CONNECTING CORE COMPETENCIES SERIES

Social Work Macro Practice

SIXTH EDITION

F. Ellen Netting
Peter M. Kettner
Steven L. McMurtry
M. Lori Thomas

CSWE EPAS 2015 Core Competencies and Behaviors in This Text

Competency	Chapter
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	
Behaviors:	
Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	1
Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	7
Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	10
Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	2
Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	8
Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice	
Behaviors:	
Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	2, 6, 8
Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	3, 5
Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	1, 7
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	
Behaviors:	
Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	3, 10
Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	2, 8
Competency 4: Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	
Behaviors:	
Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	9
Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	4
Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	1, 3, 6, 7, 11
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	
Behaviors:	
Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services	10
Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services	1, 6
Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice	2, 5

CSWE EPAS 2015 Core Competencies and Behaviors in This Text

Competency	Chapter
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	*Behaviors:*
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in- environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	7, 5, 9
Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	3, 4, 6
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
Behaviors:	
Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies	4, 8
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in- environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies	9
Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies	9
Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies	11
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
Behaviors:	
Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies	9
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies	4. 5
Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes	10
Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies	11
Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals	11
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
Behaviors:	
Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	12
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	12
Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	12
Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	12

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SIXTH EDITION

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Printer/Binder: Edwards Brothers Malloy
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color
Text Font: Dante MT Pro Regular, 10.5 pts

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Cataloging in Publication data is available upon request

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 EB 15 14 13 12 11

Student Edition
ISBN-10: **0-13-394852-8**
ISBN-13: **978-0-13-394852-3**

eText
ISBN-10: **0-13-394860-9**
ISBN-13: **978-0-13-394860-8**

Package
ISBN-10: **0-13-429012-7**
ISBN-13: **978-0-13-429012-6**

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Preface

Twenty-five years ago, three colleagues at Arizona State University School of Social Work decided to write a book to use in two courses in the foundation macro practice sequence in which we were teaching. At that point, we were using "course packs" comprised of readings from professional journals and book chapters, and we needed a textbook that integrated a growing conceptual and empirically based literature on organizational and community change. Through multiple revisions we continued our collaboration, in 2012 adding a fourth author to our team.

Much has changed in 25 years, but our commitment to our original goal remains steadfast. From the beginning, we wanted to recapture a broader definition of *social work practice* that recognizes that all social workers must be able to engage, assess, and intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In short, we believed (and continue to believe) that active involvement in community and organizational change represents one of the richest and proudest traditions of social work practice over the last century.

New to This Edition

It is our intent in this edition to bring readers abreast of the changes within the field. We have worked to make the sixth edition more practice oriented, integrating more field-based vignettes and examples throughout and elaborating the planned change model originally introduced in earlier editions. We have incorporated more material on international and global content in order to prepare future practitioners for encountering both domestic and international social problems. We have paid special attention to the use of technology such as social media and electronic advocacy, in addition to video links and media asset recommendations. We have reinforced the role of advocacy in all aspects of social work practice. Structurally, we have rearranged chapters, added a new chapter, deleted dated material, added new material, and integrated the most up-to-date conceptual and empirical scholarship into all chapters. Across all chapters, at least one-third of all references are new to this edition. In all changes in this edition, we have tried to be as conscientiously attentive and responsive to reviewers' feedback as possible while ensuring consistency with current professional literature on macro practice.

Specific changes follow:

- **Framing Macro Social Work in an International Context.** In Chapters 1–2, we have framed macro practice within an international context, adding references from international journals and information on international codes of ethics, referring to differences in social work education across multiple countries, adding a case example on international social work, and writing a new section entitled "Global Perspectives on Social Work."
- **Adding Content on Diverse Populations.** Chapters 3 and 4 have been reversed, placing the chapter on populations before the chapter on problems. In Chapter 3, we lead with a new section on "Advancing Human Rights and Social and Economic Justice," including new content on cultural humility, cultural competency, whiteness studies, and critical race theory. Another new section, "Developing Strategies for Authentic Engagement" in Chapter 3, includes new material on working with groups, community organizing, and community engagement.

- **Including Alternative Theories.** New theoretical content has been added as follows: Critical Race Theory, and Identity Theory (Chapters 3 and 9); Framing Theory (Chapter 4); Assets Mapping, Field Interactional Theory, and Power Dependency Theory (Chapter 5); and Organizational Culture, Feminist, and Critical Theories (Chapters 7 and 8). Chapter 7 was entirely restructured to tighten up the content on classical theories in order to focus more on contemporary approaches reorganized within four schools of thought.
- **Updating Practice Frameworks.** All frameworks have been revised, rearranged, and updated in Chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. New tasks within the frameworks have been renamed to be more congruent with EPAS competencies and graphical representations of each framework are now included. A new task and set of activities on "Identify Focal Community" leads the framework in Chapter 6. A new task on "Assessing the Cultural Competency of an Organization" is now featured in Chapter 8. New material has been added to Chapters 11 and 12 on the logic model in an attempt to strengthen the student's understanding of the relationship between this model and the macro practice procedures we are proposing.
- **Adding Content on Technology.** Chapters 1 and 2 feature updated information on the wise use of technology. In Chapter 9, a new section called "Strengthen Collective Identity" focuses on how use of the Internet, social-networking sites, and mobile technology can be used to facilitate communication among action system members. This is reinforced by a section on the use of technology in advocating for change in Chapter 10.
- **Adding New Chapter on Evaluation.** Our original Chapter 11 has been divided into new Chapters 11 and 12. Each chapter has been expanded in light of reviewers' concerns that more material on the planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating aspects of planned change needed more depth. The new Chapter 11 now introduces and focuses on understanding the logic model, illustrated by a series of new figures that demonstrate the model's use. Chapter 12 is almost completely new, focusing in detail on monitoring and evaluating.
- **Chapter Reviews** at the end of each chapter allow students to evaluate mastery of skills and competencies learned.
- **Marginal media assets** are included so that students can search the Internet for relevant content.

Connecting Core Competencies Series

The sixth edition of this text is now a part of Pearson Education's *Connecting Core Competencies* series, which consists of foundation-level texts that make it easier than ever to ensure students' success in learning the nine core competencies as revised in 2015 by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). This text contains:

- **Core Competency Icons** throughout the chapters, directly linking the CSWE core competencies to the content of the text. **Critical thinking questions** are also included to further students' mastery of the CSWE standards. For easy reference, a chart in the front pages of the book displays which competencies are used in each chapter.

Interactive Enhanced Pearson eText

The sixth edition Enhanced eText, produced by Pearson, contains new digital elements to enhance student learning and user experiences:

- **Assess Your Understanding Quizzes** appear at the end of each major section within each chapter, with multiple-choice questions to test students' knowledge of the chapter content.
- **Chapter Review Quizzes** appear at the end of each chapter, with essay questions to test student's understanding of major concepts in the chapter.
- **Video links** are provided throughout the chapters to encourage students to access relevant video content.

Instructor Supplements

An Instructor's Manual, Test Bank, and PowerPoint slides are available to accompany this text. They can be downloaded at www.pearsonhighered.com/educator.

The Importance of Macro Practice

We contend that social workers who see clients every day and encounter the same problems over and over are the ones who are most aware of the need for macro-level change, and even if they are not in a position to take the lead in initiating change they need to understand the process and be supportive of others who are involved in macro-level efforts. Macro practice, understood within this context, defines the uniqueness of social work practice. Many disciplines claim expertise in working with individuals, groups, and families, but social work has long stood alone in its focus on the organizational, community, and policy contexts within which its clients function. The concept of person-in-environment is not simply a slogan that makes social workers aware of environmental influences. It means that social workers recognize that sometimes it is the *environment* and not the *person* that needs to change. Mullaly (2007) states that social workers are not simply called to be direct practitioners, but are equally called to be change agents particularly in situations that place service users' best interests first. Our book is designed to prepare social workers to be agents of change for the purpose of improving people's quality of life.

We are aware that the history of social work as a profession has been marked by shifts in and tensions between intervention with individuals and intervention with and within larger systems. Early perspectives on the latter tended to focus primarily on policy-level involvements (especially legislative processes). As the need for content on social work administration and management, and community practice was recognized and incorporated into the curriculum of many schools of social work, these topics were also embraced as an area of concentration for those who wanted to work with and within larger systems. In order to manage oversubscribed curricula, students have often been forced to concentrate in *either* macro or micro areas, creating a false dichotomy, when social work of all professions is uniquely positioned to integrate both.

Therefore, over the years as we taught required foundation-level courses on community and organizational change, and as we worked with students and professionals in the field, we became aware of the changing dynamics of practice and expectations for practitioners. Both students and practitioners were working with populations such as

homeless persons, members of teen street gangs, victims of domestic violence, chronically unemployed persons, frail older adults, and other disenfranchised groups. Although social workers will always need casework and clinical skills to help people in need on a one-to-one basis, it was becoming increasingly evident to many in the profession that they were also expected to intervene at the community level. Typical activities included promoting the development of shelters, developing neighborhood alternatives to gang membership and juvenile incarceration, addressing chronic unemployment, and navigating the complexity of long-term care services as a community problem. It was becoming more and more evident that social workers must be contextual thinkers.

These activities are not new; many closely mirror the work of settlement-house workers in the early days of the profession. Yet, many social work students have traditionally seen themselves as preparing strictly for interventions at the individual or domestic level. It is unexpected and disconcerting when they find themselves being asked to initiate actions and design interventions that will affect large numbers of people and take on problems at the community or organizational level if they are not prepared to undertake and support these kinds of professional activities. When social work practice with macro systems is seen as solely the realm of administrators, community organizers, program planners, and others, a vital linkage to millions of people who struggle daily with environmental constraints has been severed. Macro-level change may, but does not necessarily always, involve large-scale, costly reforms at the national and state levels or the election of candidates more sympathetic to the poor, neglected, and underserved members of society. Sometimes useful macro-level change can involve organizing a local neighborhood to deal with deterioration and blight; sometimes it may mean initiating a self-help group and stepping back so that members will assume leadership roles. Thus, the focus of this book is on enabling social work practitioners to undertake whatever types of macro-level interventions are needed in an informed, analytical way and with a sense of confidence that they can do a competent job and achieve positive results.

As this sixth edition goes to press, schools of social work and professional associations are continuing the ongoing debate about the role of macro social work practice in oversubscribed curricula; and making choices about what content to cover, and which courses to offer and methods to use (e.g., classroom, hybrid, and online), in delivering that content. Reports on the state of macro practice social work have been issued, and a Special Commission to Advance Macro-Practice in Social Work is engaged in a multipronged strategic approach to deal with imbalances between micro and macro, the marginality of macro practitioners and educators, and the lack of support for macro practice (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Challenges to professional macro practitioners' identity, recognition of tensions among social work educators, and concerns about state licensing that privilege clinical roles all promise to fuel a continuing dialogue among individuals and groups committed to the field (Hill, Ferguson, & Erickson, 2010).

Amid these debates and challenges about social work as a profession is an increasing recognition that skilled macro practitioners are needed more than ever within a global context (Santiago, Soska, & Gutierrez, 2014). So much has happened in the last 25 years that could not have been predicted. The editors of a special issue of the *Journal of Community Practice* name a few: "global and domestic terrorism, economic adjustments, natural disasters, migration and immigration, new and emerging technologies, globalization … not unique to the United States and … mirrored around the globe" (Gutierrez, Gant, &

Richards-Schuster, 2014, p. 1). Within this international context, we believe it is critical to reiterate our original goal—to recapture a broader definition of *social work practice* that recognizes that all social workers must be able to engage, assess, and intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Across the world, macro practice skills are needed more than we ever imagined 25 years ago when we started this endeavor. It is our hope that we may contribute to preparing the next generation of social workers to embrace their calling.

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Acknowledgments

As we finish this sixth edition, much has changed since our original 1993 publication. We are now scattered in four different geographical locations: Virginia, Arizona, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. We are indebted to our colleagues and students at the four universities where we have worked who have given us constructive and helpful feedback throughout the years. We want to thank colleagues who provided feedback as they used our text at other universities. We appreciate as well the efforts of a number of reviewers who provided careful and thoughtful assessments of earlier drafts. For this sixth edition, these individuals are Donna M. Aguiniga, University of Alaska Anchorage; Kathleen Arban, Salisbury University; Iran Barrera, California State University, Fresno; Mark Cameron, Southern Connecticut State University; Adrianne M. Fletcher, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay; and Angela Kaiser, Oakland University.

To our editor, Julie Peters, we express our sincere appreciation for her oversight, patience, interest, and assistance as we began the revision of our text. To Janet Portisch and Megan Moffo at Pearson we thank you for working so hard to facilitate the many transitions we made during this edition. To our project managers at Lumina Datamatics, Doug Bell, Prathiba Naveenkumar, and Murugesh Rajkumar Namasivayam, we extend a round of applause for their diligent oversight about details, constant enthusiasm for the process, and unconditional support. Most of all, we thank those students and practitioners who, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable barriers, continue to practice social work the way it was intended. This book is dedicated to them. They intervene at whatever level is needed. They persist with what may appear to be intractable problems and work with clients who have lost hope until hope can be rediscovered and pursued. Their spirit and dedication continually inspire us in our efforts to provide whatever guidance we can for the next generation of social workers.

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1

An Introduction to Macro Practice in Social Work

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Define macro practice and its relationship to micro practice.
- Explain the theoretical and values foundation of macro practice.
- Discuss case examples used to illustrate macro practice.
- Discuss methods used to survive practice challenges.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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WHAT IS MACRO PRACTICE?

This book is intended for all social workers, regardless of whether they specialize or concentrate in micro or macro tracks within schools of social work (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Because we believe that all social workers are professional change agents, we use the terms *social worker, professional*, and *change agent* interchangeably throughout this book.

This book is also designed to be an introduction to macro practice as a set of professional activities in which all social workers are involved. Although some practitioners will concentrate their efforts primarily in one arena more than another, all social workers encounter situations in which macro-level interventions are the appropriate response to a need or a problem. Therefore, we define **macro practice** as *professionally guided intervention(s) designed to bring about change in organizational, community, and/or policy arenas*.

Professional identity is a relational concept in that one identifies with a community of colleagues who share a common value base and whose joint efforts work toward "a way of life with public

value" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 39). Professions "exist to meet the needs of others" within the larger community (Gustafson, 1982, p. 508). This characteristic has led a number of writers to refer to professions as *callings* because they literally call members to contribute to the civic good. Professions are therefore client oriented and conform to a set of values that encapsulate the community good that is to be served. In many ways, it is this commitment to the understanding and changing of larger systems that defines social work. Sullivan (2005) argues that the very nature of professionalism implies a responsibility to the larger society and to the common good.

In his classic book, *Social Work as Cause and Function*, Porter Lee (1937) described the dual calling of social work—to address systemic social problems and to provide for the needs of individuals and families. Lee acknowledged the inherent tension in trying to do both. In planning for social change while simultaneously responding to immediate need, social work finds its unique "both-and" contribution (Gates, 2014).

This book is based on the assumption that professional social workers will always experience tension as long as they recognize the importance of both providing direct services and addressing organizational and community problems. Social workers must see themselves as problem solvers and do both in order to truly be doing social work. The only other option is to ignore recurring problems. Thus, macro practice is not an option but is an integral part of being a professional social worker. All social workers will engage in some form of macro practice.

The Interrelationship of Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

A broad focus on arenas for change is a feature that makes social work unique among helping professions. When the arena for change is limited solely to casework with individuals and families, an assumption is being made. The assumption is that causal factors associated with the problem or need can be found only in some deficit in the micro system—the client, couple, or family coming for help—or in their abilities to access needed resources. Broadening the problem analysis to include organizations and communities recognizes the possibility or likelihood that, in some situations, the pathology or causal factors may be identified in the policies and/or practices of macro systems—communities and their various institutions. For example, an organization may fail to provide relevant and needed services, or may provide them in a narrow and discriminatory manner. Or some members of a community may find themselves excluded from participation in decisions that affect them.

It is not unusual for direct practitioners to have clients ask for help with problems that at first appear to be individual or interpersonal, but, after further examination, turn out to be macro-level problems. A family that loses its primary source of income, undergoes eviction, and finds that there is no affordable housing and a three-month waiting list to get into a homeless shelter represents a symptom of a community problem. Clearly, the family's immediate shelter problem must be resolved, but just as obviously, the communitywide lack of affordable housing and emergency alternatives must be addressed.

A veteran may report having difficulty getting an appointment to see a specialist at the Veterans Administration and is put on a waiting list. This may seem like an isolated incident until the social worker begins to see a pattern developing among his clients who are service members or veterans. When he watches the news one night to learn that this

delay is keeping thousands of veterans from getting health care services and that policies surrounding how waiting lists are handled need to change, what seemed like an individual's problem is quickly seen as a macro problem in the veterans' health care system. Collecting data, advocating at the local level, and joining others around the country to advocate for system reform become necessary if his clients are to receive what they need.

A mother may describe the pressures put on her son to join a gang and become involved in the drug trade. The immediate need of this family can perhaps be met by building a support system for the boy designed to keep him in school, in a part-time job, and in constructive activities. However, this individual/family approach alone would not solve the problem for the many other families who must live daily with the same threats.

In yet another example, a social worker employed by a community-based agency on an American Indian reservation talks about the importance of her work, as she constantly has to ask indigenous people for advice so that she does not make assumptions about the people with whom she works. The concept of community and what it means to this tribe, even the value of the land as a part of their tradition, is so crucial. It is much more complex than she had assumed when she was in school. In her position, this social worker has come to appreciate the false dichotomy between micro and macro social work. Although she works directly with tribal members, she is constantly assessing their environment, asking for advice, and recognizing the cultural context in which all her actions are embedded.

In instances like these, micro-level interventions alone may be inefficient (and often ineffective) ways to address macro-level problems, and they also run the risk of dealing only with symptoms. In some ways, using micro-level interventions to address a macro-level problem is similar to treating individuals who are suffering from a new flu strain one at a time rather than vaccinating the whole population before they contract the disease. In short, it is as important for social workers to understand the nature of individual and group interventions as it is to understand the nature of organizational, community, and policy change.

Macro-Level Change

Intervention in organizations or communities is referred to as ***macro-level change***. Managing macro-level change requires a good deal of professional knowledge and skill. Poor management and flawed decision making in the change process can result in serious setbacks that can make things worse for those already in need. On the other hand, many positive changes in organizations and communities have been orchestrated by social workers and others who have carefully planned, designed, and carried out the change process.

Social work students often express the concern that they came into the profession because of an interest in working with individuals and families, not with communities and organizations. This can sometimes present an ethical dilemma, because at times what a client or family most needs in the long run is macro-level change. This does not mean that the immediate need is not addressed. It also does not mean that the social worker is left alone to bring about community or organizational change. Macro practice is a collaborative effort, and change will rarely be immediate. But ignoring the need for change should not be considered a viable option.

Given the complexity of macro interventions, practitioners may begin to feel overwhelmed. Is it not enough to perform good direct practice or clinical work? Is it not enough to listen to a client and offer options? Our answer is that professional practice focusing only on an individual's intrapsychic concerns does not fit the definition of social work. Being a social worker requires seeing the client as part of multiple, overlapping systems that comprise the person's social and physical environment. The profession of social work is committed to seeking social and economic justice in concert with vulnerable and underserved populations, and macro-practice skills are necessary in confronting these inequalities. For example, consider a woman reported for child neglect who lives in a run-down home with structural problems her landlord refuses to fix. A clinical intervention designed to strengthen her emotional coping skills might be useful, but that intervention alone would ignore the context of the problem facing her and other women living in similar conditions. Social workers engaging only in working with their individual cases and ignoring larger scale problems may be doing so to the detriment of their clients. Similarly, social workers who carry out episodes of macro practice must understand what is involved in the provision of direct services to clients at the individual, domestic unit, or group level. Without this understanding, macro practice may occur without an adequate grounding in understanding client problems and needs. One example might be a social worker who conducts a community crime prevention campaign to combat high rates of petty theft in a neighborhood, unaware that most such acts are the work of a relatively small number of residents desperately in need of drug-abuse intervention. The interconnectedness of micro and macro roles is the heart of social work practice.

Macro-Practice Arenas and Roles

This book is not designed to prepare practitioners for full-time agency administration, program planning, community organizing, or policy analysis positions. Social workers who assume full-time macro **roles** will need a more advanced understanding than this text provides. Nor is this a book on how to specialize in macro practice. Instead, it is designed to provide basic knowledge and skills on aspects of macro practice in which competent social work practitioners will need to engage. We also want to raise awareness about how versatile social work is as a profession and about the potential one has to engage at the macro level.

There are different ways to conceptualize the **arenas** in which macro social work practice occurs. Rothman, Erlich, and Tropman (2008) identify three arenas of intervention: communities, organizations, and small groups. We have selected communities and organizations as the arenas on which the majority of this text will focus, folding small-group work in as a critical part of most interventions in both communities and organizations. ***Small groups*** are seen as collections of people who collaborate on tasks that move toward agreed-upon changes. Small groups are often the nucleus around which change strategies are developed in both communities and organizations, and they are therefore more logically conceptualized as part of the strategy or medium for change rather than the focus of change.

Other writers focus on the policy context in which macro intervention occurs (Gilbert & Terrell, 2013; Jansson, 2014; Karger & Stoesz, 2013). The policy arena is well articulated in other social work textbooks that complement the content here (e.g., Cummins, Byers, & Pedrick, 2011). Organizational and community arenas are

deeply embedded in political systems, which are typically the starting points for development of social policies. Although the creation and analysis of these policies are not our main focus, an understanding of how ideologies and values are manifested in local, state, national, and international politics is fundamental to macro change.

Policy Practice

Practice Behavior: Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services.

Critical Thinking Question: In your field or work experience, what policies have influenced how you practice? How have these policies benefitted or constrained your work?

The majority of social workers deal with change directly with clients, usually working with individuals one on one, or with families or small groups. Some practitioners focus on communitywide problems. Others work in the areas of planning, management, and administration of organizations. Regardless of the professional social worker's primary practice orientation, it is crucial that all social work practitioners support the position that although some problems can be resolved at an individual or family level, others will require intervention that takes on a broader scope, including the need to effect changes in organizations and communities. Social workers are constantly identifying changes needed to make systems more responsive or sensitive to **target populations**. Other professionals may also see themselves as change agents, and it is important for the contemporary social work practitioner to collaborate and partner with those from other professions so that the knowledge of diverse fields can be used in planning effective change. Macro changes are typically too complex for one to address alone.

It is not uncommon to have social workers describe themselves as *psychiatric social workers*, *geriatric specialists*, *child welfare workers*, and so on. These specialties denote the target populations with whom these practitioners work. Just as common are terms such as *medical social worker* and *behavioral health specialist*, indicating a setting in which these professionals are employed. Within all of these specialities or settings, there are multiple roles one can play as a social worker (Kerson & McCoyd, 2013).

Terms such as *planner*, *community organizer*, *case manager*, and *group worker* describe actual functions performed by social workers. In addition, social workers plan, develop, and coordinate programs; as well as administer, manage, and supervise staff in human service organizations. Social workers develop and organize communities around the world. They advocate for policy change and work as policy analysts in local, regional, national, and even international arenas.

Watch the video on collaborating with colleagues and clients for effective policy action in community organization. What change arena do the community members focus on in the meeting?

Social work practice is broadly defined and allows for both micro (individual, domestic unit, or group) and macro interventions (organization, community, or policy). See Box 1.1. Social workers who undertake macro interventions will often be engaged in what is called "policy practice" (Jansson, 2014) because policy change is so integral to what happens in organizations and communities. Given this division of labor, some professional roles require that the social worker be involved full-time in macro practice. These professional roles are often referred to by such titles as *planner, policy analyst, program coordinator, community organizer, manager*, and *administrator.*

The micro service worker or clinical social worker also bears responsibility for initiating change in organizations and communities. Workers in micro-level roles are often the first to recognize patterns indicating the need for change. If one or two persons present a particular problem, a logical response is to deal with them as individuals. However, as more individuals present the same situation, it may become evident that something is awry in the systems with which these clients are interacting. The social worker must

Box 1.1 Focus of Intervention

Level	Primary Focus of Intervention	Examples of Roles
Micro	Individuals	Clinician Care Coordinator
Micro	Domestic Unit	Family Counselor Case Manager
Micro and Macro	Small Groups	Group Worker Supervisor
Macro	Organizations	Human Service Administrator Midlevel Manager Program Coordinator Supervisor
Macro	Communities	Community Developer Community Organizer Community Planner Social Activist
Macro	Policy	Legislative Advocate Policy Analyst

then assume the responsibility for identifying the system(s) in need of change and the type of change needed. The nature of the system(s) in need of change and the type of change needed may lead to communitywide intervention or intervention in a single organization.

Suppose, for example, the staff in a senior center discover that a number of older persons in the community are possibly malnourished because of self-neglect and social isolation. A caseworker could follow up on each person, one at a time, in an attempt to provide outreach and needed services. But this could take a long time and produce hit-or-miss results. An alternative would be to deal with the problem from a macro perspective—to invest time in organizing agency and community resources to identify older people who need the senior center's services and to ensure that services are provided through a combination of staff and volunteer efforts.

Or assume that a social worker begins seeing more and more mixed-status families, composed of members with varying legal status. Parents are fearful of being targeted by deportation laws that could cause them to be forced to leave the country without their citizen-children. Choices are having to be made every day as some parents choose to leave their children in hopes that they will have a better life, whereas others choose to take their children with them even though this will mean taking them into exile. The social worker recognizes how untenable this position is for parents who have to make a choice between orphaning their children or exiling them to an unknown fate (Zayas & Bradlee, 2014). This social worker decides to document these cases, and asks her colleagues to do the same thing, so that they can join forces in advocating for immigration reform.

This may seem like a complex undertaking for someone who came into social work expecting to work with people one at a time. Yet, these social workers know that they have valuable practice experience that can be used to advocate for change . . . and, as a social worker, they are committed to being a voice for those who are unheard.

Although it is true that macro-level interventions can be complicated, we will offer a somewhat systematic approach that attempts to make such efforts more manageable. Remember, too, that these interventions are typically accomplished with the help of others, not alone.

A Systematic Approach to Macro Social Work Practice

Social workers find themselves drawn into episodes of macro practice through a number of different avenues, which we will refer to as (1) population, (2) problem, and (3) arena. The three overlapping circles in Figure 1.1 illustrate the focal points of the social worker's efforts in undertaking a macro-level change episode. As the intervention becomes more clearly conceptualized and defined, political and policy contexts must also be taken into consideration. Figure 1.1 illustrates an approach that can be used by social workers to identify, study, and analyze the need for change and to begin formulating solutions.

Initial awareness that a problem exists may occur in a variety of ways. It might be brought to a social worker's attention by a client. A group of residents within a neighborhood may present issues and concerns that need to be addressed. Issues in the workplace, such as the quality of service to clients, may surface and require organized intervention. Community problems may be so glaring that the need for change comes from many different directions. Social problems may be broadcast around the world, illustrating that multiple societies are struggling with some of the same challenges that one has identified in a local arena. Regardless of how social workers identify change opportunities, they function in a political environment that cannot be ignored.

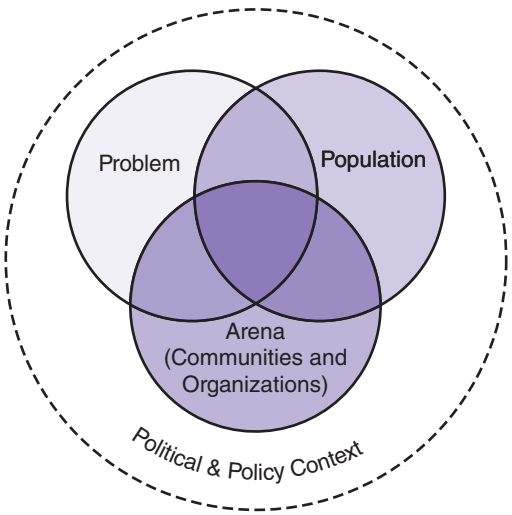

Figure1.1
Macro Practice Conceptual Framework: Understanding Problem, Population, and Arena

More will be said about these interacting factors later in this book, as the analytical and intervention phases of macro-level change are described. The following examples will illustrate these different points of entry into an **episode of change**.

- A social worker working with a senior center discovers that assisted-living resources in the community are limited for low-income seniors. In this instance, the worker's point of entry into the episode of change may be through the *population* of low-income older adults, helping them organize and approach the city council or the state legislature about the need for more options for low-income seniors who can no longer live alone.
- A social worker with a neighborhood service center may discover that among the many families served by the center are five or six single parents who have recently moved from welfare to work but are unable to find affordable child care. Working with this group's *problem* or need (children who need to be cared for while the parent is at work) as his or her point of entry into the episode of change, the social worker and others develop a plan for child care for the children of these single parents.
- A social worker at a community center learns that many apartments in the neighborhood are being used as drop points for undocumented immigrants, where they wait until they are sent to various communities across the country. Concerns are expressed about sanitation, safety, and exploitation. In this instance, the worker's point of entry into the episode of change may be the *community or neighborhood*, perhaps by sponsoring some communitywide meetings to discuss the impact, involving the appropriate community leaders and authorities, and working toward a resolution. This represents entry through the community *arena*.

In the course of engaging with and assessing populations, problems, and arenas, the social worker will inevitably focus on the areas of overlap depicted in Figure 1.1. To engage in macro practice to help a client who is addicted to alcohol, for example, the social worker must understand the problem (alcoholism), the background of the person addicted (e.g., older, retired males), and the arena (community or organization) within which the problem occurs. It would be important to review literature on the **target population**, theory about how alcohol addiction develops, and reports from studies testing various interventions. As the change agent builds a body of knowledge about the population and problem, it becomes especially important to focus on the overlap between the two areas: alcoholism and its unique impact on retired males.

It is likewise important to understand how the phenomenon of alcoholism affects the local community (the overlap between problem and arena), and to what extent the needs of the population of retired males are understood and addressed in the local community (overlap between population and arena). Ultimately, in an episode of macro practice, the objective is to work toward an understanding of the area where all three circles overlap (alcoholism and its impact on retired males in a given neighborhood or town).

As the social worker and other change agents assess the situation, they will gain at least some level of understanding of (1) retired males, (2) basic concepts and issues surrounding alcoholism, (3) the local community and/or relevant organizations, (4) alcoholism as it affects retired males, (5) alcoholism and how it is addressed

in the local community, (6) how the needs of retired males are addressed in the local community, (7) available interventions and their applicability to both the population and community of interest, and, finally, (8) the problems and needs of retired males in the local community who are addicted to alcohol.

Social and community problems and needs must also be addressed within a larger context that affects the population, the problem, and the community or organization. Dealing with social and community problems and needs effectively requires an awareness of the political environment within which the change episode will be undertaken. For these reasons, we have placed the three circles (population, problem, and arena) within a large dotted outer circle intended to depict the political environment. The importance of and the need for understanding the political and policy contexts within which macro-practice tasks take place cannot be overemphasized.

Assess your understanding of macro practice by taking this brief quiz.

THE FOUNDATION OF MACRO PRACTICE

Understanding the professional mission of social work that integrates micro and macro interventions and respects the practitioners who perform those roles is essential to recognizing why macro practice is important. Essentially, social workers have a mission to join the strengths of doing "both-and," being able to intervene with an individual service recipient and then skillfully moving into a larger system intervention that will make a difference in the lives of multiple individuals.

Similarly, the person-is-political perspective underscores the belief that individuals cannot be viewed separately from the larger society. The actions—or lack of actions—of individuals influence those around them and may have broad implications for others within an organization or a community. Thus, micro and macro roles are interconnected.

For those social workers committed to bringing about positive change not only for individual clients but also for whole neighborhoods, organizations, and communities, the question becomes: How is it possible to meet all the expectations of a job and still be involved with larger issues?

In Chapters 3 through 12 of this book, we will attempt to present the building blocks of a planned change model that makes it both possible and manageable to carry out episodes of change. Before we focus on a change model, it is necessary to develop a foundation for macro practice. That foundation is based on an understanding of the relevance of language; theories, models, and approaches; as well as values and ethics.

The Importance of Terminology

It is important to acknowledge terminology used to describe diverse population groups with whom social workers interact. Social workers need to recognize that terms used to define and distinguish special populations can be applied adversely in ways that reinforce stereotypes or isolate the members of these groups.

Abramovitz (1991) called attention to how common speech sends messages beyond those actually spoken. She offered as an example the phrase *feminization of poverty*, which calls attention

Diversity and Difference

Practice Behavior: Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

Critical Thinking Question: Why is language so important in working with diverse clients and constituencies?