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Debunking Macro Myths: Findings from Recent Graduates about Jobs, Salaries and Skills

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Abstract

Research suggests that interest in macro social work practice is declining, a trend that has been well documented in the United States. Studies find that social work educators and practitioners may foster beliefs among MSW students that discredit macro practice and associated skills while asserting macro graduates are likely to face poorer employment prospects and lower salaries than micro counterparts as they start their careers. This study builds on and extends this literature by examining 27 skills in their current job using a 5-point Likert-type scale among the early career trajectory of MSW alumni (N=182) who graduated between 2008--2012 from a public social work institution in the southeastern United States. The skills included in the survey, as well as decisions about how to group them into scales, were made based on theoretical links between the skills by macro faculty members. Findings highlight the use of macro practice skills regardless of concentration focus, no differences in salary, or the time it takes to find employment between micro and macro alumni. Implications for social work education are discussed.

keywords: macro practice, social work education USA, MSW curriculum, MSW career development,

The focus on changing environmental factors, which create and perpetuate social and economic inequities, has been a defining feature of social work since Jane Addams started the Settlement House movement (Johnson, 2004). However, throughout the history of the profession and still today, specifically in social work education in North America, a tension remains regarding the relative importance for the profession of *micro level practice* - direct practice with individuals, groups, and families - and *macro level practice* - community organizing, planning, administration and policy practice (McNutt, 1995; Hill, Ferguson, & Erickson, 2010; Haynes, 1998; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014; Specht & Courtney, 1995;). While broad in definition, globally and in the United States, macro social work practice has had a specific tradition connected to grassroots activism, community organizing, and efforts towards political reform (Rothman, 2013). Recently, as budgets and service provision are decided, the role of administration and management has become an important function of social workers in order to determine when, how, to whom, and by who services are allocated (NASW, 2013).

This paper aims to determine what are the career experiences (type of job obtained, time to find job, salary) of recent MSW graduates? Within this purpose, we attempt to discern if these career experiences vary among graduates depending on their concentration as students? In this context, concentration is the word used to differentiate between areas of study or focus. In the United States, this distinction is commonly made between direct practice and macro social work. Secondly, the paper explores what macro-related skills are most used by recent MSW graduates. We hypothesize that the time spent on each skill will vary by concentration; however, all graduates will rely on macro-related skills regardless of their concentration as MSW students. The first section

of the paper includes an overview of the current state of macro practice in North America. Next, we describe current challenges facing macro practice. The second half of the paper describes the research questions, methods and results of this exploratory study. The subsequent sections of the paper include a discussion of the findings, limitations, and future directions for additional work in this area of social work practice and education.

The Current State of Macro Practice in North America

A critique against the profession has been neglect toward social work's historical roots around organizing and community practice, and instead focuses too much on promoting individual change through therapeutic models (Hugman, 2009; Specht & Courtney, 2009; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). As described in their commentary on balancing micro and macro within social work education, Rothman and Mizrahi explain that despite "President Obama's identification as the 'community organizer-in-chief,' along with significant nationwide movements in the past several years, such as the 'Occupy' social protests and immigrant rights actions", a relatively small percentage of social work students select macro concentrations (2014, p. 1). While data is not available for all every type of macro social work (i.e., community organizing, policy practice, leadership) within macro social work, one example of diminishing student enrollment can be seen by the percentage of MSW students with specializations in administration between 1975 to 2000, which peaked at 6.5% in 1982 and dropped to just above 3% in 2000 (Ezell, Chernesky & Healy, 2004). Without a firm foundation in macro methods during training, how will social workers be prepared to take on leadership as the next generation of social work professionals? The next generation of social workers needs to

be willing and prepared to participate in macro social work across all levels of practice and includes advocacy, policy, administration, coalition building and facilitation skills (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Within social work education, the bifurcation between direct practice and macro-oriented students continues to perpetuate this long-standing tension in concentrations that may require students to choose one track over the other (Haynes, 1998; Tolleson-Knee & Folsom; 2012). Over time, interest in macro related social work education has declined and coursework and field opportunities focused on management have languished (Patti, 2003; Ezell et al., 2004). In a peer-reviewed study to determine whether schools of social work were “inhospitable” to administration and management areas, Ezell et al., (2004) found:

non-administration students were perceived to be critical of students who selected administration concentrations and administration as a career path, that majorities of students experienced anti-management comments and attitudes in a variety of forms, and that administration students thought their foundation courses provided inadequate background for their advanced studies. (p. 57).

Further, Austin and Ezell (2004) found that approximately 80% of MSW students’ primary interests were in direct practice. Data from the Survey of Social Work Programs an annual census survey of accredited social work programs in the United States and its territories, conducted by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1952 identified 8.8% of students with a focus in macro areas (CSWE, 2012). This significant preference toward clinical social work continues post-graduation (Hill et al., 2010).

The reported shifts in MSW students interests in the U.S. toward direct practice has serious implications for social workers, the profession, as well as for the vulnerable

and oppressed people that the profession serves. Without adequate macro content, the development of expertise to fulfill management, community organizing, and policy analysis roles will cease to exist (Perlmutter, 2006; Schwartz & Dattalo, 1990; Weiss et al., 2004; Wilson & Lau, 2011). Social workers trained primarily in direct practice have been found to be less effective in administrative positions given that clinical skills do not directly translate into effective management skills (Knee & Folsom, 2012; Perlmutter, 2006; Wilson & Lau, 2011). Related, by not providing enough macro training to students, social workers may miss out on jobs that end up going to graduates from other fields including business and public administration (Nessoff, 2007). If this trend continues, social workers will be “ceded to a supportive role in the management of human service agencies” where they will have less of an opportunity to influence the types of services that clients receive (Nessoff, 2007, p. 285). This also means that members of vulnerable groups may have less access to professionals who respect their self-determination and work to change systemic problems leading to inequity.

Current Challenges Facing Macro Social Work

Societal views on social problems have been impediments to macro practice as articulated by Reisch (2013) in a report on *Why Macro Practice Matters*, specifically:

“ideologically-motivated attacks on the concept of social welfare and on government as a problem-solving institution; the wide-ranging impact of economic globalization; the privatization of social life and the overall decline in civic and political participation; the devolution of political authority and power to local governments and the for-profit sector; the “industrialization” of social work; the impact of social media and the 24/7 news cycle on the public’s perception of

social issues; and the conflicts produced by the nation's increasing demographic and cultural diversity" (p. 2)"

The preference for micro social work training is related to several factors.

Research suggests that social work educators and practitioners themselves play an important role in fostering a preference towards micro among students through several key beliefs (Rothman, 2013). Results from a survey of the Association of Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA) membership cited some clinical faculty as being "uncooperative" and having "obstructive attitudes" (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014, p. 2). Additionally, social work recruitment materials and curricula may give students the impression that all social work is micro/direct practice focused. For example, an exploratory review of graduate social work recruitment materials from 48 schools narrowly portrayed social workers as women in therapeutic activities, most typically providing therapy to young children (Corvo, Selmi, & Montemaro, 2003). In contrast, these materials rarely showed social workers organizing communities, facilitating meetings, or being involved in policy analysis. Related to the role educators' play in perpetuating a preference for micro practice, a recent survey of macro faculty found tension within social work schools and departments among colleagues across this bifurcation (Rothman, 2013; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Further, Rothman and Mizrahi (2013) found that some schools/departments of social work were less inclined to hire macro focused faculty (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014).

Another way social work education favors micro practice is how the curricula is scheduled. For example, course offerings may perpetuate the idea that all students need micro skills in order to be social workers, while macro skills may only be important to a

subset of students. Several studies have documented that social work curricula primarily focuses on skills needed to obtain clinical licensure to the detriment of providing content on community organizing (Fisher & Corciullo, 2011), social action and political advocacy (Rothman, 2013), and administration and management content (Wilson & Lau, 2011). The lack of emphasis on the importance of macro oriented skills and methods may perpetuate “anti-management sentiments” once MSW graduates enter the workforce (Tolleson-Knee & Folsom, 2012, p. 393). It has been suggested that some social work educators may teach students that macro social work is not real social work or that it is antithetical to social work values (Ezell et al., 2004; Perlmutter, 2006; Rothman, 2012; Weiss et al., 2004). Additionally, there is evidence that many schools of social work have not invested in faculty with expertise and passion for teaching macro practice, which may further erode student enthusiasm for topics covered in these classes (Heidemann, Fertig, Jansson, & Kim, 2011; Rothman, 2013; Schwartz & Dattalo, 1990; Weiss et al., 2004).

Some educators and professionals may promote the belief that students should pursue “micro before macro.” Research shows that social work educators and practitioners may believe that students need substantial practice experience in order to obtain more macro-oriented jobs later in their careers (Ezell et al., 2004; Schwartz & Dattalo, 1990). Social work educators and students have reported the belief that there are not enough macro-oriented jobs available after graduation, or that they are low-paying in comparison to micro-oriented jobs (Schwartz & Dattalo, 1990; Starr et al., 1999).

Overall, an overview of the aforementioned literature suggests that social work educators and professionals’ views about macro education and the career experiences of macro-oriented students may be diminishing the role of macro social work. However,

there is little research to date exploring the accuracy of these views based on the actual experience of recent MSW graduates.

Research Questions

To fill these gaps, a survey of MSW students who graduated between 2008 and 2012 was conducted in order to determine:

1. What are the career experiences (type of job obtained, time to find job, salary) of recent MSW graduates? Do these career experiences vary among graduates with micro and macro concentrations?
2. What are the macro-related skills used by recent MSW graduates? Does the type of skill or amount of time spent using skills differ among graduates with micro and macro concentrations?

Methods

Measures

Dependent variable: Career experiences. To understand the career experiences of recent MSW graduates, analyses included information about the type of job obtained after graduation, the time it took to find a job after graduation, as well as current salary. The variable for the type of job after graduation assessed whether the first job that graduates obtained was primarily related to their concentration (macro or micro). Survey respondents were also asked the amount of time it took them to find their first job after graduation. Based on responses, a *time to first job* variable was created with the following categories: before graduation or immediately, less than 3 months, 3 to 6 months, 7 to 12 months, and more than one year. Current annual salary was measured using the following

categories: under \$20,000; \$20-29,999; \$30-39,999; \$40-49,999; and greater than or equal to \$50,000.

Dependent variable: Macro skills. To assess the macro-related skills of recent graduates, survey respondents were asked the proportion of their time that they have spent in macro-related activities since graduation. Respondents were asked how often they used 27 skills in their current job based on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the following classifications: *never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, and very frequently*. These items were originally identified by the 9 macro faculty members who comprised the dean-appointed working committee focused on the concentration within the MSW program. The skills determined were based on committee discussions about our curriculum and from gleaning key words within the School's syllabi. This process yielded more than two-dozen skills which the macro committee condensed to create a 6-item scale. The skills included in the survey, as well as decisions about how to group these into scales were made based on theoretical links between the skills and faculty discussion as a committee. Given the exploratory nature of the study, a reliability assessment or factor analysis was not conducted. Table 1 displays the six scales of skills, as well as the items included in each scale.

<<<Table 1 here>>>>

Independent variable: Student concentration. Respondents were asked to identify their concentration during the MSW program. Brief concentration definitions were offered at the introduction of the survey based on language from the School's MSW Curriculum Manual.

Educational variables. A set of questions related to the educational experiences of students was also included in the analyses, including the year of graduation, as well as whether graduates received a dual degree or specialized certificate upon graduation. At this institution, in addition to their MSW degree, students can receive a dual degree in public health, public administration, law, and divinity. The certificate programs we offer include a certificate sanctioned by the graduate school in non-profit leadership and human migration.

Demographic Variables. Demographic variables used in the analyses included the age and gender of survey respondents. We did not ask for names or job titles, place of work or other identifying information in order to protect the anonymity of respondents.

Participants

To address the study's research questions, a web-based survey was developed and distributed to MSW alumni who graduated between 2008 and 2012 from a School of Social Work at a public, top 10 university in the southeastern, United States. The survey was piloted on five students before the survey was distributed in order to ensure that the questions made sense and that the survey was not too long. The survey was purposefully distributed to alumni that graduated between 2008 and 2012 in order to capture the experiences of graduates who would have been exposed to a similar curriculum at the School. Also, by focusing on relatively recent graduates, the study was able to test the belief that social workers lack opportunities to engage in macro social work practice in the early stages of their careers. Out of the 631 students that graduated between 2008 and 2012, the survey was distributed to 515 graduates whose email addresses were available (this included personal email accounts given as alternative to school email addresses

which expire post-graduation if not renewed). Graduates received an email inviting them to participate in the survey, an email with the survey link, followed by weekly reminders for three consecutive weeks. Once the survey link was activated, the introduction of the survey included information and required informed consent before any questions were asked. Thus, data collection occurred over a one-month period in 2012. To encourage participation, graduates who completed the survey were entered into a raffle to win one of four \$25 gift cards. At the end of the month, responses from 269 students were collected, a response rate of 52.2%. The 182 alumni that had complete answers on all of the variables included in the analysis comprised the study sample (a response rate of 35.3%). The study was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board. Background characteristics of the overall sample, as well as the characteristics of macro and micro alumni are included in Table 2.

<< Insert Table 2 here >>

Statistical Analysis

To assess bivariate relationships between graduation concentration and the career experiences and macro-related skills used by recent MSW graduates, Pearson Chi-square tests were used for categorical variables, while a two-group mean comparison t-test was used to assess differences in continuous variables. To test for any differences in career experiences and the use of macro-related skills among micro and macro graduates, regression models were created. To assess whether the first job obtained was related to concentration type, a binary logistic regression was used. Ordinal logistic regression was used to assess whether concentration type was a significant predictor of the amount of time it took to find a first job, current annual salaries, as well as the frequency of macro-

related skills used after graduation among macro and micro concentration graduates. Last, to compare respondents' overall amount of time spent in macro-related activities since graduation, a generalized linear model (GLM) with a logit link in the binomial family is used, as outlined by Papke and Wooldridge (1996). Papke and Wooldridge (1996) demonstrated that this estimation strategy is optimal for dependent variables that are proportions because GLM can provide estimates for the extreme values of 0 and 1, as well as produce predicted values that fall within the actual range of data. All statistical analyses were performed by the authors, three faculty who at the time, were teaching in in the macro concentration and members of the macro committee (a dean-appointment committee within the school).

Results

Career Experiences of Macro and Micro MSW Graduates

As seen, during the time period of the study, 30.2% of graduates had a macro concentration. The overall sample was predominantly female (89.1%) with a mean age of approximately 33 years. In terms of educational experiences, in addition to graduating with a MSW degree (this was the only requirement to be included in the study), over one-third of the sample received either a dual degree or certificate upon graduation. (At this School, the most popular dual degree programs that appeal specifically to macro oriented students are the dual degree with public health and the MSW/MPA degree.) After graduation, 24.7% of alumni had obtained their clinical license, while 43.8% of alumni were currently seeking licensure. Table 2 shows that there were no significant demographic differences between micro and macro MSW graduates. However, dual degree students were more likely to focus on macro social work practice (29% macro

versus 2.36% micro), while micro graduates were significantly more likely to either have obtained (33.86% micro versus 3.64% macro) or currently pursuing their clinical licensure (84.9% micro versus 17.9% macro). Table 3 displays bivariate differences in the career experiences of recent MSW graduates. As seen at the top of Table 3, overall, 82% of graduates found jobs related to their concentration after graduation, 83.5% of graduates found jobs within 3 months after graduation, and 67% of graduates earned \$40,000 or more annually in their current jobs. Regarding career experiences, there were statistically significant differences between macro and micro graduates in both whether their first job was related to their concentration, as well as the time it took to find their first job. While almost 93% of micro graduates found a first job related to their concentration after graduation, only 56% of macro graduates had their first job relate to their concentration ($p < .001$). Close to half of all respondents obtained their first job either before graduation (found through field placement) or immediately afterwards. However, more micro graduates found employment before or immediately following graduation (58%), compared to macro graduates (49%) ($p < .01$). There were no statistically significant differences in salary between micro and macro graduates.

<< Insert Table 3 here >>

Table 4 shows the results from the multivariate analysis, which tests whether the significant differences between micro and macro students persist when controlling for other differences between these groups. The results show that when age, gender, and educational differences (year of graduation, obtained dual degree, obtained specialized certificate) are controlled for, the odds of macro students finding a job related to their concentration upon graduation are lower than the odds for micro graduates ($\beta = -2.036$,

$OR = .131, p < .001$). Meaning, if all other variables are held constant, the predicted probability that macro students would obtain a job in their concentration after graduation is about 62%, compared to 93% of micro graduates. While differences in obtaining a first job after concentration remained significant in the multivariate models, there were no significant differences between the time it took to find graduates' first job or salary differences between micro and macro graduates, holding all other variables constant.

<< Insert Table 4 here >>

Skills Used by Macro and Micro Graduates

The bottom of Table 3 shows descriptive statistics on the percentage of time that recent graduates have spent using macro-related activities in their jobs since graduation and the percentage that report either at least occasionally using (likert scale responses of *occasionally*,) or frequently using (likert scale responses of *frequently*, or *very frequently*) macro-related skills related to: resource development and financial management; human resource management; organizational development; program development and management; community practice; and, policy advocacy and practice. Overall, all recent MSW graduates spent over one-quarter of their time in macro-related activities. While micro graduates spent about 13% of their time in macro-related activities, macro graduates were using macro-related skills 58% of the time. Regardless of their concentration, graduates were most likely to, at least occasionally, use skills related to community practice, program development and management, and organizational development in their current jobs and least likely to use skills related to resource development and financial management. Regarding skills that recent graduates used frequently or very frequently, graduates were most likely to use skills related to program

development and management. Over one-quarter of all graduates (29% of micro graduates and 27% of macro graduates) reported frequently or very frequently using skills related to program development and management. The second most frequently reported skill set used across concentrations was related to organizational development. Not surprisingly, macro graduates were more likely to use macro-related skills in their current jobs compared to micro graduates. However, Pearson chi-square tests revealed that, overall, these differences between micro and macro graduates were not statistically significant.

Table 5 shows the multivariate regression results that examined differences in the macro-related skills used by macro and micro graduates. As seen in the first column, after controlling for educational and demographic differences, macro graduates were significantly more likely to spend more of their time using macro-related activities than micro students. If one sets all other variables in the model to their mean, the predicted percentage of time that macro graduates spent engaged in macro-related activities was 58.4%, compared to 13.2% among micro graduates. However, when looking at the specific skills used in their current jobs, the multivariate analysis did not reveal any significant differences between macro and micro graduates. Therefore, while macro graduates spend significantly more overall time participating in macro-related activities, macro and micro students used a similar mix of macro practice skill sets in their work.

<< Insert Table 5 here >>

Discussion

The literature suggests that interest in macro social work practice is declining and that some commonly held beliefs held by educators and practitioners may be contributing

to this decline. Specifically, recent studies have found that social work educators and practitioners may foster beliefs among MSW students that: 1) real social work is micro social work; 2) macro-related skills are only valuable to a subset of students; 3) in order to succeed in the job market, students should focus on developing micro skills before pursuing macro employment; and, 4) macro graduates are likely to face poorer employment prospects than micro students. This exploratory study builds on and extends the literature by examining the early career experiences and macro-related skills used by recent graduates of an MSW program in the United States.

One of the study's major findings fails to support the assertion that macro skills only apply to a subset of MSW students. Study results revealed that for practitioners, it takes a variety of macro practice skills in order to perform current jobs. Overall, all recent MSW graduates spent over one-quarter of their time in macro-related activities. While this percentage is less for micro graduates (13%), the finding suggests that macro content is an important part of social work practice and that it is not necessary for students to first develop micro skills before engaging in macro opportunities. For this sample of MSW graduates, program development and organizational development were two areas that all graduates tended to use most frequently, regardless of concentration or current position. This suggests that recent MSW graduates may be more likely to perform middle management and externally-oriented macro practice roles and tasks in organizations.

While the study revealed no difference in the time it took micro or macro students to find their first job after graduation, and that securing a job before graduation was common for about half of the sample, micro graduates tended to more quickly find employment immediately following graduation (58%) compared to macro graduates

(49%). Also, the study revealed that macro-oriented graduates were less likely than micro-oriented graduates to secure a first job after graduation that was related to their concentration. There are three possible reasons for why this occurred: First, it is possible that micro field placements, particularly in fields known for high turnover, such as child welfare or mental health placements are more likely to have available positions for interns after graduation than macro-related placements. Second micro-oriented graduates may search for jobs in organizations and through professional networks more densely populated by social workers while macro-oriented graduates may be accessing more diffuse networks in which multiple professional disciplines are represented. Therefore, the job seeking process could be different for these students and may include applying to and having interviews with organizations less familiar with social work as a profession and within an organization that hires fewer social workers on staff. This may be especially true for dual degree students who received a MSW degree in addition to a degree in public health or public administration. It may take macro-oriented graduates longer to access, penetrate, and convey the value of their MSW training across diffuse networks comprised of a more diverse set of disciplines. Third, social work faculty may have more professional connections with agencies recruiting micro graduates because this is a larger area of practice with more alumni. This factor could make it easier to link micro students with job opportunities given that this concentrations tends to be larger not just at this institution, but broadly in the U.S.

In order to address the job search challenges that macro-oriented graduates may experience, schools of social work can use a variety of strategies. These strategies might include networking nights with alumni; discussions with non-profit leaders during

workshops or training events the school can host. This creates various opportunities for alumni and current students to engage together and discuss the field and strategies for future employment opportunities. Additional ideas include individual networking meetings beyond the traditional career fair type program; career advising sessions that help students identify both traditional and non-traditional roles for macro-oriented social workers; and efforts to educate a diverse group of local organizations about the value macro-oriented graduates offer.

Another significant finding is that, counter to some commonly held beliefs among social work educators and practitioners, this study does not document any significant salary differences between macro and micro graduates. These results were obtained despite the fact that many of these graduates were seeking employment during a time of substantial economic decline in the United States. Thus, despite facing greater challenges in searching for jobs related to their concentration, it may be that macro-oriented graduates are pushing the boundaries of what is traditionally considered social work practice settings. This is an important possibility to consider given the rise of social innovation in the U.S. and globally, a paradigm that encourages new approaches to address social problems that are not identified with a particular discipline, yet nonetheless, fit into macro social work practice and ideas for societal change (Pitt-Catsouphes & Cosner Berzin, 2015). It is also an important possibility to consider given the rise of methods and organizational structures that blur the lines between commercial enterprises and social justice missions, such as social enterprise and low profit, limited liability corporations.

Limitations

Findings from this exploratory study reveal that more research needs to be done on the ways that both macro and micro graduates find jobs so that schools can adequately prepare all students to find jobs quickly and creatively. Research concerning how graduates find jobs should pay close attention to the access and interactions with professional networks and different types of organizations and the extent to which students felt that their schools of social work offered sufficient job placement assistance. While this exploratory study offers additional directions for future research related to the training and career experiences of MSW graduates, limitations exist and more research needs to be done to examine the career experiences of MSW alumni generally.

First, this study relied on self-report from MSWs who graduated from 2008—2012 from one public, top-tier, research-focused School of Social Work in the southeastern United States and therefore results may not be generalizable. Further, email addresses change and it is possible that some graduates would have participated if additional methods of contact had been used to recruit graduates. Another limitation is that, authors did not verify employment through background checks and the study relied on self-report data only. It is possible that there was selection bias among the sample given who decided to participate. For example, those that chose to participate may have had a particularly positive experience that they wanted to share, or perhaps, those who felt the need to express their difficulty were more inclined to respond.

Next, the macro-related activities were based on area content within this School's program and not based on CSWE scales or macro competencies as set by the accrediting body of social work education programs in the U.S. It is possible that this list can also be used by micro-focused social workers with their clinical license (what is referred to as a

LCSW in the United States). Given that the nature of social work is so broad, a comprehensive list of competencies would be helpful yet was not available or used in the analysis of this exploratory study. The career prospects of these graduates were shaped by the local economic context in which they were searching for jobs, as well as the fact that they graduated during an economic recession—a contextual factor that impacted the entire country during this time. As conceptualized in this pilot study—“obtained license” referred to clinical licensure and not other types of licensure (i.e., certified social work manager, a possible but underutilized licensure option for administratively focused social workers. More research conducted on MSW graduates in other parts of the country may yield different information.

Additionally, while macro graduates spent more time engaged in macro-related activities, the skills they used were not significantly different than the skills used by micro concentration graduates. It also has to be noted that students’ decisions about job acceptance following graduation may be related to many factors beyond concentration. For example, for some students, the financial responsibilities associated with families and student loans could have influenced both their first job post-graduation and that their first job may not have been their first-choice.

Future research should assess the ways that MSW graduate careers change over time since this study only included MSW graduates from 2008--2012 and a longitudinal picture remains unknown. Similarities and differences between social workers who were micro or macro oriented students observed over a longer period of time may offer important insight into the earnings and professional experiences of MSWs later in their careers.

Conclusions

The study's findings highlight an important implication for social work educators: The belief that all MSW students need micro skills while some need macro-skills was not accurately depicted among this sample. Results demonstrate the importance of a well-rounded curriculum that emphasizes all systems of social work practice in which professional MSWs operate. While we are not advocating for a generalist curriculum in the U.S. program under discussion, nor do we want to continue to bifurcate micro and macro social work practice-, we do want to highlight the importance of these skills for budding professionals who may not yet see macro skills within their professional repertoire. We hope the study's results serve as an important reminder to all MSW students, educators and administrators that social workers have the necessary skills to be managers and fulfill positions of leadership within a variety of settings. As Rothman and Mizrahi (2014) have stated, this is a critical time to focus on macro social work practice and findings from this paper echo their charge. Now is the time to "infuse the foundational macro component of our profession into the classroom and field to achieve a more equal footing with its clinical counterpart" (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014, p. 91). Unlike the commonly-held beliefs of some educators and practitioners, social work macro graduates are indeed able to use macro-related skills soon after graduation and secure salaries comparable to micro graduates. Additionally, micro graduates are engaging in macro practice soon after graduation. Only by sharing this vital information with all MSW students and faculty in the U.S., regardless of their concentration, can social work ensure that it maintains the person-in-environment perspective that is so central to the profession.

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TABLE 1. Macro-Related Skill Scales and Included Items

Scale Name	Included Items
Resource development and financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a program budget • Writing a grant proposal • Soliciting donations • Planning and implementing special events • Soliciting donations of in-kind goods and services • Marketing • Assisting with financial planning for an organization
Human resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervising paid staff • Supervising volunteers and/or interns • Recruiting volunteers • Assisting with board recruitment and/or development
Organizational development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting with strategic planning • Creating and revising organizational policies and/or procedures
Program development and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a program • Implementing a program • Evaluating a program
Community practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming coalitions or inter-agency task forces • Facilitating coalitions or inter-agency task forces • Assessing a community issue or problem • Community organizing • Community planning and development • Developing partnerships with other organizations • Offering community education or awareness building
Policy and advocacy practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving public presentations about an issue or problem • Analyzing policy • Working with local, state, or national officials

TABLE 2. Background and Educational Characteristics of Micro and Macro Graduates (N=182)

	Macro (n=55)	Micro (n=111)	All (n=182)
<u>Demographic</u>			
Female	89.09%	87.40%	87.91%
Mean age (SD)	33.00 (0.839)	32.756 (0.698)	32.83 (0.548)
<u>Education</u>			
Dual degree ***	29.09%	2.36%	10.44%
Obtained certificate	21.82	26.77	25.27
Year graduated			
2008	23.64	17.32	19.23
2009	23.64	17.32	19.23
2010	23.64	22.83	23.08
2011	14.55	19.69	18.13
2012	14.55	22.83	20.33
Obtained license ***	3.64%	33.86%	24.73%
If not LCSW, currently seeking license	17.86	84.91	43.80

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Note: The sum of macro and micro graduates does not equal 182 because n=16 graduates identified their concentration as “self-directed”, separate from micro or macro concentrations.

TABLE 3. Bivariate Differences in Career Experiences and Macro-Related Skills Between Micro and Macro Graduates (N=182)

	Macro (n=55)	Micro (n=111)	All (n=182)
<u>Career Experiences</u>			
First job was related to concentration ***	56.36%	92.91%	81.87%
Time to first job **			
Before graduation/ immediately	49.09	58.27	55.49
< 3 months	25.45	29.13	28.02
4-6 months	7.28	10.24	9.34
7-12 months	12.73	0.79	4.40
> 1 year	5.45	1.57	2.75
Annual salary in current position			
< \$20,000	7.27	3.15	4.40
\$20-29,99	1.82	7.09	5.49
\$30-39,999	16.36	25.98	23.08
\$40-49,999	45.45	42.52	43.41
≥ \$50,000	29.09	21.26	23.63
<u>Macro-Related Skills Used</u>			
Mean % time in macro-related activities	58.400	13.157	26.830
***	(5.203)	(1.453)	(2.419)
(SD)			
At least occasionally use skills			
Resource development & fin. mgmt.	16.36	13.39	14.29
Human resource mgmt.	29.09	23.62	25.27
Organizational. dev.	34.55	40.16	38.46
Program development & mgmt.	63.64	60.63	61.54
Comm. Practice	32.73	29.92	30.77
Policy & advocacy practice	18.18	27.56	24.73
Frequently/very frequently use skills			
Resource development & fin. mgmt.	3.64	2.36	2.75
Human resource mgmt.	5.54	5.51	5.49
Organizational. dev.	18.18	14.17	15.38
Program development & mgmt.	27.27	29.13	28.57
Comm. Practice	3.64	8.66	7.14
Policy & advocacy practice	3.64	12.60	9.89

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < .001

TABLE 4. Multivariate Regression Results for Career Experiences of Recent Graduates (N=182)

	First job related to concentration ^a	Time to first job ^b	Current annual salary ^b
Macro student	-2.036*** (0.510)	0.423 (0.375)	0.519 (0.362)
<u>Demographic controls</u>			
Female	0.264 (0.669)	-0.269 (0.441)	-0.155 (0.433)
Age	0.010 (0.344)	0.012 (0.022)	0.010 (0.020)
<u>Educational controls</u>			
Year graduated	0.064 (0.178)	-0.0366 (0.124)	-0.379** (0.123)
Dual degree	-0.552 (0.591)	-0.005 (0.516)	-0.411 (0.492)
Certificate	0.126 (0.431)	0.336 (0.341)	0.316 (0.323)
Licensed	0.431 (0.761)	-0.512 (0.426)	0.470 (0.407)
Constant	-127.277 (358.020)		
LR χ^2	33.67	6.05	26.66
p-value	<.001	.5335	0.0004
Pseudo R ²	0.195	0.0146	0.0547

^a Binary logistic regression^b Ordinal logistic regression

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Note: At this institution, in addition to their MSW degree, students can receive a dual degree in public health, public administration, law, and divinity. The certificate programs we offer include a certificate sanctioned by the graduate school in non-profit leadership and human migration.

TABLE 5. Multivariate Regression Results for Macro-Related Skills Used by Recent Graduates (N=182)

	% time after grad in macro activities ^a	Resource development & financial management ^b	Human resource management ^b	Org. development ^b	Program development & management ^b	Community practice ^b	Policy advocacy & practice ^b
Macro student	2.120*** (0.451)	0.499 (0.336)	0.364 (0.338)	0.089 (0.334)	0.163 (0.330)	0.342 (0.334)	0.021 (0.331)
<u>Demographic controls</u>							
Female	0.205 (0.623)	-0.218 (0.413)	0.013 (0.386)	-0.018 (0.394)	-0.362 (0.385)	0.115 (0.403)	-0.241 (0.399)
Age	-0.002 (0.028)	0.011 (0.018)	-0.018 (0.019)	-0.001 (0.018)	-0.006 (0.019)	-0.023 (0.019)	-0.011 (0.018)
<u>Educational controls</u>							
Year graduated	-0.182 (0.160)	0.236 (0.112)	0.132 (0.111)	0.039 (0.111)	0.069 (0.111)	0.084 (0.113)	0.059 (0.111)
Dual degree	0.056 (0.590)	-0.28 (0.506)	-0.435 (0.500)	-0.333 (0.465)	-0.439 (0.484)	-0.919 (0.459)	-0.263 (0.467)
Certificate	-0.075 (0.453)	0.049 (0.290)	-0.375 (0.299)	-0.289 (0.311)	0.042 (0.294)	0.150 (0.291)	-0.157 (0.307)
Licensed	-0.126 (0.580)	0.396 (0.370)	-0.119 (0.379)	-0.014 (0.378)	0.181 (0.368)	0.112 (0.380)	0.372 (0.376)
Constant	363.344 (321.018)						
LR χ^2		6.49	5.37	1.66	2.92	6.79	2.57
p-value		0.4843	0.6146	0.9760	0.8924	0.4509	0.9215
Pseudo R ²		0.0063	0.0059	0.0023	0.0033	0.0057	0.0031

^a Generalized linear model (GLM)^b Ordinal logistic regression

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < .001