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Field Practicum Experiences of Macro-Oriented Graduate Students
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Field Practicum Experiences
of Macro-Oriented Graduate Students:
Are We Doing Them Justice?

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There has been considerable discussion about the nature of graduate macro social work education over the past decade (Lennon, 1992; McNutt,
1995; Menefee, 2000; Patti, 2000). The focus of most of the research has been on the quantity and quality of macro practice curriculum in the classroom, but not in the field. One study conducted twenty years ago (Fortune et al., 1985) found that macro-oriented students were more satisfied with their field learning than micro-oriented students. Little is known about the current field practicum experiences of graduate students in macro-level practice. Social service organizations and communities need macro practitioners who have a deep appreciation of the work, and who are prepared to negotiate the community and organizational terrain to become strong leaders and advocates (Menefee, 2000; Patti, 2000). The profession is challenged to not only recruit more social work students into administration and community organization, but also to hold their interest in pursuing these careers after completing their education.

Since students’ fieldwork experiences often shape their decisions about career choices, it is particularly important that social work educators ensure that students in management and community practice have satisfying learning opportunities and experiences in macro practice settings. This is particularly challenging when many schools of social work are experiencing a decline in the availability and quality of field placements and supervisors to train students (Jarman-Rohde et al., 1997).

The research questions that guide this paper are: (1) What are the field practicum experiences of graduate students with a management and community practice orientation? (2) How do management and community practice students differ from more traditional clinical students in their field practicum experiences? (3) What are the implications for macro-level social work education, the structure of macro practice fieldwork, and future research on macro practice curriculum?

Studies on students’ satisfaction with field activities and field instructors’ behaviors have predominately focused on either social work students in foundation-level “generalist” placements or advanced clinical practice placements (Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune, McCarthy, & Abramson, 2001; Knight, 1996, 2000; Lazar & Eisikovits, 1997; Strozier, Barnett-Queen, & Bennett, 2000). Much less is known about the experiences of students in advanced management, and community practice field placements in particular.

A few studies have explored differences between subgroups of students in their satisfaction with their social work education experience, including part-time versus full-time students (Ackerman, Gelber, & Wayne, 1988; Boynton, 1987; Authors, 2005; Rosenthal, Wedel, & Wilson, 1989), older versus younger students (Authors, 2005, Fortune et al., 1985, 2001; Knight, 2000), and students who are employed, experienced, married, or
parents versus those that are not (Briggs & Stephens, 1990; Fortune, 1987; Fortune & Abramson, 1993). The Authors (2005) found that non-traditional student subgroups, particularly part-time and field employment-based, regardless of age, reported more positive field placement experiences than students who were full-time or students in non-employment placements.

Students in macro practice have consistently remained a neglected subgroup in the research on field education. By studying management and community practice students' perceptions of their field experiences, schools of social work can begin to understand the unique characteristics and learning needs of these students. Filling in the gap of information about their unique experiences has implications for social work macro practice in organizations and communities, and MSW curriculum and field education.

**METHODS**

**Participants**

This study is part of a broader assessment of 1,291 social work students' field experiences at a large, northeastern graduate school of social work (see Authors, 2005). The sample for this part of the study consisted of 477 graduate students in agency-based advanced field education: 329 (69%) were in clinical-oriented field placements and 148 (31%) were in macro-oriented (management/community practice) field placements. The philosophy of this particular school of social work is that macro practice encompasses a continuum of activities that include both management and community practice. Students in the macro concentration take an array of courses that include content in both areas. Policy practice is infused within the management and community practice curriculum; however, there is not a specific policy concentration. Data were collected in the spring of four consecutive academic years (2000-2004). The school utilizes a concurrent model of field education that requires students to take classroom methods courses while in field placement. Students enrolled in “advanced” field education first choose a clinical or macro practice concentration and select a placement site related to both the concentration and the specialization (field of practice). Field instructors are expected to be on-site at least 50% of the time and meet with the student at least once a week. Faculty field liaisons oversee
students' placements and are expected to make a minimum of two site visits a year.

Out of 700 advanced-level students in the field, 477 completed a field education evaluation survey for a response rate of 68%. Overall, 60% (n = 286) of the participants/students had less than five years of human service work experience, and 40% (n = 191) had more than 5 years; 68% (n = 324) were 30 years of age or younger and 32% (n = 153) were older than 30; 86% (n = 410) of students were full-time and the remainder (14%, n = 67) was part-time; 30% (n = 143) had advanced standing status; and 12% (n = 57) were in employment-based field placements.

**Procedures**

The university field education office disseminated a self-administered questionnaire to MSW students enrolled in field education (see Authors, 2005). As part of an independent research project, three social work macro students teamed with the Field Education Committee (consisting of the field education director, field education personnel, and several faculty, students, and field instructors) to review the literature and develop questions for the evaluation survey pertaining to students’ overall field education experiences. The literature highlighted the importance of understanding students’ perceptions of: The field agency or setting, itself; quality of field instruction and interaction with the field instructor; and interaction with the school’s field faculty liaisons (Cimino et al., 1982; Fortune et al., 1985; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune, McCarthy, & Abramson, 2001; Kissman & Van Tran, 1990; Knight, 1996, 2001; Raskin, 1982). The Field Committee and the research students developed a questionnaire that reflected these (above) categories of field experiences.

The questionnaire consisted of 18 items that asked about students’ field experiences related to the field setting, field instructor, and field liaison. Items were measured using a 4-point Likert-like scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) with higher scores indicating higher levels of agreement with each item. Based on an assumption that most respondents would not be undecided about issues related to their responsibilities, access to resources in the agencies, and helpfulness of their field instructor and field liaison, the undecided or neutral response category was not included. Three additional open-ended questions asked students whether they would recommend their field settings, supervisors/instructors, and liaisons to others.
The macro research students pilot-tested the survey instrument in a classroom of students representing both the clinical and macro concentrations. The questionnaire was revised accordingly following the pilot test and disseminated to advanced-level students by classroom faculty during the final week of spring semester classes. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire that briefly explained the purpose of the survey and ensured the participants of the anonymity of their responses, emphasizing that no one at the field organization would ever see their questionnaire. The students’ responses to the survey were entered into a SPSS database for analysis.

Qualitative data were analyzed using Weber’s (1985) guidelines, by performing content analysis on students’ written responses to two open-ended questions: (1) “I would recommend this field placement to others. Why or why not?” and (2) “I would recommend my field instructor to others. Why or why not?” Students’ responses were first coded as positive (would recommend), negative (would not recommend), or conditional (recommend under certain conditions). Unclear statements were dropped from the analysis (Weber, 1985). Because of the study’s focus on reasons for student dissatisfaction, negative and conditional responses under the categories of field placement and field instructor were grouped under themes that emerged from the data (e.g., under negative field placement, the emergent themes were inadequate learning experiences, inadequate supervision, internal agency problems, and lack of clarity about student role). Conditional responses were also analyzed because they specified why students would qualify their recommendation, thereby including content related to student dissatisfaction. The number of responses under each theme was counted to determine the intensity of student concerns. All coding was done by the first author.

Measures

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) estimated the extent to which the individual survey items were related to each other in a way consistent with the conceptualizations of field setting, field supervision, and field liaison experiences. Factor analysis revealed that nine items appropriately loaded on one factor (students’ perceptions of field agency/setting), four items loaded on a second component (students’ perceptions of field supervision), and five items loaded on a third factor (students’ experiences with the faculty field liaison). The internal consistency reliability of indices that emerged as empirically distinct was estimated using Cronbach’s Alpha.
Dependent Variables

Three dependent variables were created from the three respective factor components by averaging the means of each component's corresponding items that were measured on a 4-point Likert-like scale. These variables (field setting experiences, alpha = .90; field supervision experiences, alpha = .82; and field liaison experiences, alpha = .90) were used in t-test analyses that compared the experiences of macro and micro students. Since the dependent variables were correlated with each other and together conceptually captured students' overall field experiences, they were subsequently used in multivariate (MANOVA) analysis (also see Authors, 2005). MANOVA was performed because of the intercorrelated "field experiences" measures (setting, instructor, liaison), greater statistical power to detect true differences, and control of false positive results from several individual analyses (i.e., three separate regressions). The dependent variables were constructed to be more continuous for the MANOVA by running a factor analysis on each dependent variable's items, saving the factor scores, and using these scores in the MANOVA.

Experiences with the field placement agency/setting was measured by saving the factor analysis scores for nine items about students' role in the field agency, access to resources, field assignments, extent of challenge, and preparation for working in the social work field.

Experiences with field supervisor/instructor was measured by saving the factor analysis scores for four items about students' supervision related to developing a learning contract, applying learning objectives, receiving orientation, and meeting weekly with the field instructor.

Experiences with the faculty field liaison was measured by saving the factor analysis scores for five items about faculty field liaisons' role, availability, and helpfulness.

Independent Variables

Since the results of previous research on students' field experiences have been mixed related to the impact of such factors as program status (i.e., part-time or full-time, employment- or non-employment-based, advanced standing or two-year) and students' age and work experience, this study controlled for the effects of these factors in the MANOVA. Dummy variables were created (Yes = 1, No = 0) distinguishing Management and community practice students from clinical students,
Part-time from full-time students, Employment-based from non-employment-based students, and Advanced Standing from two-year students. Age was coded as 1 (over 30) and 0 (30 and under), and Work Experience was coded as 1 (0-3 years), 2 (4-9 years), and 3 (10 or more years).

RESULTS

Descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate statistical analyses were performed. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. First, descriptive and bivariate statistics were used to describe and compare macro and clinical students on each of the variables (see Table 1). Overall, students' perceptions of their field experiences were fairly positive, as the average mean score was 3.43, SD = .52 (on a scale of 1-4) for all 18 items in the questionnaire. As shown in Table 1, management and community practice and clinical practice students are fairly similar in age, work experience, and program status (i.e., mostly full-time and non-employment-based), with the exception that management and community practice students are less likely (p = .002) than clinical students

TABLE 1. Descriptive Comparison of Macro and Clinical-Oriented Students on all Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variables</th>
<th>Macro Practice Students (N = 148)</th>
<th>Clinical Practice Students (N = 329)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Employment-Based</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Standing</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Age (over 30)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0-3 years)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4-9 years)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 10 years)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Placement Setting</td>
<td>3.44*</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Instruction/Supervision</td>
<td>3.60*</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Field Liaison</td>
<td>3.01**</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01; **p < .05
to have advanced standing status. Table I also shows that students in macro practice field placements reported less favorable experiences than students in clinical practice field placements regarding each of the dependent variables: The field agency/setting, $t(475) = 2.73, p = .007$; field instruction, $t(469) = 2.31, p = .02$; and interactions with faculty liaisons, $t(465) = 2.67, p = .008$.

MANOVA were used to determine the combined effects of students’ level of practice (macro or clinical), program status (i.e., part-time, employment-based, advanced standing), age, and work experience on students’ perceptions of field experiences (agency, supervision, and liaison). Findings revealed statistically significant main effects for macro practice only on students’ reports of field education experiences. Table 2 summarizes the MANOVA results, including the $F$-test score and significance level for each of the three dependent variables. Specifically, management and community practice students reported less positive ($p < .01$) field experiences than clinical students, particularly with field placement settings. Additionally, while there were no main effects for employment-based students on field experiences overall, they reported more positive ($p < .05$) interactions with faculty field liaisons than all other students. Overall, the results suggest that when controlling for age, work experience, and program characteristics/status, macro-oriented students’ field education experiences were not as favorable as clinical-oriented students.

**TABLE 2. Results of MANOVA on Field Placement Setting, Field Instruction, and Faculty Field Liaison (N = 477)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Field Placement Setting</th>
<th>Field Instruction</th>
<th>Field Liaison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Age (Over 30)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time Status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.648</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment-Based Placement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Standing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.388</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.674</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.480**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01
Findings Among Macro Practice Students

Bivariate and qualitative analyses were also used to determine differences between management and community practice students, themselves, in their field experiences. The results show that there were no significant differences in demographics, program status, field experiences, or open-ended comments among macro practice students. Thus, the data indicate that macro practice students have similar characteristics, perceptions, and experiences, regardless of whether their field placement is oriented toward management or community practice.

Qualitative Data

Given the findings from the MANOVA analyses that macro-oriented students expressed lower rates of satisfaction with their field placements and field instructors than clinical students, responses of both groups of students to open-ended questions were compared. As shown in Table 3, over half of both groups of students responded to the question of whether they would recommend their field placement (56.08% macro; 65.05% clinical). There were no significant differences in any of the demographic or program status variables between responders and non-responders. Consistent with the quantitative data, macro-oriented students were more likely than clinical students not to recommend their placements (25.30% vs. 14.49%). The reasons most frequently cited by both groups of students were similar. Students reported that their field placements provided inadequate learning experiences (e.g., few relevant assignments, insufficient client contact) or supervision (e.g., unprepared supervisor) or that poor learning experiences coexisted with problems within the agency (e.g., poor supervision in an agency with few resources). An additional 15 micro-oriented students and 21 clinical students recommended their field placement conditionally (e.g., if supervised by a particular field instructor). Because these conditional responses specified why students would qualify their recommendation, they were analyzed for content related to student dissatisfaction. Results were consistent with the responses of students who would not recommend their placements. The majority of students (60.00% micro-oriented; 52.38% clinical) who cited a condition for recommending their placements mentioned supervision as an issue, that is, either that their field instruction was inadequate despite an overall positive field experience or that the agency was suitable only for a student who could work independently. In summary, although only a minority of students would not
### TABLE 3. Responses of Students not Recommending Field Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Students Responding to Open-Ended Question (n, %)</th>
<th>Students not Recommending Field Placement (n, %)</th>
<th>Reasons for not Recommending (n, %)</th>
<th>Combination of Learning Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate Learning</td>
<td>Inadequate Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro (N = 148)</td>
<td>83 (56.08)</td>
<td>21 (25.30)</td>
<td>5 (23.81)</td>
<td>5 (23.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical (N = 329)</td>
<td>214 (65.05)</td>
<td>31 (14.49)</td>
<td>7 (22.58)</td>
<td>7 (22.58)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
recommend their field placements, macro-oriented students were more likely than clinical students to express dissatisfaction; however, both groups of students provided similar reasons.

Macro-oriented and clinical students also provided similar responses to the open-ended question, “Would you recommend your field instructor; why or why not?” As shown in Table 4, over half of both groups of students responded to this question (57.43% macro; 51.98% clinical) with low percentages of students in both groups not recommending their field instructors (17.65% macro; 14.04% clinical). Both groups of students provided similar reasons for their decisions. Two-thirds of both macro and clinical students stated that their field instructors lacked supervisory skills (e.g., failed to provide positive feedback, failed to communicate clearly, were overbearing or autocratic) while one-third responded that their field instructors were often unavailable. An additional 12 macro-oriented and 15 clinical students recommended their field instructor conditionally. Results were consistent with the responses of students who would not recommend their field instructors. The primary reason that students gave their field instructors a conditional recommendation was that, despite their field instructors’ assistance, they were often busy or unavailable (macro, 76.00%; clinical, 66.76%). In summary, macro-oriented and clinical students who would not recommend their field instructors were similar; both groups had low percentages of dissatisfied students who provided similar reasons for their dissatisfaction.

**Characteristics of Macro-Oriented Field Sites**

In this study site, there was a range of field agencies and experiences available to students (see Table 5). The largest numbers of macro-oriented students in this study were placed in departments of social services, community-based non-profits, industrial or corporate worksites, agencies

| TABLE 4. Responses of Students not Recommending Field Instructors |
|---|---|---|---|
| Concentration | Students Responding to Open-Ended Question (n, %) | Students not Recommending Field Instructor (n, %) | Reasons for not Recommending (n, %) |
| | | | Lacking Supervisory Skill | Unavailable |
| Macro (N = 148) | 85 (57.43) | 15 (17.65) | 10 (66.67) | 5 (33.33) |
| Clinical (N = 329) | 171 (51.98) | 24 (14.04) | 16 (66.67) | 8 (33.33) |
focused on advocacy, and agencies dedicated to housing or economic development. The types of field experiences that agencies offered varied, with community-based non-profits and agencies focused on economic development more likely to offer students opportunities to engage in community organizing. Fifty percent or more of the government agencies, faith-based agencies, and agencies focused on health, mental health, advocacy or economic development combined opportunities in administration, community organization, and/or policy.

While the 92 agencies were evenly divided between small (less than 50 employees) and large (50 employees or more) agencies, community-based non-profits and agencies devoted to advocacy or housing and economic development were far more likely to be small, while public departments of social service, government agencies, hospitals, and aging facilities were more likely to be large. Approximately two-thirds of these agencies (70.65%) had an ongoing relationship with the school as a field placement site.
A substantial number of the macro practice students in this study (64, 43.54%) were placed in four kinds of agencies: Those devoted to advocacy, focused on housing and economic development, faith-based, or community-based non-profits. These nontraditional, grassroots placement settings often tend to be less predictable and more complex in nature. Typically, the field instructors in these placement settings are agency managers or directors who are particularly busy, with limited availability for regular supervisor-student conferences. For example, 75% of the field supervisors/instructors for the macro students in this study were either agency directors or high-level managers. According to the university's field education department, there is also higher turnover among field instructors in these types of organizations at the manager/director level, so there is the potential for less dependable, less consistent supervision for students.

Another quarter of the students in the study (41, 27.89%) was placed in agencies focused on health, mental health, or aging, in hospitals, or in industrial or corporate organizations, which are typically “proprietary” for-profit organizations. Marshack (as cited in Hancock, 1992) states that proprietary agencies experience high turnover rates among field instructors and put “pressure on schools for experienced students who can quickly become part of the service delivery team” (p. 339). Marshack suggests strategies that appear to be effective in combating the effects of field instructor turnover and “insufficient supervisory time and attention” including group supervision or multiple supervisors that meet the school's criteria (as cited in Hancock, 1992, p. 339).

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The purpose of this study was to explore the field experiences of macro practice MSW students. As an increasing number of schools of social work provide a macro concentration or specialization track (Lennon, 2002) for students interested in social service administration, community organization/development, and/or policy practice, information about macro-oriented students' specific educational characteristics and needs is of interest to schools of social work. As mentioned previously, students in their “Advanced” placements, in general, reported positive field experiences (most means on the questionnaire items fell between 3 and 4 on a 4-point scale). However, in comparing the field experiences of macro and clinical practice students, statistically significant differences emerged that may still
have practical implications for how macro students are prepared, oriented, and treated within the field educational setting.

The results of this study suggest that, although macro and clinical practice students were similar in many ways, macro practice students, regardless of age, experience, or program status, reported less positive field educational experiences than clinical practice students. These findings have ramifications for the education of macro-oriented social work students.

**Improving Learning Experiences for Macro Students**

Field instructors’ availability and their provision of immediate, focused feedback on students’ work in the agency has been consistently shown to increase student satisfaction (Ellison, 1994; Fortune & Abramson, 1993; Fortune et al., 2001; Knight, 1996, 2000, 2001; Miller et al., 2005). Qualitative data from this study suggest that macro students’ major complaints concerned their field placements’ lack of adequate learning experiences and the inadequacy and/or unavailability of supervision. Although the rate of dissatisfaction was greater for macro students, the finding that clinical students’ complaints were similar suggests that demands placed on social workers in some macro and clinical agencies alike are affecting these field instructors’ ability to supervise. Field instructors who are less available have fewer opportunities to help their students learn, for example, by thoughtfully planning appropriate learning experiences and providing the type of timely explanations and feedback that students find helpful. Although Miller et al. (2005) were not specifically addressing the less predictable nature of macro practice agencies, their recommendation that field instructors “learn multiple strategies for providing useful feedback to their students” (p. 143) is appropriate. For example, macro agencies could facilitate collaborative relationship between field instructors and other staff to supplement student supervision.

Qualitative data from this study highlight students’ expectations for positive, relevant learning experiences at their field placements. Designing relevant assignments for students is a complex task in that field instructors must consider the learning needs of the student in connection with the needs, purpose, and priorities of the agency. As agencies engaged in macro practice tend to be complex and changeable, this puts an additional burden on macro field instructors who cannot rely on assigning cases, but must often create new tasks each year depending on the agency’s current projects. In addition, to make student assignments meaningful, research supports the fact that field instructors need to explain the
relevance of all assignments to students’ learning goals. “Understanding the usefulness of learning tasks enhances intrinsic motivation and that pleasure should increase satisfaction” (Fortune, Lee, & Cavazos, 2005, p. 123). Schools of social work could assist macro field instructors by offering training in how to develop clear connections between student assignments and the learning goals they address. Since macro students are in the minority in schools of social work (Lennon, 2002), it requires a special effort for schools to address the training needs of macro field instructors.

Faculty field liaisons for macro practice students need to become especially vigilant and proactive in helping the students negotiate organizational and community terrains where the practicum expectations and field assignments are not as well established or clear as in more traditional clinical settings. Given the particular challenges faced by macro students, faculty field liaisons may need to initiate more face-to-face helpful interactions with macro students and their field instructors/ supervisors. Schools of social work could help liaisons by offering training that identifies the specific learning needs of macro students and targets liaisons’ role in the educational process (e.g., making connections between the curriculum and students’ work in the field; providing constructive feedback to both students and field instructors). If field liaisons have a clinical background, they may need additional training in understanding the types of assignments given to management and community practice students and how to assess their educational purpose. Overall, if macro students’ roles in the agencies and field assignments are less understood, supervision less available, and faculty field interactions inadequate, then macro students’ field experiences will be less favorable than their clinical counterparts.

Establishing Collaborative Relationships

The findings related to macro students’ perceptions of field instruction/supervision and faculty liaisons suggest that graduate social work programs need to help macro students develop better skills in advocating for their own needs and in establishing positive collaborative relationships in their field settings. Macro practice students may find their field experiences more satisfying if they received additional assistance in navigating the field education experience, including negotiating agreements with field instructors, developing and applying learning objectives, and soliciting consultation with field faculty liaisons. Additionally, macro practice courses may need to be re-examined and retooled to be more conducive to students’ field environments. Macro students may require more assistance in making conceptual linkages between classroom and field,
especially in administration and community practice in nontraditional, dynamic organizational and community settings.

The issues in macro-oriented agencies of less predictability, structure, and availability of supervision may also apply to the experiences of new social work graduates as they begin their careers as macro practitioners. Supervisors in these agencies could help new graduates stay committed to macro practice by being alert to the effects of structural conditions in their agencies on the work satisfaction of new macro practice graduates.

Other Factors Affecting Students’ Satisfaction with Field Experiences

Other findings in the study revealed that certain aspects of students’ program status, such as being part-time or advanced standing were not significantly related to students’ perceptions of educational experiences in field. However, students in employment-based field placements reported better experiences with faculty field liaisons than other students. Perhaps there was some recognition on the part of both the employment-based students and faculty field liaisons that these students, in particular, needed additional attention in terms of liaison visits to the placement setting and general availability and helpfulness to ensure that the students were indeed engaged in new learning opportunities different from their “regular job.” There is some speculation in academic settings that being a student intern in the setting where one is employed disadvantages employment-based students. Unexpectedly, neither the age of the student nor having work experience were significant factors in the analysis of field experiences. This study is limited by its use of one school of social work. However, the school is one of the largest in the country, has more macro practice students than any other school, and serves an urban and rural statewide student population making these findings more generalizable. Although this study is confined to student reports, it offers information on how the often neglected management and community practice students differ from the more numerous clinical students in their perceptions. The findings need to be replicated and such studies expanded to include measures in addition to student satisfaction, for example, students’ actual performance (Fortune et al., 2001). Additional qualitative research could provide information on the strengths and challenges macro practice students face in their field practicum. MSW field education programs and macro-oriented field sites could use this information to enhance students’ professional development as macro practitioners.
REFERENCES


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