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Nicola A. Meade

Old Dominion University, nsnyder@odu.edu

Shuntay Z. Tarver

Old Dominion University, smccoy@odu.edu

Mark C. Rehfuss

Old Dominion University, mrehfuss@odu.edu

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Clarifying the Identity of Human Services through a Content Analysis of Programmatic Accreditation

Nicola A. Meade, Shuntay Z. Tarver, and Mark C. Rehfluss, *Old Dominion University*

Abstract

Throughout the United States, accrediting bodies serve as voluntary self-regulating entities designed to ensure accountability and quality assurance at the institutions that seek accreditation. To examine the impact of accreditation on the field of human services, a mixed-method content analysis was utilized. The 50 human services programs accredited by the Council for Standards on Human Services Education (CSHSE) as of July of 2018 were examined. Researchers also employed a triangulated approach to understand these programs through an analysis of Carnegie Classifications, regional accreditation agencies, and institutions' programmatic websites. Results offer insight into how the CSHSE influences the professional identity of human services thorough: (1) variations in the length of time programs have been accredited; (2) regional distinctions between accredited programs; (3) and the titles of programs accredited by the CSHSE.

Keywords: CSHSE, programmatic accreditation, content analysis, human services identity

Introduction

Throughout the United States, accrediting bodies serve as voluntary self-regulating entities designed to ensure accountability and quality assurance at the institutions that seek accreditation (Kincaid & Andresen, 2010). Regionally, accrediting bodies are appointed to ensure educational quality and institutional adherence to national standards of higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In addition, accrediting bodies such as the Council for Standards on Human Services Education (CSHSE) serve the role of granting accreditation to programs that adhere to professional standards within specific disciplinary fields. For example, the accreditation guidelines set by the CSHSE (n.d.c) requires accredited human services degree programs to be "committed to improving the quality, consistency, and relevance of human service education programs and assuring best practices in human service education through evidence-based standards and a peer-review accreditation process" (para. 1). Although accreditation is a self-regulated voluntary process, each institution that seeks accreditation chooses to demonstrate its successful adherence to and alignment with the standards articulated by the accrediting body. Therefore, achieving accreditation affirms the institution's integrity, quality, and adherence to identified educational standards (Kincaid & Andresen, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The importance and role of accrediting bodies have been well documented in ways that emphasize the importance of institutions to be accredited (Adams, 1998; Berry & Hammer, 2018; Longenecker, 2012; Murphy, 2016; Olivi, 2013; Pavlakis & Kelley, 2016). However, limited attention has been focused on understanding the extent to which accrediting bodies influence their respective disciplines. To fill this gap, a content analysis was conducted to examine the programmatic, regional, and national influence of the CSHSE on the identity of the human services field.

Previous research investigating CSHSE programmatic accreditation has been limited. Existing literature has focused on how professional standards address diversity and social justice issues (Kincaid, 2008; Neukrug & Milliken, 2008), the CSHSE's contribution to the discourse on

the term *human services* (Kincaid, 2009) the translation of the CSHSE's educational standards into classroom pedagogy (Herzberg, 2010), and the CSHSE's requirement for a programmatic self-study (Kincaid & Andresen, 2010). Although such investigations suggest that the CSHSE has significant influence on the field of human services, less is known about the programs accredited by the CSHSE.

The College Board (2018) reports that 487 schools currently offer a major in the field of human services, yet only 50 programs were listed on the CSHSE website as being programmatically accredited as of July 11, 2018 (see Appendix; CSHSE, n.d.a). This delineates that as of July 2018, only 10% of human services programs were accredited by the CSHSE. This trend questions the extent to which the CSHSE, as the programmatic accrediting body for the field of human services, influences the overall discipline of human services. To gain insight into this issue, a content analysis of the programs that have been granted CSHSE accreditation was employed. Although presently CSHSE accredited programs represent a minority of human services programs, an examination of these programs can aid in learning more about how the CSHSE influences the field of human services. This investigation is timely, considering the CSHSE's 40th anniversary and the relevance for increasing the field's knowledge regarding professional identity at a time when programmatic accreditation is becoming increasingly vital (CSHSE, n.d.d; Jackson, Davis, & Jackson, 2010). Additionally, this study could offer an opportunity to strengthen Sparkman-Key's and Neukrug's (2016) assertion that the U.S. Department of Labor website does not presently represent the full human services field. For instance, the U.S. Department of Labor (2018) states, regarding education in the field of human services, that what is needed for employment is a "certificate or an associate's degree in a subject such as human services" (para. 3). However, the CSHSE's accredited programs offer far more than certificates and associate's degrees. To gain insight into this issue, a content analysis of the programs that have been granted CSHSE accreditation was employed. The study examined (1) variations in the length of time programs have been accredited by the CSHSE; (2) regional distinctions between the CSHSE's accredited programs; and (3) the titles of programs accredited by the CSHSE. This study aimed therefore to capture and present a fuller picture of the accredited human services programs and thereby provide more clarity to the identity of the field.

Accreditation

There are two primary types of accreditation: regional and programmatic (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Regional accreditation, also referred to as national accreditation, is required for institutions of higher education to have the authority to receive federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Programmatic accreditation is discipline specific and offers affirmation of specific professional standards, skills, and knowledge within a specific field of study (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Although both regional and programmatic accreditation are important to institutions of higher education, not every field of study within an institution of higher learning has an external accrediting body which can therefore give more weight to such credentialing overall (Jackson et al., 2010). Within the field of human services, programs have the opportunity to be both regionally and programmatically accredited. The following briefly describes the regional and programmatic accreditation of institutions that are accredited by the CSHSE.

Regional Accreditation

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), regional accrediting bodies exist to “assess the quality of academic programs, create cultures of improvement and raising standards, engage staff and faculty in evaluation and planning, and set criteria for certification and licensure” (Some important functions of accreditation, para. 3). Within the United States, institutions of higher education seek regional accreditation from one of six accrediting bodies that report to liaisons in the U.S. Department of Education (2018). The region of accreditation is tied to the geographical location of the school and/or its headquarters (Jackson et al., 2010). The regional bodies are the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Regional accreditation is necessary for federal funding eligibility, enhancing national reputation, establishing credibility, attracting quality students and fostering employability of graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Programmatic Accreditation

Agencies that grant programmatic accreditation, like regional accrediting bodies, engage in formalized activities for evaluating the quality, rigor, and adherence to specific guidelines. Within institutions of higher education programmatic accreditation affirms the (a) validity of a program within the institution in relation to other similar higher education programs, (b) its alignment with national professional standards within the program curriculum, and (c) its continuity of programmatic policies and procedures regarding curriculum delivery and consistency in relation to other similar programs, as well as continuous improvement (Kincaid & Andresen, 2010; US Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, programmatic accreditation elevates the profession, which adds value to students, clients, and administrators who matriculate from such programs (Olivi, 2013). While programmatic accreditation is not mandatory for operation and degree issuance, it is perceived to indicate a higher standard of academic and professional rigor that translates into the honing of professional knowledge and skills within a specific discipline (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Council for Standards for Human Services Education (CSHSE) Accreditation

Within the field of human services, the CSHSE is the definitive programmatic accrediting body. Emergence of the CSHSE began in 1976 when the Southern Regional Education Board, a parent organization of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, conducted a survey of over 300 human services training programs throughout the United States (CSHSE, n.a.b). The survey revealed a strong convergence in many areas including field experiences, skills, faculty characteristics, and program policies (CSHSE, n.a.b). These similarities were formalized resulting in the formation of the CSHSE in 1979. Their work came to guide the educational delivery of programs designed to train human services professionals, and the CSHSE has been evaluating, improving, and enhancing the professional standards of accredited human services programs since its founding (CSHSE, n.d.b). To explore how this programmatic accrediting body has influenced the professional identity of the human services discipline, a mixed-method content analysis of the programs accredited by the CSHSE were investigated.

Method

To provide a thorough investigation, this study followed Krippendorff's (2013) widely cited approach to content analysis that utilizes a mixed methods approach. The authors utilized quantitative research questions that also indicate the hypotheses for the current study (Krippendorff, 2013). This methodology also employs a qualitative approach by addressing issues of reliability through the triangulation of data from various contexts (i.e., programmatic, regional, national). For example, our study includes analyses from various perspectives such as accredited human services programs, regional accrediting bodies, and national Carnegie Classifications. The authors also utilized qualitative methods such as acknowledging and discussing the subjective influences of the various content analyzed and the subjectivity and trustworthiness of the authors. The following sections integrate these approaches in a holistic way.

Following Krippendorff's (2013) content analysis framework requires integration of five components:

- (1) a body of text, the data that a content analysis has available to begin an analytical effort;
- (2) a research question that the analyst seeks to answer by examining the body of text;
- (3) inferences that are intended to answer the research question, which constitute the basic accomplishment of the content analysis;
- (4) a context of the analyst's choice within which to make sense of the body of the text; and
- (5) validating evidence, which is the ultimate justification of the content analysis. (p. 35)

Each of these components are included within this analysis as it relates to our specific study. It is important to note that while this framework is often detailed as a linear and dichotomous process, a more recursive and integrative approach has been used here. Thus, our inferences were guided by our research questions, and inferences are discussed collectively as opposed to two distinct steps.

The Bodies of Text

Within this study the primary body of text is taken from the CSHSE's official website. Attention was focused on the list of the accredited schools presented on the CSHSE website as of July 11, 2018 (n.d.a; see Appendix). From this data set, the name of the institution, the state in which the institution was located, the years accredited, and the accredited program's website link were gathered. Additionally, the program link for each of the 50 schools was followed to identify the name of the program. To situate this information into a national context, each institution's name was identified within the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Learning institution search engine. The institutions' sizes and types were also identified.

Research Questions and Inferences

Three primary research questions guided this study and led to investigative inferences related to each as required within the methodology of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). RQ1: What variations exist among CSHSE accredited programs in relation to institutional size and time accredited? Neukrug (2017) explained that the origins of the human services field were to meet an increased need for community based human services that were general in scope as compared to more established fields such as social work and psychology. Thus, the authors inferred that the oldest accredited human services programs would be situated within two-year institutions. Also, the authors inferred that two-year programs would represent between 70-75% of the total institutions with CSHSE accreditation, given the generalist focus of human services

programs, coupled with the U.S. Department of Labor's assertions that human services careers needed only a certificate or associates degree. Thus, researchers predicted that programs accredited in four-year institutions would represent the programs most recently accredited by the CSHSE and be between 25-30% of the total institutions with CSHSE accreditation.

RQ2: What are the regional distinctions between CSHSE's accredited programs? Given the previously discussed history of the CSHSE that originated from a survey spearheaded by the SACSCOC regional accrediting body, the authors hypothesized that this region would account for the majority of CSHSE accredited programs.

RQ3: What do the titles of the programs accredited by CSHSE reveal about the field of Human Services' identity? The authors inferred that the growth of the field of human services would result in distinctions between how the programs with accreditation presented themselves. Thus, examining the program names was anticipated to reveal important information regarding the identity of human services and how identity may vary by the institutional Carnegie Classifications.

The Context of Choice and Validating Evidence

The multiple texts examined were the CSHSE website, institutional websites of accredited CSHSE programs, geographical delimitations of regional accreditations, and the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education's website. Using different sources of textual information fits within the quantitative framework of content analysis that requires adherence to explicit methodological steps (Krippendorf, 2013). This also provided a context for this study and allowed for multiple sources to provide information regarding the CSHSE's influence on the field of human services. The following describes the data collected from the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education's website, information on regional accreditation, and CSHSE accredited institutional websites.

Carnegie classifications. Carnegie Classifications for Institutions of Higher Education provides a national framework for "recognizing and describing institutional diversity within United States Higher Education" (Carnegie Classifications, 2017a, para 5). They categorize and classify institutions in ways that measure their comparability with other institutions on several indices such as institutional size, degree type, and involvement in institutional research (Carnegie Classifications, 2017b). Consequently, Carnegie Classifications are ideal for providing an external context for comparison and understanding of the institutions that offer human services programs across the nation. The data included in this analysis consisted of the institutional degree level (e.g. two-year or four-year) combined with institutional size (e.g., very large, large, medium, small, very small), and institutional type (e.g., Associates, Baccalaureate, Masters, Doctoral).

Regional accreditations. As aforementioned, there are six regional accrediting bodies within the United States. It stands to reason that each region housing CSHSE's accredited programs offers different influences on the field of human services. Therefore, data were grouped by regional affiliation.

Institutional websites. The CSHSE's accreditation standards require all accredited programs to have a link to their respective Human Services programs (CSHSE, n.d.a). These institutional links were used to identify departments that offered degrees in human services. The identified names of human services programs were linked to the program identity.

The Context and Organization of Data Analysis

According to Krippendorf (2013), researchers utilizing content analysis must articulate the context in which the data is being understood and organized. Such decisions are important for making sense of how data are organized and analyzed. Within this study the data was organized and situated within the larger context in various ways. Two primary decisions that guided this study included how to define the time frames examined and utilizing Carnegie Classifications to specify the institutional size and type. Researchers calculated the length of time a program had been accredited by the CSHSE by subtracting the year of accreditation from 2018, the year the data was analyzed. The programs were divided into four categories according to the length of time that were accredited. These equidistant time frames were defined as: 30-39 years, 20-29 years, 10-19 years, and 0-9 years. Carnegie Size Classifications were applied to accredited human services programs by degrees offered (i.e., two-year and four-year degrees) and by institutional size (i.e., very small, small, medium, large). Utilization of the Carnegie Classifications allowed researchers to align the CSHSE's accredited programs with nationally defined institutional descriptions as a method for comparing programs.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Within qualitative content analysis, various aspects of trustworthiness include transferability, credibility, triangulation, audit checking, and dependability (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Hill et al., 2005; Krippendorf, 2013). Each of these concepts reveal the subjectivity of the researchers in relation to how suitable they are to engage in the methodology and data interpretation. The research team consisted of three members: one White female doctoral student, one African American female assistant professor, and one White male associate professor. All three have extensive experience conducting qualitative research and have been involved in programmatic accreditation processes at the bachelors, masters and doctoral levels. In addition, one author has experience with regional accreditation processes. All three have been enrolled and matriculated from accredited universities found within the Carnegie classifications and each have completed between three to four degrees. The data was read and scored by each researcher. Then the perspectives on the findings were discussed and clarified using a triangulation of perspectives to clarify and refine the findings. Each of these factors speak to the trustworthiness of the researchers to engage in the current study.

Results

Results from this investigation are organized by the research questions guiding this study and unveil various aspects of the field of human services identity. They present trends related to length of accreditation and Carnegie Size Classifications, regional accreditation distribution, and program titles and Carnegie Type Classifications.

Length of CSHSE Accreditation in Relation to Carnegie Size Classifications

Noteworthy variations appeared among CSHSE accredited programs in relation to institutional size and time accredited. When considering all CSHSE accredited institutions, it was found that 24% ($n = 12$) were accredited for 30-39 years, 10% ($n = 5$) were accredited for 20-29 years, 24% ($n = 12$) were accredited for 10-19 years, and 42% ($n = 21$) were accredited for 9-0 years. When these results were segregated along institution size most institutions were two-year, large at 22% ($n = 11$), two-year, medium at 20% ($n = 10$), and four-year, large at 18% ($n = 9$). Since the 0-9 years' time frame constituted such a large percentage of accredited programs

(42%), it was divided in half to examine a similar comparison regarding the quantity of schools in each time frame. With this adjusted time frame, 18% ($n = 9$) were accredited for 5-9 years, and 24% ($n = 12$) were accredited for 0-4 years. Overall, 66% of CSHSE accredited schools were listed as a two-year while 34% were listed as a four-year (see Table 1).

Table 1
Carnegie Size Classifications Based on Time Frames with 0-9 Separated

	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30-39 years
Four-year, small	1	1	-	-	-
Four-year, medium	1	1	2	-	2
Four-year, large	2	1	2	2	2
Two-year, small	3	1	1	-	-
Two-year, medium	2	2	2	1	3
Two-year, large	3	2	2	2	2
Two-year, very large	-	1	3	-	3

Length of CSHSE Accreditation in relation to Regional Accreditation Location

Next, the length of CSHSE accreditation and geographical location grouped by the six regional accrediting bodies were explored. Out of the 50 institutions accredited by CSHSE, 34% ($n = 17$) were from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) region, 30% ($n = 15$) were from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) region, and 24% ($n = 12$) were from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) region. A very small portion of schools ($n = 6$; 12%) were from the other three regions combined, three from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) region, two from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) region and one from Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) region. Therefore, when considering all CSHSE accredited programs, 88% ($n = 44$) are from three regions (HLC, MSCHE, and SACSCOC), while only 12% ($n = 6$) are within the other three regions (NEASC, NWCCU, and WASC). In addition, the states with the greatest number of CSHSE accredited programs were Pennsylvania ($n = 5$; 10%), Maryland ($n = 4$; 8%), Delaware ($n = 4$; 8%), North Carolina ($n = 4$; 8%), and Ohio ($n = 4$; 8%).

When the length of program accreditation time and regional accreditations were evaluated, the HLC region had the most programs with accreditation of 20 years or greater (47%; $n = 8$), followed by SACSCOC and MSCHE (18%, $n = 3$). NEASC had two programs accredited for greater than 30 years, and WASC had one program that had been accredited for more than 30 years. Within the 10-19 year time frame, MSCHE had the most accredited programs (66%; $n = 8$). However, SACSCOC had the most accredited programs (38%; $n = 8$) within the 0-9 years' time frame, followed closely by HLC (33%; $n = 7$). When looking at the 20-year mark as a divider, all regions had more accredited programs within the last 20 years than in the first 20

years, except for WASC that had only one accredited program, in the 30-39 year timeframe (see Table 2).

Table 2

Regional Accreditation Based on Time Frames Based on Time Frames 0-40 years

	0-9 years	10-19 years	20-29 years	30-39 years
MSCHE region	4 – Pennsylvania (3); New Jersey (1)	8 - Maryland (2); Delaware (4); Pennsylvania (2)	1 - New York	2 – both Maryland
NEASC region	1- Massachusetts	-	-	2 – both Massachusetts
SACSCOC region	8 – Georgia (2); North Carolina (3); South Carolina; Tennessee; Texas	1- South Carolina	-	3 – Florida; North Carolina; South Carolina
HLC region	7- Arkansas; Michigan; Missouri; Nebraska; Illinois; Ohio (2)	2- Indiana and Nebraska	4 – Colorado; Nebraska; Ohio; Wisconsin	4 – Colorado; Illinois; Ohio; Wisconsin
WASC region	-	-	-	1-California
NWCCU region	1- Nevada	1- Alaska	-	-

These findings highlight the low number of total accredited programs ($n = 6$) in the NWCCU, WASC, and NEASC regions and that the three states with the greatest numbers of programs, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, come from the same region (MSCHE). These regional and geographical concentrations stand in stark contrast to WASC region and California, which have only one accredited institution. Additionally, the programs accredited for greater than 20 years were most frequent in the HLC region ($n = 8$), whereas the greatest quantity of programs accredited for nine years or less were the SACSCOC ($n = 8$) and HLC ($n = 7$) regions.

Human Services Program Names in Relation to Carnegie Type Classification

Of all programs, institutions represented in the category of Associate's were 66% ($n = 33$), Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges were 6% ($n = 3$), Baccalaureate Colleges were 2% ($n = 1$), Master's Colleges and Universities were 18% ($n = 9$) and Doctoral Universities were 8% ($n = 4$). Three institutions within the last category were listed in the subcategory of Moderate Research Activity, none were listed in the subcategory of Higher Research Activity, and one was listed in the subcategory Highest Research Activity. In addition, it was found that despite claims by CSHSE of accrediting associate's, baccalaureate, and master's programs, no master's programs were declared as having accreditation (see Table 3).

The titles of the programs accredited by the CSHSE were categorized by the Carnegie Type Classifications (see Table 3). Programs within Associates Colleges were most commonly titled *human services* ($n = 14$) and an additional 11 programs had the term human services in the title (i.e., *Human Services Technology* or *Health and Human Services*), however, 24% ($n = 8$) did not use the term human services. The least number of accredited types were Baccalaureate/Associates Colleges and Baccalaureate College with a total of only four institutions; three titled *human services*, and one without the term human services in the title. Master’s Colleges and Universities along with Doctoral Universities constituted the remaining 26% of institutions with most ($n = 10$) having the term human services in their title, and a few ($n = 3$) without the term human services. Overall, from all 50 institutions accredited, 76% ($n = 38$) had the term human services in their name, and 24% ($n = 12$) had no reference to the term human services in their name.

Table 3
Department/Program Names Categorized by Carnegie Classification of Institution Type

Associate’s Colleges	Humanities and Social Sciences; Counseling and Human Services; Department of Human Services; Psychology and Human Services; Health and Human Services; Public and Social Services; Public Services and Safety; Allied Health; Education and Human Services; Community, Family and Child Studies; Behavioral and Social Sciences; Division of Allied Health; Social and Human Services; Community and Human Services; Health Sciences; Human Services Generalist; three named Human Services Technology; 14 named Human Services
Baccalaureate/ Associate’s Colleges	College of Social Services; two named Human Services
Baccalaureate College	Human Services
Master’s Colleges and Universities	Behavioral Sciences Department; Human Services; Education and Human Services; College of Health and Human Services; Department of Human Services; Sociology and Human Services; Counseling; two named Counseling and Human Services.
Doctoral Universities	Human Development and Family Services; Department of Human Services; Department of Counseling and Human Services; Department of Social Work and Human Services

Discussion

Length of CSHSE Accreditation in Relation to Carnegie Size Classification

The project began with the prediction that the schools with the longest accreditation would be two-year schools, of varying size, and that the four-year schools would have received accreditation more recently. The primary reason articulated for this perspective was based on the researchers’ belief that human services programs were primarily developed in two-year schools

and that four-year schools formed programs afterwards. However, in the oldest time frame of 30-39 years ($n = 12$), four programs were in four-year institutions (33%), and in the next oldest time frame of 20-29 years ($n = 5$), two programs were in four-year institutions (40%). As such, human services programs within four-year institutions have always been a part of the CSHSE accreditation. Therefore, the researchers' inference was shown incorrect and offers some evidence contrary to assertions that associate level degrees emerged in response to community needs for training and paraprofessionals (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

It was also predicted that two-year schools would constitute 70-75% of all accredited programs. However, only 66% ($n = 33$) of human services programs were degreed within two-year schools. A substantial portion of accredited human services programs are classified within four-year institutions. These findings illustrate that although there are more CSHSE accredited programs within institutions classified as two-year institutions (66%), there is a considerable percentage of programs that are found within four-year schools (34%), and this percentage is consistent across each time frame of the CSHSE's lifespan. These results offer substantial evidence to challenge the U.S. Department of Labor's (2018) description of the human services field as inaccurate. Alternatively, this finding supports the position of the National Organization of Human Services (NOHS) that asserts the human services is a field that offers far more than certificate and associate degrees (Sparkman-Key & Neukrug, 2016).

Length of CSHSE Accreditation in Relation to Regional Accreditation Location

Exploration of the length of CSHSE accreditation and by location of regional accreditation unveiled existing regional distinctions. The inference that the Southern Regional Education Board (1976) survey would result in the greatest number of programs in a region was inaccurate. Instead, only 26% ($n = 13$) of the 50 institutions were within the SACSCOC region, and the greatest number of accredited institutions were located within the HLC region (34%, $n = 17$) followed by the MSCHE region (30%; $n = 15$). In addition to disproving the original hypothesis, these percentages make it clear that programs are not equally distributed across the United States. The Southeast, Mid-East, and Central areas collectively made up 88% of all the institutions with CSHSE accreditation and only 12% were situated within the other three regions. These were far greater variations than inferred and indicate that large geographical areas of the United States may not be included in the development of human services identity.

It is also noted that for the three regions with the greatest number of accredited programs, those programs were accredited across the time frames. The SACSCOC, for instance, had three programs with accreditations for more than 30 years, two for 10-19 years, three for 5-9 years, and five for 0-5 years. A similar phenomenon can be seen with MSCHSE, which had at least one accreditation within each time frame. On the other hand, HLC had four or five institutions accredited for every time frame except 10-19 and 5-9, where both had only two institutions. This seems to imply that programmatic accreditation in these regions continued to be pursued throughout the lifespan of the CSHSE. The finding that Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania account for the greatest quantity of accredited programs appears to highlight an unexplored regional pursuit of CSHSE accreditation, while a lack of the same in WASC, NWCCU, and NEASC regions might highlight a similar but negative relationship.

Human Services Program Names in Relation to Carnegie Type Classification

The finding that the Carnegie Type Classification described 66% of the institutions as Associate's Colleges was slightly lower than the estimated 70%-75%. It fit our expectations that there would be few Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges (6%; $n = 3$) and Baccalaureate Colleges

(2%; $n = 1$). What was unexpected was the large number of Master's Colleges and Universities (18%; $n = 9$), as well as Doctoral Universities (8%; $n = 4$). These higher rates may reflect the pressures of the public wanting more accountability in higher education and the increased role of programmatic accreditation in ensuring quality. If so, then even human services programs in Doctoral Universities are experiencing that pressure and are using the CSHSE to demonstrate their program's ability to meet high academic standards. In addition, the absence of any CSHSE accredited master's programs in human services was a surprise, since the CSHSE indicated that it does accredit at this level and has forms available for such a process. This nonexistence supports the idea that non-graduate programs are more representative of the field.

The inference that the names of human services programs would vary between the Carnegie Type Classifications was shown to exist. The department naming as identified through web pages seemed to follow certain patterns according to the type of institution. For instance, Associates Colleges most often included the title *human services* in the program's name. However, Doctoral Universities ascribed to naming systems such as *Department of* and then *human services* often coupled with *social work* or *counseling*. One exception to this trend was a *Behavioral Science Department*. There are multiple possible explanations for these differences including the internal structuring of Associate's Colleges versus Doctoral Universities, possible differences in beliefs about branding, or financial explanations to naming conventions.

In addition, though the human services field is described by the NOHS (n.d.) to be "broadly defined, uniquely approaching the objective of meeting human needs through an interdisciplinary knowledge base" (para. 1), there is some danger that departments that are combined with other disciplines will reflect a greater interdisciplinary identity versus a unique human services identity. The fact that most programs titled *human services* are found in Associate's Colleges creates an interesting construction of professional identity, since historically a field's research comes primarily from Doctoral Universities. Finally, what was completely unexpected was that 24% of accredited institutions had no reference to the term *human services* in their name. This lack of professional identification connected to the field of human services, while holding the CSHSE accreditation, is concerning in relation to the field's national identity development. This trend underscores the field's struggle to create an identity distinct from other social services and helping fields. Together, these findings highlight the disparities in identity that presently exist within the institutions accredited by the CSHSE.

Limitations

Though this study offers valuable insight into understanding the CSHSE's accredited programs and its impact on the field of human services, there are several limitations to this investigation. First, there is a lack of existing historical data. As such, the current exploration represents only a single moment in time. It was impossible to determine if the current 50 programs are an exhaustive list of all programs the programs ever accredited by the CSHSE, because the CSHSE website does not offer any information on institutions that were previously accredited and may no longer be accredited. In addition, finding variation in programs' names suggests that current CSHSE accreditation requirements necessitating the term *human services* in the program's name (CSHSE, n.d.e) may have been added or changed without record on the website of such updates. Another limitation is that there is an overrepresentation of data from the perspective of the CSHSE as two of the three data points were obtained from the CSHSE website. Only CSHSE data were examined and therefore perspectives of the accredited and non-accredited programs were not included. Although such limitations are important to note, the method of content analysis is designed to focus primarily on the documented materials. In the future, combining

content analysis with additional forms of data collection, such as interviews, could offer a more holistic perspective. The final limitation is that the CSHSE only represents about 10% of total human services programs in the United States (College Board, 2018). By design then, this study captured a minority of human services programs nationally. However, the growth of CSHSE accredited programs in the last 10 years suggests that its role as a programmatic accreditor within the field could continue to expand and therefore it could represent a larger percentage of the whole over time.

Implications and Future Considerations

The purpose of this study was to examine what the programs accredited by the CSHSE reveal about the field of human services' identity and capture a snapshot of the field as it currently stands. The clear part of the picture is the presence of four-year universities within the history of CSHSE accreditation going back to its conception. As four-year schools are usually engaged in the research that defines and informs a field, their history with CSHSE may provide a great resource for understanding their role and its implications more fully. Despite the academic tradition of Doctoral Universities leading the research of a field, for the field of human services, many of the institutions accredited by the CSHSE are Associate's Colleges (66%). This percentage suggests that gaining a deeper insight into the field and its identity would be assisted by examining the role that associates level colleges play in shaping the field.

The finding that 42% of all accredited programs had their accreditation for nine years or less also appears to support the assertion that accrediting bodies' impact has taken on a greater significance in recent years (Jackson et al., 2010). This trend reflects the public's continued push for assurances in the value of their education and highlights that the CSHSE has an opportunity to increasingly influence the field of human services in ways that support contributions of the entire field. This also indicates a growing opportunity for the CSHSE to expand, clarify, and articulate the identity of the human services field to a larger audience and ensure the training of a high-quality worker.

In other fields, the history of programmatic accreditation demonstrates that different industries have been able to create accountability and a higher public confidence in their roles by creating strong links between accreditation standards, education, and work in the field (Pavlakis & Kelley, 2016). This highlights the vital role that accrediting bodies can play in the process of helping a profession develop a recognizable public identity. However, it is something currently missing from 90% of human services programs (The College Board, 2018). This finding is also important when considering that most accredited programs (88%) are located in only three of six regions in this country. If the field of human services is to create consistently high standards for all programs and follow the example of other related fields, accreditation must be expanded to more programs. Future research should explore and clarify the barriers preventing programs from pursuing the accreditation process, as well as its benefits and its connection to professionals' performance and preparation in the workforce.

This content analysis was one way to examine the field's identity as it relates to accreditation. Future research should consider pursuing more in-depth studies such as talking with employees of the CSHSE, especially any that have been active since its inception, and discussing with them how they see the field changing over time from the perspective of accreditation and what they expect to see in the future. Further investigation is necessary for understanding why no master's programs were listed as having the CSHSE accreditation at the time of this investigation, despite the CSHSE articulation that it offers accreditation at the

graduate level (n.d.d.). In addition, further examination of master's level accreditation standards may also shed light on the lack of accreditation for human services doctoral programs. Other areas of examination could be comparing these findings with human services programs that no longer have accreditation or have never sought accreditation, which may offer the field a more nuanced view. Conducting interviews with the faculty within the various types of programs (CSHSE accredited, formally CSHSE accredited, and never CSHSE accredited) might also assist the field in better understanding where accreditation fits within the human services' identity.

As noted previously, NOHS (n.d.) describes the field of human services as being broad and drawing upon a multidisciplinary approach to appropriately improve the lives of the populations in the field. According to this content analysis, such diversity is reflected in the program titles of human services programs accredited by the CSHSE. However, these findings also point to a lack of a singular identity which may be worrisome as it hints at a need for the field, including NOHS and CSHSE, to create unified professional identity that resonates with educational institutions, the profession, and the public. It is hoped that future explorations will continue to clarify the scope and practice of human services education while delineating the continued development of human services and its importance to both individuals and organizations in the field.

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