

SEVENTH EDITION



EMPOWERMENT SERIES

Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities

Karen K. Kirst-Ashman and Grafton H. Hull, Jr.

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Seventh Edition

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Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities, Seventh Edition

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To Linda Kirst and Jim Spielman, the best relatives anyone could ask for

To my grandchildren, Patrick, Tatiana, Gregory, Ilsa, Marcus, Michael, Savannah, and Jonah

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Preface

This book is a guide to generalist social work practice with organizations and communities. The three adjectives that best describe this text are *relevant*, *practical*, and *readable*. Generalist practice is clearly defined, and specific macro-practice skills are presented in a straightforward and interesting manner. Applications to actual macro-practice situations are emphasized throughout, as is the importance of client system strengths. The content is geared to both the undergraduate and graduate generalist practice sequences.

This text aims to fulfill five major goals. First, it provides a *readable* and *practical guide* to working in and with organizations and communities (macro practice). Numerous real-world situations and case examples are presented to make the material interesting and relevant. Organizational and community theories are examined and linked to practice applications.

Second, the text proposes a *generalist perspective* to emphasize how micro, mezzo, and macro skills are interlinked. This generalist approach assumes that group (mezzo) skills are built on a firm foundation of individual (micro) skills. Likewise, skills involved in working with organizations and communities (i.e., macro skills) rest on a solid base of both micro and mezzo skills. This text links the three levels of practice—micro, mezzo, and macro—so that students can clearly see how all three skill levels are used in everyday practice situations. Whole chapters and numerous examples throughout illustrate how micro and mezzo skills can be applied to macro-practice situations. The text also aims to structure how students think about clients and clients' problems so that, as practitioners, they will automatically explore alternatives beyond the individual and small-group levels.

The text's third basic goal is to provide clearly defined, *step-by-step frameworks* for thinking about and initiating macro change in organizations and communities. A model to decide whether to pursue macro intervention is proposed. Additionally, a procedure for pursuing the macro-intervention process is described.

The text's fourth goal is to identify, explain, and examine *specific skills* useful in macro practice and

address significant issues relevant to this practice. Skills include working with the media, using new technological advances, fund-raising, grant writing, evaluating macro-practice effectiveness, resolving ethical dilemmas in macro contexts, and advocating for diverse populations at risk.

The fifth basic goal is to present material that is not only relevant and interesting but also *inclusive of major concepts currently considered critically important by the social work profession and social work educators. New material and concepts from the current accreditation standards have been included.* (Please see the subsequent section on new content.) Enhanced emphasis is placed on critical thinking, empowerment and resiliency, and the global context of social work practice. The text adopts a generalist perspective, emphasizes evaluation of practice and research-informed practice, focuses on the use of various communication skills with colleagues and community members, demonstrates the appropriate use of supervision, and examines practitioner functioning within organizational structures and communities.

About the Cover

Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities is focused on the need to work with and create change within larger systems. Often this process involves working with others to achieve difficult and intractable goals. From citizen protests and demonstrations in the Middle East (i.e., Arab Spring) to similar efforts in the United States (e.g., Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter), individuals and groups are demanding changes in their environments, including both government and business policies. Achieving and maintaining positive outcomes in any system requires continuous effort, and any gains must be guarded and protected. Rights won must be defended against groups and organizations seeking their repeal. This is part of your obligation as a social worker committed to the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental justice.

The Empowerment Series: Relationship with the Educational Policy Statement and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), and Professional Competencies

This book is part of the Cengage Learning Empowerment Series and addresses accreditation standards established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Our intent is to facilitate programs' ability to link content provided in this textbook with expectations for student learning and accomplishment. As is true in almost all learning, students must acquire knowledge before they can apply it to practice situations.¹

The CSWE has identified 9 competencies with 31 component behaviors that are critical for professional practice (CSWE, 2015). Each competency is designed to reflect knowledge, skills and values needed by social workers along with related “cognitive and affective processes” that inform social work practice (CSWE, 2015, P. 7). For clarity, we have alphabetized in lowercase the practice behaviors under each competency. “EP” icons (i.e., Educational Policy) located within paragraphs clearly show the linkage between content in the textbook and specific practice behaviors and competencies. Each icon is labeled with the specific practice behavior or competency that relates directly to the content conveyed in the paragraph. For example, an icon might be labeled EP 1, which is the competency, “Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior” (CSWE, 2015, P. 7). Accredited social work programs are required to prove that students have mastered all practice behaviors for competence as specified in the EPAS. (Please refer to <http://www.cswe.org> for the EPAS document.)

For all icons, “Competency Notes” are provided at the end of each chapter. These “Competency Notes” explain the relationship between chapter content and the CSWE’s competencies and practice behaviors. They also list page numbers or page ranges where icons are located and where the content is discussed. A



summary chart of the icons’ locations in all chapters and their respective competencies or practice behaviors is placed in the front matter of the book.

New Content

New content includes the following:

Chapter 1

- *Reduced redundancy with a stronger focus on macro practice*
- *Provided recent case examples*
- *Material on environmental justice*
- *Enhanced content on resiliency*

Chapter 2

- *Chapter 14 on Stress and Time Management from the previous edition is now Chapter 2 based on reviewers’ requests*
- *More emphasis on mindfulness as a stress-reduction mechanism*
- *More on the structural causes of stress and burnout*

Chapter 3

- *Improved clarity through greater use of bullet points instead of narrative*
- *Reduced redundancy with additional macro agency examples*

Chapter 4

- *Increased content on electronic networking and using technology to connect and organize*
- *Additional examples of networking by women veterans*
- *Emphasized conflict-resolution approaches*

Chapter 5

- *More detailed description of Type A and B personalities*
- *Reduction in length*

Chapter 6

- *Additional examples provided of macro change efforts*

Chapter 7

- *Updated chapter title to more accurately capture intent*
- *Reduced redundancy*

1. Please note that this content addresses standards posed in the EPAS. In no way does it claim to verify compliance with standards. Only the CSWE’s Commission on Accreditation can make those determinations.

Chapter 8

- Incorporated major section on doing community needs assessments
- Added discussion of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) issues

Chapter 9

- Expanded discussion of Logic models and theories of change

Chapter 10

- Reduced redundancy
- Updating of content
- New sources of evaluation instruments
- New examples

Chapter 11

- Added material on grassroots and grassroots advocacy and organizations

Chapter 12

- Added case examples to illustrate concepts and points

Chapter 13

- Added examples of potential problems in supervision
- Added examples of ways to strengthen your position in the agency

Chapter 14

- Added major section on using the Internet for fundraising along with case examples

As in the previous edition, we have listing the relevant learning objectives at the start of each chapter. This helps students understand the primary topics that will be covered in the chapter.

Instructor Ancillaries

A suite of instructor resources makes teaching with the Seventh Edition of *Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities* even easier. An online Instructor's Manual provides useful information for faculty, and an electronic Test Bank includes chapter-specific test questions that can be used immediately or adapted as needed. A complete set of PowerPoint lecture slides

is also available for download. Finally, as with every text in the Empowerment Series, a *Curriculum Quick Guide: A Resource for Program Accreditation* is available online. The “quick guide” provides an overview of textbook and supplementary resources correlated to the EPAS recommended competencies and practice behaviors to help programs prepare self-study materials more efficiently. Log in to the book-specific web site at login.cengage.com to access the quick guide.

This text is one of two for generalist practice, the other being *Understanding Generalist Practice*, Eighth Edition (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2018), which focuses on micro skills within a generalist context. Both stress the links across all practice levels necessary to maintain the generalist perspective. The texts can be used in sequence—one builds on the other—or each can be used independently in conjunction with other practice texts. Either can be used to integrate a generalist perspective at some point during the practice sequence. Similar supplementary materials to those available for this text are also available for *Understanding Generalist Practice*.

MindTap

Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities comes with MindTap, an online learning solution created to harness the power of technology to drive student success. This cloud-based platform integrates a number of learning applications (“apps”) into an easy-to-use and easy to access tool that supports a personalized learning experience. MindTap combines student learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities and assessments—into a singular Learning Path that guides students through the course. This MindTap includes the following:

- Case studies that provide students with examples and stories from social workers in the field highlighting real work application of concepts
- Self-reflection activities that encourage students to connect the book content to their own experiences and practice
- Newly selected videos from CNN and BBC that bring basic concepts to contemporary real-life scenarios
- Research activities that give students further insight into social work concepts in practice
- Chapter quizzes at the end of each chapter
- A glossary and flashcards of key terms and concepts

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1 Introduction to Generalist Practice with Organizations and Communities



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Learning Objectives (LOs)

This chapter will help prepare students to:

- LO 1-1** Describe generalist practice using the Generalist Intervention Model.
- LO 1-2** Recognize sources that guide professional values and ethics in practice.
- LO 1-3** Demonstrate awareness of personal values.
- LO 1-4** Describe the wide range of practice skills used to target systems of any size.
- LO 1-5** Differentiate client empowerment, strengths, and resiliency.
- LO 1-6** Engage human diversity.
- LO 1-7** Advocate for human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
- LO 1-8** Work effectively within an organizational structure.
- LO 1-9** Attend to a wide range of professional social work roles.
- LO 1-10** Use critical thinking skills.

RUDOLPH WILL GRADUATE IN A week and has already accepted a position in an agency that provides family counseling, foster care, and adoption services. Having done his field placement in the agency, he feels more comfortable about transitioning to this new position. However, as he begins to pack up his books, he comes across a book from one of the last practice courses he completed. The book focused on generalist practice with organizations and communities using a generalist approach. Looking at the title and thinking about his new position brings up several questions:

- How would I describe generalist practice if asked by my new supervisor?
- Why do I need to understand organizations and communities when my job will be working primarily with individual clients and families?
- Won't my supervisor or other agency administrators take care of all those agency and policy matters?

These are logical questions for social work students to consider. After all, most students enter the social work field with a desire to help people and focus their attention on learning how to work with individuals and families. In this chapter, we will try to answer these questions and provide information that is essential for generalist practitioners with a specific focus on working within larger systems.

Generalist Practice Using the Generalist Intervention Model [LO 1-1](#)

By now, you have likely been introduced to the concept of generalist practice. Other social work courses often make reference to generalist practice, and it is the model upon which this text is based. It is not our intent to bore you with repetition, but in case any space aliens have just joined your social work program, we will risk it by summarizing the basic components of generalist practice.

For our purposes, generalist practice is defined as the application of an *eclectic knowledge base*,



professional values and ethics, and a *wide range of skills to target systems of any size* for change within the context of three primary principles, a practice context, and four major processes.¹ Keep this definition in mind because we will return to it with greater elaboration later in this and subsequent chapters.

Generalist practice may involve almost any helping process, from working to establish a homeless shelter, to arranging help for a sexually abused child, a pregnant teenager, or an older adult who is no longer able to care for herself. Generalist social workers might assist an alcoholic parent, a community trying to address its drug abuse problem, or a public assistance agency struggling to amend its policies to conform to new federal regulations. Generalist practitioners also pursue efforts to achieve social justice for groups and individuals who have been denied this

1. Most of these concepts are taken directly from the *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS) developed by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (CSWE, 2015). One major goal of social work education is to facilitate students' attainment of the EPAS-designated 10 core competencies and their 41 related component behaviors so that students develop into competent practitioners. Students require knowledge in order to develop skills and become competent. Our intent here is to specify what chapter content and knowledge coincides with the development of specific competencies and component behaviors. (This ultimately

is intended to assist in a social work program's accreditation process.) Throughout the chapter, icons such as that located in this paragraph call attention to the location of EPAS-related content. Each identifies what competency or practice behavior is relevant by specifying the designated Educational Policy (EP) reference number. "Competency Notes" are provided at the end of each chapter that relate EPAS competencies and component behaviors to content in the chapter. A summary chart of the icons' locations in all chapters and their respective competencies or component behaviors appears in the inside cover of the book.

right. As a consequence of this breadth of responsibility, generalist practitioners must be well prepared to address many kinds of difficult situations.

Social workers require a wide array of skills because they don't pick and choose what problems and issues they would like to address. They must prepare themselves to help people with personal problems on the one hand and to address very wide-ranging problems that affect whole organizations and communities on the other. They may work in a broad assortment of settings that can focus on children and families, health, justice, education, economic status, and many more issues too numerous to list.

The generalist practice approach used throughout this book is called the Generalist Intervention Model² (GIM) and is oriented toward solving problems at multiple levels of intervention by employing a series of planned steps. The steps in GIM are shown in Figure 1.1.

As you can see from the figure, the model is founded on the knowledge, skills, and values that characterize the unique nature of social work. We review and explain this definition more thoroughly later in the chapter.

Second, this generalist perspective uses a specific, seven-step planned change method that includes engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, termination, and follow-up. We address each step briefly in this chapter.

GIM recognizes that problems may involve individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Sometimes these various-size systems are referred to as micro, mezzo, and macro systems. Depending on one's definition, **micro systems** include individuals, whereas *mezzo systems* are small groups. *Macro systems* are any large systems, including organizations and communities. Families, because of their intimate nature, arbitrarily lie somewhere between micro systems and mezzo systems.

Figure 1.2 illustrates how, as a generalist practitioner, you might choose any or all of the four levels of intervention to address a particular problem. First, you must often use micro skills to engage (i.e., establish a relationship and begin effective communication with) the individual or individuals with whom you are talking about the problem. Second, you assess the problem, which entails seeking information about various aspects of the problem. After Step 2, you might

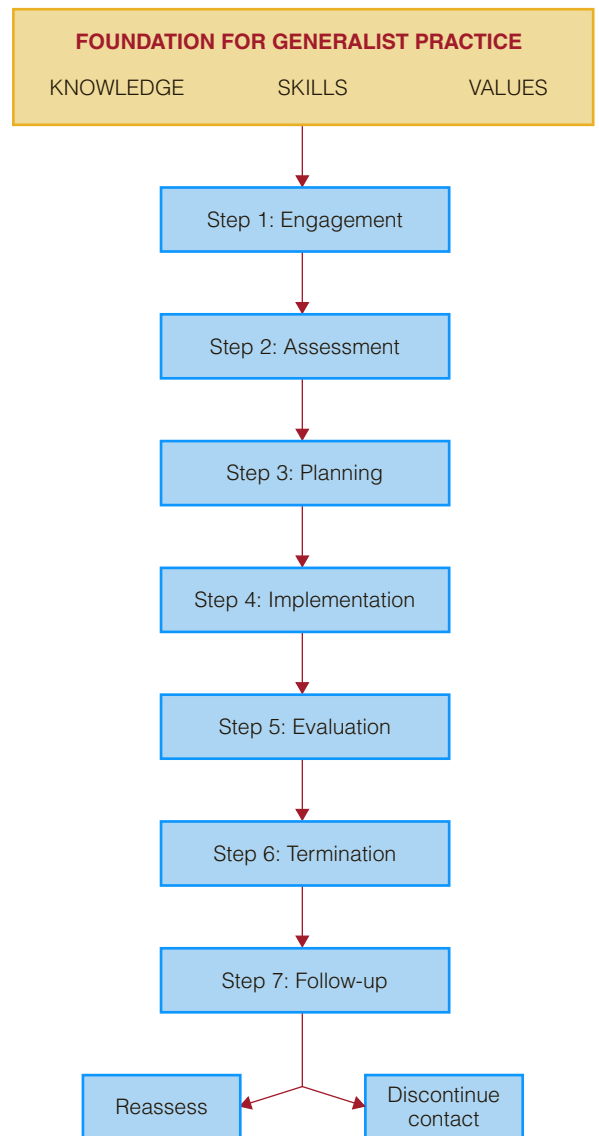


Figure 1.1 Planned Change Steps in the Generalist Intervention Model

choose to pursue work with an individual, family, group, organization, or community, or a combination of these, to solve the problem. Figure 1.2 depicts how you might progress through the planning, implementation, evaluation, termination, and follow-up process, regardless of the level of intervention you pursue.

For example, suppose you are a generalist practitioner for a rural Midwest county. Your job entails receiving referrals from the agency's intake worker. You then establish initial connections with clients and other referral people by engaging them in the planned

2. GIM was first proposed in *Understanding Generalist Practice* (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 1993, and subsequent editions).

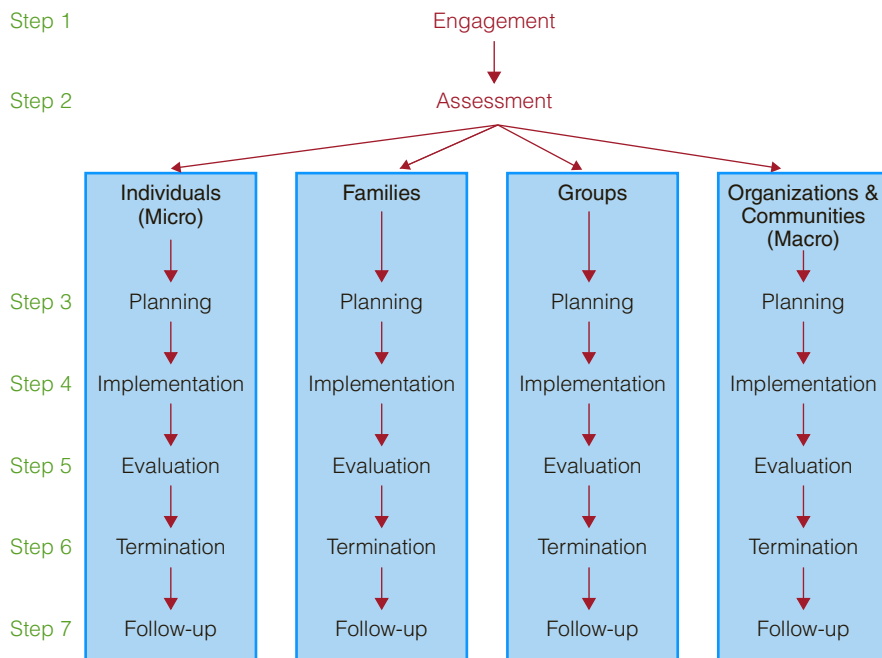


Figure 1.2 Steps in the Planned Change Process—Initiating Macro Change

change process, familiarize clients with the agency and supply them with information, solicit necessary data to assist in service provision, provide short-term counseling when needed, and make appropriate referrals to agency units and other community resources.

You receive a referral involving an older adult, Murray Strewynskowski. The person making the initial referral, Duke Earl, is one of Mr. Strewynskowski’s concerned neighbors. Mr. Earl expresses concern because Mr. Strewynskowski has twice fallen down on his icy sidewalk and been unable to get back up and into the house. Both times, Mr. Earl happened to notice the fall and was able to assist Mr. Strewynskowski into the house. While inside, Mr. Earl noticed extremely chaotic conditions: Rotting garbage was strewn about the kitchen, and about a dozen cats leisurely wandered around. Mr. Earl noticed that a black cat with a white patch over the left eye was eating what seemed to be canned creamed corn mixed with ketchup from a plate on the table that looked as if it might have been Mr. Strewynskowski’s lunch. Mr. Earl also expresses concerns about Mr. Strewynskowski’s diet in a general sense and wonders whether Mr. Strewynskowski is able to shop or cook adequately because he looks unhealthily thin.

Initially, you call Mr. Earl to clarify any questions you might have and to thank him for his interest

and help. With this call, you have engaged Mr. Earl in the problem-defining process. Engagement is the initial period when a practitioner becomes oriented to the problem at hand and begins to establish communication and a relationship with any other individuals addressing the problem. Subsequently, you figure out what to do about Mr. Strewynskowski. You must also engage him as the client in the planned change process. Of course, as a generalist practitioner, you must work with the client to establish what he needs and wants.

During the assessment phase, you may decide to pursue planning and implementation at the micro, mezzo, or macro level. You might also decide that intervention at more than one level is appropriate.

Example: A Micro Approach

A micro-level plan might be to refer Mr. Strewynskowski to the appropriate services and oversee service provision. You might then continue Mr. Strewynskowski’s assessment and arrange for additional services such as a traveling homemaker and daily hot meal delivery. You might also arrange for supportive services as needed, such as assisting Mr. Strewynskowski with paying his bills, obtaining medical assistance, or making arrangements to get groceries and other needed items.

Example: A Mezzo Approach

Assuming another perspective, however, you might choose to focus on a mezzo- or group-/family-oriented approach. Suppose there are no services for traveling homemakers or hot meal delivery in Mr. Strewynskowski's immediate area. Perhaps the county in which you work is neither very populated nor very wealthy. In fact, suppose that the county is downright poor. Without all the services and resources you would like to have, what would you do?

For one thing, you might decide to research whether Mr. Strewynskowski's family could provide help and support. Upon further investigation, you find out that Mr. Strewynskowski has two sons and a daughter living in the county. You decide to explore the extent to which they are aware of their father's situation and can provide some of the help he needs. This would involve engaging his relatives in the helping process. Additionally, you decide to look into whether Mr. Strewynskowski has any friends or neighbors who might be willing to help him. You already know that Mr. Earl is concerned about Mr. Strewynskowski's well-being.

Using a mezzo perspective therefore involves people and family who are close to Mr. Strewynskowski. You might also pursue the mezzo approach of getting Mr. Strewynskowski into some type of social or support group to minimize his isolation. This might include involving him in a local senior center. Perhaps Mr. Strewynskowski belongs to a church that could serve some of his needs, such as having volunteers take him shopping or involving him in both religious and social activities.

Example: A Macro Approach

Finally, in addition to thinking purely in micro or mezzo terms, you might decide to pursue a macro approach. Once again, suppose there are no services that offer traveling homemakers, meal delivery, older adult protection, or supportive workers in your area. Perhaps you discover that you and your colleagues have a number of older adult clients who are struggling to maintain themselves in their own homes. You find that, on a regular basis, you and other practitioners are having difficulty helping such clients because this issue extends beyond the simple provision of help to an individual client.

You determine that services are needed at a larger system level. Perhaps your county agency should develop a new program to serve these clients. Maybe you should approach agency administrators to explore

the possibility of funneling funds and resources away from other, less critical areas to these older adult clients who are in what you consider grave need. Suppose services and resources are already available in the agency but are accessible only to other client populations (e.g., people who have specific types of physical or developmental disabilities). It may be that an agency policy change could extend eligibility for resources to the older adult population. Perhaps a community organization might be willing to sponsor some type of help for people like Mr. Strewynskowski. Pursuing changes in agency service provision, policy, or distribution of resources are what macro practice—and this book—are all about. Change may have to occur in policies at the local, state, or national level, and a social worker can be involved in one or more of these efforts.

(Note that “EP” icons illustrated in this paragraph are located throughout the book. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015), the national accrediting organization for bachelor's and master's social work programs, specifies the areas where social workers must demonstrate competency. A *competency* is the proven ability to demonstrate sufficient knowledge, skills, and values in a designated area in order to practice effective social work. Component *behaviors*, as conceptualized by CSWE, are actions that students complete to demonstrate the overarching competency. In research terms, each competency is operationalized by a series of specified component behaviors. Accredited social work programs must show that they are teaching students to be proficient in these competencies and related behaviors. These competencies and component behaviors are listed inside the front cover of the book. The occurrence of an icon with a numerical reference means that the corresponding content in the paragraph relates directly to the referenced competency or component behavior. “Competency Notes” listed at the end of the chapter further clarify these relationships. The intent is to help faculty and social work programs in the accreditation process.)

Earlier, we defined generalist practice as the application of an *eclectic knowledge base*, *professional values and ethics*, and a *wide range of skills to target systems of any size* for change within the context of three primary principles, a practice context, and four major processes.

The three primary principles characterizing generalist practice all involve values. The first of these



principles entails an emphasis on client *empowerment*, *strengths*, and *resiliency*. *Empowerment* is “the process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations” (Gutierrez, 2001, p. 210). It involves ensuring that others have the right power, ability, and authority to achieve *self-determination* (each individual’s right to make his or her own decisions). *Strengths* include any “capacities, resources, and assets” that can be accessed to increase empowerment (Saleebey, 2009, p. 99). *Resiliency* (discussed further in Highlight 1.4) is the ability of any system to withstand and recover from adversity and resume functioning even when suffering serious trouble, confusion, or hardship (Glicken, 2006). Evidence suggests that most people have some degree of resilience that helps them cope with a variety of crises (Rutter, 2008). While they experience typical bouts of sadness, pain, or discomfort, these individuals continue to function and bounce back from the trauma (American Psychological Association, 2016).

The second principle emphasized in generalist practice is the importance of “understanding how *[human] diversity* characterizes and shapes the human experience

and is critical to the formation of identity” (emphasis added). The third principle accentuated in generalist practice concerns *advocacy for human rights and the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental justice*. Subsequent sections discuss these concepts in greater detail.

Social workers are usually employed by an organization and practice within the context of an *organizational structure*. Within this context, they engage in four processes that characterize generalist practice. First, generalist practice requires the assumption of a wide range of *professional roles*. Second, it requires the application of *critical thinking* skills throughout their efforts to help. Third, generalist practice incorporates *research-informed practice* to determine the most effective ways to help people and serve clients. Fourth, practitioners follow a seven-step *planned change* process as they engage in their practice.

This chapter will address the 12 key dimensions inherent in that definition. The order in which they are presented does not imply that one dimension is more important than another. Each is significant. Highlight 1.1 summarizes these concepts in outline form. Subsequent discussion of each is introduced

HIGHLIGHT 1.1

Dimensions in the Definition of Generalist Practice

1. Acquisition of an eclectic knowledge base
 - A. Theoretical foundation: Systems theories
 - B. Human behavior and the social environment
 - C. Social welfare policy and policy practice
 - D. Social work practice
 - E. Research-informed practice and practice-informed research
 - F. Values and principles that guide practice
2. Acquisition of professional values and application of professional ethics
 - A. National Association of Social Workers *Code of Ethics*
 - B. Awareness of personal values
 - C. Management of ethical dilemmas
3. Use of a wide range of practice skills
 - A. Micro
 - B. Mezzo
 - C. Macro
4. Orientation to target systems of any size
 - A. Micro
 - B. Mezzo
 - C. Macro
5. Emphasis on client empowerment, strengths, and resiliency
6. The importance of human diversity
7. Advocacy for human rights and the pursuit of social, economic, and environmental justice
8. Assumption of a wide range of professional roles
 - A. Enabler
 - B. Mediator
 - C. Manager
 - D. Educator
 - E. Analyst/evaluator
 - F. Broker
 - G. Facilitator
 - H. Initiator
 - I. Negotiator
 - J. Mobilizer
 - K. Advocate
9. Employment of critical thinking skills
10. Research-informed practice
11. Use of the planned change process

with the headings numbered 1 through 12. The intent here is to present a definition of generalist practice that you can remember.

Figure 1.3 demonstrates how the various concepts introduced thus far fit together. The large square labeled *Organizational Structure* represents the organization (or agency) that employs you to engage in social work practice. Organizational structure involves the operation of lines of authority and communication within an agency, how the administration runs the organization, and what the agency environment is like (Chapter 5, “Understanding Organizations,” discusses this in detail). As a generalist practitioner, you

will work in this environment with all its constraints, requirements, and rules. Thus, Figure 1.3 pictures you, the generalist practitioner, as a rectangle within this large square. In that same square, you see the terms *Knowledge, Values, and Skills*. These illustrate that you bring to your job a broad knowledge base, professional values, and a wide range of skills.

The concentric circles at the bottom of Figure 1.3 illustrate your potential *target systems*. As we have established, generalist practitioners may choose to work with a micro, mezzo, or macro system as the target of their change efforts. These three systems are positioned in concentric circles according to their respective sizes.

An arrow flows from the Organizational Structure square down to the Target System circles. This indicates that you will apply your knowledge, skills, and values to help change systems of various sizes.

Other arrows point from concepts on the right and left to the central “application” arrow. This means that generalist practitioners apply the concepts the arrows represent as they undertake generalist practice. “Principles/values” concepts, portrayed on the left, include empowerment, human diversity, and advocacy for human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. Social workers also apply the “processes” inherent in generalist practice. These, depicted on the right, consist of the assumption of various professional roles, the use of critical thinking skills, the employment of research-informed practice, and the undertaking of the planned change process. Each concept portrayed in Figure 1.3 will subsequently be addressed in greater detail.

Note that terms can sometimes be confusing. This book focuses on generalist practice and assumes that social workers are generalists. Therefore, the terms *generalist social worker, worker, generalist practitioner, and practitioner* are used interchangeably throughout this book to refer to professionals undertaking generalist social work practice.

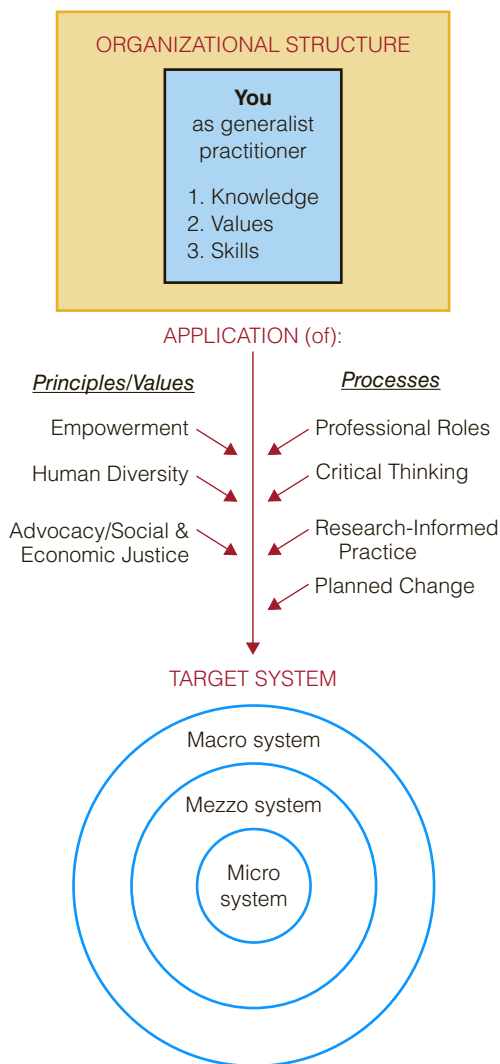


Figure 1.3 Definition of Generalist Practice

Generalist Practice: An Eclectic Knowledge Base

The acquisition of an eclectic knowledge base is a key requirement for social work practice. By an eclectic knowledge base, we mean that social workers acquire the most useful and effective information, theoretical frameworks, and practice skills from multiple sources. Knowledge entails understanding the dynamics of people’s



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situations and determining what skills work best under particular circumstances. This knowledge may be drawn from many different fields such as psychology, political science, and sociology, among others.

In addition, (as shown in Highlight 1.1), social work historically has taught the knowledge, skills, and values needed to develop the competencies and component behaviors in a series of distinct courses: human behavior and the social environment, social welfare policy and policy practice, social work practice, research-informed practice, and practice-informed research. These courses help provide the theories and perspectives used in most areas of social work, including macro practice.

Conceptualizing Macro Practice

The term *macro practice*, used throughout the book, is the application of generalist practice skills to larger organizational, institutional, or community systems. We may be pursuing a planned change process on behalf of others to make the larger system more responsive to the needs of clients, the general public, or even to organizational employees. Sometimes, we will be helping a larger system achieve changes it has decided are necessary.

Defining the Macro Client System

A *client system* is any individual, family, group, organization, or community that will ultimately benefit from generalist social work intervention. A *macro client system* typically involves larger numbers of clients, families, or groups of clients with similar characteristics or needs for resources or services. This might include such diverse groups as children needing alternative care or older adults needing services to help them remain in their own home. For example, you may work to develop and implement a job placement program that will eventually affect dozens or perhaps even hundreds of unemployed people. Likewise, an agency, organization, or community might be a macro client system seeking help responding to internal or external events or pressures. You may need to develop an internal agency training program on new intervention techniques intended to benefit the agency by improving its service provision. You may also be involved in efforts to pursue social justice goals in concert with other members of the community, such as strengthening the laws preventing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The difference is that macro change benefits larger groups of people, whether the group involves a particular client population, agency personnel, or community

residents. Sometimes, a macro level change occurs when a worker seeking changes on behalf of an individual client gets results that help multiple beneficiaries. For example, you might persuade an agency to be more flexible in interpreting its policies to benefit client A, which ends up helping other clients in a like situation.

Identifying the Target System

The *target system* is the system that social workers must modify or influence in order to reach their goals and have clients benefit from the planned change process (Compton et al., 2005; Pincus & Minahan, 1973; Sheafor & Horejsi, 2014). In macro practice, this usually involves an organization or community. For example, perhaps the agency in which you work needs to improve some of its policies or services. Likewise, your community may need to provide some new service that citizens really need (e.g., a drug rehabilitation program or a crime prevention effort). Consider Mr. Strewynskowski's case discussed earlier. Suppose supportive services such as hot meal delivery, part-time homemaker services, or community support groups do not exist for numerous senior residents. In that case, you might decide to target "the system," either agency or community, to develop such resources.

The concepts of organization and community are broad. They can refer to very small organizations or communities (such as small field offices, isolated church groups, or villages) or to systems that are huge entities (such as city, county, state, or federal government units). Similarly, a community in its broad sense might be the citizens of an entire state or nation. Much of the recent unrest in the Middle East reflects the desire of huge segments of citizens in several countries to bring about change and achieve social justice. As you can see, systems can be of virtually any size. Therefore, the target system is any system that macro intervention intends to change.

Defining the Change Agent System

Within a macro-practice perspective, the *change agent* is the individual or group that initiates the macro-change process. In our context, *you* are the change agent because this book intends to teach you how to implement macro-level change. You might seek changes such as improving agency effectiveness or enhancing a community's quality of life. Later on, you might gain the support of, and join coalitions with, others who also believe in the proposed macro change. In such situations, you become part of a larger system.

Whether you undertake macro change by yourself or join with others, you are also part of the action system described next.

Identifying the Action System

The *action system* includes those people who agree and are committed to working together in order to attain the proposed macro change. We have established that sometimes you alone will be the action system for the change effort. Other times, you will find it more useful to join with others to help implement a macro change.

Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE)

Knowledge about human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) is essential as a foundation on which to build practice skills. After engagement, the second step in the planned change process is accurate assessment of the problem or situation within the context of the social environment. The environment is vitally important in the analysis and understanding of human behavior. Because social work has a person and environment focus, the interactions among individuals, systems, and the environment are critical. Such a conceptual perspective provides social workers with a symbolic representation of how to view the world. It provides ideas for how to assess clients' situations and identify alternative solutions involving various levels of practice. Social work's goal is to apply such knowledge to enhance people's functioning and involvement with a range of systems in their environment.



Social Welfare Policy and Policy Practice

Social welfare policy is another dimension about which social workers must be knowledgeable in order to practice competently at the macro level. Policy, in its simplest portrayal, can be thought of as rules. Our lives and those of our clients are governed by rules: rules about how we're supposed to drive our cars, about when we're supposed to go to school, and about how we're supposed to talk or write.



Policies are rules that tell us which actions we may take and which we may not. Policies guide our actions and our decisions. Policy most relevant to social work

practice is often divided into three major categories: economic policy, social welfare policy, and agency policy. *Economic policy* applies to all governmental policies that relate to economic growth, taxing policies, budgeting, interest rates, money supply, and labor markets. Such policies include decisions on minimum wage, trade agreements among countries, and any action a government takes that impacts the economy.

Social welfare policy includes the laws and regulations that determine which social programs exist, what categories of clients are served, and who qualifies for a given program. It also set standards regarding the type of services to be provided, qualifications of the service provider, and many other aspects of service provision. Social welfare policy involves "the actions of government that have a direct impact on the welfare of people by providing services and income. As principles of action, policies translate our government's sense of responsibility to us, its citizens. Thus, [social welfare] policy reflects societal values, ideals, and a vision of what the world should look like" (Tice & Perkins, 2002, p. 2). It comprises the rules for how money can be spent to help people and how these people will be treated. Social welfare policies determine who is eligible for public assistance and who is not. For example, specific policies designate what social workers can and cannot do for sexually abused children. Social policies supported by social workers tend to be those that enhance social, economic, and environmental justice.

In addition to social welfare policies, *agency policies* are standards adopted by the individual organizations and programs that provide services (e.g., a family service agency, a department of human services, or a nursing home). Such standards may specify the structure of the agency, the required qualifications for supervisors and workers, the rules that govern what a worker may or may not do, and the proper procedures for completing a family assessment. These are only a few of the many aspects of agency life.

Knowledge about policy at all levels is vitally important. Economic policy can affect the kinds of employment available to citizens, whether they can afford a home mortgage, and whether they can belong to a union. An organization's policy can dictate how much vacation an employee can have and how she can earn raises in salary. An adoption agency's policy can determine who is eligible to adopt a child and who isn't. A social program's policies determine who is able to get needed services and resources and who is left without them.