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Inform, Educate, and Guide: A Study on the Impacts of the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso

Rachel Serrano
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INFORM, EDUCATE, AND GUIDE: A STUDY ON THE IMPACTS
OF THE LAW SCHOOL PREPARATION INSTITUTE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

RACHEL SERRANO

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Administration

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2021

Dedication

I know that none of this would have been possible without the love and support of my family that were there every step of the way. First is my daughter, my brat who is the best thing that ever happened to me. I started this journey wanting to be a role model for you and in turn found a passion for helping others realize and accomplish their goals because that is what you did for me. To my mom whom I owe my work ethic to, whose support never wavered throughout the teen mom and college years, which means more than you, will ever know. Your strength and undefeated attitude inspired me to never give up. To my dad whom kept my car running these years who continues to tell anyone who will listen that his daughter is getting her doctorate.

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OF THE LAW SCHOOL PREPARATION INSTITUTE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

by

RACHEL SERRANO, BA, MA

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

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of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

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Abstract

Between 1998 and 2018, the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI) at The University of Texas at El Paso helped send four-hundred and nineteen students to law schools across the United States. The mission of the LSPI aims to prepare its students to be competitive in the application process and in law school. The preparation is accomplished by providing help with the law school application. The preparation is also accomplished by creating an environment where students feel supported and prepared for the rigorous workload of law school. The techniques students acquire in the LSPI intend to make the life altering transition from one event in their lives to another less overwhelming. The study explored the impacts the LSPI had on students that completed the program. A qualitative inductive approach was used to collect and analyze the findings of this *ex post facto* study. Findings from those that matriculated to law school indicated that while the LSPI accurately portrayed the first year in law school, the LSPI was best in assisting with the application process. For those that did not matriculate to law school, the LSPI provided an understanding of the expectations of a law student as well as someone in the law profession, which helped them decide not to pursue law school. The study provides recommendations for future research to continue to explore the impacts of the LSPI and programs like it. The study also provides programmatic recommendations to update the current curriculum and provide assistance for students interested in graduate school to improve the program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For students about to enter law school including those that complete the Law School Preparation Institute, the transition from undergraduate school to law school can be stressful (Field, Duffy, and Huggins, 2013; Jarmon, 2008). The University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI) declares that their students are prepared for the maturity, responsibility, and integrity required of a law student (McCune, 2021). However, former students have expressed that the feeling they had on the first day of the LSPI is nowhere in comparison to their first day of law school (Casarez, 2001). Both Landrum (2015) and O'Connor (2012) refer to the first year of law school as nothing a student has ever experienced before. A goal of the LSPI is to prepare students to be more at ease with what law schools expect of a first-year law student that will then carry over to the remaining second and third year.

In 1993, five years prior to the start of the Law School Preparation Institute in 1998, the number of students admitted to law school that graduated from The University of Texas at El Paso with an undergraduate degree was six to seven students per year (Crowder, 2000a). That number rose to nineteen students admitted to law school (Crowder, 2000b) in the three years of LSPI's presence at UTEP. Given the success the LSPI has had in sending four-hundred and nineteen students from 1998 to 2018 to law school (McCune, 2021), the study explored the impacts the program had on the students according to their own experiences. The study specifically posed questions about the impacts the program had in applying to law school, their entry into law school, and their preparedness for law school courses. The study also posed questions about the impacts the program had on the students who chose not to apply or attend law school.

Located in the U.S.-Mexico border city of El Paso, Texas, UTEP offers students numerous bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, however, what UTEP does not offer is a law degree. For a program located in a city where the nearest law school is over three hundred miles away, the LSPI's mission is to inform students of the expectations of a law school applicant and law student (McCune, 2021). While the LSPI does its best to prepare students for law school courses, the actual setting of law school can still be alarming, especially for those who have never experienced time away from their family and friends (Landrum, 2015; O'Connor, 2012). Some interviewed for the study indicated that being away from family and friends was the most difficult part of transitioning from an undergraduate student or a law or graduate student (Diana, personal communication, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Prior to the start of the LSPI in 1998, students enrolled at UTEP that aspired to attend law school after earning their bachelor's degree had to actively seek out help with applying to law school (Crowder, 2000a). Seeking help meant that either a student had to search for an advisor or professor that knew the process of applying to law school or the student had to apply to law school on his or her own. The creation of the LSPI provided students at UTEP a comprehensive program that included help with applying to law school as well as knowledge on what law school entails. The LSPI eliminated the guesswork students had when it came to applying to law school. In addition to eliminating the guesswork in applying, the LSPI also previewed what the first year in law school would look like for those that matriculated. Matriculate means one who enrolls in postsecondary education (Maxwell, McNeely & Carboni, 2016). For the study, each participant completed the LSPI, earned their bachelor's degree from UTEP and were then admitted and matriculated to law or graduate school.

An issue some students encounter when applying to law school is not doing well on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The LSAT is not as common as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) that graduate schools use for admission (Kuther, 2020), thus classes or workshops that focus on the LSAT are not cost effective. According to *LSATClarity* (2020), a person can spend between \$600 and \$1200 on courses or printed materials to prepare for the LSAT. Although the UTEP is testing center administers the LSAT (UTEP, 2020), seeking help with the LSAT can be challenging and at times expensive (McCune, Soto, Weaver & Hobbs, 2013). Students without access to test preparation programs are often at a disadvantage when taking the LSAT and scoring well, often because they are not financially able to obtain help with the exam (Robbins, 2017). Programs like the LSPI provide students with access to practice LSAT exams, simulated tests, and tutoring services. The program provides these services to maximize the students' knowledge on the LSAT and help the student earn the best score possible.

As a program that offers access to information on the process of applying to law school and preparation for successful admission, the LSPI and pre-law programs like it are considered academic programs (Clarke, 2007). More specifically, Simpson, Hund, and Burrell (1997) would categorize pre-law programs like the LSPI as learning assistance centers, which implement an inductive approach to instruction. Inductive instruction allows students to develop an understanding of important concepts through a series of examples or exposure to problematic situations (Simpson et. al, 1997). The LSPI and law schools achieve exposing students to problematic situations by engaging in analytical and critical thinking, which is conveyed using the Socratic Method in class. In the Socratic Method, students learn through critical thinking

using questions law professors ask to fill the gaps in the students reasoning, usually related to a court case (Fabio, 2019a).

The lack of qualitative data surrounding the impacts of academic programs (Clarke, 2007; Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Simpson et al., 1997; York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon & Hawthorne, 2013) makes it difficult to describe the impacts made by a program. Statistics alone cannot convey in a study the impacts programs such as the LSPI had on providing help with the application process, preparation for the demands of law school, and the transition to law school.

Students that completed the LSPI who then matriculated to law school had to adjust to life as a law student and acclimate to living in a different city and state. Since there is no law school located in El Paso, Texas, every student that wishes to attend law school must leave the city in which they were either born and/or raised in or have spent much of their young adult life in. For many, this event means leaving home and their family for the first time and going to a place where they do not know a single person and no longer have the direct support of their family. In addition to having to acquaint themselves with a new city, students in law school can expect rigorous coursework, an unfamiliar grading system (O'Connor, 2012) and a difference in course duration. Successful completion of the LSPI requires students to complete nine credit hours in two academic summer sessions (McCune, 2021). At UTEP, the academic summer sessions are at least four weeks for one session and at most eight weeks for a full academic summer session (University of Texas at El Paso, 2021). For students enrolled in the first part of the program (Phase I) the timeframe is four weeks, Monday through Friday with seven and a half hours of in-class instruction each day. For students who continue onto the second part (Phase II)

in the same academic summer session, the timeframe is eight weeks, Monday through Friday with seven and a half hours of in-class instruction each day (McCune, 2021).

Law school requires no less than eighty-three credit hours in the span of three years, which works out to about twelve credit hours per academic semester, which are typically conducted during the fall and spring academic semesters (American Bar Association, 2021). As intensive and condensed as the LSPI is, according to all of the faculty of the LSPI who attended law school prior to working for UTEP, say the program is as close to the actual law school experience. For example, instructors in the LSPI use the Socratic Method as well as the Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion (IRAC) writing technique as instructional tools in their respective classes which are also implemented in most law school courses (Galloway, Bradshaw, Dunbar, & Fellows, 2011; Landrum, 2015; O'Connor, 2012).

Since students may not have had any experience with instructional methods such as the Socratic Method or IRAC an objective of the LSPI is to familiarize its students with these methods to better prepare them for law school. IRAC is a “problem-solving” method used for legal documents and reports to aid in the composition and clear communication of legal analysis (Nordquist, 2019). Students in law school use the method to help comprehend and evaluate their readings to reach an informed decision (Bittner, 1990; Nordquist, 2019). In the area of law, the use of IRAC requires students to follow the rules, which if properly followed, will result in an accurate conclusion, given that students are not aware of the conclusion of a case prior to implementing the method.

The initial absence of directed help with matriculating to law school according to my avail, along with the lack of information surrounding the transition from an undergraduate student to law student was no longer foreign thanks in large part to the creation of the LSPI.

What remained was the lack of qualitative data exploring the impacts the LSPI had on students that completed the program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the impacts the LSPI had on students' acceptance into law school, their success in law school, their transition to law school, and the impacts on those who completed the LSPI but chose not to apply to law school. While the LSPI focuses on increasing students' knowledge on the process of applying to law school, acceptance to law school and preparation for law school courses, not all who complete the LSPI matriculate to law school. The critical thinking skills, study habits, and mentoring might have been useful in areas other than law school such as graduate school for those that did not apply to law school. I conducted the study using the components of the LSPI (McCune, 2021). I also used Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) to explore the impact the LSPI had on the students' transition from an undergraduate student to a law or graduate student. Nancy Schlossberg (2011) defines a transition as a life occurrence everyone experiences, which results in altering a person's relationships, routines, or roles. Whether anticipated or unanticipated, these transitions often change a person's life.

For the study, I highlight the first year of law school because the first year in law school establishes a level of knowledge or skills (DeFabritiis, 2017) used when applying for first summer job placements (Chung, 2015). The first year in law school also determines the student's ability to do well in the remaining two years of law school (Heidenreich, 2014) and in some cases post-graduation plans (Chung, 2015). The mission of the Law School Preparation Institute is to increase the knowledge of its students in the process of applying to law school, preparation for law school courses, and transition to law school (McCune, 2021). While there are many

articles that discuss the Law School Preparation Institute, (Casarez, 2001; Cohen, 2000; Crowder, 2000a; Crowder, 2000b; Davila, 2000; Fonce-Olivas, 2001a; Fonce-Olivas, 2001b; Garibay, 2013; Llorente, 2000; Monarrez, 2000; Nissimov, 2002; Polk, 2001; Robbins, 2000; Roberts, 2001; Sanchez, 2012; Scharrer, 2000; Segura, 2001; Shubinski, 2001; Wright, 2000). Most articles are outdated and do not indicate a detailed description of what the LSPI does. Providing statistical data does not qualitatively address the impacts the program had on students' ability to be successful in applying or do well in law school. Incomplete data on which law school students attended as well as their post-graduation accomplishments make it difficult to analyze the impacts a program like the Law School Preparation Institute has made. The following research questions aim to explore the impacts made by the LSPI.

Research Questions

The overarching research question of the study was: What impacts has the Law School Preparation Institute had on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018? The specific research questions directing the study were:

1. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process?
2. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on its students' first year for those who attended law school?
3. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute's courses have in preparing its students for the demands of law school for those who attended?

4. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on students who did not apply or attend law school?
5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students?

The Research Setting

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) is in a city that is on the border between the United States and Mexico. UTEP serves a student demographic that is 80% Hispanic (University of Texas at El Paso, 2019). Although the LSPI is not only available to Hispanic students, the LSPI has a strong history of sending Hispanics to law school. Many of the students who attend UTEP as well as the LSPI are first generation college students (University of Texas at El Paso, 2018). A first-generation college student is a person who is the first in their family to attend college (Latino, Stegmann, Radunzel, Way, Sanchez, & Casillas, 2020). First-generation students are often at a disadvantage when it comes to preparation for college, the skills to be successful in college, and are often less confident than their classmates whose parents attended college (Pratt, Harwood, Cavazos & Ditzfeld, 2019). Of those that participated in the study, 28.6% identified as first-generation students.

Programs like the LSPI are also important where there is a lack of knowledge on the law profession and the importance of legal representation. Legal matters are often too complex for the typical person to navigate through on their own, therefore, legal representation is essential (King, 2013). A barred lawyer is a person who passed a state bar exam and was then admitted to a state bar association (Greenfield, 2013) and can practice law. In December of 2018, the population of El Paso, Texas was 845,553 of which 1.42% of that population were barred lawyers in Texas, which averages out to one lawyer for every six-hundred and fifty-four citizen

(ABA, 2018). This ratio makes El Paso, Texas the fifth city in Texas with the most attorneys putting the city behind San Antonio with a population of 2,518,036 of which 7.76% of that population were barred lawyers (ABA, 2018). In 2017, the national average ratio of lawyers to citizens was one lawyer for every two-hundred and forty-four citizens (Tobey, 2019). While not all the students who complete the LSPI and matriculate to law school return to El Paso, Texas to practice law, many do, which improves the ratio of lawyers to population in the city of El Paso, Texas.

Owing to the student demographic at UTEP, geographic location and lawyer to person ratio in El Paso, Texas, the LSPI not only provides services to students but also to the community outside the university. Students in the LSPI may participate in clinical programs, which help specific groups or individuals. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and Encouraging More Positive Opportunities With Empathy and Respect (EMPOWER) are programs students may choose to participate in which require a full year of commitment starting each August. Students that participate in CASA advocate for children in foster or kinship care (McCune, 2021). Students that participate in EMPOWER provide assistance in developing career and education goals, and with obtaining and maintaining employment for juveniles with serious mental illnesses to defer prosecution (McCune, 2021). Participating students of EMPOWER are supervised by a licensed social worker who conducts monthly training sessions on areas such as mental illnesses, career training, team building, and accountability.

The Law School Preparation Institute Model

In 1998, two professors at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), William Weaver and Robert Webking interacted with students that were not familiar with graduate school or the requirements to apply to law school but showed interest in applying. A local judge in El Paso,

Texas approached Professors Weaver and Webking who helped fund the first ever Law School Preparation Institute at a university that did not have a law school attached to it (W. Weaver, personal communication, September 16, 2019). The goal was to offer students at The University of Texas at El Paso the best opportunity of being admitted to some of the best law schools in the country (Crowder, 2000a). Over the twenty years the program has existed at UTEP, the program evolved in different ways, from personnel changes, to changes in leadership, changes in office location, and changes in its attention to the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and facilitation of clinical programs.

The LSPI curriculum focuses on preparation for the LSAT, and the components of the law school application. In-class instruction focuses on the law of torts, legal research, legal writing, and oral advocacy, which emphasizes on preparing students for what they will experience during their first year of law school (McCune, 2021). Preparation continues through one-on-one meetings with LSPI advisors after a student has taken the LSAT and is in the process of completing their undergraduate coursework. In personal communication with pre-law advisors, topics of discussion in these meetings include school preferences (W. Weaver, personal communication, September 16, 2019). Some students might choose a school based on reputation while others are more interested on the geographic location of the school. Discussions might also indicate a specific area of law the students are interested in, which then prompts advisors to recommend specific schools based on the area of law rather than reputation or geographic location. For students whose main concern is the financial cost of going to law school, advisors tend to suggest schools that offer financial aid through scholarships, employment positions or in-state tuition.

To participate in the LSPI, students must apply at the start of a spring semester in January with the application due in April. An admissions committee comprised of the director of the program, three LSPI faculty members, and the program's administrative coordinator review each application. To apply, students must be enrolled at UTEP and be pursuing their first bachelor's degree, possess at least twelve UTEP credit hours, and have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0. Since the Law School Admissions Council only takes into account courses applied to a student's first bachelor's degree (Blueprint Test Preparation, 2013), the Law School Preparation Institute observes that same requirement to advise students as to which schools to apply to.

Additional documents for the LSPI application include transcripts from all institutions where the student received college credit, a résumé, and a statement of motivation. While law school interviews have become scarce over the years (Catherine, 2016), the Law School Preparation Institute's admissions committee interviews every applicant regardless of the probability of their acceptance to the program. In some cases, the interviews give the admissions committee the opportunity to advise the applicants to either work on raising their grade point average, develop their résumé, or ask about their interest in attending the program or law school. In conducting interviews, the admissions committee members benefit from "putting a face" to the name, gauge a student's personality depending on body language, and assess reactions and responses to questions. As for the student, he or she can demonstrate their public speaking skills, defend any blemishes on their application, and connect with their potential professors of the program (McCune, 2021).

Since the Law School Preparation Institute only accepts applications from January to April, the students' classifications and/or expected date of graduation will then determine if the student will apply to one or both phases for that respective summer. The classification of a

student is based on the number of credits the student has earned. A student classified as a freshman has earned 0-29 credit hours, a sophomore has earned 30-59 credit hours, a junior has earned 60-89 credit hours, and a senior has earned 90 or more credit hours (The University of Texas at El Paso, 2021). If a student has more than one summer before their expected date of graduation, it is advised that they apply to only Phase I. If a student only has one summer left, it is advised that they apply to both Phase I and II.

Once admitted, students receive notification through electronic mail as well as through a letter mailed to the address indicated on their application. This letter includes an agreement form that all students must sign if they agree to participate in the program. The agreement form includes the dates of the program, information on the courses the student will be registered for, and a statement informing the students that they are required to apply for Phase II in a subsequent summer session. The part of the agreement form that has proven difficult to enforce is requiring students not be employed or take additional courses while they are enrolled in the Law School Preparation Institute.

When the program started in 1998, each student received a stipend of one-thousand dollars per phase to help defray the costs associated with participating in the LSPI or applying to law school. Those costs include the courses students must register for, the registration for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), law school applications, and the required law school reports. These reports are a summary of the applicant's academic history, which includes academic transcripts from every institution where the applicant earned college credit, the applicant's LSAT score, and the applicant's cumulative grade point average (LSAC, 2021). Since the curriculum for the program is "intensive" (Casarez, 2001; Fonce-Olivas, 2001; Robbins, 2000) coupling the reading and assignments of the program along with being employed

or attending additional courses could result in a student not being able to concentrate solely on the program. Restrictions on being employed and taking additional courses was also a way for the program to help students get used to not being employed or taking additional courses, which is often not allowed in law school (Roberts, 2001). Eliminating stipends has led students to register for additional courses to obtain financial aid for the summer as well as work during the summer to support themselves, their families, or have money to continue the process of applying to law school.

If the student agrees to the terms of the program, he or she will then be registered for the required courses. Tuition for the courses is the only expense the student incurs throughout the Law School Preparation Institute, all reading, and the program provides testing materials. Tuition depends on which phase the students are admitted to for that respective summer session. For example, if a student is admitted to Phase I only, then the student will register for two-three credit courses and then will return the following summer to participate in Phase II and will then register for one-three credit course. However, if a student applies and is admitted to both Phase I and II, to be completed in one summer, the student will register for three, three credit courses.

The Law School Preparation Institute is also responsible for the Legal Reasoning Minor in the College of Liberal Arts. Students that declare Legal Reasoning as their minor can earn half of the minor through the Law School Preparation Institute. Regardless of the students' major or minor, each student that completes the LSPI receives course credit for legal reasoning, special topics in law and politics, and courts in action. In addition to the three political science courses mentioned, students who minor in Legal Reasoning are also required to take an additional elective course from a list of courses that have emphasis in law as well as two required rhetoric/writing courses. Possible electives that can be counted for the Legal Reasoning Minor

include but are not limited to Business Law, Psychology and the Law, Philosophy of Law, and American Legal History to name a few (McCune, 2021).

Phase I

Daily assignments as well as homework for students who participate in the LSPI consists of up to fifty pages of reading each night, which also includes grammar, and writing assignments to help prepare students for the rigors of law school courses. Grammar assignments require students to demonstrate proper sentence structure and proper use of parts of speech as it pertains to legal writing.

Phase I is conducted during The University of Texas at El Paso's summer one session, Phase I familiarizes students with the curriculum they will experience during their first year in law school. Such instruction includes introduction to the law of torts, legal writing, legal research, and oral advocacy. The torts class, which is taught by the Law School Preparation Institute's director, is conducted like a first-year law school course. Torts is a required course for all first-year law students regardless of where the student attends law school (Princeton Review, 2018). Students in the torts class engage in the Socratic Method, according to Dr. William Weaver (personal communication, September 16, 2019) are "at least two weeks ahead of their fellow classmates in law school" when it comes to knowledge on the law of torts, and experience with a torts law exam.

The legal writing course is designed to include the Issue Rule Analysis and Conclusion method. Using this method, students can analyze assigned cases and improve their writing skills that will prepare them to compose a legal memo before they apply to law school. In addition to legal writing, students attend a course on legal research and oral advocacy, which is taught by

The University of Texas at El Paso's law librarian. In this course, students learn the fundamentals of legal research and are assigned a mock case to argue before the Eighth District Court of Appeals in El Paso, Texas. Appellant courts are considered superior courts that review the decision of a lower or trial court (Kenton, 2019). In the state of Texas, appeal courts are divided into fourteen districts, El Paso is designated as the Eighth Court of Appeals. This court was created in 1911 and has jurisdiction to hear both civil and criminal cases from El Paso County.

Students who commit to Phase I are in class Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm with a lunch break at noon and daily homework assignments. Students in the LSPI cannot enroll on a pass/fail (P/F) or satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) basis to ensure students are committed to the objectives of the course and strive for the best possible grade to improve their grade point average. While courses graded on a P/F or S/U basis can be used to fulfill degree requirements, courses are not factored into the overall grade point average (The University of Texas at El Paso, 2021). For that reason, each course has its own attendance policy, and each instructor assigns a grade that can and will affect the student's grade point average. Students that successfully complete Phase I are invited to move onto Phase II in the same summer academic session if they are set to graduate in the fall or spring semesters following the LSPI. Those students that still have one summer left before they graduate are invited to apply for Phase II for the summer before their expected date of graduation. Once a student earns their bachelor's degree, they are no longer eligible to participate in the LSPI. For that reason, students must apply to complete the LSPI before their expected date of graduation (McCune, 2021).

Phase II

Phase II is conducted during The University of Texas at El Paso's second summer academic session. For the first time in the Law School Preparation Institute, the 2018 Phase II class included a session on Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) to enlighten students about the transition of going from being an undergraduate student to a law student. For most, it means leaving their family and friends and being in an environment where every other student may be just as intelligent, driven, and competitive as they are (Landrum, 2015). A feature of the transition model session required students to contemplate the factors they will need to consider when choosing a law school. Having an idea of what a student is looking for in a law school will help the Law School Preparation Institute advisors know which schools to suggest and which schools to leave off. For example, during the in-class discussion on the transition model, some students expressed concerns with the location of the law school, the climate of the city where the law school is located as well as ranking and overall costs associated with the law school to name a few factors.

A major part of Phase II is instruction on the Law School Admission Test. The Law School Admission Test or the LSAT is scored on a scale of 120-180. Students in the Law School Preparation Institute, study, drill, and practice the Law School Admission Test from the start of Phase II up to the official September or October administration of the test. Students that participate in the Law School Preparation Institute have indicated an increase to their LSAT scores by at least eight points from their first diagnostic practice test to the official test (Casarez, 2001; Roberts, 2001). For example, if a student scores a 142 on their first practice LSAT then goes up eight points to a 150 on their official test, that student went from doing better than 18% of people who took the LSAT to scoring better than 44% (Curtis, 2019). This score could mean

the difference between being admitted to a law school ranked 157 and one-ranked 194 (Curtis, 2019). The rank of the law school tends to be important when it comes to securing employment after graduation. Law firms are more likely to hire a law school graduate from a higher ranked law school as opposed to a lower ranked law school (Curtis, 2019).

Since the fall semester of 2016, law schools started to accept the Graduate Record Examination (Rubino, 2018; Yang, 2017) in addition to the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) for consideration of acceptance. However, the Law School Preparation Institute continues to include the LSAT in its curriculum. The reason for this is that although 23 American Bar Association approved law schools have started to accept the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in addition to the LSAT (Rubino, 2018); all 204 ABA approved law schools continue to accept the LSAT (ABA, 2018). This fact is especially important because when a student has his or her one-on-one meeting with Law School Preparation Institute advisors, the student's LSAT score and GPA is taken into account when recommending which schools to apply to, which in some cases can be anywhere from fifteen to twenty law schools.

Even though the program itself concludes at the end of the summer academic sessions, students are expected to continue to study for the LSAT and revise their supplemental documents. Supplemental documents include a personal statement, résumé, and if needed, an addendum. A personal statement is not to be confused with a motivation statement. Whereas, a personal statement is used as a way for the applicants to introduce themselves, the motivation statement discusses the applicants' future goals rather than focus on self or past experiences (Potter, 2019). Personal statements are used to gain insight to an applicant that is not provided in a résumé. Essentially, personal statements provide law school admissions committees with a

qualitative description of the applicants' personal and professional lives as well as their background (Kowarski, 2019).

An addendum is a written statement that can cover a multitude of topics not included in a personal statement or résumé. An addendum is often used when a student needs to explain a low-grade point average or Law School Admissions Test score or in some cases a criminal record. While a criminal record will not necessarily keep a student from being admitted to law school, (Pishko, 2016) having a criminal record could keep a person from applying to take the Bar Exam and being a barred lawyer (Gleeson, 2018). If being a lawyer is the students' goal, it can be difficult or impossible to reach that goal if a student has a criminal record. With that said, the Law School Preparation Institute advisors meticulously review and revise students' documents to ensure the final product that is included in the application is as close to perfect as it can be.

Faculty of the LSPI advise students to apply to law school prior to the Thanksgiving holiday to avoid being lost in the mix of students who wait to apply after New Year's Day. Law School admission representatives who visited with the 2018 Phase II class mentioned that students are more likely to receive scholarships if they apply early rather than waiting for the deadline. From September to April, the Law School Preparation Institute advisors are readily available for help with applications as well as after a student has heard back from schools, as some students will have received multiple acceptances and will need help in deciding which school they attend.

A part of the LSPI agreement form that has proven to be difficult for data purposes is remaining in contact with students who have completed the program. Although students are asked to inform at least one Law School Preparation Institute advisor of their location after graduating from The University of Texas at El Paso, some students who matriculate to law

school neglect to remain in contact with the LSPI. Faculty and staff of the LSPI have yet to determine the reason for this, but suspicions are that these former students do not want to be contacted to donate money to either the program or the university. A conversation held with a former student revealed that he avoided answering any phone call that started with the area code “915” and then was followed by the prefix “747” because that meant it was a call from El Paso, Texas and more specifically, UTEP where the phone numbers begin with “747.” Bill, a male law school graduate avoided answering because he was not interested in donating to a university that had “total disregard for an issue with a member of the faculty and his appeal of a grade” (personal communication, June 13, 2019). Other former students have expressed that they are not currently in the position to be able to give monetary donations to the program or the university.

While the university development office would prefer to keep in contact with graduates for monetary donation purposes, the intention of those that work at the LSPI to remain in contact with these graduates is for studies such as this one, mentorship, and networking purposes. Although receiving contributions in the form of monetary donations would be ideal, lending one’s time, advice, and experience is invaluable. Faculty and staff of the Law School Preparation Institute often reach out to graduates through electronic mail or posts on social media such as *Facebook* (LSPI, n.d.) to seek their help with presenting to students during the program, and serve as mentors to students who are about to attend the same law school the graduate attended.

Four full-time employees, who handle a specific portion of the day-to-day operations throughout the fall and spring semesters, currently staff the Law School Preparation Institute. To execute the program, staff members combine their expertise during the summer to provide a cohesive program that has had great successes since the program began in 1998. The impacts

made by the LSPI for those that matriculated to law school as well as those that did not is described through the interviews conducted for the study.

Law School Matriculates

Students that complete the LSPI and matriculate to law school attend top law schools across the country (McCune, 2021). What categorizes a law school as a “top” law school is its ranking according to measurements such as the median LSAT or GRE scores, median undergraduate GPA, acceptance rate, bar passage rate, student-faculty ratio, and library resources to name a few (Morse, Hines & Martin, 2019). According to the LSPI’s website (McCune, 2021), one-third of the students are admitted to the top fifteen law schools with twenty-five percent matriculating in a top fifty law schools. Although students are admitted to law school, not all matriculate for a variety of reasons. Some reasons as told by LSPI advisors are lack of scholarship money, geographic location of the school, and acceptance to either a higher ranked school or top choice school (B. McCune, personal communication, n.d.).

The data available on the LSPI’s website is dated as of 2016 because it is based on the information that is made available to the staff member who compiles data for the program. For example, the Law School Admission Council compiles its data during the spring semester of the law school’s academic year, it is then sent to the persons identified as a designated pre-law advisor for an institution of higher education (Law School Admission Council, 2019). While some data does exist on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2016, the designated pre-law advisor of the Law School Preparation Institute has yet to receive and compile data for students who completed the program in 2017 and 2018 because they were still in school at the time of the study.

Of the ninety law schools students from the Law School Preparation Institute have attended since 1998, Ohio State, Texas Tech, Berkeley, University of Texas at Austin, and University of Wisconsin are schools where fifteen or more students have attended (McCune, 2021). Students are advised to apply to as many schools as possible to have options. At times, students may negotiate scholarship money if they have been admitted to a school in the same rank, which is a reason students apply to many schools.

From 1998 to 2018, the number of students matriculating to law school has outnumbered the students who have either chosen to not apply or not matriculate. As of 1998, four-hundred and nineteen students have matriculated to law school from the Law School Preparation Institute, about one-hundred and fifty of the students who completed the program either chose to not apply or not attend law school. While a goal of the Law School Preparation Institute is to get every student admitted and matriculated to law school, the reality is that not every student will matriculate to law school.

Non-Law School Matriculates

Of the six-hundred and twenty-six students that completed the program from 1998 to 2018, about one-hundred and fifty students chose to not apply to law school, were not admitted or were admitted and chose not to matriculate. Reasons for not applying or not matriculating are explored through individual interviews with the graduates themselves, but program advisors suggest that when a student contemplates attending law school, they must also take into account their projected salary even more so if they do not pass the bar exam (B. McCune, personal communication, n.d.). For some, the uncertainty of passing the bar exam or securing employment to pay back student loans is reason enough to not pursue law school.

Tuition and fees for the 2017-2018 fiscal year had an average amount of \$47,112 per year for private law schools, \$26,864 per year for public in-state law schools, and \$40,308 per year for public out-of-state law schools (Kowarski, 2019). Those amounts do not include expenses for books, living or travel. Once students are aware of the financial responsibility that awaits them if they were to continue onto law school, some end up choosing not to apply or matriculate.

While some students choose not to apply or attend law school, it does not mean the Law School Preparation Institute had no impact. The study's findings showed that the LSPI did in fact impact the students' decision to pursue graduate school. The experience and skills these participants gained by participating in the LSPI proved to be useful for the participants that did not matriculate to law school. Participating in the LSPI confirmed that while law school was not the right fit for them, graduate school was attainable, and they felt as if the LSPI did prepare them for the transition from undergraduate students to graduate students.

Summary

The chapter introduced The University of Texas at El Paso's Law School Preparation Institute and its importance being in a city, that does not have a law school. The chapter provided insight to the lack of legal representation in a city the size of El Paso, Texas as well as why legal representation is important. Curriculum for both the LSPI and law school is briefly introduced in the chapter to provide an overview of what students experience in the LSPI as well as in law school. The overarching research question centers around the impact the LSPI had on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018. Because the study is specific to a particular program, the research setting of The University of Texas at El Paso and its pre-law program, The Law School Preparation Institute are both named. A detailed description of the LSPI was provided to give an overview of the applicant requirements and components of the LSPI.

I have organized the dissertation in the following way: In chapter two, the literature review explores components that produce an effective academic program, and the history of pre-law programs using the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, and the Summer Law School Preparation Academy as comparisons for the LSPI. Furthermore, the chapter describes the use of Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011), as a theoretical framework to explore the impacts of the LSPI. The end of the literature review focuses on the first year of law school and provides insight to what the role of a lawyer encompasses. In chapter three, I describe the research design of the study, provide information on participants for the study, as well as how I collected and analyzed the findings of the study. Chapter four discusses the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 provides conclusions and implications of the study, as well as recommendations for future research and recommendations to improve the LSPI and programs with the similar attention of helping undergraduate students prepare for law or graduate school.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the literature review, I first explored how academic programs are evaluated as well as the components of academic programs. These components helped to design the research and interview questions to explore the impacts of the program. Second, I investigated the history of pre-law programs, and their role in preparing students for the law school application process as well as law school. Third, I used Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) as a theoretical framework to examine the components of the Law School Preparation Institute, which helped with students' transition to law school. Fourth, because the first year of law school is so important (DeFabritiis, 2017; Heidenreich, 2014), I explored what the first year in law school entails and the presumed impacts pre-law programs make on that year. Finally, since most of the students who participate in the LSPI and programs like it are interested in becoming a lawyer, the literature review also addressed what the role of a lawyer encompasses.

Evaluating Impacts of Academic Programs

According to Weiss, Bloom and Brock (2014), effective programs that are impactful tend to encompass four factors. These factors were taken into account when designing the research and interview questions for the study. The first factor is content, which encompasses the features and components of the program. For pre-law programs, this factor includes providing a service that helps participants apply to law school and increase their knowledge of the demands of law school. Exploring this factor asked the individuals experiences with the application process for law school, and the impacts the program had on preparing students for the demands of law school.

The second factor is quantity, this can include the number of participants in the program, the frequency of the program as well as the rigors and duration of the program. For example, from 1998 to 2018, the LSPI served six-hundred and twenty-six students, for eight weeks at a time in summer semesters (Casarez, 2001; Fonce-Olivas, 2001). The third factor is quality, which refers to how well the objectives of the program are relayed to its participants. In terms of pre-law programs, this factor would include whether the programs were successful in attaining their goal of preparing students for the law school application and law school courses. Success is therefore contextual depending on the overall goal of the program. When it comes to the LSPI, success comes in the form of students who matriculate to law school as well as those that do not. The LSPI is still successful if students do not attend law school because it eliminates potential law school applicants that are not aware of what law school entails and are interested in the idea of becoming a lawyer or being like someone they saw on television. However, some students participate in the LSPI because they want to figure out if law school and the law profession is right for them. While some of these students apply to law school, some do not, but will continue their education by attending graduate school.

The final factor is conveyance, which is how faculty or staff conduct the program including the mode of instruction such as face-to-face or on-line instruction, individualized instruction or through a group setting. Currently, the American Bar Association does not accredit online law schools (Aycok, 2019), thus programs like the LSPI offer face-to-face courses to emulate courses in law school. Teaching a course face-to-face establishes a dialogue that cannot be attained through online instruction (Tobin, 2017). For example, if an online class was synchronous, meaning the online class is being taught in real-time, there may not be an opportunity for an instructor to answer all questions that are sent through a chat box or respond

to follow up questions. Face-to-face courses also allow students to build relationships and learn from their peers without having to log into a virtual breakout room (Tobin, 2017). The LSPI does this by engaging in the Socratic Method which requires a student to stand and present in class as well as when students are separated into groups for the purpose of working together to build those relationships and learn from each other.

In addition to a lack of qualitative data on the impact of academic programs and their successes (Simpson et al., 1997; Weiss et al., 2014; York et al., 2015), qualitative data is also not available on the impacts of pre-law programs (Clarke, 2007; Gullatt et al., 2003; Young-Jones et al., 2013). Diem (2004) states that the impacts of academic programs “must ultimately change people’s attitudes or behavior, or benefit society in other ways.” Because impact is difficult to measure (Clarke, 2007; Gullatt et al., 2003; Young-Jones et al., 2013), Diem (2004) also advises programs to adopt a list of objectives created by Bennett (1975) to have an understanding of the mission and goals of the program. Bennett’s Hierarchy Evaluation Model from 1975 is being used because this idea was his seminal work on criteria for evaluating the impacts of academic programs. The objectives include inputs, activities, involvement of people, participant reactions, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations (KASA), practice change, and end results.

To explain the objectives further, inputs include funding for the program from outside donors as well as time LSPI faculty staff members have invested in the program outside of the classroom. Activities include how many sessions of the program offers and the events the program holds. People involvement is the number of people who participated in the program. Reactions are the perceptions of the participants to the organization of the program or its personnel. Reactions are also how the participants’ attitude or aspirations change having participated in the program. Practice change includes the participant being able to apply what

they learned in the program to their anticipated goal. Finally, end results are the outcomes of the program either for the participant or for the program itself.

I chose not to use Bennett's (1975) list of objectives as a theoretical framework for the study because his list of objectives depends on the people who conduct the program rather than the individuals who participated in the program. However, I found Bennett's (1975) list of objectives to be helpful with understanding how to create a list of objectives, mission and goals for an academic program. Bennett's (1975) list of objectives related to the study because it helped to single out the components of the LSPI program to design the research questions as well as the interview protocols. While faculty and staff of the LSPI may have an idea of what part of the program fits into each objective, what LSPI faculty and staff are not able to do is demonstration the personal impacts the program had on a specific individual that did or did not matriculate to law school.

The LSPI program itself incorporates three specific courses, each with its own instructor. Instructors seldom provide input on what another instructor teaches, thus they can only comment on the impact their respective course had on students. If asked, a professor might feel as though their component of the LSPI was more impactful than another component. For example, because so much weight is placed on the Law School Admissions Test, the instructor for that course might feel that their course made more of an impact than the other courses.

Although I do mention the word evaluation, in no way is the study an evaluation of the program itself. Rather, the study is an exploration of the experiences of the students who participated in the program in their own words. Evaluation research derives from a traditional experiment that includes a variety of design approaches; these studies often focus on a hypothesis and are quantitative in nature (Patton, 1980). A thorough evaluation of this or any

other program would entail the opinions of stakeholders other than the participants of the program (Patton, 2008). Because stakeholders have not experienced the LSPI as students have, they have a limited understanding of the impacts of the program and thus were not asked to evaluate the impacts of the LSPI.

According to Patton (1980; 2008), evaluation findings are often distorted when taking into account the evaluator. Biased responses from faculty who might find their component of the program to be more impactful than another professor's component might discredit an effective component of the program students found impactful. Patton (1980) also indicated that implementing an evaluation of any program with outside stakeholders could provide incomplete data. While an evaluation of the LSPI program by its stakeholders would be beneficial, the study concentrated on the qualitative responses of the students that experienced the program, rather than providing quantitative data of how many students completed the program, how many students applied to law school and how many students matriculated to law school.

The following section demonstrates the interest of pre-law aid from the early 1950's and demonstrates that no two programs are alike. The literature provided suggested students in undergraduate institutions pay close attention to the courses they took prior to applying to law school (Gustafson, 1951). The road to law school starts the moment a person enrolls in an undergraduate program since the choices they make as an undergraduate student may affect their chances of being admitted to law school (McCune, Soto, Weaver & Hobbs, 2013; Strong, 1955)

History of Pre-Law Programs

Articles on the topic of pre-law education indicate pre-law majors did not exist in undergraduate institutions, thus the articles advised students to major in areas such as history, English, political science, and philosophy to name a few (Gustafson, 1951; Rathjen, 1978;

Strong, 1955). While there are not significant relationships between a student's undergraduate major and law school, there are correlations between courses taken during a student's undergraduate studies that may help once the person is in law school (Gustafson, 1951). For example, courses in United States History or Government often offer knowledge on the creation and function of laws, writing, and public speaking courses improve critical thinking, and a student's ability to speak in front of an audience (Kuther, 2018).

Although there are many pre-law programs throughout the United States, direct access to pre-law programs in institutions of higher education was not customary (Rathjen, 1978). Not customary that while an undergraduate institution might have a pre-law advisor, it did not necessarily mean there was a program dedicated to helping with the law school application process. This statement was true for Rathjen (1978) and remains true in 2019, in a list created by The University of Hawaii at Manoa (Hutchison & Richardson, 2018). A reported thirty-seven institutions of higher education have a pre-law program. It is for this reason that providing access and support for students interested in attending law school is imperative regardless of if the pre-law program or pre-law advisor is a part of an institution of higher education or a separate entity. Programs like the LSPI increase knowledge about the legal profession, which may not be an area an advisor in undergraduate institution places much emphasis on unless there is a specific request for information.

Initial research conducted for the study suggested that there was not much of a presence of pre-law programs other than the Council on Legal Education Opportunity. The inconsistency of the information makes it difficult to assess the impacts of pre-law programs because so few of the programs listed indicate the year they began or impact they have made in aiding students interested in attending law school. This study credits Gustafson (1951) and Strong (1955) with

starting the conversation on pre-legal education as well as CLEO (2021) for its trailblazing work in helping minority students gain access to law schools. Without the contributions from Gustafson (1951) and Strong (1955), the notion of helping prepare students for law school may not have been a concern, thus, programs like CLEO and the LSPI may never have existed.

While the Law School Preparation Institute is not the only option students have when seeking help with applying to law school, the LSPI is unique in the way that it is only available for undergraduate students who attend The University of Texas at El Paso (McCune, 2021). To serve as a comparison, programs such as the Council on Legal Education Opportunity's Pre-Law Summer Institute (CLEO) or the Summer Law School Preparation Academy (SLSPA) at the University of Texas at San Antonio have an open enrollment policy. Open enrollment means that both CLEO and SLSPA accept applicants from various accredited institutions of higher education as opposed to the LSPI, which only accepts applicants from UTEP. According to their respective websites, both CLEO and SLSPA have also been successful in helping students both apply to and matriculate to law school (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021; University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021).

The number of students who participated in their respective programs who then matriculated to law school measures the success of CLEO and SLSPA. According to the CLEO website (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021), the program has helped more than ten thousand students attend law school and join the legal profession. SLSPA's website (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021) mentions that "hundreds" of students have graduated from the program and have attended over 150 law schools. What is not available on the CLEO or SLSPA websites are the number of students each program has helped, which schools these students attended, or a description of the impacts their programs had on the students in preparation for

law school and the transition from an undergraduate student to law student. It is for that reason, the study explored how the Law School Preparation Institute impacted the students that matriculated to law school as well as those who chose not to apply or attend law school. As successful as the LSPI has been in helping students to gain admittance to law school since 1998, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity has been helping students since 1968.

The Council on Legal Education Opportunity

The first pre-law program to aid students in pursuing law school began in 1968 with the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021). The Council on Legal Education Opportunity's Pre-Law Summer Institute operates out of various law school campuses. Locations include but are not limited to the Southern University Law Center, Mitchell Hamline School of Law and Georgia State University College of Law to name a few (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021). Students who participate in the Council on Legal Education Opportunity summer program come from institutions of higher education all over the United State due to its open enrollment policy. CLEO's open enrollment policy allows any graduating senior in college or college graduate to apply if they intend on attending law school in a fall semester and have already taken the law school admissions test (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021).

Students apply to the summer institute between November and March of each year and if admitted, participate in a two-week online seminar prior to attending the face-to-face institute for four weeks during a summer. One session of the Council on Legal Education Opportunity's Pre-Law Summer Institute is held each summer in a designated location where forty students are chosen to participate where the program is being hosted. In addition to providing their own transportation to the location of the summer institute, students who participated in CLEO in 2018

paid a total of \$2,500, which included room, board, and instructional materials (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021).

The summer institute curriculum includes instruction on reading case law, briefing court opinions, which summarize a case or court proceedings, and preparation for law school exams. Students receive instruction on the Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion (IRAC) method to improve their writing skills that will be useful both in law school as well as in the law profession. In law school, IRAC is used as a tool for a court case study analysis (Bittner, 1990; Burton, 2017) in which students must first identify the Issue by framing the problems or facts of a case, breakdown the Rules of the law related to the case, which includes any statutes or references to case law. It then Analyzes the links between written law, and the problems of the case to compose analogies or clear up any assumptions to finally reach a Conclusion on the legal issues, facts and problems of the case that will support the statute or case law that was used to justify the conclusion that was reached (Burton, 2017).

In addition to learning the IRAC Method, students in the Council on Legal Education Opportunity's Summer Pre-Law Institute experience simulated law school classes conducted by law professors who use the Socratic Method (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021; University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021). Harvard Law School is credited as the first law school to use the Socratic Method in 1870 (Gersen, 2016) up to that date, law professors conducted classes through lectures and reading directly from textbooks. Students were required to listen to the lectures, take notes and on occasion, ask questions to receive an answer from the professors' knowledge of the case. Law professor, Christopher Columbus Langdell suggested that law professors refrain from instructing from textbooks and instead assign cases to students where the students would then present the facts of the cases themselves (Gersen, 2016).

Using the Socratic Method in class allows students to “analyze, criticize, and reason upon the cases to him or herself” (Gersen, 2016, p. 2322) and includes students presenting their findings that are subjected to “criticisms and suggestions” (p. 2323) from their classmates as well as the professor. Thus, the practice of the Socratic Method often refers to a professor “cold-calling” on students to either present the facts of a case or answer specific questions of case at times provoking arguments among their fellow classmates (Slatton, 2014). Cold calling in law school is often referred to an instance when the professor chooses a student to stand up and verbally explain the assigned reading or answer specific questions (Slatton, 2014).

Although the Socratic Method has been met with apprehensions, mostly by students but also some professors (Morgan, 1989), it is the preferred instructional method for law school. Students who participate in pre-law programs that also practice the Socratic Method like the Council on Legal Education Opportunity are at an advantage over classmates who have yet to experience the method in their respective undergraduate disciplines. Along with learning IRAC and encountering instructional methods like the Socratic Method, participants are informed of the benefits of study groups in law school and how to ensure those study groups are productive. Finally, students have an opportunity to form professional relationships with those they interact with during the institute, some of which might prove to be useful during law school or once the person has transitioned from law student to the legal professional (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021).

The Council on Legal Education Opportunity’s (2021) policy that all applicants must already possess a law school admissions test score confirms that the summer institute focuses more on law school course success rather than preparation for the process of applying to law school. Although the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (2021) does profess to assist

students with law school placement, students must already have an idea of which law schools they will be applying to upon applying to the summer institute. In doing so, students must also take their LSAT score and grade point average into consideration when applying to both CLEO's summer institute and eventually law school.

While admittance to the Council on Legal Education Opportunity's pre-law summer institute is not dependent on an applicant's law school admissions test score or grade point average, an adequate law school admission test score and an acceptable grade point average will help the applicant once they apply to law school (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2018). An adequate law school admission test score would depend on which school the student is applying to since the average law school admission test score would be in the mid to upper 150's (Princeton Review, 2019). An acceptable grade point average would also depend on the school, but the average would be around 3.5 (Craven & Jones, 2018).

Students interested in getting help with the law school admissions test or the components of the law school application must apply and attend separate programs within the Council on Legal Education Opportunity's various programs. These programs include, the "Pre-Law Summer Institute" which prepares its participants to be competitive in the application process and law school, "Road to Law School" which provides information to college freshmen on the components of the law school application process; and "Juniors Jumpstart the LSAT" which prepares juniors in college for the law school admissions test. "Attitude Is Essential" introduces and prepares students who have already been admitted to law school for the rigors of law school (Council on Legal Education Opportunity, 2021). Each separate program is held at various institutions of higher education and each have costs associated with the program as well as various lengths of instruction. CLEO's Pre-Law Summer Institute is six weeks long while the

Road to Law School is a one-day seminar hosted by various institutions of higher education.

Like the Road to Law school, the Juniors Jumpstart is also a one-day seminar hosted by various institutions of higher education, the Attitude is Essential program is a two-day seminar also held at various institutions of higher education.

The Council on Legal Education Opportunity does not consist of a pre-law program in which students receive help with preparation for the rigors and expectations of law school courses, help with the law school admissions test, applying to law school, one-on-one advising, and help with the transition to law school. Having separate programs may be a potential problem for students who cannot attend multiple programs to receive information that can be conveyed in a cohesive program such as the Summer Law School Preparation Academy, or the Law School Preparation Institute (McCune, 2021; University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021).

The Summer Law School Preparation Academy

In the spring of 2014, coordinators from the University of Texas at San Antonio's Summer Law School Preparation Academy met with the faculty and staff of the Law School Preparation Institute to gain knowledge on the differences between the programs, as well as to obtain insight on how the program is conducted. The Summer Law School Preparation Academy at the University of Texas at San Antonio began in 2001 (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021). The Summer Law School Preparation Academy offers support to students interested in a legal career by offering advising, internships, personal statements, and résumé consultation in addition to assistance with the law school admissions test through its summer program.

According to its website, students who attended the Summer Law School Preparation Academy have gained admission to over 150 law schools in 44 states (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021).

The Summer Law School Preparation Academy is open to any undergraduate student who attends any accredited institution of higher education. Students not enrolled at the University of Texas at San Antonio who have been admitted to the Summer Law School Preparation Academy must apply to the university as a non-degree seeking student (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2019). The Summer Law School Preparation Academy conducts its program in two phases during the summer and requires participants to register for courses that offer student's twelve credit hours (four courses) each phase encompassing two-three credit courses. The Summer Law School Preparation Academy's curriculum includes writing for prelaw and constitutional analysis in Phase I. Phase II includes tort law, a law & society course, analytical reasoning, logic, and instruction on the law school admissions test. In addition to the schedule of courses, the students are also required to attend lectures provided by representatives of law schools, law school professors, and professionals from the legal community, which are used as information sessions, so students become familiar with the presenters' respective school or office.

Students in the Summer Law School Preparation Academy are encouraged to attend weekly law school admissions test labs with the understanding that these students will be taking the test during the subsequent fall semester. Upon completion of the program, students in the Summer Law School Preparation Academy can meet with pre-law advisors to have their documents reviewed for their application on an appointment basis (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021). While pre-law programs differ in areas such as curriculum, duration, and cost, one component that is included in the pre-law programs mentioned in this study is preparing their students for the process of applying to law school (Council on Legal Education

Opportunity, 2021; Law School Preparation Institute, 2021; Summer Law School Preparation Academy, 2021).

The Law School Application Process

According to the Law School Admission Council's (LSAC) website (2021) the steps to applying to law school are as follows. Meet with a pre-law advisor, this person or persons offer advice on which undergraduate courses to complete, help with preparation for the law school admissions test, as well as assist with school choice. The second step requires a student create a LSAC account. This account helps the applicant keep track of application requirements and timelines, view their LSAT score and track the status of their law school applications. The third step is preparing for the law school admissions test. Students are advised to take the test from September to December of their senior year in college if they intend on starting law school the following fall semester.

The law school admissions test is a multiple-choice, timed standardized test that consists of five sections, which are each thirty-five minutes long. Only four of the five sections are factored into the final score. Sections for the test include reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning. Any of the three main sections may repeat, but only one of the repeated sections will factor into the final score (Law School Admission Council, 2021). The final part of the LSAT is the writing sample, although this section does not affect the overall score, schools that the student applies to will receive a copy of the writing sample. The writing section displays the student's argumentative writing skills along with organization of thought, language and writing skills (Law School Admissions Council, 2021).

The law school admissions test is scored on a scale from 120 to 180. The final score is based on the number of correct answers with each question having the same weight. Students

then receive their score about three weeks after they have taken the test, and the score is then included in the student's application report. Each of the pre-law programs discussed in this literature review provides some type of preparation for the law school admissions test, from offering drill sessions to opportunities to take weekly practice exams.

The fourth and fifth steps of applying to law school coincide with each other, these two steps include researching possible law schools and meeting with law school recruiters. When choosing a law school, students should consider law school admissions test scores, grade point averages, the price of attending, rank of the school, bar passage rate and job placement percentage (W. Weaver, personal communication, September 16, 2019). Meeting with law school recruiters is an effective way for students to gain insight to what a law school is looking for in a law student as well as what the school can offer in the areas of financial aid, assistance with the bar exam, and career services.

To facilitate the research of law schools and face-to-face communication with law school recruiters, the Law School Admissions Council arranges a series of law school forums throughout the year. At these forums, students can meet recruiters from more than one-hundred law schools. Law school forums are held annually in up to ten different locations and are free to attend. Locations include Washington, DC, Los Angeles, New York, and Houston, Texas to name a few. For students who participate in pre-law programs, assistance with choosing a school or meeting a law school recruiter is part of the programs' curricula or program events (Law School Admissions Council. 2021).

Step six is to register for the Credential Assembly Service which consolidates all the required documents for applying to law school in one report, which is sent electronically to any law school the student applies to. The Credential Assembly Service report includes an

authenticated summarization of the applicants' academic records and letters of recommendation. In step seven, the person applying to law school must request transcripts from every institution where they received credit that applied to their bachelor's degree. This requirement would include any credits the applicant received in high school through dual credit or early college high school credits (McCune, 2021). Once transcripts have been submitted, the student then receives an academic summary, which then provides a cumulative grade point average. The Law School Admissions Council provides a list of all schools approved by the American Bar Association, which includes the median grade point average and law school admissions test score. Thus, knowing their cumulative grade point average will help students choose a law school based on their grade point average as well as help from pre-law advisors that recommend law schools (Law School Admissions Council, 2021).

Letters of recommendation are also a requirement of the Credential Assembly Service and the number of letters will vary by law school and is the eighth step in applying to law school. Regardless of the number of letters required, letters either are written by professors or work supervisors who know the applicant well enough to write on behalf of the applicant's academic and/or professional achievements (Law School Admissions Council, 2021). Through their law school admissions council account, students indicate their recommenders as well as how many letters each recommender will send and whether the letter will be used for a specific school or for all schools.

Although the Candidate Referral Service is listed as the ninth step in applying to law school, this feature has not shown to be a topic of conversation in any of the pre-law programs mentioned above. The Candidate Referral Service is free to anyone with a Law School Admissions Council account, which authorizes the release of the applicant's name, electronic

mail address, biographical and academic information as well as law school preferences. This feature allows law schools to find potential candidates by searching their law school admissions test score, grade point average, age, and geographic background (Law School Admissions Council, 2021).

The tenth and final step to applying to law school according to the Law School Admission Council website (2021) is to apply online. Given that the student has taken the law school admissions test, identified their recommenders, requested all their transcripts, and registered for the Credential Assembly Service, they are now fully prepared to apply to law school. However, the impact of pre-law programs described above offers more help for students than having them follow ten steps to apply to law school. These programs were designed to expand on the steps of applying to law school with one-on-one help as well as preparation for what students will experience while in law school.

Transition to Law School

As stated by W. Weaver (personal communication, n.d.), “students who participate in the Law School Preparation Institute are at least two weeks ahead of their fellow law school classmates.” That advantage applies to the torts class, the legal writing, legal research, and oral advocacy courses. The introduction of Schlossberg’s Transition Model during the 2018 Phase II class is another way to ensure students at the Law School Preparation Institute are prepared for the transition to law school.

As previously discussed in chapter one, since El Paso, Texas does not have a law school, students who participate in the Law School Preparation Institute must leave El Paso, Texas to attend law school. This fact is not necessarily the case for students who participate in the Council on Legal Education Opportunity or Summer Law School Academy. Since the Council on Legal

Education Opportunity operates out of various law schools and the Summer Law School Academy is conducted at the University of Texas at San Antonio, which does have a law school, students are probably more likely to come from cities that have law schools thus making their transition less of a cultural shock. Feedback from the end of Phase II evaluations from students who participated in the Law School Preparation Institute in 2018 indicated that the sharing of basic knowledge of how the transition model applies to law school helped put the transition from an undergraduate student to law school student into perspective.

The assignment required students to read three articles that focused on the transition model as well as transitioning to law school. Although there was a five to ten-year gap between the articles chosen for the assignment, the submitted papers showed that students in the 2018 class still responded well to the knowledge they gained from the articles and the assignment. As evidenced in the final course evaluation in which many students expressed that they felt more prepared for the transition to law school and less worried because of the assignment.

Theoretical Framework - Schlossberg's Transition Model

Students that participated in the 2018 LSPI class received the assignment in the legal writing course component of the LSPI that required each student to read three articles and write a reflective paper. The first article was, *The Challenge of Change: The Transition Model and Its Applications* by Nancy K. Schlossberg (2011). In her article, Schlossberg's transition model includes understanding the types of transitions, the 4 S's system for coping with transitions, and applying the transition model to life events.

First, students must understand that there are three different types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent transitions (Schlossberg, 2011). For students in the Law School Preparation Institute, anticipated transitions may include taking the law school

admissions test, applying to law school, and graduating from The University of Texas at El Paso. For those admitted to law school, another anticipated transition would be leaving and starting law school. The assignment required students to list factors, which would aid in choosing a law school as well as what they will need to prepare for when they are living on their own. According to the assignment conducted by the LSPI class of 2018, anticipated transitions included, securing money to travel back home during the holidays, getting familiar with their surroundings when it came to shopping, and knowing where to go to for help with classwork or mental health.

Since the Law School Preparation Institute concludes at the end of the summer session, students prepare for the law school admissions test date closest to the end of the program to better retain the sections of the test. An unanticipated transition for students may include having to retake the law school admissions test. While some students might strive to take the law school admissions test once, that is not always the case and some students end up having to take the November administration of the law school admissions test as opposed to the September administration of the LSAT. Not being financially able to attend the students' top law school may be another unanticipated transition.

Although the Law School Preparation Institute's advisors inform students of the financial burden law school can have, some students believe they will receive enough scholarship money that will keep them from leaving law school with too much debt. While students in the Law School Preparation Institute have been successful in obtaining scholarships that reduce the need for loans, full-tuition scholarships for law school are uncommon (Organ, 2011). It is for this reason that Law School Preparation Institute advisors spend most of their one-on-one sessions with students explaining financial aid, costs associated with law school as well as the benefits of

attending an in-state school. An in-state school is an institution in the same state where the applicant resides, as opposed to an out of state school, which is a school in a state outside the applicant's residence (Henshaw, 2017).

Another unanticipated transition is not performing as well academically as the student expected. The minimum requirement grade point average for students who apply to the Law School Preparation Institute is 3.0 but students in the Law School Preparation Institute have some of the highest-grade point averages according to twenty years of student records. Students who perform well in the Law School Preparation Institute often expect they will do the same while in law school.

Because students in law school tend to be intelligent and are also accustomed to earning high grades, competition to be at the head of the class is intensified (Landrum, 2015). Although the Law School Preparation Institute's curriculum is designed to portray the rigors of law school, it is possible that some students will not be at the top of the class in law school (McCune, 2021). While competition does not determine the grade students receive, the competition to attain top grades is something some students may have never experienced before (Landrum, 2015).

Last are nonevent transitions, students expect these events to happen but end up not occurring. For students in the Law School Preparation Institute, these might include being on a waiting list for their top choice school or not being admitted at all. Nonevent transitions after graduating from law school would be not passing the Bar Exam or not obtaining employment. These are categorized as non-events because those who take the Bar Exam expect to pass it and not all who take the test pass, it can take up to two or even three attempts before a person passes the Bar Exam (Evans, 2017). This non-event of not passing the Bar Exam can then lead to the non-event of not obtaining employment.

After connecting the types of transitions to law school, students can further elaborate on transitioning to law school by implementing the four “S” system for coping with transitions. The four S’s, according to Schlossberg (2011) which was used as a tool for the transition to law school are: Situation, Self, Supports, and Strategies. Change is not something that some people respond well to, especially when that change encompasses a new location, and a rigorous competitive environment like law school (Thomas, 2020). Implementing the transition model as outlined by Schlossberg (2011) may help students in the Law School Preparation Institute as well as any other pre-law program make a successful transition not only to law school but in their eventual career. While these students will be in the same state of transition going from undergraduate to law school, their individual experiences will be different. The first of the four “S” system for coping with transitions is *situation* (Schlossberg, 2011) which pertains to the student’s situation at the time of the transition.

A situation for students who participate in the Law School Preparation Institute, usually means the student is probably leaving home for the first time in their lives. Students might be in a situation where they contribute to their family in the form of care or money and thus feel they either cannot leave for school or need to be closer to home. For students that will live out of state, it may be costly for them to return home should an issue arise with their family that requires students to come back home. Costs associated with travel may be a reason some students might choose a school that is close to home or postpone law school until they are comfortable leaving their family.

The second “S” refers to *self*, (Schlossberg, 2011) which pertains either to the attitude and inner strength students have when coping with a specific situation, or the student’s self-awareness of their ability to do well in law or graduate school. Some students who do not have a

strong sense of “self” might express feelings of doubt and may make excuses for their grades or worse, give up and quit. At the other end of the spectrum is the student that is confident in their abilities to do well given their experiences in programs like the LSPI.

The third “S” refers to *supports* (Schlossberg, 2011) which pertains to the students’ support systems at the time of the transition. For students that support system includes their parents, friends, and significant others. For some student parents who have completed the Law School Preparation Institute that support system also included children. Lee (2018) views children as well as significant others to be an ideal support system because it forces law students to manage their time. For law students who have families, the obstacle is not only managing their time for law school but also managing their time so that their children or significant others are not ignored while keeping their commitments to their family as well as law school (Lee, 2018). It is important for law students to have a support system, which they can call upon at times when they are the most stressed or homesick. It is also wise for students to have non-law school supports when they need to talk about anything other than law school (Jarmon, 2008).

The final “S” for coping with transition is *strategies* (Schlossberg, 2011) which pertains to techniques students apply when dealing with various situations that will arise with the application process for law school or once they matriculate (Field, Duffy, and Huggins, 2013; Jarmon, 2008). The intensive curriculum of the Law School Preparation Institute teaches students time management whether they recognize it or not. Often, students complain about the lack of sleep or lack of time to complete all the assigned readings or assignments in such a condensed program. Implementing strategies such as designating specific amounts of time per reading or assignment throughout a week rather than a day might relieve the stress of feeling there is not enough time. Students in the Law School Preparation Institute are expected to create

a schedule of their daily activities, to realize how their day is preoccupied which allows them to better manage their time. For students at the Law School Preparation Institute who apply to law school, transitions might eventually include transitioning to law school and then to their legal career. As for those who do not apply or attend law school, their transitions might take them into an academic field other than law or into the workforce.

Field, Duffy & Huggins (2013) and Jarmon (2008) agree that the transition into the law school environment is an experience not all students are prepared for and to make this transition smoother, students must approach law school differently than they approached their undergraduate education. Although the articles do not directly mention the transition model as explained by Schlossberg (2011) some of what they write relates to the types of transitions and techniques for coping with transitions. In focusing on making a smooth transition, Field et. al (2013) and Jarmon (2008) specifically write about law school and how making sound choices before and during law school will make a more well-adjusted law student. For example, sound choices would include creating a weekly schedule, reflecting on one's strengths and weaknesses and being an engaged student who attends class and joins student organizations or study groups. Taking the initiative to learn about the legal profession by interviewing practitioners is another example of a sound choice a law student should make (Field et. al, 2013; Jarmon, 2008).

Making a smooth transition to law school also means pre-law students will have to accept that the days of having multiple assignments, tests and constant feedback are over. Most courses in law school consist of one exam at the end of the course with no prior feedback on the students' performance (Hricik, 2016). Students who are accustomed to earning "A's" or "B's" in courses with little to no effort will find it more difficult to earn those same types of grades with those same study habits such as studying the day before the test or reading an article or textbook

in less than an hour (Landrum, 2015). However, even the most dedicated student in law school is still likely to be in the middle of the class given the competitive nature of law school (Field et. al, 2013; Hricik, 2016).

Based on personal communication with former LSPI students, upon returning home to El Paso, Texas, some have expressed feelings of disappointment in their performance during their first semester in law school. More so if the student graduated at the top of their class in their undergraduate studies. For this reason, a positive mindset and attitude is vital for any new law student. Jarmon (2008) suggests law students adopt three essential attitudes, which are: to do your best every day, know yourself well, and keep in mind that you are the same person in law school that you were before law school. While these attitudes might seem cliché, as indicated in their papers and evaluations, students in the 2018 Law School Preparation Institute class responded well to the advice and some reported that they felt reassured about applying and attending law school.

While Law School Preparation Institute students are informed of the benefits of a balanced life, time management, avoiding shortcuts and how personal life can affect law school, Jarmon's (2008) article places the importance of these factors into perspective. To have a balanced life, students need to remember to get enough rest, eat well and make time for exercise. Although students might feel they need to spend every minute reading for class or working on outlines for class, taking a break for non-law school related activities is an effective way to de-stress (Field et. al, 2013; Jarmon, 2008).

Students are able to relax during law school if they practice effective time management. Creating a weekly schedule is an effective way to manage one's time; a comprehensive schedule will include when classes meet, review and study sessions, and break time for meals, sleep, and

non-law school activities. Creating and following a weekly schedule may reduce the risk of procrastinating (Jarmon, 2008). Another way to avoid procrastination is to stay away from shortcuts to try to make law school easier (Field et. al, 2013). In law school, shortcuts include missing classes or relying on the outlines of fellow classmates. Since students work differently and learn at a different pace, students cannot expect a classmate to be just as dedicated as the person next to them in class, it is for this reason that it is best for students to work independently on their course outlines (Jarmon, 2008). However, both Field et. al (2013) and Jarmon (2008) advocate for direct support from law school colleagues to share ideas.

A factor many LSPI students have difficulty overcoming is the personal connections they have to people back home as well as in law school. While having a support system may help make a student feel less alone, it can also be a hindrance. Students who go to law school with their significant other or have a family and have no alternative options are advised by LSPI advisors to have a conversation with the members of their family. Conversation topics can range from informing family members of the expectations of law school, such as daily reading, attending classes, and at times meeting with study groups or law professors. Any of these areas can mean time away from responsibilities at home. During the time the student is in law school, his or her family may feel as though they are being ignored. It is important then that the student inform his or her family of the demands of law school. However, if the student has grasped the concept of time management, there should be time for family activities in the weekly schedule (Field et. al, 2013).

Although the Law School Preparation Institute has been successful in sending students to some of the top law schools in the country (Casarez, 2001; Crowder, 2000; Garibay, 2013; Monarrez, 2000; Robbins, 2000; Scharrer, 2000). Each class that follows is unique in the sense

that this is their first exposure to law school and tackling the arduous task of applying to law school. Students who do not fit in the category of knowing a lawyer or having a lawyer in their family have expressed a feeling of not belonging through personal statements, program evaluations, and in interviews from early articles of the program (Segura, 2001). That sense of not belonging does not go away even after a student has successfully completed the Law School Preparation Institute. Instead of feeling out of place with students from the same institution, in law school, students now feel out of place with students from all over the U S and face a more demanding and rigorous course load.

The uniform curriculum for any law school in the U S consists of the same courses for a student in their first year in law school, or as is often referred to as “1L.” These courses include Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Legal Research and Writing, Property Law, and Torts (O’Connor, 2012). It is only after their “1L” year that students can choose their courses for the remaining two years of law school. Given that 1L students will have a set schedule of courses with different professors, Heidenreich (2014) suggests that students approach each professor as individuals, meaning that each has their own objective and way of handling their respective course. The first year in law school is not to be taken lightly, aside from the first year setting the tone for year two and three, if a person feels they either did not do as well as they expected or did not find enough interest in the study of law, Heidenreich (2014) advises a student to drop out. Before a student gets to this point, pre-law programs like the LSPI give students a glimpse of what the first year of law school will entail to save the student time and money (W. Weaver, personal communication, n.d.).

First Year in Law School (1L)

The Law School Preparation Institute aims to prepare students for the rigors of law school and inform students of the types of support law schools offer to ensure students are successful during their first year (Galloway, Bradshaw, Dunbar, and Fellows, 2011). The first year of law school is said to be the most challenging (Landrum, 2015; O'Connor, 2012) as well as the most pivotal when taking into account where a student intends on working during the summer after their first and second year in law school. The first year in law school is also significant should a student want to transfer to another law school, as well as getting on Law Review (Turow, 2010). In law school, law review is a journal that is overseen by students that publishes articles by law professors, judges, as well as students in which employers tend to take notice if an applicant participated in their respective school's law review (Fabio, 2019b).

Law School 1L Curriculum

As previously discussed, the law school curriculum for all law schools consists of the same courses (O'Connor, 2012; Princeton Review, 2018; Turow, 2010). All first-year courses as well as the time courses are chosen for the students (Fabio, 2019b; O'Connor, 2012). It is not until the second and third year of law school that students are able to choose their own courses (Fabio, 2019b; O'Connor, 2012). First-year courses include torts, contracts, civil procedure, property, criminal law, constitutional law, and legal methods (O'Connor, 2012; Princeton Review, 2018; Turow, 2010).

In torts class, students study judgements in civil cases, which encompass a harmful act where a person might be legally responsible (Princeton Review, 2018). Students who participate in the Law School Preparation Institute receive instruction on torts, which aims to give students an advantage over their law school classmates. It is also taught the way students will receive it in

law school, which is using the Socratic Method. Engaging in the Socratic Method is a method of instruction students in law school will encounter in their second and third year in law school.

In both the Law School Preparation Institute and law school, the legal methods course is comprised of legal research, legal writing, and an oral advocacy or moot court exercise (Princeton Review, 2018). Just as in the torts class that is offered during the Law School Preparation Institute, the legal methods course aims to give students at the Law School Preparation Institute an advantage over their law school classmates. The legal methods class in the Law School Preparation Institute does this by requiring all students to submit a legal memo, which tests their legal writing skills, and engage in legal research, which expands their knowledge of case law. Students in the LSPI are also required to argue a mock case in front of El Paso's Eighth District Court of Appeals, which places them in the role of a lawyer (McCune, 2021). As discussed in the introduction, appellate courts are considered superior courts that review the decision of a lower or trial court (Kenton, 2019). In the state of Texas, appeal courts are divided into fourteen districts, El Paso is designated as the Eighth Court of Appeals. This court was created in 1911 and has jurisdiction to hear both civil and criminal cases from El Paso County. Regardless of the county, all death penalty cases are sent to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in Austin (Texas Judicial Branch, 2019).

In law school, the contracts course teaches students what a contract represents as well as the legal resolutions if a contract is breached (Fabio, 2019b; Heidenreich, 2014; Princeton Review, 2018). Civil procedure teaches students how civil cases are brought to court and the rules of who, how, when, or where a person can sue (Princeton Review, 2018). The property course tends to highlight the purchase, possession, and sale of property in the United States as well as the economic analysis of property law. In criminal law class, students encounter cases

some may not experience in their career unless they become a criminal prosecutor or defender (Princeton Review, 2018). This course will more than likely include definitions of specific offenses as well as principles of liability (Princeton Review, 2018). Lastly is constitutional law, which is more of a history class that centers on the structure of the U.S. government and the rights of individuals (Princeton Review, 2018).

What also makes law school difficult is the fact that most if not all the final grades for the courses are based on one final exam or a final project (Fabio, 2019b; Heidenreich, 2014; O'Connor, 2012). What makes law school so competitive is that when grading exams, professors rank exams from best to worst and then assign grades based on a curve where there are a set number of grades that can be given (O'Connor, 2012). While the Law School Preparation Institute does not use this type of grading scale, the grade for the torts class is dependent on one final exam and although the writing instructor assigns brief writing projects, the final grade is dependent on the legal memo.

Instructors of the Law School Preparation Institute follow this grading policy to prepare students for the way they will be graded in law school and to help make the students less reliant on earning grades that are based on multiple assignments or tests that students might receive in their standard undergraduate courses. In addition to receiving a grade based on one project or final exam, students are also not informed on how they perform throughout the LSPI courses to mirror the experiences of students in law school.

Law School 1L Support

The law school curriculum is only one factor of the first year in law school, many schools provide support for organizations students can join that are committed to the interests of students of different races, genders, and sexual orientations (Law School Admissions Council, 2021).

Law schools also offer research opportunities as well as mental health support to ensure students are successful during their first year in law school and throughout their second and third years as well. Galloway, Bradshaw, Dunbar, and Fellows (2011) discussed student support further in their article about support strategies such as interactive teaching, peer-assisted learning, and effective mentor programs that lead to a successful first year.

Many students enter law school not prepared for the rigorous curriculum, do not attend workshops or seminars and neglect to see their benefit or seek out help when it is too late (Landrum, 2015). Another issue might be that a greater number of students might take advantage of support programs, thus causing limited individualized attention. While not all programs or not all students need individualized attention to be effective, it is reassuring to know that law schools notice the need for student support by offering services or individualized attention to those who need it.

Some of the services offered at various law schools are some of the same features students experience in the Law School Preparation Institute. Landrum (2015) discusses the lack of support for what is needed before a student starts law school, such as adequate grade point averages and law school admission test scores. More important is the under preparedness of the students enrolled in law school. While the underprepared student can modify how they approach law school courses, their need for support might be greater than the student who already possesses the skills needed to be successful in law school. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and writing skills are areas pre-law programs like the Law School Preparation Institute incorporate in their curriculum.

Participating in programs like the Law School Preparation Institute may give students a foundation to build on so they can be successful as opposed to not knowing what to expect and

learning as they go. Another area where Landrum (2015) finds law students are lacking is their ability to socialize and engage in the type of communication expected of a person in law and in the law profession. These are skills a law school student would experience during their “lawyering process” (Brest, 1982; Neumann & Krieger, 2003) course which is a way for law schools to further support their students after they have graduated. The point of the “lawyering process” is to prepare students for job interviews, possible salary negotiating, legal research and writing exercises that will be utilized in their professional career and the assumption of the responsibility of working in the legal field.

Pre-law programs like the Law School Preparation Institute also provide support in these areas by requiring each program applicant to attend an interview with the admissions committee, place students in law related offices that often require students to engage with clients and produce written projects in which research is required. Students that participate in the Law School Preparation Institute’s Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Encouraging More Positive Opportunities with Empathy and Respect (EMPOWER) programs have the added responsibility of working directly with juveniles for the betterment of the youths’ lives. Participating in these clinical programs may prove useful when it is time for the law student to choose their courses in school or seek employment either while in law school or after they have graduated.

As Landrum (2015) suggested, academic support programs are not all the same and what might work for one school or a student might not work for another school or student. For that reason, Landrum suggests schools should consider certain factors when creating support programs for students. Many of the factors she lists are some of the same factors that were taken into consideration with the creation of the Law School Preparation Institute. The first factor is to

create a support program that is unique to the characteristics of the students. The Law School Preparation Institute was created based on the student demographic of The University of Texas at El Paso and the fact that Hispanics tend to score lower on the Law School Admissions Test than non-Hispanic Whites (McCune, Soto, Weaver & Hobbs, 2013; Robbins, 2017).

The second factor is the characteristics of the faculty and staff of the school or the program. Each faculty or staff member of the Law School Preparation Institute performs tasks and offers instruction based on their educational background or expertise in a specific area. For example, the university's law librarian teaches the legal research component of the program. The third factor is the characteristics of the institution. This would include the geographic location of the school and if that institution is also a part of a law school. This fact is not the case for The University of Texas at El Paso, where the nearest law school in Texas is three-hundred and forty-seven miles away according to *Google* (2021). The location of the program makes it difficult for students to visit potential law schools, for that reason part of the program includes visits from law school admission representatives from law school around the U S. In these visits, law school admission representatives inform students what their respective law school is looking for in an applicant.

The final factor in creating a support program are the resources that are available at either the school or the program. Students that completed the Law School Preparation Institute have access to scholarship opportunities, may return to El Paso, Texas, and work as a summer intern after their first and second year in law school. Former LSPI students are also encouraged to contact faculty and staff of the LSPI throughout their time in law school. Students in the past have sought help with the review of applications for law review, information on alumni of the program to act as a mentor, and resources for the Bar Exam.

According to Landrum (2015) one way of offering support to law students or potential law students is to begin working with them before they start law school. She views these programs as a way of “introducing those students to the expectations of law school while simultaneously improving academic skills” (p. 261). She specifically mentions the Council on Legal Education Opportunity as a program that offers a pre-law program prior to the start of the students’ first year of law school.

While the second and third year of law school are important when it comes to the student being able to explore the various areas of law. It is that first year of law school that often determines how successful a student will be in in the subsequent years of law school (Heidenreich, 2014) as well as where the student will be working during their summers and in some cases after they have graduated from law school (Chung, 2015).

The Role of a Lawyer

According to the Deluxe Black’s Law Dictionary (11th ed. 2019, p. 888), a lawyer is defined as “a person learned in the law: any person who prosecutes or defends causes in courts of record or other judicial tribunals, one whose business is to give legal advice or assistance.” While the duties of a lawyer might differ according to the area of law the person is practicing, the general responsibility of a lawyer is to represent their clients in various transactions or legal proceedings (Vennapoosa, 2006). Students who attend the Law School Preparation Institute intend on becoming a lawyer after they graduate from law school. While professional training will come later in life either during law school or as a first-year associate, it is important for students to have an understanding of what a lawyer is and what a lawyer does. A first-year associate is the time a person learns to become a lawyer, usually in a law firm or law office (Yates, 2019). First-year associates tend to work longer hours and make less money than

established or more experienced associates. According to Yates (2019), first-year associates typically work under a more experienced associate conducting research, analyzing legal documents and preparing for court.

The reason it is important to have an understanding of the law profession is that it tends to confirm if a student will continue onto law school and perhaps to the profession itself. At times, the only exposure a person has to a lawyer is through television shows or films. Some students who participate in the Law School Preparation Institute may not have access to a lawyer, thus their understanding of what a lawyer does is limited. Through the Law School Preparation Institute, students will interact with lawyers through in-class presentations, mock oral arguments, and clinical programs such as CASA and EMPOWER.

The occupation of a lawyer is often referred to as a profession. Hurst (1966) defines a professional as a person who possess a specific degree of education to perform the task appointed to the person, a person who uses this education to serve others rather than themselves, and a person whose profession is regulated by those of the same profession. However, there is some debate as to when these elements became a part of the law profession. Hurst (1966) states that prior to 1870, the law profession was more of an apprenticeship in which anyone could be trained to be a lawyer without a specific degree. Hurst's reputation as the founder of American legal history (Tomlins, 2000) validates his definition of a professional and historical account of the law profession, which also justifies the use of an article from 1966 as it defines a lawyer as a professional. Taylor (2018) suggests that the law profession had no special education or training until 1761 with the first Bachelor of Law awarded in 1793 from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. In addition to legal education, the regulation of the law profession is a

concept that came from the creation of the American Bar Association, which was established in 1878 (Glendon et al., 1998; Hurst, 1966).

Men and women who obtain their law degree or as it is referred to as a Juris Doctorate who wish to practice law must pass what is called the Bar Exam (Austin, Christopher & Dickerson, 2016; Reeves, 2015; Trujillo, 2007). This exam is specific to each state where the person intends on practicing law and is a requirement to be a licensed lawyer (Austin, Christopher & Dickerson, 2016; Reeves, 2015; Trujillo, 2007). Starting with the February 2021 administration of the Texas Bar Exam, the state of Texas will become one of the thirty-three states to administer the Uniform Bar Exam (American Bar Association, 2018). The Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) makes it possible for those who pass the test to transfer their score to other participating states in which they can practice law in those states (Jones, 2019).

The Uniform Bar Exam is administered over two days and the score is composed of the Multistate Essay Examination, two Multistate Performance tests, and the Multistate Bar Examination (National Conference of Bar Examiners, 2021). The Multistate Essay Examination consists of six questions to be answered in thirty minutes to determine effective communication in writing. Graders of the essay exam are confirming that test takers can identify legal issues, identify the difference between relevant and non-relevant information, are able to present reasoned analysis of information in writing, and able to demonstrate an understanding of legal principles. The essay exam has a weight of thirty percent and covers such subjects as Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Family Law, Real Property, and Torts to name a few (Kaplan, 2019).

The Multistate Performance Test has a score weight of twenty percent and consists of two exams each administered in ninety-minute intervals. The performance test determines how a

person will apply what they learned in law school to realistic situations. The last part of the Bar Exam that holds the most weight is the Multistate Bar Examination, which is fifty percent of the overall score. This exam consists of two-hundred, multiple-choice questions administered over six hours on the last day of the two-day test. This part of the test determines the competence to practice law by assessing the test taker's ability to implement analysis and reasoning to factual patterns (Kaplan, 2019).

Those who pass the Uniform Bar Exam are then able to practice a variety of areas of law, while there might be lawyers who focus on one area of law there are also practitioners who will practice an assortment of areas. Pre-law advisors from the Law School Preparation Institute advise students to keep an open mind when it comes to the area of law they will eventually practice. Since students in the Law School Preparation Institute have yet to explore the numerous areas of law at the time they participate in the program, specifying the area of law they wish to practice could limit the students' opportunities if they concentrate in one area too soon (Craven, 2015).

The legal system falls into two main categories, common law and civil law. For the countries who follow common law, case law and published judicial opinions are sources of reference whereas in civil law, statutes classified accordingly are predominant, which allows civil law judges to interpret text or statutes (Syam, 2014). Judicial opinions are final court decisions that arrive after a judge or group of judges consider the facts in the context of the law that is then published (Judicial Opinion, 2019). Statutes are a formal enactment of legislation that declares, commands, or prohibits something in accordance with the law (Statute, 2019).

The United States follows common law in which the people who are in the law profession enter private or public practice (Glendon et al., 1998). Those in private practice are

often directed by the client in which the lawyer focuses on how the law affects their clients either through transactions or through litigation (Glendon et al., 1998; Hurst, 1966; Vennapoosa, 2006). Transactional lawyers tend to draft documents between the parties involved while litigation lawyers prepare documents to present in a trial before a judge and/or jury. According to Glendon et al. (1998) and Vennapoosa (2006), those who enter public practice tend to work for the office of the district attorney as a prosecutor or for the office of the public defender as a lawyer. Both are considered public-directed practices, as cases are argued on behalf of a county, city, or state, and are distributed among the attorneys in an office, each office funded by a government entity (Glendon et al., 1998; EP County, 2021).

U.S. News & World Report (2018) lists one-hundred and twenty-two areas of law a person can practice after they have passed the Uniform Bar Exam. With so many options, it is important for students to be informed of as many areas of law and what those areas entail. While informing students of the various areas of law may not be a focus of pre-law programs, the programs mentioned previously do provide students who participate in their programs the opportunity to speak to attorneys in various areas of law. The Law School Preparation Institute arranges presentations both in and outside the classroom as well as evening events with lawyers from the local legal community. These events not only provide networking opportunities, but they also confirm that people from the student's same city and community can be successful in the law profession.

Summary

The analysis of the articles in the literature review explored the components of academic programs and their impact on the students who participate in them. Research indicated a need and presence of pre-law programs years before the inception of programs like the Council on

Legal Education Opportunity, the Law School Preparation Institute, and the Summer Law School Preparation Academy. While there is a lack of data on the impacts of pre-law programs, the programs help with the transition from an undergraduate student to law student. For that reason, the act of transitioning from one role to another is described using Schlossberg's Transition Model. The chapter then discussed the components of the first year in law school to demonstrate what student will experience in law school. Finally, since a goal of students that participate in the LSPI is to become a practicing lawyer, the chapter ends with information on the law profession. The dated articles that discuss the LSPI, and the absence of data on the impacts the program had on the students that completed the program indicate a need for the study. The methodology chapter will describe the research design of the study, provide information on participant criteria, explain my positionality as the researcher, the ethical considerations of the study and finally, the collection and analysis of the study's data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As discussed in the introduction, the overarching research question of the study was: What impacts has the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI) had on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018? Five specific research questions that explored the impacts of the LSPI directed the overarching research question of the study. The specific research questions were:

1. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process?
2. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on its students' first year for those who attended law school?
3. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the demands of law school for those who attended?
4. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on students who did not apply or attend law school?
5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students?

Research Design

Since there is an emphasis in the study on the impacts of the LSPI for the first twenty years of the program, the research is historical in nature. Since participants of the study already completed the LSPI, the study is also an *ex post facto* study (Diem, 2002). *Ex post facto* is Latin for "after the fact." *Ex post facto* studies use the experiences of human subjects to explain the reasons for a study. Studies using this method are for phenomena that have already taken place and is often used when it is not possible to conduct an experiment (Diem, 2002). Conducting

experimental research would require the comparison of two groups to determine differences or similarities between the groups (Diem, 2002). Conducting an experiment could only happen if I were to acquire comprehensive data on a pre-law program other than the LSPI to use as a comparison to show which program made more of an impact.

I used a qualitative inductive approach because it places emphasis on the interpretations of a person's experiences through their own words (Merriam, 2009), which is one way to find out what impacts the Law School Preparation Institute has made. Using a qualitative inductive approach for the study allowed me to explore the impacts the LSPI had on its students on the application process, preparation for law school and success while in law school for those who attended law school. The study also allowed me to explore the impacts the LSPI had on the students who did not apply or matriculate to law school.

Qualitative research aims to "make sense" of the setting of the research (Merriam, 2009), I, the researcher, am an outside spectator who was interested in finding out if the LSPI prepared students for law school as it claims (McCune, 2021). Having not experienced the LSPI as a student and having not applied the skills students learn in the LSPI, I cannot personally account for the impacts of the program. Prior to the study, data acquired by the LSPI was limited to statistics. Prior to the study, the only data compiled that can be classified as qualitative research are the various articles written about or mentioning the LSPI (Casarez, 2001; Cohen, 2000; Crowder, 2000a; Crowder, 2000b; Davila, 2000; Fonce-Olivas, 2001a; Fonce-Olivas, 2001b; Llorente, 2000; Monarrez, 2000; Nissimov, 2002; Polk, 2001; Robbins, 2000; Roberts, 2001; Scharrer, 2000; Segura, 2001; Shubinski, 2001; Wright, 2000). No actual data on the students of the LSPI was collected for the articles, the articles simply report on the LSPI and the work it had done. The absence of articles written after 2002 make any type of statements made by former

students outdated because a lot has changed within the LSPI since 2002. For example, while the LSPI continues to use the Socratic Method as an instructional method, more emphasis is placed on writing fundamentals that are used in law school, and more information on the law profession has been added. Whereas during the years the articles were published, the emphasis was more about getting the students admitted to law school with minimal material on writing fundamentals or the law profession.

I chose to use qualitative inductive approach to collect and analyze the data of the study for two reasons. The first reason was that the observational objective (Zalaghi & Khazaei, 2016) of the inductive approach fits the focus of the study. The study aimed to explore the impacts of the LSPI in helping its students apply and prepare for law school. The study also aimed to explore the participants' experiences with transitioning from an undergraduate student to a law or graduate student using Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) as a theoretical framework. The second reason for using qualitative inductive approach was to explore the connection or patterns in the participants' experiences in the LSPI. I designed the study to make connections between participant responses to explore the impacts of the LSPI in various categories or themes. These categories or themes include help with the application process, preparedness for the demands of law school, and help with the transition into law or graduate school.

Owing to its flexibility, qualitative inductive approach establishes links, or a pattern between research findings (Liu, 2016; Thomas, 2006; Zalaghi & Khazaei, 2016) without having to adhere to the rules of more established qualitative methodologies. This makes the qualitative inductive approach optimal for the study. In collecting and analyzing data, the qualitative inductive approach focuses on identifying categories or themes upon comparing the participants' interpretation of the interview questions (Liu, 2016, Thomas, 2006). Participants for the study

experienced the same program in their respective year; therefore, those who matriculated to law school had similar responses on the impacts of the program, as those that did not matriculate. In presenting the findings, the qualitative inductive approach singles out a narrative of the significant categories or themes based on the responses of the participants of the study. An example of a theme is the fact that many of those that completed the LSPI were unaware of the requirements of applying to law school prior to their participation in the LSPI.

Although approximately 60% of the students that completed the program matriculated to law school (McCune, 2021), completing the LSPI does not guarantee acceptance to law school, thus, there is no cause and effect to completing the program. Meaning, that because a student completes the program, it does not mean the student is automatically admitted to law school. This fact is being raised to inform those who apply to the program or those who read the study that completing the LSPI is one step a student can take in achieving their goal of attending law school. What a student learns in the LSPI is designed to prepare them for the law school application process and increase their knowledge of the rigors of law school. It is up to the student to work on increasing or maintaining their grade point average and study for the Law School Admissions Test to obtain the best score possible. Maintaining or improving one's grade point average and improving the LSAT score are two areas where the LSPI helps students but cannot guarantee results.

Preparing students for a rigorous academic environment (McCune, 2021) is a goal the Law School Preparation Institute hopes to accomplish for students attending law school as well for those who do not attend law school. While not all students who complete the LSPI attend law school that does not mean the students' education ends once they have earned their bachelor's

degree. Data collected for the study found that those who participated in the study but did not matriculate to law school, earned another graduate degree prior to participating in the study.

Since there is a lack of qualitative data that evaluates academic programs and their impacts (Clarke, 2007), I used Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) as a theoretical framework to determine whether what the students experienced in the LSPI helped with the students' transition to law school. The interview questions used for the study explored the connection between what the LSPI does in preparing students for the transition to law school and Schlossberg's four "S" system (Barclay, 2017; Schaefer, 2010; Schlossberg, 2011; Workman, 2015). Schlossberg's four "S" system is one that aids in the transition from one event in life to another which focuses on an individual's "Situation", "Self", "Supports", and "Strategies" at the time of the transition. For the study, the transition event focused on the participant transitioning from an undergraduate student to a law or graduate student in another degree program.

I initially proposed to interview all the participants of the study either face-to-face, over *Zoom* meetings or by phone, which is why I designed interview protocols. Since not all the study participants were able or available for an interview as initially proposed, the interview protocol changed to a qualitative survey for those that preferred to submit a written response through electronic mail. Both the interview protocol and qualitative survey contained the same questions and differed only when it came to which group the participant belonged to. For example, if the study participant matriculated to law school, he or she answered the questions to the interview protocol or qualitative survey located in appendix J. If the study participant did not matriculate to law school, he or she answered the qualitative survey located in appendix L. The study participants that matriculated to law school was the only group in which both an interview protocol and qualitative survey were used. Half of the study participants that matriculated to law

school participated in a *Zoom* interview, and the other half submitted a written response. All the study participants that did not matriculate to law school submitted a written response, thus, they all participated in a qualitative survey.

To maintain the focus of the study, I chose to use a structured interview as opposed to a semi-structured interview. According to Smyth (2019), in a structured interview, the participant answers specific questions designed by the researcher, which does not allow the interviewee to waver from what is being asked. Responses can be as short or long as needed to answer the specific question. In a semi-structured interview, questions are open-ended where the interviewer feeds off the responses from the interviewee, which may veer off the focus of the question (Irvine, 2018; Smyth, 2019). In conducting the interviews over *Zoom* meetings, I followed the interview protocols I designed for the study and did not ask any follow up questions or ask any of the participants to further explain their responses. To remain consistent, I did not submit follow up questions or ask for further explanation of those participants that submitted a written response over electronic mail.

Using interview protocols provided a structure to the questions (Petrescu, Lazar, Cioban, & Doroftei, 2017) that allowed flexibility to discover the categories or themes of the responses. The use of interview protocols kept the interviewees on the topic of the designed questions regardless of how the interview was conducted. Since I was not able to conduct face to face interviews, I gave participants an option to conduct their interview through a written response. Typically, participants receive surveys through electronic mail or websites (Testa & Simonson, 2017). Interviews tend to happen face to face or by telephone (Petrescu et. al, 2017; Testa et. al, 2017), while I was able to interview participants over *Zoom* meetings, there were some

participants that did not have the time to schedule a *Zoom* meeting, thus they submitted their responses through electronic mail.

Participant Criteria

I chose the participants for the study based on their direct involvement with the Law School Preparation Institute as well for the fact that as participants of the LSPI, they can personally speak to the impacts the program had. Participants of the study were categorized into two distinctive groups. Participants in group 1 completed the LSPI, earned their bachelor's degree from UTEP and matriculated to law school. Participants in group 2 completed the LSPI, earned their bachelor's degree from UTEP, did not apply to law school but did earn a graduate degree.

Table 1 on the next page contains the total number of students that completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018. The column labeled "class" is the year the student completed the LSPI, the second column labeled "students" is the number of students that completed the LSPI for that respective year. Students under the column labeled "matriculated" attended law school after earning their bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at El Paso. The table also includes the number of students that were admitted to law school but did not matriculate as well as those students that chose to not apply to law school. The subsequent column depicts the number of students that did apply but received no acceptances, which I labeled "not admitted." The last column was labeled "unknown" simply because there is no data available for those students after they completed the LSPI.

Table 1: Students who completed the LSPI from 1998-2018

| Class | Students | Matriculated | Accepted, did not matriculate | Chose not to apply | Not Accepted | Unknown |
|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1998 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1999 | 31 | 28 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 2000 | 30 | 27 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| 2001 | 39 | 30 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| 2002 | 38 | 27 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 2003 | 40 | 26 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 2 |
| 2004 | 41 | 20 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 2 |
| 2005 | 43 | 31 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| 2006 | 38 | 23 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| 2007 | 47 | 25 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 0 |
| 2008 | 36 | 25 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 2009 | 23 | 18 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 2010 | 17 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2011 | 17 | 14 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2012 | 26 | 15 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 2013 | 24 | 20 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2014 | 18 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| 2015 | 24 | 16 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 2016 | 30 | 16 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| 2017 | 30 | 15 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 3 |
| 2018 | 24 | 9 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 626 | 419 | 31 | 108 | 44 | 24 |

LSPI completers that matriculated to law school

Since 1998, six-hundred and twenty-six students have completed the Law School Preparation Institute, 67% have matriculated to law school. Participants of the study that completed the LSPI and matriculated to law school were able to use what they experienced and learned in the LSPI and apply it to law school. Although a goal of the LSPI is to encourage each student that completes the program to apply to law school, not every student that completes the program applies or matriculates to law school.

LSPI completers that did not matriculate to law school

Those that did not apply or matriculate to law school approximately made up 33% of completers. The percentage is an approximation because that 33% also includes those that completed the program but did not remain in contact with faculty and staff of the LSPI. The reasons for not applying to law school varied among the participants of the study that did not apply to law school. For example, after participating in the program, Donna, a female doctoral candidate, realized that law was not something she wanted to pursue, instead, she went on to earn

a master's degree as well a doctoral degree in communication. Donna is only one example of someone that completed the LSPI that found the program to have made an impact on their decision to not apply to law school.

Access to Participants

To reach a larger group of LSPI completers, I posted a message on the LSPI group page in *Facebook*, I also contacted former students through direct messages on *LinkedIn*. Former students contacted on either social media site were informed of the focus of the study and for those interested in participating, they were asked to send me correspondence through an electronic mail address created for the study.

All participants received a copy of the research objectives as well as assurance that participation was voluntary, and that the data would be confidential. Both the consent form (appendix N) and the confidentiality form (appendix O) informed the participant that their responses would remain confidential.

Researcher's Positionality

I work as the Law School Preparation Institute's administrative services coordinator. Although I started working for the LSPI in 2004, it was not until the summer of 2015 when I started the Ed.D. program that I started to wonder about the impacts the LSPI made on the students that completed the program. Every paper I wrote for the courses in the Ed.D. program focused on the LSPI. I saw each paper as well as the study to inform the readers of what the LSPI has been able to accomplish since the program began in 1998.

At first, I wanted to focus on the students who completed the LSPI who then matriculated to law school. However, the more I saw students who were either not applying to law school or applying and not matriculating to law school, I started to question why it was these students

chose to not apply or not attend. Having worked for the LSPI since 2004, I have noticed that when a student has made the decision not to apply or matriculate to law school, the student ceases to remain in contact with LSPI faculty and staff. Not remaining in contact or neglecting to respond to electronic mail correspondence makes it difficult to discover the reason why the student chose not to apply or matriculate. Did the student lose interest in pursuing law school? Was the eventual expense of law school too much for the student to handle? Thus, I chose to ask questions where I could find commonalities in the responses. Given that the participants that did not matriculate to law school submitted a qualitative survey, I was reliant on their responses and chose not to ask more in-depth questions to remain consistent throughout the study.

Although I am not an instructor in the program. I am the first person potential students encounter when they apply to the program. Once admitted to the program I am in contact with students through electronic mail throughout the program as well as throughout the law school application process. Having worked for the LSPI since 2004, I have made it part of my position as an administrative coordinator to know the requirements of applying to law school to be able to answer questions students might have. My position as the administrative coordinator for the LSPI and an open-door policy allows me the time to listen to students. In addition to having an open-door policy, my status as a student provides an understanding of the dedication expected of a college student.

Ethical Considerations

Since articles used for the study include direct quotes from students identified by name, (Casarez, 2001; Crowder, 2000; Davila, 2000; Fonce-Olivas, 2001a; Fonce-Olivas, 2001b; Llorente, 2000; Monarrez, 2000; Nissimov, 2002; Sanchez, 2012; Segura, 2001) interviewee responses that mirror what was said in the articles may be considered non-confidential. Data

collected for the study did not produce comments from any former students that were interviewed for the articles mentioned throughout the study. While the interviewees were not specifically asked about the impact of the program, responses portrayed feelings of anxiety prior to participating in the program but then had a sense relief once they completed the program (Segura, 2001). Regardless of the identity of the participant, all data obtained through *Zoom* or through electronic mail were kept in password protected files. To protect the identity of the participants, I use pseudonyms when discussing the findings of the study. All correspondence between participants for the study occurred through an electronic mail address created specifically for the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Upon receiving approval to conduct the study, I contacted potential participants through social media outlets such as *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* as well as electronic mail addresses which I have access through the LSPI. The electronic mail sent to each participant included an explanation of the focus of the study. Requests for participation also included a consent form, (appendix N), and a promise of confidentiality form, (appendix O) ensuring all information received would be kept confidential. Participants that completed the demographic form and agreed to an interview were then asked their preferred method. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, face to face interviews were not permitted. Thus, participants chose between a *Zoom* meeting or responding to the interview questions in writing through electronic mail.

As previously mentioned, I chose a structured interview (Smyth, 2019) to remain consistent with the focus of the study. Structured interviews have a clear direction of where the interview should focus with questions and instructions designed beforehand (Irvine, 2018;

Smyth, 2019). In designing two interview protocols, I was able to ask specific questions of each group of participants for the study.

Participants that preferred to be interviewed through a meeting on *Zoom* had two weeks after submitting their demographic sheet to schedule and conduct the interview. Upon scheduling the *Zoom* meeting, those participants received the link to the meeting as well as a copy of the questions. Those that preferred to submit their responses in writing received the interview protocol through electronic mail and had two weeks after submitting their demographic sheet to send their responses. Participant responses were controlled through an electronic mail address created specifically for the study to avoid the participants having to send their responses to an electronic mail address provided by The University of Texas at El Paso. For those that submitted a demographic sheet but did not schedule an interview, they received an additional electronic mail message asking that they submit their responses in writing. Two weeks after I received the last demographic sheet, I no longer accepted paperwork from potential participants and began scheduling the interviews.

One week after conducting the last interview through *Zoom* and receiving the final written response, I ceased scheduling additional interviews or sending interview protocols through electronic mail. Interviews conducted through a *Zoom* meeting were both video and audio recorded with the permission from the participant. To avoid having to re-watch or re-listen to video or audio-recorded interviews, I transcribed and uploaded all interviews conducted through *Zoom*, as well as those that were submitted through electronic mail to the data analysis software used for the study.

I used the data analysis software called MAXQDA. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software, which collects data in ways that make the data readily available by saving

interviews as well as the transcript of the interviews. MAXQDA allows the researcher to designate codes, which are key terms throughout a transcription. The software codes data from multiple mediums such as text documents, audio or video recordings, and demographic records to name a few (MAXQDA, 2019). Codes are then color coded or given a specific name by the researcher.

Categories or themes are named using key terms from participants such as “impact”, “prepare”, “help”, and “nothing” when participants discussed what they knew about the process of applying to law school or the demands of law school. When the interview survey questions addressed Schlossberg’s Transition Model (2011), the key terms were, “situation”, “self”, “support”, and “strategies”. Certain participants were categorized as having little to no knowledge of what law school entailed, while others were categorized as only knowing what they had seen in television shows or films. Themes became evident when many participants had similar responses to the questions. Once I transcribed or uploaded the interviews to MAXQDA, the software showed data that compared responses between those that participated through Zoom and those who answered the interview questions in writing. These categories or themes created with the findings were then used to construct the following chapter, which presents the findings of the study.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research design restating the overarching question and the specific research question that guided the study. In describing the research design, the chapter provided reasons why I used an inductive qualitative approach to analyze the data of the study. The chapter provided information on students that completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018, which I then separated into two groups for those alumni that responded to my request for participants.

The first group of participants for the study completed the LSPI, earned their bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at El Paso, and matriculated to law school. The second group of participants also completed the LSPI and earned their bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at El Paso but did not apply or matriculate to law school. The chapter discussed that the study contained two sets of interview protocols as well as the reasons for choosing to collect data using a structured interview as opposed to a semi-structured interview. Participants of the study were given a choice of being interviewed over *Zoom* meetings or responding to the interview questions in writing through electronic mail. Approximately 43% of the participants interviewed through *Zoom* meetings, approximately 57% submitted their responses in writing. Because there were two groups of participants, I created an interview protocol for those who matriculated to law school (appendix J) and a different interview protocol for those who did not matriculate to law school (appendix L). Finally, the chapter explained the MAXQDA software and how it was used to collect and identify the categories or themes of the data that explored the impacts of the Law School Preparation Institute. The following chapter will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Results of Study

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the impacts of the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI) according to the students that completed the program. This chapter presents the findings of the study. Due to the lack of qualitative data from pre-law programs such as the LSPI, I created a demographic sheet and interview protocols specifically for students that completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018. Keeping in mind that not all students that completed the LSPI applied to or matriculated in law school, I created a separate demographic sheet and an interview protocol for those that did not apply or attend law school.

I designed the interview protocols using components of an academic program that make a program effective (Weiss, Bloom, & Brock, 2014). I also used Schlossberg's transition model (2011) to explore the impacts of the LSPI on the students' transition from an undergraduate student to either a student in law school or another graduate school program. I requested the participants to complete the demographic sheet and upon retrieval of the demographic sheet, I then asked if the participant wanted to proceed with an interview. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, I chose to conduct all interviews through meetings over the communications software called *Zoom* or through written responses submitted through electronic mail. Using social networking services such as *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*, in addition to student records obtained by the LSPI, I contacted 326 former LSPI students to participate in the study.

Participant Information

Of the 326 former LSPI students that I contacted, 46 former LSPI students responded to the *Facebook* (n.d.) post. Of the 46 former students that responded, I collected 27 demographic sheets. Although I received demographic information from a total of 27 former students, the

study only includes participant information for the 21 former students that I interviewed for the study. As far as class representation, I was able to conduct interviews with students that completed the LSPI from twelve out of the twenty classes that I targeted for the study.

At the time I conducted the study, all participants regardless of post-baccalaureate program had completed the LSPI at one point from 1998 to 2018. The study focused on two groups of former LSPI students that completed the program. Group 1 included students that completed the LSPI that applied to and matriculated in law school. Group 2 included students that completed the LSPI that chose not to apply to law school but attended a graduate program and earned their master's degree prior to the study. After I collected the data, one of the participants from group 2 earned a doctorate.

The findings of the study depict a combined representation of 52.4% Hispanic, 42.8% White or Caucasian, and 4.8% Pacific Islander participants. The findings showed that 28.6% of the participants were first generation college students and only one participant had a parent that attended law school. Table 2 in appendix G provides a pseudonym, gender, age range and race/ethnicity for those that matriculated in law school and were interviewed for the study. Table 3 in appendix H provides a pseudonym, the year the participant completed the LSPI, where they attended law school, as well as the state or states they are barred in. Table 4 in appendix I provides a pseudonym, gender, age range and race/ethnicity for those that did not matriculate in law school. Table 5 in appendix K provides a pseudonym, the year the participant completed the LSPI, their post-baccalaureate program and the degree they currently hold. Both tables include a pseudonym, gender, age range, and race/ethnicity, which I label 'W/C' for White/Caucasian/, 'H/L' for Hispanic/Latino(a), and 'AA/PI' for Asian American/Pacific Islander. The tables also include when the participant completed the LSPI, which post-baccalaureate program they

participated in after graduating from UTEP, if they are a barred attorney and in what state. For those that did not go to law school, I included their professional status at the time they participated in the study.

Participant Interviews

The request for participants explained that the study was to explore the impacts of the LSPI according to the students that completed the program. The study focused on five specific research questions with a total of fourteen interview questions for the participants in group 1 and fifteen interview questions for the participants in group 2. I then used the participants' responses to answer the specific research questions.

The group of former LSPI students that matriculated in law school responded to an interview protocol pertaining to research questions, 1, 2, 3 and 5. The interview protocol for group 1 can be found in appendix L that is followed by a matrix depicting the interview questions that pertain to the specific research questions in appendix M. The group of former LSPI students that did not apply to or matriculate in law school answered interview questions pertaining to research questions 1, 3, 4 and 5. The interview protocol for group 2 can be found in appendix N which is followed by a matrix depicting the interview questions that pertain to the specific research questions in appendix O.

In the sections below, I provide responses by all participants connecting the interview questions to one of the five research questions for the study. The sections will start with the former LSPI students that matriculated in law school and will then shift to those that did not apply or matriculate in law school. The research questions directing the study were:

1. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process?

2. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on its students' first year for those who attended law school?
3. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the demands of law school for those who attended law school?
4. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on students who did not apply or attend law school?
5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students?

Law School Matriculates

The participants interviewed for this part of the study completed the LSPI, applied to law school, were admitted to law school, and chose to matriculate in law school after earning their bachelor's degree from UTEP. Apart from Jane, who is still in law school, the others interviewed for the study had already graduated from law school prior to the interviews. Over 83.3% of those interviewed had already passed the Bar Exam with 11.1% of the participants waiting for their exam results and 5.6% still in law school. After compiling the findings, those waiting for their bar exam results passed and were preparing to be sworn into the Texas Bar Association.

Interview Findings of Law School Matriculates

The participants that I interviewed through *Zoom* meetings agreed to be video and audio recorded for the purpose of accuracy. I saved the recordings on my personal laptop and on my personal external hard drive device. I transcribed the audio files using the MAXQDA software. To confirm responses to the interview survey questions, I kept the audio recordings but deleted the video recordings. I did not see the need to keep both video and audio recordings when I only needed the audio recordings to transcribe the interview.

Participants that preferred to submit a written response sent in either a Portable Document Format (PDF) file or *Word Document* to the electronic mail address I created specifically for the study. I then saved the responses on my personal laptop and personal external hard drive and uploaded the files to the MAXQDA software. Using the MAXQDA software made it possible to single out certain terms to find the commonalities between the responses. Being able to color code the terms made finding the commonalities easier, which then allowed me to use findings specific to the focus of the study.

Instead of using everything the participants' said or wrote during their interviews, I chose to use the instances where they had similar responses to the same question. For example, when asking what the participants knew about the law school application process or the demands of law school, most of the participants had no prior knowledge of the process or demands of law school. In the findings, I also noted when a participant mentioned a feeling of not being prepared for the demands of law school. For example, a few participants mentioned not being able to use what they had learned in the LSPI because what they learned seemed outdated or not useful for law school.

Impacts on Preparing Students for the Law School Application Process

In regards to applying to the LSPI, some of the participants found the program by accident, some credit professors in the LSPI for introducing them to the program, and some were introduced to the program through the university's new student orientation session. Walter, a male law school graduate knew he "wanted to go to law school but had zero idea of how to do that and randomly found out about the LSPI." Andres, a male law school graduate and alumni of the first LSPI class said, "Dr. Weaver planted the seed when he was a junior when he talked about graduate school but more specifically, law school." Kim, a female law school graduate

who was not born in El Paso, Texas learned about the LSPI in new student orientation and said the program sounded “interesting, so I applied.” In addition to being a part of the first class of the LSPI, Izzy, a female law school graduate, who after practicing law for several years opened a public relations firm, was also asked to contribute to the proposal of the program’s creation, which generated an interest in law school.

A few students received a letter from the LSPI office advertising the program. Ronaldo, a male law school graduate awaiting his bar exam results, was attending another school in Texas when he moved to El Paso, Texas and was informed of the program by his stepmother who had seen a billboard advertising the LSPI. Dawn, a female law school graduate and mother of two, was looking to change her major when she found a description under the university’s political science department and had an “overwhelming feeling about the program.” Lastly, Jane, a female former LSPI student who was still in law school at the time of the study, had participated in mock trial in high school and had heard about the program and believed it would help to “clarify whether law school was for me.” While the statements to the question above did not impact the participants’ decision to apply to law school, it did impact their decision to participate in the LSPI.

When asked what they had known about law school prior to applying to the LSPI, apart from Abe, a male law school graduate whose father is a lawyer, the rest of the participants knew close to nothing about law school, the process of applying or the requirements and had no plans to attend law school. For example, Fran, a female law school graduate who is barred in three states, mentioned, “I was not sure what I wanted to do or how to begin the process of applying to law school.” Hanna, a female law school graduate who returned to El Paso, Texas after graduating from law school is a part of the 28.6% of the participants that were first generation

college students and had no interest or knowledge about graduate school, let alone law school. Having lawyers in his family, Abe already knew he would go to law school but felt a program “geared to law school, would be beneficial.”

Responses from Dawn and Jane stood out because they “knew close to nothing” about law school, they both had an inclination that law school was hard, a lot of work and that a lot of successful people went to law school. I asked this question to learn what the participants knew about law school prior to attending the LSPI that was then followed up with a question of what they learned about law school after completing the LSPI. The LSPI’s mission statement (McCune, 2021) states that it strives to “educate and inform” UTEP students of the requirements for applying to law school and what is expected of a law student. Having a sense of what students learned after completing the program shows the impact the program had in increasing the students’ knowledge of the requirements of law school.

The participants’ knowledge of law school changed in various ways after they completed the LSPI. Aside from knowing the process of applying to law school, some were surprised to learn about the possibility of being waitlisted at a school or the various areas of law they could practice. According to Walter, while he knew that law school was going to last three years prior to participating in the LSPI, he did not know what “people did during their summers in law school or what they did after law school.” Thanks to the LSPI, Walter learned that law students spent their summers interning at various legal related offices and upon finishing law school those that want to practice law, study for the Bar Exam.

Upon completing the LSPI and making the decision to apply to law school, 22.2% of the participants felt the LSPI confirmed that law school was right for them and gave them the encouragement they needed to apply. Participants such as Walter, Diana, Beth, and Ronaldo are

among the 33.3% that mentioned they “would not have applied to as many schools as they did,” to schools outside Texas or “apply at all if it were not for the LSPI.” Since the start of the LSPI in 1998, students that completed each phase of the program received a stipend to help with costs associated with registering for the LSPI courses, and cover the cost of applying to law school.

For the years of 1998 to 2009, students received \$1,000 for each phase they completed permitting students to receive a total of \$2,000 if they completed both phases of the LSPI. Due to a reduction of the budget from the state of Texas, the stipend amount was reduced to a total of \$700 from 2010 to 2017 for students that completed both phases of the program. Additional budgetary reductions and depletion of gift funds made offering a stipend to students impossible after 2017, which may or may not be a reason for students not applying or not applying to as many schools as the earlier classes did. Of those interviewed 27.8% credit the stipends received for participating in the LSPI as a reason for completing the program as well as a reason for applying to law school. In particular, Connie, a female law school graduate barred in New Mexico and in Texas “would not have been able to participate in the LSPI or apply to as many schools without the stipend.”

The law school admission test portion of the LSPI continues to be a reason why students apply to the program as well as give credit to why they apply to law school. Stacy, a female law school graduate who also participated in the program’s high school law camp said that the “LSAT part of the LSPI was extremely helpful and the best tool of the LSPI” and that she chose to attend UTEP to participate in the LSPI. In addition to Stacy, 22.2% of the participants also felt that the help they received on the LSAT would get them into good law schools because of how well they did thanks to the program. While Hanna felt the LSPI impacted her decision to apply to law school because she felt “sure and prepared.” Stacy was not influenced by the LSPI to apply

to law school. She found the LSPI to be a “helpful resource” that got her into law school. This response was like three other participants that felt the process of applying to law school was “intense.” The help they received from LSPI advisors on personal statements, résumés, and which law schools to apply to, made the process easier. The LSPI did not necessarily impact their decision to apply to law school but did make applying possible, which is not something they envisioned prior to starting the LSPI.

Impacts on Participants’ First Year in Law School

Because of the confidence boost the study participants received in the LSPI, the fact that Fran, Abe, Gabbie, and Ronaldo were admitted to law school meant they were going to attend regardless of where it was. Andres and Ronaldo felt the LSPI confirmed all they had heard about law school. They both used the phrase “challenge of the courses” to describe why they enjoyed the LSPI. Andres became “intrigued” with law school after a visit from the dean of the school he ended up attending. Most of the participants mentioned that the LSPI made law school “attainable,” “achievable,” and “less scary.” These feelings are what led Stacy to apply to thirty law schools resulting in being admitted to twenty law schools. For Dawn, “choosing to go to law school was harder on her than probably any other student that has gone through the process.” At the time she completed the LSPI and applied to law school, Dawn was a single parent raising two children. Although she knew it would be difficult, Dawn chose to attend law school because the LSPI impacted her decision by giving her the “self-efficacy” to know that she would be “successful.”

In addition to receiving help on the application process for law school, the LSPI simulates a first-year law school course to show students what they will experience in law school (Casarez, 2001). Although dated, the article from Casarez (2001) informs its readers of the

LSPI's course schedule and objective, which has not changed since the start of the program in 1998. When the program first started, the focus was more on getting students admitted to law school while providing as much insight to the law school environment as they could. While the participants that were part of the first LSPI class in 1998 did receive instruction on how to analyze a case, not much information was given on how to "study in law school" as stated by Andres, or as stated by Izzy, "take a law school exam." For Izzy in particular, her first year was so challenging that "if it were not for a professor at her law school she would have quit."

The curriculum for the LSPI was enhanced by focusing on getting students admitted to law school and include instructional methods students would experience in law school. For Hanna, "the LSPI taught me the basic legal writing principles, showed how a law school class is run, and helped take away some mystery and anxiety away." Thanks to the LSPI, many of the participants knew that they would have nightly reading assignments and that they needed to be prepared for class and just like the courses in the LSPI, they would engage in the Socratic method. For example, Connie recollected her first week of law school "we went right into the reading material and engaging in the Socratic Method, thanks to the LSPI, I was prepared when I was the first one called on."

Fran used the term, "muscle memory" to describe the way she felt in her first week at law school. She recalled, "spending all day reading and attending classes in the LSPI" just as she was doing in law school. Stacy felt the LSPI's approach to law school was "old fashioned" in further describing how, she mentioned tools she acquired in law school such as Quimbee and Examples and Explanations, which helped get her through law school. Quimbee is an online study aid designed for law students that provides information on case briefs, outlines, and even bar exam preparation with access to flashcards and essay practice exams (Quimbee, 2021). Examples and

Explanations, or E&E's are study aids in printed and electronic book format that law students use in various law school courses that provide explanations of class topics and features hypotheticals students may be presented with in class (Wolters Kluwer, 2021). Although Stacy had learned how to analyze a case, she did not feel those skills translated over to law school where she had to learn a new way of doing the work. Although she learned how to conduct legal research and prepare an oral argument, Stacy felt the LSPI was best for preparing for the LSAT and in getting her admitted to law school.

In being prepared for the first year in law school, Ronaldo would have liked insight into how subjective the legal writing course was going to be prior to going to law school. He mentioned that what may have been an "excellent paper" for the LSPI's writing instructor was not that same caliber that it needed to be for a law school writing instructor. Ronaldo would have also appreciated an example of a grading rubric for both the LSPI and law school to see how grading differs. Beth, a female law school graduate who was a first-generation college student, felt there was a lot of emphasis on schools in Texas, so, subjects like expenses related to the cost of moving to a different state were not addressed when she participated in the LSPI. She also felt that there was not much information about stress management or self-care, which she finds very important especially for law school and the law profession. For Beth, she felt "there was a huge gap from undergraduate school to law school, which interpersonal skills and information on self-care would have helped in law school."

Impacts on Preparing for the Demands of Law School

While not all students that complete the LSPI go to law school, and not all that graduate from law school become lawyers, what the LSPI does to inform its students on the law profession is a vital part of the program. Most of the participants had a general knowledge of

what lawyers did from what they saw on television or in films. For example, Fran “had a general knowledge of what lawyers did but not to an extent outside of what I saw on TV or in movies.”

Four of the participants knew lawyers either through their families, having worked for a lawyer or in a law firm. Two of the study participants had direct interactions with a lawyer and the court system either due to an automobile accident they were involved in or in Dawn’s case, “knew nothing about the profession outside my experiences with the child support division” while she learned about the various areas of law, Dawn was set on criminal prosecution or defense.

For most, completion of the program provided insight into the law profession, for others not so much. Walter did not think the LSPI gave him a “good perspective or impression” of the legal profession or what it was like to practice law. In being prepared for law school, Abe found “the LSPI to be more of a theoretical approach to law school application and the idea of law school and the profession but not so much on the practicality side of it.” Andres and Izzy recall meeting lawyers while in the program but having been in the first LSPI class, it was more about getting them into law school and not about what the law profession was.

In 2000, the LSPI welcomed a new director of the program which brought about a change in the way the program was structured. Panels that included lawyers from various areas of law were asked to speak to the LSPI students to offer information on what it is like to be a lawyer. The panels have included former students of the LSPI that had returned to El Paso, Texas after passing the Bar Exam. Having former LSPI students on these panels showed the students they spoke to that attending and graduating from law school was possible because they themselves were once students of the LSPI. According to Hanna, Jane, and Walter, who used the same phrase, said these panels were “extremely helpful” in understanding the law profession. In addition to the lawyer panels that provided insight to the law profession, both Frank and Stacy

participated in the LSPI's semester internship program in which they experienced the law profession first-hand. Students that participate in the LSPI have an opportunity to apply for an internship during the fall or spring academic semester through the LSPI's internship program. These internships provide students with hands-on experience assisting a judge or an attorney in a non-profit legal organization such as Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center (McCune, 2021).

For Kim, her understanding of the law profession did not come from the panels. Rather, it was a response to a comment she once made in one of her LSPI classes. Kim recollected having mentioned that she wanted to own her own practice, the response she got from the instructor was "that is not really what you want." While she did not go into the specific reasons for the instructor's response, she did say that looking back and given her current position and the type of law she practices, although it "crushed her dreams" at first, it was the best advice she got about the law profession. Kim mentioned that given the type of law she is practicing; she would have not chosen this area of law if she started her own practice. Given that Kim has practiced in the same area of law since passing the bar exam, she is happy she chose to take the instructor's advice.

A new part of the LSPI that provided additional information on the law profession is the two-week immersion trip to Dallas that Stacy attended. In her interview, Stacy mentioned not understanding the point of the meetings at the time of the trip. It was not until she graduated from law school that she realized the difficulties in arranging meetings with the law offices and people they met with. For example, arranging meetings with entire law firms in Dallas, Texas as well with the general counsel to corporations such as AT&T and Lockheed Martin is not easy to do and for most would be expensive but the LSPI was able to do just that for three years at no

cost to students. The summer immersion program was made possible due to an endowment established and various contributions from the law offices and corporations' students visited during their trip to Dallas, Texas during the first two years of the program, which then included Houston, Texas in the third year.

Application of Schlossberg's Transition Model

Although the LSPI does not specifically use the word transition for what it helps students do, their mission statement (McCune, 2021) does mention guiding and mentoring its students to toward what is required of a law student. Schlossberg's Transition Model (Schlossberg, 2011) was the best example to explain what the LSPI does for its students to further prepare them for transitioning from a bachelor's degree to a law degree. Schlossberg's transition model is specific to the act of transitioning from one experience to another using the four "S" system as a coping mechanism (Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg's (2011) four "S" model for coping with transitions defines life occurrences a person experiences that alter the person's relationship, routine, or role at the time of the transition. If not handled in a certain way, these transitions can have a negative effect on the person's life.

The four "S" model is a way to help lessen the stressors that come with transitions by taking into account the person's situation (first "S") at the time of the transition, or a situation that helped with the transition. Given the type of transition a person is experiencing at any given time, one's self-awareness (second "S") or self-esteem at the time of the transition is often what gets them through the difficult times. The way a person approaches their sense of self can determine their attitude toward good or bad news (Schlossberg, 2011). The type of support system (third "S") the person had in their lives at the time of the transition and finally, the

strategies (fourth “S”) the person used that helped get them through the transition were questions to the participants of the study that concluded the interview.

In transitioning from an undergraduate student to a law student, most of those interviewed found the amount of work assigned and the time it took to read for class to be most difficult. Many were used to reading the day before class and often not having to study for classes at UTEP. For example, Abe said, “as an undergraduate student I could do things at the last minute as opposed to law school where I needed to start earlier, reading the day before was not feasible.” Experiencing culture shock and getting used to being in a school in which the demographics did not mirror that of the LSPI or UTEP was an adjustment some felt most difficult. Andres said, “being born and raised in El Paso, Texas, there were not many minorities at my law school and I sometimes felt out of place.” For 16.7% of those interviewed, dealing with classmates that were “just as smart or smarter than them” according to Ronaldo or with a “silver spoon” mentality according to Diana was hardest to get used to, and they often found themselves competing with their fellow classmates. As much as they studied and as hard as they worked, they still had to come to the realization that they still might not get the best grade in class.

Stacy felt, “behind” in comparison to her classmates that attended undergraduate institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, and Duke. Kim and Beth felt there was so much of a gap between undergraduate school and law school that the stress of doing well in law school was the hardest part of transitioning because at this level it may affect their career whereas in undergraduate school their stress was about getting into law school. For 88.9% of those interviewed, attending law school was the first time they lived away from home. Dawn made the decision to leave her children with family members while she was in law school. Although she

found academics to be challenging, it was achievable. While Dawn did not go much into detail, what she found most difficult “was being away from my children for three years.”

When asked to recall a situation in which the participants used a lesson from the LSPI that helped them in law school, the introduction to torts was discussed by most of the participants where they learned how to analyze and brief a case while engaging in the Socratic Method. Engaging in the Socratic Method in the LSPI, Kim felt it “helped to understand what law school would be like; if it were not for the LSPI, I either would have failed or dropped out of law school.” What stood out the most for 27.8% of those interviewed was the writing course and being able to form an outline that would help with exams before attending law school. Two of the participants mentioned the LSPI’s legal research course in which students receive instruction on the online legal research tools, *Westlaw* and *Lexis-Nexis*, helped these participants the most in law school. Law students and lawyers use these tools to research cases. The participants that mentioned the legal research course felt as if they had an advantage over their classmates because they had already received instruction on these research tools and knew how to navigate them to conduct research. Jose, a male law school graduate who attended Rutgers School of Law referred to *Westlaw* and *Lexis-Nexis* as “skill sets I had before going to law school.”

In Schlossberg’s transition model (2011) the idea of self or self-awareness pertains to an inner feeling people have about the transition they are experiencing. Without any context of how self-awareness pertains to their time in the LSPI or in law school, responses to this question differed the most. When he finished the LSPI, Walter felt prepared to go to law school but quickly lost that feeling when he got his first assignments, but still he appreciated the fact that he had participated in the LSPI because he did not feel like a “complete fish out of water.”

Because they had completed the LSPI, many of the participants felt that by accomplishing that goal, they now had the confidence to complete law school. Ronaldo was more aware of his new work ethic and time management skills he acquired in the LSPI that made law school “less daunting.” For Diana, the LSPI “placed her in an environment with like-minded people and former LSPI students.” Participating in the LSPI made Diana aware that “people from El Paso, Texas and UTEP could be successful both in law school and in the law profession.” Stacy did not feel the program increased her self-awareness or make her feel as if she “had the tools for general success” and stayed with her belief that the LSPI was best for applications and getting into law school.

When Beth first applied to law school, the schools “seemed out of reach” but because of the LSPI, Beth became more aware of how to advocate for herself when it came to asking for additional financial assistance from a school. However, Beth still wrestled with the imposter syndrome at times. The more comfortable she got with her new surroundings, the more she felt like she belonged. The imposter syndrome is a feeling that a person does not belong, thus often feeling isolated from his or her peers, which is something, many law students experience (Schwartz, 2018). According to Schwartz (2018), the imposter syndrome is common for people in law school where the process of being admitted is both difficult and competitive. Upon starting school, those experiencing the imposter syndrome feel they do not deserve to be among people with different socio-economic backgrounds, or people with more knowledge of law school and the law profession (Schwartz, 2018).

A support system is not a topic of discussion in any part of the LSPI. However, having a support system either back home or at school may help to alleviate the stress of moving to a new city or the rigors of law school (Jarmon, 2008). Of those interviewed, 22.2% relied mostly on

their significant others. Walter found it “nice” to be able to go back to his apartment and not be alone and Eve’s significant other was also in law school at the same time. Of those interviewed, 16.7% ended up being roommates with fellow LSPI classmates and relied on each other to complete law school. For those that were further away from home and were not able to travel back to El Paso, Texas, they had to rely on the people around them to make law school “bearable” according to Abe and Beth.

Although all the participants made friends in law school, they relied mostly on support from family and friends back home. Having attended a law school in Texas, Diana said her support system was almost “100% back home.” Diana admitted “I did come back home more than I should have but being so close to home it was easy to fly home on the weekends.” Except for a few friends she made in law school, Diana’s social circle remained in El Paso, Texas. Of those interviewed, Stacy seemed to have had the hardest time in law school. She mentioned feeling “very alone” and not being able to participate in certain events because she did not turn twenty-one until her second year. Stacy did not become more involved until her second and third year but still had difficulties adjusting because she was not able to travel back home as much as she wanted.

For the final question, I asked participants to recall additional strategies they acquired through the LSPI that helped in the transition from an undergraduate student to law student. Of the participants, 22.2% mentioned using what they learned in the LSPI’s legal writing class to be helpful in law school. According to Hanna, the writing class “provided a foundation that was built upon in law school.” Although Andres did not feel as if he had any type of advantage over his classmates whose parents were lawyers, he did feel like he was “at least on their level.” In speaking of his classmates who had no ties to law school, Andres felt as if he had an advantage

over them in that he had more knowledge on what law school entailed before he started law school. He also felt as if he knew more about the law profession because of the exposure he had in the LSPI.

Of those interviewed, 38.9% used the instruction on how to analyze a case, how to get used to the amount of work and study strategies like using different colors of highlighters to complete their law school courses. Ronaldo did not go into much detail, but he was the only one to mention strategies such as time and stress management as well as being able to deal with professors and their different methods of teaching. Because of the LSPI, a few of the participants realized that it would take them longer to complete reading or projects for class and that they were better either studying on their own or in the morning rather than the afternoon or at night. Stacy mentioned, “I tried using the briefing techniques I learned in the LSPI, but I did not do as well as I thought I would.” Stacy “started doing better in law school when I found what was working best for me, and it was not what I learned in the LSPI.”

The consensus of those that were interviewed was that if it were not for the LSPI, they would not be where they are today and for that, they were all grateful they had the opportunity to be a part of the program. Although each person interviewed had different recollections of what happened in the LSPI even if they were from the same LSPI class, most found what they learned in the LSPI was helpful in getting them to law school and in preparing them for the demands of law school. The exception were those participants who were part of the first LSPI class and Stacy who felt the LSPI helped more with getting them into law school and not much with preparing them for the demands of law school.

Interview Findings of Non-Law School Matriculates

The participants interviewed for this part of the study completed the LSPI but decided not to apply to law school at the time they completed the LSPI and instead chose to apply to a graduate school program outside the area of law. At the time of the interviews, all three participants had graduated from a program where they earned a master's degree and one had earned a doctorate. It should be noted that both Patty, a female graduate school graduate in international history and John, a male graduate school graduate in economics still plan on applying to and attending law school soon but decided to concentrate on a master's degree before applying to law school. Participants in this group preferred to submit their responses in writing.

Impacts on Preparing Students for the Law School Application Process

All three participants had heard positive comments about the LSPI and its accomplishments in sending students to law school and felt it would be good to get firsthand knowledge on what the first year of law school would be like. Patty, especially liked how the program was "exclusive and selective with the applicants." Patty appreciated the individualized attention that was given to each applicant of the LSPI and that the LSPI was as selective as law schools would be. Prior to applying to the LSPI, Donna, a female doctoral graduate and John knew little to nothing about law school or the process of applying. Patty had conducted research on the application process and knew about the law school admission test and grade point average requirements. Although she had conducted basic research on the process of applying to law school, Patty states, "I did not know how to begin the process of applying to law school, but the LSPI helped provide information on how to apply to law school."

Impacts on Preparing Students for the Demands of Law or Graduate School

Upon completing the LSPI, all three understood what it took to apply and get admitted to law school. From what she heard from previous LSPI students that attended law school, Donna felt as if the program did simulate the first year of law school but found the components of the LSPI to be challenging and stressful given her disability. At the time she participated in the LSPI, Donna felt as if the practice of law was “designed for flexibility” which due to her disability was difficult. Patty on the other hand “welcomed the demanding curriculum because it provided insight to what was expected on the LSAT and in law school.” Patty’s understanding of what was expected of an applicant and a student mirrored that of John with the addition that he felt getting into law school was “less about what you know and more about certain abilities.” One example of “abilities” mentioned by John was that of critical thinking, which is also something he mentioned he gained by participating in the LSPI.

Just like their understanding of the process of applying to law school, all three participants had a limited understanding of the law profession. They knew that lawyers practiced law in various capacities and areas but were unaware of the various paths a law degree could lead to. John said that being in the LSPI his knowledge of what lawyers did “became more unambiguous and my interests defined which field I wanted to pursue which I felt should intersect with my passions.”

After completing the LSPI, the prospect of becoming a lawyer became less attainable for various reasons for some participants. Donna for example, she knew after the program that becoming a lawyer was not something she wanted to pursue due to the “tight deadlines and constant stress” she experienced participating in the LSPI. Patty felt having the opportunity to meet local lawyers and “get a glimpse into their lives” allowed her to question if this life was

really for her at the time she completed the LSPI. Patty concluded that she would postpone law school until she had more time to devote to the application process and school itself. Completing the LSPI for John made the law profession “less ambiguous.” Because of the LSPI, John acquired insight to the law profession and became more interested in pursuing a career in law. According to John, what he learned in the LSPI “intersected with my passions” which is the reason John still intends to pursue a law degree.

Impacts the LSPI had on Non-Law School Matriculates

For Donna, participating in the LSPI showed her that she did not want to go to law school and that a career in law was not something she wanted to pursue due to the stress and tight deadlines. For Patty and John, the LSPI impacted their decision to seek out a master’s degree before applying to law school. Both Patty and John had plans to apply for a dual degree while in law school but what they experienced in the LSPI gave them a better understanding of the demands of law school, thus, they decided to do one program at a time. For example, John said, “the LSPI made me realize how intense law school would be and that sticking to one degree at a time would be best,” as for Patty “the LSPI helped me to understand that law school required your full attention and commitment, and I came to decision that getting my master’s degree before law school was best.” Both Patty and John are still interested in applying to law school when they are ready to commit to the process.

Deciding not to apply to law school differed between Donna, Patty, and John. Donna had already made the decision not to apply to law school because it was not something she wanted to pursue as a profession. For Donna, the “stress associated with the LSAT was too much” and the fact that she had “gotten admitted to a graduate school program that provided creativity and flexibility” she needed made law school no longer a prospect. Looking back on her decision not

to apply to law school, Patty was happy she made this decision. Patty was very involved in student government while at UTEP and given the political landscape and the COVID-19 pandemic, Patty felt as if starting law school during the Trump Administration and graduating during the pandemic would have interrupted her time in law school. Patty felt there was a lot of “chaos under the Trump Administration and even more during the pandemic” that she could not see herself doing well in law school. As for John, if the LSPI did anything for him it was that it “made him want to go to law school even more.” However, he would only apply to and plan to go to law school when he accomplished his goal of getting his master’s degree in his first passion of economics.

In their decisions to forgo law school, all three felt the LSPI did make an impact in their decision to continue their education past their bachelor’s degree. Although stress was a reason Donna chose not to continue with law school, she did credit the LSPI with helping her handle stress better and helped her to make better arguments she used both in her master’s and doctoral programs. As for Patty, the LSPI helped her be more professional and gave her the confidence that after the LSPI she could “tackle” just about anything that came her way. According to Patty, before the LSPI, graduate school seemed “unattainable” but since completing the LSPI, she no longer questions her abilities. For John, the LSPI taught him the critical thinking skills he finds necessary and important for his degree in economics. In addition to critical thinking, the process of taking the LSAT helped him prepare for the test he needed to take for his master’s program.

Application of Schlossberg’s Transition Model for Non-Matriculates

In their transition from undergraduate students to graduate students, Donna, Patty, and John’s experiences once again differed. While Donna did not find the transition to be “difficult” she did credit the LSPI in helping her to manage her time better. On the other hand, Patty found

the time commitment to be most difficult and was not aware of the level of research a graduate program required. While an undergraduate student, John felt as if he was “told how to do everything” which changed when he started his graduate program where it required more learning on his own.

In describing situations experienced in the LSPI that helped them in graduate school, Donna took what she learned from the instances she practiced advocating in the LSPI that she used as a graduate student as well as in her current job. Patty found herself “deconstructing fallacies” the way she did while in the LSPI. Patty said this part of the LSPI “not only helped in her research but also in her everyday life.” John uses the situations in which he had to use analyzing skills in the LSPI to analyze the various cases whereas now he analyzes necessary conditions related to economics.

In the area of self-awareness, the LSPI helped Donna with her “time management skills” so that she “felt prepared for both her master’s and doctoral programs.” The LSPI helped Patty “become aware of my strengths and weaknesses and allowed me to get out of my comfort zone that made me ready for my master’s program that was at a university in another country.” As for John, “the LSPI made me more self-aware of my ability to speak in public in which I excelled in thanks to the LSPI.” While the LSPI may have helped all three participants become more self-aware about their ability to be successful in their post-baccalaureate programs, their greatest supporters were that of their individual families and friends. Donna had family, friends, peers, and extra-curricular activities to turn to when she needed support. Donna said, “my family has been the best and supported me every step of the way.” Patty also found support in her family and friends but also in professors she had as an undergraduate student, which now saw her as a “colleague and a friend.” Patty did not explain how but she made sure to “surround myself with

people that understood the demands and life of a graduate student.” John’s family was “especially supportive” with whatever he needed while he was studying for his master’s degree and he was sure to mention that “that support included providing housing and food when it was needed most.”

The end of the interviews asked the participants to recall strategies they learned in the LSPI that they applied to their post-baccalaureate programs. Donna credited learning how to make reasonable arguments which she used in both her master’s and doctoral program as well as her every day life. Patty credited the legal reasoning strategies she learned in the LSPI to help her communicate effectively as well as gaining the tools to “set clearer attainable goals and understand what was required to achieve them.” As a final point, John credited learning the strategy of how to better analyze case law, which helped him to analyze issues related to economics, which he used in his master’s program. Patty and John’s, concluding comments were that they would still one day apply to law school with the hopes of matriculating, whereas Donna’s was that she was happy for the experiences she had in the LSPI but thought she would do more for students with disabilities by pursuing her doctorate in communication.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the impacts the Law School Preparation Institute had on the students that completed the program. The chapter provided the findings based on the responses from students that completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018. Out of the 326 *Facebook* (n.d.) LSPI group members that received a message asking for participants, I interviewed twenty-one former LSPI students for the study. Out of those I interviewed, 85.7% matriculated to law school leaving 14.3% that did not apply or matriculate to law school. Those 14.3% continued their education earning master’s degrees in areas other than law with one earning a doctorate.

The findings of the study showed that the LSPI was instrumental in preparing its students for the process of applying to law school, providing assistance with the law school admissions test; help with drafting a personal statement and résumé for law school as well as advising on which law schools to apply to. For those that did not apply or matriculate in law school, the LSPI helped 33.3% to realize that law school and a career in law was not something they wanted to pursue. However, 66.7% of the non-matriculants are still considering law school when they feel they are more able to devote the time to the application process and school itself. The findings provided mixed perceptions when it came to the LSPI preparing its students for the demands of law school. Although many found the components of the LSPI such as practicing the Socratic Method, analyzing a case, engaging in legal writing and research to be helpful in law school, some felt underprepared for the rigors of courses they did not receive instruction in the LSPI. Others felt underprepared for the subjectiveness of professors in grading exams, and that some techniques they learned in the LSPI were not useful in law school.

In transitioning from an undergraduate student to law or graduate student, the findings showed that the situations in which the participants engaged either in the Socratic Method or in legal research using *Westlaw* and *Lexis-Nexis* helped the most in law school. Having to speak up in class and engage in research also helped those that did not attend law school but used these tools for their master's and doctoral programs. In regards to self-awareness participants felt as if they received a boost of self-esteem by participating in the LSPI. Knowing they had successfully completed the LSPI made the participants confident that they would be successful in applying to law school as well as in law school. For those that did not attend law school, the participants' self-awareness showed them that law school was not a right fit for them and that

they would find success in a master's or doctoral program, with the exception for those that are still contemplating law school.

Participants of the study confirmed that they would not have completed law or graduate school without their support systems. Whereas, most relied on their families back home in El Paso, Texas, some found support in their significant others, the friends they made in law or graduate school as well as professors they sought advice from. Finally, regardless of the graduate school program the participants entered after earning their bachelor's degree from UTEP, the participants used strategies such as time management, advocating for oneself, and setting realistic goals they learned in the LSPI.

The findings for this chapter provided personal insights on how the LSPI impacted the participants in law and graduate school as stated in their own words. Participants of the study expressed gratitude for their experiences in the LSPI and for the help they received from the faculty of the LSPI. Some credited the LSPI for getting them into law school, some credited the LSPI for preparing them for law school and some credited the LSPI for changing their minds about law school. In the end, the findings confirmed that the LSPI had an impact on the participants' post-baccalaureate pursuits.

Chapter 5 Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the impacts of the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI) at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) according to the students that participated in the program from 1998 to 2018. All participants that contributed to the study earned their bachelor's degree from UTEP after they completed the LSPI. Since the focus of the study was to explore the impacts of the LSPI, regardless if the student matriculated to law school or not, I chose to split the study participants into two groups. The first group of participants (group 1) applied to and matriculated to law school, apart from one participant that is still in law school, all participants earned their Juris Doctorate at the time of the study. The second group of participants (group 2) chose not to apply to law school but did continue their education after earning their bachelor's degree from UTEP. All participants of group 2 earned their master's degree prior to the study. At the time I conducted the interviews, one participant in group 2 was in the process of earning her doctorate.

Previous research did not provide guidance on how to conduct qualitative studies of the impacts made by pre-law programs. To generate the research questions for the study, I implemented research on the components of an academic program (Weiss, Bloom & Brock, 2014) for an understanding of what makes a program effective. The four components of an effective academic program are content, which encompasses the features of the program; quantity which pertains either to the number of participants in the program or the frequency of the program; quality which refers to how well instructors deliver the content of the program to produce the desired results. Desired results for a program like the LSPI may include students applying to and matriculating in law school or realizing that law school is not the best option for

them. Finally conveyance which pertains to how the content of the program is delivered. To provide students with insight to what law school courses are like, the LSPI conducts face-to-face courses. The exception would be the LSPI class of 2020 because the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to have face-to-face courses. Courses for the 2020 LSPI class followed an online format requiring students to log onto class sessions provided on the *Zoom* and *Blackboard* computer software programs.

The LSPI exposes its students to the type of assignments and instructional methods students will experience in law school, aims to encourage, and strengthens students' self-esteem, acts as a support system and provides strategies to navigate through law school. For those reasons, I used Schlossberg's transition model (2011) as a theoretical framework to design part of the interview protocols for the participants of the study. Other aspects of the interview protocols included questions on what the participants knew about law school and the law profession before and after the LSPI, in addition to the participant's opinion on how the LSPI helped to prepare them for the demands of law school.

Problem Statement

Students enrolled at UTEP had no direct link to a law school that would prepare them for the application process and prepare them for what they would experience as a law student prior to the LSPI's inaugural class in the summer of 1998. The LSPI first started with the intention to help UTEP's Hispanic demographic that makes up 80% of the university's student population (University of Texas at El Paso, 2020) because Hispanics are at a disadvantage with performing well on the LSAT (Robbins, 2017) and less likely to get admitted to top law schools (McCune, Soto, Weaver & Hobbs, 2013). While the student demographic of the LSPI mirrors that of UTEP's, regardless of their race or ethnicity, the students of the LSPI have a few characteristics

in common. According to the findings of the study, 28.6% of the participants identified as first generation, commuter students who attended public schools in the surrounding area of El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico, and have little to no ties to the legal community.

In law school, students interact with people from various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds, many of whom attended prestigious and highly esteemed institutions of higher education commonly known as Ivy League schools (U.S. News Staff, 2019). The stress of competing with someone from a higher ranked institution of higher education is common in law school (Galloway, Bradshaw, Dunbar & Fellows, 2011). The law school environment is also competitive, especially during the first year of law school (Galloway, Bradshaw, Dunbar & Fellows, 2011). Law students must prepare for each day of class by reading the material for the day, make notes on each case, define words unfamiliar to them, and if possible, practice speaking in public (Heidenreich, 2014). The LSPI aims to alleviate major stressors a student may have about applying to or starting law school. Stressors may include having a low law school admissions test score, or a low undergraduate grade point average that may result in the applicant not feeling adequate to apply to law school. According to the participants of the study, stressors associated with starting law school included becoming acclimated to a school demographic where they are one of a handful of minorities or a feeling that they are not smart enough to be in law school.

Procedures of the Study

I posted a message on the LSPI's *Facebook* (n.d.) group page to solicit participants for the study. In the post, I asked any member of the group that completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018 if they were interested in participating in a study exploring the impacts of the LSPI. Below is the request members of the LSPI *Facebook* (n.d.) group page received:

“Greetings LSPI Graduates. I am now ready to start the data collection part of my dissertation, which is a qualitative study on the impacts of the LSPI according to those of you that completed the program. If you completed both phases of the LSPI from 1998 to 2018 and would be so kind as to spend a minimal amount of time to help me out, please send an e-mail to me at rachelserrano8120@gmail.com to let me know if you are interested in participating in my study. The more responses I get the better my study will be, not only for my dissertation but for the LSPI as well. Since not every LSPI graduate is a member of the LSPI group or my friend on FB please do me the favor of sharing this post with your LSPI classmates. For anything related to my study please use the Gmail address above as it was included in my proposal, I cannot receive responses to anything related to my study over FB or to my UTEP e-mail address. I look forward to hearing from you and to catching up. Be safe and take care.”

The post went out to 326 members of the LSPI *Facebook* (n.d.) group page; I also contacted two LSPI alums through *LinkedIn* (n.d) and contacted one via electronic mail using LSPI student records. Participants for the study received a demographic questionnaire along with a letter explaining the study and an informed consent form. The demographic sheet required participants provide a pseudonym in case their responses were used for the study. If a participant returned the demographic sheet and informed consent form, I asked if they would participate in an interview. I then asked if they would submit the promise of confidentiality form if the participant agreed to an interview. In total, I received demographic questionnaires from 24 LSPI alumni that matriculated to law school and four demographic questionnaires from those that did not apply to law school. The final number of interviews for law school matriculates was 18 and 3 for those that did not apply to law school.

I used an *Excel* spreadsheet for each group of study participants to keep track of responses to the demographic questionnaire information. I saved all signed documents that I received on a personal flash drive and I conducted all communication between the participants through an electronic mail address I created specifically for the study. I audio and video recorded interviews that I conducted over *Zoom* meetings and saved those recordings on the same flash drive as that of the demographic questionnaire. I then uploaded the audio recordings to a qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA. After I uploaded the audio recordings to MAXQDA, I then transcribed the interviews I conducted through *Zoom* meetings. As for the interview protocols I received via a written response, I used the copy and paste command to upload the participant responses to MAXQDA.

Summary of Study Participants

As stated in chapter 4, information on the participants of the study includes only those that I interviewed either through *Zoom* meetings or through written responses. Of the eighteen participants that matriculated to law school, approximately 66% identified as female and approximately 33% identified as male. Ages for the participants ranged from 20 to 49, LSPI class representation ranged from the inaugural class of 1998 to 2017. While the LSPI may have started with the intention to help underrepresented minority groups such as Hispanics (McCune, Soto, Weaver & Hobbs, 2013) apply and get admitted to law school, the LSPI does not only admit minority students. Of the eighteen participants I interviewed that matriculated to law school, 55% identified as Hispanic or Latino and 44% identified as White or Caucasian. While 16% of the participants were either still in law school or had just graduated within a month of participating in the study, 83% had graduated from law school at the least a year but at the most

nineteen years prior to participating in the study. At the time the interviews were conducted 83% of the participants were barred lawyers.

Of the three participants that did not apply to law school, 66% identified as female and 33% identified as male. Ages for this group ranged from 20 to 30 and the LSPI classes represented were the classes of 2010, 2016, and 2017. This group was more diverse than the group that matriculated to law school, since 33% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 33% identified as White or Caucasian, and 33% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander. While this group of participants did not apply to law school, 100% of them earned a master's degree. One participant had earned a doctorate prior to submitting her interview protocol. Sixty-six percent of these participants indicated they are still planning on applying to and matriculating in law school in the future. As stated in the findings, for these participants earning their Juris Doctorate was something they wanted to do since participating in the LSPI. They felt it was best to concentrate on their master's degree before taking on the task of applying to law school.

Research Questions

The research questions that directed the study for the group that matriculated to law school were research questions 1, 2, 3, and 5. The research questions that directed the study for the group that did not matriculate to law school were research questions 1, 3, 4, and 5. The interview protocol for participants that matriculated to law school can be found in Appendix J with a matrix of which interview questions pertain to which specific research question in Appendix K. The interview protocol for participants that did not apply or attend law school can be found in Appendix L with a matrix of which interview questions pertain to the specific research question in Appendix M. The research questions directing the study were:

1. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process?
2. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on its students' first year for those who attended law school?
3. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the demands of law school for those that attended?
4. What impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on students who did not apply or attend law school?
5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students?

Conclusions

For Research Question 1 for the participants that matriculated to law school (group 1), in addition to inquiring what they had known about law school before the LSPI and what impact the LSPI had on their decision to apply to law school, I also wanted to know why they applied to the LSPI. These participants stated that attending the LSPI is the reason they chose to attend UTEP. For the participants that did not apply or matriculate to law school (group 2), I asked the same first two questions with the third asking the LSPI impact in their decision not to apply to law school.

Across the two groups, many had applied to the LSPI because they were interested in law school and wanted to get more information while others had known someone that participated in the program and heard positive comments about the program. Most of the participants had little knowledge of the process of applying to law school or little knowledge of what law school entailed. The idea of graduate school in general was foreign to many of the participants, and with

no ties to the legal profession prior to the LSPI; law school seemed unattainable for many of the participants.

Upon completing the LSPI, group 1 felt as though law school was right for them, as they felt more confident in their decision to apply. A few used the stipend students previously received to apply to several law schools. As stated by Hall (2018, p. 1) “Without fee waivers, applying to one law school can cost applicants a minimum of \$400.” Students in the LSPI applied to between fifteen and twenty law schools in one cycle, which meant that \$400 quickly turned into over \$1000. For example, those applying to law school will pay the standard cost of the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) (\$180), the cost of the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) (\$185), which processes an applicant’s supplemental application documents, and a CAS report, which costs \$35 per school. The applicant is already at \$400, which does not include application fees which most schools charge. At minimum, a school will charge a fee of \$60 to apply but application fees have been as much as \$85 (Hall, 2018). Not qualifying for a fee waiver or not receiving a stipend that helps reduce the costs of applying to law school limits the number of schools students are able to apply to. Regardless of whether the participant received the stipend, many participants I interviewed felt they would not have applied to law school if it were not for the guidance they received from the LSPI especially in regards to the Law School Admissions Test.

I asked Research Question 2 specifically to group 1, which was how their experiences in the LSPI impacted their decision to attend law school and how the LSPI prepared them for the demands of law school. Most of the study participants felt as though the LSPI confirmed their desire to attend law school and that having completed the LSPI meant that they might also be successful in law school. While the participants felt much of the LSPI focused on the application

process for law school, they also felt the program also simulated the first year of law school. This simulation encompassed breaking down a case, engaging in the Socratic Method, reading, and writing assignments, and a final exam closely related to the law school exam they would have in law school.

Although the participants had an idea of what they were going to experience in law school through the instruction they received in the LSPI, there were some topics some wished had been addressed in the LSPI. For example, getting a sense of what a law school written assignment looked like, how to better study for exams, how to handle stress and self-care while in law school as well and less of an emphasis on law schools in Texas.

Research Question 3 asked how the LSPI prepared its students for the demands in law school. This question was answered using responses to three interview questions, which asked the participants how their knowledge of law school changed after the LSPI, what they knew about the law profession prior to the LSPI and how that knowledge changed after the LSPI. Both groups 1 and 2 indicated that upon completing the LSPI, they were more informed of the requirements of applying to law school. Participants were also more aware of the type of work they would be doing in law school. In line with what they knew about law school, the participants' knowledge of the law profession was also limited. Few participants knew lawyers or had been exposed to the profession through family members. Most received their knowledge of what a lawyer does from television shows or films.

Just as their knowledge of law school changed after completing the LSPI, so did their knowledge of the law profession. Those that participated in the LSPI from the years 1998 to 2001 did not get a thorough sense of what the law profession entailed because the focus was on getting students admitted to law school and not on what the law profession entailed. It was not

until instructors in the program started to invite lawyers from the El Paso, Texas legal community to speak to the students during the summer in the classroom or through field trips that students in the LSPI received insight to the law profession. Exposure to panels and presentations gave students of the LSPI a better understanding of the law profession as well as career options they could pursue with a law degree that does not include practicing law. For example, one of the participants interviewed for the study earned her Juris Doctorate but after passing the bar exam and practicing law for several years, decided to use her law degree to open her own public relations firm and no longer practice law.

Research Question 4 pertained specifically to group 2. This question asked the LSPI's impact on those that did not apply to law school. This research question was answered through responses from three interview questions, one, which asked what impacts the LSPI had in their decision to not apply to or attend law school and how the LSPI prepared them for graduate school. While the participants enjoyed their time participating in the LSPI, the program showed them that law school was not the right fit for them, either at that moment in time or ever. For the participants that are still interested in applying to law school, they decided to wait to apply once they earned their master's degree and had more time to devote to the law school application process.

What the LSPI did for these participants was give them insight to the requirements of law school. While these participants did not use what they learned in the LSPI in law school, they used some of the techniques in their master's and doctoral programs. Participants from this group acquired a level of professionalism in the LSPI that helped them become more confident in their abilities to pursue graduate school and no longer question their skills to be successful in school.

Research Question 5 addressed Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011) and was addressed using interview questions asked of both groups. The questions focused on transitioning from an undergraduate student to either a law student or graduate student. The questions asked participants of the study to recollect a situation in which the LSPI helped them in law or graduate school. The questions also asked them to recollect any strategies they used while in school, if the LSPI made them feel more self-aware about their ability to be successful and finally, what type of support system they had while in school.

Because there is no law school in El Paso, Texas, all eighteen participants that matriculated to law school left El Paso, Texas. Of the three participants that did not matriculate to law school, two left El Paso, Texas to pursue their master's degree. The participant that stayed in El Paso, Texas after earning their bachelor's degree from UTEP soon after enrolled in a master's program at UTEP. For the participants that left, moving away from home for the first time and having to get accustomed to a new city was most discussed as being difficult. Some participants felt underprepared for law and graduate school courses where they had to learn a lot on their own and did not get as many opportunities to complete or revise an assignment as they were given in their undergraduate courses.

In regards to situations and the strategies the participants learned in the LSPI that helped them in law or graduate school, participants discussed some of the same areas that were discussed in research questions 1 and 2 such as the Socratic Method or knowing what to expect from a law school course. What was also discussed was time management and being comfortable with the various teaching styles of professors and knowing that students could ask their professors for help. Additional situations and strategies discussed were the instruction on how to conduct online research using tools such as *Westlaw* and *Lexis-Nexis* which the participants

found put them at an advantage over some of their classmates that had never conducted research using these online research tools.

Aside from providing various strategies to help make the participants successful either in law school or in a different graduate program, growing a person's self-awareness proved to be an aspect of the LSPI. For the participants that matriculated to law school, many of them felt aware of how to advocate for themselves when it came to applying to law school or while in law school when they felt out of place. The LSPI also made them aware that people from El Paso, Texas and UTEP could be successful both in law school and in the law profession. As for the participants that did not matriculate to law school, the LSPI made them aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Realizing their strengths and weaknesses prepared them for what they might experience as a graduate student. The LSPI helped take them out of their comfort zone, which translated well to graduate school especially for the two participants that left El Paso, Texas to attend graduate school.

Regardless of what participants did after earning their bachelor's degree from UTEP, their support systems were the most similar throughout the study. Most received support from family members that were back home in El Paso, Texas as well as friends they had made at UTEP that did not matriculate to law school. Many of the participants found support in either friends they made in law or graduate school, which they continued to keep in contact with after earning their law or master's degrees. A few participants found support in their professors, which they discussed that if it were not for their professors, they probably would have quit their respective program. Only a few participants had significant others or children when they started law or graduate school, those that did, mentioned that their significant other or children as being

their primary support system. In all, the participants of the study felt that without their support system in place they would not have been successful in school.

Implications

Based on the lack of qualitative research focused on pre-law programs (Clarke, 2007; Gullatt and Jan, 2003; Simpson et al., 1997; York, Gibson and Rankin, 2015; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon and Hawthorne, 2013), it is apparent through the study that additional research is needed to explore the impacts of pre-law programs such as the LSPI. Studies such as this one may provide insight to what works and what does not when it comes to pre-law programs. Since this study focused on the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso, the questions are specific to the LSPI. However, that does not mean that other pre-law programs cannot modify the research or interview protocols for their respective program. Research for the study showed that no two pre-law programs are the same. Because the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) oversees multiple programs that assist with being admitted to law school (CLEO, 2021), any study being conducted on CLEO would be specific to whichever program was being focused on. For example, if the focus of the study were on CLEO's Pre-Law Summer Institute (CLEO, 2021) the study and its interview protocols would focus on what the program offers. Because it is similar to the LSPI in regards to both programs offering course credit for participants the Summer Law School Preparation Academy (SLSPA) (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021) could modify the interview protocols to be more specific to what the SLSPA offers its students.

While the website for CLEO (CLEO, 2021) includes direct quotes and interviews from some of their previous students, comprehensive qualitative data on any of their programs are not available. As for SLSPA (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021), there is no mention of the

success of the program qualitatively or quantitatively. The lack of available qualitative and quantitative data for CLEO and the SLSPA, to me, implies these programs either have not conducted studies or do not feel it is important to share the data of their successes.

As indicated by the participants of the study, the LSPI did help with the application process by preparing them for the law school admission test, reviewing supplemental application documents such as the personal statement, résumé, and addenda. Participants also discussed the help they received as to which schools to apply to, based on their LSAT score and grade point average. Preparing the participants for the demands of law school was not as significant of an impact for some, especially those that participated in the earlier LSPI classes. Some concluded through the LSPI that law school was not for them either due to the stress of the environment or the law profession. For those that matriculated to law school, some felt underprepared when it came to academics even though they had participated in courses modeled after a law school course. Others felt the LSPI was “outdated” and “subjective” in its methods of course instruction and less technical in how to apply what they learned in the program to law courses other than torts or a basic understanding of legal writing and how writing is graded in law school.

Schlossberg’s Transition Theory (2011) examines the aspects of transitioning from one event to another in an individual’s life helped to design part of the protocols for the study. Being a person that observed the LSPI from a non-student perspective, and my knowledge of Schlossberg’s transition theory, I noticed where the theory intertwined with what LSPI students were experiencing both in the program and in law school for those that remained in contact with me and other members of the LSPI staff. Using key words such as situation, self, support, and strategies in the interview protocols, was too general without any type of context as to how Schlossberg’s theory (2011) applied to the questions.

For example, when asking for a situation a participant experienced in the LSPI that helped them in law or graduate school, I anticipated getting responses that were specific to the instructional method the students in the LSPI are exposed to or to specific readings they did in the LSPI that they also completed in law school. While I did receive responses that discussed the Socratic Method or readings from the torts class, some participants could not come up with a situation that helped with their transition. Some of the participants seemed to confuse situations with strategies. Whereas for situations I was looking for challenges the students had with reading a case in the LSPI but then ended up helping them in law school. For strategies, I expected discussions on time management or ways to relieve stress; instead, I got a combination of responses. Some participants had very similar if not the same response for the questions that focused on the situation or strategies. In addition to similar responses, some participants did not know how to respond to the question concerning self-awareness.

Perhaps rewording these questions would have clarified what the question was asking. While I was able to give an example of a situation or strategies the might have carried over from the LSPI or what self-awareness meant for those that were interviewed through a *Zoom* meeting, I was not able to clarify for those that submitted a written response. I cannot say that having clarification or more elaborative questions would have changed any of the responses. However, I do feel that there would have not been as much overlap in responses or a lack of understanding in the self-awareness question if the questions were clearer. For example, instead of using the term “self-awareness” I could have used self-esteem or confidence when asking if the LSPI had any impact on their emotional ability while they were in law or graduate school.

The findings of the study implies that the program itself is successful in preparing its students for the application process and in getting students admitted to law school. What the

findings do not clearly support is if the curriculum of the LSPI prepares the students for law school courses. While participants of the study did discuss that engaging in the Socratic Method helped prepare them for what they will experience in a law school course, they also discussed that the instructional methods of the LSPI were outdated. Statements like this implies further research is needed to update the way instructors of the LSPI deliver the curriculum to emulate that of law school courses.

The findings also imply that the LSPI had an impact on those participants that chose not to apply to law school by helping them realize law school was either not for them or it was not the right time to apply. Although it is not a focus of the LSPI, there was no indication that the LSPI made any effort to help these students apply to graduate school. While the focus of the LSPI is on informing its students of what is required of a law student, the fact that not all LSPI participants apply to or attend law school implies those students are on their own when applying to a graduate school. Although participants of the study that did not apply to law school did discuss being able to use study or time management skills they acquired in the LSPI for graduate school, no other component of the LSPI seemed to be helpful in applying to graduate school. Unlike those that did apply to law school, there was no discussion of being offered help on a standardized test for graduate school, help with a personal statement, or help with the application process for graduate school. Not offering help to students interested in applying to graduate school is a missed opportunity for the LSPI to expand its program to further help undergraduate students continue their education after they earn their bachelor's degrees.

Limitations of Study

Approval of the study came at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I first proposed to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants as well as travel to Dallas, where several of

LSPI alumni live. Prior to submitting the Internal Review Board application, I removed face-to-face interviews, travel to Dallas, and instead chose to conduct interviews over the online meeting platform, *Zoom* or through written responses.

While not securing a location or making the expense to travel to conduct interviews should have been an advantage, I found scheduling interviews rather difficult. Since the city of El Paso, Texas as most cities in the country began to work from home as well as having to homeschool their children, alums still working and with children found it more difficult to arrange an interview. I thought that people had more free time since they were working at home, whereas they had less. Whereas a person might keep a strict schedule when he or she goes into the office, working from home seemed to blur the lines between work and home that resulted in some participants working more unconventional hours than they would have if they went into the office.

Those that submitted their responses through electronic mail found this option easier given their limited availability to schedule a *Zoom* meeting. Upon taking on the task to transcribe the responses I conducted over *Zoom* meetings, it became apparent that written responses did not take up as much time as the *Zoom* meetings did. This became apparent when I sent the interview protocol to the participant and received their responses within an hour for some and within the next day for others. Scheduling *Zoom* meetings resulted in multiple electronic mails with a single participant to secure a two-hour time-slot.

Although the request for participants reached many alums of the LSPI, not having a complete contact list was a limitation of the study. While staff at the LSPI try to remain in contact with students after they earn their bachelor's degree from UTEP, it can be difficult to do so when former students do not update their contact information. In the fall of 2018, the LSPI

hired a student that completed the LSPI in the summer of 2017 to compile a complete list of LSPI alumni, which would include their contact information. The student employee contacted LSPI alumni through *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, or through an electronic mail address obtained through various bar associations. Through personal communications with former LSPI students, I discovered many were uncomfortable releasing their contact information to a student employee instead of a member of the LSPI full-time staff.

To recruit participants for the study, I posted a message on the LSPI group page on *Facebook* (n.d.). While this group has 326 members, this number is an approximation because there are members of the group that have not attended the LSPI. Since the group is public, anyone interested in acquiring information about the program can request to be a member. With the group itself not being exclusive to those that completed the LSPI, the message went out to all members. To filter out anyone that responded to the post that did not complete the LSPI, I had to look up the person's name in the LSPI files that I have access to as the administrative services coordinator of the LSPI. Another limitation of contacting alumni through *Facebook* was that not every person that completed the LSPI has a *Facebook* account, are not a member of the LSPI group page or are not active on *Facebook*.

Since our student database does not track students that did not apply to or matriculate to law school after they have earned their bachelor's degree from UTEP, recruiting participants from this group was difficult. I relied mostly on my knowledge of which LSPI completers did not apply or matriculate to law school to track them down using *LinkedIn* (n.d.) or previous electronic mail addresses I had access through the LSPI files. I obtained electronic mail addresses using information indicated on the participants' LSPI applications, which they used throughout their time as a student of the LSPI. I was able to track down seven former students

that had completed the LSPI but did not matriculate to law school. While all seven indicated they were interested in participating in the study, only three submitted their demographic sheets and submitted their responses through electronic mail.

Upon reviewing the list of LSPI completers, I was not able to find contact information for anyone that would consider participating in the study for eight out of the twenty classes that the study focused on. Those that participated in the LSPI classes of 2000, 2002, 2005, 2010-2011, and 2013-2015, were either not part of the *Facebook* (n.d.) LSPI group, or were not on *LinkedIn* (n.d.). It is not to say that these former students are not on *Facebook* or *LinkedIn* at all. Since both *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* require people to “friend” or “connect” with people they choose or accept, anyone that did not “friend” or “connect” with me would not be visible to me. Since students seldom update the LSPI staff with contact information upon graduating from law or graduate school, contacting former students through *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* were my first outlets to solicit participants for the study. For those participants that are not active on *Facebook* (n.d.) or *LinkedIn* (n.d.), I used the LSPI’s alumni database to contact participants directly.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recollecting the participants’ experiences in the LSPI that helped in law school is important for a study such as this one. Those I interviewed from the LSPI classes of 1998 to 2004 admitted to having some trouble remembering exactly what they did in the LSPI as well as how it applied to law school since it had been years since they were a student in the LSPI as well as a student in law school. A recommendation to continue research on the impacts of the LSPI or programs like it, is first to get a sense of what program participants know about the process of applying to law or graduate school as well as gather information on what they know about the demands of law or graduate school. Obtaining this information can be done with an entrance

interview at the time the undergraduate student applies to the program or at the time the student is admitted to the program. Once admitted to the program, students may then be asked to participate in an exit interview that will explore what they learned about the application process and demands of law or graduate school after completing the program.

Those that commit to and participate in the exit interview can be contacted at the end of their first year either in law school or in graduate school. Contacting program completers after their first year in school will ensure those that postpone applying to law or graduate school or that delay starting school by deferring a year will be able to participate in future research. By having the completers commit at this stage will require an electronic mail address that is not the one provided by their respective undergraduate institution. Thus, it is presumed that the contact information will be valid for three years if a law, graduate school, or another option would be for the participant to provide personal electronic mail address.

While the study focused on the LSPI program at UTEP, this model of research may also apply to the many pre-law programs around the U S that may want to research the impact their respective programs have made. What maybe especially useful is the use of Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2011) and how it applies to the transition from an undergraduate student to a law student. However, it should be noted that a basic understanding of Schlossberg's theory is needed to design questions that program participants will answer. To make the concepts of the theory clearer, the researcher may want to provide participants with examples of the types of transitions as explained by Schlossberg (2011), as well as examples of her four "S" coping mechanism. In conducting the study, I did find components of the LSPI that could be improved upon.

Programmatic Recommendations

Updating and maintaining the LSPI alumni database should be more of a priority than it has been in previous years. It is only when a request is made on what LSPI alumni is currently doing that a list is compiled. As previously mentioned, the last time an attempt was made to update the LSPI alumni database was in 2018 and the effort was overseen by a student employee. While the student was able to collect contact information from numerous alumni, many expressed apprehensions in responding and giving their contact information to a student, they were not familiar with through electronic mail or *Facebook*. Taking on the task of updating contact information for over six-hundred former students can be a full-time job, which is why the LSPI employed a student to oversee the project. Conducting this study showed me that a staff member and not a student could best handle requesting personal information and that remaining in contact once it has been established is the best way to know the current professional status of former participants of a program.

Updating the alumni database on an annual basis through an annual announcement or newsletter would ensure that the information is readily available should a request for data be requested by the university. Updating the LSPI's alumni database would also allow me to continue the research I started for this study. For programs like the LSPI, maintaining or updating their alumni list could also provide mentors for future students of their programs and provide data for any studies these programs might be interested in conducting.

The findings of the study provided praise to the LSPI's ability to prepare its students for the law school application process through its LSAT instruction and attention to the supplemental documents required for the law school application. While some participants did feel as they were prepared for the demands of law school because of their experiences in the

LSPI, many felt more prepared for the application and not so much for law school courses. While it may be true that one cannot be fully prepare for the demands of law school, this study has presented insight to what may be lacking in the LSPI.

Based on responses that participants made that the LSPI's curriculum is outdated, more research is needed on new techniques or the grading system law schools are using to bridge the gap between the LSPI and law school. Interviews discussed using the Socratic Method in law school and reading some of the same cases they did in the LSPI. However, there was a difference in new studying techniques such as Quimbee and Examples and Explanations. Quimbee is an online study aid designed for law students that provides information on case briefs, outlines, and bar exam prep with access to flashcards and essay practice exams (Quimbee, 2021). Examples and Explanations, or E&E's are study aids in print and electronic book format that law students use in various law school courses that provide explanations of class topics and features hypotheticals students may be presented with while in class (Wolters Kluwer, 2021).

The findings also discussed that acquiring a grading rubric that depicts the difference in the grading system for the LSPI and that of law school would be helpful, in regards to written assignments. Working closely with law professors either by visiting a law school class or through direct input from law professors may provide a better understanding of what law school professors are looking for in a written assignment or exam answer, which would further immerse LSPI students in the law school environment.

Participants of the study also discussed only being able to apply to law school because of the student stipend they received by completing the LSPI. Although program funding from the state and donor contributions has decreased since 2015, the class of 2014 was the last class to receive the student stipend using money that was not a condition of a grant as was the case for

the LSPI classes of 2019 and 2020. At the time I conducted the study, the LSPI received a grant that provided stipends for the LSPI classes of 2019 and 2020 but even then, the stipend only covered the cost of the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and the Credential Assembly Service (CAS). If one of the goals of the LSPI is to get their students to apply to law school, it needs to be understood that if a student cannot afford to take the LSAT, pay for CAS, or submit applications, that lack of funding limits the number of students that apply to or matriculate to law school. I recommend recruiting donors to either establish an endowment or contribute to a gift account to help provide stipends for students that want to apply to law school but do not have the financial means to do so.

As it relates to having a better understanding of how the transition model applies to what students experience in the LSPI and in transitioning to a law or graduate student, I recommend making Schlossberg's transition model part of the LSPI's curriculum. As Schlossberg (2011) states in her article, "The Transition Model can take the mystery-if not the misery-out of change." Students in the LSPI can use the transition model to help make the transition from an undergraduate student to law or graduate student less of a mystery and less daunting to ensure that success in transition from an event in their life to another is possible.

Lastly, as it relates to those students that choose to not apply to or matriculate to law school but want to continue their education, I recommend that the LSPI provide services to students interested in applying to graduate school programs other than law. Services could include help with the standardized test required to apply to the respective graduate school program, drafting a personal statement, a résumé, or obtaining information on graduate schools, and requirements to apply. When students choose to not apply to or matriculate to law school,

they assume LSPI staff members are no longer interested in helping them to continue their education.

While those on staff that graduated from law school are more equipped to help students apply to law school, I am a resource for students not interested in law school that is not being utilized. Since starting UTEP's Educational Leadership and Administration doctoral program, I have offered to help students with their applications to graduate school outside the law school setting. Since the fall of 2020, I have helped one former LSPI student with their Fulbright U.S. Student Program application as well as graduate school. I have also helped a student not associated with the LSPI with their personal statement for graduate school. The former LSPI student received the Fulbright U.S. Student Program Award, and the other student received admittance and will start their graduate program in the Fall of 2021. Knowing that I was able to help these two students with their non-law school related applications, I hope to be able to help more students apply for awards and graduate school with the same confidence that our law school applicants apply.

While the recommendation to include graduate school programs other than law may go against the current purpose of the program, I believe the mission to inform, educate and guide remains intact. Prior to the start the LSPI, Dr. Weaver had no idea if the LSPI model would work or even last as long as it has (Weaver, personal communication, n.d.) twenty-three years later and over six-hundred alumni, the LSPI continues to send students to some of the best law schools in the US.

Conclusion

The Law School Preparation Institute was the focus of the study since beginning my doctoral program. What was not clear was the route I would take to introduce the LSPI in a way

that has never been done before through any article or presentation. Because of its geographic location on the U.S.-Mexico border and the demographic of students the LSPI serves, an expected route would be the lack of Hispanics in law school or the law profession. Initial research resulted in many articles and dissertations commenting on the same subject. Even writing about pre-law programs and their aid in helping minority students was not a new concept. At this point in my research, I did not find any qualitative studies on the impacts of pre-law programs according to the students that participated in them. Having worked for the LSPI since 2004, I was aware of its accomplishments in sending students to some of the best law schools in the country (McCune, 2021). The more I worked with LSPI students, faculty, and staff, the more knowledge I gained on how the LSPI was successful in sending students to law school through its impressive statistics. What was lacking was personal accounts whether the LSPI helped with the application process, demands of law school, and the transition from an undergraduate student to a law student.

The focus of the study was to explore the impacts the LSPI had on its students from 1998 to 2018 in their own words. Using examples of effective programs that are impactful as described by Weiss, Bloom and Brock (2014) and Schlossberg's Transition Model (2011), I was able to develop research questions that directed the study. Those research questions and knowledge of the components of the LSPI led me to creating interview protocols for the participants of the study. The LSPI promotes providing knowledge of the process of applying to law school and insight to what is expected of a law student. However, participants of the LSPI are not required or pressured to apply to or matriculate to law school. For that reason, it was important for me to solicit feedback not only from those that completed the LSPI that matriculated to law school but also those that did not apply to law school.

While my findings on the impacts of the LSPI are mostly from those that matriculated to law school, I was able to get some data from those that did not. I concluded that those that completed the LSPI found it was more of a program that informed them of the law school application process and helped them gain admittance to law school rather than a program that prepared them for the demands of law school. That is not to say that the LSPI had no impact on the preparation for law school courses or the demands of law school. Professors in the LSPI can assign work that closely relates to what students will experience in law school, but LSPI courses are still undergraduate courses taught by undergraduate professors as opposed to law school courses taught by law professors. However, the findings did show that the participants that did matriculate to law school felt more prepared for law school than some of their classmates.

Although the study focused on the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso, the study was designed in a way that can be utilized by other pre-law programs that may be interested in exploring the impacts of their programs. A program such as the LSPI continues to be a topic of discussion mostly through word of mouth. Many students attend UTEP and apply to the LSPI, because they want to go to law school and because they know someone who completed the program or heard great news about the program. Thus, a qualitative study such as this one provides the LSPI and UTEP with one more recruiting tool, instead of providing only quantitative data on the success of the LSPI in sending its students to law school generated by the staff of the program. The LSPI can now provide qualitative findings on the impacts of the program according to the students that experienced the program and applied what they learned either in law or in graduate school.

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Appendix A

Date
Dr. John Wiebe
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
The University of Texas at El Paso
Office of the Provost
Administration Building Room 310
500 West University
El Paso, Texas 79968

RE: Permission to Use Name of University

Dear Dr. Wiebe:

I am writing to request your written permission to use the name of the university throughout my doctoral dissertation. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at UTEP's College of Education and Administrative Coordinator for UTEP's Law School Preparation Institute. The working title for the study is "What are the Qualitative Impacts of a Pre-law Program According to Its Students?: A Study of the Students of the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso".

Research for the study has indicated that the LSPI and its participants are unlike any other pre-law program in the country due to its uniqueness of being located at an institution that does not have a law school and the demographic both the university and the LSPI serve. Including the name of the university would highlight UTEP's innovativeness in facilitating programs that encourage our students to continue their education.

The research question that guides the study is: What impacts has the Law School Preparation Institute had on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018? Potential participants for the qualitative study will include all students who completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018. As the administrative coordinator for the LSPI, I have access to student files and contact information for potential participants for the study. Including all students who completed the program will detail the impacts the program has made since it began in 1998 regardless if the student attended law school or not. The participants' confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms for those who are interviewed for the study.

The study will include two separate demographic sheets to identify and help me develop an aggregate profile of the participants who did matriculate in law school and those who did not. The study will also include two separate interview protocols which will again separate the students in two groups: one group will be completers who matriculated to law school and the other group will be completers who did not apply or matriculate to law school from 1998 to 2018.

As part of The University of Texas at El Paso Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, and at the advice of my chair, Dr. Eduardo Arellano, I must include written approval from you to be able to name the university throughout the study. With that said, I would appreciate your written approval at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. Please do not hesitate to contact me via electronic mail at rserrano5@utep.edu or by phone at my office on campus 915-747-8866 should you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Rachel Serrano

Appendix B

From: Wiebe, John
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 10:22 PM
To: Serrano, Rachel
Subject: RE: Permission to conduct research and use name of University

Hi, Rachel. Congratulations on reaching this stage of your doctoral study. I would be happy for you to conduct the research and name the university, provided that your full proposal is approved the UTEP IRB.

Good luck,
John



John Wiebe, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Office of the Provost
The University of Texas at El Paso
500 W. University Ave.
El Paso, TX 79968
Office: 915-747-5725
Fax: 915-747-7522
www.utep.edu/provost



From: Serrano, Rachel <rserrano5@utep.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 11:03 AM
To: Wiebe, John <jwiebe@utep.edu>
Subject: Permission to conduct research and use name of University

Dr. Wiebe,

I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am in the process of submitting my IRB application for review before I submit the official application. Attached is a letter requesting permission to conduct my research at The University of Texas at El Paso and to use the name of the University throughout my doctoral dissertation. Written permission is required for the final IRB application, please respond to the attached letter at the earliest of your convenience.

Regards,
Rachel Serrano

Appendix C

Date

Dr. William Weaver
Director, Law School Preparation Institute
The University of Texas at El Paso
500 West University
El Paso, Texas 79968

RE: Permission to Conduct Study and Use Name of Program

Dear Dr. Weaver:

I am writing to request your written permission to conduct a study at The University of Texas at El Paso's Law School Preparation Institute as well as to use the name of the program "Law School Preparation Institute" in my study. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at UTEP's College of Education and Administrative Coordinator for the Law School Preparation Institute. The title for the study is "What are the Qualitative Impacts of a Pre-law Program According to Its Students?: A Study of the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso".

The research question that guides the study is: What impacts has the Law School Preparation Institute had on students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018? Potential participants for the qualitative study will include all students who completed the LSPI from 1998 to 2018, most of which matriculated to law school and some who decided to not apply or matriculate. As administrative coordinator for the LSPI, I have access to student files and contact information for potential participants for the study. Including all students who completed the program will detail the impacts the program has made since it began in 1998 regardless if the student attended law school or not. The participants' confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms for those who are interviewed for the study.

The study will include a demographic sheet to identify and help me to develop an aggregate profile of the participants of those who did matriculate in law school and those who did not. The study will also include two separate interview protocols which will again separate the students in two groups: one group will be completers who matriculated to law school and the other group will be completers who did not matriculate to law school.


As part of The University of Texas at El Paso Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, I must include written approval from you to conduct the study and use the Law School Preparation Institute name. With that said, I would appreciate your written approval to conduct the study and use the program's name at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and consideration to my request. Please do not hesitate to contact me via electronic mail at rserrano5@utep.edu or by phone at 915-328-1922 should you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Rachel Serrano

Appendix D

TO: University of Texas at El Paso Institutional Review Board

FROM: William G. Weaver, J.D., Ph.D. 
Director, Patti and Paul Yetter Center for Law
University of Texas at El Paso
108 Miners' Hall
El Paso, TX 79912

RE: Research Project of Ms. Rachel Serrano

Ms. Rachel Serrano is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, UTEP. Ms. Serrano is also the Administrative Services Officer for the Patti and Paul Yetter Center for Law. Her proposed dissertation, "What are the Qualitative Impacts of a Pre-law Program According to Its Students?: A Study of the Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Paso," will make use of data and material that are part of the work records of the Yetter Center. Ms. Serrano has permission to use Yetter Center records for research to support her dissertation and agrees that appropriate measures to protect student confidentiality will be used.

Appendix E

Interview - Cover Letter

Dear Former Student of the Law School Preparation Institute:

My name is Rachel Serrano and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership and Foundations Department at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)'s College of Education. I am also the Administrative Services Coordinator for The University of Texas at El Paso's LSPI. The purpose of my research is to explore the impacts the LSPI has had on the students who completed the program from 1998 to 2018.

As part of my study, I would like to ask for some time to interview you, about your experiences with the LSPI while you were a student at UTEP as well as after you completed the program. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and refusing to participate will not cause any penalties. You will not be compensated for taking part in this research study. The information gathered will be confidential. Only I will receive the data which will be password protected and only I will have access to hard copies of the data which will be stored under lock and key in my office.

If you have any questions regarding the procedures of this study, you can contact me via telephone at (915) 328-1922 or via electronic mail at rachelserrano8120@gmail.com. In compliance with UTEP's Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, any information you provide will be kept confidential.

By answering these questions, you are indicating that you understand the above and that you give consent to participate in the study. Attached you will find a copy of the interview questions. Please respond whether you would prefer to conduct your interview face to face, by telephone, by Skype or through written response via electronic mail.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and consideration to be interviewed.

Sincerely,

Rachel Serrano
Doctoral Student
Educational Leadership and Foundations Department
The University of Texas at El Paso

Appendix F

Demographic Sheet for Law School Matriculates

Please provide the following demographic information about yourself. This information will only be used to assist me in developing a participants' profile.

1. To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender Female
- ☐ Transgender Male
- ☐ Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
- ☐ Other (Please, explain): _____
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

2. Which category below includes your age?

- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50 or older

3. Identify your race or ethnicity.

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Asian American/ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic/ Latino(a)
- ☐ Native American or American Indian
- ☐ Other. Please, explain: _____

4. Did your father or mother complete an associate's or bachelor's degree?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Did your father or mother graduate from a law school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Did you complete high school within the same country as the university you completed your undergraduate degree?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. How did you find out about the LSPI?

- ☐ Advisor
- ☐ LSPI Faculty or Staff
- ☐ Friend

- Former LSPI Student
- Other? Please, explain _____

8. What calendar year did you complete the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI)? _____

9. How many law schools did you apply to? _____

10. How many law schools were you accepted to? _____

11. Which law school did you end up attending? _____

12. Are you a barred lawyer/attorney?

- Yes
- No

13. What state(s) are you barred in? _____

14. What is/are your legal specialization(s)? _____

15. How many years have you been in practice? _____

16. In what state/city do you currently reside? _____

Pseudonym _____

Appendix G

Table 2: Law school matriculate gender, age range, and race/ethnicity

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age Range | Race/Ethnicity |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Izzy | F | 40-49 | W/C |
| Andres | M | 40-49 | H/L |
| Gabbie | F | 40-49 | H/L |
| Dawn | F | 30-39 | W/C |
| Abe | M | 30-39 | H/L |
| Diana | F | 30-39 | W/C |
| Walter | M | 30-39 | H/L |
| Eve | F | 30-39 | H/L |
| Kim | F | 30-39 | W/C |
| Jose | M | 30-39 | H/L |
| Frank | M | 30-39 | W/C |
| Connie | F | 30-39 | H/L |
| Beth | F | 30-39 | H/L |
| Fran | F | 30-39 | H/L |
| Hanna | F | 20-29 | H/L |
| Ronaldo | M | 20-29 | W/C |
| Stacy | F | 20-29 | W/C |
| Jane | F | 20-29 | W/C |

Appendix H

Table 3: Law school matriculate LSPI completion year, graduate school program, state barred in

| Pseudonym | LSPI Class | Law School Attended | State barred in |
|-----------|------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Izzy | 1998 | University of Texas at Austin | Barred in TX, not practicing |
| Andres | 1998 | University of Texas at Austin | Barred in TX |
| Gabbie | 1999 | Texas Tech University | Barred in TX |
| Dawn | 2001 | University of Texas at Austin | Barred in TX |
| Abe | 2003 | Pennsylvania State University | Barred in TX |
| Diana | 2004 | University of Texas at Austin | Barred in TX |
| Walter | 2004 | University of Minnesota | Barred in TX and NM |
| Eve | 2004 | New York University | Barred in TX and NY |
| Kim | 2006 | University of Oklahoma | Barred in OK |
| Jose | 2006 | Rutgers University | Barred in TX |
| Frank | 2007 | University of Texas at Austin | Barred in TX and NY |
| Connie | 2008 | University of Arizona | Barred in TX and NM |
| Beth | 2009 | American University | Barred in D.C. |
| Fran | 2009 | Cornell University | Barred in NY, TX, and MD |
| Hanna | 2012 | Ohio State University | Barred in TX |
| Ronaldo | 2016 | University of Iowa | Barred in TX |
| Stacy | 2016 | University of Texas at Austin | Awaiting Bar Results |
| Jane | 2017 | University of Texas at Austin | Still in law school |

Appendix I

Demographic Sheet for **Non**-Law School Matriculates

Please provide the following demographic information about yourself. This information will only be used to assist me in developing a participant's profile.

1. To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender Female
- ☐ Transgender Male
- ☐ Gender Variant/Non-Conforming
- ☐ Other (Please, explain): _____
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

2. Which category below includes your age?

- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50 or older

3. Identify your race or ethnicity.

- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Asian American/ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic/ Latino(a)
- ☐ Native American or American Indian
- ☐ Other. Please, explain: _____

4. Did your father or mother complete an associate's or bachelor's degree?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Did your father or mother graduate from a law school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. Did you complete high school within the same country as the university you completed your undergraduate degree?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. How did you find out about the LSPI?

- ☐ Advisor
- ☐ LSPI Faculty or Staff
- ☐ Friend

- Former LSPI Student
- Other? Please, explain _____

8. What calendar year did you complete the Law School Preparation Institute (LSPI)? _____

9. Did you apply to law school?

- Yes
- No

10. Upon obtaining your Bachelor's degree did you continue onto to a Master's degree program?

- Yes
- No

11. Where did you receive your Master's degree? _____

12. In what academic area is your Master's degree in? _____

13. Upon obtaining your Master's degree, did you continue onto a Doctoral degree program?

- Yes
- No

14. Where did you receive your Doctoral degree? _____

15. In what academic area is your Doctoral degree in? _____

16. In what state/city do you currently reside? _____

Pseudonym _____

Appendix J

Table 3: Non-law school matriculate gender, age range, race/ethnicity

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age Range | Race |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| Donna | F | 30-39 | W/C |
| Patty | F | 20-29 | H/L |
| John | M | 20-29 | AA/PI |

Appendix K

Table 4: Non-law school matriculate LSPI completion year,
Graduate school program, current degree held

| Pseudonym | LSPI Class | Graduate School | Current Status |
|-----------|------------|---|---|
| Donna | 2009 | University of Texas at El Paso Washington State University | M.A. Communication Ph.D. Communication |
| Patty | 2016 | Trinity College Dublin | M.A. International History |
| John | 2017 | University of Texas at El Paso | M.S. Economics |

Appendix L

Interview Protocols for Law School Matriculates

Question #1: What about the LSPI encouraged you to apply to the program?

Answer: _____

Question #2: What did you know about law school before applying to the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #3: How did your knowledge of law school change after you completed the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #4: What did you know about the law profession before applying to the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #5: How did your knowledge of the law profession change after you completed the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #6: How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision to apply to law school?

Answer: _____

Question #7: How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision to attend law school?

Answer:

Question #8: How did the LSPI help you prepare for law school?

Answer:

Question #9: How did the LSPI prepare you for the demands of your first year in law school?

Answer:

Question #10: What did you find most difficult in going from an undergraduate student to a law student?

Answer:

Question #11: Describe a situation where what you learned in the LSPI helped you in law school.

Answer:

Question #12: How did the LSPI increase your self-awareness to be successful in law school?

Answer:

Question #13: What type of support system did you have in law school?

Answer: _____

Question #14: What strategies did the LSPI provide you that helped you in law school?

Answer: _____

Appendix M

Interview Matrix for Law School Matriculates

| Research Question | Interview Question/s | Interview Method | Findings |
|--|---|------------------|----------|
| 1. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process? | 1. What about the LSPI encouraged you to apply to the program? 2. What did you know about law school before applying to the LSPI? 6. How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision to apply to law school? | | |
| 2. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on the student's first year for those who attended law school? | 7. How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision to attend law school? 8. How did the LSPI help you prepare for law school? 9. How did the LSPI prepare you for the demands of your first year in law school? | | |
| 3. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute's courses have in preparing its students for the demands of law school? | 3. How did your knowledge of law school change after you completed the LSPI? 4. What did you know about the law profession before applying to the LSPI? 5. How did your knowledge of the law profession change after you completed the LSPI? | | |
| 5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students? | 10. What did you find most difficult in going from an undergraduate student to a law student? 11. Describe a situation where what you learned in the LSPI helped you in law school. 12. How did the LSPI increase your self-awareness to be successful in law school? 13. What type of support system did you have in law school? 14. What strategies did the LSPI provide you that helped you in law school? | | |

Appendix N

Interview Protocols for Non-Law School Matriculates

Question #1: What about the LSPI encouraged you to apply to the program?

Answer: _____

Question #2: What did you know about law school before applying to the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #3: How did your knowledge of law school change after you completed the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #4: What did you know about the law profession before applying to the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #5: How did your knowledge of the law profession change after you completed the LSPI?

Answer: _____

Question #6: How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision not to apply to law school?

Answer: _____

Question #7: How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision not to attend law school?

Answer:

Question #8: What else impacted your decision not to apply to law school?

Answer:

Question #9: What else impacted your decision not to attend law school?

Answer:

Question #10: How did the LSPI prepare you for graduate school or the workforce?

Answer:

Question #11: If applicable, what did you find most difficult in going from an undergraduate student to a student in a Master's or Doctoral degree program?

Answer:

Question #12: Describe a situation where what you learned in the LSPI helped you in graduate school or the workforce.

Answer:

Question #13: How did the LSPI increase your self-awareness to be successful in graduate school or the workforce?

Answer:

Question #14: What type of support system did you have in graduate school or the workforce?

Answer:

Question #15: What strategies did you use that the LSPI provided that helped you in graduate school or the workforce?

Answer:

Appendix O

Interview Matrix for Non-Law School Matriculates

| Research Question | Interview Question/s | Interview Method | Findings |
|--|---|------------------|----------|
| 1. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have in preparing its students for the law school application process? | 1. What about the LSPI encouraged you to apply to the program? 2. What did you know about law school before applying to law school? | | |
| 3. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute's courses have in preparing its students for the demands of law school? | 3. How did your knowledge of law school change after you completed the LSPI? 4. What did you know about the law profession before applying to the LSPI? 5. How did your knowledge of the law profession change after you completed the LSPI? | | |
| 4. What qualitative impacts did the Law School Preparation Institute have on the students who did not apply or attend law school? | 6. How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision not to apply to law school? 7. How did your experiences with the LSPI impact your decision not to attend law school? 8. What else impacted your decision not to apply to law school? 9. What else impacted your decision not to attend law school? 10. How did the LSPI prepare you for graduate school or the workforce? | | |
| 5. How did Schlossberg's Transition Model apply to the Law School Preparation Institute's students? | 11. If applicable, what did you find most difficult in going from an undergraduate student to a student in a Master's or Doctoral degree program? 12. Describe a situation where what you learned in the LSPI helped you in graduate school or the workforce. 13. How did the LSPI increase your self-awareness to be successful in graduate school or the workforce? 14. What type of support system did you have in graduate school or the workforce? 15. What strategies did the LSPI provide you that helped you in graduate school or the workforce? | | |

Appendix P

Consent Form

INTERVIEWER:

Rachel Serrano, Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations The University of Texas at El Paso, (915) 328-1922, rachelserrano8120@gmail.com.

DESCRIPTION:

I am interested in exploring the impacts the Law School Preparation Institute has had on students who completed the program from the years 1998 to 2018. This study involves you participating in an interview with me in which you answer questions and discuss issues related to my topic. Interviews conducted face to face, by phone, by Skype or through electronic mail will be recorded and a summary will be made of the interview. You will be asked to sign a promise of confidentiality before the interview begins. If you agree, I can also confirm your comments and possibly ask follow-up questions. The length of your participation will be no more than three hours (one to two hours for the interview and an optional hour for a follow-up).

CONFIDENTIALITY:

I will keep any information that identifies you in a locked file cabinet. Any information that I will use for my study, will not identify you as I will be using pseudonyms.

BENEFITS:

There are no known benefits to you for participating in this project.

RISKS:

There are no known risks to you for participating in this project.

CONTACT PEOPLE:

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me at the number listed above.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate or would like to end your participation in this project, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to you which you are otherwise entitled. In other words, you are free to make your own choice about being part of this project or not and may quit at any time without penalty.

SIGNATURE:

Your signature on this consent form indicates that you fully understand the above project, what I am asking of you in this project, and that you are signing this voluntarily. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to ask them now or at any time throughout the project.

Signature _____ Date _____

A copy of this consent form can be made available for you to keep upon request.

Appendix Q

Promise of Confidentiality Form

This form is intended to protect the confidentiality of what you and I say during the course of this interview on the impact of the Law School Preparation Institute. Please read the following statement and sign your name indicating that you agree to comply.

I promise that I will not communicate or talk about information discussed during the course of this interview with anyone.

Interviewee's Name: _____

Interviewee's Signature: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Interviewer's Signature: _____

Vita

Rachel Serrano was born and raised in the Lower Valley neighborhood of El Paso, Texas. She transferred from El Paso Community College to The University of Texas at El Paso in the fall of 2004 and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Multidisciplinary Studies from UTEP in 2010. In 2013, she earned her Master of Arts in Leadership Studies also from UTEP and joined the UTEP doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Administration in 2015.

Since 2004, Rachel has worked for UTEP's Law School Preparation Institute working her way up from undergraduate assistant to administrative services coordinator. In her time working for the LSPI, Rachel has worked with some of the best students at UTEP helping to guide them to law school. She began participating in new student orientation, transfer fairs and orange and blue days to promote the LSPI, which cultivated her desire to work primarily with undergraduate students. Rachel will continue to work in the field of higher education for it is her desire to help those she works with realize that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible.

Rachel's dissertation, "Inform, Educate, and Guide: A Study on the Impacts of The Law School Preparation Institute at The University of Texas at El Pas" was supervised by Dr. Eduardo Arellano

Contact Information: rserrano5@utep.edu

This dissertation was typed by Rachel Serrano