

University of California at Berkeley
School of Social Welfare
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Berkeley CA 94720-7400

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Hunter College
Silberman School of Social Work
2180 Third Avenue at 119th Street
New York, NY 10035

Dear Members of the Faculty Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor that you advertised on the Council for Social Work Education website. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate at the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley, where I expect to receive my PhD in May 2012. My primary areas of expertise are racial and ethnic disparities, group work to promote positive youth development, and school-based interventions. As a translational social scientist with more than ten years of research and practice experience, I have successfully developed partnerships in diverse urban communities to improve, integrate, and evaluate services for vulnerable adolescents. As reflected in my CV, I also have a track record of outstanding teaching evaluations, funded research, and peer-reviewed publications. I believe I am an excellent fit for this position because of my long-standing commitment to community-based inquiry and praxis linked to teaching and student mentoring.

My scholarship illustrates my dedication to advancing theory, practice, and policy in the field of social work with children and adolescents. I have authored peer reviewed articles outlining frameworks for understanding disparities in special education, policy perspectives on disproportionality in the child welfare system, and strategies to strengthen community capacity to implement evidence-based practices for youth development. In publications targeting practitioner audiences, I also have written pieces on the contributions and challenges of facilitating youth-led action research groups and providing social services in educational settings. Building on this work, my dissertation focuses on a city-county-district initiative to improve high school students' well-being and educational achievement through comprehensive school health programs. In partnership with the lead agency, I developed a multi-year research agenda, of which my doctoral research is one component. In my dissertation, I examine patterns of student participation in the initiative across race and ethnicity, considering the influence of school context on youth access.

Using epidemiological and administrative data, my dissertation provides evidence that school-based programs improve access for many historically underserved adolescents, but it also illustrates the challenges of delivering health and social services in schools. Black, Latino and Pacific Islander students are overrepresented in these programs, whereas Asian youth are underrepresented, relative to White students. These trends are only partially explained by the varied prevalence of depression and risk taking behaviors across racial and ethnic groups. I find school-based programs are least responsive to the needs of Asian American students, who are also less likely to be served by other systems of care. Additionally, Black and Latino students' representation is driven by their enrollment in the most stigmatized and deficit-oriented services offered, such as individual psychotherapy. I propose that the unique contexts of schools, where teachers serve as the primary source for identifying youth in need of assistance, contribute to these patterns.

This line of inquiry is informed by institutional and social reproduction theories, which emphasize the role of context in understanding individual action and recognize schools as mechanisms for reinforcing patterns of inequality. To test my hypothesis, I created a unique, nested dataset linking student- and school-level data from fifteen sites. Using clustered logistic regression methods, I modeled the net effect of school contextual factors on students' service use. I find that teacher referral practices, along with the racial and ethnic composition of the general student population, contribute to disparities in school-based health and social services. My dissertation illustrates that schools are not neutral settings for service delivery; their specific organizational structures shape adolescents' pathways into services. These findings extend existing ecological theories of help-seeking and institutional frameworks for understanding human behavior by demonstrating that it is impossible to understand trends in service utilization without accounting for social contexts.

My study also demonstrates the need for more expansive notions of culturally responsive services which look beyond the skills and interventions employed by individual clinicians to the larger systems and contexts within which social workers operate. To convey these practice implications of my research, I facilitate professional development workshops for teachers and school health providers on strategies for reducing racial and ethnic disparities. I teach my social work students that the person-in-environment framework, so central to our professional perspective, must be applied when developing outreach and referral systems and policies, not only when clients have found their way into services. More broadly, my research and practice experiences have prepared me well to teach courses such as Group Work, Social Welfare Policy and Services, Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Social Work Practice in School Settings, and Ways of Knowing: Youth Development or Schools. I have already taught courses in social welfare policy, applied youth development, and research methods in social work, where my evaluations have consistently been above average and excellent.

I also have a strong history of funded research. During my doctoral studies, I garnered over \$70,000 (plus fees and tuition) in fellowships outside of the School of Social Welfare. In two cases, where my competition included students from across the University of California, I was the first social worker to receive the award. Prior to graduate school, I raised almost an half million dollars in private foundation grants to support a community-university partnership to promote youth development. My interdisciplinary work, which bridges education, public health and social work, positions me well to be competitive in future funding applications from a variety of sources. Currently, the Institute of Education Sciences and the Spencer Foundation are reviewing proposals for support of two studies that build on my doctoral research. One project involves a qualitative examination of teacher referral practices and the other considers whether outcomes for participants in school-based services vary by race and ethnicity and type of service.

My research, teaching and practice experiences are well aligned with your school's emphasis social work that promotes human rights in urban settings with vulnerable populations. This October, I will be presenting a paper at CSWE's Annual Program Meeting, where I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my fit with the needs of your school during an informational interview. Attached please find my curriculum vitae with my references' contact information. I will be happy to provide any additional materials upon request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Doctoral Candidate
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