Macro Social Work Practice Review

Field Seminar III
Thursday, September 13, 2012
Three Levels of Social Work Practice:

**Micro** - The most basic system, referring to an individual and their immediate environment.

**Mezzo** - A more generalized system referring to the interactional processes between multiple micro-systems (for example whole families or community groups).

**Macro** – Systems on a broad level which affect individuals indirectly (i.e. schools, legal system, employer, health care provider, state government).
The Community Practice and Partnerships Concentration prepares students for community-based practice in local, national, and international contexts. This curriculum is designed for students interested in international social work, global relief and development activities, community organization and advocacy, social service administration and grant-writing.
Terms:

- The terms *micro* and *macro* practice are used throughout this slide presentation as synonymous with “clinical” and “community” practice.
Macro Practice Defined:

• NASW believes that Organizational, Community and Policy issues frame individual problems

• Macro-practice is a broad concept that covers a wide variety of social work activities. It can be sub-divided into three areas, administrative practice, community practice and policy practice.

• Macro-activities benefit large groups of clients, or society in general, by introducing large scale positive change in the lives of clients through systemic solutions
Types of Macro Practice:

• Administrative Practice
• Community Practice
  • Planning, Development, Organizing, and Social Action
• Policy and Advocacy
Macro Practice: Administrative

- Organization seen as client
- Budgeting and financial management
- Working with board of directors
- Resource development
- Program evaluation
- Organizational design, development, assessment and diagnosis
- Computer information systems and technology
- Leadership and personnel management
- Networking
- Fundraising
- Media and marketing

(Birkenmaier, & Berg-Weger, 2007)
Macro Practice: Community Development

- Community as client
- Outreach program development, implementation and evaluation
- Fundraising (grant-writing, event planning)
- Coalition formulation and maintenance
- Planned change techniques
- Macro-level advocacy
- Leadership development and citizen participation
- Small group decision making
- Community organizing
- Task force membership
- Membership development and retention
- Economic development techniques

(Birkenmaier, & Berg-Weger, 2007)
Macro Practice: Policy and Advocacy

- Social problem/at-risk group is the client
- Legislative advocacy and lobbying skills
- Policy analysis and management
- Issue analysis techniques
- Social policy research
- Legal action

(Birkenmaier, & Berg-Weger, 2007)
What about theory? What are some macro practice theories?

- APU students learn to apply some of the following theories to macro practice:
  - General Systems theory
  - Ecological framework
  - Conflict theory
  - Organizational Behavior theory
  - Social Learning theory
  - Social Change model
  - Critical theory
  - Community Organization theory
  - Empowerment theory
Example: Applying General Systems Theory

General Systems theory teaches that the environment is made up of various systems that interact with each other. Some examples of systems are organizations or social groups. Systems are made up of various inter-related parts, and systems theory looks at the dynamic relationship between parts.

• **KEY CONCEPTS:** Each system is affected by whatever happens to another system, and each system is greater than sum of its parts.

• All organizational and social interactions involve communication and/or transaction to achieve equilibrium (balance). Communication is the exchange of information, while transaction involves the exchange of matter-energy.

• Systems have boundaries, which are more or less permeable depending on the amount and type of feedback received.

• Systems may have permeable or impermeable (rigid) boundaries—this defines the difference between an open or closed system.

• Open systems have inputs - energy or matter that enters through the boundaries, and outputs – energy or matter or that departs through the boundaries (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1997)
Macro Practice Field Settings

• According to a 2007 study by Deal, Hopkins, Fisher & Hartin, macro students placements were typically found in the following settings:
  • Departments of social services
  • Community-based non-profits
  • Industrial and corporate worksites
  • Agencies focused on advocacy
  • Agencies dedicated to housing or economic development
How do we integrate macro practice with clinical practice?

Austin, Comb & Barr, 2005 states:
“The tension between the clinical and community domains of social work practice dates from the debates of the 1920’s between the social control function (empowering clients) and the social reform cause (changing the system)”.
Integration of Micro & Macro = the Generalist Practitioner

• We must help social work students hold on to two competing ideas at the same time; namely, individual and community assessment (Austin & Combs & Barr, 2005).

• APU MSW Program Goal: “Graduates will exhibit competence in generalist and advanced social work practice with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities, including appropriate uses of supervision, consultation, and discernment to seek necessary organizational change”.
Recognizing Common Cross-over Skills

- According to Austin, Comb & Barr (2005):

  “While it is interesting to note the differences between micro and macro practice, it is increasingly evident that more attention is needed in explicating the commonalities across both domains of social work practice. These are referred to as **common skills utilized by both** micro and macro practitioners.”

  They include:

  1. Relationship building (e.g., engagement, trust-building, collaboration),
  2. Assessment (e.g., interaction between person and environment),
  3. Promoting helping processes and engaging in change strategies (e.g., contracting and monitoring the change process),
  4. Effective use of self in fostering client empowerment,
  5. Use of empathy and cultural sensitivity.
Challenges for Macro Field Instructors

• Typically field instructors in macro-placement settings are agency managers or directors, who are particularly busy, with limited availability for regular supervisor-student conferences.

• Agencies that engage in macro practice also tend to be complex and changeable, less predictable.

• Macro field instructor cannot rely on traditional assignment of cases, but instead are burdened with creating new tasks for the intern each year depending on the agencies current projects.

(Deal, Hopkins, Fisher & Hartin, 2007)
Strengths of Macro Field Placements

• Integrates students learning in the classroom with field experience.
• Recruits more students into administration and community organization careers
• Macro project meets genuine need for agency/community/clients
• Creates greater social awareness and sense of civic responsibility
Specific Macro Practice Skills
Student Develops:

• Demonstrates ability to identify resources, both internal and external.

• Demonstrates understanding of the impact of variables such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, socioeconomic status, etc.

• Identifies the impact of variety of systems and how they interact.

• Formulates an appropriate plan with appropriate short range and/or long range goals.
Student Macro Practice Skills, Cont.

- Demonstrates knowledge of an array of interventions reflecting organization development, program planning, development and evaluation, needs assessment, board and committee work, leadership development, community networking and public relations, personnel management, management information systems, and training and consultation.

- Demonstrate ability to work in different modalities, including groups, committees, boards, and communities.

- Demonstrates ability to engage in a change effort with community members in meeting their needs.
**Exercise:** Ask yourself what type of macro activity could:

- Increase organizational effectiveness?
- Improve quality of services to clients?
- Increase inter-agency collaboration?
- Help evaluate agency outcomes?
- Organize community around key issues?
Examples

Consider the following ideas:

• Intern organizes a community planning group
• Intern participates in a steering committee, a task force, a social action group, or an inter-organizational body such as a coalition, to address social problem.
• Intern creates and implements a client survey or conducts an evaluation of service outcomes.
• Intern researches and writes a grant proposal
• Intern prepares and implements a training, seminar or community outreach event, i.e. a health fair
• Intern develops new client support group, researches topics and plans curriculum.

(Suggestions for MACRO Field Assignments, University of Maryland.)
Sources Cited

- Maryland School of Social Work, *Suggestions for MACRO Field Assignments*, University of Maryland.