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Re-Envisioning Macro Social Work Practice

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Abstract: This paper presents 10 recommendations supporting a re-envisioning of macro practice for the 21st century. These strategies are needed to counter a generational trend of disinvestment in macro social work practice, and to support the historic vision of the social work profession as equally responsive to the needs of at-risk, disadvantaged populations and the organizational, community, and policy roots of social injustice. Before describing these recommendations and discussing their implications for the social work profession, I first briefly review the challenges facing macro practice and current initiatives promoting its renewal. The goal of this analysis is to define the essential contributions of macro practice while identifying strategies for responding to current dilemmas facing our profession.

Keywords: macro practice, advocacy, social work profession, human service organizations, management, leadership

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Among most social work organizations, the macro dimensions of social work practice—including policy advocacy, development, and analysis, community development and community organizing, and organizational management and leadership—have over the past two generations lost much of the prominence they once held under early welfare state theorists such as Richard Titmuss and Harold Wilensky and historic social justice leaders such as Jane Addams, Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Height, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The macro dimensions of social work practice ("macro practice") are now generally viewed as subsidiary to clinical or micro social work practice, as evidenced by the disproportionate emphasis placed on micro practice in social work practice and educational settings (CSWE, 2014; Whitaker & Arrington, 2008). Concomitantly, the concern of macro practice with addressing the organizational, community, and policy roots of social injustice via structural reform has been challenged by an emphasis on clinical intervention, as seen in the current promotion of evidence-based practice, defined as the use of manualized clinical interventions that have been shown through experimental research to be efficacious (Barth et al., 2014).

However, a call for greater attention to macro practice has emerged recently. The call has arisen in part due to: documentation of the impacts of structural racism (Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2004); recognition of the effects of neighborhood factors on sociodemographic disparities (Katz, 2015); and concerns that changes in public policies and public investment in social welfare programming may affect economic opportunity and social mobility for historically disadvantaged populations (Mason, 2012). The call is supported by critiques that characterize human service organizations as co-opted by public and private funders and unresponsive to the needs of service users (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Reisch, 2013a). The

call can be seen in scholarly attention to the advocacy and policy roots of social justice work (Austin, 2014; Reisch, 2013b). It is embedded in efforts to address grand societal challenges (Uehara et al., 2013). It also reflects the struggle to increase the number of social work students and faculty dedicated to macro practice (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014) and concerns regarding the ability of clinicians to demonstrate competency in macro practice (Silverman, 2014). Finally, the call for a renewal of macro practice is implicit in efforts to organize new social movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

In light of these scholarly, policy, and practice developments, the main objective of this analysis is to present a set of 10 recommendations supporting a re-envisioning of macro practice for the 21st century. These strategies also hold value for the re-envisioning of micro practice, as the struggle for legitimation faced by macro practitioners is shared by clinical social workers (Gonzales & Gelman, 2015). Taken together, these recommendations provide a conceptual blueprint for the social work profession as it seeks to address external challenges emanating from legislatures, funders, accrediting organizations, and sister professions.

Before describing these recommendations and discussing their implications for the social work profession, I first briefly review the challenges facing macro practice and the current initiative promoting its renewal. Two premises underlie this analysis: 1) if the current state of macro practice is a product of institutional and organizational forces shaping the nature of social work practice and affecting the social work profession, then any effort to renew macro practice must address these external factors; and 2) any reconceptualization of macro practice should capture the essence of the 20th century by reflecting the historic strengths of the profession while identifying new possibilities for future leadership. The overall goal is to define the essential contributions of macro practice while identifying strategies for responding to current dilemmas

facing our profession.

Challenges Facing Macro Practice

Social work as a profession seeks to respond to the needs of at-risk, disadvantaged populations and address the structural determinants of social, economic, and political injustice. The paired focus on micro and macro practice reflects the origins of the profession, as seen in the efforts of Progressive-era community organizers to deliver services to individuals, families, and groups while leading community development initiatives (Austin & Betten, 1977). Over its nearly 100 years of publication, this journal has sought to promote a unified, multilevel approach to practice that views micro and macro practice as necessary and complementary, and in which effort is made to avoid the divisive "micro versus macro practice" arguments that have arisen periodically (Fogel, 2015; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). This division of labor between micro and macro practice is similar to how sister professions have organized themselves to promote a comprehensive and balanced approach to practice. For example, public health includes health behavior/health promotion and maternal, child, and family health, and the macro practice areas of health management/policy and community health.

This historic vision of social work, involving equal attention to the micro and macro dimensions of practice, has been challenged by evidence suggesting that social work is largely micro in nature. A recent survey of the NASW membership found that 86% of social workers were engaged in micro practice, defined as clinical work or practice with individuals, families, and/or groups, with 14% involved in macro practice (Whitaker & Arrington, 2008). A similar disproportion can be seen in social work education. A 2014 survey of accredited MSW programs found that 45 of 192 programs (23%) had advanced practice concentrations in community practice, management practice, or policy practice (CSWE, 2014). This survey also found that of

37,699 MSW students in 2014 field placements, 2,247 (6%) were in macro-oriented internships, defined as placements emphasizing community development/planning, administration, advocacy, or social policy.

This imbalance is a product of cascading forces that incentivize micro practice and disincentivize macro practice at the level of the profession, within schools/departments of social work, and among individual practitioners in human service organizations. Specifically, the attention placed on micro practice, and the corresponding under-emphasis on macro practice, can be attributed to: 1) increasing needs among historically disadvantaged populations, as well as new groups and communities, requiring relief; 2) fiscal/policy changes to the US social welfare state that have reinforced public disinvestment in universal, community-based social welfare programming and located the roots of (and solutions to) social problems within individuals as opposed to their social, economic, and political environments; 3) organizational adaptations to these external challenges that have led to an overemphasis on clinical service provision to support organizational survival; resulting in 4) the lack of funding for macro practice positions and, overall, a limited labor market for macro practice. Each of these points requires elaboration.

First, the nature of social work practice is, at base, a reflection of the prevailing needs expressed by individuals, groups, and populations in society. As basic needs have grown in traditional service areas in the wake of the Great Recession beginning in 2008, and as new needs have emerged, social work practitioners have been called upon to provide immediate relief. Surveys of the nonprofit sector over the past three years suggest that over half of providers have not been able to provide sufficient services to meet demand (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2015). Need levels have risen even more among historically disadvantaged populations, particularly at the intersection of race/ethnicity, poverty, and geography. For example, research attests to the

rise of a school-to-prison pipeline for poor, urban and suburban African Americans (Fenning & Rose, 2007) as well as increased healthcare needs among poor communities of color experiencing environmental racism (Taylor, 2014). Other needs have arisen as a result of the emergence of new groups seeking support, as can be seen in the increased numbers of families with children diagnosed with autism; and in response to natural disaster, such as in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These trends have directed attention towards frontline service delivery.

Second, the nature of social work practice is, in part, a reflection of the structure of the social welfare state and, in particular, how social welfare programs are authorized and funded. The US social welfare system is a patchwork quilt of publicly supported programs authorized by federal, state, and local policymakers, and to a much lesser extent, programs subsidized by private sources, including foundation grants, fee-for-service payments, and donations (Smith, 2012). The stability and legitimacy of social welfare programs, and thus social work practice, depend on public investment. However, federal fiscal trends begun with the Reagan-era 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, and exacerbated by the Iraq and Afghan wars, have resulted in decreased non-defense discretionary spending as a proportion of GDP (Austin, 2014). Public disinvestment in social welfare programming has been accompanied by a persistent belief in individualized approaches to social welfare programming, as seen in: the continued disinclination to provide universal, community-focused social welfare services (Gilbert, 2002); and the continuation of means-tested social benefit programs, often yoked to Medicaid funding and the use of block grants (Smith, 2012). In addition, as the New Public Management movement has framed social welfare programs as ineffective and inefficient, accountability concerns have arisen regarding the use of public funds (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). These

trends have directed attention away from publicly funded universal policies/programs and collectivist approaches to service delivery, towards services delivered to individuals directly or indirectly (e.g., vouchers, credits), and towards experimentation with privatization and other market-based strategies (Gilbert, 2002; Smith, 2012).

Third, human service organizations have responded to these external challenges by adapting to the requirements and preferences of public and private patrons. The close ties between funders and providers have been characterized as supporting a partnership in public service (Salamon, 2012). Yet these ties have also resulted in human service organizations focusing on internal advocacy (i.e., outreach to funders to support organizational maintenance) as opposed to external advocacy to promote systemic change on behalf of service users and their communities (Mosley, 2012; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). The concern of providers with "keeping the lights on" has grown due to increasing competition for public funding, social entrepreneurial efforts to develop fee-for-service programs, board-led fundraising for private donations to avoid the strings attached to public revenue streams, the entrance of for-profit firms into historically nonprofit human service markets, and legal restrictions against public lobbying (Kimberlin, 2009; Smith, 2015).

Fourth, these forces have reinforced the micro practice orientation of human service organizations. More specifically, these trends have resulted in what has been termed *managerialism* in which providers have struggled against the commodification and decontextualization of frontline service delivery amidst a climate of competition for funding (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Netting et al., in press). Through commodification, service users and practitioners are viewed as anonymous individuals whose value is determined in relation to funding as opposed to persons whose basic human rights merit protection and support. Through

decontextualization, individuals are disconnected from their broader organizational and community environments. These forces have pressured human service organizations to: 1) deliver residual services as opposed to prevention/promotion services as a result of a pay-for-problems approach to social welfare funding; 2) attach questions of "deservingness" to the identification of needs via individual eligibility determination processes; 3) emphasize the use of evidence-based practices; 4) evaluate the contributions of practitioners and programs via a criterion of cost-effectiveness; 5) view workforce development through a lens of clinical licensure and accreditation; 6) organize programs around policy/contractual demands as opposed to community or service user preferences; and 7) utilize performance measurement systems to monitor and report on worker productivity (Donaldson et al., 2014; Gelman & Gonzalez, 2015; Reisch, 2013a; Smith, 2012).

The organizational response to these interrelated changes has been severe. Human service organizations have directed resources to structuring the immediate context of service delivery in alignment with the requirements of funders and policymakers, by concentrating administrative and supervisory attention on the task and technical environment shaping frontline practice and on the gatekeeping function of determining eligibility for public support. There has been a strong emphasis on practices deemed by legitimating bodies (e.g., legislatures, public funders, private patrons) to be associated with effective clinical practice and, in the aggregate, organizational performance. The overall effect has been to push human service organizations towards the adoption of business models developed in other sectors (e.g., performance measurement systems) and sister professions (e.g., various evidence-based practice models) to support the provision of individual services in concordance with the preferences of policymakers and funders; and to steer agencies away from experimentation with alternative service approaches untethered to

current funding streams, and away from engagement in community work and policy advocacy (Hasenfeld, 2015; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Kimberlin, 2009; Smith, 2012).

These organizational adaptations to external forces have stunted the development of the macro practice labor market, which can be characterized as small, poorly funded by public sources and often requiring subsidization by private sources, and unstable. An exception to this is management practice, which remains an option given that managers are needed in human service organizations to satisfy governance requirements. Yet the market for management practice has contracted as human service organizations have reduced supervisory and middle management positions in the wake of the Great Recession. The marketplace has also become more competitive, as social workers have had to contend for administrative positions with business and public/nonprofit management professionals (Smith, 2015). As a result, the nature of management practice, which historically has included attention to advocacy, community organizing, and policy development (Austin, 1986), has narrowed to focus on securing funding, administering and evaluating programs, and monitoring performance (Pritzker & Applewhite, 2015; Smith, 2012). To sustain their organizations, social work managers have ironically become stronger proponents of micro practice than of their historical macro practice roles. In short, the space for macro practice has contracted as the need for a robust macro practice has grown.

The Call for Macro Practice Renewal

The effects of these policy and practice trends have not been isolated among macro practitioners, although it may be argued that macro practice has been disproportionately impacted. As awareness of the challenges facing the social work profession has grown, a call has arisen for a renewed focus on macro practice. This call has sought to emphasize the importance of macro practice in light of diminished numbers of macro practitioners.

The current call originated with the release of the Rothman Report (2013), which summarized findings of a 2011 survey of 172 social work educators who were members of the CSWE Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA). Professor Rothman found that these macro practice faculty perceived: a general lack of interest in macro practice among their micro practice colleagues; greater employment and research opportunities for micro practice than macro practice students and faculty; and limited resources available to develop macro practice-related courses, field internships, and research projects. In light of these findings, Professor Rothman identified the need to raise the visibility of macro practice, provide resources to support macro practice education and students, and enhance macro practice scholarship. These recommendations corroborate those from other studies on the state of macro practice in social work education (Ezell, Chernesky, & Healy, 2004; Fisher & Corciullo, 2011; Netting et al., in press). They also evoke the efforts of previous generations of macro practice academics, including the 1962 CSWE statement authored by Meyer Schwartz legitimating community practice as a social work practice concentration (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014) and the scholarly debate surrounding the publication of *Unfaithful Angels* (Specht & Courtney, 1994).

The Rothman Report led to the formation of the Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work ("Commission") in spring 2013. Given the charge of addressing the recommendations of the Rothman Report, the Commission was initiated by ACOSA and supported financially by more than 50 schools of social work and the Network for Social Work Management (NSWM). To date, the Commission has: a) engaged in social media marketing to highlight the importance of macro practice in social work and call for the enrollment of macro students to reach 20% in schools/departments of social work by 2020; b) catalogued and shared macro practice content for use in educational curricula; c) networked with other social work

membership organizations to discuss inclusion of macro practice content in accreditation and licensing standards; and d) sought to increase attention to macro practice among policymakers (Donaldson et al., 2014; Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice in Social Work, 2014).

Implications for Macro Practice

At least four implications may be drawn from this brief review of trends to inform the current effort to renew macro practice. The first two implications concern the need to work *externally* to secure needed resources to support macro practitioners (e.g., through interorganizational, inter-institutional, and interprofessional initiatives). First, given the professionalized nature of social work, the balance of micro to macro practice depends on the cultivation of a robust macro practice labor market. Second, given that public funding is the predominant revenue stream supporting human service organizations, demand for macro practice is likeliest to grow through public investment in macro programs. This line of reasoning affirms the value of human service organizations partnering with allied institutions outside of social work around a progressive agenda by advocating for public funds for community-based, universal social welfare programming. It also suggests that agency directors and policymakers are needed to lead the effort to expand macro practice in partnership with social work educators.

The final two implications concern how social work organizations work *internally* to enhance the relevance and value of macro practice (e.g., through intra-organizational, intra-institutional, and intra-professional activities). Third, because challenges to the legitimacy of macro practitioners are also felt by micro practitioners, efforts to expand macro practice should promote collaboration with micro practitioners to address common threats to the profession. Fourth, the value of macro practice should be understood in relation to social justice outcomes such as reduced needs, enhanced diversity and equity, and greater wellbeing of service users and

practitioners. This line of reasoning affirms the importance of developing social change strategies that support partnerships between macro and micro practitioners within human service organizations and schools/departments of social work. It also suggests that macro practice expansion should be understood as an instrumental objective designed to enhance the experiences of service users and practitioners, as opposed to an end unto itself.

These four implications ask important questions of the current call for macro practice expansion, including: How can macro practice enhance micro practice (and vice versa) to better address concerns with managerialism and the lack of funding for community-based, universal services?; Why does macro practice matter for social justice?; and, What macro practice models best address diverse societal needs? This line of questioning implies that the forms and purposes of macro practice need to be articulated for any call for macro practice expansion to be coherent.

These implications suggest new directions for macro practice. They suggest that we develop active networks to support structural reform of the US social welfare state, and argue against reaffirming the status quo as reflected in the demands of funders/policymakers. They challenge the insular preoccupation with macro practice at the expense of micro practice as well as the view of social work as separate from other professions and disciplines. They urge us to consider how social workers can best advocate for social justice across diverse practice contexts.

Strategies for Re-Envisioning Macro Practice

Taken together, these implications argue for a re-envisioning of macro practice as opposed to a simple reinvigoration of it. This section introduces 10 recommendations to support re-envisioning. Recommendations 1-5 focus on stimulating demand for macro practice by strengthening awareness of and responsiveness to external challenges, by coordinating the efforts of professional associations and schools/departments of social work, and through outreach to

allied professions and disciplines. These *externally* focused strategies are dedicated to the development of new markets for social work overall, including macro practice, through interorganizational, inter-institutional, and interprofessional outreach and collaboration involving outreach by human service organizations and social work educational institutions. Recommendations 6-10 focus on increasing the supply and quality of macro practitioners by strengthening the connections between macro and micro practice, and by grounding macro practice in theory, evidence, and the perspectives of service users. These *internally* focused strategies are dedicated to enhancing the ability of macro practitioners to address organizational, community, policy, and societal challenges through the refinement of practices and educational approaches within human service organizations and social work educational institutions.

1. Developing External Advocacy Networks

Recommendation 1 concerns the development of networks to strengthen the legitimacy of the social work profession, help the profession advocate for national and international social justice concerns, and advocate for community-based social welfare programming. Such network development is predicated on strengthening linkages to major institutions with authority over social welfare funding, including: federal, state, and local political institutions (e.g., executives, legislatures, bureaucracies); social justice-focused economic institutions (e.g., public welfare-focused global foundations, community foundations and banks, microfinance initiatives); and social institutions (e.g., global and national civic associations, educational districts). It is also concerned with public sector network development, as seen in the growth of coalitions involving city, county, regional, state, and/or federal governmental bodies to address multi-jurisdictional issues/opportunities. This advocacy should be coordinated, with national and international efforts the focus of national social work membership organizations, and state and local efforts the

province of state NASW and NSWM chapters and other local and regional human service organizations. These efforts should be focused on developing policy and programmatic solutions to address social exclusion/oppression, as exemplified in a vision of a 21st century Office of Economic Opportunity tasked with reducing economic inequality in the new Gilded Age (Grusky & Krichli-Katz, 2012).

2. Cultivating Agency-University Macro Practice Partnerships

Recommendation 2 concerns the cultivation of collaborative, macro practice-focused partnerships involving social work organizations and educational institutions. At the organizational level, partnerships could involve human service organizations and schools/departments of social work establishing "macro practice laboratories" that pilot, evaluate, refine, and disseminate community, organizational, and system change interventions; share staff engaged in model development and testing; and develop student internships that provide advanced training and lead to paid macro practice positions. At the regional level, the intention is to support the growth of clusters of densely interwoven agency-university initiatives bringing new macro practice models to scale. These innovation clusters, which are common in science and technology (e.g., Silicon Valley), would require support from local governments and foundations to address community and regional needs in alignment with a collective impact approach (Hanleybrown, Kania, & Kramer, 2012).

3. Supporting Interprofessional and Interdisciplinary Exploration

Recommendation 3 concerns the development of interprofessional and interdisciplinary initiatives to accelerate knowledge development and sharing and identify new strategies for social work advancement and macro practice expansion (Moxley, 2008). Such initiatives should involve sister professions (e.g., public health, nursing, medicine, education, public

policy/management) and disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology), with prominent attention given to professions that have been successful in institutionalizing policy and practice reforms to address the needs of at-risk populations (e.g., public health, with which the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies). Attention should also be paid to seemingly unrelated professions. For example, non-traditional partners with social work include civil engineering (with its commitment to urban infrastructural development) and the environmental sciences (with their focus on the social and ecological consequences of environmental racism). Cross-pollination opportunities also exist with the humanities (e.g., protest art and photovoice as community organizing and policy advocacy tools) and the social sciences (e.g., political science, with its interest in civic participation, policy advocacy, and social movements). The overall goal of interprofessional and interdisciplinary initiatives is to stimulate radical discoveries and support the development, refinement, and application of innovative practice frameworks.

4. Using Technology to Network and Advocate

Recommendation 4 concerns the use of technology to network, advocate, and organize across organizations, jurisdictions, and nations. Self-determination in a technologically advanced world depends on access to information. Technology is important for human service organizations seeking to develop networks and partnerships, and to support the diffusion of social work innovations across organizational, professional, and geographic borders (Goldkind & Wolf, 2014). Social networking tools are supporting virtual organizing and the mobilization of communities (e.g., the use of social media in support of gay marriage, and during the Arab Spring and Occupy movements), and are creating new methods of macro-level problem solving (e.g., crowdsourced projects, online competitions). Technology is also helping human service organizations gather, collate, and share information related to social justice issues, with the most

technologically savvy organizations serving as clearinghouses of social justice information to promote their advocacy efforts. These examples underscore the benefits of technologies that are inexpensive and simple, that promote information sharing, and that support the formation of social movements.

5. Using Equity-Focused Frameworks

Recommendation 5 concerns the use of equity frameworks for evaluating the impacts of social welfare initiatives. Equity frameworks, including racial impact assessments and equity scorecards (Harris III & Bensimon, 2007), provide standardized methods of documenting levels of social inclusion/exclusion. When combined with rigorous data collection methods, equity tracking tools may be used to assess the progress of policies and programs around social justice goals such as decreased racial/ethnic disparities and increased access to resources for at-risk populations. An equity lens may also support the development of performance measurement systems to track critical needs, organizational and community efforts, and outcomes. Finally, the use of equity tools can be combined with organizational learning frameworks to examine the degree to which organizations and community coalitions, for example, are engaged in continuous improvement, have needed leadership, and provide sufficient resources to implement equity initiatives fully.

6. Strengthening Linkages to Micro Practice and Within Macro Practice

Recommendation 6 concerns the development of connections between macro and micro practice, and among the macro practice specializations of policy, community, and management practice. Although social work practice has historically been conceptualized as addressing human behavior in relation to the social environment through a multilevel ecological model, social work educational institutions have generally organized professional training at a single

level of practice. This static approach to practice: a) reinforces information silos (i.e., "micro versus macro practice") to the detriment of developing a common professional language and identity; b) leads to an "othering" in which macro practice is ghettoized, particularly when the social work labor market incentivizes the choice of micro practice; and c) weakens professional development pipelines through which micro practitioners are prepared for future supervisory and managerial roles. A similar logic holds for the macro practice specializations of management, policy, and community practice. Multilevel practice approaches (e.g., advanced generalist practice models, which prepare social workers for clinical, supervisory, managerial, community, and policy practice roles) thus hold promise, particularly when combined with field placements that challenge students to practice across levels. The overall goal is to promote cross-pollination so that all social workers have knowledge of micro practice and the ability to supervise staff and develop and evaluate programs, facilitate community development, and engage in policy development and advocacy (Austin, 1988, 2002).

7. Scanning the Environment to Enhance Responsiveness

Recommendation 7 concerns environmental scanning to ensure that macro practitioners are responsive to current societal needs and aware of emerging needs. Attending to the needs of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities is a core tenet of macro practice. As needs change, then macro practice models and educational methods should respond in kind. For example, unaddressed needs can be used to support network development as described in Recommendations 1-3. Continuous assessment of the relevance of macro practice is enabled by a general focus on capacity building, developing close relationships with diverse stakeholder groups, and embedding feedback loops into the development and implementation of macro practice initiatives. The use of collaborative leadership frameworks, in which social work leaders

share decision-making with community leaders, may also facilitate overall environmental scanning. It should not be assumed that policymakers and funders are able to accurately gauge and respond effectively to the perspectives of service users, community members, and practitioners. Nor should environmental scanning be equated with market assessment, which focuses primarily on identifying needs that can be transformed into profitable services and funded programs. The overall goal is to identify macro practices that address current and anticipated needs regardless of their economic benefits.

8. Developing Theory-Informed Macro Practice

Recommendation 8 concerns the development of theory-informed practice and practice-informed theory. Attention to social science theory has informed the development of macro practice models, including: a) community development models reflecting social disorganization and social capital theories; b) social movement organizing methods that draw on social movement theory; c) policy framing and policy implementation tools that reflect theories of political communication and political organization; d) management approaches drawing on social psychological theories of power and exchange; and e) feminist community organizing models that reflect feminist theories of leadership. The search for other practice-relevant theories may be facilitated through Recommendation 3. There should also be emphasis placed on the contributions of practice for theory development and refinement. Finally, normative theory, which concerns the ethical foundations for action, can support the refinement of macro practice competencies; and positive theory, which is used to understand the interrelationships among phenomena, can inform the development of macro practice intervention approaches.

9. Promoting Evidence-Informed Macro Practice

Recommendation 9 concerns the integration of diverse types of evidence into practice.

Reflecting the main approaches to evidence-based clinical practice, models of evidence-informed macro practice include: a) the design, testing, and refinement of research-based policy, community, and organizational/managerial interventions to enhance service effectiveness (Briggs & McBeath, 2009; Heinrich, 2007); and b) the integration of available research, practitioner expertise, community and cultural considerations, and service user preferences to support macro practitioner decision-making (McBeath & Austin, 2015). Although funders and policymakers are increasingly interested in the former, the latter will likely be more useful to macro practitioners given its comparatively smaller resource demands, intuitive familiarity, and adaptability to diverse organizational and community practice settings. Each approach supports an emphasis on using research to guide practice, a commitment to critical thinking and curiosity, and engagement in trial-and-error experimentation to support practice innovation.

10. Centering Practice Around Human Rights

Recommendation 10 concerns the centrality of promoting and protecting human rights within the context of social work practice. Taking rights seriously requires that macro practitioners act as stewards and champions. Macro practitioners act as stewards (i.e., guides, translators, facilitators, boundary spanners) when service users and community members are involved in social welfare programs that promote human rights. However, in the presence of policies and programs that seek to degrade or deny basic human rights, macro practitioners act as champions (NASW, 2008). They illuminate injustice, organize and advocate, and contest. These roles are critical for addressing the policymaker- and funder-driven pressures of managerialism and co-optation impacting human service organizations (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Smith, 2015). Macro practice strategies that support the roles of steward and champion include: a) promoting the leadership of service users and community members; b) engaging in political

social work and encouraging civic engagement; c) focusing on the community-based aspects of policy enactment and organizational management; d) supporting asset-based policy and program development; and e) tracking levels of inclusion/exclusion (i.e., Recommendation 5). Overall, efforts to promote and protect human rights are facilitated through the creation of participatory spaces where service users and community members can contribute to the development, implementation, and evaluation of social welfare policies and programs in collaboration with social workers. Maintaining and expanding these spaces is the primary responsibility of macro practitioners.

From Principles to Action

Imagine a social work profession that invests equally in frontline service and in shaping the organizational, community, and societal contexts in which social work is practiced. Imagine a social work profession that has been charged by major institutions with the responsibility of developing and implementing empowering solutions to grand societal challenges. Imagine a social work profession that advances practice and education by integrating research, theory, and the perspectives of the least powerful. This is a robust vision of a profession that invests in all forms of practice as a means of creating a more just society.

It is in support of this vision that the preceding 10 recommendations were developed. These strategies do not focus solely on macro practitioners, and are dedicated as much to the development and management of networks of influence to address external forces (emanating from policymakers, funders, and professions) as they are focused within social work. They are an effort to understand the current call for macro practice expansion in relation to the fundamental external and internal drivers of the imbalance between micro and macro practice, and in regards to the overarching challenges facing the social work profession. As with any call for reform,

serious empirical and theoretical analysis of these recommendations is needed.

Such analysis may be facilitated by a national study of human service organizations and of the institutions and professions noted in Recommendations 1 and 3 to assess the demand for macro practice and identify opportunities for the expansion of the profession. This study should differentiate between current needs supporting residual social welfare programming and emergent needs in practice areas focused on the development of preventive, community-based, and universal support services. It should thus illuminate opportunities to organize and advocate to develop new policies and markets promoting social work practice (Recommendation 4), particularly in metropolitan regions with high concentrations of human service organizations.

A similar study should be conducted among educational institutions to build upon the findings of the Rothman Report (2013). This study should seek to identify the efforts of social work educational institutions to expand macro and micro practice pipelines, by identifying opportunities for schools/departments of social work to: a) engage in multilevel intervention development and testing with human service organizations (Recommendation 2); b) collaborate with other academic units in the service of theory- and research-driven interprofessional and interdisciplinary education, research, and service (Recommendations 3, 8, and 9); c) support macro practice students and faculty with interests in micro practice and vice versa (Recommendation 6); and d) inform the development of equity-focused tracking systems for attending to the needs of macro-oriented students, faculty, and community members (Recommendations 5, 7, and 10). The overall goal of this study should be to illuminate opportunities for universities, colleges, and community colleges to affirm a commitment to social justice and expand educational resources for macro practice and social work overall.

This goal is important because schools/departments of social work are generally much

smaller than other professional schools and colleges, and are therefore at risk of delegitimation in academe in the same way that macro practice concentrations are at risk within schools and departments of social work. The role of the social work dean/director has never been more important. They need to act as stewards among their own faculties and student bodies, serve as champions when critical questions concerning the societal and scientific value of social work are raised, and connect with directors of human service organizations, policymakers, and funders to stimulate demand for social work. In carrying out these activities, deans/directors are truly engaged in macro practice, but they are at risk of being overpowered in relation to the tasks at hand. The 10 recommendations I have provided suggest paths of action for them as well.

Finally, serious efforts to expand macro practice require the operationalization of the recommendations I have presented. Such efforts should begin with the two national studies described above, to develop an inventory of macro practice-related needs and opportunities among human service organizations and social work educational institutions. They should also include: 1) the creation of a blue ribbon commission of leaders of major social work and human service membership associations (e.g., NASW, NSWM, CSWE, SSWR, ACOSA) to develop supply-side and demand-side strategies to expand the macro practice labor market; 2) the investment of resources in Washington, D.C. and in state capitals to strengthen the social work policy/advocacy presence, to develop funding streams for new programs and research; and 3) the expansion of strategic alliances involving major human service organizations and schools of social work to accelerate the pace of social work practice model development, support macro practice teaching and executive education, and strengthen pipelines for macro practice and research.

Conclusion

My effort has been motivated by the assumption that an affirmative, inclusive response to the challenges facing macro practice and social work can be envisioned. For almost 100 years, this journal has provided a venue for dialogue and debate concerning the challenges facing the profession and the strategies needed to enact societal reform while delivering effective, needed services. These challenges have occurred generationally, suggesting that the current call for macro practice renewal will not be the last opportunity to address the tensions between micro and macro practice, or the external challenges affecting human service organizations. It is hoped that current and future responses to these challenges are in the service of expanding opportunities for social work and social justice overall.

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