



Deciding to undertake graduate study in sociology has been an important personal goal for the past two and a half years. When I was young my parents carefully fostered a love of learning in me, and a lifelong appreciation for books. Since then I've discovered that as much as I enjoy learning, I also enjoy doing research and producing knowledge. During my previous time at the University of South Florida I majored in Sociology and ever since that time I have dreamed of attending graduate school and becoming a Professor myself.

Attending Graduate School is a step closer to my goals of not only finding a place in academia but of using my position to help others. Throughout my life I have been interested in the causes of societal problems such as homelessness, and social stratification. As a graduate student, and a future PhD in sociology, I will examine the causes behind such social stratification issues and strive to influence policy changes with my research.

Going forward with this goal I have improved my ability to do research by taking courses such as Sociological Research Experience, and doing independent research with a faculty mentor. These courses gave me firsthand knowledge of gaining IRB approval, and creating instruments, as well as experience with personal interviews and questionnaires.

Sociological Research Experience was my first taste of real research. During the semester I served as a research assistant for Dr. Kusenbach, and completed several hands-on assignments including transcribing audio recordings, creating reports using themes identified in interviews, as well as inputting data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. For this course I was also required to collect data from University of South Florida undergraduates regarding hurricane preparedness. I found

one of the most enjoyable parts of this research process to be the interviews because it allowed me to engage fellow students and allowed me to experience one of the primary aspects of my future career.

More recently, I conducted research which touched upon the quality of sibling relationships among adults with disabled siblings. I created the study from the ground up by first identifying the gap in literature (the quality of these particular sibling relationships), and then by creating a proposal which I submitted to the IRB. For this study I was able to create my own instrument with approval from my faculty mentor, Dr. Sara Green, and conducted an in-depth guided interview. These experiences have given me skills upon which I would like to build as a graduate student.

After attaining a master's degree, my future career goals include obtaining a PhD and applying for a position at a university. It is my goal to fill in knowledge gaps in the research while working my way to achieving tenure. Research is an important part of my desire to work at the university level, as a professor I will have the right tools at my disposal which will allow me to contribute to the current knowledge base as well as any causes of interest. My current areas of interest include families and gender, as well as social stratification.

I have several research questions that I would like to pursue if given the opportunity to attend graduate school. A type of research question I would be interested in pursuing is the role of childhood poverty in the lives of impoverished adults. I would also be interested in doing further research relating how gender affects the quality of sibling relationships among adults with disabled siblings.

During my time at the University of South Florida I have also been an active member in my school community. As a president of the [REDACTED] Club I have given lectures, talked with potential club members and put together a variety of presentations geared toward helping fellow students with their future careers. I am also a part of two honor societies: Tau Sigma National Honor Society and the Alpha Kappa Delta International Honor Society.

I have a great respect for all the research the faculty members at the University of South Florida are conducting, and there are several that I would be interested in working with specifically. Among others I would be interested in working with Dr. Green in her research focusing on disabilities, and/or with Dr. Kusenbach whose work focuses on community issues.