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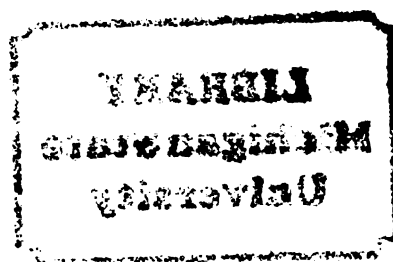
A STUDY OF USES THAT GRADUATES OF
SOCIAL WELFARE SEQUENCES AT
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MAKE OF
THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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Undergraduate Social Work Education

A study of Uses that Graduates of Social Welfare Sequences at
Michigan State University Make of Their Undergraduate Experience.

by

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THE

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We are indebted to Rachel Smith, Coordinator of Undergraduate Field Experience, for suggesting that the committee work on a project which could be of significant importance to the School of Social Work. To Robert Green, Ph.D. for permitting the group to ventilate their understanding on the use of the suitable statistical tests. To Betty Heilbronn, for making available copies of grade point averages for the majority of the population, years, 1960 - 1964. To J. B. McKnight, for providing his home to the committee of commuters, where the material was left, compiled and typed. To Gwen Andrew, Ph.D. for having provided the committee with the techniques and encouragement to undertake and develop an ambitious research project in a limited time span. To the ninety-six respondents who made possible the data. To Joanne Jackson, who typed and proof read the material.

Wm. H. H. H. H., CHAIRMAN
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I

INTRODUCTION

This study is addressed to the question of how former undergraduate students, who have taken the undergraduate courses in social welfare, have used their educational experience and what has happened to them after graduation. By a survey approach, we hoped to discover some factors which may have influenced the decision to continue or not to continue their education in a Graduate School of Social Work.

As a starting point, some understanding of the general features of the undergraduate program is essential, its purpose must be understood as well as its place in making a contribution to the preparation of personnel for the field of social welfare. Graduate professional education, agency staff development, and in-service training make a significant but essentially different contribution toward the educational growth, training and development of the practitioner in the discipline of social work.

In the four above-mentioned means of preparing personnel for the field of social welfare, basic professional social education consists of two years of graduate school study leading to a Master's degree.

Staff development programs of social welfare agencies provide for the on-going professional development of qualified personnel as do the post-Master's programs of schools of social work.

In-service training programs of social welfare agencies provide specific agency-oriented training for the development of

social welfare personnel, a function not appropriate to undergraduate education.

The function of undergraduate study is to provide the broad foundation upon which both professional social work education and in-service training programs are built. "Michigan State University pioneered in undergraduate education for social welfare and the present curriculum is designed for such students as the following:

(1) those who wish to prepare themselves to undertake graduate professional study,

(2) those interested in social welfare as a career but who plan to seek employment upon graduation and desire to be prepared for on-the-job training,

(3) those planning to enter other helping professions such as law, medicine, nursing, education, counseling, clinical psychology and the ministry, and,

(4) those concerned with becoming informed citizens with respect to social welfare needs and services and who desire to participate in a volunteer capacity in such programs.

Courses with social welfare content¹ include survey and service courses open to sophomores, cross-disciplinary, courses for upper division majors in social work and related fields and courses designed especially for students with a concentration in social welfare.²

The design of the curriculum content as suggested by the Council on Social Work Education³ would be expected:

- (1) to contributed to knowledge of man and insight into human growth and behavior.
- (2) to develop knowledge of society and social interaction.
- (3) to foster an appreciation of the philosophical values which underlie social welfare activities.
- (4) to develop abilities in methods of problem--solving and in the arts of communication; and
- (5) to provide an understanding of social welfare as a social institution and social work as one of the professions concerned with human welfare.

In general, the field experience is designed to help the undergraduate student:

- (1) gain first-hand knowledge and greater understanding of the operation of the network of health and welfare service in a community and their contribution to maintenance and enhancement of social functioning:
- (2) gain an understanding of the impact on individual human beings and families, as well as the cost to society, of such problems as delinquency, poor housing, poverty, mental illness and family breakdown;
- (3) assume responsibility for specific productive tasks of a non-professional character in the social welfare field;
- (4) observe the social worker in his various professional roles in the agency and the community wherever this is appropriate;

(5) assess his own interest in and motivation for a career in social welfare; and

(6) test his capacity to enter, through graduate education, the helping profession of social work.

Data concerning graduates of social welfare sequences is quite limited.⁴

A survey was made at Texas Women's University of their 1964 social welfare graduates. Of the 28 women who had taken courses in the social welfare sequences, three graduates enrolled at Louisiana State University, Graduate School of Social Welfare while 12 entered employment in social welfare agencies. Six entered employment in other occupations or in business.

Another similar survey was recently made at the University of Wisconsin which had a total of 35 social welfare graduates in 1964. Five of these graduates then entered the Graduate School of Social Work while 20 entered employment in social welfare. Five of these graduates who are trainees in Public Welfare programs have plans to attend a Graduate School of Social Work.

Based only on these two surveys, it was found that between 10% - 15% of the graduates immediately enroll in a Graduate School of Social Work and between 42%-58% of the graduates accept employment in some social welfare agency or institution. Another 15% of the total are contemplating the attainment of full professional status by enrolling in a Graduate School of Social Work sometime in the future.

II

METHOD

The hypotheses of this study focus on the relationship between undergraduate education in social work and the graduates' goals with regard to employment in the field of social welfare or to his preference to continue his education leading toward a Master's degree in Social Work and full professional status. It does not unalterably follow that the graduate entering a Graduate School of Social Work does not plan on obtaining gainful employment upon meeting the requirements for the Master's degree but does pose the following hypothesis:

The undergraduate curriculum has no relationship to the decision to enter professional social work training.

Alternate hypotheses to be tested are that:

1. The undergraduate curriculum has a direct relationship with the decision to enter employment in the field of social welfare.
2. The undergraduate curriculum is related to the decision to enter other helping professions.
3. The undergraduate curriculum has a minor relationship to the decision to enter social welfare programs in a volunteer capacity.

The population studied consisted of the total 187 graduates of the social work sequences who graduated from Michigan State University during the past five years i.e. from June 1960 through June 1964 inclusive. Student records relevant to the population were made available at the School of Social Work office and the current

addresses were obtained from the alumni office. The entire group of graduates was selected for our survey so that every graduate in the universe under consideration would have the same chance for inclusion in the study. Therefore, each graduate was mailed a questionnaire with a covering letter* and a self-addressed stamped envelope in which to return the questionnaire.

The questionnaire** was designed for these purposes:

1. to elicit or identify the main motive graduates stated underlay their decision to take courses in social welfare,
2. to determine the type of employment selected after graduation,
3. to identify his area of training if he is continuing his education in social work,
4. to determine his reasons for not continuing his education in social work, and
5. to discover the reasons why those graduates who are currently attending, who plan to attend, or who have already completed graduate school, have chosen universities other than Michigan State University in order to receive a Master's degree in Social Work.

In order to obtain the respondents attitudes toward the undergraduate social welfare courses, nominal scales were used as a part of the questionnaire. They were designed to elicit opinions and reactions toward the courses which might be indicators of influence toward continuing or not continuing education in the

*See Appendix A

**See Appendix B

Graduate School of Social Work.

Lastly, an open-ended question was used in order that the graduates might express their views and opinions in their own way without the restrictions imposed by the structured questions.

III

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The sample consisted of ninety-six (96) respondents out of the population of one hundred and eighty-seven (187), the total number of graduates. The final number of questionnaires sent out was one hundred and eighty-three (183); two were not contacted because they were out of the United States, and two were not sent because addresses were unknown. Fifty-one percent (51%) of the total receiving questionnaires responded.

The questionnaire presented several problems that were not apparent until tabulation was begun. In one instance, question 5, could not be used because the designation of "M" and "F", were subject to misinterpretation. The abbreviations M and F were interpreted Male and Female and also Father and Mother. In other instances the titles of the categories were overlapping and not sufficiently discriminative to be useful. In an attempt to revise questions, that on first writing seemed to be too value laden, more objective it was found that a certain clarity was lost. Where the respondent was asked to give either a positive or a negative answer, and then given an opportunity to qualify it, it was found that the response was sometimes reversed by the comment or revealed plainly a definitely ambivalent position.

Therefore, in reporting the results of the survey, it was necessary to use a descriptive analysis of the contents rather than to attempt statistical analysis, although there is sufficient material to provide for statistical follow-up studies directed toward certain

areas. The frequencies of responses have been noted, and, in certain instances, when combined with the qualifying observations, have led to useful conclusions.

Two-thirds ($2/3$) of the respondents were residents of Michigan at the time of matriculation. Approximately two-thirds ($2/3$) of the respondents graduated in 1963 and 1964; and were in the twenty to twenty-five age group. All of the men (18) were married, as were fifty (50) of the seventy-four (74) women. Over half were the eldest children in their primary families.

About one fourth ($1/4$) came from homes where one or both parents have college degrees. About two-thirds ($2/3$) of the mothers and little more than one-half ($1/2$) of the fathers had finished high school. About three-fourths ($3/4$) came from urban or suburban communities.

The typical respondent was a woman under twenty-five from a middle-class home. She has married since graduation or before, is working or went to work temporarily before marriage. Young married women sometimes gave pregnancy as a reason for leaving their positions. Most of those working, were earning between \$4,000 and \$7,000 annually.

The respondents were divided into groups according to the year graduated to determine what percentage of each class responded to the questionnaire. The most responsive class was that of 1962, the least responsive, the class of 1960. The non-respondents made up forty-nine (49) percent of the total group receiving questionnaires.

Most of the respondents had elected the undergraduate curriculum because they wanted to do social work. Of these, forty-nine (49) said their goals had changed upon graduation, but seventy-four (74) went directly into social work type positions. It is not clear what they mean, because the majority have remained in social work, and it may be that increasing self-awareness as well as a growing familiarity with the many aspects of social work were involved in the attitudinal changes.

An overwhelming majority think of social work as a profession, requiring special skills and training. Of the 96 respondents, 63 or two out of three think that the B.A. degree did not prepare them adequately for the social work positions they took upon graduation. They mentioned lack of skill in interviewing, and lack of sufficient knowledge of human growth and behavior. Some felt that classes now offered to graduates fall within the range of undergraduate ability. Some felt that more involvement in the field work experience would have been helpful. Some expressed the feeling that the undergraduate program was geared to the needs of those who planned to go on to graduate school rather than to the needs of those who would be working after graduation.

Every third negative response was read for qualifying remarks. From these it appears that graduates who checked a negative response nevertheless, felt that the undergraduate program had some value. They could meet a basic qualification for employment in a field where there is great demand.

However, they felt a real lack of adequate skill in meeting the needs of the multiproblem family which they find in public welfare.

A second set of responses, similarly chosen, confirmed these impressions.

Most of those (65) who entered the undergraduate curriculum intending to become social workers took social work type positions and earned between five and seven thousand dollars a year. Of the total number employed upon graduation (74), forty (40) report themselves as working in public agencies, and twenty-two (22) in private agencies. Eight who identified themselves as caseworkers did not specify. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the respondents, therefore, went to work in public agencies.*

The reason given most frequently for taking the initial position was that the position was interesting (35)* The next most frequently named factor was salary. If those who say that they took their first social work position because it offered training experience (9) are included with these who stated they were interested in the job itself, then there are forty-four (44) persons, approximately half of the respondents, who seem genuinely interested in social work as a career. Twenty-one (21) of this group are earning at present from \$4,000 to about \$8,000 annually. This is thirty-eight percent (35%) of the forty-four, about twenty-five percent (25%) of the sample. Six are now full time homemakers, and seven have returned to graduate school.

* See Appendix C

Of thirteen (13) who gave salary as the prime motive for accepting their initial position, six are now earning between \$5500 and \$6500 annually, thirty-eight percent (38%) of the "salary motivated" group.

Those seemingly motivated by a more professional attitude are doing as well financially as those who were mainly interested in salary. Fourteen percent (14%) of the first group have gone back to school, fifteen percent (15%) of the second.

At present, forty-nine (49) of the respondents are now directly employed in social work, and eighteen (18) are now in graduate school obtaining advanced degrees mostly in social work. Ten (10) reported themselves in non-social work positions. The remainder are chiefly homemakers or persons who are not at present employed.

The positions taken immediately upon graduation were left for a variety of reasons. Out of forty-two (42), the largest number fourteen (14), or thirty-three percent, left to improve themselves professionally; ten (10) to do graduate study, two for another type of professional development, and two did not specify. Ten women left because of marriage, pregnancy, or to follow their spouses. Seven (7) simply said they had moved. Five (5) reported that they left because of a negative experience. Three moved to a new position or advanced within the same department.

It seems plausible to suggest that a desire to do a more professional job coupled with a feeling that their job performance

lacked something may have motivated these moves. The majority appear to have been satisfied with their career choice but dissatisfied with their own level of training. It is possible that the return to school for the Master's Degree in Social Work may be ascribed to other motives separately or in combination, such as the desire for higher status or better income.

There was no indication that the curriculum or the instructor was a determining influence in the choice to work or to go on to graduate study after graduation. The quality or direction of the influence was referred to only infrequently, usually not at all.

There were indications that the majority of the students reacted positively to their field work experience although they questioned its value. Since a large proportion (79) reported that they obtained from it a better picture of the welfare community, and almost as large a number took positions in that area, it seems possible to say that, at least, what they saw did not deter them from their original aims. It seems that a relationship might exist between this aspect of the undergraduate program and the kind of decision made upon graduation, but it remains to be explored.

The findings suggest that the graduate holding a B. A. degree in Social Work and working in a public agency more often than not feels inadequately prepared, not so much because he has been told so, but because he is made aware of this in his work situation. Certainly other factors are also operating in any important decision of this kind--family situation, marriage, financial considerations, needs

of the spouse, etc. The majority of the group under consideration felt that they were not equipped for the positions they accepted after graduation. As stated earlier, some indicated that it seemed a better preparation for entering graduate school than anything else.

The decision to continue study toward the M. A. degree seems to be related to financial conditions in about thirty-two percent (43) of the cases. The decision to remain in the state or to attend a school near one's place of residence is frequently financially determined, although, of course, other factors are often involved. The seventy-seven percent (77%) who checked "location" as an influencing factor may also be thinking of more than travel convenience.*

In an attempt to determine whether or not the grade point average was a factor in returning or not returning to graduate school, the group returning to school was compared with the group not returning. An arithmetic or average was calculated for the grade point averages of each group. The average for the group which had returned to school was 2.98. For the group which has not returned, although some of them indicated an intention to go on to graduate school later, the average was 2.66. The groups do not encompass the entire sample because it was not possible to obtain the grade point averages of the total population before the project was due for evaluation. However, grade point averages were available for about two-thirds of the total number of graduates.

Forty-nine (49) of the total sample have continued or are continuing in graduate studies. Twenty-six (26) of the forty-nine returned to Michigan State University.

* See Appendix D

Ten (10) have decided to enter other professions; of these, half of them are in teaching, several (3) are in recreation work, and one (1) is in school administration. Seven (7) have already obtained M.S.W. degrees, four (4) from Michigan State University, and three (3) from other schools. Eighteen (18) are currently enrolled in the graduate curriculum for M.S.W., ten (10) at Michigan State University, six (6) at other schools, and two (2) undesignated.

The foregoing discussion was selective and did not attempt to deal comprehensively with the data.

Summary:

In conclusion, it was found that the main motive for entering the undergraduate curriculum, as stated by the respondents, was that they wanted to become social workers.

A substantial majority obtained employment as social workers, mostly in the field of public welfare, upon graduation.

About one-half of the graduates responding to the questionnaire already have or are in the process of continuing their education. Of this number, more than three-quarters are remaining in social work.

Reasons for not continuing graduate study are marriage, finances, or satisfaction with present employment.

The main reason for returning for graduate study is the awareness of the need for additional training. It was found that sixty percent (60%) of those who do return come back to Michigan State University.

IV

LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this project was to find out, by making a survey, how graduates of the undergraduate curriculum of the School of Social Work at Michigan State University have used their educational experience, what happened to them after graduation, and what influenced them to continue or not continue their graduate training.

Upon final tabulation of the data it was discovered that there was not enough information relevant to the null hypothesis as stated to accept or reject it or the alternative hypotheses.

The lack of clarity in the questions, and an overlapping in the responses resulted in data that, in most instances, did not lend itself to establishing discrete categories. Therefore, the findings are reported in the form of a descriptive rather than a statistical analysis. Simple statistics such as cross tabulations, percentages, and proportions were used. However, the data is available for further exploration using more sophisticated statistical procedures. The time limit placed on the research committee precluded more comprehensive evaluation of the data.

Although the study is of rather limited scope, certain conclusions are possible. When responses to certain questions within the questionnaire occurred with sufficient frequencies trends in one direction or another were suggested.

V

IMPLICATIONS

As stated earlier, further study using the data already compiled might be undertaken, using different statistical methods and making full use of the data.

The study would seem to indicate that a revision and remailing of a second questionnaire to the non-respondents might clarify the questions left unanswered in the area of motivation. In connection with this, it might prove to be significant if the "new" questionnaire eliminated the name of the former student to see if this would elicit a higher percentage of responses.

The results of this study seem to indicate that a large portion of the graduates feel the need for further study, in-services training, or further enhancement of skills. For the individual who must continue in the job he obtains upon completion of his undergraduate training for financial reasons or for the person who is satisfied with this job, it would seem that the School of Social Work might re-evaluate and/or re-structure the undergraduate curriculum with a view to meeting the needs of these individuals.

An overwhelming number of the respondents indicated that they entered the undergraduate curriculum because they wanted to be a social worker. Almost all recognized social work as a profession, but there seems to be a difference of opinion relative to the need for an M.S.W. degree. This would seem to imply that here again is a recognition of the need for additional training but a divergence of opinion as to when the training should be received, the direction the training should take, and the nature of the additional training.

"It is axiomatic that the content of the social work curriculum ought to stand in some relationship to social work practice. Unless what the student learns in a school of social work is applicable in his later practice of social work, the school is not doing its job."

Although Dr. Boehm was referring to schools of social work and not undergraduate curricula, it is interesting that a similar feeling appears in the responses of the graduates to the questions relating to the adequacy of their training in terms of the positions they later fill in the social work field, particularly in public welfare.

The findings of this study, and the questions and speculations they have raised, certainly point out the need for more research in the area of the undergraduate program and its relationship to employment in the field of social work and/or graduate social work training.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Michigan State University
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

April 12, 1965

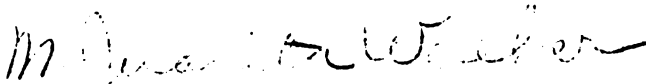
Dear Former Student:

The School of Social Work, Michigan State University has approved a survey which has as its purpose the gathering of information concerning graduates of the undergraduate curriculum. The information will be held strictly confidential. It is hoped that the information gained can be made a part of a larger study of the undergraduate in a School of Social Work.

To this end those who completed Bachelor's Degrees during the years 1960-64 are receiving a questionnaire which is focused mainly on what has happened to them since graduation--where they are now, what they are doing, what they have done, what they sought by the way of advanced training or education, plus such relevant material as may contribute to a better idea of the effectiveness of their undergraduate experience.

We hope, even though you may be working in another field, you will still be sufficiently concerned about the need for social workers to make this contribution toward the improvement of their training. Please return the questionnaire as soon as you can using the enclosed stamp-addressed envelope.

Yours very truly,



M. Juanita Walker, Chairman
Graduate Research Group

APPENDIX B
Michigan State University
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE
For
Graduate Social Work Student Research Group

Name _____

Year Graduated MSU _____

1. Age:____ 2. Sex:___M___F
3. Marital Status: ___Single ___Married ___Widow ___Divorced ___Separated
4. Place in family: Are you 1 2 3 4 5 6 ___child in family? Circle one
5. Occupational background of parents:

F M	F M
Business	Semi skilled
Professional	Unskilled labor
Clerical	Farm
Skilled labor	Other (specify) _____
6. Education of parents: (Circle one of the following)

Grades	College	Masters	Ph.D.
Mother 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	1 2 3 4	_____	_____
Father 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	1 2 3 4	_____	_____
7. In what type of community did you spend your youth? Underline:

Urban	Suburban	Rural
-------	----------	-------
8. At the time of matriculation, of what state were you a resident?

9. In which category does your individual income now fall?

\$3,000 and below	\$5,001 - \$6,000	\$10,001 - 15,000
3,001 - 4,000	6,001 - 7,000	15,001 - 20,000
4,001 - 5,000	7,001 - 10,000	
10. Has travel outside your home community helped you to develop a sense of concern for the welfare of people and of their problems? ___yes ___no
In what ways: _____

11. Indicate with an 'X' one of the following which best explains your reasons for taking undergraduate courses in social work:

☐ I wanted to become a social worker

☐ I planned to do graduate work.

☐ I thought the courses would help me with my own personal problems.

☐ I did not know what other courses to take.

☐ I thought it would be interesting.

☐ I thought the courses would help me in my chosen field of work.

☐ Other. (explain) _____

12. Please identify the kind of position you accepted upon graduation:

Title	Year	Type of Work
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		

Reason for Selection	Salary	Reason for Leaving
A.		
B.		
C.		
D.		

13. ☐ I do not plan to continue my social work education because:

☐ I have married

☐ I have had enough of college

☐ I am disabled

☐ I do not have the funds

☐ My present employment is satisfactory

☐ My vocational interests have changed

☐ Other. Explain _____

14. ☐ I have continued my education

Date _____ Where _____
(Name of school)

Reason for this decision: _____

☐ I expect to continue my education

Date _____ Where _____
(Name of school)

Reason for this decision: _____

15. What was the factor(s) influencing your selection of a graduate school?

☐ finances ☐ distance ☐ location ☐ curriculum

☐ orientation of school ☐ stipends ☐ scholarship

☐ other _____

16. Were you influenced by an instructor(s) during undergraduate days in making a vocational decision? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How _____

17. Were your career goals upon graduation the same as those which you had when you began the social work curriculum? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain: _____

18. How useful was your undergraduate field experience? Did it:

- ☐ Help obtain employment?
- ☐ Give a better picture of social welfare community?
- ☐ Help in graduate work?
- ☐ Other (Explain)

19. Which best describes your field experience?

- ☐ rewarding
- ☐ quite interesting
- ☐ valuable introduction to the function of agencies
- ☐ disappointing
- ☐ remarks

20. Do you think of Social Work as a profession? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

21. Do you think special training and skills are necessary to become a good Social Worker? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

22. Do you now think well-trained and qualified Social Workers are necessary for the good of society? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Do you think a Master's Degree is necessary to become a good Social Worker?
☐ Yes ☐ No

24. Do you believe that the B.A. Degree prepares you adequately for your Social Work position? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Explain: _____

25. Did this influence your attitude toward graduate study? ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Explain: _____

26. Please write below any comments you would like to make either about the field of Social Work, and/or the undergraduate courses in Social Work.

APPENDIX C

Table 1. Positions that graduates accepted after graduation.

Kind of Position	Number	Public Agency	Private Agency	Unknown
Child Welfare	22	15	6	1
Public Welfare, P.A.	16	16		
Caseworker	14	2	8	4
Court Work, Prob.	7	7		
Group Work	4		3	1
Administration	1	1		
Supervision	1		1	
Non-Social Work	17			
No Work	13			
No Category	1			
Totals	96	41	18	6

Table 2. Motives for accepting first social work positions

Motive	Number
Interest	35
Salary	13
Training or Experience	9
Opportunity or Availability	8
Location	5
Fulfilling commitment	2
Obligation to spouse	1
Total	80

APPENDIX D

Table 3. Factors influencing choice of school of graduate studies, as stated by those doing or planning definitely to do advanced work

Number of respondents - 50

School of Choice	Number of Respondents	Financial considerations Stip. & Scholarships	Distance and Location	Curriculum and Orientation
MSU	27	27	28	20
Other	23	11	19	22

Table 4. Choice of University for graduate work according to place of residence, by students actually attending.

Number of respondents - 40

Residence	Number	Michigan State University	Other University
Michigan	30	16	14
Out of State	10	6	4
Total	40	22	18

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APPENDIX E

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