Enhancing Student Commitment to the Micro-Mezzo-Macro Continuum: The Macro Practice Assignment

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Abstract: Despite the importance of macro practice to the social work profession, research related to social work students' preparation and enthusiasm for macro practice suggests that there is significant room for improvement within macro social work education. The purpose of this report is to describe and explore a novel macro social work pedagogy that is designed to encourage student engagement within macro practice social work courses. The Macro Practice Assignment (MPA) offers students a real-world learning exercise with embedded micro, mezzo, and macro social work applications with one vulnerable population. The results of a multiple case study exploring the effectiveness of the MPA reveals that the MPA 1) reduces students' negative perceptions of macro practice courses and careers, 2) fosters students' interest in future macro practice, and 3) helps students see macro practice as a necessary component of the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum. In order to address shortcomings in macro social work education, educators should consider adding real-world macro practice learning exercises such as the MPA, grounded in Bloom's Taxonomy, with the goal of enhancing social workers' lifelong commitment to macro practice.

Keywords: Human trafficking; teaching in social work; macro practice; human trafficking education; social work education

Macro social work education typically addresses core social work competencies related to engaging, assessing, intervening, and evaluating practice with organizations and communities (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2022). Although learning objectives related to these competencies are essential for budding social workers, students who enter the field with more interest in direct practice with individuals, families, and groups may find macro social work instruction to be less immediately relevant to their professional goals than instruction in other types of social work (Crutchfield et al., 2016). This is problematic, since a commitment to macro practice is core to the social work profession. Even social workers primarily engaged in micro or mezzo practice are ethically obligated to apply macro social work skills within their direct practice contexts (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021).

The purpose of this paper is to describe and explore a novel macro practice pedagogy that we designed to encourage student engagement within a macro practice social work course. We developed the Macro Practice Assignment (MPA) to offer students a real-world learning exercise with embedded micro, mezzo, and macro social work applications. First, we describe the MPA, its theoretical grounding, its learning objectives, and its promise for transformational social work education. We then report the results of a mixed methods

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multiple case pilot study, which we undertook to answer questions about 1) students' understanding of and commitment to the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum after completing the MPA, and 2) students' development of micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills related to one specific vulnerable population that students engaged through the MPA. First, we review the literature related to the importance of macro practice and students' perceptions of macro social work education in order to lay the foundation for why experience-based assignments like the MPA ought to be considered for implementation in macro social work practice courses.

Literature Review

The NASW (2021) Code of Ethics encourages social work professionals to advocate for social justice, to enhance the well-being of all people, to meet basic needs, and to empower groups of people who are oppressed and vulnerable. The Code of Ethics also encourages social workers to increase institutional and community responsiveness to individual and community needs (NASW, 2021). Of course, social workers can carry out these ethical obligations within the context of micro, mezzo, or macro practice, or some blend thereof (Austin et al., 2016). Research related to social work practice, however, indicates that most early career social workers enter the profession with a near-singular focus on micro or mezzo practice (Austin, 2019; McBeath, 2016; Reisch, 2017; Salsberg et al., 2019). Unfortunately, macro practice has historically been overlooked as a career goal by social work students and early career practitioners alike (Salsberg et al., 2019), despite the fact that macro practice can sustain and positively impact quality of life through important social work activities like advocacy, policy creation, administration, evaluation, community organizing, and more (Hill et al., 2017; Netting, 2005; Salsberg et al., 2019; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). In addition to the positive outcomes associated with these macro practice activities, scholars have noted that macro practice is uniquely suited to examine and address the underlying structures of society that lead to and compound systemic oppressions and inequalities like racism, sexism, and poverty (Netting, 2005; Reisch, 2017).

Despite perceptions to the contrary, macro social work practice is not a niche subspecialty within the profession, with few accompanying job prospects (Ezell et al., 2004). Social work graduates with macro specializations report that they are able to obtain jobs within the profession (Pritzker & Applewhite, 2015; Zippay & Demone, 2011), including jobs that tend to have greater than average salaries for social workers. For instance, Zippay and Demone (2011) found that social work graduates who specialized in macro practice often engage in activities like supervision, program development, planning, and program evaluation. Pritzker and Applewhite (2015) likewise found that macro practice graduates reported frequent engagement in activities like evaluation, project management, budgeting, advocacy, and coalition building, and that their jobs were also open to other professionals with graduate degrees in public health, public administration, and business. The wide range of macro practice jobs available to social work graduates—and the importance of macro practice skills and activities for the successful completion of these jobs—points to the reality that macro social work education is as practically relevant

to social work students as it is a vital component of ethical and competent social work practice (Ezell et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2017).

Students' Perceptions of Macro Social Work Education

Unfortunately, a variety of evidence suggests that social work education does not adequately prepare graduating students to a) demonstrate a commitment to lifelong macro social work practice, b) effectively apply macro practice skills, nor c) compete with other professionals for macro practice-focused jobs. For instance, in a national survey of graduate social work students, Salzburg and colleagues (2019) found that most recent social work graduates - over 82%, in fact - work directly with individuals or groups, while roughly 8% work in indirect roles such as administration or research, and only about 5% work in community practice or community organizing roles. These employment trends are mirrored when examining graduate social work students' professional interests and intentions. In the same study (Salsberg et al., 2019), the authors found that nearly 82% of recent graduates reported that they were most interested in micro social work practice, whereas only 9% stated that they were most interested in indirect or macro practice. Social work educational programs in the United States, likewise, are largely focused on direct practice and clinical social work specializations rather than social work administration or community practice (Ezell et al., 2004; Hill et al., 2017; Liddell & Lass, 2019).

Within this social work educational environment, perhaps it is unsurprising that macro social work students have reported dissatisfaction with macro practice course material and experiences (Deal et al., 2007; Hill et al., 2017; Liddell & Lass, 2019). Course content and field experiences are meant to provide students with the professional skills to meet their social work professional goals, so it is concerning that the students who are most interested in carrying forward the macro practice torch report that they lack the same educational opportunities as social work students who are more interested in micro and mezzo practice (Deal et al., 2007; Hill et al., 2017; Liddell & Lass, 2019). For instance, Liddell and Lass (2019) found that nearly 42% of students enrolled in a community practice program strongly disagreed that the quality of community practice course material was equal to the quality of clinical practice course material. The authors also found that roughly 42% of the student participants felt that instructors covered community practice course material insufficiently and that the material lacked the same depth as clinical material (Liddell & Lass, 2019). Although this is but one study, the results are troubling because the sample was comprised of students who evidenced some predisposition towards macro social work practice, rather than viewing it as a necessary educational nuisance on their way to a social work degree, as some social work students do (Crutchfield et al., 2016). Research has also found that macro practice students were often told by social work educators that it is difficult to obtain a job and pass the licensing exam with a concentration in macro practice – which perhaps speaks to the content of licensing exams (Plitt Donaldson et al., 2016). Social work students often perceived their foundational social work courses to be void of relevant examples of macro practice and social work administration (Ezell et al., 2004; Zerden et al., 2016). Likewise, faculty members who teach macro practice often feel unsupported by their departments and institutions while teaching macro content (Rothman, 2013). Additional research on macro social work education suggests that macro students

are significantly more dissatisfied with their field placements, and significantly less confident in their preparation to meet workplace demands than their micro practice-focused peers (Deal et al., 2007; Iverson et al., 2021; Williams-Gray, 2014). In light of these findings, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the inattention to macro social work education may lead to future generations of social workers feeling ill-equipped to independently apply macro practice skills, theories, and concepts that are important for effective macro practice (Deal et al., 2007; Netting, 2005).
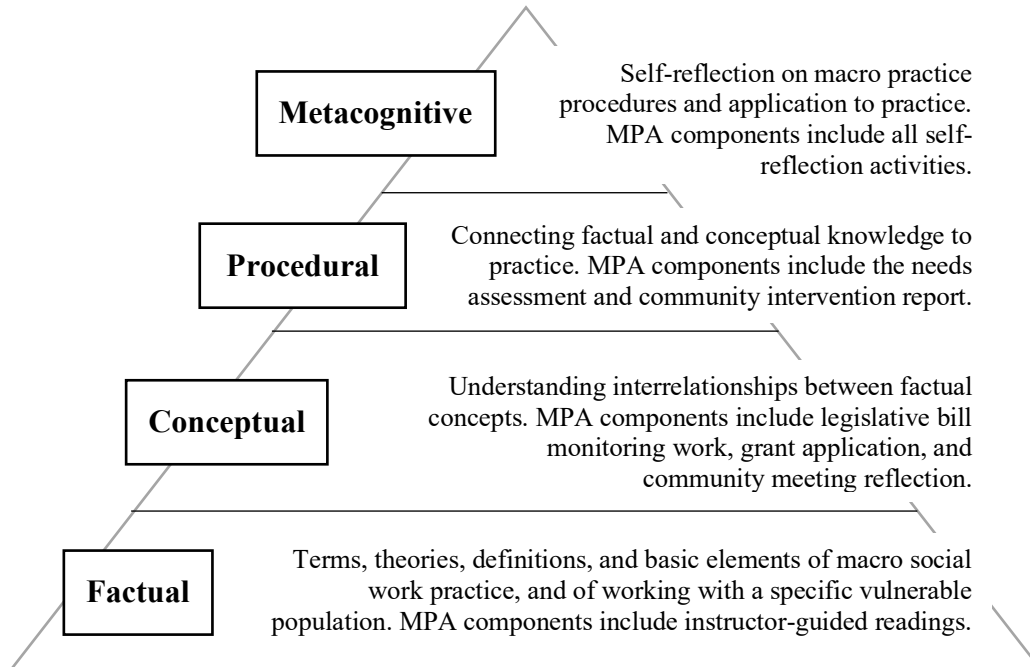
In order to address these shortcomings in macro social work education, various authors have suggested that professors assigned to teach macro practice courses could or should implement community-based or service-learning projects in their classes (Crutchfield et al., 2016; Lucero et al., 2017). These types of projects can foster an understanding and application of macro practice skills and knowledge, thereby addressing some of the deficits associated with macro practice education. Lucero and colleagues (2017) described one project in which a macro practice course partnered with a community institution to help implement a statewide survey. The qualitative student responses at the end of the course revealed that students had increased understanding, perceptions of competence, interest in macro practice, and willingness to shift their professional goals to include macro practice activities following the completion of the project (Lucero et al., 2017). In describing and examining another macro practice activity, Crutchfield and colleagues (2016) found that prior to completing a service-learning project, social work students initially reported a limited understanding of macro practice. At the end of the project, however, the students reported an increased awareness of macro practice strategies and skills, including advocacy skills that are applicable to micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. The results of the studies accompanying these activities suggest that practical, in-class projects that encourage students to apply macro knowledge and skills have the potential to bolster professional interest in macro practice, and better equip students to incorporate macro strategies into their social work careers. However, these studies did not explicitly examine how or whether students' understanding of the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum developed as a result of completing the projects, nor how or whether their micro-mezzo-macro practice skills developed concurrently with the projects. We developed the Macro Practice Assignment (MPA) described below, and a corresponding multiple case study, to address these unanswered questions about macro practice pedagogy.

Macro Practice Assignment (MPA) Description

Given both the importance of macro practice, and the limitations of macro social work education cited above, we created the MPA to encourage social work students to meaningfully engage in macro social work education—with the hope that doing so would encourage lifelong engagement with macro practice. We hypothesized that delivering the MPA would reduce students' negative perceptions of macro practice courses and careers, foster their interest in future macro practice, and help them see macro practice as a necessary component of the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum. Here, we describe the seven components of the MPA, each of which is grounded in Bloom's Taxonomy. Bloom's Taxonomy calls on educators to build students' knowledge by first exposing them to factual knowledge, then conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and finally metacognitive knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Anderson & Sosniak, 1994;

Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956). We designed the components of the MPA to guide students in their acquisition of these layers of knowledge about both macro practice and one specific vulnerable population. In Figure 1, we illustrate how the components of MPA build students' knowledge layer by layer, according to the parameters laid out by Bloom's theoretical model.

Figure 1. *The MPA Mapped to Bloom's Taxonomy Framework*

Metacognitive — Self-reflection on macro practice procedures and application to practice. MPA components include all self-reflection activities.

Procedural — Connecting factual and conceptual knowledge to practice. MPA components include the needs assessment and community intervention report.

Conceptual — Understanding interrelationships between factual concepts. MPA components include legislative bill monitoring work, grant application, and community meeting reflection.

Factual — Terms, theories, definitions, and basic elements of macro social work practice, and of working with a specific vulnerable population. MPA components include instructor-guided readings.

The assignment's focus on one vulnerable population was by design. Curriculum crowding is an ongoing concern in social work education that we sought to address in this project. We hypothesized that providing in-depth information about a specific vulnerable population/practice area through the MPA would provide students with a clear illustration of the relevance of macro social work practice with the population. We believe that the MPA can be modified to fit various class sizes, collaborating agency needs, and vulnerable populations. The MPA as we describe it here is specific to a Macro Practice course taught in both Spring 2020 and Spring 2021. The MPA ran for the duration of the 15-week course; students worked on the individual and group components of the MPA while learning macro practice course content on a weekly basis. (Specific course syllabus, class schedule, assignment instructions, assignment requirements, and grading rubrics are available for review upon request.)

Pre-Course Collaboration with Agency Serving a Vulnerable Population. Prior to beginning each semester, we collaborated with a non-profit agency providing a range of services to a vulnerable population. In this iteration of the MPA, we selected an agency serving domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) survivors. We encouraged the non-profit

agency (hereafter called Community Agency) to articulate 1-2 macro-level goals they would work towards if they had student volunteers available to help accomplish the goals; after they articulated these goals, we included the goals in the course syllabus. These goals became the overarching goals for students when they began working on the MPA. Importantly, students were not graded on whether or not they accomplished their assigned overarching goals for Community Agency. Instead, the goals offered the students a low-stakes opportunity to simulate and reflect on micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills through the completion of MPA components. The MPA components, in turn, existed in service to the eventual completion of the Community Agency's aspirational goals. Although students did not actually participate in the pre-course collaboration component of the MPA, this work is crucial for the success of the MPA and the course itself. Pre-course collaboration allows the MPA to unfold as a partnership that exists in service to the agency, rather than a partnership that exists in service to the students.

Instructor-Guided Readings. The MPA began with students reading six articles pertaining to human trafficking populations. Again, we believed this level of population focus was important for building students' buy-in to course activities, and exposing them to a new content area that they would otherwise only encounter through elective-type courses. The articles included information about human trafficking, and about micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills that social workers use with human trafficking survivor populations. Students completed these readings individually.

Community Meeting Reflection. The students then attended a community meeting organized by the Community Agency. The meeting offered students an opportunity to observe stakeholders discussing human trafficking and Community Agency's initiatives. Students then completed an individual assignment where they reflected on a) what they expected from the meeting, b) how the meeting did or did not meet their expectations, c) whether or not the meeting adhered to social work values, and d) how they would apply macro practice concepts to improve or enhance the meeting's processes.

Legislative Bill Description and Monitoring. Next, students were required to identify state-level policies relevant to Community Agency and/or the human trafficking survivor population. Students then submitted an individual paper where they a) identified a bill from a recent state legislative session, b) identified how and why the bill was relevant to Community Agency and/or human trafficking survivors, c) described the bill's process through the legislative system, and d) described the bill's potential impacts on Community Agency and/or human trafficking survivors.

Grant Proposal. Prior to the start of each semester, we set aside roughly $400 from a small community engagement grant for use in the MPA. The purpose of the grant proposal component of the MPA was to give students an opportunity to practice writing a grant proposal. Students were instructed to use any funds they received towards the implementation of their selected macro intervention with Community Agency; the selected macro intervention was to move Community Agency closer to its stated goals. Students were instructed to work in their groups to complete the grant proposal, which we then funded for the students. Grant totals ranged between roughly $100 - $250.

Needs Assessment and Community Intervention Report. This report served as the culmination of students' work over the course of each semester. Students worked in groups to discuss a specific need of Community Agency or the human trafficking population it served. After deciding upon a need to address through selected macro interventions, the students prepared focused 20-page papers that a) provided a description of the local human trafficking survivor population and Community Agency's related need, b) discussed the general changes and interventions that needed to occur so that Community Agency could better meet clients' needs, c) described what their group did during the MPA with Community Agency, and d) identified and described how student activities met the needs identified in sections a-c of the paper.

Self-Reflection. The final MPA activity was a self-reflection. In this paper, students individually reflected on a) what they learned as a result of the MPA, b) what was rewarding and frustrating about the experience, c) how they intended to apply their learning to future work, and d) how the project advanced human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Case Study Research Questions

Throughout the development and implementation of the MPA, we attempted to adhere closely to the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Anderson & Sosniak, 1994; Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956) to ensure that students were, indeed, developing their macro practice competencies through the MPA. The assignment's theoretical underpinnings, however, did not provide us with assurance that the MPA is a uniquely effective macro practice pedagogy, nor did it provide us with evidence that the MPA encourages increased levels of student engagement in macro practice (or micro and mezzo practice, for that matter). As a result, we chose to scrutinize the MPA through a research study, spanning two different semesters and iterations of the course, in order to answer the following research questions:

1) How does students' understanding of, and commitment to, the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum develop as a result of completing the MPA?

2) How do students' micro-mezzo-macro practice skills—related to one specific vulnerable population engaged through the MPA—develop during the MPA?

Answers to these research questions will inform whether the MPA is worth adapting, implementing, and further analyzing as a potentially promising and transformational macro social work pedagogy.

Methods

This research study adheres to a mixed methods multiple case study design (Creswell, 2013; Gustafsson, 2017; Zach, 2006). We selected this approach because it is effective for answering exploratory research questions about an area of interest—particularly in cases where the sample size is constrained, but the depth of data is not (Creswell, 2013). Although we believe this method is appropriate for initial explorations of the MPA, the

inherent limitations of a case study design mean that we would likely select a different method for subsequent inquiries into the MPA's feasibility, future analyses of the specific student learning outcomes associated with the MPA, and whether these students' learning outcomes are enhanced by the MPA in comparison to other macro social work pedagogies. Despite our small sample size and the limitations of case study research (Yin, 1994), the study design lends strength and reliability to our findings, because it provided us with multiple data types (quantitative, qualitative) and multiple data sources to answer our research questions (Zach, 2006).

Sampling and Participants

Before we began collecting data from our study sample, we sought institutional review board (IRB) approval. The university IRB granted an exemption for this study because study procedures were determined to pose minimal risk to participants. For the study, we sampled two separate cohorts of social work graduate students over two semesters of the Macro Practice course (Spring 2020 and Spring 2021). All of the students included in the study were enrolled in the same generalist social work program. Both semesters of the course were held at a private university in a large metropolitan area in the southwest United States. Although the course was intended to be held in-person, the course instructor (first author) moved the Spring 2020 course to an online format shortly after the mid-term because of campus closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The course remained online-only for the Spring 2021 semester. Since the students in this study were all enrolled in a two-year social work graduate program, none of the students had any social work experience prior to Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, respectively. None of the students had previously taken a Macro Practice course. Of the 15 students included as participants in the study, 5 took the course in Spring 2020 and 10 took the course in Spring 2021. Twelve of the students (80%) identified as female and three of the students (20%) identified as male. Eleven of the students (73.3%) identified as non-Hispanic White, three of the students (20%) identified as Hispanic, and one student (6.6%) identified as African American. On the first day of the class in each semester, all 15 students said they intended to find employment in direct practice social work (micro or mezzo) upon graduation.

Instruments and Procedures

Mixed methods multiple case study designs require researchers to use several instruments, measures, or data collection approaches (Gustafsson, 2017), in order to enhance the depth of data collected and allow for improved data triangulation. For the purposes of this study, we used three separate data collection tools in order to gather a wealth of data from our small sample. The tools included a Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory (pre- and post-test), focus group prompts, and a Reflection Journal.

Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory. After we collected informed consent from the students in January 2020 and January 2021, a research assistant distributed an 18-question Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory via Qualtrics prior to the delivery of course content (see Table 1 for questions in the inventory). This instrument is not validated, which is a limitation of the design, but we were unable to locate a relevant, reliable, and

validated instrument for our purposes. We developed this inventory to assess students' knowledge of human trafficking as a social issue, and to assess how they might apply a range of social work skills and behaviors to three human trafficking case vignettes. We wrote these case vignettes because they correspond with relevant and diverse fields of social work practice, including medical social work, community mental health, and social work in a criminal justice setting. We also wrote questions related to human trafficking knowledge that we were able to pull from the individual MPA readings. Once the students had completed the pre-test, they were briefed on the MPA. The same Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory was distributed to our sample at the end of the semester in April 2020 and April 2021.

Focus Groups. In addition to the pre- and post-tests, we deployed focus group prompts to the students in late-April 2020 and late-April 2021, with the intent of gathering narrative data about the MPA and students' new understandings of micro-mezzo-macro practice and human trafficking. We initially intended for the prompts to be delivered through in-person focus groups, but we had to move the data collection in Spring 2020 to an online discussion board format because of the effects of COVID-19 on the Macro Practice course. Thus, instead of a conversational focus group, responses were constrained into a written response format. Our plan was for a research assistant to run the focus groups so students could speak more freely, but this became impossible with the online discussion format. As a result, it is possible that students censored their responses, since they knew the course instructor would read their answers. In Spring 2021, we conducted the focus group via Zoom, and transcribed the recordings for subsequent analysis. We decided that this was the best approach to data collection, since the instructor had seen student responses in the previous year's discussion board. The 12 questions posed via focus groups are available for review upon request. Example questions include: "How do you feel your participation in this course's Macro Project has influenced your future social work practice?" and "Describe the social work skills that you believe are most important when working indirectly (macro practice) with sex trafficking survivors?"

Reflection Journal. Finally, we asked students to individually reflect and journal on what they learned from the MPA and how they intended to apply their learning to their future micro, mezzo, and macro social work practice. This reflection journal was a component of the MPA itself. The specific prompts for the Reflection Journal were: "How do you intend to apply what you learned in this class to your future work?" and "How did your work on this project advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice?" Students received points for the journal if they completed it, but the content itself was not graded.

Analysis

We first conducted descriptive statistical analyses on the pre- and post-test data. Due to our small sample size, and some study attrition between pre- and post-tests, we were unable to conduct inferential statistical analyses. Several students did not complete the post-test since they did not attend the class in which it was administered. Consequently, we used abbreviated procedures to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the focus group

and Reflection Journal data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The first author coded the focus group and Reflection Journal data, and after checking these codes against the second and third authors' interpretations of the data, the first author then returned to identify corresponding exemplar quotations. Because the narrative data was brief and consistent, and already organized by question prompt, we present participants' responses in the Findings section by reporting the narratative data with question prompts rather than by qualitative themes. Since all three data collection methods inquired about students' knowledge, behaviors, and skills, we were able to triangulate findings from each data collection tool to help answer the study's research questions.

Findings

First, we present quantitative findings associated with the pre- and post-test Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory, and then the qualitative findings associated with the Discussion Board and Reflection Journal data. We believe that these findings provide evidence that the MPA may be an effective novel pedagogy for macro social work education, because the MPA appears associated with improvements in students' understanding of the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum, and modest gains in their social work skills application with a vulnerable population.

Pre- and Post-Test Findings

First, we present student gains in social work skills application. In looking only at the Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory pre- and post-test findings, it appears that students experienced modest changes in human trafficking knowledge, skills, and behaviors during the course of the MPA. See Table 1 for pre- and post-test results.

The students appeared to enter the course with a high level of knowledge about human trafficking and how to apply micro and mezzo practice skills to human trafficking populations. Overall, they performed well on the inventory, scoring an average of 12.87 points (71.5%) on the measure. This suggests that students began the course with some baseline knowledge of the vulnerable population, and how they might apply their social work skills in work with human trafficking survivors in a variety of social work settings.

Of note, though, there were several questions on which the students performed more poorly than others. The questions that fewer than 70% of students answered correctly were Q2, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q16, and Q17. Interestingly, only one of these questions (Q2) was designed to measure human trafficking knowledge; the remaining five questions were designed to measure social work skills and behaviors. It appeared that at the beginning of the MPA, students had greater difficulty understanding how to apply skills with human trafficking populations than they did in recalling facts related to human trafficking.

Although only thirteen students took the post-test, and it was not possible to know who completed it. Post-test results suggested that students improved slightly in their knowledge of human trafficking and how to apply social work skills with this population following completion of the MPA. To begin, participants' average scores increased from 12.87 (71.5%) to 13.69 points (76.1%) in their post-tests. Of course, there are many confounding

factors that may have produced this result, but it appears that students experienced slight increases in knowledge and skill application with human trafficking survivors as a result of completing the MPA.

Table 1. *Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory: Pre- and Post-Test Results*

Inventory Question	Inventory Responses	Pre-Test n=15	Post-Test *n* =13**
1. According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, sex trafficking occurs—even in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion—when an individual exchanges sex for money or goods AND is:	a. An adult female	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. *Under the age of 18	13 (87%)	11 (85%)
	c. An immigrant without legal docs	2 (13%)	2 (15%)
	d. Unable to speak English	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2. Which of the following do experts largely consider the most significant risk factor for domestic minor sex trafficking?	a. Female gender	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
	b. Male gender	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. Identifying as LGBTQ	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
	d. *Running away/homelessness	10 (67%)	13 (100%)
3. Which of the following methods of coercion is most likely to be used by sex traffickers to gain control over their victims?	a. Physical restraints	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. Locked doors	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. *Threats	11 (73%)	10 (77%)
	d. Drug restraints	4 (27%)	3 (23%)
4. At-risk youth are most likely to be trafficked for sex by:	a. A federal law officer	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. A businessperson	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
	c. A stranger	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. *A family member/romantic partner	12 (80%)	13 (100%)
5. What is the first service that sex trafficking survivors typically require upon exiting the sex trade?	a. An appointment with a MH clinician	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
	b. Job placement services	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
	c. Education/loan deferment services	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. *Crisis intervention services	11 (73%)	13 (100%)
6. As a social worker, which of the following is not considered a helpful behavior when working with a sex trafficking survivor?	a. *Relating to survivor's experiences	15 (100%)	10 (83%)
	b. Building a positive rapport	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
	c. Articulating empathic understanding	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. Paraphrasing diverse needs	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
7. Which of the following mental health disorders is a possible outcome of sex trafficking victimization?	a. ADHD	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. Bipolar Disorder	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	15 (100%)	12 (92%)
	d. Narcissistic Personality Disorder	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
8. Social workers should consider using all but one of the following skills while working with sex trafficking survivors. Which of the following skills should not be used by a social worker with this population?	a. *Pressing for details	15 (100%)	13 (100%)
	b. Providing an orientation to services	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. Closed/open-ended questioning	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. Dedicating adequate time for discussion and questions	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
9. Which of the following components of Simone's presentation do you think led to the social worker's suspicion of human trafficking?	a. Simone's age	3 (20%)	3 (23%)
	b. Simone's race and ethnicity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. *Simone's history	9 (60%)	6 (46%)
	d. Simone's manner of dress	3 (20%)	4 (31%)
10. Which of the following is most suggestive that Simone might be a victim of sex trafficking?	a. Her revealing clothing	2 (13%)	1 (8%)
	b. Her difficulties with her stepfather	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. Her age	3 (20%)	4 (31%)
	d. *Her boyfriend's age	10 (60%)	8 (62%)

Table 1. *Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviors Inventory: Pre- and Post-Test Results*

Inventory Question	Inventory Responses	Pre-Test n=15	Post-Test *n* =13**
11. Which of the following behaviors is the most significant red flag for human trafficking?	a. Tommy's frequent phone use	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. Simone's reference to antibiotics	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. Simone looking at Tommy	14 (93%)	9 (69%)
	d. *Simone admitting that she ran away from home	1 (7%)	4 (31%)
12. Why is it essential that all members of Simone's healthcare team be informed about the NP's and social worker's suspicions of human trafficking?	a. Witnesses	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
	b. Informed due to liability	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
	c. *Wraparound services possible	9 (60%)	11 (85%)
	d. Reporting to hotline	3 (20%)	2 (15%)
13. Which of Brian's characteristics, or presenting concerns, might lead the social worker to suspect human trafficking?	a. Brian's age	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. *Brian's romantic involvement	15 (100%)	13 (100%)
	c. Brian's gender	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. Brian's anxiety and depression	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
14. Which factor is most indicative that Brian might be a victim of sex trafficking?	a. Brian's history with bullying	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. Brian's bisexual identity	0 (0%)	3 (23%)
	c. *The power differentials with partner	12 (80%)	9 (69%)
	d. Brian's childhood history of sexual abuse	3 (20%)	1 (8%)
15. When the social worker begins to suspect that Brian is a victim of trafficking, which of the following is the most appropriate question to ask?	a. "Have you ever wondered…?"	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. "What does Richard do for work…?"	2 (13%)	0 (0%)
	c. "Why are you spending time…?"	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
	d. *"I'm feeling genuinely concerned…"	13 (87%)	12 (92%)
16. Which of the following risk factors might lead the staff social worker to most suspect that Jennifer is a victim of sex trafficking?	a. *Jennifer's relationship with parents	8 (53%)	6 (46%)
	b. Jennifer's tattoos and piercings	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	c. Jennifer's age	7 (47%)	7 (54%)
	d. Jennifer's race/ethnicity	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
17. Which of the following social work behaviors is the most important one for the social worker to exhibit while working with Jennifer?	a. Personally relating to experiences	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	b. *Empathizing with Jennifer's pain	3 (20%)	5 (38%)
	c. Communicating familiarity	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
	d. Understanding everything that Jennifer is divulging	12 (80%)	7 (54%)
18. When interacting with Jennifer, which social worker skill is the most important for assisting an individual in her position?	a. *Assessing Jennifer's resources	11 (73%)	9 (69%)
	b. Setting strict boundaries	3 (20%)	4 (31%)
	c. Being available 24 hours a day	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	d. Growing comfortable with stories of abuse	1 (7%)	0 (0%)
	Average Score	12.9 (71.5%)	13.7 (76.1%)

*Correct answer; **Post-test results n = 13, unless participant left answer blank*

Focus Group and Reflection Journal Findings

When we triangulated the pre- and post-test findings against this study's qualitative findings, we observed increased evidence beyond the inventory that, after completing the MPA, macro social work students a) develop micro-mezzo-macro practice skills, and b) display an understanding of the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum. Since student responses were fairly brief, we have included a selection of their responses below.

Focus Group Prompts. In response to a range of questions about macro social work, micro social work, human trafficking, and students' future professional goals, participants spoke very positively about the MPA. In particular, they felt that the MPA provided them opportunities to apply skills, engage in meaningful practice, become more motivated for macro work, and build the depth and breadth of their social work knowledge.

To begin, over half of the students said that the MPA offered them an opportunity to apply a range of social work skills to a real-world scenario, and that this was valuable for their learning even when it was challenging. One student said, for instance, that "the [MPA] was massive and the group element was quite tricky at times…but I still was able to learn a lot about myself and about this issue." The group activity itself was an opportunity for students to learn more about how to engage in mezzo practice with a team. Similarly, seven students referenced the meaningful practice offered to them by the MPA as an important element of learning. These students highly valued the real-world scenario and practice experience they gleaned from the MPA. One student commented, for example, "We have talked about in the course how it's important to work with people who have differing opinions than us, because things don't always come together when everyone is the same." Similarly, the ways in which students were required to engage with a vulnerable population, collaborate with an outside agency, and collaborate with each other, meant that students were able to practice group work and interpersonal dynamics in the context of macro practice, thereby developing the depth and breadth of students' knowledge base. One student explained, "Having to dive head-first into this project while working through class material provided a huge variety of lenses through which to view the issue and I would have to say that has been my biggest takeaway." Perhaps most important for this study's purposes, a majority of the students commented that they began the MPA with little affinity for macro work, but left the MPA with a newfound motivation to engage in and appreciate macro social work practice. One student said, "Firstly, when beginning this class, I would have to say I personally was fairly adamant about not going into macro practice in the future. While I still feel like micro work is where my skill set functions best, this class and this project has taught me that both macro and micro work go together and you cannot have one without the other." Contact the author for additional focus group responses.

Reflection Journals. Students provided similar responses to the Discussion Board in their Reflection Journals, even with different question prompts. Every sampled student stated that the MPA provided them with increased motivation for macro practice, allowed them to apply their skills, and expanded the depth and breadth of their knowledge. One student shared she felt committed to engaging in macro social work throughout her career: "As future social workers, by working on this project, all of the knowledge we have gained will travel with us throughout the entirety of our careers and we will be equipped to continuously support human rights and all forms of justice through the work that we as individuals will do." Another student commented that she sees the direct application of her newfound depth and breadth of knowledge to her future career: "Post-graduation, I want to go into medical social work and I wonder if I will ever come into contact with someone touched by human trafficking—I feel the chances are high that I might, and with the knowledge gained from this project, I know that I will be more equipped to understand

their experience and also possibly the ways in which I can be of the most help to them." Although these comments did not diverge much from the focus group responses, when we directly asked students about the relationship between macro social work and the social work value of social justice, they quickly made connections between the two. One student explained how she infused principles of social justice into the MPA: "Overall, the project led to a product that would have highlighted lived experiences, represented a diverse range of people, increased awareness of human trafficking, and emphasized the need for this population to have access to quality resources and care." As seen in these responses, students viewed the MPA positively and saw its relevance to their careers and lives.

Discussion

The findings from this study suggest that the MPA is an effective approach to help graduate social work students develop an increased understanding of, and commitment to, the micro-mezzo-macro practice continuum, and that they also gained micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills with one specific vulnerable population. Although this is a small case study, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that students may improve, in particular, their applied behaviors and skills with human trafficking populations. Findings also suggest that students demonstrate an increased interest in macro practice, and an increased awareness of how macro practice is relevant to micro and mezzo social work, and vice versa.

Our qualitative findings further suggest that the effectiveness of the MPA is grounded in the ways in which it encourages knowledge depth and breadth, skills application, and skills practice. These themes—which we observed throughout the narrative data—align well with the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy that we sought to infuse into the MPA. We aspired to expose our students to factual knowledge through the MPA's required readings; to conceptual knowledge through the Community Meeting Reflection, the Legislative Bill Description and Monitoring Assignment, and the Grant Proposal; to procedural knowledge through the completion of the Needs Assessment and Community Intervention Report; and finally meta-cognitive knowledge through the self-reflection paper. It appears as though these knowledge elements and corresponding activities, purposefully infused into the MPA, enhanced student motivation for macro practice and student recognition that macro work is transformational social justice work.

Of course, it is possible to include these knowledge elements into many different types of macro practice assignments. My own (first author) undergraduate macro practice course included a community engagement assignment, in which we completed a macro activity for a local non-profit. The MPA is perhaps unique, however, in that we designed it to focus specifically on one vulnerable population, we selected readings that applied to micro-mezzo-macro interventions, we required students to work together (mezzo practice) towards the same goal, and we ensured that all components of the Bloom's Taxonomy model were methodically included in the assignment. We also ensured that students made real-time connections between the MPA and micro and mezzo interventions they had to complete in order to achieve their goals. This last step was an important consideration for the MPA. Unfortunately, macro social work is all too often siphoned off from micro and

mezzo practice. As a result, many social workers are unable to immediately identify the connections between all forms of social work practice (Crutchfield et al., 2016; Lucero et al., 2017). Increased intentionality in social work education, through the MPA or similar learning activities, may help to reconnect these forms of practice in the minds of the next generation of social workers.

Our positive findings suggest that social work educators should consider implementing the MPA—or an activity that includes all of the knowledge components referenced above—in macro social work classes. Doing so may lead to enhanced outcomes in both the short-term and long-term. In the short term, students exposed to the MPA may demonstrate increased knowledge and application of appropriate social work behaviors and skills with vulnerable populations, and an increased recognition that micro, mezzo, and macro practice exist along a continuum. In the long-term, students exposed to the MPA may be more likely to meaningfully engage in macro practice throughout their careers, whether they are employed in an official macro practice context or not.

Limitations

We undertook this multiple case study to explore a novel macro social work pedagogy with a small sample of graduate social work students. We believe that a multiple case study design was appropriate for our research questions, but the study has several limitations which should inform the interpretation of its results. To begin, we relied upon a small and non-representative sample of graduate social work students, which means that generalizability should not be assumed. Moreover, there were many confounding factors in the study; it is quite possible that student improvements were the result of course content rather than the MPA, other social work courses, field placement experiences, and more. Causality, therefore, cannot be assumed. Due to the small sample size, we were also unable to conduct inferential statistics to determine if student changes on the pre- and post-tests were statistically significant, nor were we able to link positive student assessments of the MPA to actual long-term behavioral change. The pre/posttest measure was also not a validated measure. Finally, the narrative data may be limited by the fact that the PI was the course instructor, and had to collect this data from students in writing due to pandemic-related issues with the focus groups. Despite these limitations, we believe that there is some evidence to support the MPA as a promising pedagogy. Future research should investigate whether these findings hold true with a larger randomized sample of students, and with correspondingly robust research methods that are more equipped to answer research questions related to causation.

Conclusion

Although this mixed methods multiple case study relied on a small sample of macro practice students in one graduate social work program, findings suggest that the MPA is a promising macro social work pedagogy. The MPA appeared to enhance students' knowledge, behavior, and micro-mezzo-macro practice skills with vulnerable human trafficking populations, and also appeared to improve students' understanding of, and commitment to, the micro, mezzo, and macro practice continuum within the social work

profession. Findings suggest that the MPA can help students understand the relevance of macro practice to their future goals; it is for this reason that social work educators may find the MPA to be particularly useful for students who take macro practice courses because they are required, and not because they find macro content to be immediately relevant to their professional goals.

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