

# Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) uses the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) for accreditation purposes in Bachelor's level (BSW) and Master's level (MSW) social work programs. These standards support academic excellence by establishing a basis for professional competence. They permit programs to design their curriculum, using both traditional and progressive methods and models, by balancing requirements that promote comparable outcomes across all programs.

All social work students are required by the CSWE to develop the 9 Educational Policy Competencies to the extent that students are able to demonstrate the integration and application of the competencies in practice. Students' ability to demonstrate the level of competence necessary to enter professional practice is taken as a reflection of their program's success in helping them achieving their goals.

The grid below shows how our book addresses the 9 competencies and the practice behaviors within each as they are relevant and applied to macro practice in social work.

The 9 Competencies and the Practice Behaviors	Chapter reference
Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	
A. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW <i>Code of Ethics</i> , relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13
B. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13
C. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	9, 10
D. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	9, 10
E. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12
Competency 2: Engage in Diversity and Difference in Practice	
A. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13
B. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts on their own experience	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

C. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	<b>6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13</b>
Competency 3: Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	
A. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	<b>2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14</b>
B. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	<b>2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13</b>
Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice	
A. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	<b>10, 11, 13</b>
B. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	<b>7, 9, 10</b>
C. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	<b>9, 10, 12</b>
Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice	
A. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services	<b>3, 6, 8, 9</b>
B. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services	<b>2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12</b>
C. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice	<b>1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13</b>
Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
A. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	<b>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9</b>
B. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	<b>1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14</b>
Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
A. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies	<b>5, 7, 10, 14</b>

B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies	<b>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12</b>
C. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies	<b>4, 5, 6, 9</b>
D. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies	<b>4, 6, 7, 9, 10</b>
Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
A. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies	<b>3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13</b>
B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies	<b>2, 4, 5, 6, 8</b>
C. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes	<b>1, 2, 6, 8</b>
D. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies	<b>1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13</b>
E. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals	<b>5, 6, 8</b>
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	
A. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	<b>10</b>
B. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	<b>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9</b>
C. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	<b>5, 6, 8, 12</b>
D. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	<b>5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14</b>

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## THE ADVOCACY PRACTICE AND POLICY MODEL (APPM)

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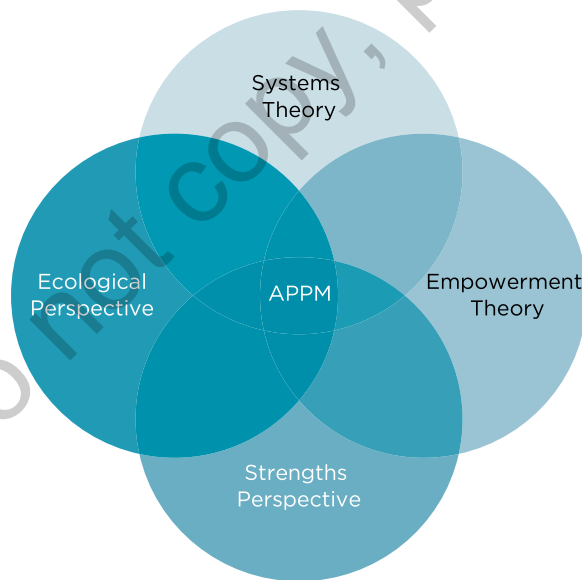
Advocacy in social work practice involves activities to “defend, represent, or otherwise advance the cause of one or more clients at the individual, group, organizational, or community level in order to promote social justice” (Hoefer, 2012, p. 3). Advocating for social justice is a complex process, containing a number of key elements for consideration. Cox, Tice, and Long (2019), as seen in Figure 4.1, offer and describe a dynamic advocacy model that identifies four interlocking tenets (economic and social justice, supportive environment, human needs and rights, and political access) as factors for reflection when advocating for change. It is noted that “in social work practice with real people and situations, these tenets have considerable overlap with and influence on one another” (Cox et al., 2019, p. 69). Although not exhaustive, the advocacy model and its tenets are offered “to prompt critical and multidimensional thought and discussion about advocacy in social work practice” (Cox et al., 2019, p. 69).

A succinct description of the four tenets of the dynamic advocacy model is provided in Table 4.4.

What is important when reviewing the **advocacy practice and policy model (APPM)** is that the four tenets are not meant to be identified as distinctive or independent from one another. Rather, the tenets overlap and inform, as well as influence one another, when placed in the context of consumers. Thus, the model is designed to encourage critical and intersectional thought, discussion, and action related to practice and policy advocacy.

**FIGURE 4.1**  
Theoretical Framework for the Advocacy Practice and Policy Model

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Source: Cox, Tice, and Long (2019).

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**TABLE 4.4****The Four Tenets of the Advocacy Practice and Policy Model (APPM)**

Economic and social justice	Emphasis is placed on advancing economic and social rights for all people. These efforts are often actualized through the development and establishment of liberties, rights, duties, access, opportunities, and the active voices of people in specific domains (e.g., education, employment, housing, religion, voting, safety, citizenship, and marriage).
Supportive environment	Examination of the total social, economic, and physical (natural) environment takes place and is aligned with the aforementioned systems and the ecological and person-in-the-environment perspectives. A supportive environment for advocacy can be derived from significant others, friends, family members, churches, companies, associations, community entities, and community and national groups and organizations. Natural and tangible aspects of the environment are also important considerations; these could include factors such as buildings, use of land, monetary support, water, food, computer access, technology, and so on.
Human needs and rights	Special consideration in advocacy needs to be given to who is defining human needs and why. Implicit in the definition of human needs and rights is power. How should and can consumers of services be involved in defining human needs and rights? The active participation of consumers of services in defining human needs and rights is highly aligned with the notion of empowerment and the ability of consumers to influence and affect decision-making processes.
Political access	Who has access to political power and why? Identifying key stakeholders and their influence over policy and legislative development is crucial. Politicians are responsible to the public and their constituency but often beholden to the people and political parties who significantly donated to the campaign fund and assisted with their election. Political access typically involves the building of relationships with politicians, elected officials, and key stakeholders. McBeath (2016, p. 9) identifies “developing external advocacy networks” (e.g., between professional, public, businesses, nonprofit, and private entities) as a top strategy for reenvisioning macro social work practice.

The APPM indicates that justice is integral to social work policy and practice by “promoting and establishing equal liberties, rights, duties, and opportunities in the social institutions (economy, policy, family, religion, education, etc.) of a society for all [people]” (Long, Tice, & Morrison, 2006, p. 208; see also Cox et al., 2019, p. 69). Thus, the APPM fosters a “big picture perspective” of people in their environments that enables social workers to analyze issues outside of a box and focus not only on the amelioration of an issue but also, equally as important, its prevention (Reisch, 2016). The idea of purposeful change is a theme that runs throughout the APPM by encouraging collective and collaborative practice and policy development with consumers at the center of planned change.

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE ADVOCACY PRACTICE AND POLICY MODEL

The **theoretical foundation of the APPM** includes systems and empowerment theory, the strengths perspective, and the ecological perspective. These theories

# Using Technology in Social Work Practice

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

1. Define advances in technology and social media
2. Describe the possible use of technology by social workers
3. Apply the advocacy practice and policy model to technology
4. Consider ethical issues associated with technology
5. Explore the future use of technology in practice

## ROSE GRABANIA EMBRACES TECHNOLOGY

Rose has been a social worker for well over 30 years. Throughout her career, Rose has been instrumental in organizing community-based voter registration drives, public education on policy initiatives associated with health care and wellness programs, and a reading partnership for both children and older adults. In the past, Rose did her organizing work primarily through face-to-face encounters, petitions, forums, boycotts, meetings, and lobbying.

Over the past decade, Rose has come to realize that technology plays a huge part in a changing society. The increase of information available to people and the speed of communication patterns have altered the traditional methods Rose used to initiate social change. Consequently, Rose has gradually integrated more technology into her traditional macro practice strategies. For example, she used e-mails and text messages in conjunction with websites to advocate in the last political campaign. She successfully raised money for a children's camp by using an online funding drive.

What concerns Rose is the ongoing need to enhance her technology literacy and competence while considering how technology and social media affect her relationships and interactions with consumers. In many ways, Rose sees new relationship possibilities along with an array of ethical considerations.

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## ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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Social workers began using technology in their practice in the late 1980s and early 1990s (McNutt, 2018). Personal computers, computer networks, and technology centers supported the Internet development and provided a set of tools for social workers to use across consumer systems (Schuler, 1996). As listed in

Table 10.1, the digital, online, and other electronic technology offer a landscape of practice options.

There are three basic approaches when considering the integration of technology with social work practice—proactive, reactive, and rejection. Ideally, the majority of social workers will decide to be proactive and positive in their reaction to the acquisition of new knowledge (Belluomini, 2013). A proactive stance requires reading about current technologies that affect evidence-based practices, consumer populations, advocacy actions, ethics, agency processes, and strengths-based solutions. Furthermore, macro social work necessitates remaining up-to-date on technologies affecting groups, communities, and organizations. To a degree, this can be accomplished through online services that include articles of interest to educate practice. Examples include [www.socialworker.com/](http://www.socialworker.com/), [www.socialworktoday.com](http://www.socialworktoday.com), and [www.socialworkblog.org](http://www.socialworkblog.org).

There are situations in which the approach to technology might be reactive. This is when critical thinking about technology and its impact is especially essential. For example, Snapchat could capture a particular community or agency in a negative light and place the entity at risk for funding, harm, stereotyping, or stigma. Indeed, university officials likely attempt to monitor the usage of social media in relationship to the oppression of and discriminatory comments toward students. Similarly, membership by a social worker on Facebook or other social media platforms makes public a profile that might be better kept private from consumers and their communities.

Rejecting technology involves a decision against its use because the tool will not enhance the quality of life for consumers and communities. Misinformation and cyberbullying are examples that could influence a social worker to reconsider the value of technology in practice. Even the use of e-mail under some circumstances can come under scrutiny as being informal, brief, subject to misuse and viewing by others, and too spontaneous. If technology holds the potential of negatively impacting consumers or affecting their privacy, social workers are obligated to anticipate the negative consequences of social media and technological exposure.

**TABLE 10.1**  
Web 2.0 Technology-Based Techniques

Blogs and microblogging	Image sharing (Flickr)
Wikis	Video sharing (YouTube)
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat)	Virtual worlds (Second Life)
Meetups	Storify
Podcasts	

Source: Adapted from McNutt (2018, p. 140).

## Time to Think 10.1

Review the opening case and consider how technology and social media could be used to enhance Rose's organizing activities. What specific features of technologies could you see Rose using and why? Who could serve as a resource person, mentor, source of encouragement, and role model for Rose? Identify and describe organizing strategies that would combine traditional methods of organizing with technological applications.

### THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY BY SOCIAL WORKERS

A strength of the social work profession is its ability to adapt new methods and models to address social, economic, and environmental issues. With an open mind to innovation, technology offers social workers new and effective ways of advancing communication, delivering services, and working with consumers in communities while pushing or enhancing the boundaries of traditional practice (Reamer, 2013).

Technological services and intervention provided to consumers are often called “telehealth,” “e-therapy,” “online therapy,” or “online counseling.” The contemporary application of technology in practice is multifaceted and can include the use of psychoeducation websites, phone apps, self-guided interventions, supportive electronic communities, online hotlines, chat sites, and professional online forums and listservs (Dombo, Kays, & Weller, 2014).

#### Websites

Social workers have access to a variety of websites designed to inform and guide assessment, planning, networking, organizing, evaluation, and administration. For example, [www.people.uncw.edu](http://www.people.uncw.edu) defines social change strategies focused on individuals, groups, and organizations. This site also defines and applies the role of change agents in relation to settings and goals.

Principles of community organizing are found at [www.icpj.org](http://www.icpj.org), where the relationship between organizing and

activism is concisely described. The fundamentals of grassroots organizing are found at [www.commorg.wisc.edu](http://www.commorg.wisc.edu), including 10 rules for effective community organizing. Highlighted in the rules is the need for group formation and community leadership development to help ensure goal achievement.

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#### PHOTO 10.1

Social media are a tool for social work policy and practice.

Of course, the challenge in using websites involves the reader deciphering the validity, objectivity, and value of website content. Website content needs to be viewed with skepticism and critical thinking. Workers should give special attention and scrutiny to the sources for information.

## Social Media

Social workers can use **social media** to build partnerships and collaborations with people who share common interests, goals, and activities. In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook, a free **social networking** site that allows members to post profiles and upload photos and videos. With approximately 2.23 billion users, Facebook is the most popular social network used to connect and share online.

Social workers who use Facebook and other forms of social media such as blogs, message boards, or Twitter must be careful and responsible about sharing personal or consumer information. Discussion on any public arena opens the possibilities for inappropriate disclosures. Indeed, the onus is undoubtedly on the social worker to protect consumers by constructing boundaries that protect privacy and emphasize respectful engagement (Young, 2013).

## E-mail

Electronic mail, e-mail, involves people exchanging messages using electronic devices. First introduced in the 1960s by Ray Tomlinson, the e-mail of today came to the general public in the mid-1970s. The substantial growth of the use of e-mail has made a tremendous impact on the norms that influence socialization and how we come to understand both private and public information (Bratt, 2010).

One result of e-mail is the possible disconnect between “real-life interactions and the perceived anonymity of the online world” (Bratt, 2010, p. 341). The notion of “friending” makes establishing and maintaining relationships across consumer systems appear easy. Online friendships have few of the relationship components associated with the traditional concepts of a friend. For example, loyalty, shared experiences, common beliefs, and trust are not necessarily a part of “friending.” Consequently, the embedded complexity is that social workers do not have personal relationships with consumers but rather connect at a professional level.

Given that e-mail occurs in a professional setting, certain **e-mail etiquette** should be followed. Table 10.2 outlines some guidelines for e-mail communication.

## Texting

Texting or text messaging, also called short message service (SMS), is an exchange of brief written messages or comments between mobile phones or portable devices (Kuhns, 2012). Texting is an extremely casual way of exchanging information; consequently, it is essential that social workers be aware of the context of communication. Texting provides social workers with a fast and easy form of communication, but we are reminded that words can be misspelled,

**TABLE 10.2****Professional E-mail Etiquette**

1. Include a clear, direct subject line. Examples of a good subject line include “Meeting date changed,” “Quick question about your presentation,” or “Suggestions for the proposal.”
2. Use a professional e-mail address, most likely an agency e-mail address. E-mail addresses should always convey the sender’s name, so that the recipient understands who sent the e-mail.
3. Think twice before hitting “reply all.” Refrain from hitting “reply all” unless everyone on the list needs to receive the e-mail.
4. Include a signature block. Readers should receive some information about the sender, such as full name, title, agency name, and contact information, which should include a phone number.
5. Use professional salutations. Don’t use laid-back, colloquial expressions like, “Hey you guys,” “Yo,” or “Hi folks.”
6. Use exclamation points sparingly. Exclamation points should only be used to convey excitement.
7. Be cautious with humor. Humor can easily get lost in translation without the right tone or facial expressions.
8. Know that people from different cultures speak and write differently. Miscommunication can easily occur because of cultural differences, especially in the writing form when we can’t see one another’s body language. Tailor messages to the receiver’s cultural background or based on the depth of the relationship.
9. Reply to e-mails—even if the e-mail was intended for someone else. Here’s an example reply: “I know you’re very busy, but I don’t think you meant to send this e-mail to me. And I wanted to let you know so you can send it to the correct person.”
10. Proofread every message. Recipients will notice, and perhaps judge, any mistakes that are made.
11. Add the e-mail address last. Avoid sending an e-mail accidentally before the e-mail has been completed and proofread.
12. Double-check that the correct recipient has been selected. It’s easy to select the wrong name, which can be embarrassing to senders and to the accidental recipient.
13. Keep fonts classic like Times New Roman. For business correspondence, keep fonts, colors, and sizes classic.
14. Nothing is confidential—so write accordingly. A basic guideline is to assume that others will see what is written, so don’t write anything that shouldn’t be seen by everyone.

misconstrued, or misinterpreted. Additionally, the use of emojis, symbols, and graphic representations is open to multiple interpretations and alternate meanings. The following questions should be considered: Is texting the best way to communicate one’s thoughts to another person? Are there differences in what is said over text versus in person? What needs to be remembered is that texting remains a more impersonal and short-worded mode of communication. Furthermore, it is important to note that the platform is more secure and more accessible.



## Time to Think 10.2

Consider your use of texting and e-mail. How conscious are you of how you convey your thoughts and ideas via these forms of communication? Have you ever received or sent a message that you regretted or felt dismayed over? If so, what action did you take to correct the incident? What if your texting or e-mail comments were subpoenaed and disclosed via court proceeding? Would damaging or embarrassing content be revealed?

### ADVOCACY SUITES

Social workers can link consumers to elected officials, educational material, and advocacy strategies through a comprehensive online system. An example of such a system is Maryland Learning Links ([www.marylandlearninglinks.org](http://www.marylandlearninglinks.org)) that compiles information and resources on mental/behavioral health, policy/leadership, evaluation/assessment, and other topics relevant to individuals, communities, and organizations. The National Council of Nonprofits ([www.councilofnonprofits](http://www.councilofnonprofits)) offers social workers and the general public a site with advocacy tools and lobbying strategies for local, state, and federal actions.

The availability of advocacy suites expands social work's resources and facilitates state-of-the-art interventions based on human rights standards. Thus, the suites help create public policy and programs that respect, protect, and fulfill the values of social work as seen in social, economic, and environmental justice.

The speed, effectiveness, intensity, and global nature of technology clearly present new and ever-changing opportunities for social workers as we struggle to adapt to new approaches to practice and policy. The profession understands that technology is here to stay and will exponentially increase, generating profound social action and change.

### THE ADVOCACY PRACTICE AND POLICY MODEL AND TECHNOLOGY

With the rise of high-speed Internet connections and web-enabled cell phones, social workers and consumers find it easier to find and access information and resources. What is the role of the advocacy practice and policy model (APPM) in this ever-changing environment? The flexibility of the framework, comprising economic and social justice, a supportive environment, human needs and rights, and political access, is adaptable and agile to meet the demands of new media and forms of communication.

Throughout this book, the needs and strengths of consumers and communities are recognized as vital components to social work practice. It is useful to conceive technology, much like other resources or interventions, in the context of social work values and ethics. Technology keeps consumers and professionals

updated on the issues at hand, mindful of consumers' role in the change process, and current with evidence generated from research that informs practice.

Indeed, many social workers would argue that technology supports educational advancement and research agendas. From this foundation of knowledge and skills, social workers are better equipped to respond to consumers and community situations in a timely fashion. By establishing robust systems of communication, supported by technology, social workers can engage with consumers when assessing a community, or any other social system, from a multitude of perspectives, including the strengths orientation.

Many social workers would agree that technology literacy is intricately linked to elements of advocacy. Technology has created greater access to information that informs practice and provides educational venues to people who previously had only limited access. Thus, technology itself becomes a tool of intervention and change. By sharing technological knowhow, social workers and consumers join forces in partnerships and broad-based coalitions. It can be argued that technology helps to create and nurture lines of communication, relationships, and communities beyond the barriers of time and space.

### Economic and Social Justice

In an increasingly interconnected and technological society and world, individuals, groups, communities, and organizations use and rely on social media and other digital technology to locate information, communicate, and access services (Tooley, 2015). It can be argued that the Internet is an important factor for fostering social justice because it enables anyone to participate in the global economy, obtain education and training, and network.

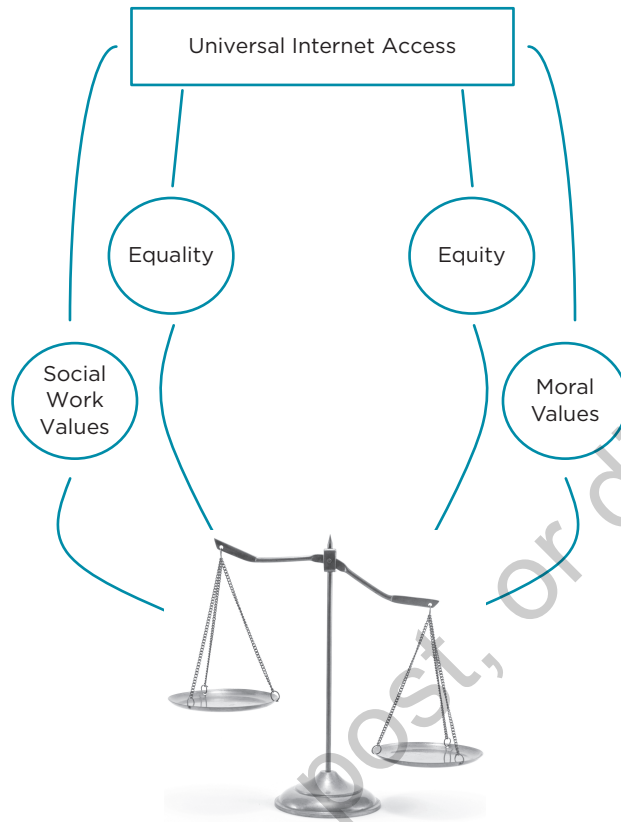
As advocates for universal access to the Internet, social workers would help to end the isolation so many people experience, especially those in rural areas and developing nations (Dobson, 1997). Technology in the context of economic and social justice recognizes that free Internet is critical because it is the technology that we use to connect and share knowledge with each other. Consequently, there is a need to prioritize investment in the national and global infrastructure to help ensure meaningful access to the Internet for all. This kind of thinking is fundamental to the values of social work and the principles of equity and justice.

The APPM recognizes that social justice encompasses economic justice. Economic justice, which affects individuals as well as societal order, encompasses the moral principles that ideally guide social policies and the creation of societal institutions. The problem of unequal access to technology is only a small part of inequality in the United States; however, it is a good place to start. Universal access to the Internet challenges the barriers of language and customs, and it is easier to provide than other services like health care or housing (Dobson, 1997). Additionally, the Internet opens space for communication that will minimize the isolation experienced by economically challenged people and poverty-stricken countries.

The elements associated with the notion of **universal Internet** are depicted in Figure 10.1. As indicated, both social work values and moral principles are critical to social and economic justice as they relate to equity and equality.



**FIGURE 10.1**  
Social and Economic Justice



When considering the tenet of economic and social justice, social workers should consider the following questions:

- How can economic opportunities become more broadly distributed?
- Is economic justice about more than just income and wealth?
- How can prosperity be shared across households, regions, and sectors of the economy?
- What is the relationship between concepts of human rights and economic and social justice?
- How does social and economic justice celebrate aspects of diversity?

### Supportive Environment

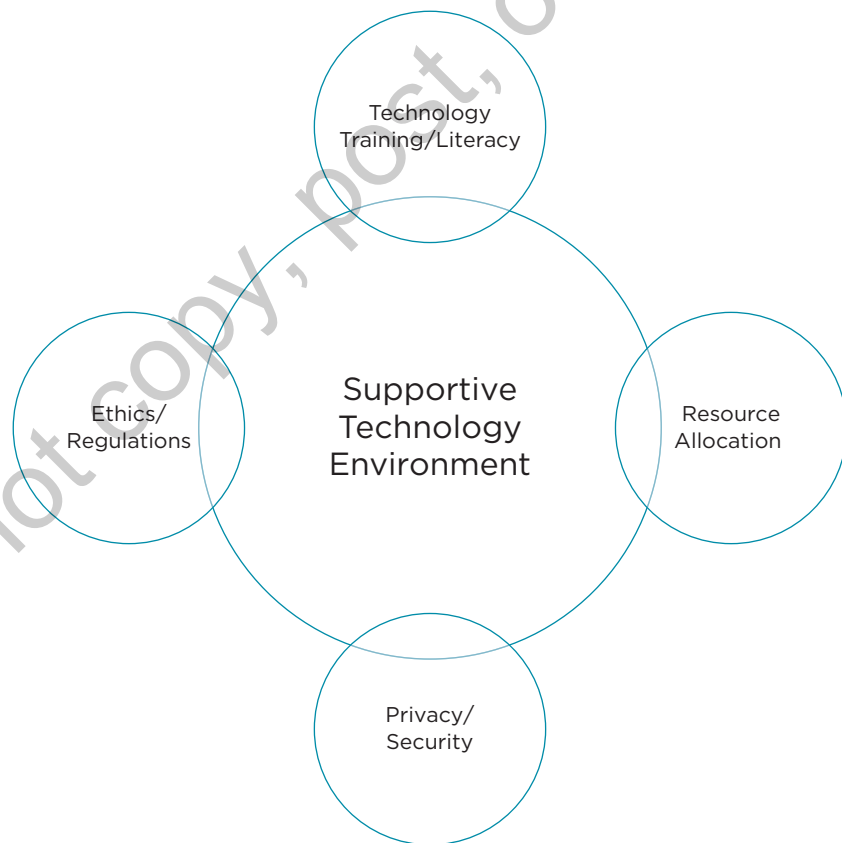
The speed and intensity of digital technology has changed the societal and work environment. These changes require an understanding of the current and future

of technological developments. Specifically, the professional of social work needs to revisit and possibly revise concepts related to communication patterns, social systems, relationships, and resources that surround a person. Within this framework, the APPM supports an environment that nurtures creativity in the context of privacy, equality, and equity.

The digital environment includes the use of computers, Internet networks, and various forms of social media, including texting. This environment, by its very nature, allows users to engage with each other almost instantaneously and with near anonymity. The expansion of communication opportunities also has challenges associated with ethics, privacy, and security that require ongoing attention. Furthermore, the range of information available through technology requires users to scan the environment to find pertinent data, to discern good information from bad, and to stay relevant in the face of rapidly changing discoveries.

As seen in Figure 10.2, the elements of an environment supportive of technology are complex and require vigilant monitoring and adjustments. The tenets of

**FIGURE 10.2**  
Elements of a Supportive Environment



the APPM and its conceptualization of advocacy help to ensure an environment that supports ethical and effective practice and policy development.

## Human Needs and Rights

According to the World Economic Forum (Hickin, 2017), a not-for-profit foundation, there are three ways in which technology can address human needs and address rights.

1. Online learning and the right to education:  
Globally, approximately 120 million children do not attend school. Technology is emerging as a major asset to help ensure that children have access to education.
2. Big data distribution:  
There is a vast amount of data available on environmental conditions, migration, and conflict situations. Cloud computing and big data analysis can use this data to analyze key trends and provide early warnings related to critical issues, aiding the prevention and rapid response to humanitarian disasters.
3. Protecting the supply chain:  
An estimated 30 million people are currently in forced labor across multiple industries from electronics to fishing. Technology can be used to enable transparency in supply chains from sourcing through to customer purchase.

The complexities of these issues are significant. What becomes obvious when considering social institutions, social class, changes in the value systems, and employment settings is the **intersectionality of technological innovations** (see Figure 10.3) with inequality and resource scarcity. These interlocking systems speak to the need for social workers to understand systems of power and advocate on behalf of those marginalized nationally and internationally.

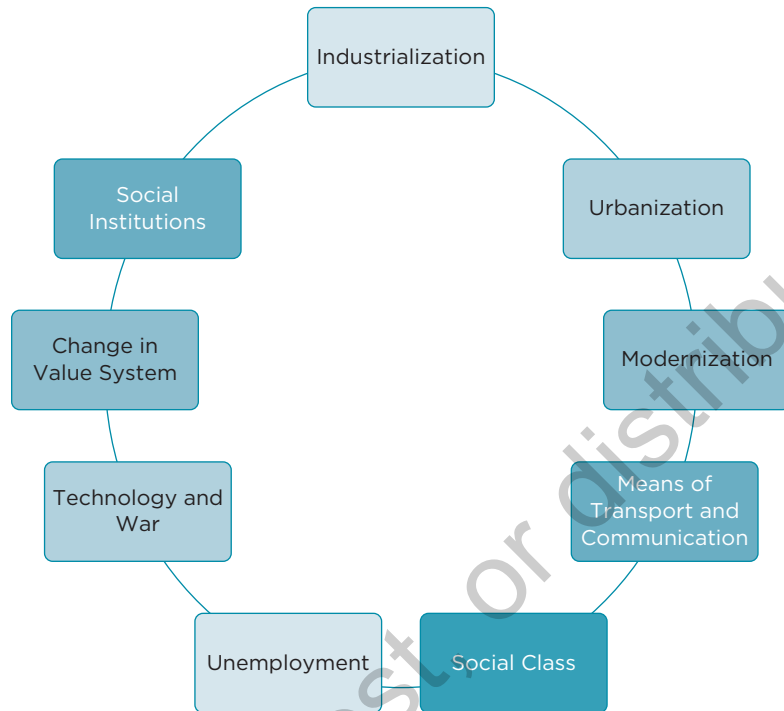
## Political Access

Social work practice coupled with the access to the power base of politics has changed with the emergence of Web 2.0 techniques and the subsequent use of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter (Germany, 2006; Guo & Saxton, 2015; McNutt, 2018). When advocating for social causes, these technical tools introduce a relations-building element into the process of online organizing, which can enhance consumer participation, friend and fund raising, and the dissemination of information and viewpoints to political allies and decision makers.

According to the APPM, the technology-based tools available to social workers add strength and options that address many challenges to social

**FIGURE 10.3**

Intersectionality of Technological Innovations



Source: Provided by SociologyGuide.com.

change. In contrast to more traditional tools and strategies, technology options are vast and growing. The dynamic nature of the APPM complements the growing use of technology and the increase in knowledge of how advocacy strategies work, structurally improve organizations, and address issues of social justice.

In keeping with social work values and goals, technology standards are needed to address ethical regulations. Specific technology standards that protect the integrity and privacy of consumers and social workers include adherence to the *Code of Ethics*, compliance with laws that protect consumers' rights regarding data transmission and storage, recognition of cultural and

social contexts, and verification of identity. Furthermore, it is imperative that social workers use technology to remain proficient in their field of practice while enhancing consumer accessibility to technology.

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**PHOTO 10.2**

Ethics must govern the use of social media.

## Time to Think 10.3

After reading the table of technology standards, consider why the profession of social work is focused on both the use of technology and ethical regulations (NASW, 2017). How do the standards offer protection to social workers and consumers alike? Why do you think communities are included in the standards?

### ETHICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH TECHNOLOGY

Technology has altered our homes, workplace, relationships, and communication patterns. The widespread availability of technology brings new and challenging ethical issues to the forefront for social workers. Understanding the most critical ethical issues that arise from technology will help us to better understand how to address them in a proactive manner. Table 10.3 outlines practical considerations where using technology in practice.

#### Confidentiality

Between using online forums, social media, and other technologies, social workers are collecting and have available to them a lot of sensitive information. Some of

**TABLE 10.3**

#### Ethical Social Media Use

- A. To minimize the potential for the social media concerns previously described, it would be prudent for practitioners to first take an in-depth look at the content of their online identity and then consider taking appropriate security precautions with their own personal information and identity.
- B. Practitioners should become familiar with the privacy settings on their personally controlled social media sites and adjust them so as to limit undesired access by clients to personal information (Guseh et al., 2009, p. 585; Lehavot, et al., 2010, p. 164; Luo, 2009, p. 21).
- C. Practitioners are advised to conduct a personal Google search in order to gain awareness of what anyone, including a client, might find out about them. If inaccurate or clinically inappropriate information is found on a website, the practitioner should submit a request to the site's manager to have the information removed, if possible (Luo, 2009, p. 21).
- D. One way to help control the information a client might find is to create a professional website with relevant links and to possibly purchase a domain name, both of which would help to reduce misrepresentation online (Luo, 2009, p. 21), while also providing an avenue through which to bring in potential clients (Malamud, 2011).
- E. Practitioners should discuss online privacy issues openly with their clients and suggest more appropriate means of communication (e.g., telephone) indicating that it benefits both clinician and client to respect professional boundaries (Lehavot et al., 2010, p. 165; Luo, 2009, p. 21).

Source: Voshel and Wesala (2015).

this information is about consumers and the communities where they live. Social workers understand their obligation to protect consumer **privacy** and **confidentiality**. Furthermore, they are familiar with mandatory reporting laws related to abuse and neglect (Reamer, 2013).

Digital technology and other forms of social media have added a new layer to issues of consumer confidentiality. For example, social workers must be diligent in thwarting the hacking of records and other breaches of confidentiality. They also maintain strict adherence to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that focus on consumer confidentiality by providing specific guidelines for practice.

The National Association of Social Workers' *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) provides compelling statements regarding confidentiality for practice across systems:

### 1.07 Privacy and Confidentiality

- (l) Social workers should protect the confidentiality of clients' written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Social workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.
- (m) Social workers should take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of electronic communications, including information provided to clients or third parties. Social workers should use applicable safeguards (such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords) when using electronic communications such as e-mail, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, and text messages.
- (n) Social workers should develop and disclose policies and procedures for notifying clients of any breach of confidential information in a timely manner.
- (o) In the event of unauthorized access to client records or information, including any unauthorized access to the social worker's electronic communication or storage systems, social workers should inform clients of such disclosures, consistent with applicable laws and professional standards.
- (p) Social workers should develop and inform clients about their policies, consistent with prevailing social work ethical standards, on the use of electronic technology, including Internet-based search engines, to gather information about clients.
- (q) Social workers should avoid searching or gathering client information electronically unless there are compelling

professional reasons, and when appropriate, with the client's informed consent.

- (r) Social workers should avoid posting any identifying or confidential information about clients on professional websites or other forms of social media.

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## Organizing Online

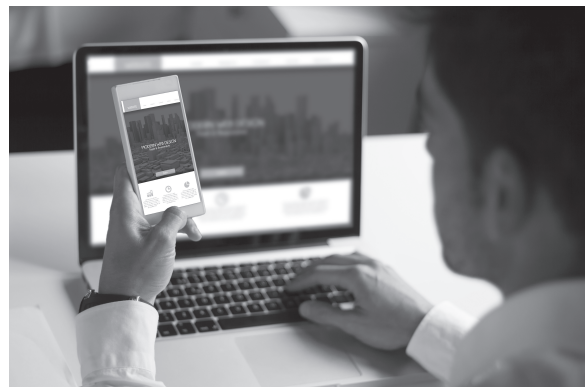
Franco, a social worker with an urban not-for-profit agency, is organizing an online holiday toy drive for children in the community where he works. As a result of his organizing strategies, Franco has contact information on both contributors to the drive, as well as those in need of toys. Throughout the drive, Franco has used his agency's e-mail address; however, people participating in the drive

have searched and found Franco's personal Facebook page and asked to "be friended." Franco feels torn: He wants to reach out and establish community partnerships, but he understands that Facebook is not the appropriate venue. What do you think Franco should do in this situation? What obligation does Franco have to report the situation to his agency supervisor?

### Boundaries and Dual Relationships

Ethical issues related to professional boundaries and **dual relationships** are common and multifaceted. There are three basic reasons why boundary issues are particularly critical to social workers: (1) protection of the intervention process, (2) protection of consumers from exploitation, and (3) protection of social workers from liability (Dewane, 2010).

The use of digital technology has introduced new and complicated boundary issues. Specifically, consider the use of Facebook by a social worker who is asked by a consumer, present or past, to be "friends." Or what if consumers have access to the postings of a social worker where personal information is learned? In situations such as these, it is helpful to consider Reamer's (2001) typology of dual relationships.



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**PHOTO 10.3**  
Informed consent is essential when using social media.

Reamer (2001) proposes a typology of the following five categories of dual relationships in social work that include the following:



- **Intimacy**—in which physical contact is made
- **Personal benefit (monetary gain)**—involves an exchange of money between a social worker and a consumer
- **Emotional/dependency needs**—where a social worker gains emotional support from a consumer
- **Unintentional/unplanned relationships**—in small communities, social workers may cross the path of consumers, which is not inherently unethical but requires skillful handling
- **Inadvertent situations**—meeting a consumer by chance in a store or at an event
- **In a technological way**—the use of social media may contribute to unintentional communications and forming of relationship
- **Altruism**—dual relationships form because of social workers wanting to help a consumer

Deciding whether to enter into a second relationship includes the following:

- How will this secondary relationship change the power differential or take advantage of a power differential in the relationship?
- How long will this relationship last? Is it a one-time occurrence or expected to last indefinitely?
- How will ending one relationship affect the other relationship?
- How much will objectivity be impaired?
- What is the risk of exploitation?
- Would such a second relationship constitute or approach a violation of ethical or legal standards? (Dewane, 2010)

### Ethical Considerations

As indicated in the typology, not all dual relationships are unethical. The challenges in the digital age are not easily solved, but the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) provide helpful guidelines in the 1.06 *Conflicts of Interest* section:

#### 1.06 Conflicts of Interest

- a. Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Social workers should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.



- b. Social workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
- c. Social workers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, social workers should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when social workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.)
- d. When social workers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), social workers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of social workers' professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (for example, when a social worker is asked to testify in a child custody dispute or divorce proceedings involving clients) should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.
- e. Social workers should avoid communication with clients using technology (such as social networking sites, online chat, e-mail, text messages, telephone, and video) for personal or non-work-related purposes.
- f. Social workers should be aware that posting personal information on professional Web sites or other media might cause boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients.
- g. Social workers should be aware that personal affiliations may increase the likelihood that clients may discover the social worker's presence on Web sites, social media, and other forms of technology. Social workers should be aware that involvement in electronic communication with groups based on race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, mental or physical ability, religion, immigration status, and other personal affiliations may affect their ability to work effectively with particular clients.
- h. Social workers should avoid accepting requests from or engaging in personal relationships with clients on social networking sites or other electronic media to prevent boundary confusion, inappropriate dual relationships, or harm to clients.

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In summary, the *Code of Ethics* is vital to social workers in redefining and maintaining appropriate relations with consumers and their communities and organizations. They provide a clear demarcation between the professional and private life of all involved parties.

## Time to Think 10.4

Tutu has worked as the director of a women's homeless shelter for several years. In her capacity, she has come to know a number of women, some of whom stay in touch with her after they leave the shelter and establish residency in their private homes. Ashley was a resident of the shelter for approximately 6 months, during which time she was pregnant. When she left the shelter and moved into her own apartment, Ashley gave birth to a daughter, Grace. Ashley has asked Tutu to participate in Grace's baptism and to serve as Grace's godmother. What should Tutu do given the standards of professional boundaries and dual relationships?

### Informed Consent

As advocates, lobbyists, policy analysts, or organizers, social workers may provide services, such as consultations or education, electronically. As stated in the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2017) below, social workers have the ethical duty to ensure that consumers and community partners fully understand the nature of the services to be provided. This can be difficult if the consumer is not initially seen face-to-face when consent could be explained.

#### 1.03 Informed Consent

- (a) Social workers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent. Social workers should use clear and understandable language to inform clients of the purpose of the services, risks related to the services, limits to services because of the requirements of a third-party payer, relevant costs, reasonable alternatives, clients' right to refuse or withdraw consent, and the time frame covered by the consent. Social workers should provide clients with an opportunity to ask questions.
- (b) In instances when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure clients' comprehension. This may include providing clients with a detailed verbal explanation or arranging for a qualified interpreter or translator whenever possible.
- (c) In instances when clients lack the capacity to provide informed consent, social workers should protect clients' interests by seeking

permission from an appropriate third party, informing clients consistent with the clients' level of understanding. In such instances social workers should seek to ensure that the third party acts in a manner consistent with clients' wishes and interests. Social workers should take reasonable steps to enhance such clients' ability to give informed consent.

- (d) In instances when clients are receiving services involuntarily, social workers should provide information about the nature and extent of services and about the extent of clients' right to refuse service.
- (e) Social workers should discuss with clients the social workers' policies concerning the use of technology in the provision of professional services.
- (f) Social workers who use technology to provide social work services should obtain informed consent from the individuals using these services during the initial screening or interview and prior to initiating services. Social workers should assess clients' capacity to provide informed consent and, when using technology to communicate, verify the identity and location of clients.
- (g) Social workers who use technology to provide social work services should assess the clients' suitability and capacity for electronic and remote services. Social workers should consider the clients' intellectual, emotional, and physical ability to use technology to receive services and the clients' ability to understand the potential benefits, risks, and limitations of such services. If clients do not wish to use services provided through technology, social workers should help them identify alternate methods of service.
- (h) Social workers should obtain clients' informed consent before making audio or video recordings of clients or permitting observation of service provision by a third party.
- (i) Social workers should obtain client consent before conducting an electronic search on the client. Exceptions may arise when the search is for purposes of protecting the client or other people from serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm, or for other compelling professional reasons.

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Perhaps it is helpful to consider the concept of **informed consent** as a way to empower consumers. Specifically, by asking consumers for permission before offering services or engaging them in forms of technology, they have the right to refuse or indicate their choices. Thus, informed consent lends dignity and equality to the professional relations while recognizing the rights of consumers.

## Time to Think 10.5

Have you been asked to sign an informed consent? Why and what did you consider as you signed the form? If you have not had the opportunity to participate in informed consent, what situations do you imagine might occur in your life when you would need to do so? Who does informed consent protect and why?

### FUTURE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiatives (Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2009) focuses creative thought and action on emerging issues relevant to the lives of individuals, families, and communities in the context of social justice. Included in the Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiatives is the topic of harnessing technology for social good.

As stated by Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare members Berzin, Singer, and Chan (2015), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is transformational and offers the ability to embolden new opportunities to rethink social work practice. As the world becomes more reliant on technology, social work is increasingly challenged to use technological advancements and digital advances for social good. Indeed, programs and services would become more available to people who are often excluded from the social service system because of geography, transportation, and scheduling barriers (Berzin et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of empirical research on how technology can influence social work practice and policy (Ceranoglu, 2010). The need for research to inform the use of technology in practice and policy is but one issue that the social work profession must address as we move further ahead in the application of technology to practice. Other issues to consider are as follows:

1. Ensuring that social work students are kept abreast of technological advances through their courses and field education enrollment
2. Encouraging social work faculty to gain competency in technology and to maintain a skill set in the area
3. Advocating for structural support for and student, staff, and faculty training in technology at colleges and universities
4. Supporting local, state, and federal funding sources to conduct research on the efficiency and effectiveness of various types of technology in relationship to the common good of all
5. Establishing interdisciplinary working relationships with programming and technology companies to offer input on how and why computer platforms and devices are creative

6. Participating and involving consumers on boards of programming and technology companies to provide input on design, research, and product distribution feedback
7. Funding innovation in technology in schools of social work, agencies, and community organizations so as to enhance the ability for intersectionality of technological tools across systems
8. Advocating for universal Internet to ensure that all people and communities have access to technology in an equal fashion
9. Introducing technology to children early in school settings across all sectors of society along with accompanying ethical standards
10. Networking with the local, state, and federal political structures in such a way that elected officials are readily available to communicate across all systems and with all segments of the population
11. Advocating for robust federal privacy policies and regulatory standards of enforcement



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## SUMMARY

The digital age is here to stay! Social work education and practice need to incorporate digital literacy in pedagogical approaches and practice skill development, supported by **ethical standards** and evidence-based research. Additionally, we must be mindful that advocacy, related to the access and support of social media, should be in the forefront of consumer interactions as it relates to privacy, confidentiality, and the allocation of resources (Hitchcock, Sage, & Smyth, 2018).

This chapter highlights how the APPM, along with professional social work organizations, offer innovations in technology and the subsequent monitoring and enforcement of networks. As a vital element of the change process, technology in all its forms is a viable tool to challenge social injustices by intersecting core social work values with consumer strengths and needs.

## TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

confidentiality 238  
 dual relationships 239  
 e-mail etiquette 229  
 ethical standards 245  
 informed consent 243

intersectionality of technological innovations 235  
 privacy 238  
 social media 229  
 social networking 229  
 universal Internet 232

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What elements of a federal privacy policy would you like to enact to protect your personal information on sites like Google? Discuss the implications of such a policy on you as a social worker employed as a community organizer or lobbyist.
2. Informed consent is an essential component in the use of technology with consumers. Consider how you would gain informed consent from a consumer who did not speak your first language and had minimal reading skills.
3. You are a social worker in a rural food bank. One of the people who frequents the food bank asked that you “friend” him on Facebook. How would you respond and why?
4. You are working on a voter registration drive in a major metropolitan area. Part of the drive process involves educating people to knock on neighborhood doors, talk about the importance of voting, and offer registration forms for completion. While you are training volunteers on the process, with PowerPoint slides and handouts, several people in the class are texting on their phones. How would you respond to this situation?
5. How does the advocacy practice and policy model apply to the need for adequate training opportunities in technology offered by colleges and universities for students, staff, and faculty?

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## EXERCISES

1. Interview a student who is majoring in computer science. Ask about his or her skill set, career plans, and thoughts on future developments in technology. Reflect upon the provided answers in the context of your social work plans. What are the points of intersectionality between the two of you?
2. Review Table 10.2 and list the missteps you have made when e-mailing and how you went about making the necessary corrections.
3. Review the technology and/or social media policies of your social work program. Where are they published, how are you trained on them, how do they relate to your work with consumers, and what occurs if a policy is violated?
4. Discuss with a faculty member in your program his or her thoughts on technology as a tool for teaching, advocacy, and practice. How did the faculty member rate their competence in technology? What surprised you about the faculty member’s comments and why?
5. Explore your community to discover where people go to use computers who do not have them at home. Visit a homeless shelter to see if computers are available there and, if so, to what degree they are used. What did your exploration tell you about access to technology, power, and privilege?

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

- American Academy for Social Work and Social Welfare (<http://aaswsw.org/>): An honorific society of distinguished scholars and practitioners dedicated to achieving excellence in the field of social work and social welfare through work that advances social good. The academy offers articles on social work practice and technology.
- Federal Trade Commission ([tps://www.ftc.gov/](https://www.ftc.gov/)): A government organization that works to protect consumers by preventing anticompetitive, deceptive, and unfair practices, including those related to technology, privacy, and confidentiality.
- *The New Social Worker: The Social Work Careers Magazine* (<http://www.socialworker.com>): An online magazine that provides articles about social work practice, including trends in technology and career opportunities.
- NASW, ASWB, CSWE, and CSWA Standards for Technology (<https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617>. TechStandard): A pamphlet compiled by the National Association of Social Workers, Association of Social Work Boards, Council on Social Work Education, and the Clinical Social Work Association on the use of technology in social work.
- *Journal of Technology in Human Services* (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wths20>): A peer-reviewed journal that provides relevant information on the various applications of technology in human services.



# Informing Macro Practice With Research

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Discuss evidence-based practice along with research
2. Distinguish the benefits of using quantitative versus qualitative analyses
3. Explore ethical dilemmas involved with research strategies
4. Articulate how to infuse research findings into macro practice

## AARON EMPLOYS QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Aaron has worked on a neighborhood planning council and has been involved with an action and citizen-based community planning review team. His team recently disseminated a comprehensive report to New Jersey Governor Murphy, called “Atlantic City: Building a Foundation for a Shared Prosperity” (n.d.). This report is based on 5 months of fact finding, consultation, and quantitative/qualitative analysis. The report’s multifold goals are to provide a historical background, recommend steps for progress to address chronic challenges, and provide a framework for shared prosperity. The review team spoke with stakeholders comprising casino owners, parents of children in Head Start, public employees, business leaders, union members and young entrepreneurs, elected leaders, and civic activists. National experts knowledgeable of Legacy Cities were also a part of the process. A six-pronged shared vision for prosperity resulted in the following recommendations: (1) focus on the fundamentals of government; (2) build a diverse economy based on the principle of shared prosperity; (3) build effective partnerships between government, philanthropic, and nongovernmental anchor institutions; (4) improve the amenities that affect the quality of life for current members and can attract new residents; (5) build on Atlantic City’s strengths; and (6) address social challenges and create pathways to opportunity. Atlantic City is considered a distressed city where over a third of its citizens, including 10,000 children, live below the poverty line, and it has one of New Jersey’s highest rates of infant mortality. Additionally, Atlantic City has been hit extremely hard by the national foreclosure crisis. Aaron’s review team members have included in their report figures that illustrate New Jersey and Atlantic City poverty rates and unemployment rates over time. This report’s strategic vision urges Atlantic City to use a new strategic approach based on the model of 24 other small “Legacy Cities” found in seven states. Key findings that resulted from the review team’s research report included the following: (1) Atlantic City faces significant public health challenges, (2) significant



health disparities exist for black residents, and (3) men of all races/ethnicities have higher rates of mortality than women. The methodology used by Aaron and his review team members included existing data from the New Jersey Department of Health (NJSHAD), the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data, and so on. Aaron also serves as a social work professor at a nearby university, where he is able to include students in his research methods, practice, and fieldwork classes to be involved in Atlantic City's revitalization process.

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## WHAT IS EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH MACRO PRACTICE?

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Evidence-based practice (EBP) involves applying clinical evidence and research to decisions made about practice interventions. Historically, social workers have long assessed client system issues and consumers in organizations and communities, based on facts; however, using research and clinical findings helps practitioners across multiple fields of practice make better macro-level decisions. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) notes how using EBP helps social workers use cultural aspects and empirically based interventions across their levels of practice (NASW, n.d.). Social workers are change agents who require flexibility, critical thinking, and theoretical and evidence-based best practices, as they evaluate social service programs, tackle community or societal issues, and interpret results for future applications to consumers (Netting, Kettner, McMurty, & Thomas, 2017, p. 106).

Inherently, an evidence-based approach is critical and continuously questions if certain practices or policies are effective. The EBP approach has emerged, along with a growing body of research evidence and increasingly sophisticated research techniques, and guides human service organizations, communities, and policymakers. As well, an evidence-based approach provides evidence that shows which practice interventions and programs are effective.

Evidence takes many forms—observations of consumers or a client system, surveys about service delivery strategies, or a needs assessment in impoverished communities. EBP considers diversity and differences that can lead some organizations or communities to disproportionately suffer from issues that human service workers try to alleviate, such as discrimination or inequality. Sometimes standard research methods used in agency research result in misleading or false conclusions and require modification. For example, quantitative research approaches can yield number data that simply counts how many services were delivered; however, qualitative research approaches may offer word data that attends to the voices of



Photo taken by Michel G.

**PHOTO 11.1**  
Research is used to highlight and address chronic community challenges.

those who receive said services and reveals what consumers feel about the quality of provided services.

Six basic steps are involved in the research process: problem formulation, research design development, data collection, data analysis, drawing conclusions, and public dissemination of results (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong, & Hilton, 2014, pp. 8–9). First, a practical, narrowly defined, methodologically doable, and ethically and financially appropriate research question requires formulation. Second, a viable research design requires development that spells out the stages of the research process. Third, decisions are made about what kinds of data will be collected and how. Will **pretests** (preliminary data-gathering techniques to discern adequacy) or pilot studies (small-scale trial runs) be used? Fourth, data analysis using statistical tools can be used to confirm or refute empirical realities. Fifth, conclusions are drawn and can be expressed in a summarized form (e.g., descriptive study) or with hypotheses or statements (e.g., predictive and explanatory research) that lead to weak or strong findings or results. In evaluation research, drawing conclusions may involve judging the adequacy or effectiveness of an organization or program and any modifications that may help improve conditions. Sixth, the most crucial stage of the research process is publicly disseminating results through a report, book, publications, or presentation to a professional organization or community. This last stage ensures that newly created knowledge can be used by others to make programmatic changes or build and conduct future research.

One of the most important ideas in a research project is the **unit of analysis**. The unit of analysis is the specific element or object whose characteristics are going to be described or explained, and it is the data researchers collect. Many units of analysis exist, and five are commonly used in human services research. The unit of analysis is the major entity that a researcher analyzes, and a unit could be the following:

- Artifacts
- Geographical units (census tract, state, town)
- Groups, organizations, and communities
- Individuals (e.g., consumers, organizational staff)
- Social interactions (arrests, divorces, dyadic relations)

Macro social workers often study and work with large systems like organizations as a unit of analysis, because formal organizations are specifically created groups designed to achieve particular goals. Corporations, government bureaus, prisons, schools, and human service agencies are examples. Sometimes researchers study communities, for example, to learn about best program practices. For example, a director of a substance use center might think that an organization that uses SMART recovery instead of a 12-step program may better serve consumers, especially if organizational communication is democratic, open, and transparent instead of closed and rigid. Even though consumers using substances engage in a successful recovery, only organizations can have a success rate.

To study success rates of substance use programs, researchers might use either qualitative or quantitative approaches in their studies.

## Time to Think 11.1

The report disseminated by Aaron's community planning review team, noted in the opening case study, discovered public health indicators and added them as an appendix to the report. These largest causes of mortality in New Jersey are heart disease, cancer, unintentional injury, stroke, chronic lower respiratory disease, homicide, mortality due to gun violence, suicide, diabetes, hypertension and kidney disease, liver disease, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality, and chlamydia (the only nonmortality indicator included in the report). For black men, the mortality rate due to heart disease greatly exceeds that of white men, and the rate for black women greatly exceeds that of white women. For mortality due to homicide or gun violence, rates for black men exceed all other groups. For Hispanic men, however, rates for many causes of mortality are actually lower than for both black and white men (except unintentional injury), and the same low rates are also found for Hispanic women (except for diabetes). The Hispanic health paradox has intrigued the review team. What might be happening in Atlantic City across races/ethnicities that might serve as risk or protective factors that can be studied through quantitative or qualitative research? What implications does this review team's evidence-based research have for social workers employed in Atlantic City and people living there? What kinds of evidence do researchers need to examine?

## The Logic of Scientific Inquiry

Scientific research is predicated on particular tenets that distinguish it from other forms of inquiry (e.g., philosophical or theological). The scientific pursuit of knowledge involves a rational and systematic process for pursuing knowledge involving a topic, a comprehensive literature review, the formulation of a hypothesis or theory for testing, a specified methodology, and an analysis and reporting of findings. In research articles, typically examined for publication through blind peer review, manuscripts end with a discussion/conclusion section examining the limitations of the research as well as the need for subsequent research. Social scientists build upon previous research in a cumulative manner in an effort to replicate prior research findings and advance knowledge. It is the findings from a body of research that provides social workers with confidence when considering and engaging in best practices.

At the heart of research is the struggle for objectivity, an attempt to eliminate bias and influence in the research process. Although objectivity is an ideal state, social scientists approach research in a way designed to thwart subjectivity and pressure from others. Objectivity is sought through adherence to formulated rules and procedures that guide research and by the provision of checks and balances (e.g., entertaining divergent perspectives or worldviews). Indeed, skepticism is deemed a

desirable and healthy attribute to the extent that researchers question and challenge one another with respect to their adherence to scientific principles in research.

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## QUANTITATIVE VS. QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

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**Qualitative research** involves data in the form of descriptions, narratives, pictures, or words. By contrast, **quantitative research** uses counts, numbers, and measures of things (Berg & Lune, 2012; Monette et al., 2014). Many research projects incorporate both approaches and then make choices as to whether to use cross sections (a snapshot in time) or longitudinal (gathering data over time) research. **Measurement** techniques and measurement levels require consideration too. Will verbal reports, observations, or archival records be used? Will measures used be at the nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio level of measurement (Monette et al., 2014, pp. 105–113)? How will reliability and validity be assessed? How will cultural humility be regarded?

### Quantitative Analysis

**Quantitative analysis** (QA) is a technique to understand behavior by using math or statistics, measurement, and research. Researchers who use quantitative analysis try to represent a particular reality in terms of a numerical value, and they use such analyses for measurement, performance evaluation, or valuation of an organization's productivity and effectiveness. They may also use QA to evaluate a community's needs or to predict real-world events. Quantitative analysis gives researchers tools to analyze and examine current, past, and anticipated future events. Any subject involving numbers may be quantified; therefore, social scientists like macro social workers find QA beneficial.

Large organizations, community planners, and governments rely on quantitative analysis to make economic policy decisions or other monetary decisions. Employment figures are commonly tracked, investment opportunities for organizations and communities are analyzed, and organizations evaluate success of service delivery programs created for consumers.

Methods used in quantitative analysis may be described as either descriptive or inferential. **Descriptive methods** analyze and summarize data to describe what is found in an existing data set. An example might be to look at unemployment rates in a city and describe the population's characteristics by gender, race, and ethnicity. Aaron and his review team mentioned in the opening case study most likely used such methods. **Inferential methods** analyze and summarize data to make estimates about a larger body of data. For example, a sample of incomes of people who live in southern New Jersey versus northern New Jersey could be examined to estimate and infer, from this sample data, the mean income of the larger population of the United States.

### Qualitative Analysis

The goals of **qualitative data analysis** may be to describe, evaluate, and explain phenomena, as well as to understand by generalizing beyond the data to more

abstract and general concepts or theories, people, groups, or organizations. Qualitative research recognizes how abstraction and generalization are matters of degree and emphasizes context to better understand groups, organizations, and communities; it also emphasizes inductive reasoning more than deductive reasoning. Social work researchers may display qualitative data, in figures and tables, to let word data describe an issue or thematic story.

The term *qualitative methods* is relatively new. While there is no single definition, qualitative methods often share common features, such as flexibility, holism, naturalism, and insider perspectives. Epistemological debates continue among qualitative researchers, and the diverse methodological approaches they employ often reflect the influence of constructivist critiques. **Constructivism** is a paradigm or worldview that posits learning is an active, constructive process. People actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. The basic approaches—



Tom Williams/Contributor/Getty Images

ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, narrative, phenomenological, and action research—exemplify fundamentals of data collection and analysis, the role of theory, standards for rigor, ethical issues, and social work values used by macro-level researchers. Rapid growth in the popularity of qualitative methods ensures that they will play a key role in the social work professions' knowledge development in the future (Connolly, 2003; Padgett, 2013). Table 11.1 illustrates how to display qualitative data to highlight policy areas with related descriptions and issue examples.

**PHOTO 11.2**  
Life conditions are a part of the political realities. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-NY, meets a family whose children have special medical needs.

**TABLE 11.1**  
Ways to Illustrate Qualitative Data

Issue Examples	Descriptions	Policy Areas
Medicaid expansion, minimum wage, reproductive choices	Representing vulnerable and oppressed people in the wider community	Health disparities and economic and social justice
Capital punishment, hate crimes, immigration	Advocating for diversity; opposing biased or discriminatory legislation	Explicit and implicit bias
Charitable choices, religion in public schools, school vouchers	Separating church and state; stopping public policy from being unduly influenced by idiosyncratic religious tenets or views	First Amendment
Gun control	The right to carry a gun, use it to protect oneself with or without a permit or license; the access to firearms to any person	Second Amendment, stand-your-ground law



## Time to Think 11.2

Imagine you are a member of a program development task force and research team that is preparing to apply for a funding grant. In your community, there exists a documented number of 400 school dropouts, and some of these dropouts are runaway youth. The task force is considering how to best provide services to help people obtain medical care, search for employment, find shelter, reunify families, and deliver daycare and after-school programs. The task force decides to divide into two groups. One group plans to use *quantitative analysis* to develop an idea statement that can be used in the grant proposal, and they plan on writing approximately five pages. The second group wants to use *qualitative analysis* to develop their idea statement, and they envision offering approximately five to eight more pages to the grant writing effort. Divide into small groups and try to write an idea statement that requires quantitative evidence and analysis; then try to write another idea statement using qualitative evidence and analysis (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 349).

### ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN RESEARCH STRATEGIES

A fair amount of tension exists between the roles of social worker and social work researcher because of the researcher's dual roles and boundary issues (Landau, 2008). Ethical dilemmas vary depending upon if the research is being carried out in a therapeutic framework (settings where consumers receive social work services) or a nontherapeutic framework (community members). In therapeutic settings, consumers may be confused about interactions and boundaries. In nontherapeutic settings, research on vulnerable populations like the homeless or older adults in long-term care settings may not appear so voluntary. In qualitative research, especially participant observation, consent is given once. However, to be truly ethical, consent should be continually negotiated, in the form of "process consent" (Landau, 2008, p. 574). What makes research "ethical" is not so much its procedures or design but the researcher's individual actions, commitments, and decisions (Haverkamp, 2005).

#### Organizations

An exciting role for a macro social worker may be that of a **social entrepreneur**, who may be instrumental in facilitating the creation of a new social service organization. Think for a moment about the ways macro social workers can begin a new social organization. Consider the ethical dilemmas related to hiring, funding, management, and political influence. Whether an organization is designed to help people with developmental disabilities, the homeless, or people who have suffered domestic violence, some group of people had to envision how to best help these target populations, and research had to guide them (Lindorff, 2007). Directors of organizations have to deal with nepotism in hiring practices. They

have to lead and manage by modeling integrity, and they must avoid conflicts of interest when funding involves political influences from the outside. Research related to hiring practices, leadership style, budget types, and political lobbying could be fodder for research studies and reports to ensure organizations act as ethically as possible.

## Communities

Community planning and evaluation requires community research, and it is a vital way to improve community engagement, refine services, and strengthen a democratic process among citizens. Macro social workers who participate in community planning play crucial roles across multiple fields of social work.

At its core, community planning is a process by which citizens/consumers join, sometimes along with macro social workers, to assess community needs and strengths, as well as to create proposals to make communities better. Before community planning can occur, research in the form of assessment, planning, and strategizing is required. Without proper planning, social work administrators are unable to fulfill their organization's mission or the future needs of their consumers (Daugherty & Atkinson, 2006).

Macro social workers can place themselves strategically within communities to train and educate citizens/consumers in civic affairs. They can also work ethically to persuade local government entities to include neighborhood members as active consumers amid the planning process. In this role, macro social workers can teach consumers about budgets, agency operating procedures, and federal, state, and local program requirements and policies. Social workers can collaborate with consumers to get information about private or public plans that might affect their neighborhoods and locale. Community planning groups consisting of macro social workers and consumers can comment on city/community-initiated plans and public services, critique plans, assemble reports to local government entities, and provide feedback. Consumer feedback is especially important to elicit from communities of people who have historically had fewer resources, less power, and less opportunities to influence plans created by government bureaucracies or powerful business entities. Macro social workers best help vulnerable communities improve when they serve as liaisons between staff, community politicians, and neighborhood planning groups. In this role, they can help consumers access contacts to best help them navigate complex governmental bureaucracies. As liaisons and active collaborators with consumers, macro social workers help to write reports and proactively present plans to local officials for future implementation.

## Societal

Global, international, or societal empowerment must be considered and studied so that exploitive global market society and intergovernmental organizations, like the International Monetary Fund or World Bank, are understood, in an effort to help consumers in large systems. An important goal of macro social workers is to employ social action models to help indigenous people around the world obtain empowerment via grassroots social organizations, nongovernmental

organizations, and international social movements. For example, today people from the Middle East—the “Arab Spring”—are taking responsibility for their future by overthrowing autocratic governments and refusing to follow dictators (Bailey, 1988; Bruggemann, 2014, p. 39).

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## INFUSING RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO MACRO PRACTICE

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Macro social workers can infuse findings from research they have conducted into multiple forms of organizational, community, and societal practice. Once a planning group is coordinated, through recruiting committed consumers/community members, using public forums, running focus groups, holding meetings, and forming the group and orienting members on rules, boundaries, values, and so on, a methodological approach needs to be selected. Subsequently, political realities, cultural differences, and ways to disseminate findings and advocate for change are considered.

### Placing Research on the Agenda

When macro social workers place organizational, community, or societal issues on agendas, they must begin with defining the planning issue. Identifying common issues can help consumers and social workers avoid pitfalls. For example, an existing vacant lot behind a public library might be a wonderful space for a community garden plot. Eliciting dialogue about how to develop an idea about creating a community garden may evolve into a clear-cut set of joint actions for group members to address.

While agenda items in the form of solutions are sometimes obvious, there are other times when barriers and pitfalls must be dealt with first. For example, real causes may not be identified if issues are prematurely labeled. Options must be left open when planning and identifying issues. Sometimes consumers, politicians, and even social workers can come to meetings with possible solutions already fixed in their minds. Such set-in-stone mind-sets may be problematic if not every stakeholder/consumer is brought along in the process of planning and conducting research. Pitfalls may be circumvented by asking good questions—ask who, what, when, why, and how questions to obtain evidence-based information. Explore multiple questions in relation to a community, organizational, or societal issue.

Decision-making techniques such as brainstorming can be used. Brainstorming can explain rules and the purpose of gathering and placing an item on a research agenda so feedback may be collated in a systematic and sensible fashion. Employing brainstorming can reduce dominating cliques, domineering people, or group dependency on a particular authority figure. Rules of brainstorming might include (1) expressiveness (express any idea that comes to your mind), (2) nonevaluation (no criticism is permitted), (3) quantity (the more ideas the better), and (4) building (try to build on other people's ideas) (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 187).



Reverse brainstorming, which is a technique to consider negative consequences, may also be used. Nominal group technique (NGT) is another viable approach where consumers form a group in name only, with a structured series of steps so every member has equal input. The NGT offers a way to generate information about a particular issue, elicit responses from consumers (by using a round-robin strategy), discuss ideas, and establish priorities using a rank-ordering mathematical process. NGT yields a conclusion, considers multiple alternatives, and encourages participation and discussion (Miley, O'Melia, & DuBois, 2017).

### Political Realities in Organizations, Communities, and Society

Sometimes social or consumer movements employ research or research strategists to bolster their influence or evaluate their effectiveness. Understandably, researchers, consumers, and social workers, in organizations, communities, and society, are all influenced by political realities. Macro social workers use advocacy-based and empowerment approaches to engage people in social advocacy, social movements, and transformational politics. **Social advocacy** involves forming alliances with advocacy organizations and consumer groups to enhance capacity and make a difference in the policy arena. Social workers advocate for the development of empowering policies throughout the agenda-setting, formulation, implementation, evaluation, and revision stages of the policy process. **Social movements**, amid communities and society, as exemplified in the past 40 years, have come in the form of civil rights, women's equality, disability rights, and justice for the LGBTQ community. These movements have resulted in significant increases in political power, legal rights, government resources, and in some cases enhanced socioeconomic status for consumers who were previously marginalized (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 38). Examples of such activism continue in the form of the "Occupy" movement, "Me Too" movement, and outrageous public and congressional sentiments and incivility over the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Research can play a vital role in assessing the influence of politics or political sway in social movements and events.



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### Addressing Cultural Competence: Diversity and Difference

Examples of how research has related to diversity issues and also influenced health care, public, and social policies are those of the gay rights movement involving

**PHOTO 11.3**  
Qualitative research informs the practice of social work.

marriage rights and the military. The gay rights movement has been steadily becoming more powerful and the military has abandoned its failed “don’t ask, don’t tell” discriminatory policy. Slowly, gay men and lesbian women are making progress, state by state, in their quest to marry. Research has been collected along the way to show the desire of consumers/citizens for marriage equality and more. Additionally, the labor movement is in some ways gaining strength despite challenges by conservative politicians who wish to crush collective bargaining. Research is collected in state, educational, and other bargaining units to drive decisions about advocacy.

**Transformational politics** conveys the idea that systems, albeit organizations, communities, or society, require courage, creativity, and vision to chart a course and focus on a future that is empowering for all. Amid the process to empower, the practice of cultural humility ought to be evidenced in the hearts and minds of politicians, consumers, and macro social workers. Important questions that culturally competent and humble members of planning processes can ask include the following: What should happen? How can we best get there from here? What should be? What will be? (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 38). And, why aren’t more diverse consumers included in our research?

Social workers have a long tradition of saying “start where the client/consumer is.” When a macro social worker tunes into and tries to engage a community, organization, or wider population, their efforts will be rewarded if they are culturally competent and give ample attention to multiple cultural perspectives. Amid research processes, oftentimes the macro social worker will not resemble the values and cultural mores of the population or larger systems they are trying to change. Cultural competence involves learning from consumers, acknowledging and dismissing stereotypes, and fostering self-determination (Netting et al., 2017, p. 65). In addition to becoming culturally competent, and as previously covered in Chapter 3, medical educators Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) stress how cultural humility ought to be the core goal of cross-cultural practice, no matter the size of the system.

Three human diversity issues are involved in research writing: (1) curtailing bias against particular groups in reports, (2) avoiding the use of exclusive language in reports, and (3) considering which consumers and community members get to see the results of a report. Biases in writing that may stereotype ought to be attended to throughout the research process. Exclusive language can be avoided by minimizing the use of only the male pronoun and using descriptors of cultural groups that are recognized by the group itself. For example, avoid using the term *Mexican American* in New Mexico because it may offend people who view themselves as Spanish Americans with little connection to Mexico. Accuracy can be acquired by not lumping groups of people all together under one label. Again, advocates who come from a feminist perspective think that sharing results with participant consumers is just another dimension of how “the researcher and subject can work in different ways to explore a ‘truth’ that they mutually locate and define” (Davis, 1986, p. 45).

## Time to Think 11.3

Husband and wife researchers Link and Phelan (2001, p. 367) have contributed research where they suggest that stereotypes occur and stigmatization exists when five particular elements collide: (1) identifying and labeling human differences; (2) cultural values and differences connect labeled consumers to negative stereotypes; (3) a separation of “them” versus “us” evolves, thereby categorizing consumers as a group; (4) consumers in the labeled group lose status and are discriminated against; and (5) once stigmatized, a labeled population fails to gain access to resources and is subsequently excluded and disempowered (adapted from citation in Netting et al., 2017, p. 68). Consider these elements, and then identify and discuss how environmental and structural forces affect organizations, communities, and society in such a way that these larger systems become stereotyped and stigmatized. Consider the opening case study set in the Atlantic City context.

The opening case study alludes to the steps that Aaron and his review team members took to develop their research agenda. The team (1) worked with consumers in the community, (2) prioritized problems, (3) translated problems into needs, (4) evaluated the levels of intervention required for each need, (5) established goals, (6) specified objectives, (7) specified action steps, and (8) formalized a contract (Marlow, 2011, p. 26). Their practice efforts involved engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, termination, and follow-up. The last step in practice and also research is that of follow-up or dissemination and use of the research findings. What are we going to do given the recommendations the researchers have supplied?

Unfortunately, this stage tends to be the most neglected in social work practice; however, dissemination of research findings is crucial. Dissemination can occur in multiple ways, including (1) publishing a report and distributing it to organizations nationally and internationally, (2) distributing data results electronically to multitude venues (e.g., webpages, blogs, wikis), or (3) orchestrating a community forum.

The final human diversity issue related to research writing is who ought to get a copy of the results. Increasingly, macro social workers who are also researchers think that findings need to be given to consumers and study participants—such sharing of at least parts of a report is critical to participatory or action research (Marlow, 2011, p. 302). Research results can be empowering to consumers and study participants.

### Using Research Findings to Advocate for Change

Macro social workers involved in organizational, community, or societal planning can employ multiple approaches that yield particular results. Such approaches

may include the needs/services, the deficit/problem approach, the asset/strengths approach, or an advocacy-based approach (Brueggemann, 2014, pp. 184–185; Cox, Tice, & Long, 2019).

## DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

A community forum can be a wonderful vehicle to disseminate research results. Essentially, a community forum can publicize a meeting or series of meetings to which consumers or community members are invited. Once created, a community forum can serve to get input for the initial development of a research question or set of questions, to develop a project, and to disseminate findings.

Examples of multiple approaches to planning that involve research are listed in Table 11.2, along with the pros and cons of each approach. The Appendix includes a table that outlines the relevant sections of the NASW (2018) *Code of Ethics* intended to guide macro social workers and researchers in their work with consumers across all systems.

Standards found in the revised version of the *Code of Ethics* (NASW, 2018) outline numerous ways research enhances social work practice. For example, in Section 5.02, *Evaluation and Research* is addressed. Such information about Section 5.02 is found in the Appendix. Section 6 substantially addresses how social workers use research as part of their ethical responsibility to the larger

**TABLE 11.2**  
Approaches to Research and Their Pros and Cons

Approach	Pros	Cons
Needs/services	Focus on individual needs and service gaps	Misses developing community strengths, leadership, or ways to improve communities, organizations, society
Deficit/problem	Still focuses on how systems include people who may become dysfunctional or stunted and traditional rational problem solving	Focuses too much on systems defects in community service provision, tends to rely on expert specialists instead of engaged consumers, only sees deficits
Asset/strengths	Identifies consumers/community potential for social bonds and participatory democracy and creates concrete positive projects to improve neighborhoods and improve consumers' skills	May miss identifying real needs and problems with community resources or people's strengths
Advocacy based	Considers economic and social justice, human needs and rights, political perspectives, and environmental contexts	May miss as strong a focus on empowerment and strengths

society (e.g., 6.01 Social Welfare; 6.02 Public Participation; 6.03 Public Emergencies; 6.04 Social and Political Action).

Research about advocacy efforts in social work macro practice and policy efforts is greatly needed. Earlier chapters addressed the four interlocking components of the APPM, and the subsequent table and section illustrate the APPM's utility in informing macro practice when studying the large system issue of poverty. Specifically, Table 11.3 highlights how the APPM can be used to configure viable strategies to use research to explore macro social work practice issues. Four advocacy tenets are applied: (1) economic, environmental, and social justice; (2) human needs and rights; (3) political access; and (4) supportive environment. Note the possibilities for quantitative and qualitative research studies to inform macro practice while studying poverty concerns of clients, organizations, and communities.

**TABLE 11.3**

Applying the APPM to Inform Macro Practice With Research

Advocacy Tenets	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Economic, environmental, and social justice	Conduct in-depth interviews with people living in poverty to record verbatim responses and analyze word data to learn about their experiences with social welfare agencies.	Assess how the power structure within selected organizations and/or communities has changed to address inequality issues by collecting and analyzing statistical data.
Human needs and rights	Interview leaders of governmental organizations to learn how they have shown their commitment to human rights. Record responses and analyze emerging themes.	Analyze existing data and create items in a new survey research tool to evaluate how organizations, governments, and multilateral institutions have shown their commitment to human rights.
Political access	Interview an available sample of people and ask them about their voter registration status. Record their verbatim responses and analyze themes.	Compare and contrast existing archived data about voting practices across states from the Northeast and Southwest to discern descriptive and inferential statistical findings.
Supportive environment	Interview 50 mothers who use community day-care options and record word data about their experiences.	Conduct a secondary data analysis on the types of training programs that currently exist in the community, in an effort to discern which programs still require development and implementation.



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## SUMMARY

In this chapter, the power of using quantitative and qualitative research methods in macro social work practice was dovetailed with how to effectively create research agenda items, implement research in a culturally humble way, and disseminate findings to best help organizations, communities, and society. The opening case study prodded students to consider how officially orchestrated planning councils can responsibly

collaborate with consumers and macro social workers and sponsors (e.g., foundations, social agencies, city councils, mayors' offices, and planning commission entities) to engage in decision making, local responsibility, and grassroots democracy to plan futures, based on evidence-based research collected and evaluated in a culturally competent and humble manner.

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## TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

constructivism 253  
descriptive methods 252  
inferential methods 252  
qualitative analysis 252  
quantitative analysis 252

social advocacy 257  
social entrepreneur 254  
social movements 257  
transformational politics 258  
unit of analysis 250

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you are the director of a substance use treatment center, and you have been asked to write a grant proposal to seek funding for a new opioid treatment unit. What steps would you take to assess and justify the need for this special unit and programming? What quantitative or qualitative research methodologies would you use? How will you ensure that the structure of this unit is carried out ethically and financially sensibly?
2. How do people's subjective notions affect how they create a research problem? How differently might you perceive an issue/phenomenon, depending upon if you take a "quantitative approach" versus a "qualitative approach"?
3. How can macro social workers engage action-social planning groups for change using advocacy-based and empowerment-oriented processes? Consider the role of the social worker, the sponsoring agency, the recruitment of consumers, use of public forums, and use of focus groups.
4. What, if any, community-based planning initiatives exist in the town or city where you reside? Who are some citizen/consumer planners you could work with to design and execute research to help a community thrive? Consider the opening case study—the review team that sponsored the Atlantic City initiative.
5. How can macro social workers use their interpersonal skills, empathy, and reflection in their activities with large systems?



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## EXERCISES

1. Divide the class into two groups. One group will role-play being members of a foster parent organization that has been asked to give the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) suggestions for research priorities. What research issues would Group 1 study from a quantitative approach? What research problems would Group 2 study from a qualitative approach?
2. Search for the term *participatory action research* and describe the advantages to both the researcher and the participant in conducting this type of research.
3. Imagine you were asked to evaluate a program in which you are working (e.g., field placement, paid work setting, etc.). How would you justify the significance of your research to another person/student?
4. Divide into small groups and imagine you are members of an action-social community planning committee. How will you press for grassroots involvement of consumers who want to insert their values and ideas in policy decisions and implement new initiatives in the community? Explore how your team will substantively consider the following aspects related to community planning and implementation (modified from Brueggemann, 2014, pp. 177–179):
  - Gain consumers'/citizens' trust
  - Collaborate with consumers/neighborhood participants (e.g., local access, resource development, skill building)
  - Understand varying personal agendas (e.g., motives such as academic study, curiosity, altruism, financial gain, professional duty, neighborliness, protection of interests)
  - Accept multiple issues
  - Accept limitations
  - Accept varied commitments (e.g., varying life priorities; informal rules of operation)
  - Accept different types of processes (e.g., coalition boards, citizens advisory boards)

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Social Work Search (<http://www.sociaworksearch.com>): This site has links to research and statistics topics.
- University of Michigan Social Work Library—Guide to EBP Research (<http://hsl.lib.umn.edu/learn/ebp>): Provides a tutorial on evidence-based practice as used by health-care professionals.



**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe what evaluating macro change involves
2. Understand funding sources related to research evaluation.
3. Explore the relevance of participatory research and policy-practice
4. Articulate ethical issues and considerations involved with evaluating macro change

**JESSICA EVALUATES MACRO CHANGE**

Jessica is a social worker employed by the Community AIDS Research Consortium. Her responsibilities include serving as the co-chair of the AIDS clinical trials program's community advisory board, recruiting and counseling study participants, and participating in multiple community-based organizations' efforts to educate and train others about the human immunodeficiency syndrome and acquired human immunodeficiency virus (HIV/AIDS). Jessica also sits on important state and national boards and committees where she collects and analyzes data, writes grants, and engages in action research, where consumers of services become involved in research to promote practical findings to enhance the lives of people. Every 5 years, Jessica and her colleagues are required to resubmit a competitive grant proposal to acquire continued funding. While working with the Community AIDS Research Consortium, for the past decade, Jessica has engaged in both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. She encourages consumers of services to assist with defining the purposes of and planning for various research projects. Jessica also assists her research team members, and consumers appreciate and consider four categories of social research—descriptive, explanatory, exploratory, and evaluative. In recent years, Jessica's research has evaluated which clinical trial recruitment strategies have been most successful, described demographics of attendees at community educational forums, explored service delivery needs of study participants, and explained differences in program outcomes across multiple states in the Northeast.

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**WHAT IS EVALUATION?**

Evidence-based macro practice critically challenges social workers to delve into a scientific understanding of the various aspects of community organization, management, and planning and large-scale change. Social workers who work with and within large systems interact with complex forces that require tools

to function and develop insight about the interactions between staff, agencies, consumers, and the even larger systems (e.g., community and societal factors) that affect the field of social work. Social work professionals must appreciate and understand multiple factors, including human diversity, consumer advocacy, skills essential to running meetings effectively, handling community conflict, and managing both time and stress. At the heart of the social work process—whether at the individual, family, group, organizational, community, or societal level—is a commitment to improve the lives of people through the purposeful and professional use of one’s self. Professionals who choose to engage in macro social work practice will be involved in more than just a 9 to 5 job. Macro-oriented social workers seek ways, using research data and findings, to empower consumers of services to enrich organizations, neighborhoods, and communities and improve quality of life (Murari & Guerrero, 2013).



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**PHOTO 12.1**  
Scientific inquiry is critical to social work practice and policy.

Leaders, administrators, managers, and social workers rely on empirically supported models of practice to guide program and policy development, manage service systems, empower communities, and prompt various forms of social change. Macro practitioners may be involved with writing grant proposals, developing action plans, mobilizing grassroots organizations, community building, and national legislative campaigns, to mention just a few activities. Macro practice efforts and actions can help communities and organizations enhance service delivery and improve social and environmental conditions for consumers of services.

Specifically, there exists a dearth of rigorous research on many kinds of macro practice interventions and the results of organizational, community, and societal change. Additionally, much of the research investigating the influence of efficacy of programs, projects, policies, and legislation employs case studies and surveys offering insight and ideas, but often limitations regarding the generalizability of findings. Furthermore, more research is needed to better understand how culture influences service providers and service effectiveness (Hemmelgarn, Glisson, & James, 2010).

In contrast, a rich research literature exists examining leadership, specifically leader-member exchange and transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2006; Northouse, 2013). Extensive literature also exists on burnout and compassion fatigue. Macro practitioners would be well advised to immerse themselves in the rich content examining burnout, which guides one on how to reduce feeling stressed and maintain healthy work-life balance (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

## Traditional Approaches to Social Research

Usually, social research is categorized as one of four types. Schutt (2018) summarizes these types of research as follows:

- *Descriptive research:* At first, researchers simply want to define what they are studying and describe the social phenomena of interest.
- *Exploratory research:* Researchers try to discover how people get along in specified settings, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them.
- *Explanatory research:* The focus gradually shifts to the causes and effects of the phenomenon.
- *Evaluation research:* Special attention is given to whether particular policies and programs help to alleviate issues and problems.

People conducting **descriptive research** collect data with the intent to better describe social phenomena. In macro social work practice, this could involve collecting data describing a community, an organization, a service population (e.g., teenagers, older adults, and clinical trial study participants), social conditions (e.g., poverty, health literacy, opportunity or lack of opportunity, or homelessness), and social actions (e.g., collaboration, discrimination, recruitment, and types of support). When considering specific kinds of social phenomena, consumers of services often find themselves uniquely equipped to facilitate an advanced understanding and description of influences and occurrences. For example, who better to “brainstorm” and identify factors related to economic opportunity in a community than consumers of services who have experienced a degree of upward mobility?

In addition, social workers possess a rich tradition of documenting needs, opportunities, and characteristics of people being served through descriptive research. Funding sources often require such information (e.g., community needs assessments and consumer profiles). For social workers and consumers alike, descriptive data facilitate the identification of population groups at risk and allow for a differential assessment of the availability of resources, barriers, and opportunities by consumer groups.

In **exploratory research**, the primary focus is on formulating or refining definitions of actions, concepts, conditions, and issues. To initiate a preliminary grasp of a phenomenon, situation, or circumstance, a beginning characterization of what is occurring is required. Consumers of services have expertise in providing these kinds of understandings and conceptual breakthroughs.

If you are interested in learning about the distinct culture and areas of strength of a particular social service agency, ask for a depiction of this organization from the perspective of consumers. They will often be able to identify specific qualities and characteristics that differentiate a given human service organization from its social counterparts. Without consumer insight, the sense of discovery in exploratory research is often compromised.

One of the most difficult and complicated types of research is **explanatory research**. Examining the causes and effects of social phenomena is a complex matter, as establishing causality involves addressing three important prerequisites—establishing that the factors under consideration are correlated (change together),

determining time order (the causal factor occurs prior to the outcome factor), and accounting for other factors that could be affecting the outcome factor. For example, communities typically change as a result of technological innovation, changes in leadership, variations in the availability of resources, and population shifts. Understanding the relevance, time order, and relationship among these and other relevant factors in producing community-level change is greatly enhanced when incorporating the views of consumers.

While social workers regularly engage in many forms of research, **evaluation research** is especially important in macro social work practice. Program and policy development are common forms of macro-level intervention in social work practice. Hence, the ability to weigh the successes and limitations associated with social programs and policies is fundamental to documenting macro-level change.

Particularly in the current age of accountability, administrators, professionals, and consumers alike are very interested in evaluating the effectiveness of social programs and services and policy initiatives. Americans want to know “how much bang for the buck” will I receive? Politicians, government watchdog organizations, and special interest groups often place intense pressure on administrators and service providers to demonstrate the efficacy of programs and policies.

Royse (2011) suggests that program evaluation has traditionally sought to address the following kinds of issues:

1. Are consumers being helped?
2. Is there a better (e.g., cheaper, faster) way of doing this?
3. How does this effort or level of activity compare with what was produced or accomplished last year? (Did we achieve our objectives?)
4. How does our success rate compare with other agencies' success rates?
5. Should this program be continued?
6. How can we improve our program?

*Source: Research Methods in Social Work, 6th edition, by Royse, p. 284. 2011.*

Royse (2011) provides useful and important questions for study. For the social worker interested in implementing a strengths perspective, however, additional consideration ought to be given to identifying concrete mechanisms for including the insights and perspectives of consumers in evaluating social change. For example, how best might consumers be involved in defining criteria for program continuation? How can consumers give narrative (qualitative) feedback to improve programming?

The effectiveness of any program, service, law, or policy needs to be contemplated and approached from multiple vantage points, especially from that of the

consumer, even though this is a potentially unpopular and politically charged stance. Measuring the success of any program or policy through the eyes and perception of consumers—using consumers’ ideas about the process and criteria needed to evaluate success—is an imperative in macro social work practice. Consumer-directed research represents as valuable and worthy a source of discovery as any other scientific endeavor.

## Time to Think 12.1

As a macro-level social worker, Jessica is involved in a collaborative fashion with designing, implementing, and evaluating research being conducted about clinical trial outcomes and research about HIV-infected consumers’ satisfaction with their study experience and how organizations are responding to their service delivery needs. After working for the Community AIDS Research Consortium for the past 10 plus years, imagine and identify ways Jessica has been able to advance the voices of consumers to inform research studies. As examples, she has been actively involved in identifying and documenting the effect of macro change involving various populations at risk, organizational practices, community resources, and national policies. As a social worker, what are potential challenges and hurdles that Jessica has likely faced when working with community officials, administrators, and other researchers with research projects?

## FUNDING SOURCES AND RESEARCH

The interests of funding sources, accreditation bodies, administrators, board members, legislators, and politicians are routinely imposed on helping professionals when evaluating program delivery and policy implementation. In these instances, social workers are required to produce documentation and statistics describing how consumers use service delivery (e.g., units of service by type and number of minutes). This information typically involves a detailed analysis of consumer characteristics or demographics (e.g., age, gender, race, socioeconomic status) and the ability of consumers to meet or maintain eligibility requirements. Administrators are highly invested in identifying and tracing measures of consumer usage and worker production. This kind of information is used to demonstrate staff utilization and to justify the deployment of resources in the delivery of services.

Research emphasizing consumer attributes and units of service tends to emphasize cost efficiency and can be accounting oriented. This type of data collection is typically time-consuming and is frequently viewed by practitioners as an accountability requirement dictated by funding sources. In fact, in conjunction with the expectations of funding sources, cost analyses by type of consumer group are often used by administrators as a basis for pinpointing allocation or reallocation of resources.

## Time to Think 12.2

A stipulation of program funding is program evaluation. The ABCs of program evaluation are the following:

- A**lways expect funding sources to mandate program evaluation.
- B**e prepared to advocate for consumer participation in program evaluation.
- C**are needs to be taken to ensure that evaluation is approached in a participatory manner.

Unfortunately, program evaluation driven by the requirements of government and funding sources often neglects a primary question: How do consumers define quality programming? Consider and identify consumer perspectives concerning the effectiveness of program delivery, services, organizational practices, and policies that are especially valuable when considering evaluative processes and procedures.

Royse (2011) suggests the need for **program monitoring**: “measuring the extent to which a program reaches its target population with the intended interventions” (p. 288). Of course, program monitoring is not meant to be the sole prerogative of directors and managers. Guidance can be derived from multiple sources, particularly from consumer groups: “There is no assumption that staff or the administration know best.” To the contrary, consumer input and feedback are essential components of comprehensive, high-quality program monitoring.

In social work research, the “basic desire to know has been intensified [at times compromised] by the pressure for more accountability in the human services” (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong, & Hilton, 2014, p. 7). Single-subject designs and other empirical practice models give social workers and consumers a structure for reevaluating and documenting consumer improvement and achievement, especially on a micro level (case by case). Although these techniques have been valuable sources of empowerment and advocacy for many consumers, it behooves consumers and social workers to continue to raise the standard when it comes to consumer participation in research. This is especially true in assessing conditions and evaluating planned change in relation to large-scale change and larger social systems. Indeed, it ought to be anticipated that consumers and community leaders will differ in their assessments of the merits of macro-level change.

### Unit of Analysis: Organizations, Communities, and Society

An important part of creating and modifying a research problem is deciding which unit of analysis to use. Units of analysis are the specific elements or objects with characteristics researchers want to describe or explain, and they are also the objects about which data will be collected. Multiple units of analysis exist. There



**TABLE 12.1****Possible Units of Analysis in Research When Evaluating Macro Change and Practice**

Unit of Analysis	Example	Possible Variables	Research Problem
Organizations	Adolescent treatment facilities	Auspices, funding level, size, type of programs or services implemented	Do public agencies serve more minority and lower socioeconomic status consumers than private agencies?
Communities	Geographical units	Town, state, census tract	Which communities provide the most affordable housing options?
Society	Developed country vs. a Third World country	Social interactions (arrests, crime rate, divorces, poverty level)	What accounts for differences citizens experience in public safety?

are five typical ones used in human service research: individuals, groups, organizations, programs, and social artifacts. Other units of analysis are used when studying documents. This chapter focuses on three units of analysis, as illustrated in Table 12.1, that are typically used in macro practice: organizations, communities, and society.

At times, macro social work practitioners and researchers deal with *organizations* as the unit of analysis. Formal organizations are intentionally created groups that are designed to achieve some particular goals. Examples of formal organizations include government bureaus, human service agencies, schools, prisons, unions, and corporations. For example, a social worker may think and observe that organizations that serve adolescent consumers need to adapt more technology and different kinds of communication structures, so they would use “organization” as the unit of analysis to study different communication strategies and technological advances used across different organizations.

Research in macro social work can also focus on *communities* or *societies* as alternate units of analysis. For example, communities in the Northeast may vary from those in the Southwest regarding available and affordable housing options. Also, regarding societies, international social workers may study how India or Costa Rica differ from the United States and United Kingdom in their policies and outcomes related to arrests for particular crimes or dealing with extremely low levels of poverty.

### Decision Making in Evaluative Research

With regard to macro-level change, social workers require knowledge and skills in “establishing ongoing systems and mechanisms to monitor and improve outcomes . . . the planned or unplanned end result of an intervention, treatment and/or process” (Neuman, 2003, pp. 8–9).

In its most basic form, this involves helping to create a strategy and process for evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to create social change.



In human services, many professionals are familiar with the work of the United Way of America (UWA) in promoting outcome measurement in nonprofit agencies. For the UWA, a major emphasis has involved promoting “the use of outcome measurement as an aid to communicating results and funding decisions within its network of member United Ways” (Fischer, 2001, p. 562). Although many human service agencies continue to struggle to identify resources to fund outcome evaluations, several helpful publications are available to help practitioners (see, e.g., Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Also, the UWA produced its own guide to help agencies manage the task of outcome evaluation (Hatry, van Houten, Plantz, & Greenway, 1996).

No single model exists for developing a comprehensive outcomes management program to measure the effectiveness and influence of social intervention. Instead, think of outcome evaluation as a process whereby professionals and consumers form outcomes, develop a strategy or plan, review internal data sources, review external data sources, design a framework and finalize outcomes, standardize terms and collection procedures, determine a report format, develop guidelines for data management, present the evaluation program for support, implement the evaluation program, and evaluate the results (Neuman, 2003, pp. 10–17).

It is vital that specific outcome measures be viewed by both consumers of services and professionals as acceptable indicators of influence and change. Cheetam (1992) differentiates between “service-based measures” focusing on quality of service and “client-based services” emphasizing the effects of service (or social intervention) on quality of life. Hence, the perspective of the consumer is crucial to determine measures and outcomes.

Regarding empowerment, advocacy, and strengths-based outcome evaluation, Jonson-Reid (2000) suggests that community-based research can be improved in the following ways. Professionals ought to consider: “(1) researching how a project defines community empowerment; (2) using a theory-based framework to connect program definitions, components, and measures; and (3) understanding the relationship of time to the use of the program outcome” (p. 57). These suggestions seem appropriate both for designing a process of outcome evaluation and also operationalizing concepts into measures. Thoughtful consideration needs to be given to the role of consumers and other stakeholders in shaping outcome evaluation, deeming the appropriateness of theoretical frameworks, and judging the relevance of time.

In the case of community-building efforts, special attention needs to be given to what residents and consumers of services believe constitute the purposes of projects or programs and agreed-on gauges for success. Jonson-Reid (2000) indicates that “clear definitions and theory-based connections between program components, outcomes, and measures should be accompanied by realistic time frames” (p. 74).

### Advocacy Strategies Related to Evidence-Based Macro Practice

The dynamic advocacy practice and policy model (APPM) may assist macro social workers in evaluating macro change in an evidence-based manner,

considering human needs and rights, supportive environment(s), political access, and economic/social justice (Cox, Tice, & Long, 2019, p. 70). As examples, at the *organization level of analysis*, regarding economic and social justice, researchers may analyze how well is this organization securing needed resources for consumers. At the *community level of analysis*, regarding supportive environments, the macro practitioner might analyze how well a community's organizations are creating supportive environments to foster collaborations and generate solutions. Regarding evidence-based advocacy and macro-based research at the societal level, a social worker might consider political access by analyzing how well policymakers and politicians look beyond consumers'/citizens' situations to assess structural and systemic issues that contribute to the existence of private troubles.

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## PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND POLICY AND PRACTICE

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Conceived by administrators, politicians, and research consultants, **participatory research** is the opposite of authoritative or expert-based approaches. This is a process whereby “all participants (especially consumers) are afforded opportunities to reflect on programs, projects, and policies, the mission and aims of the organization and their own and others' involvement in change efforts. Evaluation is something done with people, not *on* people” (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 335).

Participatory research directly challenges traditional beliefs and practices conserving authority and power in the research process. It elevates consumers to a coresearcher or coevaluator status. Credence and legitimacy are given to the capacities of consumers to conceptualize and develop measures to assess their social circumstances and conditions.

Participatory research is closely aligned with the strengths perspective, empowerment theory, and the APPM (Cox et al., 2019). Emphasis on the abilities and talents of consumers to understand their own lives and to shape research in a way that accurately assesses and evaluates their lived realities employs a strengths-based approach and orientation. Promoting consumers as active participants in research processes and securing consumer ownership in decision making in research as “coinvestigators” are illustrations of empowerment and advocacy.

### Types of Participatory Research

One way of thinking about some of the virtues of participatory research is to view it as a particular form of **grounded research**. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe grounded research as an inductive process where conceptual distinctions, hypothesis, and theory formulations are derived from data. From their perspective, important insight for decision making in research comes from “grounded” sources—the experiences and perceptions of humans (consumers) in everyday life.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain how “awareness contexts” exist in the social world (p. 83). **Awareness contexts** can be thought of a situations or circumstances in which people experience varied degrees of visibility and understanding of what is going on. Here, the ability to know is contingent on one's consciousness and ability to comprehend the meaning of actions, language, gestures, and behavior.

For example, have you ever experienced a social situation, like a party, gathering, meeting, or event, where you engaged in interaction or conversation with others and struggled to understand what was happening? You might have felt like an outsider while others seemed able to follow and adhere to the rules, terms, and conditions surrounding the social interaction and discourse. Your first experience at a professional conference, political rally, board meeting, or protest demonstration may have evoked an uneasy feeling of not being “in the know.”

In social research, decision makers are confronted with the challenging task of posing questions, hypotheses, and theories in conjunction with specific social contexts (e.g., rural vs. urban context, social-economic surroundings, and demographic characteristics). This constitutes a challenge at every stage of the research process. Consider the complexity of trying to identify the attributes of any single concept or measure in a research project without an astute awareness of social context. Consider how the term *homelessness* differs for people in a densely populated, racially diverse, and economically challenged African urban area as compared to homelessness in a rural, predominantly Caucasian small town.

As another example, geographic communities and neighborhoods in urban areas are often defined by corporation limits. Yet, in rural areas, community identity is often a matter of township or county affiliation. These types of distinctions are relevant for researchers to contemplate when determining the appropriate geographical context for examining topics such as homelessness. However, understanding the meaning of belonging to a specific city, township, town, or county will necessitate special insight and thought about the meaning of concepts, behaviors, and actions from people who actually live there.

There are many good and rational reasons why consumers of services ought to be fully vested in research processes. Their insight and expertise about contextual awareness and understanding in relation to particular communities, neighborhoods, and organizations constitute such a justification. Yet, ever more important, the integrity of social research rests on analytical thought, critical reflection, and the ability to entertain states of being from multiple vantage points. This broader and more encompassing way of thinking relies on the ability to embrace participatory research and to use thinking that extends beyond professional expertise and the intellectual origins and imagination of social scientists.

Participatory research can take multiple forms. The following bulleted items illustrate different types of participatory research, accompanied by some ideas on how consumers can become involved. Of course, the key to true participatory research is for consumers to assess and make informed decisions concerning their level of involvement and potential for making contributions in the research process. This is very different from having scientific experts delegate duties to consumers or allowing scientists to make unilateral decisions about how consumers can best contribute to research.



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**PHOTO 12.2**  
Focus groups are components of participatory research.

Participatory research is particularly important and challenging when examining macro or large-scale change. Policy, legislative, and program changes will affect many people and various constituencies. This means that various special interest groups will be positioning themselves and vying to affect decision making. To help ensure adequate consumer participation, consumers need to be involved in every phase of a research project.

The notion of a **research team** needs to be embraced in a broad and inclusive fashion with each of the following types of participatory research. The basic assumption is that the team approach extends to consumers, embraces diversity of person and thought, and offers a mechanism for critical reflection and contemplation. This allows for the experiences and awareness of consumers to come forward in evaluating the results, or potential results, of large-scale social change. “Critical reflection is a structured, analytic, and emotional process that helps us examine the ways in which we make meaning of circumstances, events, and situations. . . . Posing critical questions is key to critical reflection” (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 355).

Particular vocabulary is important to understand when trying to understand how to evaluate macro change using research. For example, differences exist across advisory groups and focus groups. Social-historical analyses differ from surveys and program evaluations. And still, policy and legislative analyses are completely different entities than case studies and field studies.

- *Advisory groups:* It is not unusual to have an advisory group attached to research projects. **Advisory groups** can help guide research processes, be a helpful resource in decision making, and serve in a consultative role. Although these groups are typically loaded with experts and professionals, it is important to recruit consumers who show interest in research and evaluation and who feel comfortable speaking out in an advisory group context.
- *Focus groups:* Scientists often struggle with developing and refining the research question. The **focus group** helps develop the research question since it provides suggestions about the definitions of the question and other issues regarding planning the research. The focus group format is a somewhat flexible strategy for collecting information and data from a group of people at one time and place. Facilitators initiate discussion on a subject to elicit insights, perspectives, and data from consumers of services. Anticipate high levels of participation and strong reactions from consumers when examining important topics.
- *Social-historical analyses:* Societies, communities, programs, services, and agencies function in a social-historical context. In assessing and evaluating strengths and areas to be strengthened, it is often important to document and collect data with respect to historical information and events. In any form of **social-historical analysis**, digging up the social remains of the past, a key question involves who is asked to remember and describe the factual events and provide documents (e.g., letters,

memos, records, minutes, and photographs). Consumers provide an enlightened and unique vantage point for describing the past.

- *Surveys:* Survey research is typically conducted to collect information concerning beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. **Surveys** provide leaders and politicians with a gauge of public sentiment and the opinions of various constituency groups. Deciding which questions are to be asked, how, and to whom will have a pronounced effect upon findings. The validity of measures—the extent to which they measure what they purport to measure—is of the essence. Surveys can be especially helpful in conducting program or project evaluation. Consumers can be important team members by providing contextual awareness for questionnaire construction and in refining data collection techniques. In addition, they are a crucial population to poll concerning program or policy effectiveness.
- *Program evaluations:* Royse (2011) identifies several distinct types of program evaluation. They include patterns of use (Who is being served?), formative evaluation (How can the program be improved?), consumer satisfaction (How satisfied are consumers with the program?), outcome evaluation (Does the program reach its goals?), and cost-effectiveness (Is the program cost-effective in helping consumers?) (pp. 258–268). It is difficult to imagine devising a system for evaluating social service programming without significant ownership and buy-in from consumers. Consumers need to be active participants in determining program goals and evaluative outcomes, as well as in the process of completing program evaluation. Again, a research team with significant consumer participation would seem to be a promising format.
- *Policy and legislative analyses:* Social workers often work with consumers to assess the need for policy formulation and development. Two examples of this are community needs assessments and agency (organizational) profiles. In these instances, information is gathered to advise and influence policymakers and legislators. Additionally, consumers can serve as catalysts for evaluating the effectiveness (both successes and detrimental effects) of legislative and policy initiatives. In both cases, consumers are important participants in developing the process and criteria and adding a unique perspective for use in **policy/legislative analysis**.
- *Case studies:* These are often useful to analyze and describe a particular community, organization, event, program, or social unit in great depth. Although case studies are notorious for their weaknesses with respect to generalizability, they provide important information in flushing out the how, where, why, and when of social phenomena. Consumers constitute a valuable source of information for determining the nature of programs, organizations, and communities. Consumers can also provide valuable leads concerning data sources.



- *Field studies:* Some social processes need to be studied as they happen and in a relatively undisturbed fashion. In these instances, researchers seek to understand how events and actions unfold in their natural settings. This kind of research involves acquiring a sense of social context, an understanding of how actions develop and take place. Hence, if a social worker seeks to understand a particular community, then she or he needs to know how it really functions. This will necessitate direct observation and a level of immersion in the community. This often requires the involvement of consumers. It is their expertise that often allows researchers access to the everyday workings and activities of a community that may be invisible to the casual eye.

### A Participatory Research Case Examined: Welfare Reform

A case in point for the relevance of participatory research involves the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. This historic piece of social legislation resulted in significant changes in the ways communities address the needs of the poor. Enacted in a spirit of “new federalism,” with the intention of promoting self-sufficiency and reducing federal spending on public assistance, this law shifted social responsibility from the federal government to the states and local communities. Additionally, time restrictions were placed on receipt of aid—hence, the change of title from Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

In essence, states were directed to develop strategic plans for using Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) block grant monies that are consistent with federal guidelines and mandates concerning work requirements and payment levels. States, in turn, ask local areas (often counties) to create service delivery plans compatible with federal and state regulations, to address the needs of local constituents. The net result is a proliferation of state and local initiatives, each unique in name and substance, that reinforce the two main federal directives emphasizing employment and time limits of financial assistance. (Long, 2000, p. 63)

It is important to note that this type of service delivery has profound implications for policy and program evaluation. The creation of customized programs by state and county produced a myriad of programs (frequently called “family or children come first” initiatives) across our nation. Each program was unique in its specific goals and objectives. Decentralization and local control allowed states and counties appreciable latitude in assessing the success of welfare reform. Consequently, counties were challenged to develop individualized strategies for evaluating their program goals and desired outcomes.

As a result of federal mandates and prevailing belief systems (e.g., fiscal responsibility, self-sufficiency, the work ethic, and pressures for state or local control), many programs approached evaluation in terms of budgetary relief, cost-effective utilization of services, reduction in the number of people on welfare rolls, and various back-to-work ratios (Kilty & Meenaghan, 1995). These “accounting” types of

criteria fit nicely with public and political concerns for reducing spending on welfare and for encouraging work. Meanwhile, consumer-oriented interests—such aspects as self-actualization, quality family time, and basic needs (e.g., food, medical care, and utilities)—were often overlooked or overshadowed in community-based research plans.

For many counties, it became relatively simple to rely on traditional measures of success, focusing on reducing welfare rolls and transitioning people toward available forms of employment. Although many counties developed advisory or planning boards to monitor TANF programs, political appointees and administrators were often overrepresented on these boards. The idea of embracing and including the voices of consumers in developing program goals, objectives, and measures of success was not always fashionable.

Long (2000) suggests that a comprehensive study of the effects of welfare reform would include consumer-driven criteria. From the perspective of TANF recipients, factors to be considered in an analysis of the success of welfare reform would likely include the employment market (e.g., the kinds of jobs available and their wages and benefits), the prospect of worker satisfaction, the availability of affordable child care, the presence of social support (e.g., family, friends, and groups), the availability of affordable and efficient transportation to and from work, the existence of safe housing, the effects on family preservation, options for medical insurance, and support from local organizations (e.g., social services, churches, and employers).

A thorough examination of how the lives of consumers have changed as a result of welfare reform would also include the use of multiple research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative. Consumers could assist in the design and implementation of focus groups, case studies, surveys, and field research. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how one could effectively describe and document the impact of welfare reform without the active participation of recipients.

Interestingly, one descriptive analysis of the impact of welfare sanctions found that only 10% of former recipients felt they were better off as a result of welfare reform (Lindhorst, Mancoske, & Kemp, 2000). As one might have anticipated, consumers in this study pointed to the disruptive effect of welfare reform on family life. When asked, consumers described the following kinds of struggles: changes in living arrangements, inability to pay rent, disruption in phone service, reliance on food banks or kitchens, separation of children from their caregiver, homelessness, and involvement with foster care (p. 195).

Clearly, looking at welfare reform from a consumer's perspective means considering factors that are very different from those posed by politicians and government leaders. People who are sanctioned as a result of welfare reform know firsthand the consequences of the legislation. Thoughtful reflection by consumers should be considered a source of enlightenment and discovery in research.



**PHOTO 12.3**  
Consumer participation is vital to decision making.



## Criticism of Participatory Research

Many criticisms have been leveled against participatory research. Most center on the idea that the involvement of laypeople (e.g., nonresearchers, politicians, lobbyists, and consumers of services) in the research process interjects subjectivity and bias, thereby compromising a major tenet of logic scientific inquiry—objectivity. Traditionalists believe that in the quest to more fully understand the relevance of culture and context, consumer participation in research can taint findings and, knowingly or unknowingly, push a project in a certain direction. Participatory research provides an opportunity for persuasion and influence that could unduly influence methodology and findings.

Over the past several decades, there has been a rich body of literature (e.g., Beresford, 2000, 2007; Beresford & Boxall, 2012; Beresford & Croft, 2001, 2004) examining the relevance and usefulness of consumer, sometimes referred to as “service user,” participation in research. Consumers of services can offer valuable experiential knowledge in conventional research projects, collaborative research (consumers working jointly with traditional researchers), and user research (consumer-led and controlled research) (Beresford, 2007, pp. 333–334). Consumer participation in research can involve

all keys aspects of research including: the origin of research; the accountability of the research; who undertakes the research; research funding; research design and process; dissemination of research findings; action following from research. (Beresford, 2000, p. 495)

Some social scientists argue that participatory research is just another name for action research, where there is a specific intent to engage consumers in research as a means of improving social conditions. In **action research**, a major and explicit goal of consumer participation is to guide or structure research in a manner that leads to practical outcomes for improving circumstances or overcoming oppressive conditions for people. Because action research is aimed at remedying social issues and/or enhancing people’s lives, acquisition of knowledge is not intended to be the sole intent of the research. Instead, consciousness raising and persuading others to adopt a particular way of thinking are often implicit, if not explicit, goals.

## Consumer Participation in Research

Participatory research need not be action research, however. Participatory research allows for the abilities and talents of consumers to come forward in the research process. The primary goal of having consumers participate as core-researchers is to offer their expertise, based on experience and knowledge, which can include the development of hypotheses, theories, and models, based on the viewpoints and firsthand knowledge of consumers, for testing (Beresford & Croft, 2001). Participatory research can (but may not necessarily) mean that participants are engaged in an attempt to create social change that favors their interests.

## Participatory Research and Advocacy

The strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2002, 2012) offers basic tenets that are helpful to consider when using participatory research to involve consumers of services. These include the following:

- Membership
- Dialogue and collaboration
- Strengths of systems of various sizes
- Helping consumers discover their abilities and resources

**TABLE 12.2**

Applying the Advocacy Policy and Practice Model Through Participatory Research to Evaluate Macro Change

APPM Tenet	Participatory Research	Macro Change
Human needs and rights	How can consumers of services lend experience, perspective, and viewpoints about the specific needs and rights of population groups for study?	How might consumer participation in research inform and influence decision making regarding human needs and rights with policies, program development, legislation, and social work practice?
Economic and social justice	How can consumers of services help identify social and economic factors for consideration in research?	How can social and economic conditions be better understood and affected through consumer participation in change efforts? For example, how can the voice(s) of consumers be powerful in influencing decision makers?
Supportive environments	Consumers are keenly aware of elements supportive or unsupportive in their living environments. Consumers can identify key individuals, groups of people, organizations, and conditions both as units of analysis.	Focus on the consideration of supportive environments can prompt descriptive and exploratory research to identify areas for strengthening (e.g., the presence of urban food deserts and the lack of affordable transportation) in support of consumer health and well-being.
Political access	Consumer participation in research can often depend on the endorsement, validation, and support of key politicians or decision makers aligned with such politicians. Building relationships and alliances with politicians can be a key factor for advancing consumer participation, viewpoints, and influence in research.	The awareness and validation of politicians, political party members, and a political base in participatory research can initiate a beginning level of support (e.g., endorsement, funds, and voting) for macro-level change (e.g., policy development, projects, and new programs) in conjunction with research findings.

In addition, the dynamic APPM (Cox et al., 2019) offers a four-pronged advocacy approach for identifying and understanding tenets of advocacy that can be useful when contemplating participatory research in relationship to macro-level change. As a brief illustration of the usefulness of the four APPM principles with participatory research and macro change, consider Table 12.2.

### Time to Think 12.3

Identify a research question involving a contemporary social issue and population group that interests you for social work practice. Examples might include the sexual harassment of women, underemployment of racial minorities, homelessness for people experiencing mental health challenges, and the absence of treatment services in your community for people wanting help with substance issues. How could consumers of services, past and present, become involved in participatory research? Using exploratory research as an example, how might consumers be able to identify concepts, trends, behaviors, actions, and conditions that others participating in a research endeavor would lack knowledge? Would all consumers be willing, expected, or considered for participation in research? Identify consumer strengths (e.g., leadership, verbal communication, insightfulness, emotional state, etc.) that would be valuable when encouraging and selecting consumers to become involved in participatory research.

#### Advocacy and Strengths-Oriented Measures in Macro-Level Change

When approaching research from either an advocacy policy-practice focus or strengths-based manner, multiple areas can be identified for further exploration and study. In each of these cases, emphasis is given to building the abilities and capacities of larger systems. Although the following is not an exhaustive list, it provides several themes for discussion among research team members when conceptualizing the evaluation of large-scale change.

- *Assets*: Groups of people, organizations, communities, and societies consist of assets. These are positive features or resources that help to sustain and promote the well-being of a social system. For a group of people, it could be a sense of cohesiveness or “we-ness.” Communities often possess a degree of pride. For a society, an asset could be adaptability. When evaluating social change, attention ought to be given to the potential for strengthening salient assets and advocating for economic and social justice.
- *Capabilities*: Larger social systems also possess abilities and potentials. These often go unrecognized or unrealized. Saleebey (2002) suggests this to be “especially true of marginalized communities where individuals and groups have had to learn to survive under difficult and often rapidly changing conditions” (p. 236). When studying social change, the

research team needs to weigh the degree to which human and social capacity is actualized. This includes both formal entities (e.g., agencies, churches, and schools) and informal associations (e.g., neighborhood groups).

- *Rights*: One indicator of macro-level change involves the formation or development of laws and policies that advance or protect the rights of people. For example, many Americans have been disappointed that an equal rights amendment for women has never been passed in the United States. Such a piece of national legislation could have established guidelines and standards for the fair and equitable treatment of women. Such a law could have been a source of inspiration for women, as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has been for persons experiencing disabilities. Evaluating human needs is just as important as evaluating human rights.
- *Opportunities*: When conceptualizing structural change, one should think in terms of the creation of widespread opportunities for groups of people. These can be thought of as opportunity pathways or highways, where large numbers of people experience newfound access to information, power, resources, and decision-making processes. At the organizational level, opportunity could be measured by recognized membership, for example. Opportunities are also affected by political access and the decisions of policymakers and politicians.
- *Accomplishments and goal attainment*: Larger social systems (e.g., groups, organizations, and communities) often set goals for themselves. This could involve reducing absenteeism and truancy in schools or creating additional jobs or businesses in an area. Many times, state and national competitions establish measurable criteria for evaluating organizational or community progress and recognizing accomplishments. These can be useful markers of large-scale social change, especially when such goals are formed and established with the input of consumers. For example, consumers of services often value full-time employment that includes a livable wage, medical benefits, and opportunities for childcare. Meanwhile, politicians and business leaders can be satisfied with simply creating and reporting part-time and minimum-wage jobs without medical or day-care provisions.

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## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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As indicated earlier in this chapter, fundamental principles of research include objectivity, replication, the accumulative nature of findings, and the value of discovery. Participatory research provides opportunities to both inform research processes and procedures as well as produce checks and balances to thwart bias. However, ethical boundaries exist with regard to protecting consumers and society, which include premises of confidentiality and prohibitions against falsifying

and/or misrepresenting research procedures, data, and findings, to name just a few prohibitions.

The direct personal involvement of a field or macro social worker in the social lives of consumers raises many ethical dilemmas. Dilemmas arise when a researcher or evaluator is alone in the field, organization, or community and has little time to make a moral decision. Although evaluators may be aware of general ethical issues, such dilemmas arise unexpectedly in the course of observing and interacting in macro systems. Four particular ethical issues in field research, for example, are deception, confidentiality, involvement with deviants, and publishing reports.

Deception involves the issue of being covert or overt in conducting research. Some field sites or activities can only be studied covertly, even though covert research is really not preferable or easier to do than overt research because of the challenges of maintaining a front and the constant fear of getting caught.

Confidentiality is a moral obligation the evaluator promises his or her consumer participant. Sometimes an evaluator or researcher cannot quote a person, such as a vulnerable stakeholder or community leader. One strategy instead of reporting the source of an informant is to document evidence that says the same thing and uses a document instead as the source of information.

Researchers who conduct research on deviants who engage in illegal behavior face added challenges. Researchers can experience a dilemma in building trust and rapport with deviants, while not violating their own personal moral standards.

Publishing reports can also create dilemmas regarding the right of privacy and the right to know. A researcher does not publicize consumer secrets, violate privacy, or harm reputations. However, some researchers will simply ask consumers to examine a report to verify its accuracy and to approve of their portrayal in print. For marginalized groups (e.g., substance users, prostitutes, etc.), this may not be possible, but researchers must always respect member privacy.

Social work researchers, much as social work practitioners, sign an oath to conduct themselves in accordance with a code of conduct—for social workers, the principles and standards identified in the National Association of Social Workers' (2018) *Code of Ethics*. Indeed, failure to abide in ethical conduct in research can yield profound and damaging consequences for consumers of services. And, for social work researchers, reprimands and potential expulsion from the profession can occur as a result of misconduct.



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## SUMMARY

Understanding social change with larger systems is a multifaceted proposition. The unit of analysis could be a characteristic or attribute of a group of people, organization, community, or society. The

composition of the research team, including their backgrounds, expertise, and predispositions, will have a powerful effect on the research process and subsequent findings.

In this chapter, you are challenged to embrace a somewhat nontraditional view of research. The primary focus has been on finding ways to identify and consider the use of the strengths of consumers to become participants and team members in research involving macro-level change. This is true of all kinds of research, including descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, and evaluative.

A participatory approach to research demands the active involvement of consumers in methodological decisions as well as throughout the

research process. Consumers are viewed as experts in their own right, as they possess unparalleled knowledge, direct experience, and a unique orientation to issues and problems. Grounded information is often crucial to the formation of concepts, hypotheses, and theories in the research process. Consumers need not be viewed merely as subjects for study but as potential coinvestigators and valued members of a research team. This is true regardless of the methodology employed (e.g., case study, survey, or field research).

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### TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

action research 278  
awareness contexts 272  
descriptive research 266  
evaluation research 267  
explanatory research 266

exploratory research 266  
grounded research 272  
participatory research 272  
program monitoring 269  
research team 274

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss with your classmates your interest or lack of interest in research. As a social worker, how would you envision yourself becoming involved in research projects and involving what topics? Who might be a research mentor for you (e.g., a faculty member, field supervisor, or other researcher)? And, could you see yourself participating in a research team that produces a published research article?
2. Is there a fine line between consumers influencing and unduly swaying research? Consider action research in this realm. Discuss what you believe might be inappropriate behaviors by social workers and consumers.
3. Your social work education program is involved in program evaluation through the assessment of student learning via practice behaviors and competencies. Most likely, as a student in field education, your field supervisor will be or has conducted an evaluation of your abilities when working with consumers of services. What are your thoughts about this process at your university, and have you been actively involved in program evaluation for your program? If so, how? If not, why not? How is the voice of students important in evaluating your educational program's effectiveness?

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### EXERCISES

1. Ask a social worker engaged in research for her or his views on participatory research and the use of consumers of services as coinvestigators. What types of arguments are provided for or against the use of consumers in the research process? Does

- her or his views represent a strengths- or advocacy-based orientation in relationship to consumer participation or a more traditional stance concerning the conduction of research?
2. Request a copy of an agency's program evaluation standards as prescribed by a funding source (e.g., United Way, grant funder, or allocation board). What kind of information is mandated? Are the standards geared toward effectiveness or efficiency? Does this constitute descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, or evaluative research? How are consumers included in decision making with respect to the research process? Do consumers serve a program-monitoring function? Are consumers considered in any fashion as members of the evaluation team?
  3. Contact your local county Department of Human Services and inquire about efforts in your county to evaluate the success of TANF. What kind of research strategy has been employed? What criteria have been used to measure the success of welfare reform at the local level, and who determined such criteria? Was insight solicited from consumers in order to acquire contextual awareness of the consequences of welfare reform? Why or why not?
  4. Identify a recent policy or legislative initiative that has been undertaken in your community. Was a community assessment completed to gather relevant data and to gauge public sentiment? Were consumers of services in your community involved in designing or conducting any of this research (e.g., focus groups, surveys, and/or social-historical analysis)?

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

- To learn more about a contemporary effort to advance participatory research, examine the website [participatesdgs.org](http://participatesdgs.org). The Participate initiative began in 2012 and involves the promotion of participatory research examining the plight of economically deprived and marginalized people in 29 countries.
- The Social Work Policy Institute at [socialworkpolicy.org](http://socialworkpolicy.org) provides a useful review of various resources for examining and promoting best practices and ethical conduct in social work research.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [cdc.gov/eval/standards/index.htm](http://cdc.gov/eval/standards/index.htm) has advanced a set of 30 standards for use in assessing the quality of evaluation activities. A primary goal of these standards is to support culturally competent evaluation practices.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Appreciate and recognize macro social work as a lifelong calling
2. Engage in self-assessment via reflection and feedback regarding practice abilities and skills with large systems
3. Explore strengths in macro practice roles, including self-advocacy
4. Understand the value of networking, partnerships, and collaboration
5. Articulate the need to stay current through reading

## HIRING PARAPROFESSIONALS

Allyson Crawford is a social work supervisor in a child protection unit at the county cabinet for children and family services. She has eight social workers and four social work assistants under her authority. As caseloads have swelled, the agency has decided to hire additional protective service workers. The cabinet is currently experiencing a fiscal crunch, as the county has not passed new monies for services to children in 5 years. As a result, county administrators have approved the hiring of three new social work assistants in Allyson's unit but no additional social workers.

Allyson, other professional social work administrators, and the agency's consumer council firmly believe that the new hires should be professional social workers. Asking paraprofessionals to assume professional positions and perform professional duties is inappropriate, irresponsible, a possible violation of state law, and arguably unethical. Allyson and others fear the harmful consequences of such action for consumers. Allyson worries she will be held responsible for any incompetent actions of people under her supervision.

Allyson has quickly entered into discussions with members of the consumer council, other supervisors, the unit social workers, members of her local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), empathetic administrators at the agency, and multiple others to assess and strategize about her personal power as well as the power of consumers and professionals. To date, most agree that the hiring of new paraprofessionals presents a huge liability issue for Allyson, the organization, the county, and public officials.

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## MACRO PRACTICE AS A LIFELONG CALLING

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Macro social workers have a lifelong mission to become more knowledgeable of the extent of life challenges and barriers facing consumers requiring services. Comprehending varying levels

of vulnerability for economic strain is important to effectively plan and provide services in and to organizations, communities, and society at large. Many of the *Grand Challenges* for social work focus on financial stability and poverty reduction (Long, 2018; Williams, 2016). Therefore, adding a robust poverty research agenda will enhance what macro social work professionals have to offer consumers in larger systems.

The list of human rights, economic, environmental, psychological, and social challenges requiring social work research and macro practice responsiveness is considerable (Williams, 2018). In small and larger systems, two areas requiring research include racial inequality and poverty. Research needs to examine the precise causes that lurk behind racial disparities and racial differences and move beyond race as a mere predictor. For example, research is needed demonstrating best practices for affirmative action and advancement of diversity and inclusion in organizations. Research describing the effects of gentrification and redlining in communities is also needed. Additionally, minimal attention has been given to understanding aspects of poverty across the life span. Knowledge about the percentage of Americans in poverty and how assets and income differ across age, ethnicity, gender, and race in organizations, communities, and society will identify specific needs and population groups at risk and enhance the ability to effectively serve consumers of services through program and policy development. Such research on poverty holds promise for advancing capabilities for both direct and indirect social work practice (Williams, 2018, p. 68).

Disenfranchised consumers and populations are confronted with multiple insecurities, especially financial insecurity. Health-care insecurity continues to put U.S. consumers and populations in the United States in struggles for their life and quality of life. Vulnerable consumers worry about how they will afford good-quality health care as they age and possibly face financial devastation if and when they become ill. Disenfranchised consumers also face physical and social insecurity (e.g., mistrust, stress, and skepticism), which can undermine access to services, housing, or nutrition. Macro social work researchers can focus on how interventions and programs can promote, mitigate, and/or moderate such insecurities and woes.

In this section, multiple situations are mentioned wherein quantitative, qualitative, or participatory action research would be useful to proactively respond to issues such as health-care disparities, poverty, or economic, environmental, or social injustices. Responding to these issues will persist and consequently require social workers to maneuver on the macro level. Macro-level interventions require social workers to revisit their “calling” to be advocates for human rights and social justice. Interventions must be assessed and social worker’s use of self in engaging with large systems also requires assessment.



ROBYN BECK/Contributor/Getty Images

**PHOTO 14.1**  
Macro social work bridges individual needs with national and global issues.

## Time to Think 14.1

Consider the case study featuring Allyson and her supervisory work in child and family protection. If you were Allyson, how would you think through the following issues?

1. Identify how the misuse of paraprofessionals as substitutes for professionals may be detrimental to consumers, the agency, and professionals or an asset. How could consumers and professionals work together to document and provide information to substantiate harmful consequences?
2. How does this case example help elucidate the role of power in decision making? Although administrators at the agency appear empathetic concerning the staffing situation, is it not crucial to identify who has the power to rectify the situation? Is there a “power elite” in the county that dictates decisions? How can the strengths of consumers, professionals, and concerned others be used to influence key decision makers? Given those in power, what types of information would be compelling?

### ENGAGING IN SELF-ASSESSMENT

Assessing available resources across consumer systems helps macro social workers and consumers achieve change efforts, choose strategies to promote consumers’ strengths and advocacy efforts, and activate environmental resources. To assess one’s work and progress, social workers can consider the array of resources systems in the physical and social environment and ask the following: How do they function as resources? What cultural resources support social workers? The **competency self-assessment** found in Table 14.1 can help with the self-assessment process.

#### Using Reflection to Assess and Enhance Macro Practice Skills

Engaging in self-assessment is an important endeavor for macro social workers. Table 14.1 provides a tool to assess some competencies that are relevant to work with consumers and large systems.

Through the process of engaging in self-assessment and evaluating competency levels, students completing the items related to the rating scale in Table 14.1 have the opportunity to rate themselves as 1s (beginning competence level), 3s (intermediate competence level), or 5s (advanced competence level). Obviously, students would want to have 5s in each category; however, this result will not likely always occur. For example, in assessing the ability to assess “physical environment” for a consumer-in-environment perspective, a 1 rating may be expected from a newly minted BSW graduate and indicate his or her ability as a macro social worker to merely generally describe the community, workplace, or home of a consumer. A social worker with an admitted “calling to do macro social work,” even though he or she has not practiced very long, may be able to reach a 3 rating,

**TABLE 14.1**  
Competency Self-Assessment

Use the scale below to rate your achievement level on the concepts or skills presented in this book.

1	2	3	4	5
I can accurately describe the concept/skill		I can consistently identify the concept/skill when analyzing macro practice work		I can competently employ the concept/skill in my macro practice work

\*Distinguishes macro social work assessment from an advocacy and strengths-based viewpoint:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognizes economic, environmental, and social justice in the allocation of resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ Locates resources in complex situations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Collaboration with community and organizational partners (stakeholders)

\*Contextualizes assessment from a consumer-in-environment viewpoint by assessing

- \_\_\_\_\_ Organization/community structures
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interactions between consumers and organizations/communities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Thoughts and feelings in the context of organizations and communities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cultural factors/influences on consumers linking with large systems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Physical environment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Political environment

\*Verbalizes how social work tools are relevant to macro practice with large systems:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Group assessment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organizational assessment, including *force field analysis* (forces helping to achieve or hindering going toward a goal)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Community and neighborhood assessment, including focus groups

\*Describes techniques for macro social work professionals to enhance assessment:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Interviews significant consumers/community leaders/administrators/elected politicians
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contacts professionals in organizations, communities, society
- \_\_\_\_\_ Observation (a technique of field research by which an investigator or participant observer studies the life of a group by sharing in its activities)

\*Defines procedures for social workers to record documentation:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Documentation formats, including organizational and community policies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ethical and legal considerations in documentation

*Source:* Modified from page 150, Ex 10.7 in 2009 Pearson Education, Inc. Publishing as Allyn & Bacon Instructor's Manual and Test Bank for *Generalist Social Work Practice: An Empowering Approach*, 6th ed. (Miley, O'Melia, & DuBois, 2009).

thereby signifying this social worker can consistently identify the concepts and skills required to help consumers navigate within and outside of their community, workplace, or home. These social workers may know community leaders, agency directors, and nuances about neighborhoods. And a 5-rating may reveal more advanced competence in assessing the “physical environment” because macro social workers self-rated as 5s are likely to integrate more interprofessional and intersystem knowledge when evaluating their assessments and interventions. Social workers who rate themselves as 5s may understand “physical environment” broadly and in depth by assessing the built environment, structural environment, and sustainable environment issues.

## Time to Think 14.2

What potential resource systems might you explore to assess how a community system consumer has defined a direction to improve relationships between citizens/consumers of color and the police force? Broadly consider how economic, environmental, and internal community resources might help reach the goal of assessing resource capabilities. Consider further how the community where you live or work offers resources to explore. Think about how cultural assessments reveal how cultural identity affects consumer interactions with larger systems and how cultural elements internalized by consumers contribute to diversity within any social system or larger society.

### Accepting and Using Feedback

When macro social workers use feedback from research, data, reports, leaders, administrators, and so on, they can help consumers reflect on changes needed in their lives and the organizations, communities, and society in which they work and live. Feedback provides a dynamic and continuous stream of communication. Some information fits well with how an organization or a community does something. The system assimilates such feedback, thereby reinforcing the status quo. Contrarily, incompatible information forces the organization or community to change to accommodate discrepancies. Essentially, two forms of feedback exist: (1) information that maintains the current equilibrium and (2) information that induces change toward a new equilibrium.

Macro social workers give both types of **feedback**. They offer reinforcing feedback to maintain existing strengths and advocacy efforts. For example, when a social worker facilitates a townhall meeting and the diverse views of all the consumers in attendance are accepted, such an approach encourages continued respect for diversity. By contrast, social workers might also introduce system-altering feedback to disrupt perplexing patterns or allow for new possibilities. When a social worker confronts a consumer committee about how funding has been unequally allocated, the social worker gives feedback to disrupt the status quo

and seek a newer and fairer way to distribute funds. Macro social workers have to offer feedback sensitively as they work toward the desired goals of interest to consumers, organizations and communities.

### Expanding and Improving a Macro Skill Base

Forming empowering, strengths-based, and advocacy-oriented relationships and partnerships with consumers in large systems—such as groups, organizations, and communities—requires an array of skills. Trusting relationships must be built between consumers and organizations, neighborhoods, and communities. Social workers also help consumers increase their power through cohesive development and leadership distribution. In other words, macro social workers facilitate feelings of power in as many consumers in large systems as they can, especially consumers who feel disempowered or oppressed.

Macro social workers make direct connections with consumers and work to accept their contributions, no matter how active they are in partnering with larger systems. The goal of the macro social worker is rather simple—they collaborate with consumers and systems to resolve difficult, challenging, complex, and controversial situations. Social workers require proficiency and competency in resource networking, client advocacy, and facilitating macro-level change within organizations, communities, and society.

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## RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS IN MACRO PRACTICE ROLES

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This book about macro social work practice has emphasized the importance of an advocacy-based policy-practice model. Hence, Figure 14.1 illustrates the advocacy practice and policy model (APPM) in relation to the range of four domains that require social work professionals to step up and be active advocates. First, in the domain of economic, environmental, and social justice, practitioners are reminded to be vigilant when assessing funding issues and realities within organizations, communities, and society. As well, this domain highlights the need to be involved with decision-making efforts and assess and address public health and resource needs.

Second, in the human needs and rights domain, professionals ought to advocate for equality and the dissipation of health disparities. Social workers can help consumers become active participants on community councils and active advocates for access to health services and housing services. Shelter is a basic human need, so practices such as redlining and gentrification require ongoing monitoring.

Third, macro social workers must promote a supportive environment. In doing so, public health concerns, social movements in the making, and the revitalization of communities and creation of new organizations require vigilance.

Fourth, the domain of political access urges macro social workers to be aware of local, state, and federal policies, laws, and statutes. Understanding the nuances of “who has the power” in organizations and communities, relative to the conservative to liberal continuum or spectrum, helps facilitate and evaluate work with large systems. Figure 14.1 illustrates the application of the advocacy policy-practice model in relation to multiple macro social work practice roles.



**FIGURE 14.1**  
Applying the APPM



Social workers can expand and improve their skill base if cognizant of how to apply the APPM to multiple macro practice roles. Figure 14.2 further illustrates multiple **macro social work roles** and skill sets across organizations, communities, and society. The roles of educator, enabler, mediator, integrator/coordinator, general manager, analyst/evaluator, broker, facilitator, initiator, negotiator, mobilizer, and advocate are foremost in the repository of skills that professionals require. To assess how well to intervene and then evaluate work across levels, the macro social worker must be aware of what steps to take when working with consumers in organizations, communities, and the larger society.

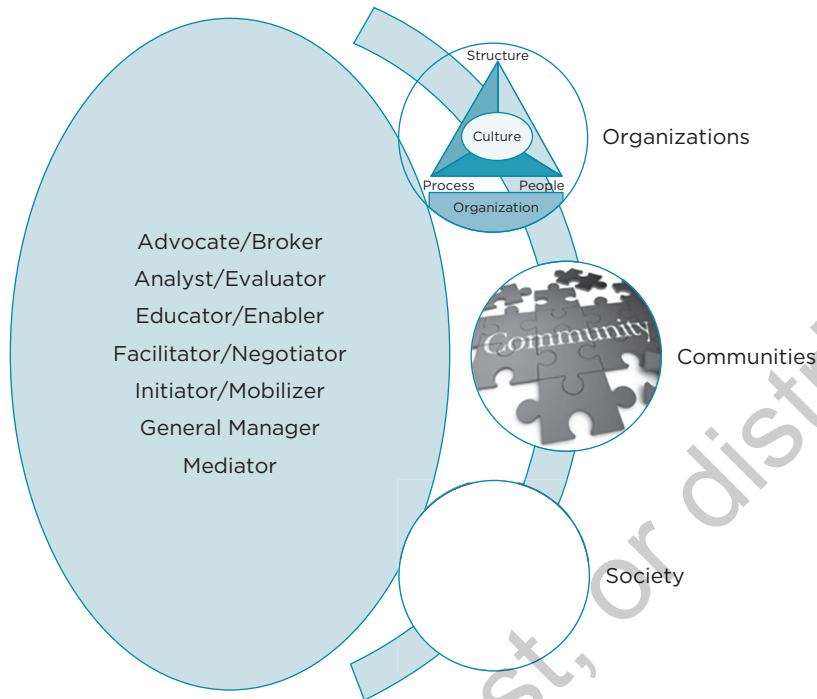
Figures 14.3, 14.4, and 14.5 provide steps to **assessing macro social work practice**. Three important steps are involved in macro social work at the organizational level. For example, when social workers are involved with organizations, during Step 1, they assess the connections the agency or organization has with its wider community, note sociocultural artifacts, and consider possible funding and/or referral sources. During Step 2, the organization's capacity inside requires assessment, such as the following: (1) What leadership style is being used? (2) Which services are provided? (3) How are the programs and structure of the organization? (4) How adequate is the technology being used? and (5) What personnel policies, practices, and procedures are being used? For Step 3, an effective macro social worker will explore the cultural humility and competency levels that exist within the organization by determining the following: (1) How healthy are external relations? (2) How diverse, friendly, and healthy are staff? and (3) How culturally relevant are the available programs and services?

Three important steps are involved in macro social work at the community level, too. For example, when social workers are involved with communities,



**FIGURE 14.2**

Macro Social Work Practitioner Skill Set and Roles



**FIGURE 14.3**

Assessing Macro Social Work With Organizations Framework

Step 1: Examine organization to assess relationships

- Learn about the organization and its environmental relationships
- Identify sociocultural artifacts
- Note funding and referral sources

Step 2: Assess organization's capacity inside

- What leadership and management approaches are used?
- Which programs and services are offered?
- How is the overall structure of the organization and its programs?
- How adequate and functional are technology/technical resources?
- What personnel policies, practices, and procedures exist?

Step 3: Explore cultural humility and competency

- How healthy are external relations?
- How diverse, healthy, and friendly are workers/staff?
- To what extent are programs and services offered culturally relevant and appropriate?

during Step 1, they identify the focal community. This identification involves ascertaining community boundaries, learning the history of the community and its consumers, and collaborating with consumers. During Step 2, the data and information about the community require obtainment. Data about consumers and targeted population needs becomes important, and identifying helpful information about data sources is key. For Step 3, an effective macro social worker will assess assets, capacity, and the structure of a community. They assess such by discerning power sources and assessing differences, strengths, assets, and values. In addition, they assess existing helpful linkages and observe control and influence aspects, as well as available services.

Yet another three steps are involved in macro social work at the societal or global level. For example, when social workers are involved with societies, during Step 1, they must assess economic and political feasibility issues. They do this by understanding how urgently a particular problem requires redress and what resources are important. During Step 2, macro social workers involved with any society must choose an approach for change and simultaneously assess what personnel policy, practice, or policy approaches require consideration and selection. For Step 3, effective macro social workers will discern which strategies and tactics to use. By so doing, they will assess which collaborative tactics are most relevant and consider campaign strategies.

Social workers, in their roles of advocates, educators, and facilitators, may accomplish advocacy policy-practice via social welfare/policy advocacy-oriented organizations, such as health maintenance organizations, neighborhood civic associations, or service club entities like the Rotary, Lions, or Kiwanis clubs or League of Women Voters (Brueggemann, 2014, pp. 304–305). To make social changes or ensure social justice at the community, state, and national levels, as analysts,

**FIGURE 14.4**  
Assessing Macro Social Work With Communities Framework

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Step 1: Identify focal community

- Ascertain community boundaries
- Learn about the community's history and consumer characteristics
- Collaborate with consumers/focal community population

Step 2: Obtain information and data on community

- Collect data about consumers/targeted population's needs
- Identify helpful information and data sources

Step 3: Assess assets, capacity, and structure

- Discern sources of power and resource availability
  - Assess differences, strengths and assets, and values
  - Examine service delivery aspects
  - Discern existing and helpful linkages
  - Observe control and influence aspects, as well as services available
-

**FIGURE 14.5**

### Assessing Macro Social Work With Society/Societies Framework

Step 1: Assess economic and political feasibility

- How urgently must the problem be addressed?
- What resources must be considered?

Step 2: Choose an approach for change

- What personnel policy, practice, or policy approach ought to be selected?

Step 3: Discern which strategies and tactics to use

- Which collaborative strategies and tactics might be best and most relevant?
- What campaign strategies require consideration?

evaluators, or mobilizers, social workers may be involved and seek board membership with a community or nation's political and policy advocacy organizations, activist community organizations, and civil and human rights organizations. As enablers and initiators in social advocacy organizations, social workers can work expeditiously and perhaps bypass formal, unwieldy, and time-consuming political processes by convincing government officials to act in the best interests of consumers

who may not have powerful lobbyists or corporate sponsors in their back pockets.

The United States has nearly 2 million nonprofit organizations that account for approximately 5% of gross domestic product. By 2052, an estimated \$6 trillion will flow directly to social organizations. At the same time, a new generation of business leaders, philanthropists, and social entrepreneurs—including macro social workers—is creating new types of hybrid social enterprises (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 312). Such initiatives often identify creative and innovative ways to link, establish, and develop partnerships between for-profit and nonprofit entities to address consumer, organizational, community, and societal needs and problems. For example, Cincinnati-based grocery giant Kroger has been expanding its unsold-food programs to distribute goods to community foodbanks across the nation. Kroger has also been a longstanding leader for partnering with nonprofit organizations to provide employment for people with developmental challenges.



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**PHOTO 14.2**  
Advocacy uses organizations to achieve social justice goals.

## ADVOCACY STARTS WITH SELF

Since social work's beginnings, the profession has noted the importance of relationship and **conscious use of self**. Self is a function of relationship with others, and the self is constantly created, maintained, and re-created (Arnd-Caddigan

& Pozzuto, 2008). The qualities of awareness, genuineness, and honesty are significant to building relationships, and the self is a process in interaction. The use of self requires attention to an unpredictable and unfolding process, not simply a narrow focus on particular techniques or outcomes. “Knowing the real self is the pre-condition to using the self in social work,” and searching for the “self” sets the foundation for a vibrant, loving, and caring society and facilitates the realization of goals important to the social work profession (Kaushik, 2017, p. 28).

Involvement with research and work with large systems requires social workers to be lifelong learners when it comes to the refinement of macro social work practice skills. While nationally, few Boards of Social Work Examiners include specific continuing education requirements for practice with large systems, these skills are important to advocating for consumers and working effectively with organizations, with communities, and in society. Macro social workers must stay current with research findings, legislation, and administrative and organizational practices. Research-informed practice remains a lifelong requirement for any social worker engaged in macro practice. To summarize a few points from earlier chapters about research (a method of systematic investigation or experimentation), social workers conduct research to test theories about human behavior and the social environment and to document evidence of the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Therefore, basic **research literacy** is required. Macro social workers must know about the research process, research terminology, and concomitant ethical issues. Social workers must critically analyze research studies and conduct formal research themselves for the purpose of program development and policy analysis.

It is worth noting that participation and using the contributions of practicing social workers in various forms of practice-informed research can be challenging. As noted by Rowan, Richardson, and Long (2018), “Examples in social work literature of social workers using practice experiences to inform scientific inquiry are not plentiful, as practitioners are usually positioned as consumers rather than co-producers of research” (p. 15). Furthermore, practice-prompted and informed research manuscripts may face unique scrutiny by reviewers, editorial board members, and editors in the publication review process (Rowan et al., 2018). Indeed, lack of sensitivity toward the publication of research involving new and previously underdocumented population groups and needs could be in part an artifact of an overall lack of appreciation for the potential contributions of practitioner knowledge and wisdom in the research process.

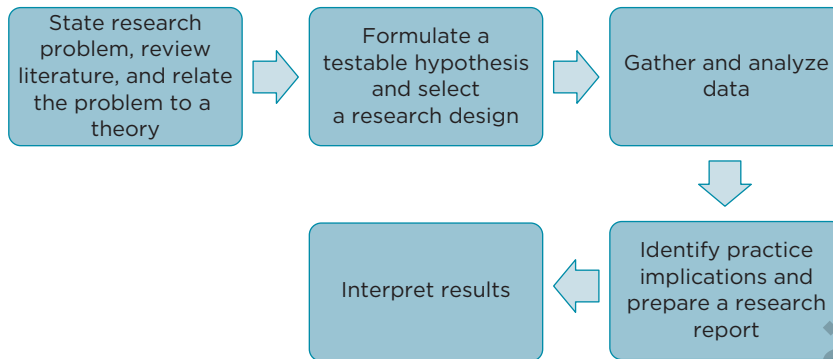
Social workers do indeed consciously use themselves as instruments of change and advocacy. When macro social workers take on a research role with large systems, they must be aware of the pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages between different research approaches, as previously covered—quantitative deductive approach or qualitative inductive approach. Two subsequent sections illustrate how these two approaches flow differently.

### Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research Processes

Earlier chapters covering informing macro practice with research and evaluating macro change elaborated on the logic of scientific inquiry and distinguished between quantitative and qualitative approaches. Macro social workers must be

**FIGURE 14.6**

Quantitative Research Process Flow

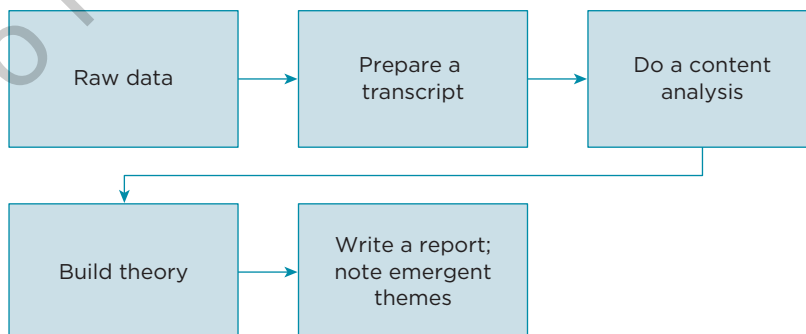


cognizant of research-informed processes, specifically **quantitative and qualitative research process flows**. The flowchart in Figure 14.6 illustrates how researchers wishing to evaluate macro change by using a quantitative approach would proceed. Sometimes a research question or hypothesis about a large system can be easily articulated, and empirical literature can be found to contextualize subsequent research. Once a question or hypothesis is developed, researchers would choose a design and gather data. Data analysis would ensue and results would be interpreted, thereby producing an eventual report for dissemination.

When macro social workers, who are also researchers or evaluators, do not choose to start from a research or hypothesis, they could employ a qualitative research process. This process would not begin with locating existing literature or testing a hypothesis. Rather, researchers using a qualitative approach would be more interested in building theory than testing a theory or hypothesis. Action research, participatory research, grounded theory, and naturalistic inquiry are options such researchers might use. Figure 14.7 shows how data would be collected in raw form. For example, sitting in an agency meeting, attending a community

**FIGURE 14.7**

Qualitative Research Process Flow



forum, or observing and participating in a social movement might present opportunities to collect data in vivo—in the field, from the ground up. Raw data in the form of notes might be kept, or audio or video recordings could be used to gather data. Subsequently, themes would emerge as data are analyzed, and ultimately, a theory would be built regarding how to proceed. The eventual report would include verbatim word data and themes rather than statistical analyses or simply numeric data.

## THE VALUE OF NETWORKING, PARTNERSHIPS, AND COLLABORATIONS

Table 14.2 illustrates an array of **macro social work functions** with the associated skills and knowledge areas required to work with larger systems. The use of critical thinking, the will and wherewithal to be a healthy leader and administrator, and the ability to realize what you know and what you still need to learn about organizations, communities, and society are part and parcel of being a competent professional social worker. Such a professional who networks, partners, and collaborates will be best prepared to conduct and analyze research, create and run organizations, assess, evaluate and intervene in communities, and be aware of societal trends, movements, policies, and needs.

**TABLE 14.2**  
Self-Assessing Macro Social Work Functions and Skills

Social Work Functions	Skills and Knowledge to Assess
Administration	Conventional managerial leadership, federal regulations dealing with administration, classics in administration theory, general vs. social administration, supervision, decision making, budgeting, finance, administering the human side of organizations, functions of the executive, program evaluation, program logic evaluation models
Critical thinking	Learning theory, rational problem solving, social change, social thinking, sociocultural premises, using journals and research, theory of social problems, working with groups, social leadership
Practice with organizations	History and theory of organizations, basic philanthropy, fundraising and giving, getting started, working with boards and staff, social enterprise development; management, leadership and economics; foundation fundraising resources, foundation and grant information; government funding sources; contracting; writing grants and proposals; grassroots fundraising resources
Practice with communities	History of community; community research; social work practice with communities; community building; sociology of community; community theory; communitarianism; modern classics in neighborhood and community organizing, history of community organizing, community organizing: theory and practice; social work community organizing; the Saul Alinsky approach; community organization with specific communities; faith-based community organizing
Practice with societies	Social policy, social advocacy, social action, social critique, interest group liberalism, the good society



Meenaghan, Kilty, Long, and McNutt (2013) pose the following important, reflective questions helpful for social workers contemplating placing research abilities and skills into action:

Which questions (and whose questions) should be stressed? Which interests are served by which program designs? Who should participate and at what points in designing and studying interventions—creation, collection, interpretation, and so on? (p. 303)



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**PHOTO 14.3**

Social workers are involved in lifelong learning.

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## STAY CURRENT THROUGH READING

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Social work education does not stop with graduation. **Continuing education** is part of the continuum of social work education, which can include an associate's degree in human services and professional social work education at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels. Because social work knowledge and skills change and evolve, and state licensing boards require continuing education, macro social workers must keep abreast of changing knowledge and intervention strategies by reading and participating in continuing education. Congress (2012) has cited Rooney's (1988) three levels of continuing education effectiveness:

- Level 1—whether theory and skills are learned
- Level 2—whether social workers are able to practice those skills at the end of their training
- Level 3—whether social workers will practice these skills when they return to their jobs

Social work professionals emphasize the importance of continuing educations for all licensed and credentialed practitioners. Also, keeping abreast of the most recent literature and research in one's area of expertise and scope of practice can be challenging. Fortunately, modern search tools and electronic access to published documents have made scholarly works more readily available. Indeed, one of the very first thoughts for social workers in keeping in touch with best practices should involve a review of literature to capture and read what the most recent research suggests.

This chapter has conceptualized macro social work practice as a lifelong commitment for social workers that requires engaging in competency self-assessments and understanding the utility of research-informed practice. Competency self-assessment tools can be used to assess what further training and education may be required to sharpen macro social work functions, roles, and skills.



Macro social workers are actively involved with organizations, communities, and society at the national and international levels. International social workers may help with economic and community development projects in developing countries through the United Nations or International Red Cross and International Social Services (ISS). Student experiences with the Peace Corps, other service-oriented volunteer corps, and international educational experiences can be very informative and supportive of developing a macro-oriented social work outlook. Macro social workers can also link with social justice and advocacy organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to fight against unjust imprisonment, torture, or other human rights violations (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 437). At the policy level, social workers can help to reduce pollution and end international conflict with the goal of creating a sustainable social and natural environment.

Perhaps a hallmark of international social work is the ability to engage people or consumers no matter where you are. Macro social work, too, is all about learning how to engage people by building trust, developing strengths, stimulating empowerment, and employing advocacy policy-practice. Macro social workers are called to assess and then facilitate the challenge of perceptions, stimulate reflection, encourage sensible decision making, develop and implement plans, and provide training, education, and leadership.



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## SUMMARY

Throughout this text, readers have been urged to identify sources of information to help them in their work with large systems and consumers. Macro social workers can acquire much knowledge from collaborating with key informants, case managers, and focus group participants. Also, reviewing case study content, diaries, journals, internal case records, minutes from employee meetings, billing records, and the most recent literature and research can be informative. The advocacy policy and practice model (APPM) can

be especially instrumental in guiding macro social workers to use direct observation and learn by participant observation what occurs in community and national forums that can be used to foster change. Macro social work is important work because organizations, communities, and societies are diverse, vary in power structures and technological advancements, and need attention so that economic, environmental, and social justice are continually advocated for.

## TOP 10 KEY CONCEPTS

assessing macro social work 310  
competency self-assessment 306  
conscious use of self 313

continuing education 317  
feedback 308  
macro social work functions 316

macro social work roles 310  
 qualitative research  
 process flow 315

quantitative research  
 process flow 315  
 research literacy 314

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What roles might macro social workers commonly assume in the development and promotion of social organizations, especially with micro-oriented employment?
2. In the opening vignette, social worker positions were being replaced by paraprofessionals. Through discussion with classmates, identify several viable macro social work ideas and options to pursue in relationship to this personnel matter. How might your personal and/or professional comfort level be challenged with each idea and option?
3. Macro social work is a field that lauds authentic personal relationships, altruism, compassion, and reciprocal communication. By contrast, modern complex organizations often eliminate altruism and compassion, require nonpersonal relationships, use one-way communication, and rely on depersonalized, quantitative statistics. What ethical dilemmas might occur as social workers inject personal feelings, compassion, and values into an impersonal organizational system? How will you cope with such dilemmas?
4. It is imperative to cite and validate information sources when posing ethical dilemmas involving social justice. Consider how in the opening case study, “caseloads had swelled” at Allyson’s agency. What does this mean with regard to the actual number of cases and the severity of issues in the people being served? What types of information would be important to document the need for additional professionals? Remember, this is a child protection agency. (Note: Consider the NASW *Code of Ethics* and your state statutes for protecting children.)

## EXERCISES

1. Ethical statements reflect personal and professional values. Ask the listed professionals to identify the relevant ethical principle for each of the following societal values. How do your findings compare to the ethics for social work practice? What are the similarities between professionals?

Professions	Lawyer	Physician	Clergy	Psychologist	Banker
Social justice					
Freedom					
Life orientation					
Privacy					
Individual choice					
Equality					

2. Read a national newspaper for several days and collect at least two articles that highlight a professional who has acted in accordance with or in opposition to the rules of professional ethics. Consider the situation, the particular values and ethics involved in the situation, and the actions of the professional. What would you do in a similar situation? Also, review Abramson's (1984) definition of "ethical dilemma":

An ethical dilemma or moral quandary is one in which there are conflicts and tensions concerning the right and the good, when

choosing one course of action will uphold one moral principle while violating another. (p. 129)

3. Go to the following selected organizational resources and learn more about evidence-based practice:
  - Campbell Collaboration
  - Social Care Institute for Excellence
  - SAMHSA Guide to Evidence-Based Practices
  - Swedish Institute for Evidence-Based Practice

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### ONLINE RESOURCES

- Business and Human Rights ([www.business-humanrights.org](http://www.business-humanrights.org))
- Corporate Critic online ([www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org))
- Corporate Watch ([www.corporatewatch.org](http://www.corporatewatch.org))
- Endgame Research Services ([www.endgame.org](http://www.endgame.org))
- Multinational Monitor. ([www.multinationalmonitor.org](http://www.multinationalmonitor.org))