INFLUENCES IN MACRO PRACTICE: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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B.S., California State University, Sacramento, 2008

PROJECT

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2010
INFLUENCES IN MACRO PRACTICE: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

A Project

by

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Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

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Social Work professionals who are working in a macro capacity were surveyed for this study in order to gain insight into what inspired them to engage in macro level practice. Of the 30 professionals surveyed the majority report being influenced by their education and by attending social action events such as lobby days. The study corroborates literature, which states that social work students are heavily influenced by classes taken while obtaining a social work degree and that in order to inspire future practice on the macro level strong macro content should be infused in education programs.

_______________________
Susan Eggman, Ph.D., MSW, Committee Chair

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to all the marginalized populations in our world who are without a voice, and to future macro practitioners, YES WE CAN!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My education has been a long journey, one that I would not have survived without the encouragement help and support of my family and friends.

To my parents, thank you for pushing me to achieve my goals and for setting me up for success always. Dad, thank you for always being there with a listening ear and good advice or with tools to fix my car on the side of the road. Mom and Steve, thank you for your constant encouragement, emotional and financial support every step of the way, I couldn’t have gotten through without all of you.

To my siblings, Danny, Shelly, Andrew and Rhonda the friends that I was lucky enough to be born into having, thank you for your love, support and most of all thank you for giving me Tyler, Daniel, Corinne and Omar who I strive to be a good example for and who give me unconditional love, laughs and encouragement.

To my grandmothers Marian and Cathy, thank you for being wonderful examples of what strong women can do, even when the odds are not in your favor. Grandma Marian, Abuela Angel, words cannot express how grateful I am for everything you’ve given me. To my grandpas, Marty and Jack you are in my heart and mind always.

Finally, to my friends, you have enabled me to get through this journey with a smile on my face and have provided me with the support that I could not do without. To my MSW friends, I am so grateful to have met all of you, couldn’t have done it without each other!
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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

I have always viewed my education as an opportunity, not only an opportunity for a good job as a result of my education but an opportunity to gain as much experience as I can while in my educational journey. Social work is a diverse field, from the beginning of my social work education in the Bachelor of Social Work program at Sacramento State I have continuously taken in new possibilities of what one can do with a degree in social work. Learning of all of the career opportunities inspired me to use my field education to get a broad understanding of jobs in different systems levels. For example I have worked with young adults doing individual and group counseling, I have worked in a school setting coordinating events and providing counseling and now I am at NASW gaining macro level experience. With this curiosity in macro level work I became interested in taking classes in which I would gain exposure to the diversity of social work. However when attempting to find macro content in the social work program I found it was simply not as present as the clinical, micro level education. From my experience in both the bachelor of social work program and the master of social work program being heavily focused on clinical interventions it became clear that more attention needs to be paid to this issue in social work education.

Background

The majority of social work students beginning their education focus on clinical intervention. Frequently however once these students enter the profession, especially after earning their MSW, they are placed in positions where they do not perform direct
service. The changing role of social workers in their practice requires professionals to have not only clinical skills but indirect service skills as well. When placed into these roles in the workplace social workers should have macro level skills they can utilize. However with the lack of emphasis placed on macro level social work practice this is a challenge.

California State University Sacramento employs the generalist perspective in both the Bachelor of Social Work Program (BSW) and the Master of Social Work Program (MSW). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) states that programs using the generalist perspective must contain a macro component (CSWE). Ideally social work students should attain macro level practice skills which can be taken with them into whatever scope of practice they work. Macro practice has been recognized as a specialized form of practice since the early 1960’s (Jansson, 1987).

Problem

The focus of the research problem is that while promoting social justice is a core value of social work research finds that social work students report preferring direct service. This research aims to examine factors that inspire social workers to engage in macro level social work. Because so many social work students report a lack of interest in practice with larger systems I would like to gather attitudes of professionals who work in a macro settings. Existing professionals who are working in a macro capacity have chosen to respond to the call to action and advocacy with action and advocacy. Learning what shaped their interest can help frame the issue of polarized views of micro and macro practice in a practical way. Furthermore it could inform schools of social work, letting
them know which aspects of their program could be enhanced to engage more future professionals in macro level work.

Purpose of Study

Gathering data that will help inform schools of social work, what social work professionals feel influenced them in their decision to engage in macro level practice is the purpose of this study. This research will focus on social work professionals who are involved in practice on the macro level. Finally, this study’s findings and recommendations can be a component of future research or could be incorporated into informing macro content in social work education.

Theoretical Framework

Social work as a profession sets itself apart from other helping professions with its person in environment perspective. This perspective is key to the macro component of a generalist social work education program. Social workers view the person, their challenges or problems as they relate to their surrounding environment. If social workers do not view the environment of a person as something that they can change the scope of competent care provided to the client is limited. With limited knowledge and skills provided to a student of social work, the future practitioner will be hindered in practice and in their career. The limits to the social work practice will affect the social workers clients and agency negatively. The social worker may encounter a problem which needs to be addressed in their clients community and not have the necessary skills or drive to assist in organizing communities to come together and accomplish goals. Also a social
worker within an agency may be promoted to a job in which they are not adequately prepared for which can result in the agency suffering.

Macro social work practice being included in social work education should also be viewed from a systems perspective. Systems perspective is also core to social work practice with clients and their environments. Social workers engage in practice across all systems in a client’s life, with the understanding that all systems are related. For example understanding that practicing in social work policy, advocating for populations social workers serve will ultimately affect clients on a micro level. Helping to stop budget cuts is an example of this because not only does it help social work professionals it ensures that millions of people will receive services. If social work education programs are not embedded with macro level focus and skills social workers will not be able to truly function and help clients in all systems levels.

Definition of Terms

Macro Practice: social work practice in a non direct capacity. This can include advocacy, community organizing, management, program developing and many other techniques that serve the call for social justice in a non direct way.

Direct services: services provided to clients on a one on one basis.

Non direct services: services that benefit clients but are provided without direct contact with clients.

Schools of social work: a college or university program that upon completion a student will receive either a Bachelor of social work BSW or master of social work MSW degree.

BSW: a person who holds a Bachelor in social work degree.
MSW: a person who holds a master in social work degree.

Assumptions

I am starting with the assumption that macro social work is not a large enough part of the generalist social work program at CSUS and as a result of this the population of macro social work professionals is low in numbers. Macro social work should be more heavily emphasized which could shift preference of students to both direct and indirect practice components. Students who prefer to focus on clinical direct practice skills do not realize the need for them to retain a macro skill set which they will need in the future while practicing in the field.

Justification

This study aims to ultimately strengthen the competency of social workers to advocate for social justice and engage in practice or social action events on the macro level. One of the core ethical principles of social workers focuses on the fight for social justice. Social workers need increased macro level content in their education as it will prepare and inspire them to practice the mission of social work as it relates to creating change in the environment.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Social work practice is complex and multidimensional. Social work education is the foundation for practitioners in the field and should contain a well rounded representation of all aspects of the profession— including: practice and interventions on the micro, mezzo and macro levels, meaning work with individuals, groups and communities. Practitioners are expected to approach work with clients from the person in environment perspective and this can not truly be done without having an education that’s foundation includes micro mezzo and macro level interventions. This review of social work literature will focus on macro content in social work education, beginning with history, moving into social work student practice preference, techniques for integrating macro content into social work education and finishing with examining social work of macro practice in a contemporary context.

History

The profession of social work emerged in response to a need for justice in society. From a number of needs identified on the micro level macro level interventions were launched. Community justice was addressed by charity organizations, social justice was the focus of settlement houses and the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton school focused on distributive justice (Weil, 1996, p. 9, Schneider & Lester, 2001, p. 10). The example set by the settlement houses which provided education for adults, while working
to enhance the social environment by focusing on economic and social development shows an inclusion of multiple systems in practice (Simon, 1994, Weil, 1996, p. 9). Viewing the initial efforts of the profession in a macro context enables one to see how macro level work is embedded into the mission of Social Work. In the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) code of ethics preamble it is stated that social workers responsibilities are to promote wellbeing of individuals in a social context and to promote the wellbeing of the society at large (NASW, 2009).

While the mission of social work includes both the macro mezzo and micro practice areas, the field of social work has historically been divided into either clinical direct practice with individuals or macro work with policy or administration (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987; Vodde & Gallant, 2002, NASW, 2009). Macro social work was considered a specialized form of practice in 1962, the specialized form of practice includes community, administration, planning, and policy (Jansson, 1987, McNutt, 1995). Until this point of specialization there was little to no literature in the field of macro social work, regardless of specific discipline (Jansson, 1987). The generalist model for social work practice emerged in the late 1960’s to early 1970’s and was described by Iacono-Harris and Nuccio(1987) as being an attempt to create a unified practice model. The model is a way for social workers to engage either the person or their environment without necessarily having to stick to one specific method of interaction.

Social work education began with a focus on case work and practice methods. Groupwork was added to course content next and finally came macro content (Frumkin, 1979). Many social work education programs adopted the generalist practice model to
attempt to integrate the separate views of macro and micro practice by examining clients from the person in environment perspective (Frumken, 1979, Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987, Hymens, 2000). Hymans (2000) suggests still that there is still too little emphasis placed on community practice strategies in the last two decades (Weil, 1996, Hymans, 2000). The Council on Social Work Education states that generalist education programs should prepare social work students for generalist practice on the micro mezzo and macro systems levels. (B6.10, curriculum policy statement as cited by Hymens, 2000).

The Council on Social Work Education’s education policy states that social work programs “Core competencies (which define generalist practice or are applied in advanced practice) and field education (the signature pedagogy of social work education) are the key elements of the explicit curriculum. Competency-based education is an outcome performance approach to curriculum design. Competencies are measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values, and skills. The goal of the outcome approach is to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.” (CSWE, 2008) As stated by the CSWE social workers are required to be able to demonstrate core competencies with clients on all systems levels. Students getting their MSW are expected to master the core competencies along with the ability to practice within a specific concentration (CSWE, 2008).

A Divided View of the Profession

A divided view of the profession forced social work students beginning their social work education to make a choice between macro social work and clinical social
work. The overwhelming majority of social work students get into the field in order to practice in a clinical setting, like medical social work, work with children and counseling with individuals and with groups. (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987) There has been expressed concern over the lack of interest in macro level social work which is a central element of social work and the quest for social justice. Mor Barak, Travis and Bess report in the past twenty years less than ten percent of social work students chose to enter into a macro track in their education. This is attributed to a variety of factors such as, lack of positive experiences in field, lack of jobs available to MSW’s with a macro concentration and a lack of integration of macro concepts in the classroom. (Jansson, 1987; Mor Barak, Travis & Bess, 2002)

Over ten years ago McNutt (1995) describes macro social work education as being in a crisis. This described crisis was due to low enrollment of students, the role of macro work being reduced in education, and the idea that macro concentrations were inadequate in preparing students for macro work. Mcnutt (1995) also addressed there being little empirical evidence to support or deny the claim of a crisis in macro education. In turn a survey was developed to be distributed to schools of social work in the US that had macro concentrations. Additionally data was collected from content analysis of syllabi from participating schools (McNutt, 1995). This study resulted in findings that while macro education was lacking in some areas like financial planning and personnel it was strong in presenting students with content in other areas such as nonprofit organizations and ethics. The perceived crisis that the study was conducted in response to was found to be empirically un supportable.
There are reports of social work students preferring clinical practice rather than larger systems, Foucault’s theory of internalization is a possible explanation (Hymans, 2000; Vodde & Gallant, 2002). The theory explains that people accept their environment and the powers that be. By accepting the external power over their situation people submit their lives to conforming to societies rules (Vodde & Gallant, 2002). People submitting their lives to societies rules translates into people accepting without question the policies created by their governing body, either federal or local government. Social workers who have made a commitment to social justice and who have a call for advocacy should make the commitment to not easily accept a client’s environment and to advocate for that client on whatever level would best produce desired results. (Drake, Hovmand, Jonson-Reid & Zayas, 2007)

Student Preference

It is apparent with the discussion of macro social work from a historical perspective that students of social work enter the field with hopes of doing clinical work, however even when a social worker is in an agency doing micro level work, macro level skills are still needed. It is stated that many masters level practitioners begin practicing in a clinical setting and then are promoted to different levels of administration and program management where macro skills are to be applied (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987, Hymans, 2000, Vodde & Gallant, 2002, Weiss, 2006). While social work students express a micro preference social work educators should inform students of the variety of roles they will encounter while working in the field as social work practitioners. (Thompson, Menefee, & Marley, 1999) This could spark interest in macro social work specifically
when it is framed as a key component of social workers commitment to social justice. Taking advantage of their position as educators and expanding on the career possibilities of the social work students. If students are not choosing to take macro electives it is the responsibility of professors and schools of social work to integrate multi level content into foundation courses.

One level of macro Social Work is administration and supervision of employees. Social workers with a master’s level education are often placed into a supervisory or administrator role within agencies. This makes it especially important for social workers to receive the tools needed to become competent when functioning within these roles. (Frumkin, 1979, Mertz, Fortune et. Al, 2007, Teare & Sheafor, 1995, Thompson, Menefee, & Marley, 1999). Teare and Sheafor(1995) report that one half of all MSW’s are involved in organizational and management practice. The authors stress the obligation of social work education to open student’s eyes to macro level practice skills which they will need while in these positions. Social work students should possess skills in program evaluation, management, community organizing and research (Mertz, Fortune, et. Al, 2007; Carey, 2007). Because there is a need for competency in the mentioned macro practice skills, social work educators are presented with a challenge to integrate content into their courses (Carey, 2007).

There is a need for development of empirical research in practice areas such as gerontology; this is an example of the need for social work students to be competent in macro practice areas (Mertz, Fortune & Zendell, 2007). Students of social work in field have the opportunity to experience a rich learning environment where they can gain
educational experiences that can expose them to a variety of practice levels. With the lack of preference for practice on in the macro system students are becoming short changed in their education and in turn are short changing the profession by not becoming a professional who adds to social work literature or who effects change on a societal level (Mertz, Fortune & Zendell, 2007).

Weiss (2006) examined reports of graduating bachelor’s level social workers all at the same point in their career from seven different countries around the world. Of the social workers surveyed it was found that macro social work is the least preferred, placing emphasis on the United States as having an especially low rate of macro preference (Weiss, 2006). Similar findings are reported by Carey (2007) stating that in exit interviews BSW students report macro practice being the least preferred. However students report understanding of the importance of community practice but have no interest in doing community practice (Carey, 2007). This is also reported by Hymans (2000) who notes the growing interest of social work students in learning clinical interventions specific to one population (Hymans, 2000, Carey, 2007).

The CSWE (as cited by Hymans, 2000) reports only 1.1% of social work students chose community organizing and planning as their primary method concentration combined with field and practice. The CSWE further reports 3.1% of students focus on administration and management. The drift in the mission of social work is at of the cause of the overwhelming preference of clinical practice. The described drift refers to the diminishing focus on advocacy, political action and social justice (Hymans, 2000, Carey, 2007). This is said to be a result of growing conservatism, middle class focus and clinical
focus in the profession (Hymens, 2000, Carey 2007). These are factors which contribute
to the reduction in the desire for social work students to promote change in society.
Social work students do not view their role as being able to create a society with equal
opportunity and effective and fair social policy (Hymens, 2000, Carey, 2007).

Social work education as previously stated by the CSWE’s policy and
expectations should include a macro component, such as research and macro practice
courses. Research is a part of the required core content areas in social work education
while other macro courses are electives (Mertz, Fortune, et. al, 2007). In the core courses
of social work such as, diversity, theory and practice social work students should
experience both micro and macro content integrated into the courses but often that is not
the case (Frumkin, 1979). Also included in the macro component should be social
workers field education. Field education exposes social work students to social work
within an agency (Kaspar & Weigand, 1999, Mertz, Fortune, et. al, 2007). The generalist
social work education should require exposure to issues and engagement in macro level
activities however Kurtz and Jarrett as reported by Kaspar and Weigand (1999) report
that the majority of social work programs on the BSW level required no macro content in
field. Social work students in field should be making connections between content in
classes and lived practice experience. If there is no focus on macro issues within an
agency the connection of macro content to macro practice will be a challenge for the
social work student (Mertz, Fortune, et. al, 2007).
Social work student’s view of social work as being separated into micro and macro needs to be challenged in social work education. Often times though it is reinforced by students receiving broad macro concepts in class then in turn while in field students focus on singular issues with clients (Frumkin, 1979; Vayda, & Bogo, 1991). For example a student may receive extensive content on a particular method of intervention with a client with minor attention paid to macro level interventions or issues that can be addressed from a micro issue or problem a client faces. There are many suggestions as to methods social work educators and more largely, social work education programs can use to break down the polarized view of social work. Icano-Harris and Nuccio report integrated learning programs were set up to expose all BSW’s to macro social work. This resulted in students who previously report having no interest in macro level work expressed increased interest in macro social work (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987). Carey (2007) implemented an experiential learning approach to expose students to macro level interventions. As a result of the experience students report feeling like community level intervention can promote change and a belief that social action can create change which they did not report having previously (Carey, 2007) The authors recommend that macro and micro professors open lines of communication as well as for undergrad and graduate level professors. (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987)

There is a need in social work education for integration of macro and micro content. There have been many individual studies done on techniques for this integration. The studies done however share little to no commonality, contain no real
uniformity in the way data is collected and the content which was added into the courses was limited and not included in the entire curricula (Ager, 2006, Goldstein 1991). Johnson (as cited by Ager, 2006) lead a grant funded project in which social work curriculum was stripped of community content. Next a community content committee was formed to reintegrate macro content into the program, including faculty defining community practice, a foundations methods course and exposing first year students to community building practices in a local metropolitan area (Ager, 2006). Throughout this process no empirical data was collected reflecting the approach of faculty being included in the development of the community social work program (Ager, 2006).

Students from a large northeastern graduate school of social work were surveyed about their experiences in field; students enrolled in the macro track at this university are expected to practice on a continuum including management and community practice (Deal, et. al, 2007). Students were surveyed using a self administered survey which consisted of a Likert scale; the questions were informed by the literature which placed importance on the student’s perception of the field agency, the interaction with the field instructor and the interaction with the faculty liaison (Deal, et. al, 2007). These students enrolled in the macro track in the graduate level program report needing additional supervision and access to supervisors in the field, they also report wanting more adequate learning experiences in their programs (Deal, et. al, 2007). Students also report needing more positive and relevant learning experiences while in field (Deal, et. al, 2007). Field instructors need to be able to relate student tasks to their learning objectives and assist macro students in making connections between classroom and field (Deal, et. al, 2007).
Social justice, has no micro or macro focus. Social workers should focus on the client’s issues and their causes (Vodde & Gallant, 2002, Carey, 2007). For example when working with a client suffering with anorexia a social worker can link the client to counseling services and provide assistance on the micro level. While at the same time the social worker can connect the client with others suffering from anorexia as well. This turns anorexia from an individual problem to a collective battle shared between a group of people- (Vodde & Gallant, 2002) which increases social justice as well as the clients experiencing self efficacy. Through this process the anti-anorexia/bulimia leagues were formed in many places around the world (Vodde & Gallant, 2002). Carey (2007) names this practice “case to cause”, taking a specific case seen in micro practice and transforming it into a societal problem which can be addressed on a macro level. The experiential learning project stated by Carey (2007) outlined students from a school of social work recognizing a need for change in their universities sexual assault prevention training because of the number of sexual assaults occurring on campus. Students launched a grassroots campaign with the goal of making training for sexual assault prevention mandatory. Students presented their case to the president of the university which resulted in the desired change to the policy (Carey, 2007).

Vayda and Bogo (1991) propose that students and educators must challenge traditional methods of learning by examining the client with broad theoretical perspectives and knowledge of varying world views in hopes to have both aspects shape intervention with clients. The authors frame their education model from social structural theory, organizational theory and theories of human behavior (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991;
Vodde & Gallant, 2002; Carey, 2007). The model for integrating classroom and field is the Integration of Theory and Practice (ITP) Loop, the goal of this loop is to assist field instructors include theory and practice into field work (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991). The ITP loop begins with retrieval, where students share situations experienced in field (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991). Next students reflect, this phase of the ITP loop relies on self awareness and results in students being able to analyze situations objectively (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991). The next phase is linkage, in this phase students and instructors are asked to identify knowledge that is helpful when in a certain practice situation (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991). The final phase of the ITP loop is professional response, students have the ability to develop concrete plans which will enable them to deal with the same situations in the future in the same informed and integrated manner (Vayda, & Bogo, 1991).

In another innovative method of integrating theory and practice instructors in an Israeli community college were called on to assist in helping teens who were recently part of the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip. (Nuttman-Shwartz & Dekel, 2009) as a result of the disengagement plan eight thousand people were moved from their homes and relocated elsewhere. (Nuttman-Shwartz & Dekel, 2009) From this experience participants gained knowledge of how to integrate theory in practice by critically thinking and examining work with clients participants requested more information on theoretical interventions in order to properly engage their clients in the helping relationship. They also were forced to evaluate their own political views and ideations and evaluate how these views affected the relationship with clients. (Nuttman-Shwartz & Dekel, 2009).
Examination of social policy is an integral part of social work education. (Gregory & Holloway, 2005) it is suggested by Gregory and Holloway (2005) that until students put concepts learned in policy class to work they cannot fully develop these concepts. Policy practice learning requires experiential learning, including, identifying and challenging assumptions, recognizing the importance of context, imagining and exploring alternatives, and developing reflective skepticism. (Gregory & Holloway, 2005) it is proposed that debate can be used in policy courses to assist students in challenging their values and assumptions and advocating for a particular viewpoint while being informed and persuasive. (Gregory & Holloway, 2005) students who have used debate in the classroom report having a higher understanding of concepts in post debate questionnaires. (Gregory & Holloway, 2005)

Contemporary Social Work

Currently the social work field is experiencing waves of changes. Funding for many social work programs and service agencies has been cut significantly while workloads for practitioners have increased significantly (Teigiser, 2009). The upcoming changes to healthcare and cuts to funding for social services call for social work students to be prepared to advocate on behalf of social work professionals and populations social workers serve (Vecchiolla et. al, 2001; Teigiser, 2009). These changes do not only affect the social workers already working in the field students receive less field instruction time which hinders the education process while still being expected to rise to the level of competency expected with a social work education (Teigiser, 2009).
There is current legislation, The Social Work Reinvestment Act (SWRA), which was reintroduced into the 111th congress by social workers for social workers (NASW, 2009). This piece of legislation addresses the challenges in the profession of social work, paying special attention to the dangers associated with practice in settings such as prisons and mental health facilities, lack of competitive salaries and high educational debt. If enacted the legislation would create a commission, which would have the ability to award grants for students and programs to address the challenges faced by social workers (NASW, 2009). However the SWRA has been introduced previously and has failed to be passed by congress.

Social workers engaging in social action and advocacy are essential in the passage of legislation such as the SWRA (NASW, 2009). Social workers who have access to computers and the internet can perform advocacy much easier than in the past. For example NASW’s website contains links to the Capwiz website where social workers can type their zip code in, find their legislators and have a letter drafted in support of legislation in a matter of seconds (www.capwiz.com/socialworkers/ca/home).

Teigiser(2009) describes two new learning approaches in field education adapted by the university of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration. The learning approaches are collective learning and macro projects (Teigiser, 2009). Collective learning is centered on generalist practice in field education but applied in a new way. Collective learning groups students according to geographical location and have a regular meeting schedule the students were also placed into two of the core courses together. The students field placement agencies operated together as a system of service delivery,
enabling students to have real examples of connections between agencies (Teigiser, 2009; Netting, 2005).

Macro projects enable students to have choices and make connections between real life situations and theory (Teigiser, 2009). The macro projects were integrated into the first year of field where students were not seen as being exposed to macro practice, the goal being to expose students to organizational structure and the process of organizational change (Teigiser, 2009). This article is an example of one with no empirical data provided as evaluation of the approach to field. Since the program is newly implemented the author suggests that positive results will be seen in the first few years of the programs implementation, however this is purely speculation and the need for increased empirical data is seen.

Social work is an international field and Meyer (2007) places emphasis on conveying the message to social work professors that international content should be included in macro courses. International social work education is looked at as a goal that is somewhat unattainable. However the author suggests connecting the globalization of social work to students experiences (Meyer, 2007). Students need to be able to relate what they experience to people around the world and understand that people in other countries are sharing the same experiences. (Meyer, 2007) Introducing students to the concept of economic globalization where capital is becoming increasingly mobile which threatens the rights to labor held by people in any country (Meyer, 2007). Globalization content was integrated into a graduate level macro course and the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The course previously did not include globalization content.
In class learning exercises look at aspects of American culture and the affect on communities in other countries. The example given was of Valentine’s Day, because one of the globalization classes fell on Valentine’s Day, the class examined the effects of consumers purchasing roses and diamonds as is traditional on the holiday. (Meyer, 2007) Discussion of the affects of pesticides on rose farmers in Ecuador which is one of the largest exporters of roses to the United States. (Meyer, 2007) Also imported diamonds from war torn African countries that are plagued with constant violence and suffering people. (Meyer, 2007) This also sparked discussion on American society and how to alleviate problems created by consumerism. (Meyer, 2007) Infusing global content into the macro social work course resulted in students displaying skills and knowledge which are parallel to the ones outlined by the advocates for international education. (Meyer, 2007) Students also report a change in attitudes toward the global community. Many students reported that the way they view the world and their commitment to social justice on a global scale as being changed (Meyer, 2007).

Netting (2005) discusses social workers effect on change in society. The idea that change comes from social workers operating from the understanding of people being influenced by societies view of the world and a need for increased self awareness of the worldview of the practitioner (Netting & O’Connor, 2003; Netting 2005). Also discussed is the need for integration of aspects of macro social work. There is no room for compartmentalizing social work practices in contemporary social work. The advancement of the profession requires integration of skills, for example looking at community organizing as containing legislative advocacy, budgeting and program
planning (Hardina, 2002; Netting, 2005). Practice on the macro level is going to change and contain elements that a practitioner has not yet experienced and it is important for social workers to be able to operate in a versatile way adapting to new ways of practice (Netting, 2005).

**Summary**

From the examination of social work literature it is apparent that there is a need for increased focus on macro level social work both in social work education and the social work profession. Social work calls for both the clinical focus and the macro focus and when one is lacking clients suffer as a result. It is important to highlight the need for micro mezzo and macro skills in social work practice (Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987; Hymans, 2000; Vodde & Gallant, 2002; Weiss, 2006). Generalist social work practice incorporates all systems levels however social work education operating from the generalist perspective is represented as lacking integration of macro into BSW and MSW programs (Mertz, Fortune, et. Al, 2007; Iacono-Harris & Nuccio, 1987).

During times of economic hardship social workers should be able to act as advocates for themselves and the vulnerable populations they serve (Vecchiolla et. al, 2001; Teigiser, 2009). Like many professions social workers are experiencing the repercussions of the current economic climate, being connected to professional organizations that can keep social workers abreast of legislation and opportunities to take part in social action. Starting with a comprehensive macro social work education and using that education as a springboard for social action is how social workers can make strides to achieve social justice. Just as people are influenced by society and legislation,
people can influence society and legislation by attaining macro level skills and applying them (Hardina, 2002; Netting, 2005)
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was exploratory in nature and used a single questionnaire to gather both qualitative and quantitative data from participants. This study examined macro level social work and what factors lead to practitioners engaging in macro level practice. The questionnaire that was used measured participant’s perceptions of what influenced their engagement in macro practice. For example, significant events in their education or field work, and perceptions about social work as it relates to social justice. The research aimed to examine motivations for macro practice and in turn provide recommendations for schools of Social Work in order to better prepare social workers to be active in promoting social justice.

Measures

A 10 question survey was used to gather information from participants (see Appendix B). The survey contained a majority of closed ended questions with some open ended questions as well. The reason for this was to gain more insight into participants perceptions, allowing them to frame their opinion in their own words. The questions began with demographic data, moved to motivations for entering the profession, to inspirations and specific factors leading to engagement in macro level practice.

Data Collection

Contact was be made with a possible participant either in person or via email, this initial contact contained a brief explanation on the topic of the survey. The researcher
explained to participants at this point either by speaking directly to participants or by text in the body of an email, that the aim of this research is to examine the factors that contributed to participant’s engagement in macro practice. Next the informed consent form (see Appendix A) and survey were distributed. If the forms were distributed in person the researcher distributed the informed consent form and obtained a signature prior to distributing the survey. If the survey was distributed via email the researcher attached the informed consent form and survey in one document to an email sent to the participant. Once the surveys are complete they were collected in the same form they were distributed, either in person by collecting completed forms or via email with the completed survey attached.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to create a data file and analysis of characteristics, frequencies and correlations among selected quantitative variables. For qualitative data themes were identified from answers to survey questions and variables were created from these themes. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the characteristics of the sample. Frequency distributions were used to explore participants’ answers to survey questions and cross tabulations were used to determine if there were statistical significances between variables.

Subjects

The researcher contacted social work professionals who are employed in a macro setting. For example, staff at the National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter, the board members of the National Association of Social Workers - California
Chapter and those social workers who are elected officials or social workers employed by elected officials. It was expected that all participants were currently actively engaging in an aspect of macro level practice.

**Sampling Plan**

Researcher contacted ten people by email and twenty five people at The National Association of Social Workers Legislative Lobby Days event and board meeting. As contact was made with participants researcher asked them to inform the researcher of other possible participants. As a result of these initial contacts the researcher obtained completed surveys from 30 participants. This qualifies as snowball sampling method, a non probability sampling method and a way to gather participants who are active in the network of macro social workers (Rubin and Babbie, 2008).

**Instrumentation**

The 14 question, questionnaire was developed by the researcher over a one month time period and was reviewed by the researcher’s advisor. During this time the researcher examined previously used instrumentation and literature and used this information to develop the questions used. Questions were written by the researcher and changed as recommended by her research advisor.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher submitted her research proposal to the committee for the protection of human subjects and it was returned and deemed as being of no risk. Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to complete the questionnaire and that if they did their responses would be confidential. In addition there
was an informed consent form distributed with the questionnaire where the participants agreed to participate as subjects of research. The subjects were also informed that there would not be compensation as a result of participating in the research.

Participant’s confidentiality was protected by keeping signed informed consent and surveys separate from each other, for electronic surveys information was printed and stored in the same manner as surveys distributed in person. Researcher kept all forms in a locked cabinet. The only people who viewed individual data was the researcher and her thesis advisor.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This study’s focus is on macro level social work practitioners. The researcher began by examining literature and developing a questionnaire that specifically examines factors that professionals identify as being influential in shaping practice decisions. Experiences while in their social work education were also examined in order to provide insight into what inspires social workers to become involved in macro level practice.

This study is exploratory and of mixed methods and used a single questionnaire to gather data. The questionnaire used closed ended questions, paired with opportunities for participants to explain their answers in their own words. This chapter will first explore the descriptive statistics of the sample. Next the chapter will explore the rich qualitative data gathered by participants in response to their reflection on what specific event inspired them to have interest and then engage in macro level practice.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that 40% of macro professionals surveyed are age 50 and older. Of
the population surveyed 16.7% were between the ages of 41-50. The table also shows that 20% of the participants were ages 31-40 and 20% of those surveyed were 25-30. The age group with the least representation in the sample was 18-24 with only 3.3%. This could mean that there is a lack of young professionals engaging in macro work or that the network of professionals surveyed lacks young professionals.

Table 2

*Gender of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the gender of participants, 70% of participants sampled were female, and 30% were male. This table also illustrates that no transgender social work professionals were a part of the sample. This means that of the network of social work professionals sampled the majority are female.

Table 3

*Level of Social Work Degree*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows that the majority 86.7%, of participants held their Master of Social Work degree. While 10% of participants held their Bachelor of Social Work degree and 3.3% of participants held their Doctorate Degree. This shows that the majority of social work professionals surveyed began macro practice after going through a MSW program.

Table 4

*Experience that Sparked interest in Macro Social Work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>999.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 represents the question directly relating to the qualitative data which will be presented next. If a participant entered into the profession with an interest in clinical work they were to have answered this question. Of those that answered the question 85% report specific experiences which lead to their interest in macro level work. In turn 15% of participants who answered this question report that they are not able to attribute their interest in macro level practice to specific experiences.

*Qualitative Analysis*

As Table 4 illustrated there were 17 participants who reported a specific as being responsible for their interest in macro level practice. In this section the findings from the
analyzed qualitative data will be presented. The observed themes in experiences discussed in the qualitative data were, Social Work Education programs, attending Lobby Days, Time period of entering the profession, exposure to job opportunities and being mentored by an individual or a service organization.

The majority of participants discussed their school of social work as being their experience where macro practice was inspired. This correlates with the literature placing importance on social work education providing students of social work with a solid macro foundation (Vodde & Gallant, 2002; Carey, 2007). Some participants name professors that specifically inspired them to action on the macro level. Others simply report that the core course content in their community organizing and policy courses inspired them to engage in macro practice.

The next most popular experience that inspired macro level practice was attending legislative lobby days. There was no specification if the legislative lobby days discussed was organized by The National Association of Social Workers or another organization. Participants report that after participating in the lobby days event feeling like they had a better understanding of policy and the legislative process. It was also reported that participating in lobby days increased confidence in the ability to do macro level work. Some participants added that the encouragement of school faculty along with attending lobby days lead to a greater interest in macro level practice.

Mentors or volunteer organizations were also listed as being influential in inspiring macro level practice. Participation in the peace corps was listed by one participant as being the exposure needed to needs within communities and the need for macro level
practice to address the identified needs. Witnessing social injustices was also listed as an experience that inspired macro level practice, being a witness and seeing social injustice was reported by participants as being so powerful that there was no other option than to fight back by engaging in macro level practice.

The time period in which some participants were going through their education and entering into the profession was also reported as being the experience that lead to engaging in macro level practice. For example one listed there being a strong call to social action in the 60’s which resulted in their response with action on the macro level. They reported their goal was to assist disenfranchised communities in organizing themselves and addressing community needs or problems.

Finally exposure to macro level job opportunities was reported as being an experience that inspired macro level practice. There was no specification as to where the exposure to macro level job opportunities took place. One participant discussed how they did not realize how essential macro level work was in social work and made the connection between good public policies being the first step to service delivery. Another reported learning of an elected official with a social work degree as inspiring them to look into what other career opportunities were available on the macro level.

This study provides examples as to what currently practicing macro professionals felt inspired them to respond to the call for social action with action on the macro level. Although the sample size was no more than thirty this study provides a glimpse into the motivations for macro practice. The majority of macro practitioners surveyed were in their 30’s and 40’s this seems to correlate with literature presented discussing a lack in
student interest in practice on the macro level.

The qualitative data gathered in this study illustrates how single experiences shape how social workers decide where to practice. It also demonstrates how no matter how much time has passed, professionals remember experiences in their social work education programs and stay true to the core values of social work in the capacity they feel will benefit people most, for example the discussion of sound public policy being the first step in service delivery. This revelation happened when this participant was a young professional and they have made practice choices around that revelation since.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Summary

Social work as a profession arose from identifying community needs, and providing community members with services to address their needs. Social work professionals are people who chose a career where they can make a difference in the lives of others. More often than not social workers view their ability to make a difference as being confined to a micro or mezzo, direct service level. This study examined factors that lead to social work professionals engaging in macro level practice. Social workers who were exposed to educational experiences, social action events and role models who provided lived experience of macro level practice and what kind of effect it has on not only clients but the social work profession have a higher propensity for engaging in macro level social work practice.

Once a social worker attains their BSW or MSW degree they can be put into situations where they require the knowledge and use of skills that are not specific to one level of practice. For example, a social worker who is a state senator and who is the chair of the Senate Health Committee may need to draw on their knowledge of group communication learned in social work theory class in order to effectively prepare and facilitate committee hearings. If there is little integration of practice on all systems levels in the social work education process, social work professionals are at a disadvantage.

Recommendations for Social Work Research

This study provided some insight into motivations for social work professionals
engaging in macro practice. However the insight gained by this study is only a small component for fully examining what motivates macro practitioners and using this information to influence the way social work’s core courses are structured. Some recommendations for future research are:

1. It would be beneficial to broaden the sample of macro professionals used; this could provide future researchers with a more clear understanding of the differences and similarities between the inclusion of macro content in social work education programs either state wide or on a national level.

2. Expanding the survey to include examples of macro experiences while in social work education and more opportunities for qualitative data to be gathered. This information could be used to provide more specific recommendations for activities students could participate in order to further their macro understanding and entice involvement in macro level practice.

3. Literature pertaining to macro social work practice is dated and low in volume. Literature on the necessity of macro practice as well as ways to present macro content in an engaging and inspiring manner would greatly benefit future research. For example examining the relationship between social worker burn out and macro practice.

**Recommendations for Social Work Practice**

Macro social work is an essential component to social work profession. Social work students who are exposed to experiences that enhance macro social work skills and
provide them with inspiration in the form of engaging course work, social action events, a role model or an example of what a social worker can do to have an impact on policy are more likely to engage in macro level social work practice in the future. Without positive exposure that is integrated into all core classes social work professionals are not fully prepared to practice on all levels comprehensively.

Macro content should be more comprehensively covered in social work program’s core courses. This content should be developed to actively engage students and present macro social work in an accomplishable light. Students should not only be learning macro content in the classroom setting, field education which is a cornerstone of social work education should also be required to have a macro component. Field education provides social work students with hands on experience in the field, since no practice setting is without a link to policy or other macro components students and field instructors can highlight macro aspects of practice within all field settings.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Purpose:
You are being asked to participate in research being conducted by Erin Ryan, who is a graduate student in Social Work at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of the study is to explore social work professional’s reasons for engaging in social work practice on the macro level. This study is exploratory in nature and seeks to examine what experiences have motivated current macro practitioners. The purpose of the research is to examine motivations for macro practice and in turn provide recommendations for schools of Social Work in order to better prepare social workers to be active in promoting social justice through macro practice.

Design:
This study is designed to be an exploratory and mixed methods survey. A survey will be used to gather information from participants such as experiences in their social work education as they relate to the shaping of their current practice.

Procedures:
The surveys will be distributed after a brief explanation on the topic of the survey which is factors that contributed to participant’s engagement in macro practice. Completion of the survey is expected to take no longer than fifteen minutes.

Risk Discomfort:
Reflecting back on past experiences and different times in one's life can be difficult, however if you find any questions that prove to be difficult or uncomfortable remember you do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

Benefits:
Participation in this study will not benefit you directly; however, your participation will assist in broadening research regarding factors that contribute to the success in inspiring social work students to engage in macro level practice.

Confidentiality:
Your participation in this study will be kept completely confidential. There will be no personal identifying information on the questionnaire. If you are participating in this study electronically, your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data. The researcher and her thesis advisor will be the only individuals having access to the completed questionnaires. The completed questionnaires will be secured in a locked cabinet within the researcher’s home.
study is complete in May, 2010 all of the completed questionnaires will be destroyed in the form of shredding.

**Right to withdraw:**
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering and you can terminate your participation at any time without repercussions. However once you have submitted a confidential survey the researcher will be unable to remove confidential data from the data set, should you wish to withdraw.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your involvement in the study, you can contact Erin Ryan via email at efr9000@yahoo.com or by telephone at (916) 834-3581 to discuss your participation in the study. This research is being supervised by Dr. Susan Eggman, Professor at California State University Sacramento who can be reached at (916) 278-7181, or by email at eggmans@csus.edu.

**If participating via email:**

I acknowledge that by completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in the research.

**If participating in person:**

I acknowledge that by signing this consent form, I am agreeing to voluntarily participate in this study. My signature indicates that I have read and understand the contents of this consent form. A copy of this consent form has been offered to me.

_____________________                                                   _______________________
Signature of the Participant                                                 Date

_____________________                                                    _______________________
Signature of the Researcher                                                 Date
APPENDIX B

Survey

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please circle your answer.

1. Gender
   a. Transgender
   b. Female
   c. Male

2. Age
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-30
   c. 31-40
   d. 41-50
   e. 50+

3. What level of social work degree do you hold?
   a. BSW
   b. MSW
   c. PhD

4. What is the most significant reason you chose social work as a career?
   a. To make a difference
   b. To impact social change
   c. To help others
   d. To be of service
e. For job security
f. For job versatility
g. For job satisfaction
h. Other ________________

5. What was your intended area of focus when entering your social work education program?
   a. Clinical or direct services
   b. Macro or non direct services
   c. Was not sure
   d. Do not recall

6. If it was not macro or non direct services was there a certain class or experience that lead to your interest in macro practice?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. If you marked yes please describe the experience:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
8. While studying for your social work degree where was (were) your field placement(s)? Circle all that apply:

a. Aging or Gerontology
b. Alcohol Drug or Substance Abuse
c. Child Welfare
d. Criminal Justice Corrections or Probation
e. Cultural or Immigrant Services
f. Disability or Rehabilitation
g. Health or Medical
h. Homeless or Poverty
i. Macro
j. Mental health
k. School-Based
l. Social Justice
m. Victim services
n. Welfare, Employment or Social Services
o. Other

9. In your opinion what is the greatest benefit to practice on the macro level?

a. Professional recognition
b. Educational opportunities
c. Networking opportunities
d. Political advocacy

e. Leadership opportunities

f. Events, conferences or boards

g. Participation in committees or boards

h. Social connections and activities

i. Professional information resources and links

10. What do you feel is your greatest influence while making professional choices?

a. Membership to a professional organization

b. Personal lived experience

c. Classes taken while studying to obtain a social work degree

d. A role model, if so who? ___________________

e. Desire to make a difference wherever possible

f. The NASW Code of Ethics

g. Other ________________
REFERENCES


