors I didn't get too much feedback from. Some professors, because I was an Advanced Standing student had higher expectations from me and my coursework.

I guess [the instructors] have had questions about the Advanced Standing program- because again, it's new, and a lot of people are not knowledgeable about what it [BSW] entails... They didn't know, I guess what exactly they had to do...we learned a lot from each other.

One of my instructors told me, "You Advanced Standing Students are more knowledgeable and more prepared than half of the 2nd year students."

I think Hunter did not prepare students or professors about the Advanced Standing program...

The Advanced Standing students had much to say about the nature of institutional support that was offered, as well as what in their estimation should have been offered. This will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Administrative Support

It should be noted that some administrative decisions were made hastily, as the admissions process was completed later in the spring prior to program implementation than had been planned. Consequently, the orientation and pre-registration process was compressed—which perhaps unwittingly set the tone for the feeling articulated quite often by students that the initial acceptance and registration experience was “rushed”:

They called me on the phone and said, 'well you need to come in tomorrow, and by the way, you've been accepted!'... I was like, hello?

I feel as though I wasn't even going to apply, and then I got it (the application) in the mail, and it was due in a week and a half, and then I had an interview during graduation week...and we hadn't even graduated yet...everything was like, this is

an experiment, nothing was set in stone, they called me and said, 'hey you gotta go to class tomorrow!'

I wish we had a break between finishing at Lehman and beginning here.

It was a big responsibility, [coming into the program]. It was hard because you have to start getting accustomed to it, and you have a very short time to do so, and then the classes are very difficult and demanding as well and you have family... That was a big strain, and I didn't have a break in between.

[W]e were overwhelmed, and we were rushed into this, you know, we had problems with registration, which we got really upset about. We were the last to register, and courses were closed.

The money thing has been frustrating, and the fact that I got called Friday to let me know that class starts on Monday.

There was evidently a sense of agitation related to both the speed at which decisions had to be made, and the financial aid and registration mix-ups. They also voiced concerns over other orientation issues. For example, many were concerned about library hours and ancillary support services:

Another challenge is going to be the library, I've been there and ...it's not nice...some of the books were at Brooklyn College, or Lehman, and I don't have the time to go there... Here, I understand you have to go to 68th street to do your papers.

I have a word processor at home, but I plan to use the Lehman library because it's 15 minutes from me...

I wasn't really impressed with this library I guess I got used to the one at Lehman.

And then we have to figure out when we're going to be able to make use of the library.

Yet, from the time of the first group interview, students seemed to be able to separate the instrumental support (which seemed to them to be somewhat haphazardly in place), from

the emotional support and an atmosphere of warmth and welcome as is apparent through the following comments:

The open house was also great too. The staff was so warm and welcoming.

[Y]ou know that's another reason why I came to Hunter, because when I called I could actually speak to people, when I would call Columbia and leave a message, they would call back a week later, here I could speak to a person. Here, maybe because it's a new program, and people want to take that extra step to want to work with us, but it's great.

Perception of welcome and warmth notwithstanding, problems with registration and financial aid seemed to plague the process during the summer semester:

I agree I think that the staff has been very attentive...but I don't know, I feel kind of like a guinea pig in this program....um some things are really frustrating like having to take a tutorial credit, and when I have to take a course on Mondays and Wednesdays I thought it was going to be on Tuesdays and Thursdays, that was frustrating also., cause your planning, and then you find out on Friday, that you have a class on Monday (others nod and agree). And then you have to pay for the summer here, you know you have to be sensitive to people's schedules and their financial situation... and something else, I didn't even think that we'd have to pay for the summer course, at [my undergraduate program] we have modules and where you can take intercession course, and you don't pay for the course, and here nothing had been spoken about financially.

[The] 2nd course was also frustrating because we didn't receive a bill for it, and then we go down to the registrar who tells us we're going to be kicked out of the class, we had no clue that we had to register. They [in the registrars office] asked us who registered us, and we said the program did, because that's how we were registered for the June class. It just seemed that there was some miscommunication.

I knew there was going to be a summer school session, but I didn't know about the financial aid problems, since I called and came up here beforehand, and no one seemed to have all of the information. I understand that this is a pilot program and things will be ironed out.. but Lehman had been working with Hunter to form this program, I think they should have been more organized, and the money is a big issue!

To me, the administration part has been the worst. Even like, we're supposed to take two courses over the summer that equal five credits. If you only take 5

credits you can't get financial aid. In my case I needed the financial aid. Why not make it 6 credits? What they wanted to do instead was give us an independent study for the 6th credit. Which means more research, more paper work, which I think is unfair.

These administrative 'snafus' were coupled with the fact that since the Advanced Standing cohort was the last to register, they were not offered choices about what courses they could take for electives. This was a criticism that, although was most pronounced during the group interviews conducted right after the summer semester, was persistent for most of the students throughout their tenure at the school as the following statements reveal:

And we didn't get to choose, some of us. It's like we don't have any control over our learning. It's like they're telling us what we have to take, when we have to take it.

[A]nother thing, you know, we didn't have a choice.

We have so many courses and not very much choice, not much leeway.

They need to look at course curriculum to see if its geared to Advanced Standing students like the course in the summer, having advanced research, letting students pick out classes first, at least in the 2nd semester. because it's very difficult to get the last of the pickings, it's like 'what's wrong with this picture. like why am I getting last again?' They got to pick their classes first always—at least let me take one of the classes that I'm interested in. That was very frustrating.

Here a student remarks how, for the spring semester, and final, the process was streamlined, but far from perfect:

[Registration] was easier this time. We were given late dates, so by the time we registered for some classes we got whatever was left. So I felt bothered by that, because this was my last semester and I felt that I should have been given the privilege to be one of the first persons to register, so there would be more to choose from...there were two classes that I got closed out of that I really wanted to take.

The school's formal efforts to provide administrative support were met with both frustration and tolerance, in part as the students mentioned, because it was the pilot year, and they understood that there were technical kinks that needed to be ironed out. In addition, students seemed to have the capacity to overlook the more minor inconveniences that were endured, because there seemed to be a substantially valuable pot at the end of a not so distant rainbow. This student's comment was echoed and applauded by others in an early group interview and clearly illustrates the sentiment:

All I keep thinking is that in June, I'm going to have a degree from Hunter, and the reputation will carry!

Planning for the Field

During the planning period before the Advanced Standing program was piloted, there was discussion amongst faculty members about the possibility of starting field work during the summer session that students would be required to attend. This particular school of social work usually requires students to attend field work concurrent with methods classes, so it seemed that this would have educational merit. However, it became clear that the field work department did not have the resources to arrange for summer placements, and therefore students began placement in the fall semester. Field placements were, nonetheless, carefully planned for with each student. The Assistant Director of Field Work met individually with all of them early in the planning process. Students responded positively to the school's special efforts to provide appropriate placement sites for the fall and spring semesters. One student, who had specific health

concerns, articulated how grateful she was to the Assistant Field Work Coordinator for her attentiveness:

[She] was really great because I needed to be close to home

Although the topic of field placement selection did not come up in subsequent interviews, one student wondered whether their choices of field placements would be handled in the same fashion as course registration had been:

What kind of worries me is that the 2nd year students have already been placed. What's going to be left for us, are we going to get the leftovers?

This was in fact, the only concern over appropriateness of field placement choice that was articulated during the entire course of the study by any of the students.

Advisement

The majority of students appreciated the efforts of the faculty advisor and consistently voiced their appreciation for her instrumental assistance in negotiating academic and administrative concerns, as well as her intervention and advocacy when there were field work issues that needed attention:

About a month ago there was an incident where she (field supervisor) yelled at me in front of my client...I was like that's it, I'm not about to have her yell at me in front of a [client]... I went to [my advisor] and I was able to set an agenda to meet with her. When I met with her, she felt offended, that I hadn't really been honest with her from the beginning. She tried to blame me, saying that it was me that caused it—she met with [my advisor], and after that we've been able to talk.

Before I was upset because they were giving me too much work—the social worker from the special care department left—and I was telling [my advisor], I can't handle all this!

Other students felt that the faculty advisor was “there for them” formally, as well as

informally, or “socio-emotionally”:

[My advisor] is great.

[My faculty advisor] is great. I mean, she's been there, I have called her, she called me right back. I have gone to her office numerous times, if there has been any problem with my schedule or something, she's taken care of it...

She's great, [she's] has been so supportive and she's been able to help us with any problem we've had. We would go to her, and you could bet that problem was going to be taken care of.

Others saw her as an academic resource solely, not someone who was necessarily available as a shoulder to lean on, or as the proverbial “social worker” that one student had voiced the collective need for.

I meet with [my advisor] only on scheduled dates. Once I had to call her about a change in a course number. I called her and left a message, and she got back to me immediately. As far as meeting her and what is happening to me in my personal life, and how that's been affecting me academically, I didn't share that with her.

Since I didn't have any problems, I didn't have to overwhelm [my faculty advisor] with problems...Because I'm really pleased with my supervisor...

One student, whose major method was not casework, felt that the advisor did not have the technical or methodological expertise to substantively advise her around field issues:

One of the problems that I've experienced with the program is that my advisor, she's a casework person, and at my placement, my task supervisor is also a casework person [and I'm majoring in a different method]. So I think I'm like losing an experience, I have been able to speak to my professor, through, like my papers...I also spoke to her about advising, not to change my advisor, just like to have an extra someone [in my method], who I can speak to [to know] if I'm doing the right thing.

That a single student voiced such a concern should not negate its significance in planning for future groups of Advanced Standing students. That only two students enrolled in methods concentrations other than casework, was perhaps a function of chance, or may have been related to the hastily implemented admissions process. Future cohorts will no doubt have more than one group work and community organizing student. Consequently, their distinct advisement needs will have to be considered.

Mentoring

During an early group interview, a few students remarked that they had been contacted by their assigned “buddies” and voiced that they would be happy to connect with other students through such a mechanism.

They seem very friendly actually. I've met one or two.

Yeah and they have a buddy system going.

And I think the mentor/mentee thing will be good too. I spoke to mine and it was good.

Yet in a short time, it seemed that the buddy system seemed to fizzle after a phone call or two:

I spoke with my mentor once. I had no relationship with her;

Someone called me and left a message once, but I never got in touch with them.

My mentor was my friend from undergrad. I touched base with her but I never really needed to...I didn't find it helpful.

I spoke to my mentor a few times, she kind of gave me a little insight, you know what to expect...I really didn't, honestly use her.

I met her [my mentor] and spoke to her once or twice, ..but I guess we tend to discuss our problems within, you know within the group. So, whoever has time, and whoever has connections with other students, would get an answer and then they would get back to us.

The fact that the formal mentoring efforts did not appear to be successful should not be construed as evidence that the Advanced Standing students did not want to be a part of the larger graduate student cohort. In fact their relationship with the 2nd year class seemed to be quite significant and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 10.

Faculty/Student Relationship

Evidently, it was the student-faculty relationship that provided intensive and meaningful ‘socio-emotional’ support for these students. As is apparent through the following statements, students’ relationships with their professors were multi-dimensional. Clearly they experienced the faculty as providers of a substantive and stimulating academic experience. Yet there was also the feeling that faculty members went further in their support, extending themselves, again in Davis’ parlance, socio-emotionally:

[The instructor] always made [casework class] fun. In the morning, we all came in tired, and he really made it exciting...I really enjoyed that class. I got a lot out of it. We didn't have a required textbook—we used journal articles. He would tell us the topic of the class and we would go and do research. We would go and Xerox whatever, we found interesting. And a lot of the lecture he told us about his experience as a social worker—which was very interesting, very helpful...he was very supportive ...

The professors are very supportive, very accessible...my Human Behavior professor, she even gave us her home number, and that was very meaningful, you know, she is a mother too, and she said, “You can call me up until 9 o'clock when I put my son to bed,” I like that, it's like an open door for you...And my casework

professor, he listened very, very actively to us, and my research professor, he is a doll...after his class, I'm not afraid of research any more.

[The] professor was very supportive, when we got overwhelmed he was there for us...but he knew much more about Advanced Standing than all the other professors...and the research professor... he was aware too. So, he was there to sort of hold our hands and to encourage us.

[The instructor] seemed to be a nice professor, because he allowed us to vent, if we had a problem.

I think he's like one of the professors that really takes the time to listen to you, about problems with Advanced Standing, or personal problems. He's always there. I really appreciate that instructor. He's been really helpful throughout the year.

They have been more understanding here...if you're feeling like you're falling behind you can talk to your professor and tell him, "I need an extension", that's ok. they're very understanding.

My HBSE instructor, I needed an extension on an assignment—and it's so funny, because at Lehman when a paper was due, you really don't get extensions, and when I needed one here, I said to the professor, look I really need an extension on my paper. And she said 'Ok!, OK!' And I didn't have to explain it any further. I was thinking, 'Wow! This is really great!'

Regardless of the almost unilateral sense that faculty members were supportive, a few students experienced boundaries to the faculty-student relationship and expressed a sense of formality that was new for them:

I think they're standoffish, and it's not because they want to be, it's just that their time doesn't allow them to have as much. For example in undergrad, the Lehman professors are tenured, they're 9-5. But a lot of professors here just teach one class. and after their class when they're finished doing their paperwork they leave. If you don't have an appointment with them, chances are slim that you will catch them in, because they have other jobs...like [the casework professor], I think he was only here on Fridays, I'd try to find him on Tuesdays but he wasn't here...but how available can one be when you're doing counseling, or consulting, or research, a lot of the professors aren't "staff" which makes it difficult for them to be accessible to students. At Lehman, everyone was there. If they didn't have a class they still had a 9-5 so to speak, so they were there. So we got more support

from them.

Faculty has been supportive—sometimes we have a question, they can't get back to us right away, but that's sort of understandable.

The Hunter faculty isn't as available as the staff at Lehman. You pretty much have to make appointments. Either they're all busy right now or whatever. So over there, they were available, and even if they were busy, most people would take the time to just listen to whatever you had to say. Here, if I need to speak to someone, well I have to come back and make an appointment, it's more like...formal...but they are pretty helpful.

This particular student attributed the different experiences with faculty to her truncated tenure in the graduate program:

I felt closer to the faculty...at Lehman than I do here. But then again I was at Lehman for two years, as opposed to only being here for six months, so the relationships haven't had time to grow.

Another student evidently expected there to be more rigid boundaries between faculty and students and was happily surprised:

Actually, I was amazed. I was shocked. I had thought graduate professors would be a little more—removed!

The warmth and supportiveness offered spontaneously by faculty seemed to become a significant element to the Advanced Standing students' ability to make it through the often pressure filled graduate year. Although for some students, the faculty seemed more remote, or less accessible than undergraduate faculty, for the most part, they felt that, if there was some sort of a problem, the faculty member would at the very least demonstrate caring and sensitivity. At best, they provided some sort of relief or respite through assignment extensions, or granting of incompletes. It is no coincidence that students most often mentioned their Casework instructor as being very supportive. It was in the

fall semester that 13 out of the 15 students were enrolled in a combined Casework I and II course. As will become increasingly evident, the fall semester was undoubtedly more stressful for most students than either the summer before, or the following spring semester. During casework class they were all together. The subject matter often seemed to be a catalyst for their own feelings of stress and anxiety. The casework instructor apparently took on the task of providing a forum for students to discuss these feelings.

The Advanced Standing students had anticipated the need for a “support group” and a “social worker.” Considering the opportunities that were available to them, they utilized the time and the personnel they needed to meet their own needs. However, what was supportive to most was an inappropriate use of class time to others. There were a few students that did not think it suitable to use the class in such a way. Not coincidentally, these particular students were not feeling as overwhelmed as others, perhaps because they did not have the added family responsibilities. None of the students who objected to use of class time for other than academic purposes were mothers, nor were they those who consistently articulated feelings of stress and anxiety. And they were quite vociferous in their objections to what they saw as an inappropriate use of class time:

That course was very interesting when we actually talked about what was being discussed. A lot of the students in that course seemed to have problems adjusting to coming to grad school. And it took up a lot of time...The faculty advisor should have been dealing with that rather than [the casework professor]. It was hard to say. In some ways it was good and some bad. A lot of students would come in late and then ask questions about what they missed—It was very distracting to the

students that were there. He went more in depth in certain topics that I would have liked to hear about.

Actually I thought that was one of the biggest problems (isolated classes with just Advanced Standing students). We were too separated, I didn't like that. I found the courses that had less Advanced Standing students I enjoyed more. Because the focus wasn't Advanced Standing, the focus was course work. So I liked it when there were mixed classes...I kinda anticipated this semester (2nd semester) would be better because it would be more mixed.

The students tended to use it more as a [counseling session] .We discussed problems that I thought were more appropriate to be discussed with [the faculty advisor] or the field supervisor...[like] complaints about other classes, complaints about [the administration's] lack of communication with Advanced Standing students...

Interestingly, the students who objected to the use of class time in a manner that they thought inappropriate were not part of the Lehman College group. It may have been that they felt isolated within the larger cohort, and therefore felt less trust or support from the other Advanced Standing students. This may have made it less likely that they would have felt comfortable expressing feelings or thoughts that might have made them appear more vulnerable in front of the others. It may have been that these particular students were not accustomed to venting, as it were, in a formal, classroom atmosphere, or simply did not feel the need to do so. Regardless, the majority of students found the classroom faculty members supportive, sensitive to their needs, and flexible when necessary. Incidentally, the classroom instructors, in the faculty focus group interview conducted in January of 1998, never mentioned that students used the classroom inappropriately. The casework instructor did say that students were “not a whole lot different than other students”; however, there was one marked difference, “they were much more open about

their struggles.” He remarked that on a scale of 1 to 10, this group was an “8” on stress, whereas other groups first coming in to graduate school are usually “5.5.” He also mentioned that there were a high number of absences in the casework course, which met at nine in the morning. Instructors whose courses met later in the day did not report a high rate of absence. Finally, the casework instructor noted that the students were a support system to each other. This clearly was evident in both group and individual interviews, and will be explored in depth in Chapter 9.

Relationship with Field Instructors

Students’ relationships with field instructors was an integral component of their support system. Different qualitatively than their relationship with classroom instructors, the interactions with field instructors was strictly “one-on-one.” This allowed for support of a different nature for some students who appreciated the individualized and more intimate nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Yet for some students, the relationship was one of discomfort. Below students encapsulate both sentiments:

He was great. he kept pushing me and saying you can do it...I gave him a copy of my schedule...and we talked about how I can manage my time better . He said, “You need to understand that some of these cases require more time than others”...

She [field instructor] has worked with students for a while, she has a lot of experience with groups, I’m learning a lot with her, she’s so understanding...about my needs, she’s available whenever I need her.

I think I could have a better supervisor. In supervision I found myself comparing her to my undergraduate supervisor, and expecting more from her. My undergraduate supervisor was excellent. With the one I have now, she doesn’t

like to be questioned. She doesn't like to debate issues. Supervision is not the most comfortable setting.

Students' relationships to field instructors, as well as the significance of the field experience as a whole will be elaborated on in depth in Chapter 11. Yet the point can be made here that it is evident is that Advanced Standing students appreciated and benefitted from the support that was offered to them by faculty as well as field instructors, both formally, as well as spontaneously. It seems that because of the compression of the graduate school experience, providing ample opportunities for the creation and maintenance of supportive mechanisms appears to be a critical element to the graduate school experience for these students.

Chapter 9-Student Cohesion vs. Integration with the 2nd year Class: The Benefits of Camaraderie and the Need to Feel a Part of the Program

As was mentioned previously, the Advanced Standing students were well aware of their “pioneer” status. They came as a cohort into a pilot program that was formulated quickly. Many had administrative and financial aid concerns. Their course of study was new to the school, and there was not unilateral support for the efficacy of accelerated learning from the faculty. Clearly the feeling that they were traveling these uncharted, and not altogether friendly, waters together was one ingredient of the adhesive that seemed to unify the group. Certainly, it was apparent that they, as one of their instructors observed, “formed a support group.” In fact, the support system that they created to hold each other up emotionally and instrumentally was at times, most significant. Here, students discuss how they helped each other out:

I'd tell students don't go out and copy the whole bibliography, look for what is important for you...if you don't have to read that book, don't read that book!

We have a little copy club, and just talking about my experience at placement—and it was helpful.

We were in all the classes together! [Another student] and I were even in electives together. Then we'd get together after classes, and all go out to lunch—

Oh it felt good [being in Casework class with other Advanced Standing students], because it felt more like a family...I would say that we all supported each other, It felt really good to be able to say what was on our minds. It just felt very comfortable.

What seemed on the face of it to be a singular group, that was unequivocally supportive to its members by virtue of the fact that they were thrown together as the pilot Advanced

Standing cohort, was in fact more complex than that. In early group interviews it was evident there were at least two sub-groups within the larger cohort, those who went to Lehman and those who didn't. During one interview, I asked the group if they thought that other Advanced Standing students would be a source of support. They all nodded their heads vigorously to say yes, yet one student thoughtfully added:

I guess for the Lehman College students, since we all know each other.

At that point in the interview, two of the students who hadn't gone to Lehman looked at each other and smiled. This interaction did not go unnoticed by group members, and another student quickly said:

"We'll welcome you as one of us!"

The other students agreed enthusiastically.

Yet apparently, some of the non-Lehman students never did feel a complete sense of unity with the Lehman students. In an individual interview, the following student was quite hostile in her characterization of her classmates:

Oh yeah [students from Lehman got away with stuff]! It was like people would hand papers in 3 weeks late and no one would think anything of it. It was just very unprofessional and very rude. And I understand that they had kids and everything. But at the same time, I'm saying that something has to give and take. The only classes they pulled that with were the ones with just Advanced Standing students. I think it annoyed [another non-Lehman student] and I because we would bust our rumps to get papers in on time and these people would hand them in weeks late and still get the same amount of credit.

This same student further articulated a sense of separateness she felt from the Lehman group:

Well a lot of it was that [another non-Lehman student] and I were the only 2 students that were younger, that were not from Lehman. So I think that's what pushed us together because I think everyone from Lehman knew each other. There were only 4 or 5 people who didn't go to Lehman and went to other schools, and I think one of them is a CO student and she doesn't really work a lot with the case work students-And [mentions two other non-Lehman students]... And it was difficult to sort of break into the whole Lehman dynamics cause everybody knew each other. Even though some of them didn't get along with each other, they knew each other.

Although not as acerbically articulated, the same division was noted by other students as well:

I have gotten close to a couple of Advanced Standing students. The majority of them are Lehman students, and they already had a relationship...

We talk [with other Advanced Standing students who did not go to Lehman], although it is not as intense, we concentrate on sharing information related to our classes...it is more of a distant type of friendship.

The first student quoted above noted that "some of them didn't get along with each other". She was referring to the two sub-groups of Lehman students, one composed of students that had attended college during the day, and the other group that had gone as evening students:

[S]ome of us knew each other already, and we would stay together. And then others who we knew from Lehman, like the night students, they knew each other. So they pretty much remained in their little group, and then myself and the other daytime students remained together. And then some of the students who knew each other from other schools hung out together... And then there were one or two students, one that was from Lehman and one that wasn't from Lehman who just remained by them selves. And even at times we'd say "Hey we're going to do this, we're going to do that, want to join us?". They'd say, "Oh no, I have something to do". And they even refused to do any kind of studying with us what so ever. I think they were just so stressed out that they decided they just needed to get through the program and they worked better alone. But-the other Lehman students whether, they were night or daytime, they were very supportive. We were

all supportive to each other. And I don't think we could have made it through without each other.

Other students described their relationship with friends from the day and evening divisions at Lehman College:

I have not made any new friends here at Hunter...I mean you rush in, you rush out. The friends I have, I had at Lehman. {Another evening student} and I met in 1993 we've been in class since then. {Another evening student} I met in 1995, so we've been a study group since then. (She mentions two more evening students) we were in class together but not very close, but now we're like a study group, and now you know, we do everything together.

[I]n [the casework] class we were always together, and there was a particular group of us, of five, and we did very well together...We had all been night students at Lehman...and even though we didn't hang out together at Lehman, we know that we're here alone now...and there's (another student), even though she's a group work student we still call if someone can't be there.

One of the two students not in the casework concentration but who had been an evening student at Lehman expressed a sense of regret over not being in classes with her former class-mates:

[In] the beginning when we had classes together in the summer I felt that way [supportive camaraderie with other Lehman students]. We do keep in touch now. But because they're in a different method than I am, we tend to separate. We still keep in touch. For support [she mentions one of the Lehman evening students], really always has time. I don't really keep in touch with the others.

Below while another student describes a source of conflict between the two groups, she also emphasizes that the two groups of Lehman students operated as support and study groups as well, providing a sense of belongingness and academic support that was an integral aspect of their graduate school experience:

Well the others that went to Lehman during the day, I didn't really know them. So we'll talk now, but we tend to just keep in our little group. And we'll share things

with them and they won't. We'll find something out about the CSW—we were willing to make copies for them. And they had already bought the book. They hadn't even told us about it.

With a degree of tension and conflict within the Advanced Standing cohort, one question might be why didn't these students branch out more, and reach out to other 2nd year students? One reason that came up on numerous occasions, was again the issue of time, or lack of it:

I think it's going to be hard to make major connections in a year. That's the one thing that kind of bothers me. At [college], I made great connections. But in a year, everyone's on the go, it'll be hard getting to know people as people.

It's also very difficult for me to get really involved here. Because I have so many things that I do. Because of where I live—I just don't have the time to do it.

I wish I could [get involved in extra-curricular activities at Hunter], but you know, where time is concerned, I spend two days per week at school. I only have time to go to my classes and then I tend to rush to the library and I have to do my research. So there is not time to get myself involved in extra activities.

I would have liked to have gotten involved in one of the Alliances. The HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Black Alliance. But I decided I don't have time for it.

I never attended (organized extra-curricular activities), just common day. I find myself not interested in these things. Simply because—instead of attending, I feel that I should be doing my work. And I'm exhausted also. So when I come home I just want to relax and lie down. So that I can wake up for the next day. In undergrad it was different I was involved in the social work club. Just being that I want to get it over with and just graduate in May—is preventing me from getting involved in too many activities.

The absence of a spare moment to get involved in extracurricular activities and to make connections with other graduate students was often underscored. Regardless of the comfortable relationship they shared, the Advanced Standing students, from the earliest

interviews, voiced the desire to integrate with other 2nd year students:

I'm looking forward to mingling with the 2nd year students and getting to know them-you know we're all going to be graduating together, so why not?

The only thing here that's more enriching [than undergraduate social work education] is the experiences that people bring. Like you're in class with OYR students and they're working in the field, which makes it more enriching.

Many of the students felt “mingling” with other 2-year students would be an enriching aspect of their educational experience, yet there was some trepidation, as is evidenced by the following quote:

Wow. I can't wait to meet the other students because they'll know things that I don't. like which professor should I choose, I'll be looking to them and their experiences, even though I'm on the same level. I'm sort of like a freshman coming here and looking from the upper classmen to give me support and get me through this. I hope there's no animosity.

With the knowledge that the Advanced Standing program was new and untested, there was a sense of uneasiness over whether or not there would be, as the above student characterized it, “animosity”:

One thing I've been thinking about, is that will they think...they know more than we do, and we shouldn't be in the same level as they are. I came here to see a friend who was graduating and a friend of hers was introduced to me and her reaction was-"oh you're going to get your MSW in one year...that's not fair" so we went on about it and I wonder if she's not the only one who feels this way, and I'm sure she's not.

In fact these concerns were, at least in part, realized. After the beginning of the first semester, students reported that they had experienced a sense skepticism, bordering on hostility, from members of the traditional 2-year program, related to their status as full-fledged members of the second year class. Particularly during their earliest interactions,

the Advanced Standing students' feeling that other students did not accept them was pervasive. These comments are excerpts from group interviews conducted in September of 1997, just after the start of the Fall semester:

We get these looks like 'What makes you so special?' I feel like [saying to them] I'm here because I got accepted. You could have done the same thing but you came a year too late...I'm very sorry!

At first I started taking it personally. But then I started feeling like, it's not that this was on a platter and I've taken it. I've earned this, it wasn't given to me. That's the impression that they've given me. It's like I was talking to this guy on the elevator. And he asked me if I was a 2nd year student and I said yes, I'm Advanced Standing. And he said, 'well, how did that happen? Do you have the foundation that 2nd year students have?' I said yes, I have a BSW. The he asked 'do you have the proper credits? Do you have this? Do you have that? I said 'yes, if I didn't have them, I wouldn't be here.' He made me feel intimidated, but then I thought about it and I thought, why am I letting him get to me? I earned this and I deserve to be here just as much as he did!

A lot of times when I'm in classes with other students, I get this feeling that they're thinking, 'what did you do that I couldn't do?'. They don't understand that I took first year classes before and if I had to take first year classes now, I'd be sleeping through them. This to me-I'm stressed because of time constraints, but I'm not stressed by my work. I'm learning, I don't feel intimidated. If I had to repeat the first year all over again, I'd go crazy. I would have left, I couldn't have done it.

It is clear from the above statement that feeling as though they were truly a part of the larger 2nd year cohort held more than social significance. Acknowledgement as having earned their rightful place as 2nd year graduate student status was imperative to their academic success.

The Mailbox Debacle

Early in the fall semester, an incident occurred that became symbolic for the Advanced

Standing students' sentiment that they were somehow perceived as "less than" other 2nd year students. Each year, students are assigned mailboxes according to class. Rather than the Advanced Standing student mailboxes being integrated with other second year MSW students, they were included with the first year student boxes. This perceived symbolic affront loomed large for the Advanced Standing students as is evident by the statements below:

We've had incidents with the mailboxes too. They put us with the first year students. And we said, 'Why are we with the first years'? We're actually 2nd year students!' We vented in [the casework instructor's] class. [One of the Advanced Standing students] went to talk to the BSA (Black Student Alliance). And now the first years have their own section as do the 2nd years and the OYRs and now, we have our own.

With the mailbox, it was kind of an acceptance thing. They were trying to mesh us with the first years and not accept us as 2nd year students. I think the fact that they separate us out. [it's like saying], 'Are you not accepting us, that we're really here?' I think the administration didn't know whether to tell the students about the new Advanced Standing program or let them find out themselves. I think if they had told people about it in advance, they [students] could have prepared themselves...

At the beginning it [social life] was really difficult. Because I think a lot of the students weren't knowledgeable as to what the Advanced Standing program was about. Or what kind of credential we brought with us.- what was our academic background- and we really were receiving a lot of resistance. I don't think we were really being recognized or accepted. We were getting a lot of...talk at school, when we were in classes...we were questioned a lot...or in classes, we would say this or that, and they [other students] would say "Oh that's not true- this is not what it's like at Hunter in our first year...I think they were questioning our knowledge until I found myself actually in the elevator, I was explaining the kinds of courses we did and how our undergraduate experience was...even our mailboxes...we were considered first year students because it was our first year HERE...until we advocated and they changed it. We actually got our own mailboxes with a big sign "Advanced standing"- and now we're being invited to things—[on posted notices] it will say "First year students, second year students, and Advanced Standing students"-so I guess we have our own little group.

The mailbox issue became symbolic of their perception of how other MSW students felt about them, that they were somehow interlopers, being handed the privilege of entering graduate school in the 2nd year. Just as significantly, this meant to the students that their was institutional ambivalence about their 2nd year status. In fact it became clear that they blamed the 'administration' for not preparing the larger cohort of MSW students for their arrival. As one student commented above, the Advanced Standing students did raise their concerns in class (another example of their use of class time for other than academic purposes), as well as with student government.

This problem was resolved by separating the Advanced Standing mailboxes from both the first and second year sections and placing them in their own section. Unfortunately, this solution meant that the mailboxes issue became symbolically intertwined with the separateness that the Advanced Standing students continued to experience:

There's not much interaction with them (other 2nd year students). I went in January there was a WEP program meeting. And they were like 'are you sure you belong here? They were all 2nd year students. I spent the whole day by myself. They wouldn't talk to me. And it's not the first time I've gotten that kind of reaction. In one of the classes someone commented, 'that's not fair why should they only do one year when we have to do two years. Now it's, they're aware, it's different. At the beginning, we had problems with the mailboxes. They stuck us with the 1st year students. And, we're in 2nd year.

I received a comment from a BSR student (student government officer). I was asking about some notice that I hadn't received that everyone else had received and she said to me 'are you a first year student or a 2nd year student?' - And I said, 'well this had to do with graduation, why would I be asking you if I was a first year student?' And she said, 'that's strange that you didn't get the form'. And then I said, 'well, I'm Advanced Standing. And she said 'Oh that's why you didn't

get the form-it's just that your mailboxes are on the side and not everybody recognizes you as 2nd year students, because of where your mailboxes are. And I felt kind of awkward because this semester was really good. I was in a class, Family Therapy, with no one from Advanced Standing, and I felt pretty comfortable with everyone there. So that when I was faced with this comment, I felt pretty bad about it.

Another student cited the difficulties with integration into school life as a source of stress, and once again mentions the mailboxes:

I found it a little bit stressful coming to Hunter as an Advanced Standing Student. I think I could have had more preparation. I had a feeling sometimes that the professors were a bit skeptical. One or two people were very honest that they were skeptical. During the 2nd semester, things got a little easier. I think the work wasn't difficult, just integrating into the program was difficult-Little things that we didn't have access to, like mailboxes...

While the sense of separateness could have led to alienation, it did not, which is again a testament to the fortitude and resiliency of these students. The student below appeared to be able to withhold her anger from the group but expressed resentment during an interview:

I have no relationship with any second-year students, I mean, I don't, I couldn't even call anybody who is a 2nd year student by their name. I haven't worked with a 2nd year student, like on a project, or in groups...and it has always been segregated, anytime I'm in a class and we break into groups, we [Advanced Standing students] sit on one side, and the 2nd year students sit on the other side...

Other students did not express such extreme sentiments and appeared to adapt. For example, the student cited previously, who felt that integrating was stressful, abruptly shed her Advanced Standing student label:

The 2nd semester, I didn't acknowledge that I was an Advanced Standing student.

Other students used similar adaptation strategies:

The 2nd semester was better than the first, once you stop identifying yourself as

am Advanced Standing student.

I guess if I was here for two years struggling, I'd have questions—But I knew I was coming in as a 2nd year student, so I'd say that if anyone asked me, if then someone said 'Oh I didn't see you here last year, I'd say, 'well they just started the Advanced standing program, and we came in over the summer and I took some classes at Lehman, and I'm integrated with you guys...

In the other classes [with 2-year students], I didn't like to say I was an Advanced Standing student...I got the feedback right from the start that they had some reservations about the Advanced Standing program. First, I think they thought it wasn't fair—second, I don't think they thought we were as prepared as [if we had spent the first year at Hunter]...so when ever they say 'introduce yourself', I would just say, 'well I'm a 2nd year student'.

There was one comment that a woman made in the elevator, she asked me 'When are you graduating?', I said in June, and she asked me 'when did you come here?', I said in September. So she got really uptight and said something like 'I'm going to the office to find out about this!'...so you tend not to say anything.

It is clear that Advanced Standing students felt that their status as 2nd year students was questioned by some of the MSW student body. Although this experience was not monolithic, it remained a sore point that was reiterated during a number of interviews throughout the year.

With a little help from...

Perhaps shedding the label “Advanced Standing” served the purpose of increasing overall comfort in the MSW program, but it did not seem to be an effective means for becoming involved as members of the larger cohort of MSW students. As was stated earlier, although the Advanced Standing students did rely on one another for support, encouragement and camaraderie, they did think it beneficial for academic, as well as social purposes, to interact with the larger student body:

In the summer, we didn't feel like we had the opportunity to [know what graduate school was like] because we were just with the OYR students, and they were just starting out too... Mixing in with the 2-year students has allowed me, made me see that I needed to be on my toes a bit more.

During the summer, when I was with Advanced Standing students, ACS (Administration of Children's Services) and OYR students, and I found that I learned a lot from the ACS. They had a lot more knowledge of the child welfare system. I learned from them.

I did enjoy it with the Advanced Standing students, but, I didn't want to feel like, you know, special emphasis was being placed on us, as though we need to have a whole separate class- only because it brought friction among other students-but a lot of our experiences [with the other Advanced Standing students] was so similar- but I like to be integrated with the other students, to hear the different experiences, what they were about...and maybe something I didn't get in undergrad, [another] 2nd yr. student can provide knowledge about.

I've dispersed a little bit, I kind of feel like I'm putting a limit on my learning experiences if I stay with them to much, so I try to get phone numbers from other students, because in two of my classes I was the only one, actually there was another one, but you know we didn't really connect, she sat in the back, and you know I always sat in the front...

With constraints of time and separate classes, how were students able to get to know students outside of the Advanced Standing group? While the formally organized mentoring system did not seem to work, it was other 2nd year students, not faculty or administrators, that spurred the process of integration for some of the Advanced Standing students. Students active in the Latino Students Alliance informally took it upon themselves to reach out to Advanced Standing students. This proved to be a meaningful bridge for becoming integrated into student life at the school as the following examples illustrate:

I met [one of the leaders of the Latino Alliance] in my group work class, so from

the very first day he talked to me about the Alliance, and I liked the idea of it because you know, being in a new school with so many faces-I knew that I needed to develop a network of friends and also to talk to people about their experiences here at [the school of social work].

I am involved in the Latino Student Alliance...one of the members was in my class and she just happened to come up to me and talk about it, and asked me if I'd like to attend meetings...she is a two-year student, and was very welcoming. We are planning a common day with the Black Student Alliance and the Asian Student Alliance.

I joined the Latino Alliance, so now I got to know a lot of people...I had a class with one of the members...and he sat us down and talked to us, and we went out to lunch...he was nice. he introduced us to the Latino Alliance...so there I got to know a lot of other students...Hispanic students, as well as some from the Black Alliance, the Asian Alliance- and when we do our meetings, there are other Alliances where there are a lot of 2nd and 1st year students. And we have become recognized there, accepted, finally, which is a great feeling...that was another stressor, feeling that we were not accepted, and everybody looking at us as being different-it made us feel very uncomfortable...we just isolated ourselves into our own little group.

For the student quoted above, becoming a member of the Alliance was key to her adjustment, integration, and sense of belonging at the School of Social Work:

I feel more accepted (after the 1st semester). Now I really feel I can say "Yes, I am a 2nd year student, yes I do belong at Hunter!"

This particular student led an extraordinarily stressful life, yet regardless of the fact that her life was complex and busy (she had more than two children), she flourished academically as well as in the field. Her involvement in the Alliance, although time-consuming, evidently served to deepen her graduate school experience. In fact, the other student who stood out academically, in the field, and as a student leader, was a student who became very active in the Black Students Alliance:

I've joined the ABSW and the Black Students Alliance, I'm part of the faculty/student senate, I've represented my group at senate meetings...Well for the

Black Student Alliance. I just joined on my own, For the NABSW . one of my friends is the president of the chapter and he told me to come to a meeting...he invited me to a meeting and then I became a memberI try to make it my business to be involved with more than just the academics. Bonding with other students is important to me.

It should be noted here that the diversity of the student population at the School of Social Work provided an atmosphere of support and welcome, even for those students who did not actively engage in student life beyond the class-room experience. There was no indication that the concerns of the traditional 2nd year students over the introduction of an Advanced Standing cohort were associated with race, ethnicity, or class. Although all but two of the advanced students were women of color, from working class backgrounds, they never felt excluded from student life on that basis. In fact, as has been mentioned previously, one reason they were attracted to Hunter was because of its commitment to diversity. In fact when discussing the positives about their experience at Hunter, it was the richness of diverse cultures that was prominently featured as these examples illustrate:

I noticed that there were a lot of multicultural workshops...There's a togetherness, where you find different cultures together...The common day that we're planning...is based on the different struggles that the Alliances have been faced with. So I feel a lot of togetherness...you don't see Hispanics hanging out with Hispanics , and the Blacks hanging out with Blacks...it's very welcoming...you don't see as much separations you do in the other schools. Even at Lehman I have seen so much, where the Dominicans hang out with the Dominicans and the Puerto Ricans hang out with Puerto Ricans...I found this [Hunter] very exciting...you see at Lehman, the Majority were Hispanics. Here, I think you see it all...even in the Advanced standing group, there are a lot of Americans, white people, and we all get along great.

I enjoy it [ethnic diversity at Hunter] because where I came from in undergrad, it was not very diverse, I mean so I figure that I'm learning a lot from the diversity in my classes here...I mean because I am going to be working with diverse populations, you know, so , I get a lot of feed back from them, and I'm learning a

lot about their culture...and I don't think I would have gotten the same experience elsewhere.

It was quite refreshing for me, to have so much diversity, I came from [a small liberal arts college] which is a predominantly all white girls college.

One student was surprised, after having gone to another branch of the same university, that there were not as many students of color as she had expected:

In my Human Behavior class, there was only one African-American, and myself (Latina). The other ones were all white. And at first I felt "Oh my god!", but once I started integrating with them, and you know talking to them--at first I didn't feel very comfortable, but after the class progressed, I felt more comfortable...but I did wonder, because they do say that Hunter is really culturally diverse...when I saw this class, I thought, is it just the Advanced Standing program that the majority of students are minorities, and the other 2nd year program is more white...but then I went into the other classes and I could see there was more of a mix...but not as much as in Lehman.

Although other students were aware of their minority status at this particular institution (see Lennon, 1998), they felt that they were a part of a school culture that embraced diversity:

I think this is a very diverse environment...the student body is very diverse and welcoming to one another, different cultures and ethnicities and backgrounds. It's really been an overall pleasant experience interacting with the student here. Most of my friends that I really talk to and hang out with are from my cultural background, but I have good friends that I will talk to outside of school that are from other cultural backgrounds. That's something that's definitely new to me. I think you have a tendency to bond with who looks like you, who talks like you.

We [Latino students] are not as many, here at Hunter, as we were at Lehman, but everybody is nice, and identifies with diversity, we have the same worries, the same goals...I feel very comfortable, very comfortable.

For this student, the profession's commitment to diversity indeed seemed to percolate through her graduate school experience.

I had different people telling me about Hunter, and the Majority of the population is white, and I'm saying 'oh really!'. But it may be true for the big campus, but here, it may be not even true here, but here for me, and this may not be true in the larger society, but for me, here, it's not an issue...maybe cause it's smaller and everyone's about helping one another...I think this is a social work atmosphere.

Alienation vs. Integration

For approximately one third of the Advanced Standing Cohort, involvement with student groups or “Alliances” served as a vehicle for integration into the MSW student body at-large. They were able to comfortably move between the intimacy of their smaller, cozier Advanced Standing group and, through contacts made in the Alliances make their own way in the larger group. In fact one student called it “cutting the cord.” But for the students who were not able to gain entrée through the Alliances, a sense of uncomfortable separateness persisted. One student characterized the separation as a lack of normalcy:

We should have been split up more-maybe the adjustment would have been better. Like in our Human Behavior course, like there's two of us in each class (Advanced Standing Students), and maybe that's better. [There], I feel completely normal.

It should be noted that this particular student was neither part of the Lehman group, nor did she become involved in the non-academic life of the school. She indicated that her only opportunity for getting to know other 2nd year students was during class hours. Another student who was, on the other hand, very much connected to the Advanced Standing cohort acknowledged that the supportive atmosphere of the separate classes was comforting, yet also articulates a similar concern about, as she puts it, “segregation.” Here she wonders whether mixing everyone up from the start might not be better:

Maybe we should be a part of ...in classes maybe there should not be a distinction between Advanced Standing or OYR...we should have classes together instead of segregation...it was good this time, because you know, we had to lean on each other, but you know, we should be a part of the group.

By “this time” we had to “lean on each other,” she was referring to the reality that this was the pilot year of the Advanced Standing program. With the newness of the program, as has been discussed previously, there were occasions where there was confusion over registration, financial aid, and, as the mailbox incident indicated, over how the students were perceived vis-à-vis the institution. It has already been stated that some students felt that the Administration could have done more to make their entry into the program less stressful. There was the feeling that the institution should have been more proactive in smoothing the way for Advanced Standing Students. It was often articulated that they were left to spell out for traditional 2nd year students what it meant to be “Advanced Standing” and that their abbreviated graduate course of study was met with resentment by other students who seemed to know nothing about them. During a group interview, there was a discussion over just how the institution could be more supportive in the future. They even came up with a strategy that the school could consider implementing in the future:

I think Hunter should inform students about Advanced Standing. I found that I had to explain myself in every class! It got repetitious. I would say to myself ‘How come no one knows about this?’ They should have some information, maybe a Common Day...you know talking about the program...just to explain it.

During this same group interview, which happened to be the last time we met formally as a group, another student picked up on the same idea:

-to explain what a BSW program is about, and to explain what we had to

accomplish in an accredited program so that we could be an Advanced Standing student...

As acceptance by the student body seemed to be both socially and educationally important to the Advanced Standing students, while they cherished the comfort and supportiveness of the Advanced Standing group, they felt that the institution bore some responsibility for the stress and isolation they experienced.

Ironically, it must be noted that an unanticipated paradox occurred. While it appeared that efforts to integrate the Advanced Standing cohort into the mainstream 2-year program was perceived as having been institutionally neglected, it may have contributed to the profound connectedness and reliance upon one another that that the Advanced Standing group experienced. And, it was that group cohesion that students frequently expressed was what got them through a very stressful year. Had the institution been more proactive in planning for their adjustment and integration, and had the Advanced Standing cohort (or sub-groups within that cohort) not consequently cleaved together, would the students have done as well academically and in the field as they did?

Chapter 10- The Three R's: Articulation, Redundancy, and Revisiting

Providing BSW graduates with a Masters level education, regardless of whether or not they have been granted Advanced Standing, can be problematic. If required to take foundation classes that have already been completed on the undergraduate level, redundancy is an issue. However, if, as most critics of Advanced Standing fear, BSW holders are exempt from courses that first year graduate students must take, then the concern is that they will be missing out on the intellectual depth and breath of graduate work. And, if they're lacking this foundation, will they be up to speed for the intellectual and practice demands of second year MSW work?

During the planning stages of the Advanced Standing program at this particular university, this conundrum took center stage. The issue of articulation was further complicated by the School of Social Work's unique practice of beginning methods education in the first year of the two-year program. Consequently much of the faculty concern was over articulation and if, whether or not, as one faculty member put it, "the generalist background could mesh with our methods focus" (p.c.-Advanced Standing Committee meeting, 11/18/97). During the months preceding the Pilot Program's beginning, there were numerous discussions over how best to insure this "meshing."

The Advanced standing committee reviewed BSW syllabi from local programs and invited directors of BSW programs to committee meetings to discuss these issues. While

BSW program directors expressed their certainty that their graduates were prepared to enter the 2nd year of Hunter's graduate program, they also commented that students would benefit from additional methods preparation, either during the summer or in the fall (meetings with BSW directors, 11/25/96 and 12/5/96). BSW program directors discussed how their curricula covered both "micro" and "macro" methods. They also emphasized the rigor of their undergraduate practica. At the same time, they felt that a summer methods course might serve the multiple purposes of covering specific content that had not previously been taught, providing opportunities for the Advanced Standing students to become familiar with the school, and to coalesce as a cohort. They also suggested that perhaps the Advanced Standees could enter practica at the same time they took a summer methods course. However, as was stated earlier, this ultimately proved to be unworkable, as the field work faculty would not have ample time to carefully and thoughtfully place students for a summer practica, as the school utilizes a field concurrent with methods model. It was also felt that providing a methods course without the concurrent placement would not serve its educative purpose. What was finally decided upon was that during the fall semester, for the casework students, who represented the vast majority of the cohort, a combined first and second semester methods course would be created. The one group work student would enroll in the regularly scheduled "Groupwork I" and "Groupwork III," as would the Community Organizing student in "CO I" and "CO III." This meant that the Groupwork and CO students would, in the Spring semester, enroll in methods courses II and IV. It was also decided that during the summer semester (before their first fall semester), Advanced Standing students would be

enrolled in two courses, first an Administration course, then a Policy course. Thus, the idea of beginning a methods course with a concurrent field experience during the summer was abandoned. However, students would begin coursework in the summer.

That students had to, as it were, begin at the beginning, even though methods material is covered in the BSW curriculum, is evidence that the larger concerns in Social Work Education about the readiness of BSW graduates to enter the 2nd year of graduate school, were mirrored by the graduate faculty at this particular institution. Some faculty members voiced strong concerns that BSW students would not be prepared for the 2nd year of graduate work, specifically in the methods areas, but for other courses as well.

The issue of articulation and redundancy was not exclusive to the methods areas.

Research faculty was concerned about the variability in BSW curriculum. It was felt that it would be difficult to ascertain just from looking at the list of required courses, whether or not BSW graduates would benefit from an advanced research course, or if they needed to take a more rudimentary research methods course. Consequently research faculty opted to determine on a student by student basis what research course they would take.

What will be discussed in this section, is how the Advanced Standing students themselves perceived their preparedness for the coursework (articulation) and whether or not, once they were enrolled, they seemed redundant, too difficult, or somewhere in between.

Student Perception of their Readiness for Graduate Study in Social Work

Group interviews with Advanced Standing Students took place in June of 1997, just as summer courses were beginning, in September of 1997, at the beginning of the Fall semester, as well as in June of 1998, before graduation. Comments in this section are excerpted from the two earlier group interviews.

Almost unilaterally, students were of the opinion that they were prepared for the rigors of the second year of graduate school. Many of them told of how their undergraduate social work professors had told them that their senior year in their BSW programs was comparable to the first year of a graduate program:

Lehman prepared us for Advanced Standing, because we looked at our senior year at Lehman as the first year of graduate school...the program is so intense, for example we did policy and research...

They(professors in the BSW program) told us, these are graduate level courses. In our research course, we had to do our own research. We did everything. If [in our field placements] we weren't doing group work, we had to create a group of our own. We had to do community organizing...you went from start and learned the policies...they geared it to the graduate level.

The stuff that I had as an undergrad is the first year stuff here. So you would expect that a BSW and an MSW candidate would know basically the same thing on a first year basis.

I think Lehman really prepared us for the masters level-they gave us as many papers...so I think we were prepared.

I think [my undergraduate program did an excellent job, I think they're closely related, I learned a lot about oppression and social change...[a student from Hunter] looked over my syllabi and she said 'wow! You guys are reading Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and stuff like that, and she felt that the stuff she was getting here, I had gotten at the BSW program...

I feel that I am as prepared as a second-year student because I have a BSW, and I have the background in social work...whatever is being taught here, in the first year, I have already learned in undergrad...Advanced Standing prepares you just as well as if you had been in a two-year program-you're pretty much picking up where you left off in undergrad.

It is clear that there was a sense of confidence and readiness. This air of certainty about preparedness for the rigors of graduate work was not exclusive to coursework. Students voiced a similar assuredness about preparedness for field placement:

At [my BSW field placement], being a graduate student was no different, I had to do the same thing. And I even had a larger than normal caseload because I am bi-lingual...

I think it's going to be quite similar, I know with me and some of my BSW classmates, we were in the field with MSW students, and you know, our work load was the same. You know the agencies I don't think see the difference in what [degree] you're going for, so I think the workload was the same.

Interestingly, when asked specifically which course would they expect to be most challenging, Research was the resounding response:

One thing that concerns me is the research course. I'm wondering about Research II. I took research at Lehman, and I got an A and all, but when I came [to Hunter] for the group interview, the faculty member that interviewed us...was talking about research, it was like 'Oh no!'

I think I'm a little concerned about research. I had the same group interview...

That's funny, cause I had the same concern [about research]. I understand that we'll have to work here with the computer? We didn't have to do that at Lehman.

I really did well in it [in undergraduate program], but I don't know if I'm prepared.

I think the reason why [we're all concerned about research] is that we haven't constructed a study...we had to construct questionnaires and stuff, but we never actually did a research study.

One student added with a sensible, if not omniscient, tone:

I think that all students are afraid of it. We always heard they were the toughest courses.

What Was Repetitive-What Was Most Challenging?

With an understanding of how the students in the Advanced Standing cohort perceived their undergraduate training to have prepared them, and knowing what the faculty felt they needed, their feelings about what in fact was redundant, new and challenging are quite fascinating.

One student commented that a summer disability course was repetitive and another spoke of having had an administration course in “undergrad” that was much more in depth than the one she took during the summer at Hunter. But the majority of casework students agreed that the course that seemed to contain the most repetitive material, at least during the first half of the fall semester, was casework. They did not appear to be annoyed, or particularly frustrated about what could be characterized as redundancy. And all imparted the sense that revisiting material was educationally beneficial, as this student points out:

A lot of it [the casework course] was redundant, but then again it was good because it refreshed our memories and got into more detail

Some students were quite specific about what in fact was repetitive and what wasn't:

It was a little repetitive (casework). The first paper was something we had already done, a psychosocial assessment of a client. Then we let him know that it was going slowly. His course I liked. Cause it helped me as a worker. One of the papers I did was on counter transference. My client was going through bereavement issues, and I was going through my own bereavement issues, so it helped me to work my way through it—and that helped me a lot.

I think it's repetitive [casework], but repetitive in a good way. I think my assessment skills are good, but I would like to keep practicing them. I'm not totally comfortable, but I like the idea that I'm reinforcing what I already know.

What was redundant was, we knew what to do with the joint assessment, the mutual agreement...then we started to get into things like counter-transference more in depth, and we started getting into resistance more, and actually dealing with a client, and it's not until you're actually in there for a few weeks that you realize that there may be resistance.

If the redundancy was at all experienced negatively, it was because new material was introduced late in the semester, when there was not enough time to fully absorb the new material:

The beginning part of the class was redundant and then three-quarters of the way through it started getting into new material

The casework class at the beginning, it was repetitious, and then it started to speed up toward the end, and then we thought it was going a little too fast and we wanted to have more time to learn.

When we got to the middle of the semester [in casework] it started to move a lot more quickly and we felt that we needed to slow down a bit more so that we could grasp all the concepts and all the different theories and you know, everything that was involved in casework that was new to us...like crisis intervention, and more in depth family and individual counseling...

Casework—that was fine because a lot of what we did there, we had already covered at Lehman, however, when it came to brief therapy, cognitive therapy, family therapy, it went into more detail here than at Lehman. In some cases we hadn't touched on things at Lehman, so that was good. However, we kind of touched on things late in the semester and I kind of wish we hadn't waited till the end and then you felt like you were rushing, rushing, rushing.

It may be that re-framing “redundancy” as “revisiting” can be a useful construct. It is apparent that some of the material in this combined Casework course had been previously covered in the BSW programs. Yet students did not remark that they were bored or felt it

unnecessary to review. Rather, they commented that it helped them to focus their learning. Perhaps developing the concept of “educational revisitation” rather than “redundancy” could prove to be useful for the Council on Social Work Education to consider as it evaluates linkages and articulation between BSW and MSW programs.

It is also significant to note, in the above student comments, the perception that the casework instructor was flexible about responding to the students’ educational needs. Clearly this is an advantage of having segregated the cohort for the methods class, as it enabled the instructor to make a differential diagnosis and to assess what the students brought with them and what material they should focus on. The responsiveness to students’ educational strengths and deficits did not go unnoticed, as this student points out:

[The instructor] is trying to find out what we know so that he can tailor the class to our needs.

Equally important to note is the student who responded that, when the course did pick up the pace, it felt as though they were “rushing, rushing, rushing”. Here, again, there is a manifestation of the compression of time and the feeling of stress that went along with it.

Overcoming Research Phobia

Many students had been apprehensive about the research course, and indeed for some it was reported as being the most challenging course during the fall semester. While most of the students were enrolled in the same research class, the two who were not casework

students were not available at the time when the class met, therefore they had to enroll in tutorial sessions. Their experience was somewhat different, as they had to work more independently. The following excerpts are taken from interviews with students who were enrolled in the course, rather than the tutorial, again this done so because it preserves the anonymity of the students:

I think it's research. The word research just scares me. Basically, we had a sociological research background at Lehman. It really wasn't social work. [The] professor was excellent. We had an opportunity to look at research from a social work perspective.

Well to me the most difficult, and I struggled a bit, was Research, only because I overwhelmed myself...I don't know if it was as complex as I thought it was...when I heard the word "Advanced" (research), I think that is the thing that made me become overwhelmed...I was thinking "My gosh, I'm going to do research!" ...even though I had taken the basics at Lehman. I thought I actually had to come up with some kind of research study...and it turned out to be something that was actually going to help at field...it made me understand my case better, it was case research. It was pretty simple, then [the Research instructor] took us step by step, and he explained to us what it was that he wanted, what he expected from us.

Research...the most difficult class!...But actually it wasn't so bad, once I got into a topic...I was looking at the difference between students who are referred for counseling, and those that are self-referred—and their responses and behavior, similarities and differences. It took a lot of work. What was most difficult was looking for literature related to the topic.

Research—it's like he wanted so much in one semester—we all thought it was going to be so hard, but when we got started we found that it wasn't that hard—once I started it wasn't so bad... I run a teen mothers group here, so I did an evaluation of that group, whether there should be more services for teen mothers in the high schools. So I'm going to bring that into the professional seminar.

Actually the most challenging was research, that was a lot of work! Because that involved the practice—My research design was implementing a program where the clients are substance abusers with HIV+. I had to come up with a design for the group, and an assessment.

Research...you feel at some point kind of lost...but I was very happy to do a study of a patient that I had at the beginning of the semester-it was very inspiring, because the patient had a lot of issues, like substance abuse, in addition to her mental condition.

Note though that once the fear and anxiety dissipated, students stated that it wasn't as bad as they thought it was going to be. This appears to be associated with the practical and utilitarian function of the research curriculum. It illustrates the significance of the research course in the integration and synergy of theory and practice for the Advanced Standing students. The need for course work to be utilitarian, and that it serve the purpose of increasing efficacy and understanding in the field, resonated through many of the discussions regarding courses and how challenging they were. It may be a function of their truncated tenure in graduate school, that every minute needed to serve a practical purpose. Or it may be a function of learning style that, for these particular students, generating practical uses for complex theories made the learning less anxiety producing. Regardless, it is clear that the fear of research as an academic challenge dissipated as students were able to ground the learning in the real world of field work. The issues of the interplay between theory in practice will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

Human Behavior in the Social Environment (HBSE) was also frequently reported as being the most challenging. Here students discuss how HBSE material was new, and how it prodded them to think in ways they hadn't before.

The most challenging course that I've had was human behavior. And not so much because the course was difficult but because it challenged me to think about myself as ... a social worker, think about what I'm bringing to the field, my prejudices, my biases, the type of person that I am and what we're learning and

the combination of the two...like you can learn a theory or a skill here at Hunter, but you're going to have to develop your own style when you leave here. So, we were able to explore that, it was just a lot of looking into your self and you think that has really changed me a lot. To think about the concepts of power and social work...we talked about collaboration, like working with your client so that it's their definition of what the problem is and not your own. And in order to do that I've learned that you have to give up some of the power as a social worker...these are things I never thought of.

I would have to say Human Behavior, because it was more diagnosis, and you have to look at various symptoms and understand the cultural aspect of it...I never took a course like this where I really looked at mental illness...I had to do a lot of reading, and sometimes I had to read it over.

I would have to say Human Behavior. It was the only thing that I hadn't gotten a taste of [in undergraduate]...It was basically the DSM IV...at first it seemed overwhelming...all the disorders, and I wanted to learn so much that I felt I didn't get to do it...there wasn't enough time to learn what I wanted to learn.

Once again, the compressed experience is noted. Here, an unanswered question emerges: Was it only Advanced Standing students who felt that there wasn't time enough "to learn what I wanted to learn" or was that a more universal perception shared by 2nd year and OYR students? It is beyond the scope of this particular study, but it would have been valuable to be able to compare Advanced Standing and traditional two-year MSW students' perceptions about such courses, particularly as the HBSE courses were not segregated.

During a group interview with faculty members (2/97), one instructor noted that the previous Dean at the School of Social Work, Harold Lewis (who was not an advocate of accelerated MSW programs) had remarked on more than one occasion, that the "real learning is in the 2nd and 3rd semesters." Perhaps the intensity with which Advanced

Standing students seemed to absorb and want to use what was learned in courses to increase understanding of practice issues is a function of that “real learning.” And, if they were behaving like “real learners” in this, their first semester in graduate school, it would perhaps indicate that, at least this group of BSW graduates, had indeed received adequate preparation to enter the 2nd year of the MSW program.

The Challenges of Graduate Social Work Training and the Express Train from Generalist to Specialist Learning

The Advanced Standing students were successful in their coursework. None were singled out by faculty or advisor as having academic difficulties that would prevent them from completing their graduate studies. Three students took a grade of ‘Incomplete’ in their research course that was taken during the first semester. The only reason cited was that there did not seem to be enough time to complete what was necessary within the semester. The following student summarizes the sentiment:

I felt bad about taking an Incomplete...I just wanted to be able to finish it all. But it's OK, you can just take your time, it's not that you fail, it's just that you need some extra time to do it.

The cynical response to the apparent successful transition to the 2nd year of graduate training is that it may be due to the possibility that graduate social work education simply may not be more rigorous than undergraduate training. If this were the case, then such questions may be raised as: Was the Advanced Standing program so stressful simply because it took up so much time?; What, if anything makes graduate school for BSW holders anything more than just a requisite fifth year of coursework?

In fact the majority of Advanced Standing students felt that graduate school was more rigorous than their undergraduate work. Evidence of this is illustrated by their comments about the use of primary sources over textbooks in graduate school, and the long hours spent in the library:

In undergrad, the textbook was what the professors really focused on and anything you did in addition to that, in terms of reading, was your research. So unless you were actually interested in something, very rarely was it required that you had to pull something from the library to read...but here... They gave us a broad selection to choose from and it wasn't until the end that [the] Professor made it clear to us that even though the semester was over, that there was a lot of information [in the bibliography] and that most of it was in the library, so that if you ever have a question, or just need to know, or want more information, just go down and pull the reading from the library. So I realized that you get a lot more information in the journals, as opposed to the textbooks.

In undergrad, whatever textbooks that we used- and some articles were handed out, but it was mostly text book. Here, we use textbooks, but whatever sources are out there, we have to find them. People say to me, oh you're only in school for a couple of hours, but I'm in the library all the time!

[E]ven though we went to our journals for research papers [in the BSW program]—I think they integrate journals here—in undergrad you basically bought a textbook at the beginning of the year, and that's what you used—as far as the class was concerned.

There was an awful lot of reading-reading went along with the papers.

The readings [in HBSE] were challenging, they don't assign books-we had gotten used to books being assigned, instead it's like 100 articles that you have to go to the library and get.

I think when you are in graduate school...you have to go everywhere- you have to go to journals, you have to go to textbooks...you have to use a lot of sources for one particular subject.

The sense that graduate education was indeed more challenging than undergraduate BSW programs also centered around the transition from a generalist perspective, towards increased specialization in one's chosen field of practice. Here a student begins by discussing the amount of work assigned but then goes on to discuss the change in emphasis:

I think the quantity of work [makes graduate school more rigorous], how much readings, assignments. In undergrad we were introduced to different topics, and here we focus on more specific topics.

Below, another student remarks about the specificity of graduate study:

I think in grad school you focus on what interests you—you have more freedom—in the BSW, you had to learn this and that. It's more focused [in graduate school] on your field of practice.

Another student zeroes in on why a particular course was challenging and relates it to the nature of the course content and how it differs from a course she took in her BSW program:

Human Behavior—at Lehman we were looking at the life cycle—bio-psycho-social changes at each level. And it was great. But when we came to Hunter it's like we went through a whole new thing. Really heavy in DSM, the DSM IV—clinical terms—(looking at pathology more) and that was something we never touched on at Lehman.

In spite of the challenges, the students' experience in this particular Advanced Standing pilot program seem to confirm Thyer, Vonk & Tandy's (1996) findings that traditional 2-year students and accelerated students were "equivalently prepared at the point where they typically converge" (pg.45). Their experience apparently is similar as well to the cohort studied by Fortune, Greene and Kolevzon (1987), which, the authors note

performed on par academically with traditional students but experienced more psychological stress than their 2-year counterparts. Here, as in the Fortune et al. study, the stress seems to be connected to the compression of time, rather than to lack of preparedness or difficulty in adjusting to the demands of graduate work.

Chapter 11- Advanced Standing Students and the Field Work Experience

In the last chapter, it was noted that Advanced Standing students not only felt prepared for the academic rigors of the 2nd year of graduate social work education, but also expressed readiness for their field experience. Indeed, Knight's (1993) study, which surveyed field instructors, indicated that there were few apparent differences between the field work performance of advanced standees and their 2 -year counterparts. This chapter will focus on the Advanced Standing students' experiences in the field.

Although students articulated a sense of preparedness for field, in a group interview before the students entered placement, there was some anxiety expressed over entering a graduate level placement and the demands that may be placed on them:

I think that I am so anxious! The reason why is that I've worked at my job for 6 1/2 years and I'm so used to that place and I want to go to a different environment.

I'm a little nervous my anxiety level isn't as high as [the student who previously spoke in the interview], I think we'll be applying the same skills maybe at a more advanced level.

I expect the expectations to be a little higher, I'm a little anxious about it...It's something new.

Group interviews were conducted again after students entered field work in the Fall '97 semester. It was apparent that students felt that there were substantial demands placed on them, and that there appeared to be a marked difference in how they perceived their roles

as 2nd year graduate students as compared to their experiences in their BSW placements:

[W]ell, I can speak for myself, my supervisor was very welcoming. The workload is very intense. There's a lot of work to be done, a lot of paper work-a lot of meetings to attend, unlike my BSW placement, which was pretty easy going. I did learn a lot [there], there was a lot of diversity and a lot to learn from. I did get experience as a generalist practitioner. I think out of the field placement-I get more of the sense and feeling that I'm already a social worker, and I'm more accepted and more recognized, as opposed to when I was at the hospital [BSW] placement, there was a lot of conflict there and everyone saw me as a student-whereas at my placement now, I'm seen as a therapist—even though I'm a social work intern.

I'm seen as a therapist and I'm performing a lot of roles...

When I was an undergrad, I did HIV case management for a year and then put together a program for HIV negative children who had a parent or relative who was HIV positive. So I did a lot in the HIV field in undergrad-so in grad school I didn't want to do HIV stuff. So now, I do a lot of individual counseling and I work with a group of adolescents who are survivors of incest. So I do a lot more counseling, which in undergrad I didn't do. So I think there's more responsibility that is placed on me as a graduate student because there are a lot more expectations—they have to make sure we know everything before they don't have time to teach this to you—this is your last shot to get this experience and we want to make sure you have it.

As noted above, the field experience seemed to be characterized, for the majority of Advanced Standing casework students, by the change in role from “case manager” to therapist or clinician. From their comments, it is clear that the use of the term “therapist” had begun to be infused into their lexicon. This is significant in light of Bogo & Michalski's (1995) findings that self-identification as "Social Worker" declined and "Clinical Social Worker" among accelerated students increased. The following quotes corroborate the perception:

I'm working with another [student] who is a first year, and I feel like we all have to take it slow with her, and with me, it's like OK well you're running this group here, and here are your three clients and know the paper work? No, well ok,

we'll show it to you quickly. I feel like it's really overwhelming. And they refer to me as a therapist. They called my clients in front of me, and said 'yeah your new therapist is...'. They didn't even tell them I was a student

And [in BSW placement], you weren't doing individual therapy. In BSW, I was doing case management, which is much easier than running groups and doing individual and family work. And my caseload tripled as compared to my BSW caseload.

At [my BSW placement] it was mainly eligibility... for elderly and home visits. I got into details about benefits concrete services... [And now] Well I'm running groups. and doing individual case management with clients—basically therapy with my groups, and then I have my individual clients that I see once a week. Between 2 and 4

I'm doing a lot of counseling. In my undergraduate placement I did some counseling, but provided a lot of concrete services.

As has been noted previously, between the fall and spring semesters I interviewed students individually. A substantial portion of the discussions focused on field work, and the demands of the graduate placement as compared to BSW placements. For all but two of the students, no major problems were revealed. Yet, it seemed that the transition from BSW student to 2nd year graduate student was like being catapulted into a new role. As is evident from the excerpts above, students in undergraduate placements focused on case management, concrete services and, for a few students, what they deemed as “generalist practice.” Yet in their graduate placements, almost immediately, they were thrust into a new role that they defined as either “therapist” or “counselor.” For a significant number of them, the transition was startling, apparently as the role was foisted on them before they felt they had the appropriate knowledge base under their belts to be truly comfortable:

Oh forget it, I was scared out of my mind. I thought, 'What am I gonna be doing here?' And I had a really bad misconception about the mentally ill. And then you get there and you find out that these people are just as smart—have a lot of their capacities...have a lot of insight...you can learn from them.

When I first got to [placement], I went there and I wasn't sure WHAT I was going to do...because I'm working with the day treatment program, so it is not a school setting. I thought it was going to be more case management...then I started doing therapy, I didn't know what to expect...what it was that I was doing...but my supervisor is very supportive, and he's provided me with a lot of literature to help me.

[At first] it was pretty scary. I had no idea what I was doing. I wasn't trained for this...once I had positive feedback with the clients, that gave me confidence, my supervisor gave me confidence.

At first when I went to the field I was anxious about doing therapy...What I had done [in BSW placement] was short-term casework, and it basically consisted of doing advocacy work and referrals. So it was a challenge...but once I started to get into it, it got easier...and of course, the readings help.

When I first got here, I had zero knowledge—my theoretical work at school paved the way for me to do my work here.

The students struggled with the transition, had feelings of self-doubt, but for the most part, they did not balk at their changes in role. In fact, it appeared that the urgent 'need to know' was another impetus to learn and to do so quickly.

More Therapist-Less Advocate

It is significant to note that this increased intensity of focus on clinical role did not appear to be accompanied by an increased concern about the social worker's professional commitment to social justice. This study was conducted during a time period when there had been a sea change in a number of American social welfare policies, specifically related to the provision of health care and entitlements. These changes would

undoubtedly have far-ranging impacts on the delivery of social services to clients in most settings. Considering this salience and timeliness, I asked students in the individual interviews if they had become increasingly aware of social justice or social welfare issues in graduate school, and if that had prompted them to become more active in that arena. The majority of students remarked that time did not allow for exploration in this area as the following comments illustrate:

It's also very difficult for me to get really involved here. Because I have so many things that I do. Because of where I live—I just don't have the time to do it.

I call people to find out information, from my own experiences, information that I obtained about what's going on from welfare reform—and I inform my clients. In my neighborhood, I'm a member of my tenants association...I'm looking forward to graduation, and getting involved in those kinds of activities, I just don't have the time right now.

A few students, while acknowledging that they had not had the time to explore social welfare policy changes, did not see the lack of time to focus on policy or social justice issues as something to be concerned over:

No- I think about it when I read the NASW news, so that I can be aware. But that's as far as it goes.

My experience has been very clinical so I haven't been exposed to [the changes in the social welfare system and its impact on practice] ...I'm really glad about that, because I wanted to get the clinical.

One casework student, perhaps not coincidentally, the same one who had difficulty adopting the role of 'therapist' (see a discussion of this below), did voice very strong concerns in the area of social justice and was disturbed by the lack of concern demonstrated by her supervisor:

I am very nervous about Medicaid Managed Care and the consequences it will have on disadvantaged groups...my supervisor seems to undervalue those [advocacy] skills that I have...And I believe that now, we have to be even more resourceful- I have to be even more creative in fulfilling my client's needs- the government is cutting more and more.

Once again, the question begs to be asked: Is this expanded focus on clinical role and concurrent constricted role as advocate for social justice, a function of the accelerated educational time-frame? Or, is the same phenomenon evident in the two-year cohort as well?

Advanced Standing Students' Relationships With Field Instructors

Field work instructors who provided support and instruction, as well as coursework and classroom faculty that could arm them with knowledge and skills for use in the field, appeared to be instrumental to helping the students to adjust to increased demands of graduate field placement. Field instructors provided substantive instruction as well as emotional support so that the students could indeed perform the tasks that were expected. During interviews, students warmly told of their field instructors' support, accessibility, and willingness to impart information as these excerpts illustrate:

She [field instructor] has worked with students for a while, she has a lot of experience with groups, I'm learning a lot with her, she's so understanding...about my needs, she's available whenever I need her.

[My supervisor] has been very helpful, because every week something new arises that I'm having difficulty with, not something that I'm having a great deal of difficulty with, but that I have questions about...and definitely I need to speak with my supervisor because...I don't like to make decisions about something that could have a negative effect...and she was very helpful, we have a great relationship.

When I first got there [to field], I was overwhelmed, so much paper work, and there are 90 days for this, 30 days for this...and the deadline is 6months for this, and you have to have a weekly activity log, and ...and three process recordings per week...I felt like pulling my hair out, I became real stressed...and I sat down with my supervisor and I told him how I was feeling. He was just great, again he was very supportive- he kept reassuring me that I can do it- and I was able to do it!

My field supervisor is very supportive, she's like a teacher out of Hunter. I have to prepare myself for supervision when I go and see her...she says "you said you wanted to learn this, and I'm going to make sure that you learn it."

My supervisor encouraged me to do more with the DSM IV. Now I feel a lot more comfortable with that.

She has a lot of knowledge—Right now we're dealing with how to work with couples. She's given me some articles to read. On individual cases-she gives me suggestions---and we go over process recordings.

Field instructors were able to provide reflective feedback along the way. As was mentioned previously, during the beginning stages of their year in graduate school, the students struggled with self-doubt. Here, the students demonstrate that they were able to get affirming responses to the proverbial question: 'how am I doin'?:

I wanted to know from my supervisor, what was the difference between me as an Advanced Standing student and another 2nd year student...She made it clear to me, She said "Well... you are a 2nd year student as far as I'm concerned."

One thing, at my field placement, at the beginning, I would run back and forth to my supervisor. And she said, "[Y]ou're a professional now." She said "you have to make decisions for yourself." She said "you have to come up with your own schedule." And I'm like OK, and she allows me to make decisions, and then in supervision I'll come to her and say this is what I've done. And she might say to me "Well, what made you do that?" And I have learned to rely on my own techniques, my own skills and knowledge, and to trust myself.

She allowed me to do it [complete a self-evaluation]. And when I gave it back to her, she said, "you were really harsh on yourself!" I thought I didn't think I knew this—and she was really supportive.

· Even when positive feedback was combined with constructive criticism, this student felt supported:

At [the agency], they only accept 2nd year students, and my supervisor, she pointed out a few things, actually one specific thing, and it's interviewing technique... Everything else she felt that you know, I was where a 2nd year student should be, and in a lot of things, she thought I was more advanced, in terms of life experience, but in the interviewing technique, she thought I was lacking, because, being in graduate school for 2 years and working on that level, and the supervisor's working with you, it kind of better prepares you. So I felt that that's where I was lacking.

Here, a student gives her supervisor the penultimate compliment as she describes how her field instructor was the supportive bridge between school/theory, and field/practice:

I think that one complimented the other (relationship w/field instructor and faculty). Because I know there were times when I had a little difficulty with some of the theories I was learning here, and then I would go to my supervisor who would say...you know what the theory is, and connect my actions with the theory, he was great at helping me with difficult issues...he helped me really grow.

The majority of students performed at least adequately both academically and in the field.

There did not seem to be any significant relationship between performance in coursework and practice. In fact, the two students who had difficulties in the field, did well in coursework. Yet they had very stormy relationships with their field instructors. Below, a student shares in an interview, that she felt particularly conflicted about shedding her generalist role and bristled at the concept of “therapist” and that this was a source of conflict between she and her field instructor:

In my BSW placement, in the hospital, I was focusing on the bio-psycho-social aspect of the patient, and now at my MSW placement, they want to focus on the clinical issues...the focus is just therapy, therapy, therapy, and some of my

patients are very psychotic, and you try to do what you can, but some of them don't have the insight enough for you to really work with them in therapy.

Unlike her classmates, who enjoyed a supportive relationship with their instructors, this student's relationship with her field instructor was fraught with strife. It appeared that their differing theoretical ideas were related to what the student's role with clients should be and that this dissonance was at the core of the conflict:

For me it was harder, what I never anticipated was how hard it was going to be in the supervisor-student relationship...she's critical, very, very critical...she always focuses on the negative...in one process recording, I was able to elicit important information about a patient's relationship with her daughter, and she didn't acknowledge that...In my placement, it is clinical and my supervisor has a clinical perspective, sometimes I think we are not exposed enough to clinical information here at Hunter, that we cannot be considered clinical social workers. I see myself as a generalist, caseworker. This person that I'm working with, she's 100% clinical and so now she's like I hope that you work extra hard this semester so you can graduate in June...'

This particular student had been highly valued in her undergraduate placement, and had in fact been hired there on a part-time basis during weekends as a BSW level social worker. Nonetheless, she seemed to lock horns with her graduate field instructor early on. In fact, during a telephone interview with this particular field instructor, she indicated that she felt the student had performed less than adequately:

Her interview skills are poor, on a superficial level. I expected more of her. I thought she would have known more.

One other student also had an acrimonious relationship with her field instructor that she discussed at great length in an individual interview. Similarly, there seemed to be both a personal and professional dimension to the conflict. Below the student discusses a conflict over theoretical approaches of casework to use with clients:

Every week I would hear "I question your judgement, you have poor judgement"-like I would give [clients] little exercises to take home and do, and she doesn't like that. She tends to use a more object-relations approach...I started taking this cognitive therapy class, and I like some of the exercises-and she'd say "I question your judgement, I question your judgement, I don't think you should do that with your client."

Here the same student discussed how the conflict took a more personal turn:

I really feel that as soon as I told her I was an Advanced Standing student, her whole reaction—like she said, it's not fair, I don't think there should be an Advanced Standing program. So she let her personal issues get in the way and I feel like up until now that she treated me different from the other students placed here. She would tell me like I can't treat you like a 2nd year student, I'm going to treat you like a 1st year student. I would have problems with that-she would say I had a wall up, but I felt uncomfortable with her. I wouldn't get any kind of positive feedback, it was all negative, to the point where I felt really incompetent, if I was doing anything right. About a month ago there was an incident where she yelled at me in front of my client...I was like that's it, I'm not about to have her yell at me in front of a student. I went to [my advisor].

Note that the student stated that the field instructor seemed to have strong negative feelings about the general practice of Advanced Standing. Both students who had difficulty in the field stated that their field instructors were not proponents of Advanced Standing. The previous student also stated that her "supervisor disclosed" to her that she was "not in favor of Advanced Standing". In fact, both instructors, when interviewed were quite open about their objections to accelerated graduate programs as the following statements confirm:

I have my reservations about Advanced Standing. I'm a believer in two years. Personally, I got a BSW in social work. There was no Advanced Standing option. I benefited from two years of graduate school...I feel that people are short-changed with one year of graduate school.

I was in a BSW program, and then a One-Year Residency Program. I don't believe in [Advanced Standing programs]-I think a whole lot of integration takes place [in non-accelerated programs]...I think Hunter is at risk of losing its

reputation...I don't think [this student] should have slipped through the cracks.

It should be noted that the student she was referring to above was an excellent student academically and received a grade of 'Honors' in four courses, more than any other Advanced Standing student in the cohort.

A similar but converse dynamic appears to be evident in the relationships between student and field instructor for those students who did well in the field. Supervisory sensitivity to the Advanced Standing student experience seemed to be a significant ingredient to the supportive relationship that many students enjoyed with their instructors as the following comments by Advanced Standing students illustrate:

[M]y supervisor was an Advanced Standing student at NYU, so she kinda knew what it feels like—to be expected—basically as she puts it, it's your first year doing field as a graduate student, but you're expected to perform as a 2nd year student—and so she just said we'll have to work to work on self awareness.

My supervisor is an Advanced Standing graduate from Columbia...He knows what we've been through and he knows that it works.

It was for the two students who had conflictual relationships with their field instructors that the advisory relationship was so critical. For both students, the advisor was able to be an effective mediator as this student describes:

We had a training, and I was a little late [about 3 minutes]. So she just yanked me by the arm, and said 'I told you to be here by 11!' and I said 'I'm not a child do not yell at me!' And she'll tend to do that. So we really weren't able to get in depth...I went to [my advisor] and I was able to set an agenda to meet with her. When I met with her [the field instructor], she felt offended, that I hadn't really been honest with her from the beginning. She tried to blame me, saying that it

was me that caused it—she met with [the advisor], and after that we've been able to talk.

By the end of the spring '98 semester, one of the two field instructors felt that, in spite of her concerns and objections to Advanced Standing, that the student had improved. She conceded that "It (the student's capacity to understand and apply practice skills) came together." Yet she still felt that the student was "finishing at first year level, second semester." When asked if she would hire the student if there were a position for her, she said "Yes, with more training." The other field instructor said that she saw "some real significant changes (in self-awareness) in the last three months", yet felt the student finished as an "average mid-first year student." She was the only field instructor to report that if there were a position available in her agency, she would not hire the student.

Regardless of the two field instructors who felt negatively about their student interns, the 12 others reported that they were satisfied with the Advanced Standing students' performance in the field. Some were resoundingly flattering in their evaluative comments during telephone interviews, while others spoke more cautiously of increasingly developing skills over the two semesters. Here is a sampling of their responses about the students:

Both [Advanced Standing students that I supervised] were concerned and committed. They followed through, made good use of supervision. Overall I was very pleased.

She was autonomous, I would just have to give her an outline of a task and she would carry it out.

She was fabulous, thought on her own...she was objective...she improved as she

went through the year...She was the best student I ever had.

She was a wonderful student...she has an uncanny intuitive ability...she was less reliant on me than other students. She picked up what she needed to very quickly.

She has a good understanding of Human Behavior and good assessment skills...she has some weaknesses in diagnosis and breaking down what treatment goals should be...[but] she worked much more autonomously than some of our staff. She 's enormously confident...She doesn't recoil from difficult cases.

There were slight problems at the beginning with grammar and spelling. [Her skills were comparable to other MSW students] except in the area of therapy, because the BSW is generalist...she was a great student, aware of counter transference and diversity.

Clearly these field instructors felt that their interns did well in the field. They noted their maturity, ability to work autonomously, to learn quickly, and their sensitivity to diversity.

If there were deficits, they were in the area of theoretical knowledge. As the field instructor above stated, her student's skills were comparable to those of others in their 2nd year of graduate school, except in the area of therapy. Another noted that her student was lacking in diagnostic skills. Below a field instructor outlines her student's deficits, yet, all the while praising her in many ways:

She didn't come being able to fill in for me. At the beginning, she still looked like a first year student. There were so many things that she didn't know...I saw growth. She knows the system, is an independent worker, she's quick to learn...[She] had good engagement skills but could have benefited from more clinical experience. Her knowledge of Human Behavior just started sinking in...She could very well be hired here.

Again, without a comparative traditional 2nd year student sample, there is no methodologically sound way of discerning whether or not 2 out of fifteen negative reviews of student performance in the field is the norm. Yet it is apparent that these field

instructors, who have also regularly worked with traditional two-year students, had favorable experiences with these Advanced Standing students.

The 2nd Semester And The Marriage Of Theory And Practice

As pressed as the graduate school experience was for the Advanced Standing students, they managed to extract from it what they needed to in very efficient ways. Apparently, some of the field instructors felt that they did not have the clinical/theoretical underpinnings that traditional 2nd year MSW graduate students had. One attributed this to the generalist emphasis at the BSW programs. However, the field instructors felt that the Advanced Standing students were mature, responsible, worked autonomously when appropriate, and asked for guidance when that was necessary. What is clear from the students' point of view is that they had no pretenses about what they knew and what they needed to know. Through their classroom and field experience they were able to assess their gaps in knowledge on-the-job, and used that 'need-to-know' as a propeller toward learning:

I'm looking for articles that interest me, and I'm reading them and I'm enjoying them and I'm learning. In undergrad, I felt like 'you gotta get the grade, get the grade, get the grade, and now that I'm not worried about the grade, I'm just reading for my education. I'm reading the assigned articles not because I want to get the A, but because I want to learn.

The Human behavior class was just like hand in hand—you go to class and she'll discuss schizophrenia and all the different subtypes of it—and we went into it and you read your DSM and there was another book—Maxman and Ward—broke down everything about epidemiology—and then we'd go have a staff meeting and they'd be talking about the same thing so it was just like doubly reinforcing everything. And I'm able to participate in the staff meetings—it makes me feel good to participate, and I wouldn't have been able to have done that, if it wasn't

for the class here. It was like I got the book and the background knowledge here and I was able to take it back to the field and put it into action with my clients.

I don't believe you become a professional while you are a student...you need the knowledge basis; however, you need to put it into practice, and to me, I feel that the more experience you gain, the more professional you become...there are still so many aspects of social work that you are going to be faced with, and once you are faced with them is when you're really learning, because you HAVE to go back to the literature and read about it...that's what I found with myself. I could learn about counter-transference and transference... When read about if I didn't necessarily really understand the concept...but once I experienced it, I'm actually dealing with this in one of my cases, and read about it...then those two things together...

I did get a lot of knowledge in my undergraduate studies, but I didn't, I wasn't able to apply all the knowledge, until I go the experience (field placement). So I think I've learned more, through the experience. I've learned from textbooks, don't get me wrong. But I learned more through my experiences. And then I was able to come back to school and talk about the experiences...so between both, I really learned a lot...I was able to incorporate what I learned into the field, and what I learned in the field, into my school work. So both worked together.

When cases are very complex, I would come and discuss it with my Human Behavior or Casework professor, they were great, they were helpful...so the practice is very intertwined with my classes.

To me, the whole coursework at Hunter College, really connected with what I'm doing here [in my field placement]...I was able to really reflect...it was like theory was there and my practicum here...this was a major difference from undergrad. I could see the connection here.

In psychodynamics I did my paper on my client. And I looked at her symptoms and her status now, and I looked into her past...and it helped me to understand my client.

And it's helpful, when you write about it, you're able to see what you're doing...you wonder 'Am I using the right approach for this client, and then you write the paper it's like, oh!'-And then you get the feedback, it makes you feel like you're doing something right, so the papers are really helpful.

This propulsion, as it were, was not linear, rather it was synergistic. Not only did academic work inform practice, but practice concerns and experiences made classroom

learning more meaningful. As one student said, classes went “hand-in hand” with field work. Needing to know about theories, skills and techniques would provide the incentive to find the necessary knowledge, either through course work, readings, or discussions with faculty. As the student statements above made clear, it was the potential for practical application of theoretical knowledge that made the learning so meaningful. Although this theory-practice relationship is a pillar of social work education, it was the sense of urgency, prompted by the compression of time that students experienced in the Advanced Standing program, that seemed to make the theory/practice relationship an imperative that provided the fuel for the synergy.

Chapter 12—Conclusion

After more than a year of planning, the Pilot Advanced Standing Program began at the Hunter School of Social Work in June of 1997. Fifteen students were admitted. All had received their BSW degrees less than a month before entering; 10 received their undergraduate degrees from another unit of the same university. All 15 students were women. Thirteen of the fifteen concentrated their graduate studies in Casework, one chose Group work, and the other, Community Organization and Planning. Utilizing the standard benchmarks, the program was indeed successful. Each of the 15 students performed at least adequately, academically. Although some problem areas were reflected in the comments of field instructors, by October of 1998, four months after 14 of the 15 graduated (one student had incompletes to fulfill), all 15 were employed full time as social workers. Five students took positions with the agencies in which they did their fieldwork placements. Of the 15 students who were employed, 13 reported their annual salaries ranged from \$29,000 to \$40,500 with an average annual salary of \$34,538.

The optimistic results of this study could be interpreted as the result of a haphazard combination of ingredients: 15 uniquely suitable and resilient students; a pinch of serendipity, sprinkled with a dose of 'Hawthorne effect', quickly prepared at a high temperature by a well-seasoned institution. Yet through this qualitative year-long study of the experiences of these fifteen women in graduate school, a great deal can be learned

that can inform educational practices in accelerated learning programs in the future.

Summary of Findings

The Advanced Standing students' tenure in graduate school was marked by a sense of urgency. The year was very full, with most students expressing feelings of stress along the way. The stress appeared to stem from a variety of origins, most significantly from the swift convergence of roles that included mother, spouse, provider, and accelerated graduate social work student in a program. The metaphor, 'waiting to exhale' (McMillan, 1995) continued to resonate through the study, as these women grew closer to one another and grew intellectually and professionally as well, all the while keeping their eyes fixed on the pot at the end of the year-long rainbow, a Master's Degree in Social Work.

As the Advanced Standing cohort was for the most part composed of Latina and African-American women, the literature that identifies indicators of success for these students seems particularly relevant. Davis (1991) found that, sympathy and understanding, which he called socio-emotional support, and help with academic problems and financial aid (instrumental support), were critical to the success of African-American students in his study. The School of Social Work's Advanced Standing committee worked to insure that these types of supports would be available to the Advanced Standing students. A "buddy" system, connecting a traditional 2nd year student with each Advanced Standing student, was developed. However, students did not find this system to be particularly helpful. Although there was some confusion with financial aid and registration, students

did not feel that that reflected a non-supportive atmosphere; rather they were able to understand this as an aspect of the newness of the program, and wore their “guinea pig” or pioneer status as a badge of honor.

Although their reliance upon one another for socio-emotional support was critical to their “making it through,” they expressed the need to branch out and become a part of the larger graduate social work student body. This integration was meaningful as it signified a sense of belongingness and legitimate membership in the 2nd year class, in their own eyes, as well as those of the other students. Students reported that they felt that the administration did not adequately prepare the traditional 2nd year students for their arrival subsequently they perceived resentment from the other MSW students, which they felt could have been avoided.

This sense of belongingness was elusive for some of the Advanced Standing students, who also articulated a sense of isolation and lack of connectedness. Nonetheless, this isolation did not appear to be associated with any negative outcomes. Keeping in mind that this is a small study of students in one program, it is interesting to note that, the students who remained isolated from the larger student body throughout the year in graduate school were white. It may well be, that for them, feeling that sense of membership within the larger cohort was not as critical to their success.

It is significant to note that graduate student members of the Latino Students Alliance and the Black Student Alliance were instrumental in facilitating integration with the 2nd year cohort for the Advanced Standing students. They informally took it upon themselves to invite Advanced Standing students to get involved in Alliance activities such as organizing Common Day events. It may be that as both seasoned members of the larger cohort as well as “minority” students, that they were sensitive to the Advanced Standing students’ need for membership as part of the process of becoming successful graduate students.

Through gaining access to the Alliances, Advanced Standing students were able to both feel a part of the larger cohort, and to maintain connectedness with the smaller Advanced Standing group as a source of comfort, strength, and academic and emotional support. Although there seemed to be some discord among members of the Advanced Standing sub groups, very little tension ever surfaced and certainly, during the final group interview, there was a victorious sense of unity, that they had come through a very difficult year, together.

Access to administrators and faculty seemed a significant factor in the Advanced Standing students’ graduate school experience. Particularly as minority students, who had come first through community colleges, then on to four-year college within the City University system, this seemed meaningful. Their success held particular significance considering their non-traditional journeys towards completion of a graduate degree. City

University of New York is historically a university whose mission is to provide higher education to the poor and the working classes of New York City, yet its community college students are much less likely to earn a bachelor's degree than those who start at senior colleges (Reitano, 1999). That a pathway to graduate social work education has been established within CUNY for the university's target population is a victory. That the Hunter College School of Social Work had successfully worked to develop a diverse student body that was prepared and welcoming was clearly an essential ingredient to this program's success.

As planned, the Advanced Standing students all were assigned the same advisor, a faculty member with experience as a casework instructor and as a former field work director. For the casework students, this seemed to work extremely well, particularly for those students who had stormy relationships with their field instructors. One student, not a casework major, did indicate that she felt had she had an advisor who was more familiar with her major method, she may have been able to utilize advisement in a more meaningful way. Although this was but one student's experience, it seems relevant in planning for future Advanced Standing cohorts.

The students reported that their relationships with faculty were for the most part supportive. However, the internal debate within the faculty over the efficacy of advanced standing did not go unnoticed by students, as they perceived that at least some members of the faculty were dubious about the program's success. Access to faculty was

important to them. They experienced instructors as being sympathetic to their busy lives, as they were often flexible about deadlines for assignments. It appeared that for the casework students, the combined casework I and II class provided some other than educational functions, and the instructor for this course facilitated that process of providing a forum for appropriately discussing student concerns. Although some students clearly objected to this, there appeared to be a strong need for a forum to informally discuss issues related to the mechanics of the Advanced Standing program, as well as the stresses that many of them were experiencing. Keeping in mind that these students had very little extra time, using the class in this way was expeditious, and the instructor, in their estimation, was able to facilitate these types of discussions without compromising course content. Again, in terms of planning for Advanced Standing groups, curriculum developers may want to consider the complexity of student need when designing courses and curriculum in the future. For example, they may want to incorporate regularly scheduled formal group advisory sessions in order to facilitate non-academic discussions.

The cohort of Advanced Standing students unanimously articulated that they felt prepared for the rigors of graduate work. Berger (1989) expressed the need for undergraduate BSW programs to prepare minority students for the rigors of graduate work and, indeed, it appears that for these particular students, their undergraduate programs did so. Although they did find that a substantial portion of their Casework course was repetitive, they did not experience the repetition as remediation. Rather, they appreciated the

opportunity to assess the knowledge that they brought with them and to focus learning in the latter portion of the course in areas that were new. Again this speaks to the unique function of the combined methods course for the Advanced Standing cohort. That the instructor was an experienced faculty member, who was knowledgeable about the BSW/MSW educational continuum, appeared to matter significantly. He was able to revisit portions of the curriculum without it seeming punitive, and to assess the content areas that needed to be attended to and then facilitate student learning in those areas, all the while attending to the “socio-emotional” needs of the group. In planning for both the educational and adjustment needs of Advanced Standing students, it is evident that segregating the cohort for a methods course appears to be worthwhile.

It must also be reiterated that in this cohort there were only two students whose major method was not casework. Each of them had significantly different experiences from one another as well as from the cohort as a whole. From the students’ comments, it is clear that they experienced some isolation and that that impacted on their experience as graduate students. Because of their divergent schedules, they had to take research as a tutorial, rather than as a course, and their advisor, although supportive, was not a specialist in their methods concentrations. One did exceptionally well, academically and in the field, and the other’s performance was deemed adequate by instructors and field instructor. So, while it is apparent that there was no adverse effect as a result of this isolation that is associated with any outcomes, clearly efforts to recruit more students in methods other than casework should be considered.

Having made the case for establishing at least one course exclusively for Advanced Standing students, there was no evidence that the Advanced Standing students felt at all inadequate in courses where they were integrated into the larger 2nd year cohort. Although they felt challenged by the material, all of them managed to pass every course.

For the majority of students in the Advanced Standing cohort, the field experience was a positive one. According to their field instructors, they performed quite well in the field. If there was a deficit that was cited more than once, it was that, coming into the field, the students lacked theoretical knowledge that traditional 2nd year students often possessed. However, by the end of the year, most field instructors reported that they were pleased with their students' performance and would in fact hire them if they could.

For the few students who had negative experiences in the field and had less than positive relationships with their field instructors, it was apparent, that those field instructors were not advocates of accelerated learning. From their experiences, an additional seminar for field instructors that addresses the issue of Advanced Standing may be advantageous.

In effect, for these Advanced Standing students, the successful completion of the graduate program and the evident marriage of theory and practice was the result of a whirlwind romance that was rushed and replete with both richness and stress. Yet because of that intensity, rather than in spite of it, the experience seemed all the more pithy.

The theory-practice relationship that was evident in this study is most certainly an essential ingredient of professional socialization for all social work students. Daly (1969) underscores this relationship as integral to the process of social work learning and to the continuum of social work education with extraordinary succinctness here:

NASW's "Working Definition of Social Work Practice" lists five essential elements: values, purpose, knowledge, sanction, and method. ...most educators agree that the knowledge component can and should be introduced in undergraduate learning. Further does knowledge include only comprehension or such intellectual skills as application, analysis, and synthesis? Comprehension is the lowest form of understanding, requiring the person to know what is being communicated without necessarily knowing how to relate it to other material. Application requires the use of abstractions, as well as of concrete situations and the ability to apply material learned in one setting to other settings. Analysis indicates the ability to identify elements, relationships, and organizational principles in material read or discussed. Synthesis means the combination of elements and parts into wholes and the ability to produce unique communications, plans and proposals. Skill in organizing ideas and communicating them is part of synthesis...

An overriding concern about the educational efficacy of accelerated educational programs in social work has been centered around what is most nebulous and difficult to quantify, that is, this final stage that Daly refers to as "synthesis," or what O'Neil (1980) described as the final stage of professional socialization, integration and identification. There is evidence that the Advanced Standing students reached that final stage.

As has been stated previously, O'Neil (1980) conceptualized the process of professional socialization in social work as having three phases: the initial, somewhat idealistic stage; a second stage in which the student faces the often painful realities regarding self and

profession; and the final stage of integration and identification (pg.77). Paralleling the first stage, students in the Advanced Standing pilot program initially exhibited a great deal of confidence, when considering the experience they'd had as BSW student interns, and how prepared they were for social work practice. Concurrent with the 2nd stage of the development of professionalism that O'Neil discussed, when students began field placement in the fall semester, there was a palpable feeling of uncertainty and insecurity about skills they were expected to exhibit as 2nd year graduate students. Finally, O'Neil (1980) was concerned that there was not time in an accelerated program for the socialization process to progress to the final stage of integration and identification. This would assume then, that although the role of clinical social worker may have been adopted, that perhaps students were not provided ample time for the process to genuinely take hold. One could question whether or not they had time to immerse themselves in the concurrent tasks of learning theories, taking that theoretical knowledge into the field and applying it to their work with clients, discussing processes and results in supervision, writing about the experience, and then getting feedback from faculty and other students. Yet numerous examples of this synergistic activity between theory and practice have been illustrated.

Perhaps parenthetically, it is disturbing that commitment to social justice and learning about the impact of the changing political landscape, as it related to social welfare, seemed not to be a priority for many in the Advanced Standing cohort. It may well be that a concerted effort to include those concerns should be more resolutely incorporated

in future curricula, and perhaps be included as part of the criteria for professional socialization. In spite of these concerns, the findings of this study point optimistically to the effectiveness of Advanced Standing as viable practice in Social Work education.

Theory Practice Synergy and the Point of Metamorphosis

A number of students were even able to pinpoint actual moments when theory and practice came together for them, in fact one student called it the moment when she could “spread her wings and fly.” It seemed that it was when theory and practice converged that students felt as though they had in fact emerged as professionals. This statement illustrates that moment:

The 2nd semester was like a turning point for me. To say Oh my God, I'm getting towards the end and I can really do this! And I am doing it and I'm getting supervision, using what I learned in school, different techniques and really applying it...it was more real to me, it didn't seem like it was unattainable.

Just as when one masters a second language and can think in that language rather than first translating from one to the other, the following student focuses on the actual moment when she seemed to acquire professional fluency or, as Daly characterized it, synthesis:

In casework III-when I was doing a psychosocial paper—when I had to discuss what interventions I used and why I was using them. And it was interesting to me because there were certain modalities and theories that I was using, and I wasn't even aware that I was using them...I made the connection and now I understood why I was using them.

Below, another student articulated how the integration of theory and practice set the stage for the realization that she had emerged from the graduate school experience as a professional:

I took a cognitive therapy class and [the professor] had given us an exercise to use and I thought of applying it with a particular client and it was so helpful, in one particular session, the client was able to make important connections with the past, she got very emotional. When she left the room, I felt like wow! I really did it. I felt really competent and confident. I'd been having problems in my internship...but after this I felt like I have learned enough to actually help people.

Interestingly, this coming together of theory and practice in no way indicated an end to the learning process for these students. Many seemed humbled by all that there was still to learn and, in a final group interview, they tempered their jubilation about graduation and professionalism with these statements about needing to learn more:

I want to [go on for more training], but I don't know where. I don't know what would give me what I want. I have a very focused specific interest, psychiatric social work.

I feel the need to learn more. I feel that comes with experience, the more you practice, the more prepared you feel.

I think to consider yourself a specialist at this point is closing a lot of doors, because I'm not a specialist yet. I haven't had enough experience...I think even all social workers, whether they come out of an Advanced Standing program or not, really need to continue their education after their masters to consider themselves a specialist.

I think no one coming out with their master's should consider themselves a specialist, I think that advanced training is necessary for that.

The same student who, in a previous chapter, felt that the role of therapist had been foisted upon her remarked:

To be professional is to be updated, to be able to provide the best possible service to clients. Now I think there is no end to study-no matter if we finish in June, there is no end to this.

Ultimately, it is this simple statement that represents a most complex realization that an emergent professional social worker can express: Professionalism implies an unrelenting

focus on maintaining a sense of purpose and professional mission, while believing, without hubris, that there is always more to learn.

Future Inquiries

There were some significant limitations to this study. That much of the data rested on the experiences of but 15 students must caution the reader about making generalizations. Yet mirroring the students' final statements about needing and wanting to learn more, the results of this study, although optimistic and illuminating, prompt this researcher to want to learn more.

It was reiterated throughout the findings that a qualitative study comparing the traditional two-year graduate experience with that of Advanced Standing students was warranted. Often the experiences of the Advanced Standing cohort seemed significant, i.e., their expressed need to belong to the larger graduate student body, and their ability to practically apply social work theory expeditiously. Furthermore, this was the first advanced standing cohort to graduate, and its characteristics were quite unique. The ten students who received their bachelor's degree from CUNY were all from the same bachelor's program in social work, and 13 of the 15 Advanced Standing students were casework majors. Would the results have been different had the cohort been more diverse? Clearly, exploring the experiences of additional Advanced Standing cohorts would shed light on this question.

Finally, the optimistic findings of this study, that Advanced Standing was clearly for these students a success, does not necessarily put the larger continuum debate to rest. Although it indicates that accelerated learning in graduate social work programs can be effective and should be developed to meet the needs of non-traditional students, future inquiry would clearly be even more illuminating if a larger cohort could be studied.

APPENDIX A

Student Focus Group Guide-Time 1

Opening Statement--The purpose of this focus group is to gain an understanding of your expectations of the Advanced Standing Program--specifically as they relate to the classroom and field work experiences, as well as preparation for social work employment. This is the first of a number of times that we will be meeting, so you will have ample opportunity to express your thoughts and ideas related to your experiences at Hunter.

Opening Question:

Could we each take a turn and state our first names, the school where you got your BSW degree, and what your major method of practice will be here at HCSSW?

Introductory Questions:

Why did you decide to come to HCSSW?

What factors influenced your decision to attend the Advanced Standing Program rather than another option?

What are your career plans/goals?

Transition Questions:

How did your undergraduate program prepare you for graduate school?

Cues: Courses were rigorous?

Faculty was encouraging

Field work was stimulating

How did you find the course requirements on the undergrad level, easy to meet?
Difficult?

Key Questions:

You've all seen information about the courses you'll take here, what do you expect will be the most challenging? Which do you feel most prepared for? Least prepared for?

What about field work? How do you expect the demands to be similar or different from your field experiences in the BSW program?

And faculty, how do you anticipate them to provide guidance/support/advisement for you?

cues: availability
extra help if necessary?

What do you think will be most difficult during the year?

cues:Fieldwork?

Course work? (ANY IN PARTICULAR?)
managing family responsibilities
managing other personal responsibilities
managing financially?

Where do you foresee support coming from?

Other AS students?

Faculty?

Other HCSSW students?

Family?

Friends?

Ending Questions:

All things considered, what are you most excited about in coming to Hunter?
What, if anything worries you?

Is there anything already that you think you'll need, that hasn't been offered that will help you to have an educationally rewarding year here?

Appendix B

Student Focus Group-Time 2 (September, 1997)

Opening statement--After having met with you previously, you know that the purpose of these interviews is to learn from your experiences here at Hunter in the advanced standing program. This is the second interview which, will focus on your experiences thus far, as well as your thoughts and feelings about the academic year to come.

Opening Questions

You've all taken two courses over the summer, how did it go? Perhaps each of you could say a little something about that.

Introductory Questions:

Academically, what were the demands of the courses in comparison to you undergrad courses?

Was it what you expected?

assignments?

interaction with the instructor?

interaction with other students?

Transitions Questions:

- Now that you've taken graduate level courses, do you feel that your undergraduate program prepared you well enough?
- There are some academics who write about advanced standing who feel that course content on the BSW level isn't taught on the same intellectual level as in graduate school --that the "breadth and depth" are different, on the other hand, some are concerned that there is curricular redundancy, that course content is too similar. From your experience thus far, are there differences in the intellectual qualities of courses on the BSW level and here at Hunter?
- What about the courses you're enrolled in now, in the fall semester?
- This is the first time you're enrolled in a "single method" course, any feelings/thoughts about that?

I've found that sometimes when I teach a more advanced course, I tend to go over and spend a great deal of time reviewing content from previous course, sometimes I think it's beneficial to revisit content, other times I look around at students and I feel as though I should speed things up, that I'm losing them to boredom...any thoughts about that? Is content new? Repetative? If it is, does it matter?

Key Questions:

Have you all received your field work assignments? Can you each tell me briefly where your placed?

So far, how does it compare with your bsw placements? Are the demands different/similar? How about supervision? Different/similar?

We spoke last time about relationships with faculty and other second year students, do you perceive those any differently than you did when we met before?

We also spoke about the fact that most of you have families and some of you work in addition to going to school. Having been in school over the summer, and having begun fieldwork, you probably have a better sense about managing those various areas of your lives, anymore thoughts about that?

What's been most difficult thus far?

- coursework?
- getting to the library?
- managing families?
- financially?
- other?

Ending Questions:

Now that you've been here for a few months, you probably have a better idea about what supports should be in place for you here. Are they here? If not, what do you make of that?

Appendix C

Student Interview-Individual (To be administered in January of 1998)

Introduction-As you know, I've been researching the Pilot Advanced Standing Program and have been focusing on the student experience. I've met with students in groups, but I wanted to meet with each of you individually this time. In so doing I'm hoping that we can talk in more depth about the program, and your experiences and thoughts about it thus far.

Opening Question:

You're now past the halfway point, with only one semester to go! Any thoughts about that?

Introductory Questions:

The last time we met, we discussed the preparation you had as a BSW student. Everyone seemed to be in agreement that your BSW programs really prepared you academically for graduate school. After having completed your first semester of course and field work, do you still feel that way?

What's been the most challenging course you've had so far and why?

Cues: readings?
classroom demands?
papers?
Projects?

WHAT'S MOST DIFFERENT ABOUT GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Do you read more primary sources?
More reading?
Papers?

Transition Questions:

What about field work? Tell me how your BSW placement and your MSW placement differ?

Cues: role?
Responsibilities/demands?
Relationship w/ staff and other students?

We've also discussed the fact that many of you have quite a few responsibilities that you have to manage in addition to your school work. Can you talk a bit more extensively about that? How have you been managing?

What's your day like?

Cues: family?
Financially?
Other?

Key Questions:

Tell me about how your friends here at Hunter and faculty have either been supportive, or not so, to you, as you've been dealing with the demands of class work, fieldwork, along with the other issues that we have discussed.

Cues: friends that you had from your BSW program?

Instructors?

Advisor?

Field Instructor?

WHAT ABOUT MENTORS?

You've been in classes that have been composed of advanced standing students only, as well as those where there have been a mix of two-year, OYR and advanced standees. Has that made it easier or more difficult to forge relationships with students outside of the advanced standing group?

Follow-up: Has that (capacity to create relationships within and without of the cohort) been important to you?

Have you been involved in non-academic student activities at all?

Cues: committees?

Social gatherings?

Political forums?

Follow-up: Do you think your level of involvement has an impact on your experience here at Hunter?

What do you think are the steps towards becoming a "professional" social worker?

Cues: obtaining a BSW? MSW?

Gaining increasing responsibility in the field?

Being recognized as an advanced learner?

Having a certain kind of relationship with faculty? Students?

Gaining confidence academically?

In the field?

Ending Questions:

If you were to talk with prospective advanced standing students, what would you tell them?

What would you say in a public forum?

What about privately?

Is there any thing you want to add to what we've discussed?

Thanks for spending this time with me.

Appendix D

Student Group Interview - Time 3 (May 1998)

We have met a number of times in regards to your experiences as Advanced Standing students here at Hunter. Now you're at the end of the process, this is the final time we'll be meeting. I want to thank you for all your assistance.

Opening Question:

You've made it! How do you feel in comparison to the first time we met last June?

Less stress?

More Professional?

Introductory Questions:

In retrospect, are you glad that you did an advanced standing program as opposed to a two-year program?

What course were most difficult and why?

Transition Questions:

You have all said that your BSW programs prepared you for the rigors of a masters program, but if you could change /help to design the curriculum in your BSW program, would you change anything?

Add a course?

Add content to a course?

What about here at Hunter? If you had the time, what courses, or specific course content would you have liked to get more of?

Method?

Research?

Other?

Key Questions:

Could you characterize your experience here at Hunter for me by using this metaphor as a starting point—you started off as caterpillars, the advanced standing group was a sort of cocoon, you shared an experience as the first group of advanced standees, many of you coming from the same school, but all of you having received your foundation year of social work education at the BSW level. Are you butterflies yet? In other words, do you feel as though you're graduate level practitioners?

If so, what was key to the metamorphosis?

If not, what's missing?

Is it something that HCSSW failed to offer? What?

Can you talk more about the process of becoming professional as it relates to your field work?

Course work?

Informal interactions with faculty?

Students?

Tell me about the stress you experienced, or didn't. What was the source of it?

Taking care of family obligations while being a full time graduate student?

Financial pressures?

Expectations that were difficult to meet in field work?

Completing coursework satisfactorily?

Is there some way Hunter could have helped to relieve any of those pressures?

Ending questions:

What are your plans for the summer?

Job prospects?

Who has taken the CSW exam? Do you plan to?

Will you study together?

Is there anything else that you want to add?

Once again, thank you and congratulations!

Appendix E

Faculty Focus Group Questions

The purpose of this focus group is to explore your feelings, perceptions, and opinions about the advanced standing program from the instructors perspective. Some of you have taught advanced standees together with traditional two-year students and OYR's, and others have taught them in an isolated group. Some of you have taught their methods classes, while other have been their instructors for HBSE, or for electives. Some have had experience with an large number of advanced standees, while those of you have taught methods other than casework have only had experience with one advanced standing student. Regardless of these variances, much can be learned from your experiences with these students that can serve to deepen my research in the area of the continuum of social work education as well as to inform the om-going program evaluative process.

Can we begin by introducing ourselves and stating what class you taught in which advanced standees were enrolled? Please also state whether the class was conducted in the summer, fall, or spring semester.

some of the concerns articulated in the literature on advanced standing revolve around the issue of course content that is taught on the BSW and MSW levels. Some people are concerned about redundancy, that students who have been through bsw programs will have content repeated in courses, while others are concerned that foundation content on the bsw level is watered down, and therefore bsw students are ill prepared to go into the second year of graduate school. From your experience with advanced standing students, do you think students were overprepared, ill prepared, or was there a smooth transition from the foundation year to the second year of graduate school?

Early literature concerning undergraduate social work education, and indirectly about advanced standing, articulated concerns about the maturity coginatively, as well as chronologically of undergraduate students, and whether

Appendix F

Field Instructor Telephone Interview

Instructor : _____.

Student: _____.

As you know, the Hunter College School of Social Work just completed the pilot year of their Advanced Standing Program. Fifteen students just completed a summer and a year at Hunter (comparable to their second year of graduate social work training). You have been the field instructor for one of these students.

I am a doctoral candidate at Hunter, and for my dissertation project I am evaluating the advanced standing pilot program. Although it is primarily a qualitative study focusing on the student experience in the program, it is essential to obtain a comprehensive understanding of that experience. Towards that end, I am interviewing each students field instructor.

The interview should take about 15 minutes.

1. Was she reliable? Prompt? And responsible to the agency?

2. Did she maintain case record effectively?

3. did she come to the agency with an understanding of human behavior? Interviewing skills? Other skills comparable to other students that you have supervised entering their 2nd year?

4. Was she able to work autonomously or did you spend more time with her than with other students?

Did he demonstrate self-awareness?

Was she self critical?

Could she maintain composure in the face of difficult cases?

Was she objective or did she tend to over-identify with clients?

5. **Did she demonstrate the capacity to understand and apply practice skills?**

6. **Was she sensitive to diversity?**

7. **If you were able to would you hire her?**
Never, or perhaps with more training

8. **Is there anything else you'd like to add about the student, Hunter's advanced standing program, or the concept of advanced standing in general?**

Appendix G

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR ADVANCED STANDING STUDENTS
ABOUT REGISTRATION FOR FALL SEMESTER**

You will be expected to take four classroom courses and Field Instruction III in the Fall semester.

All of you will be in school on Tuesdays. Casework majors will also be at school on Fridays, and Groupwork and Community Organization majors on Thursdays.

All of you will take the third semester of the Human Behavior and the Social Environment sequence (SSW 713). Choose one of four sections meeting on Tuesdays from 9-11 AM.

All of you will also take Field Instruction III (SSW 763). Casework majors will be in field placements on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Group Work and Community Organization majors will be in placements on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

You will take either one advanced Social Work Research course or the two taken by most students. You received information about the procedure for requesting a waiver at orientation. If you are taking the first of two courses (SSW 751), sections are available on Tuesdays from 11-1, 2-4, and 4-6. The advanced course (SSW 754) will meet on Fridays from 2-4.

Group Work majors are expected to register for both Group Work I (SSW 731) and Group Work III (SSW 733). Three sections of Group Work I meet on Thursdays, 11-1. Group Work III meets either on Tuesday from 6-8 or Friday 2-4.

Community Organization majors are expected to register for both Community Organization I (SSW 741) and Community Organization III (SSW 743). Two sections of Community Organization I meet on Thursdays from 11-1. Two sections of Community Organization III are available on Tuesdays from 6-8.

Casework majors will take Social Work Method & Theory (SSW 791.89) which will meet on Fridays from 9-11. For your remaining course, you may choose among the following electives:

- SSW 715 Seminar in Psychodynamics Fridays, 11-1
- SSW 792 SW Practice w/ Children & Adolescents, Tuesdays 11-1
- SSW 735 Social Group Work I (non-majors) Fridays, 11-1
- SSW 770 Drug and Alcohol Abuse Wednesdays, 6-8
- Urb 787.89 Urban Policy & Politics: Making Government Work
(being taught by Ruth Messinger, former Manhattan Borough
President) Mondays, 6-8.

If you have any questions about registration, leave a voicemail message for Elaine Marsnack at (212) 452-7038, and she will get back to you.

Appendix H

**Recruitment Script for Advanced Standing Research Project
(in person meeting with advanced standees)**

I'm excited about the opportunity to study and help to evaluate a program that creates opportunities for BSW graduates to obtain an MSW at an accelerated pace.

Student perceptions and experiences haven't been included in the studies on advanced standing that have been conducted thus far. As a participant in this study, you'll have the opportunity to contribute to what is known about the educational practice of advanced standing and to help shape this brand new pilot program at HCSSW. I'm inviting you to attend the first group interview on (date), at which time you'll first be asked to sign a consent form. Please understand that you're under no obligation to participate, and that if you do agree to do so, that the groups' responses will be kept confidential. Information shared with HCSSW administrators or faculty involved in program planning, regarding academic, field, or other school-related issues, would not contain information that would identify particular students. Specific information would not be shared if participants did not wish it to be so.

If anyone has any questions I'd be happy to answer them.

Appendix I

Informed Consent

Dear Advanced Standing Student:

As you know, you are a member of the first group of Advanced Standing students to be admitted to the Hunter College School of Social Work. During this pilot year, the Advanced Standing program will be evaluated in order to ascertain its effectiveness in educating social work students at the masters level. I have taken on the task of evaluating the project as the basis for my doctoral dissertation.

During the 97-98 academic year, I will be exploring a number of dimensions which will aid in understanding the pilot program's educational and programmatic strengths and weaknesses. As part of the study, I am requesting your participation. You will be asked to participate in periodic group and/or individual interviews so that your expectations, perceptions and views about course work, field work, as well as the overall experience at Hunter as a social work student can be clearly understood. With your permission, I will tape group and individual interviews, however, no one but myself will listen to, or have access to any recordings. In order to get a complete understanding of your academic and field experience in the Advanced Standing Pilot Program, I am also requesting your permission to review official school records, such as transcripts and field work evaluations. A draft of the final product will be shared with participants and your input will be considered when making necessary changes and revisions.

Your anonymity will be strictly maintained, and your identity and any identifying characteristics as a respondent will remain confidential with regards to any publications and oral presentations. Participation is voluntary. No one beside myself will know who has participated, therefore there will be no penalty should you decide not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns at any time during, or after the research period, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

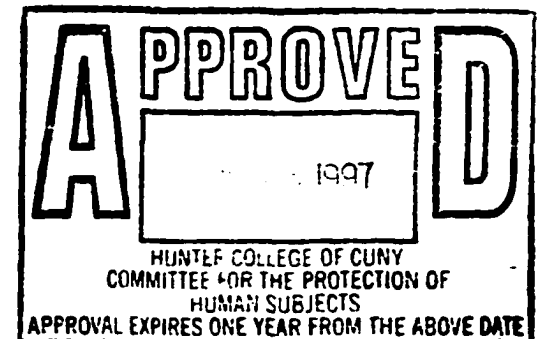
Sincerely,

Lisa Hale Rose
(718)832-5377

I understand the information provided about what I will be asked to do as a participant, and do agree to participate in the research described.

Signature

Date



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