

FCAB in the Curricula: Student Perceptions

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Background

- ▶ Social service providers unprepared to offer FCAB services
(Despard & Chowa, 2010; Gillen & Loeffler, 2012; Loke, Watts, & Kakoti, 2013)
- ▶ Social work students lack adequate personal financial knowledge and skills
(Gillen & Loeffler, 2012; Loke & Hageman, 2013)
- ▶ Graduate social work students more knowledgeable than undergraduates
(Gillen & Loeffler, 2012)
- ▶ Social work students generally lack sensitivity to client's financial constraints
(Eamon & Zhang, 2006)
- ▶ Social work students see association between financial stressors and host of client issues, agree that finances are relevant to social work, and moderately receptive to receiving financial education (Kindle, 2010)

Research Questions

- ▶ How do client's financial situations intersect with social work practice?
- ▶ Is it important to be educated about FCAB content and skills?
- ▶ Where does FCAB fit in the social work curricula?
- ▶ How much FCAB content has been received?
- ▶ Is there a difference in perceptions by preferred fields of practice?
- ▶ Is there a difference by level of program?
- ▶ Did the social work program make a difference in perceptions?

Methods

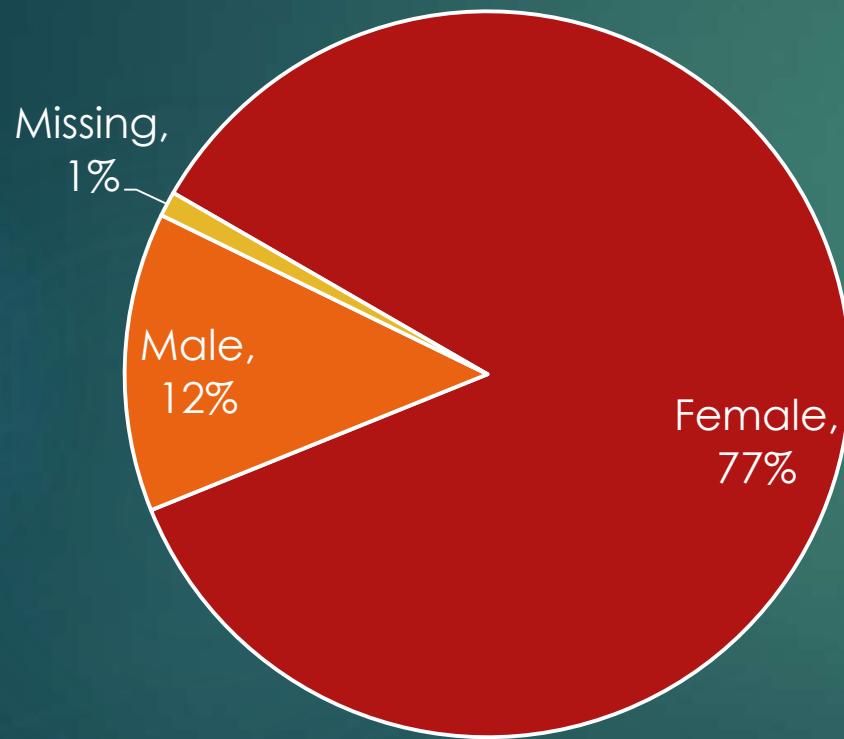
- ▶ Sampling Frame
 - ▶ 16 social work programs across the U.S. recruited
 - ▶ All students are invited to complete the survey
- ▶ Measures
 - ▶ Developed survey instrument for study
 - ▶ Survey piloted, checked for face and construct validity
 - ▶ Instrument refined based on feedback

Sample

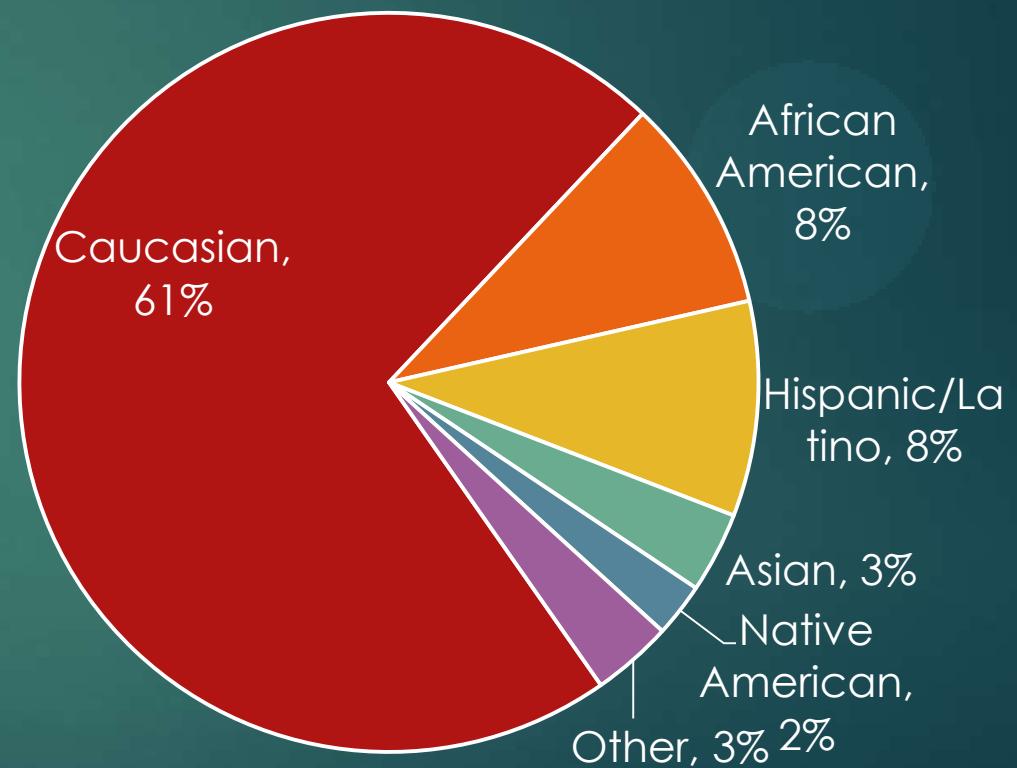
- ▶ 643 students from 16 social work programs across the U.S.

Demographic profile

Gender

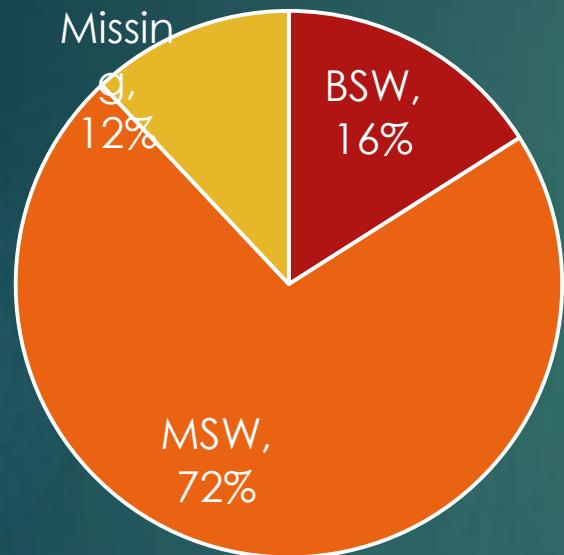


Race /Ethnicity



Program status

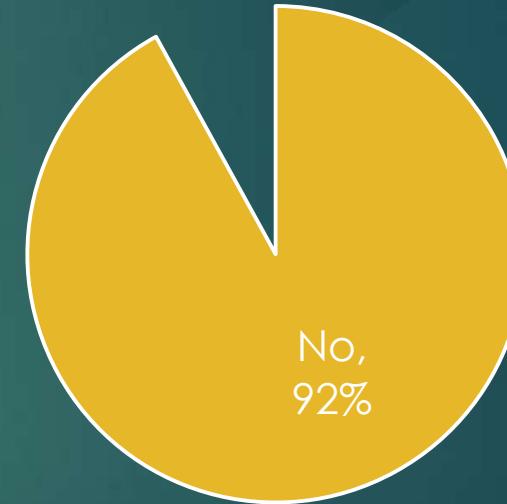
Program Level



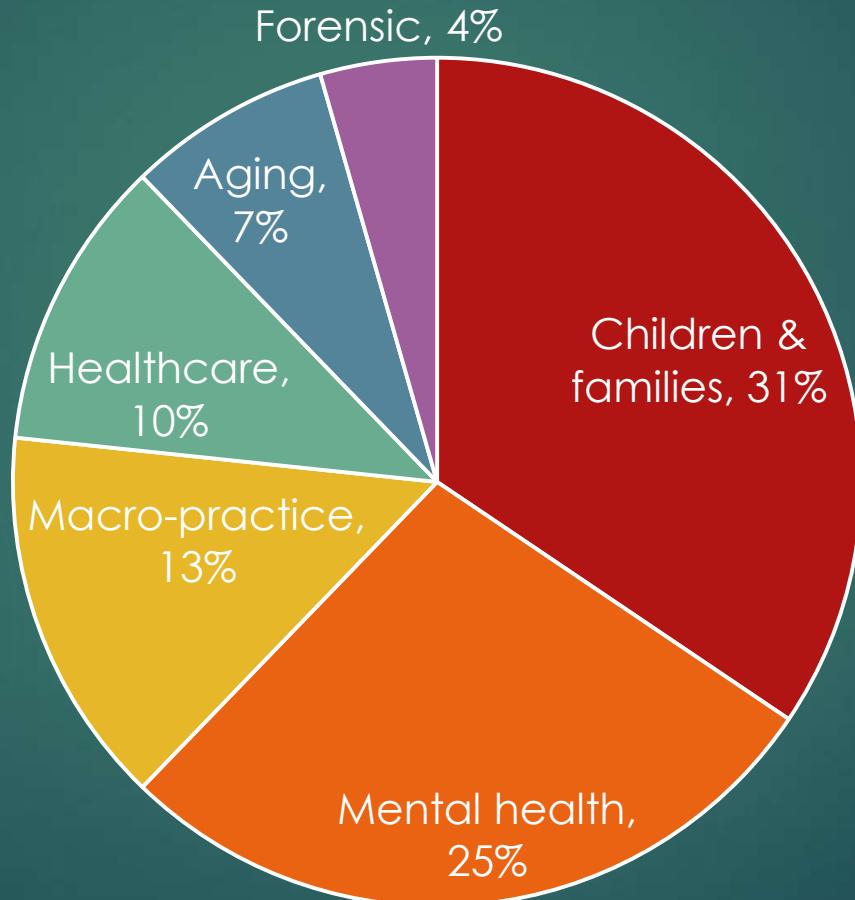
Program Stage



Fin Ed



Preferred fields of practice



Results

Intersection of social work and client's financial issues

- ▶ Broad acknowledgment that client's financial issues intersect with social work on a conceptual level ...
- ▶ “working on economic issues is something social workers should be involved with”
 - ▶ 92% agree or strongly agree
 - ▶ No difference by program level or program stage
 - ▶ Students preferring macro practice have higher agreement compared to students preferring the other fields, with the exception of forensic social work

Intersection of social work and client's financial issues (cont'd)

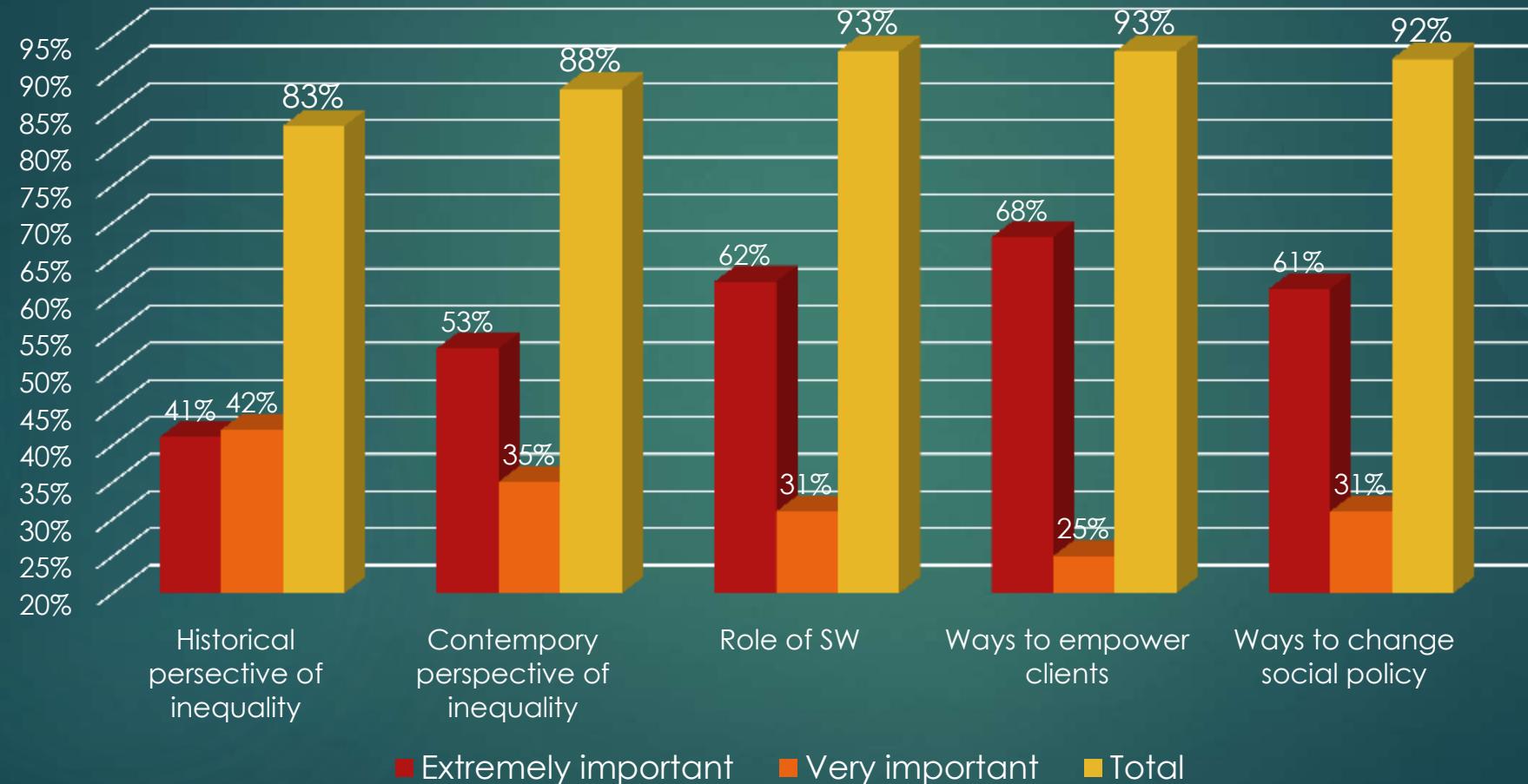
- ▶ Slightly lower support for FCAB practice in social work
- ▶ “improving the economic circumstance of people in need is an important focus of intervention for clients”
 - ▶ 86% agree or strongly agree
 - ▶ No difference by program level or program stage
 - ▶ Higher agreement among students preferring macro-practice compared to those preferring mental health

Intersection of social work and client's financial issues (cont'd)

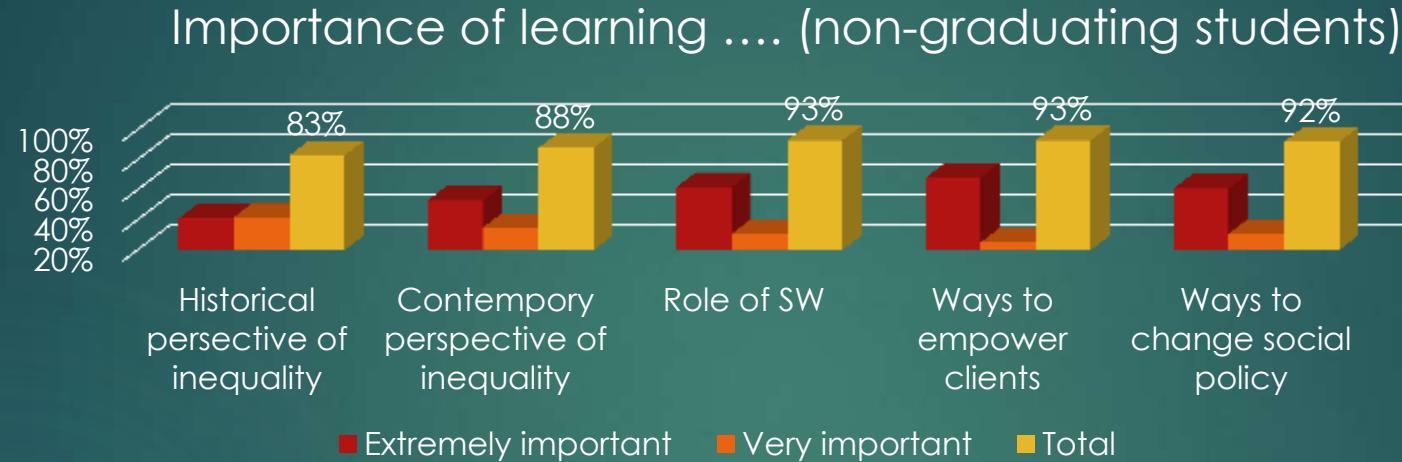
- ▶ Client's economic information is used ...
 - ▶ To better understand client barriers (96% agree / strongly agree)
 - ▶ No difference by program level or preferred fields of practice
 - ▶ Stronger agreement among graduating students
 - ▶ Primarily as an eligibility screen for services (14% disagree / strongly disagree)
 - ▶ No difference by program level
 - ▶ Stronger agreement among graduating students
 - ▶ Stronger agreement among those preferring forensic social work compared to mental health

FCAB education

Importance of learning (non-graduating students)



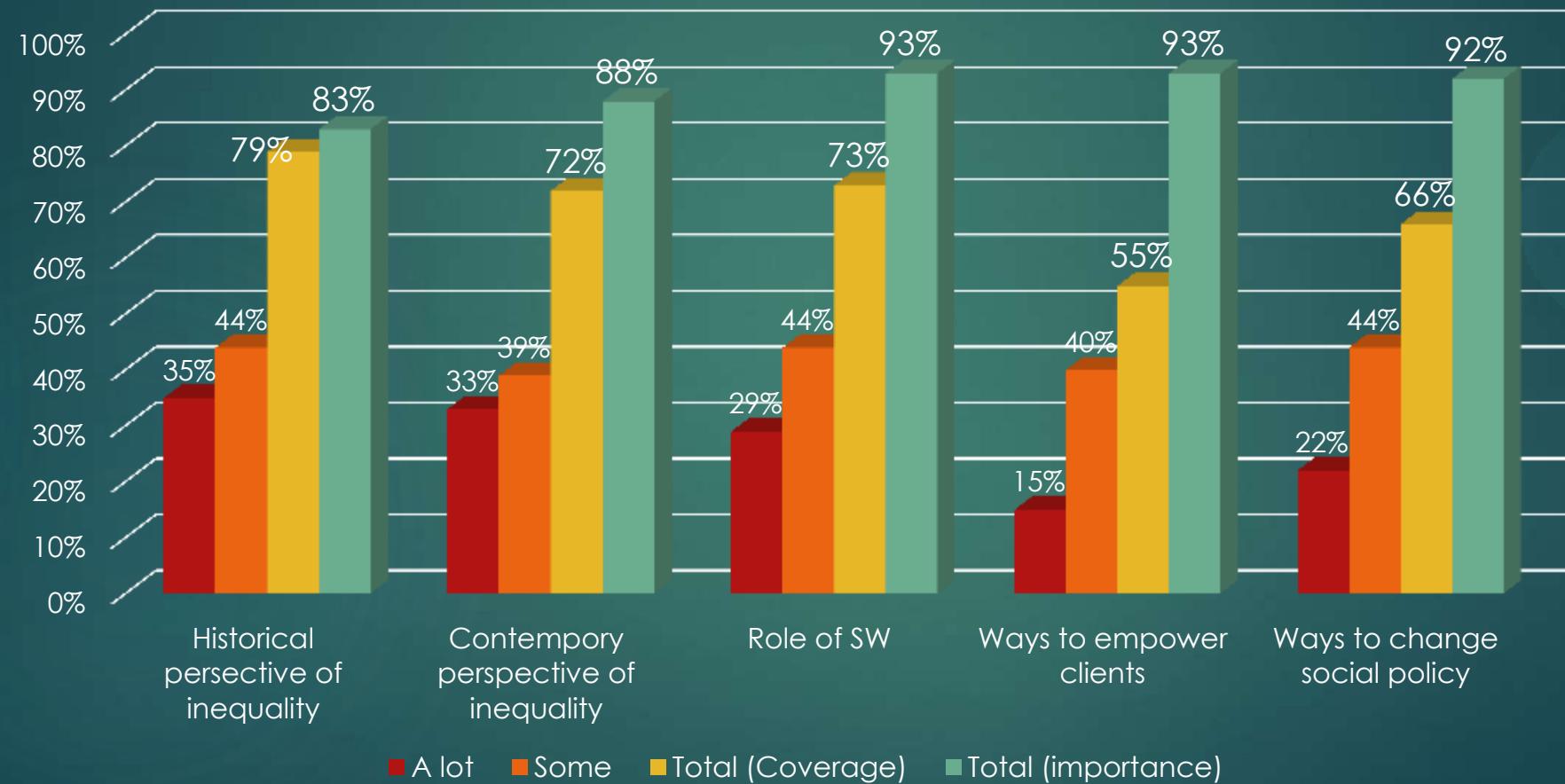
FCAB education (Cont'd)



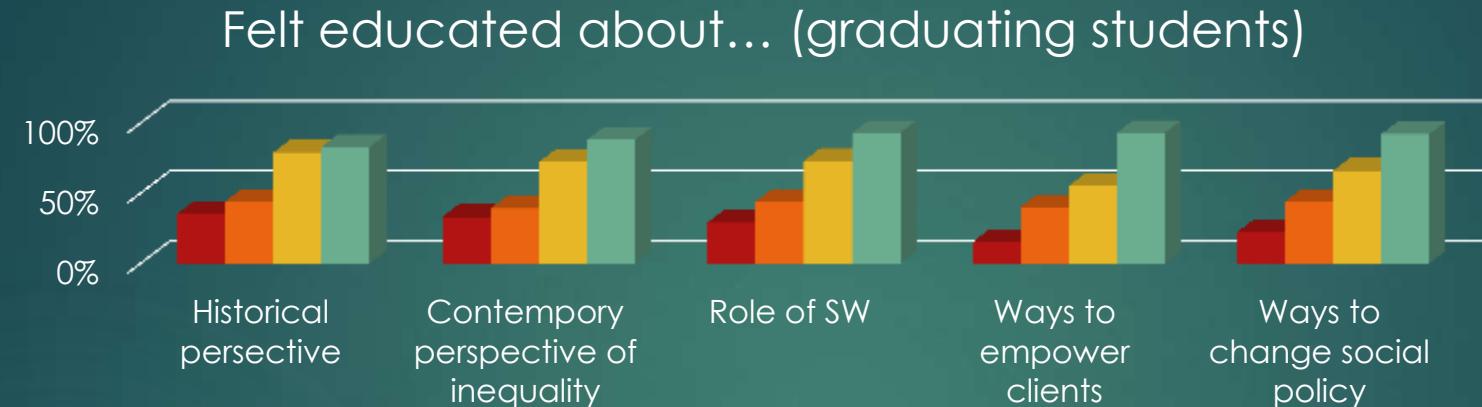
- BSW students found this content to be more important than MSW students
- Students preferring mental health placed the least amount of importance in learning about FCAB practice, while macro-practice students placed the highest

FCAB education (Cont'd)

Felt educated about... (graduating students)

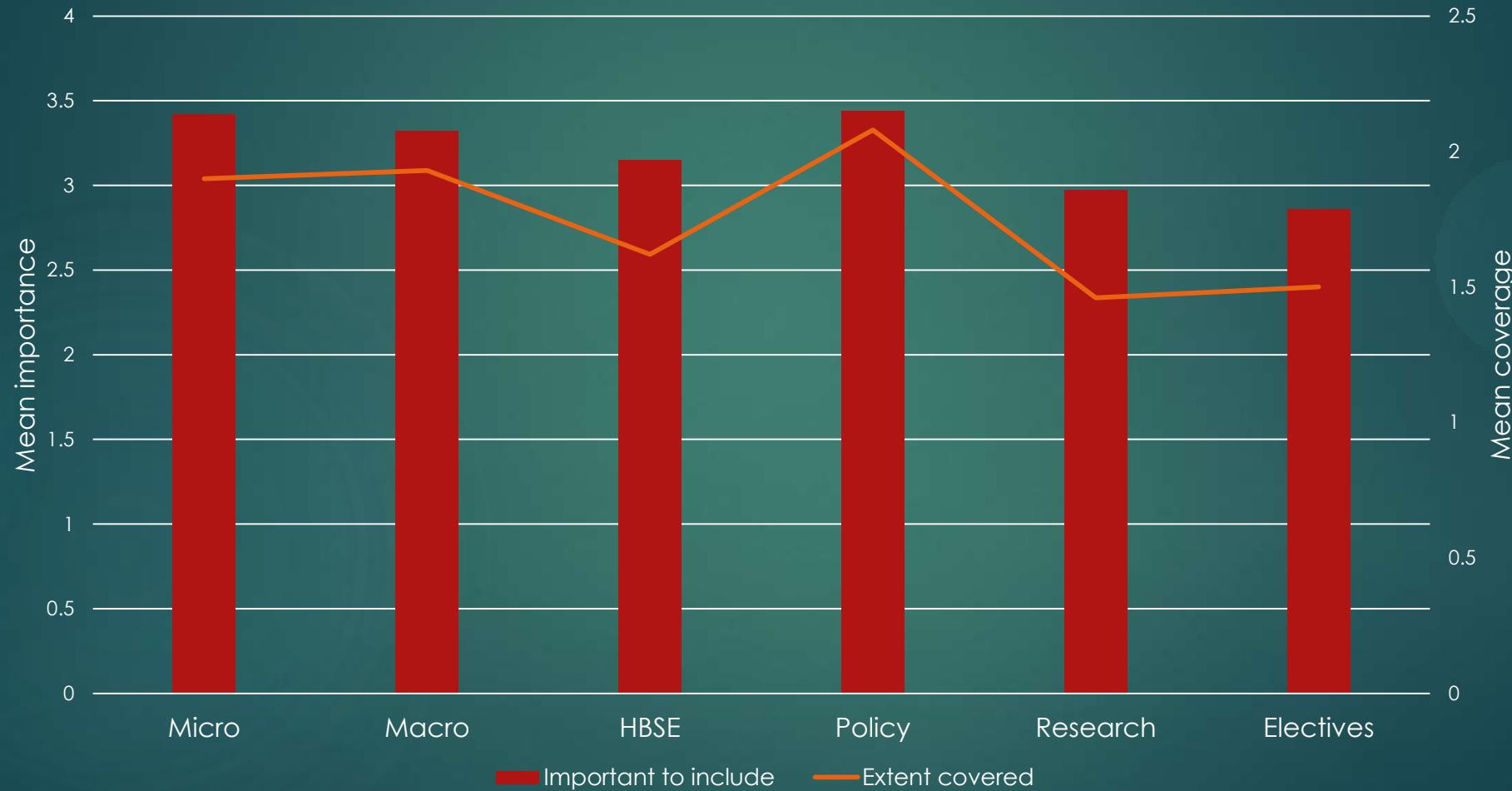


FCAB education (Cont'd)



- More coverage in BSW for the contemporary causes of inequality and ways to empower clients economically
- Mismatch between what students perceive as important, and what they actually received in their education.
- Most of FCAB education focused on providing background rather than on equipping students with skills for FCAB practice

FCAB in social work curricula



FCAB in social work curricula (Cont'd)



- ▶ MSW placed higher importance in including FCAB in HBSE and policy
- ▶ BSW received more coverage in micro, macro and HBSE
- ▶ No difference across fields of practice

Summary

- ▶ General consensus that social workers have an important role in addressing client's economic issues
 - ▶ But only 40% strongly agree that FCAB is important
 - ▶ Majority not convinced of FCAB as an integral and critical charge of social work
 - ▶ Negligible effect of social work education since graduating and non-graduating students are similar

Summary (Cont'd)

- ▶ Preferred fields of practice influences outcomes
 - ▶ FCAB more central to those preferring macro / community development
 - ▶ Preference for mental health associated with lower agreement that social work should be involved with FCAB, and that improving client's financial circumstance is an important focus of intervention
- ❖ How to more increase the fit between FCAB and mental health practice?

Summary (Cont'd)

- ▶ Gap between what is perceived as important, and what students actually received in the social work program.
 - ▶ Students more interested in skills to intervene with clients at the clinical and policy levels, but received more information at the conceptual level, and feel least educated about various skill-based FCAB content
 - ❖ Need to integrate more FCAB intervention skills into curriculum, especially micro and macro practice courses?
- ▶ BSW report higher levels of education around FCAB
 - ❖ Increase focus at the MSW level?