

“Not social workers, but social fighters”: Navigating the search for macro social work identity in the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal*

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Given the social work profession’s roots in social justice, macro social work is an essential part of professional identity, both for individual social workers and the profession as a whole. However, the influence of neoliberalism may have an impact on the amount of macro work that is feasible in the practice environment because of a sustained emphasis on micro work.

METHODS: To better understand macro social work’s place in the profession, this research sought to assess the historical and current discourses surrounding macro social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. To do this, a qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis was conducted on publications of the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal* since it began in 1965 to 2020. This meta-synthesis was one part of a broader study on macro social work for a PhD thesis.

FINDINGS: The analysis focused on finding journal articles that relate to macro social work to generate themes around how social workers think and feel about the place of macro social work in the profession. Themes around historical trends, scope of practice and the status of the profession were discussed in the context of macro social work and social change. The themes illuminated key tensions between micro and macro social work in the professional identity.

CONCLUSIONS: This article makes a case for an integrated professional identity by increasing the discussion of macro social work in the professional discourse in the Journal and beyond.

Keywords: Macro social work, social work identity, meta-synthesis, social justice

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Since its inception, the social work profession has had to grapple with its identity and purpose as a discipline. Social work as a profession is often associated with the founding of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and the Settlement House Movement (SHM) which had overlapping

but sometimes competing ideologies about the nature of social problems (Netting et al., 2012). While the COS headed by Mary Richmond promoted systematic management of individual problems, the SHM headed by the pioneering work of Jane Addams concentrated more on

economic and social reform (Netting et al., 2012). These two traditions led to the idea of a dualistic focus of the profession where social workers focus both on individuals (micro) and social systems (macro) (Netting et al., 2012). In the current Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers' *Code of ethics*, social work is said to have a "dual focus", meaning that social workers need to "empower individuals" on the micro level while informing "society at large about the injustices in its midst" at the macro level (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2019, p. 7). However, in practice, both sides of the dual focus are not always equally supported and encouraged, creating a tension in how social work is practised and how social work identity is viewed both within and outside of the profession (Mosely, 2013; Reisch, 2013; Renau et al., 2023). The article explores this micro and macro tension through the years in Aotearoa New Zealand by looking back through a key place where social work voices were and are heard: the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work Journal*.

In 1964, the constitution of the New Zealand Association of Social Workers was adopted and in 1965, the association began to release a journal (*Social Work in New Zealand*, 1965). Notably, in the *Interim code of ethics* of 1965, it was specifically stated that social work is an occupation concerned with "individual wellbeing" (New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 1965). But the idea of social work being focused on individual concerns as opposed to social concerns has changed throughout the years. In 2020, the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) created the "Aotearoa New Zealand General Scope of Practice (Hokaitanga o nga Mahi)" because a scope of practice was required to be in place following mandatory registration in 2019 (SWRB, 2020). Part of the scope explicitly addresses practising at different levels of social work:

Social workers apply their knowledge and expertise in a variety of ways and roles at micro, meso and macro levels. This includes direct work with

people and whānau, therapeutic social work, community-led development, consultancy, research, education, supervision, facilitation, advocacy, management, policy development and leadership. (SWRB, 2020, p. 2)

In addition, the ANZASW released a resource called "He Whakamārama Mō Te Tauwhirotaanga (Social Work Explained)" which was to be used alongside the "General Scope of Practice" (ANZASW, 2020).

The resource featured a clear mandate to service the wider society of Aotearoa and facilitate social change. For example, He Whakamārama Mō Te Tauwhirotaanga specifically states that social workers should "seek to influence persistent issues of poverty, inequality, violence, discrimination and ongoing failures of social systems" (ANZASW, 2020). This resource also points to the need for social workers to address wider social issues by:

... actively challenging discriminatory practices, inequality and social injustice in organisations and wider society and "work to influence change at individual, family, whanau, hapu, iwi, community and government levels". (ANZASW, 2020, para 8)

While our contemporary definitions accept social work as dually responsible for both micro and macro concerns, social workers have long debated the practical, theoretical and professional ramifications of this dual focus. In practice, generating social change and being critical of systems may simply not be a part of the day-to-day work for many social workers. Due to a variety of factors, social workers often find it difficult to engage in political change or discourse as a part of their role due to the increasing neoliberal environment surrounding social work and managerial restrictions faced by social workers (Baines, 2022; Rocha et al., 2010). Aotearoa New Zealand entered its neoliberal phase during the late 1980s, but the negative effects on the social service sector were not immediately evident

(Aimers & Walker, 2016). Macro social work is much more difficult to focus on when practitioners are fighting for their own professional needs and are overworked and underfunded with their individual casework responsibilities (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Weiss-Gal, 2017). In addition to the rise in neoliberalism during the late 1980s, social work as a profession was very preoccupied in Aotearoa New Zealand with establishing itself as a registered profession (Nash, 2009). It was a time in which the profession was fighting for itself (and within itself) in a difficult environment. This struggle is still evident in contemporary practice. Although the social work profession in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand has definitions and mandates regarding generating social change, it can be an uphill battle for social workers in practice (Renau et al., 2023).

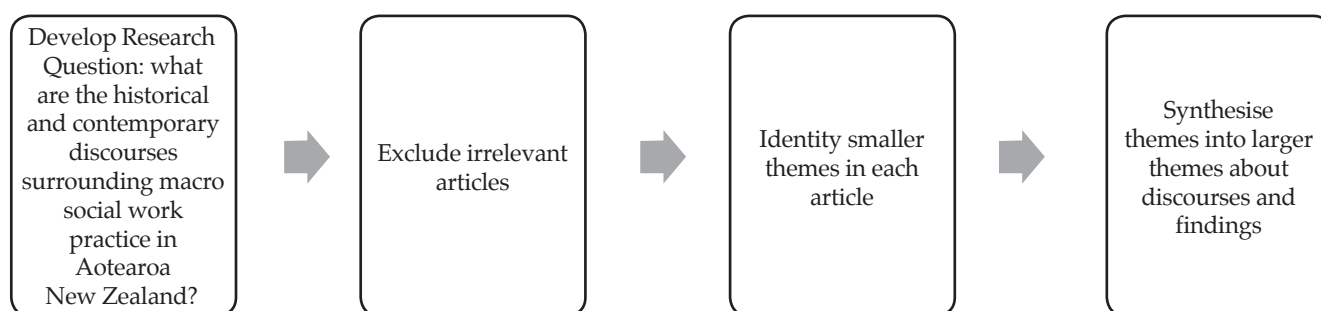
The qualitative meta-synthesis reported in this article examines the history of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand using the ANZSW journal with the intent to understand how macro social work has and will fit into the social work profession. The particular focus on macro practice was due to the meta-synthesis being a part of a larger study on macro social work. Macro social work or macro practice is defined as “professionally guided intervention designed to bring about change in organisational, community, and policy arenas” (Netting et al., 2012, p. 5). Therefore, macro social work is the practice to address macro concerns and bring about social change. The ANZSW journal was chosen for this research as the publication

reflects social work knowledge, debates and innovations over the last 64 years in Aotearoa New Zealand. According to McKenzie and Nash (2008), “Our journal is a prime site for an archaeological dig into the knowledge base of New Zealand social work, providing a critical lens with which to track the historical development of the profession and its knowledge base” (p. 5). By understanding the discourse and tensions through history, this study sought to illuminate key themes and future directions for the profession now.

Methods

The qualitative meta-synthesis was part of a larger study of macro social work for a PhD thesis. Ethical approval for the larger study was granted by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee in 2019. The meta-synthesis focused on articles from the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work (ANZSW) Journal* since its inception in 1965 to Vol 32(1), 2020¹. Qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis (QIMS) was used to analyse the articles. QIMS involved grouping studies on a related topic to synthesise an improved understanding of the topic and generate new knowledge. QIMS involves integrating the products of existing research about a certain subject (macro social work in this case) and systematically generating inductive conclusions about this subject (Given, 2012). The goal was to create a “web of knowledge about the topic where a synergy among the studies creates a new, deeper and broader understanding” (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014, p. 283). QIMS had four steps as listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Steps for Qualitative Interpretive Meta-Synthesis



The first step in QIMS, as in any meta-analysis, was to develop a research question that informs the meta-synthesis (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014; Timulak, 2013). For the meta-synthesis, that question was: What are the historical and contemporary discourses surrounding macro social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand?

The next step in QIMS was the sampling step which involved exhausting the literature about the topic using purposive sampling (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014). The analysis solely focused on articles relating to macro practice in the ANZSW journal. The articles in the journal did not need to be qualitative studies, in fact, many of them were not. While the synthesis did not use qualitative studies per se, it used a variety of studies, editorials and other works to analyse trends, findings and publicly stated opinions about the social work role. Therefore, the methods of a qualitative meta-synthesis were borrowed and adapted to the purpose of this research.

Not all the articles related to the research question. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for which articles to examine were used in the meta-synthesis. The following criteria

were used: the article must explicitly be about how or why social work (or social workers) engage with macro issues (as opposed to how macro issues affect micro practice), and the article must be related to how or why social workers can generate social change (as opposed to a critical analysis of a social policy or phenomenon). These criteria focused the meta-synthesis on articles that directly relate to the study's topic as opposed to articles that may speak to advocacy work on a micro level or how macro issues affect clinical practice. As noted in Figure 2, 2,263 articles in the ANZSW journal were reviewed (every article). The first review involved reading both the title and the abstract. If it was not apparent from the title and abstract that the article met the criteria, then the article was reviewed a second time by skimming the full article. In total 81 articles were used for the meta-synthesis.

Next, the articles were read repeatedly to identify key terms and phrases in order to generate themes (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014). This involved two main steps: 1) making a table with every article that related to macro social work and highlighting key themes

Figure 2. Exclusion of Articles for the Meta-synthesis

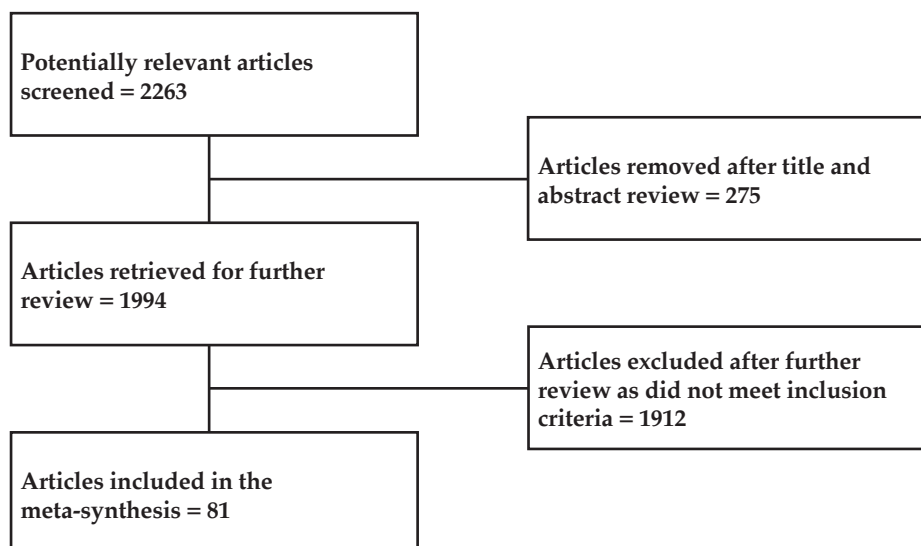
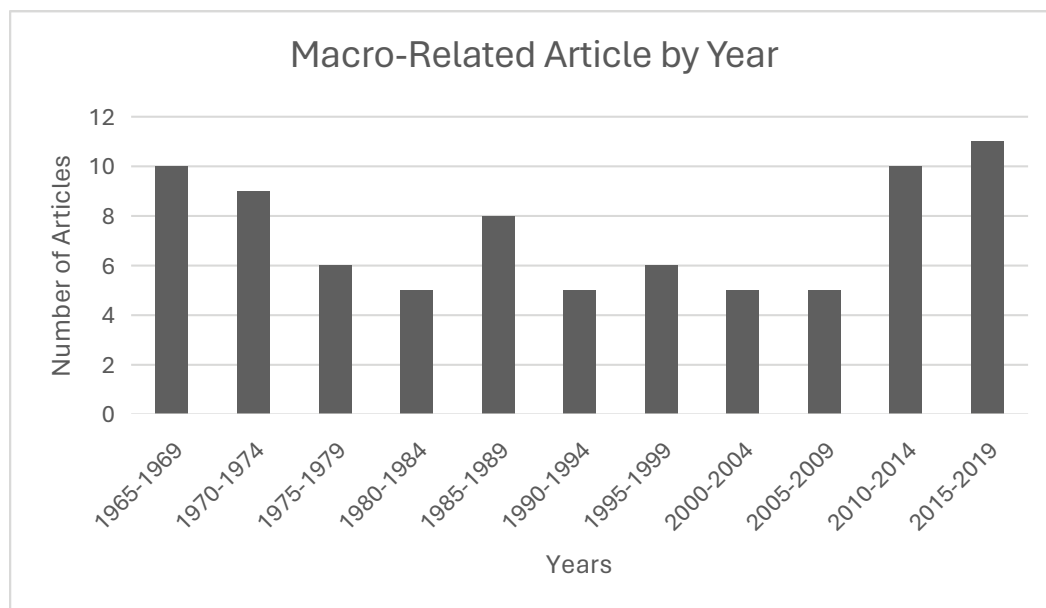


Figure 3. Number of Macro-related Articles in 5-Year Increments



(Article Table); 2) synthesising those themes further and creating a theme table of overarching themes (Theme Table). Generating themes involved the interpretive element of QIMS which focused on interpreting the data for theory and concept development (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014). The synthesis of themes went beyond aggregating results of the articles and focused on developing a new understanding of macro social work through the ways in which the knowledge in the articles were connected (Aguirre & Bolton, 2014).

The 81 articles included in the meta-synthesis spanned from 1965 to 2019. Figure 3 shows the number of articles found in this meta-synthesis in 5-year blocks.

Findings

It was apparent that macro social work and social change has been a topic of interest throughout the social work profession's history in Aotearoa New Zealand. In analysing the findings, two major themes were identified: the scope of social work practice and the status of the profession.

The scope of social work practice

The theme of social work identity and scope was prominent in most (58) of the 81 articles included in the meta-synthesis. While some articles discussed the "dual" focus of the profession in which both individual and social change is a focus, a few articles defined social work as more one than the other. It is clearly a topic of some debate as it is for social work internationally and historically (see Colby et al., 2013; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2017; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; McLaughlin, 2009; Netting et al., 2012). For example, as stated above, the ANZASW Interim *Code of ethics* was featured in the ANZSW journal in 1965 which clearly defined social work as mainly concerned with "individual social wellbeing" (NZ Association of Social Workers, 1965). Conversely, an article published the very next year, specifically advocated for accepting "responsibility for the broad purposes of social welfare" (Brown, 1966).

Advocating for macro practice

A total of 37 articles specifically advocated for macro work and social change to take

a larger part in the scope of social work practice as a whole (e.g., Baretta-Herman, 1993; Hunapo & Ohia, 1986; Jones, 1974; Mendes, 2001; O'Brien, 2014; Papadopoulos, 2017). The discussion around advocating for macro practice used a variety of techniques and appeals to encourage social workers to get involved in macro work. The large presence in the journal of articles which advocate for macro work shows the journal itself has been an avenue to facilitate macro work and raise awareness.

General comments about awareness raising of the possibilities of general social change activity was one technique for advocating for macro practice. For example, in comments made in 1973, John Fry, the then president of the New Zealand Association of Social Workers stated:

It would help if we all occasionally moved away from our offices and our pre-occupation in helping individual clients in face-to-face therapeutic relationships and moved into the wider circle of community activity. (J. Fry, 1973, p. 5)

O'Brien (2014) also highlighted the importance of extending practice to social change:

We need to reflect on not just the immediate dimensions, but to extend that to the wider social and economic considerations. (p. 12)

Other articles used more specific arguments, suggesting that macro activities (management, community development, etc.) could naturally be included in the scope of the profession. These articles focused on more practical arguments such as what specific skills and knowledge the social work profession can bring to macro practice in certain settings. Webster et al. (2015) advocated for social workers to use their specific skills in management roles and the creation of management standards for social workers. In addition, when discussing public

health activities such as health policy and community development, Nuthall (1989) stated that:

Social workers have the most relevant core training for these activities. (p. 10)

Another technique to advocate for macro practice involved appealing to more values-based causes that tended to provoke emotion or righteous anger or frustration in order to advocate for macro work. Papadopoulos (2017) wrote directly about the centrality of the values of radical social work:

The values enacted by radical projects are too important to be made vulnerable to the vicissitudes of political fashion. (p. 54)

In addition to value-based causes, articles also sought to provoke a response by directly criticising the social work profession for the perceived lack of priority of macro work in the professional scope and practice. For example, Ross (2014) pointed out that, in social work literature:

There is considerably less emphasis on the broader systemic social justice work and almost no discussion on what may assist us to work sustainably and effectively towards social justice and human rights on all levels in real-world environments. (p. 6)

Hunapo and Ohia (1986) were also concerned about the lack of focus on social change:

Thus, social work was catapulted into a preoccupation with individual pathology rather than major structural change. (p. 4)

Two articles specifically focus on the historical importance of macro practice in the social work identity as a way to advocate for the place of macro work in the profession. Using historical arguments provided legitimacy that macro practice is indeed part of the profession's history from the beginning and therefore part of its scope now. Fraser

and Briggs (2016) detailed key historical events relating to biculturalism and the ANZASW, specifically highlighting events when Māori social workers advocated for equal representation. This article used quotes from newsletters, reports and journals to tell the story of how biculturalism has been developed in the ANZASW since 1984, including discussion of how qualification and competency assessments were developed (Fraser & Briggs, 2016). In addition, Jennissen and Lundy (2018) overviewed female North American social workers throughout history, including Jane Addams and Bessie Touzel. Jennissen and Lundy (2018) did this to highlight how radical women social workers have created social change:

Their legacy reflects the possibilities and potential for positive social change when we come together in solidarity to challenge the policies and practices that disadvantage a significant segment of the population. (p. 55)

Other studies focused on advocating for macro practice in the social work identity using specific approaches in order to help their own communities and beyond (Hunapo & Ohia, 1986; Jennissen & Lundy, 2018; Serrallach, 1988; Walsh-Tapiata, 2000). Serrallach (1988) discussed historical and contemporary programmes to develop biculturalism and reduce disparities for Māori. This article suggested that,

... there is a great gap between policy makers and the principles [to] which practitioners verbally adhere. (p. 8)

The article asserted that social workers should close that gap by advocating specifically for Māori in the social, cultural and economic realms (Serrallach, 1988, p. 8). Haitana (1995) underscored the importance of macro work for and by Māori:

This means that as tangata whenua social/community worker you need to consider (always) the collective well-being above that of the individual. (p. 30)

Walsh-Tapiata (2000) also focused on the challenges for Māori and spoke directly to Māori social workers. This article advocated for Māori social workers to engage in social change by constantly assessing the organisation for its cultural appropriateness and “finding appropriate ways to challenges these systems” encouraging Māori social workers to focus on “the support of our whānau and the vision of a better existence for Māori” (p. 12). Hunapo and Ohia (1986) were also critical of social work’s practice with Māori on the micro and macro level, asserting that:

Thus far, social work’s interactions with the Māori people have contributed little-altering neither the micro nor macro concerns. (p. 4)

Effects of an exclusive micro focus

Rather than advocating for macro practice, the place for macro work in the scope of the profession was also debated by discussing the dangers of exclusively or disproportionately focusing on micro or individual practice. A dichotomy of the profession that is often framed in opposition of each other is the idea that the profession could be focused on social control versus focusing on social change (Aimers & Walker, 2011; Baretta-Herman, 1993; Barretta-Herman, 1994; Jones, 1974; “Notes on social work: A Marxist view”, 1974; Lloyd, 1977; Morley & Ablett, 2017; Opie, 1993; Papadopoulos, 2017; Sawyers, 2016; Uttley, 1977). Similar to the professionalisation debate discussed in the next section, the meta-synthesis identified an ongoing concern in these articles that social work will be used as a way to control service users and “fix” them to fit into society, as opposed to generating social change. Jones (1974) asserted that:

In New Zealand the social control function of social work, associated with social casework, has always outweighed the social reform function. (p. 29)

In the same year, another article, “Notes on Social Work: A Marxist View” (1974), promoted moving away from an exclusive micro focus:

What is needed in New Zealand is not people who do social work, but people who do anti-social work: not social workers, but social fighters. (p. 5)

This framing of *typical* social work (micro work) as a type of social control or a threat to more radical work was a regular theme throughout the journal (e.g., Jones, “Notes on Social Work: A Marxist View”, 1974; Lloyd, 1977). This framing of an almost *us versus them* split in the social work profession illustrated a fracturing of the profession into two distinct groups which points to possible barriers when attempting to have a collective social work voice.

In other articles, this framing was still displayed, but with more nuance. According to Barretta-Herman (1983), social workers should work on keeping the tension “*between bureaucracies and social work practitioners*” in order to practise social change instead of social control (p. 17). In Papadopoulos (2017), mainstream social work and more politically active social work were both seen as necessary for the profession and the wider society and can work together to achieve social change. Similarly, in Hunapo and Ohia (1986), micro and macro interdependence was viewed as essential in order to emphasise systems and social factors that directly relate to individual issues.

Status of the profession

In addition to the larger debate about the place of macro work in the social work profession, the status of the profession was an important piece of how macro social work was understood in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically discussions around professionalisation. This theme featured prominently in 28 articles across the journal. This is perhaps not surprising given that the time period (1965–2020) saw the profession

becoming a registered and regulated profession with the introduction of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003, and then with an amendment in 2019 moving the profession to mandatory registration. From very early on, it seemed there were concerns about professionalisation (see Jones, 1974; Lloyd, 1977; Throssell, 1971). In 1971, an article from the *Australia Journal of Social Work* reprinted in the ANZSW journal expressed strong reservations about professionalisation (Throssell, 1971). The article was mainly concerned about what could be lost in the effort to gain “professional prestige”, fearing that activism and questioning systems may be impossible if social workers are not able to act outside of the system (Throssell, 1971, p. 9). The article described a satirical dystopian reality in Australia where social work ceases to exist because their lack of power. The main explanation as to why social work disappeared was at the end of the article:

Through their [social work’s] need to become an Establishment profession, they changed from identifying with the aggressors and in the end were only required to be able to read and obey instructions. (Throssell, 1971, p. 11)

These concerns are again echoed in 1974, when Jones (1974) asserted that professionalisation would cause the occupation to lose power and oversight to the state.

As professionalisation and registration became more of a reality in Aotearoa New Zealand, increasing numbers of articles began to move the discussion of professionalisation away from the abstract and toward the more specific dangers and possible benefits (e.g., Barretta-Herman, 1993; Maharey, 1998; Mendes, 2001). Barretta-Herman (1993) pointed out that social work could remain committed to the dual focus of social work by:

Using power and status of increased professionalization to improve services to clients and enhance social justice. (p. 35)

Maharey (1998) stated that:

A robust social work profession would have been in a much better position to tell those who have driven the policy agenda over recent years that they were wrong. (p. 26)

Several articles discussed how social workers can perform macro work to enhance the status of the profession (K. Fry, 2010; Hanna, 2000; Maharey, 1998; Ross, 2014; Webster et al., 2015). For example, Ross (2014) explored how union activity could strengthen social work practice. By participating in unions and advocating as a collective, the status of the profession could be enhanced with better working conditions and more political respect for the discipline (Ross, 2014). Other articles pointed out the importance of social workers seeking leadership and management positions in order to advocate for the profession (K. Fry, 2010; Webster et al., 2015).

This idea that social work needs to fight for the profession's status seemed to be a response to the rise of neoliberalism and managerialism which presented a variety of barriers for social workers. Professionalisation appeared to be increasingly discussed as a way forward in the ideological and economic environment to increase the status and power of the profession (e.g., Aimers & Walker, 2011; Hibbs, 2005; O'Brien, 2005, 2014). That did not mean there were not still reservations about professionalisation as noted in Hibbs (2005):

Professionalization of social work might potentially threaten its ability to respond to the wider societal causes of oppression, especially when those cases involve the state. (p. 39)

Discussion

Despite increasing marginalisation in practice settings due to neoliberal and managerial policies, there have been calls from social work voices in Aotearoa to have

more of a social justice focus, a more radical focus. And still this call persists. However, throughout the history of the profession, the tension between the micro work and macro work was often a push-pull relationship. The framing from "Notes on Social Work: A Marxist View" (1974) illustrated this push-pull dichotomy: "not social workers, but social fighters" (p. 5). Social workers vs. social fighters, social work vs. anti-social work: this discourse echoes the idea of the dual focus of the profession and the tension between individual and social change. But this quote is not just discussing professional identity tensions, it also refers directly to individual social workers needing to choose a side, either one of *us* or one of *them*. This concept is reflected in the professional discourse historically which has often framed the dual focus of the profession as oppositional (Keenan et al., 2016).

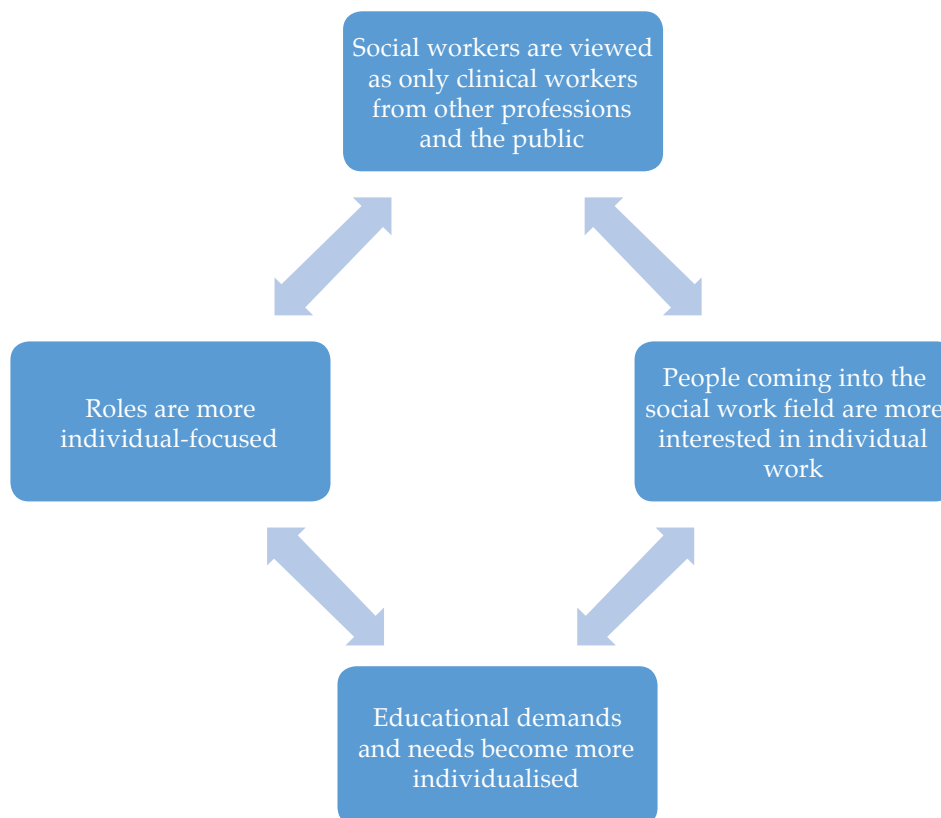
Professionalisation has only made this tension more complicated, as now social work has a statutory regulatory body telling social work what it is and what it can do. The articles in the meta-synthesis raised both concerns and opportunities that might result from professionalisation. After reading about the fears of professionalisation and the radical language used in the ANZSW journal, some important distinctions between the SWRB General Scope of Practice and the ANZASW *Code of ethics* became apparent. While the Scope of Practice by the SWRB does acknowledge the existence of macro social work, it uses neutral and task-based phrasing. In contrast, the ANZASW document (much like the journal) explicitly notes the role of social work "addressing wider impacts such as the historical impacts of colonisation, assimilation, institutional racism, exploitation, violence and oppression" (ANZASW, 2021). Conversely, the General Scope of Practice developed by the SWRB, a Crown enterprise, does not contain the words *challenging*, *discrimination*, *inequality*, *poverty*, *colonialism*, *racism* (much less *institutional racism*) nor does it point to any innate failures of social systems and policy. The terms listed are arguably

more politically charged terms and seem to align with a much more critical perspective rooted in a more radical approach. The internal tensions in the social work identity are again seen here with the statutory agency stating the professional scope in one way, while the professional association is asserting something that is inherently different. It is out of the scope of this article to debate the full merits and drawbacks of professionalisation, but the historical discourses and current language about professional social work do reflect again a notion of uncertainty about how to include macro practice in the profession.

Articles accessed for examination in the meta-synthesis also pointed to a fear of an increasingly diluted profession: a profession that is apolitical, non-confrontational and focused on changing individuals instead of

society. It is a fear that macro practice will essentially be trained out of the profession. From inductively linking concepts from the articles in the meta-synthesis, a cycle of individualisation resulting from both internal professional factors and external factors was created. Figure 4 shows the cycle of individualisation that was developed as a result of the meta-synthesis: roles appeared to become increasingly individualised due to perceived needs in society, therefore the educational needs of social workers becomes more individualised, therefore people choose to enter the social work field who are more interested in micro work, therefore social workers are viewed as more micro workers, therefore social work roles increasingly reflect individualised work. All of these factors together could result in a perpetual cycle emphasising individualisation.

Figure 4. Multi-directional Cycle of Individualisation



This cycle points to some of the difficulty of including macro practice in predominately micro roles. This move toward individualisation due to neoliberal policies and discourse is reflected in international literature as well (see Mosley, 2013; Reisch, 2013; Rocha et al., 2010). The impact of this cycle is that those advocating for macro practice are put in the position of seeming impractical and ignoring the realities of over-worked social workers as their roles are focused on micro practice. Maybe this is why calls for more macro practice, alongside criticism of the profession's focus on clinical practice alone has been so consistent throughout the years. Given this cycle created from the articles, it seems that there is a perception that macro practice is still marginalised because social work is still being told what it is by the state and wider societal structures defined by neoliberalism. The separation and internal tensions between social workers may be a product of external forces telling social workers who they are and then the profession is internalising those things. This is neither an accident on the part of the external forces nor something that was unforeseen by social workers historically in Aotearoa.

Conclusion

In advocating for macro practice in the journal, the articles examined in the meta-synthesis discuss how macro practice has been marginalised due to neoliberal forces and regulatory bodies. Some articles also feature a discourse that frames the dual focus of the profession as a battle within the profession when perhaps that discourse was forced on social work by those same external pressures and then internalised by the profession. What this does mean is that the oppositional nature of the dichotomy that we have been given about micro and macro work is a false one. According to Keenan et al. (2016), while micro and macro practice are different methods to succeed in the goal of social work, the distinction between micro and macro has been "overemphasised" and reduces the possibilities for collaboration and action (p. 26). While framing social workers and social fighters as in opposition to each

other may have been helpful to encourage dissent in the past, rejecting this discourse now may be important in finding a way to bring social workers together and discover the nuance of practising micro and macro work interdependently in a way that is feasible in their practice reality. Because of the marginalisation of macro practice, interdependent micro and macro social work will involve an increased focus on bringing macro practice into existing discourse and practice, while continuing to uphold micro practice as an essential part of social work.

The hopeful part of this discussion about social work identity and macro practice is that there seem to be increasing numbers of articles in the journal and beyond that focus on developing macro practice. While there have always been radical edges and sections in the profession, making macro practice an equal part of the interdependent dual focus of the profession seems possible. Creating a shared vision for social work is essential. This will take bridging the us vs. them divide without compromising the radical agenda that was/is so strongly advocated for by social workers past and present. It will take some amount of rejection of external narratives and the creation of a vision of what social work can be. Ironically, it may be through looking in the past that we can see our future emerge as both *social workers* and *social fighters*.

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¹The journal has gone through several name changes as you will note in the references, but its current name is *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*.

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