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Identifying Factors that Predict Policy Practice Among Social Workers

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MSW, University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, 1999

BS, Olivet Nazarene University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The social work profession has long touted a dual focus on service within micro and macro realms of practice, preparing social workers to serve marginalized populations at the boundary between the powerful and the powerless. Research, however, has shown that macrosocial work, or policy practice, has diminished. Current research has been inconsistent in identifying predictive factors of increased policy practice. With recent efforts by the profession to bolster waning policy practice among social workers, it is vital to identify factors that predict higher engagement. Theoretical frameworks suggest that professional socialization in policy practice as a group norm, having resources to participate in policy practice, being psychologically engaged in politics, and engaging in recruitment networks tends to increase policy practice. Based on these frameworks, professional socialization, policy practice preparedness, type of employment, and social media use were considered as potential predictive factors of engagement. The purpose of this study was to analyze these factors that may predict policy practice among social workers. Survey research was used to gather data from practicing social workers in Illinois (N = 93). A hierarchical multiple regression analysis empirically validated that higher levels of perceived professional socialization and policy practice preparedness both predicted higher levels of policy practice. Additionally, social workers who reported primary roles as administrative were more likely to engage in policy practice than direct practitioners. The results point to a need for the social work profession to bolster knowledge and skills in policy practice, reinforce professional identification in policy practice, and mobilize leaders to recruit and mentor direct practitioners.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my incredible husband, Tom Broers. You are always patient, supportive, and willing to pick up the pieces I leave behind when I get overwhelmed with work. You politely feign interest when I want to talk about my research and you celebrate my milestones with me. I say all the time that I do not deserve you, but I am sure appreciative that God saw fit to send you my way. I love you and I thank you for your support through the last three years of doctoral work, I could not have gotten through it without you!

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A huge thank you is owed to my mother, LaVerne Jordan for your encouragement and help. She proofs almost everything I write, and probably deserves an honorary degree in social work after all she has read. Thank you also to my dad, Gary Jordan, who always encourages me, celebrates my achievements, and makes sure to tell me he is proud of me. I love you both!

Thank you to my husband, Tom Broers, and my boys, Ben and Alex, for tolerating hours and hours of me sitting at my laptop, and 3 years of housework taking a backseat to schoolwork. I pray that our kids someday realize that if I can do this, they can do anything also. I love you all!

To my beautiful friend, Heather Oosterhoff, thank you for always encouraging me and celebrating every milestone with me. I pray I can celebrate your milestones just as well as you did mine!

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (2008) names social justice as one of its six core values and one of six main ethical standards. In addition, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; 2008) mandates that all social work students be taught and demonstrate competence in advancing human rights, social and economic justice, and engaging in policy practice. Social workers would find themselves sorely inadequate in meeting professional mandates if these macrolevel efforts were not a meaningful component of their social work practice. However, over the last several decades, researchers have suggested that social workers in fact have not claimed engagement at the macrolevel to be a meaningful component of practice (Bernklau Halvor, 2016; Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Engagement postmatriculation has shown a lack in the vigor expected to be promulgated throughout formal social work education, although not all social workers have reported feeling adequately prepared for this practice (Bernklau Halvor, 2012; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). The social work profession may be clinging to its social justice mission through policy and education, but this has not been well reflected in practice.

The current political landscape in the United States, however, has suddenly revived citizen activism nationwide at rates unseen for half a century (Manning & Kelly, 2017; Waddell, 2017; Wheeler & Shelbourne, 2017). Only 2 months after a highly contentious election, unprecedented numbers of individuals were participating in protests,

petitions, and legislative advocacy (Wiggs, 2017). Fueled by nationwide division and alarm and galvanized through anger and fear, individuals were utilizing social media as a new platform for sharing information and mobilizing action (Larson, 2017; Przybyla, 2017; Wiggs, 2017). In order to work toward engagement sustainability among social workers and renew commitment to social justice, it is critical that researchers seek to establish current rates of engagement among social workers and understand the factors that predict higher levels of policy practice.

Background

The profession of social work derives its foundational tenets from two historical ideologies of helping: direct practice at the individual or group level and policy practice at the system or macrolevel. In the 19th century, Mary Richmond established an individual, or casework, approach to human service through the development of the Charity Organization Society (COS; Addams, 1938; Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012). The focus of the COS was to remediate individual problems by meeting needs, promoting individual change, and problem solving (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012). The work of the COS was limited by the ideology that individual problems, such as poverty and mental illness, were the result of individual deficiencies instead of wider society issues (Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012).

Jane Addams, recognized that many individual problems were the result of systemic deficiencies and oppression. She advanced a social justice, environmental model through her Settlement House Movement (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal,

2012). Workers within the Settlement House Movement focused on finding solutions to individual problems by identifying and advocating for change in social structures, developing community resources, and empowering marginalized populations to advocate for their own needs while understanding society contributions to the issues (Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012).

Over time, these two traditions became the ideological bedrock of social work as a unique helping profession, and all social workers are tasked with meeting the needs of the individual while simultaneously recognizing the need for and advocating for social change (Brown, Livermore, & Ball, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Mosley, 2013; Weiss-Gal, 2016). As a result, social workers have served on the front line of social change and progress over the last century (Hylton, 2015). The historical precedent and demonstration of a social justice imperative in social work is well established.

Ethical Mandates and Core Values

The NASW (2008) is the primary professional organization for social work and holds social justice as one of the core values and ethical standards expected of social workers. The NASW has established social workers' ethical responsibilities to include broader society and mandates social action from local to global levels, in social and political action, and in efforts to bring about equality and prevent discrimination. The CSWE (2008) has mandated formal social work educational programs to prepare students for practice in areas that meet these expectations: education in advancing human rights, social and economic justice, and engaging in policy practice. The dual focus on

individual and social change meets a critical need in society, promoting policy that benefits large populations and empowering marginalized populations (Bent-Goodley, 2014). Without the oversight and intervention of social workers trained not only in advocacy practice, but in the ability to assess the social implications of policy, social constructions that have historically plagued the marginalized, oppressed, and powerless will likely increase along with constructions that favor the privileged and powerful (Felderhoff, Hoefer, & Watson, 2016; Jones & Truell, 2012).

Barriers to Implementation

While policy practice engagement is a critical tenet of the profession of social work, researchers have demonstrated that social workers have been abandoning policy practice as a meaningful foundation of practice (Bliss, 2015; Halvor, 2012; Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Social workers have been accused of relegating the social justice mission to little more than a slogan or rhetoric (Kam, 2014). Social workers have been found to overwhelmingly support the ideology of policy practice but have been mostly spectators in the actual practice, expecting others to do the actual engagement (Felderhoff et al., 2016). Social workers may like the idea of social change but fall short in actual practice and application.

Several factors are at least partially responsible for this phenomenon. The movement toward evidence-based practices (EBP) has helped the profession of social work to earn credibility (Kam, 2014). Research and best practices are utilized to demonstrate the effectiveness of direct practice services, which helps to gain and

maintain funding streams; however, EBP is based from a medical model and is best applied to a clinical practice model of social work (Kam, 2014). Furthermore, an EBP focus emphasizes interventions and diminishes the importance of *cause*, a key motivator for social justice efforts (Kam, 2014). Therefore, although a focus on EBP may have helped the profession gain credibility, it has simultaneously diminished the value of social work as a unique, dual focus, helping profession (Kam, 2014).

An additional problem is that social work has increasingly been drawn to a clinical, therapeutic focus of care. Many social workers are working strictly in direct practice or private practice and have been criticized for abandoning service to the poor (Kam, 2014). Privatization of social services has also impacted the relationship of social work to the larger society. With more reliance on bureaucracy and government to keep agency doors open and services funded, there is motivation to treat decision-makers more like pet tigers than like instruments of change (Kam, 2014). While not good excuses for the decline in social justice, these are valid reasons for waning social justice ideologies.

The Current Political Landscape

While a decline in policy practice has been established in the literature, recent current events may have served to reignite a policy practice among social workers. The 2016 presidential race, with candidates representing opposite ends of the political spectrum, escalated a smoldering divide not only along partisan lines, but among the American people (Przybyla, 2017). With control over heated issues such as gun control, unemployment, racial tension, immigration, women's issues, and healthcare hanging in

the balance and candidates demonstrating unprecedented dishonest and unethical behavior, motivation to engage in the political sphere was high (Przybyla, 2017). Such divisive issues began to galvanize concerned citizens of the United States, and around the world people began to not only reengage in political action, but at unprecedented levels (Przybyla, 2017).

Following the presidential win of Donald Trump and his subsequent installation as President of the United States, staggering rates of individuals participated in protest marches, such as the Women's March, which drew crowds of between 3.6 and 4.6 million participants in total around the world (Waddell, 2017). Petitions also became a popular method of political activism. Petition websites such as the official White House petition site and Change.com witnessed record petition signatures, with citizens advocating for the release of President Trump's tax returns and for Electoral College voters to cast an anti-Trump vote (Change, 2016; Manning & Kelly, 2017; We the People, 2017).

Phone calls and e-mails to legislators also increased dramatically about numerous issues of immediate concern to constituents. Federal legislators reported having great difficulty handling the volume of phone calls and e-mails and that the number of constituent contacts had dramatically increased (Wheeler & Shelbourne, 2017). Protests opposing Trump's policy decisions also began almost immediately following the inauguration. A travel ban on certain Middle Eastern countries drew thousands of citizens who demonstrated their opposition, including over 10,000 in the United

Kingdom and around the world (Collingwood, Lajevardi & Oskooii, 2017; Grinberg & McLaughlin, 2017).

Collectively, this unprecedented activism has been called "America's golden age of political activism" (Wiggs, 2017, para. 1). Against the backdrop of prior political passivity, it appears that the American people revived a democratic spirit. The profession does not yet know how active social workers, specifically, have been in this renewed activism, nor how such activism can be maintained beyond the current political landscape. It is critical to establish the factors that triggered social workers, long dormant in their advocacy efforts, to now engage. I found no literature that had yet explored these questions in the current political landscape.

Problem Statement

The problem I addressed in this study was the decrease in policy practice among social work practitioners and the need to create sustainable rates of active policy practice engagement. Kam (2014) found that social justice efforts should be an expected role in social work practice, yet many social workers believed that it was not part of their defined duties of employment. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) discussed the transmission of professional skills and values through role modeling and emphasized that social workers must be trained and socialized into the social justice role of the profession. This suggests that professional socialization through employment and professional networking, which often occurs through social media today, is critical to engagement (Larson, 2017; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012; Sitter & Curnew, 2016). Other researchers have pointed out that

people become politically engaged when they have resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks, all of which are more accessible to social workers who are engaged in social media and professional networking as well as employed by an agency that emphasizes policy practice (Felderhoff et al., 2016). This research supports the importance of policy practice knowledge, skills, and networking within the profession.

Although the aforementioned researchers illustrated numerous factors that influence level of policy practice, little is known about the specific factors that do or do not tend to significantly influence such behavior among social workers. Although activism rates are rising in general, it is not yet known if social workers are themselves engaging at higher rates than in the past, nor what particular factors predict engagement in current times. Given such, further research was warranted to determine the current factors that most influence policy practice. Understanding this can assist social work educators, supervisors, and practitioners in responding to the need of increasing and/or sustaining policy practice in the most effective manner.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this nonexperimental, quantitative survey study was to examine the current rates of policy practice and the factors that may predict higher levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois. The primary mission of the social work profession is to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people" (NASW, 2008, para.1). Policy practice is an expected role of the profession of social work (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; NASW, 2008). Policy practice activities serve this

mission at macrolevels, going beyond direct, individual services by benefitting entire populations of vulnerable individuals (Brown et al., 2015; Kam, 2014). While researchers have shown that many social work students and social workers who engage in professional organizations do not adequately engage in policy practice activities, little is known about the levels of policy practice among the entire population of social workers (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Swank, 2012). Determining the factors that predict policy practice among social workers will help the profession improve strategies that increase levels of policy practice. Increasing these practices will strengthen adherence to the mission of social work, but most importantly, will benefit vulnerable populations when social workers strengthen advocacy efforts in support of policy that benefits the disenfranchised.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The results of this study provide the field with information that will help determine the predictive factors of policy practice engagement among social workers in Illinois. The research question and hypotheses I addressed in the study were:

RQ: How are social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use predictively related to levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois, as measured by the Weiss-Gal, Gal, & Tayri-Swartz (2013) policy practice engagement subscale?

H_0: There is not a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional

socialization, and social media use, and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

H_A: There is a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use, and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks for the Study

The social work profession is in need of pioneers in the field to resurrect the mission of social justice. Since research has demonstrated that many practitioners have not been engaging in policy practice and that social justice ideologies decrease after formal education is complete, it is insufficient to place the burden of this professional socialization on the shoulders of academia alone (Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Some social workers aptly engage in both micro- and macrobranches of the profession simultaneously, and others firmly rest their practices in the microarena (Bliss, 2015; Gitterman, 2014; Kam, 2014). If it is understood what factors contribute to engagement in all aspects of social work, the profession will be better able to implement strategies, during formal education and beyond, that engage and sustain more social workers in policy practice. One theoretical foundation, the social identity theory, and one

conceptual framework, the citizen voluntarism model, provided the foundation for this study.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory buttresses the idea that professional socialization in policy practice can revive the social justice mission. This theory states that group identity becomes part of an individual's self-concept and is based on knowledge of being a part of the group and the significance perceived from that membership. Jackson, Miller, Frew, Gilbreath, and Dillman (2011) reported that when individuals perceive a group identity, "they are more trusting and supportive of their fellow group members, are motivated to work hard to obtain common goals, and are willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of the group" (p. 345). Common goals on policy practice engagement are therefore critical to communicate among the profession. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) extended this idea by referring to professional socialization as a critical method of transmitting norms, roles, and values, stating that this is transmitted through professional role modeling, recruiting, and organizational culture. While educators and schools of social work can offer such role models and culture, the social work field often does not. Social work leaders must become such role models and create organizational cultures that support social justice as expected roles among direct service workers.

Another way to consider common goals is as normative expectations. Jackson et al. (2011) used social identity theory to propose that group identity has a positive impact through two means: "normative expectations (what are the other members of my group

going to do?) and goal transformation (a shift from being concerned about 'me' to being concerned about 'we')" (p. 344). When social workers observe leaders and others engaging in social justice efforts and consider it a normative expectation of the profession, personal dislikes and challenges regarding policy practice engagement become less important than work for the common good.

Citizen Voluntarism Model

The United States is a democracy, and as such, relies on citizens to engage in decision-making, primarily through representation. While participation is voluntary, many agree that participation is a civic duty. Social workers, however, should consider this a professional duty as well as a civic duty (Felderhoff et al., 2016). The civic voluntarism model was created to propose reasons why some engage civically and others do not (Felderhoff et al., 2016). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) theorized that level of involvement rests on three components: resources to participate, psychological engagement in politics, and attachment to recruitment networks that solicit engagement. In this study, it was critical for me to assess these factors of civic engagement as potential predictors of policy practice.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a quantitative, nonexperimental, correlational design, specifically a descriptive, cross-sectional approach. A multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the predictive nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. A sampling of social workers from a range of social work

fields, levels of education, and social work roles completed an electronic survey on social work policy practice.

Definition of Terms

Social work scholars and practitioners utilize a number of terms to describe policy practice: Some that describe similar activities and others that describe specific activities.

Policy practice: Weiss-Gal (2016) defined this as "efforts to change policies in legislative, agency, and community settings, whether by establishing new policies, improving existing ones, or defeating policy initiatives of other people" (p. 2). Policy practice can broadly describe a myriad of macrolevel activities such as social change activities, social activism, macropractice, civic engagement, policy advocacy, social reform, political participation, cause advocacy, and civic voluntarism (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mellinger, 2014).

Social justice: Efforts that have been broadly described as attempts to convey how a society's social contract should be formulated in order to protect those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed and lead to fair distribution of social goods (Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014).

Civic engagement: Includes such activities as campaigning; contacting media and public officials; engaging in government, civic, and political undertakings; initiating and signing petitions; protesting; testifying at committee hearings and government meetings; and volunteering (Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013).

Policy advocacy: Mosley (2013a) described this as "advocacy that is directed at changing policies or regulations that affect practice or group well-being" (p. 231).

Assumptions

I made several assumptions in this study. The first was that participants of the study volunteered willingly, and therefore, their willingness did not bias the study. The second was that participants made efforts to answer each question with fidelity. I also assumed that the survey questions, based on established research, were appropriate for measuring what was intended to be measured and that as trained social workers, the participants would understand the context of the survey questions. Finally, I also assumed that, prior to beginning the survey, participants truthfully responded that they possessed a degree in social work. This was critical since I was specifically assessing policy practice among social workers in the study.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I sought to determine factors that predict policy practice among social workers. Since policy practice is a primary tenet of the profession and expected of social workers, only social workers were included in this study. Other social service providers are not held to such expectations and were, therefore, not included in this study. Furthermore, there are many potential predictors of policy practice, including factors such as the socioeconomic level in a person's upbringing and level of parents' education; however, it was beyond the scope of this study to assess every potential predictor. I chose the independent variables of this study due to their established relevance in the

literature but also for their usefulness in promoting increased policy practice in the profession if found to be relevant predictors.

Generalizability is limited to policy practice among social workers only and cannot be construed to reflect policy practice among other helping professionals. Since this study was completed in Illinois only, the results also cannot be considered fully generalizable to other states. States vary in political ideologies and each state NASW chapter may engage social workers differently, leading to increased or decreased policy practice among social workers in each state.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation was in the instruments themselves. Taking into consideration that policy practice varies over time, the instruments appeared to have good reliability. The survey questions on policy practice were created in Israel and adapted for use in the United States. While only minor wording and choices were changed to reflect similar organizations or practices in the United States, it should be noted that this could be a limitation of the study.

Another limitation was in being able to collect a representative sample of the entire social work population in Illinois. Since many social workers do not hold memberships with professional organizations or licensures, there are many who would be difficult to find. Additionally, since many *grassroots* or entry-level direct service social workers typically receive low incomes and spend a vast majority of their time in direct service, they are likely highly underrepresented in membership lists. At the other end of

the spectrum, primarily administrative social workers may become disconnected with the social work profession, focusing on leadership and administrative identification more than the social work profession. In these cases, administrative social workers may no longer hold social work professional memberships or licenses and also be underrepresented. For these reasons, I employed additional measures beyond membership lists to discover social workers, including website and social media searches.

Significance for Social Change

The social work profession has not been living up to the policy practice mandate (Kam, 2012; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). It is critical that researchers seek to understand the historic causes of social justice apathy and current rising rates of engagement. With such information, leaders can work to discover solutions that restore and sustain the profession's policy practice commitment.

If the data collected in this study substantiated that particular factors tend to predict increased levels of policy practice among social workers, including the impact of social media, education, and professional socialization, the implications for the social work profession would be many. First, the results would support further focus on quality formal education in policy practice at the undergraduate and graduate levels of education. Social workers must learn both why policy practice is critical and how to engage in these often confusing and intimidating practices as well as grasp the necessity of engagement at both the micro- and macrolevels of social work.

Second, the results would support efforts to engage individual social workers and social work employers to utilize social media and networking to inform and engage in policy practice. This could occur by encouraging social workers to join and actively engage in social media platforms, creating and promoting social issue awareness and engagement opportunities, and role modeling and inviting active engagement in policy practice activities, such as advocating to legislators, protesting and marching, petitioning, or joining community committees or advocacy groups.

Summary

Policy practice has long been an expected role for individuals identifying as part of the social work profession, yet for many decades has been relegated a small portion of service efforts among social workers. While several relevant phenomena illuminate why such a decline has occurred, they do not justify nor excuse the decline. The purpose of policy practice is to serve as advocates for the marginalized populations social workers serve, and the lack of such practice leaves such populations at risk for harm and exploitation (Jansson, 2014). A recent resurgence in civic engagement among the population of the United States in general provides hope that social workers too are increasing policy practice engagement, although it is critical to statistically assess such engagement and the factors that predict higher levels of engagement. In the next chapter, I will provide an in-depth analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of the study, the background of policy practice in social work, and the current political landscape.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review, I will substantiate the need for further research on not only the current levels of policy practice among social workers but also the identification of predictive factors that can be utilized to increase future levels of policy practice. The social work profession was firmly established on the provision of services at both individual and system levels in order to advocate for social justice and create social change that benefits marginalized individuals (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014; Mosley, 2013a; NASW, 2008). While researchers have reported a decades-long, troubling decline in social work efforts to engage in the civic and political activities that can lead to social change, recent phenomena such as the 2016 U.S. election and the growth of social media have led to rising engagement among the general population (Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014; Mellinger, 2014; Przybyla, 2017; Swank, 2012).

The problem I addressed in this study is the decline of social justice and policy practice among social work practitioners and the need to create sustainable rates of active engagement. As the profession pursues strategies for reengaging its social workers in political and civic engagement, it is critical to explore the current engagement levels of social workers and the impact of potential predictive factors on motivating such engagement. To that end, the purpose of this nonexperimental, quantitative survey study was to examine levels of policy practice engagement and the factors that may predict levels of social justice and policy practice among social workers in Illinois.

I grounded this study in two theoretical foundations. Together, these foundations establish that individuals tend to engage in policy practice when the following factors exist: resources, psychological engagement, recruitment, and professional socialization into policy practice (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2011). Policy practice is a multidisciplinary activity and empirical research on practice engagement and predictors of engagement is published in peer-reviewed journals from not only the social work profession but from other professions such as organizational psychology, technology, political science, and sociology. I conducted digital searches of the literature through the use of databases that included Google Scholar, PsychINFO, SocINDEX, Political Science Database, and PscyARTICLES. Search terms used included: *civic engagement, social work policy practice, social media, macro practice, social justice,* and *advocacy*. The articles I used as sources for this research were mostly obtained digitally although some articles were obtained in print form. Almost all the literature obtained had been published within the last 5 years with the exception of seminal work on the conceptual framework and theoretical foundation. Many of the resources on current events and levels of engagement were culled from online news publications as they had yet to be included in scholarly literature.

In this chapter, I will present the civic voluntarism model, a conceptual framework of motivating factors of political and civic engagement, as well a review of the social identity theory applied in this study to illustrate the need to reinvest in the development of social justice practices as a professional identity and social norm for

social work. In addition, the history of social work and the profession's ethical mandates and values will be reviewed. Since political and civic engagement is referred to in many different terms and reflects a broad array of activities, in this chapter I will establish the activities being referred to in this study. In order to portray the challenges of engagement, barriers to policy practice engagement will be explored and the literature on levels of engagement, both in recent decades and currently, will be reported. Finally, research reflecting known predictors of engagement will be offered as evidence of use for further exploration in this study.

Theoretical Foundation

Social justice as a distinct mission of the profession of social work must be resurrected. Social work educators typically bear the burden of professionally socializing social workers, yet since research has demonstrated that many practitioners have not been engaging in policy practice, and social justice ideologies decrease after formal education is complete, it is insufficient for educators to bear this alone (Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Some social workers aptly engage in both micro- and macro-branches of the profession simultaneously and others firmly rest their practices in the microarena (Bliss, 2015; Gitterman, 2014; Kam, 2014. If it is understood what factors contribute to engagement in all aspects of social work, the profession will be better able to implement strategies, during formal education and beyond, that engage and sustain more social workers in policy practice. Multiple theoretical foundations exist suggesting that factors, such as access to resources, professional socialization into policy practice, opportunities

to practice, and motivation to engage in policy practice, tend to predict engagement (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2011). These theories include the civic voluntarism model and the social identity theory.

Citizen Voluntarism Model

The United States is a democracy, and as such, relies on citizens to engage in decision-making, primarily through representation. One of social work's historical foundations, the Settlement House Movement, capitalized on this democratic process. Warren (2010) described the Settlement House Movement as one of the early groups responsible for launching the practice of community organizing, providing resources to arm marginalized populations and concerned citizens with the ammunition needed to advocate for change. Addams (1938) wrote that one of the three traditions on which the Hull House was grounded included improving conditions in the local community. While participation in civic engagement is voluntary, many agree that participation is a civic duty. Social workers, however, should consider this a professional duty as well as a civic duty (Felderhoff et al., 2016). The civic voluntarism model was first posited by Verba et al. (1995) in response to an inquiry as to why some engage civically and others do not. Simply stated, their findings showed that citizens tend not to participate when they cannot participate, do not desire to participate, or were not asked to participate (Verba et al., 1995). Conversely, Verba et al. theorized that level of involvement rests on three components: resources to participate, psychological engagement in politics, and attachment to recruitment networks that solicit engagement.

Resources to participate. Resources needed to participate in civic engagement include tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets generally refer to money and the resources that money can buy, such as travel, advocacy materials, trainings, or admission to political events (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015). Intangible resources include such assets as time available to engage, information, skills in civic and political engagement, and education (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015; Nygård & Jakobsson, 2013). According to Verba et al. (1995), time and money were the two most critical resources needed to successfully engage; however, while time is available to many across all socioeconomic levels, money is not (Kim & Khang, 2014). Even so, the impact of money on civic and political engagement is limited by the civic and political skills of the individual (Kim & Khang, 2014).

Civic and political skills include "the communications and organizational abilities that allow citizens to use time and money effectively in political life" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 304). While money itself can certainly lessen the challenge of establishing a voice within civic and political networks, its power is significantly lessened in the hands of an individual who lacks the skill to use it wisely. Communication skills needed to influence leaders and legislators are procured primarily through formal education and experience, which can naturally favor those higher on the socioeconomic scale. Kim and Khang (2014), however, suggested that the current technology age is shifting this imbalance because social media is accessible to almost anyone and requires little time for engagement. Further, information on any topic regarding civic and political engagement,

from current events, political analysis, and civics lessons, to instructions on advocacy and engagement, are readily available through the Internet and social media (Kim & Khang, 2014).

Despite this new and growing benefit to the general population, formal education continues to be an important and valuable resource for foundational knowledge in civic and political engagement. Felderhoff et al. (2016) pointed out that social workers reported their formal education in policy practice lacked depth and quality compared to their education in direct service. The civic voluntarism model suggests that social workers who developed civic and political skills through social work policy courses and postgraduate professional development trainings are more likely to successfully engage (Verba et al. (1995)).

Psychological engagement in politics. Psychological engagement in civics and politics also predicts active engagement (Verba et al., 1995). This engagement includes interest, efficacy, and identification. These types of engagement are interrelated yet distinct factors (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015).

Political interest. Like any activity, motivation to engage increases with interest in political activity (Bernklau Halvor, 2016; Kim & Khang, 2014). While this seems to be a simple concept, it is important to note that interest can be attained through exposure and experience. Although many may say they are not interested in politics, this could easily change given person, places, or things that pique interest.

Political efficacy. Political efficacy refers to "the feeling that participation makes a difference" (Kim & Khang, 2014, p. 116). One group of researchers went so far as to claim that political efficacy is "at the core of beliefs and values needed to participate in a democratic society" (Moeller, de Vreese, Esser, & Kunz, 2014, p. 2). Three dimensions of efficacy have been identified: external efficacy, the sense that leaders are responsive to engagement; internal efficacy, the belief that an individual is competent to engage; and information efficacy, the confidence held about an individual's level of political knowledge (Moeller et al., 2014).

Political identification. Identification with a political party, organization, or political belief system also predicts engagement. Although partisanship can be viewed negatively, aligning with a group, from which a person derives a belief system, provides a framework that gives meaning to political information (Weeks & Holbert, 2013). A strong affiliation is itself a predictor as Weeks and Holbert (2013) found "there is strong empirical evidence that political party identification serves as a positive predictor of a wide range of political behaviors" (p. 217).

Psychological engagement is a critical component in the predictive factors of engagement (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015). Resources alone do not adequately motivate engagement (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015). Just like no amount of expensive golf clubs, access to green fees, nor use of golf carts could interest me in playing golf, no amount of time nor money can motivate individuals to

engage politically if they lack interest, efficacy, and identification with a belief system (see Kim & Khang, 2014).

Attachment to recruitment networks that solicit engagement. Recruitment, sometimes called mobilization, involves direct efforts by another person or group to engage an individual in civic or political activity (Kim & Khang, 2014; Nygård & Jakobsson, 2013). Analogous to the concept that resources are inadequate for psychological engagement, so too many individuals who possess both resources and psychological engagement will fail to actively engage unless recruited (Kim & Khang, 2014). Recruitment is a critical component to engagement.

Recruitment itself can occur within many settings and take many forms. While organizations such as settlement houses historically served as recruitment networks, today organizations such as churches; workplaces; and other social, service, or professional groups provide social networks within which individuals are more frequently and easily exposed to recruitment opportunities (Kim & Khang, 2014). Recruitment might occur through a direct request (to sign a petition, join a march, attend a hearing), or through an indirect request given en masse to a group or provided electronically (via e-mail, social media, the Internet; Kim & Khang, 2014). The invitation itself, whether personally or collectively, can serve as a trigger for engagement, mobilizing individuals who otherwise may sit on the sidelines of engagement (Kim & Khang, 2014). Social workers, then, who have been actively recruited or invited to participate are more likely to engage in policy practice if sufficient resources are provided and accessed, and if they

possess psychological engagement. It is critical not only to confirm these potential predictors of policy practice but to utilize these factors to actively equip, engage, and recruit social workers in formal education and in the field.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory further buttresses the idea that professional socialization in policy practice can revive the social justice mission. This theory states that group identity becomes part of a self-concept, and is based on knowledge of being a part of the group and the significance perceived from that membership (Jackson et al., 2011). "When people identify with a group, they are more trusting and supportive of their fellow group members, are motivated to work hard to obtain common goals, and are willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of the group" (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 345). Common goals are therefore critical to communicate among the profession. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) extended this idea by referring to professional socialization as a critical method of transmitting norms, roles, and values, stating that this is transmitted through professional role models and organizational culture.

While educators and schools of social work can offer such role models and culture in formal education, the social work field often does not. O'Sullivan (2013) pointed out that social workers become aware of injustice, the impetus for engagement in social justice, when working closely with injustices. This suggests that social workers employed in roles distanced from marginalized populations or clients experiencing injustices are less inclined to engagement. Israeli researchers Makaros and Weiss-Gal

(2014) also hypothesized that the type of social work employment predicted level of engagement. These authors compared the social justice orientations of caseworkers, who focus on individual and family counseling and interventions, and community support workers (CSWs), who focus on serving clients through addressing social and community problems, organizing and advocacy, and creating change in their social systems (Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014). The authors found that social workers who work in roles with a social orientation have greater social justice orientations than social workers working in roles with primarily individual orientations. While all social workers are taught that social justice engagement is a tenet of the profession, fields of social work reflecting more individualized practice, especially those more removed from injustices, likely do not perpetuate a social identity that includes policy practice and provide less professional socialization toward becoming engaged.

Jackson et al. (2011) also used social identity theory to conceptualize the impact of group identity on the establishment of behavioral orientations. These orientations are established through normative expectations, or the expectations established through group norms, and goal transformation, shifting from self-centered to a group-centered ideology (Jackson, 2011). It is critical to consider type of social work employment as a possible predictive factor of engagement. When social workers observe leaders and peers engaging in social justice efforts and consider it a normative expectation of their social work employment, personal distance from injustice and an individual orientation become less important than work for the common good.

Historical Foundations of Social Work

The profession of social work derives its foundational tenets from two historical ideologies of helping. These ideologies were promulgated by the COS movement and the Settlement House Movement (Addams, 1902, 1938; Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014; Mosley, 2013a). These two approaches laid the foundation for the dual focus of social work on micro practice and macro practice.

The Charity Organization Society

In the 19th century, Mary Richmond established an individual, or casework, approach to human service through the development of the COS (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014). The focus of the COS was to remediate individual problems by meeting needs, promoting individual change, and problem solving (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2013). The work of the COS was limited by the ideology that individual problems, such as poverty and mental illness, were the result of individual deficiencies instead of wider society issues (Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014). The language used within this paradigm of care was fraught with descriptions that perpetuated stratification and a delineation of deserving versus undeserving poor: "the incompetent, unfit, immoral, feckless, or fallen poor, the recalcitrant or disreputable poor, the surplus, residual, criminal, undeserving and un-helpable poor: the threatening or dangerous classes" (Hyslop, 2012, p. 412). Considered *scientific philanthropy*, the COS focused on complex assessment of the deserving state of an individual in need in order to distribute resources wisely (Gitterman, 2014, p. 599). Richmond later developed this

focus on addressing individual problems into what not only became a clinical, evidence-based medical model of social work, but in doing so, assisted in establishing social work as a legitimate profession (Gitterman, 2014).

The Settlement House Movement

Rapid industrialization at the end of the 19th century was a major impetus for the development of the alternate focus of social work: systems perspectives and macro practice (Gitterman, 2014). Jane Addams championed such a perspective with the development of the Settlement House Movement. Suffering, they claimed, in contrast to the COS perspective, was more a result of one's environment than personal shortcomings, and rather than focus on individual charity work, they focused on engaging in and advocating for that environment (Addams, 1938; Gitterman, 2014; Steiner, 1929). Jane Addams, recognizing a myriad of systemic deficiencies and oppression that bifurcated society, advanced a social justice, environmental model of practice (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014). Steiner (1929) stated, "Their interest was in a more effective democracy in building up helpful social relationships and in developing a public sentiment that would insist upon an improvement in social conditions" (pp. 334-335) Workers with the Settlement House Movement focused on finding solutions to individual problems by identifying and working to change social structures, developing community resources, and empowering marginalized populations to advocate for their own needs while understanding societal contributions to the issues (Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014).

It is critical to note that this focus on system change and macro involvement evolved from what would now be considered evidence based practice. Social workers recognized that direct service alone was insufficient for addressing client problems, leading to the development of a new paradigm of thinking: the social question (Reisch & Jani, 2012). The social question obliges practitioners to consider issues beyond the individual him/herself. Such issues include:

> poverty, pauperization, societal disintegration and endangered social cohesion, as well as the origins of social politics. [The social question] is concerned with the boundaries between normal and deviant, integration and disintegration, as well as with those vulnerable and disconnected people who have to survive at the boundaries of society…about processes of social disqualification, vulnerability, disconnectedness and misrecognition that lead to 'disaffiliation'. (Heite, 2012, p. 4)

As such, Heite (2012) recognized social work as a profession whose historic efforts have been situated "*at the border*" between the powerful and the powerless, the haves and the have-nots (p. 5). Social change that benefits many individuals within populations occurs when systems and inequities that maintain such borders are recognized and challenged.

The Emergence of a Dual Focus

Over time, the two traditions, micro practice and macro practice, became the ideological bedrock of social work as a unique helping profession, and all social workers are tasked with meeting the needs of the individual while simultaneously recognizing the

need for and advocacy of social change (Brown et al., 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Mosley, 2013a; Weiss-Gal, 2016). As a result, social workers have served on the front line of social change and progress over the last century, initiating and supporting efforts for recovery during the Great Depression, the creation of Social Security and iterations of the welfare state, and civil, voting, and equal rights (Hylton, 2015). The historical precedent and demonstration of a social justice imperative in social work is well established.

Ethical Mandates and Core Values

As social work grew as a profession, so did the establishment of professional norms and mandates. The NASW (2008) is the primary professional organization for social work and holds social justice as one of the core values and ethical standards expected of social workers. The NASW (2008) has established social workers' ethical responsibilities to include broader society and mandates social action from local to global levels, in social and political action, and in efforts to bring about equality and prevent discrimination. The CSWE (2008) has mandated formal social work educational programs to prepare students for practice in areas that meet these expectations: education in advancing human rights, social and economic justice, and engaging in policy practice. The International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work also have both revised their definition of social work in 2000 to include that "principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work" (Kam, 2014, p. 4).

Such mandates must be appropriated status beyond rhetoric or adherence to historical practices. Kam (2014) advocated that social justice be promoted as *the* principal guiding value of the profession. The dual focus on individual and social change meets a critical need in society, promoting policy that benefits large populations and empowering marginalized populations: practices that in fact were promised to the American people in the Constitution of the United States that established a government for its *people* (Bent-Goodley, 2014). Without the oversight and intervention of social workers trained not only in advocacy practice, but in the ability to assess the social implications of policy, social constructions that have historically plagued the marginalized, oppressed, and powerless will likely increase along with constructions that favor the privileged and powerful (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Jones & Truell, 2012).

Social Justice, Policy Practice, and other Macro Activities

It is challenging to conceptualize social justice practice within a singular definition. Not only is the practice described using a multitude of different terms, but it encapsulates a vast array of actions that are often misunderstood. Politics, for example, is a term often relegated to a description of activities within the legislative realm. However, Reisch and Jani (2012) pointed out that politics is a process through which "institutions, relationships, language and activities, as social constructions, reflect and perpetuate power differences in material, cultural and psychological ways" and within which social workers "embody societal efforts to create and sustain power arrangements affecting both

clients and workers" (p. 1134). Before continuing a discussion on these broad social work activities, it is critical to establish a common understanding of such actions.

Terminology

Social work scholars and practitioners utilize a number of terms to describe social justice practice: some that describe similar activities and others that describe specific activities. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) have conceded that there is no one accepted definition for *social justice*. Social justice efforts have been broadly described as attempts to convey how a society's social contract should be formulated in order to protect those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed, and lead to fair distribution of social goods (Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014). Weiss-Gal (2016) utilized a definition that described *policy practice* as "efforts to change policies in legislative, agency, and community settings, whether by establishing new policies, improving existing ones, or defeating policy initiatives of other people" (p. 2). Terms utilized to describe such practices include social change activities, social activism, macro practice, civic engagement, policy advocacy, social reform, policy practice, political participation, cause advocacy, and civic voluntarism (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mellinger, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Some terms, like civic engagement, broadly describe a myriad of macro-level activities, while others, like cause advocacy, more specifically reference advocacy efforts toward a particular cause. Mosley (2013a) defined policy advocacy as "advocacy that is directed at changing policies or regulations that affect practice or group well-being" (p. 231). Mellinger

(2014) clarified that all such efforts are aimed at challenging perceived social injustices in order to bring about social change. Whatever one chooses to name it, these efforts are expected practices for social workers (NASW, 2008).

Activities

The activities that constitute these social justice umbrellas are even broader. Hylton (2015) described civic engagement as including such activities as protesting, engaging in government, civic, and political undertakings, volunteering, campaigning, contacting media and public officials, testifying at committee hearings and government meetings, and initiating and signing petitions. Felderhoff et al. (2016) broke these activities down into two categories: direct and indirect participation. Direct participation encompasses directly communicating with legislators and local officials through email, phone calls, and/or letter writing, and voicing concerns directly through protests, marches, and demonstrations. Indirect participation includes efforts to influence electoral and legislative results and engaging civically through volunteer efforts (Felderhoff et al., 2016). Mosley (2013a) offered a description of four main types of advocacy activities: client, cause, legislative, and administrative, which all take place using insider tactics (direct to decision makers) or outsider tactics (indirectly through protests, petitions, etc.). Social justice efforts can occur locally or internationally through very direct and indirect methods, but all social justice efforts are aimed at bending societal decision-making toward the benefit of disenfranchised individuals.

Barriers to Implementation

While social justice efforts are indicated to be an important base of the profession of social work, researchers have demonstrated that social workers are abandoning social justice as a meaningful foundation of practice (Bliss, 2015; Bernklau Halvor, 2012; Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Social workers have been accused of relegating the social justice mission to little more than a slogan or rhetoric (Kam, 2014). While some researchers have shown that social workers may civically engage at higher rates than the general public, others found that less than half of social workers are politically involved, and two-thirds of social workers reported a preference for individual, rather than social justice, practice (Brown et al., 2015; Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Social workers have been found to overwhelmingly support the ideology of social justice practice but are spectators in the actual practice: most hold expectations that other social workers will engage in the social justice work (Felderhoff et al., 2016). Bernklau Halvor (2016) found political participation and activism to be moderate at best but inconsistent, and that half of licensed social workers surveyed believed they were not adequately prepared to engage in advocacy. Social workers may like the idea of social change but fall short in actual practice and application. Several factors are at least partially responsible for this phenomenon, and include the rise of evidence-based practices, focus on clinic care, and chronic ambiguity about social worker roles.

The Rise of Evidence-Based Practices

The movement toward EBP has helped the profession of social work to earn credibility (Kam, 2014). The drive to become a credible profession was spurred by a lecture given in 1915 by Abraham Flexner, an American educator. The lecture, aptly titled "Is Social Work a Profession", compared social work to contemporary expectations of a profession:

> professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self-organization; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation… (Flexner, 2001, p. 156)

Flexner (2001) found social work lacking in a clear differentiation as a unique profession grounded in its own scientific findings. Rather, Flexner found a profession that blended aspects of multiple professions, including medicine, law, and education, and had great "professional spirit", but fell short of a true, distinct profession (Flexner, 2001, p. 161). Flexner (2001) also cast suspicion onto the role of social worker as mediator between client and system or expert, claiming that the connective or liaison role, while valuable, lacked professional expertise.

Flexner's lack of endorsement for social work as a profession sparked the race toward scientific legitimatization. Mary Richmond of the Charity Organization Society published *Social Diagnosis* just two years after Flexner's speech, which leaned heavily

on science to codify casework methodology (Gitterman, 2014). The popularity of Freudian psychology led social work toward more psychological, rather than environmental and social, causes of social ills, and a psychosocial, medical model of social work was born (Gitterman, 2014). While such advances helped establish theoretical foundations that lifted social work to bona fide professional status, it was not without sacrifice. Gitterman (2014) wrote:

> …the price the profession paid was steep; namely, a damaged social work identity. The historic and noble title of social worker was replaced with the title of therapist. Helping clients was replaced with treating clients or patients. The helping process was replaced by the therapeutic process or, simply, therapy. Sadly, although these changes in nomenclature may have augmented professional status, it was achieved at the client's expense. The caseworker gained a one-up position in the role of the superior expert healing the disturbed, inferior patient. Although the caseworker grew in stature, the client's stature was diminished. Essentially, for the lure of status and recognition, caseworkers identified with medicine and psychiatry rather than embracing its distinctive liaison identity. (pp. 600-601)

Today, social work practice demands that research and best practices are utilized to demonstrate the effectiveness of direct practice services, which help to gain and maintain funding streams. EBP is also now considered the "new paradigm for social work education and practice" (Okpych & Yu, 2014, p. 3). However, EBP is grounded in

the medical model and is best applied to a clinical practice model of social work, which is but one branch of practice within the social work profession (Kam, 2014). Furthermore, an EBP focus emphasizes interventions and diminishes the importance of *cause*, a key motivator for social justice efforts (Kam, 2014). Therefore, although a focus on EBP may have helped the profession gain credibility, it has simultaneously diminished the value of social work as a unique, dual focus, helping profession (Kam, 2014).

A Focus on Clinical Care

An additional problem is that social work has increasingly been drawn to a clinical, therapeutic focus of care. Many social workers are working strictly in direct practice or private practice and have been criticized for abandoning service to the poor in deference to the privileged middle class with good insurance that pays handsomely for the services of a licensed clinical social worker (Kam, 2014). In the profession's determined undertaking to legitimize itself among its scientifically grounded peers, helping became treating and the helping process became a therapeutic process (Gitterman, 2014). While there is certainly a need and legitimate place for a therapeutic role within social work, one can conceptualize that while therapy occurs in offices and agencies, the historic helping role of the social worker "at the border" occur outside of a clinically therapeutic setting.

Chronic Ambiguity of Social Worker Roles

A chronic ambiguity regarding the dual focus of social work and the multiple levels and systems within which social workers practice has also stymied the

development of macro practice. Reisch and Jani (2012) pointed out that social workers have long struggled to justify the perceived divergence between social justice efforts and a clinical, objective focus of practice, as well as the dichotomy of work toward system change while simultaneously building and maintaining social work's professional prestige. The profession itself is known to escalate this dilemma by simultaneously criticizing social workers too involved in activism and social workers too removed from activism, which also reflects the diverse spectrum of social workers from very conservative to very liberal (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Researchers have argued that four issues obstruct social workers from full engagement in professional mandates at micro and macro levels: conflict avoidance, fears of political incorrectness, a belief that activism is a specialty practice in which only some social workers are qualified to engage, and gender inequality that exists since social work as a female-dominated profession is pitted against a male-dominated political and societal landscape (Bliss, 2015; Reisch & Jani, 2012).

Privatization of social services has also created ambiguity in social work practice and impacted the relationship of social work to the larger society. With more reliance on bureaucracy and government to keep agency doors open and services funded, there is motivation to treat decision-makers more like pet tigers than like instruments of change (Bliss, 2015; Kam, 2014).

Levels of Engagement

It is clear, then, that social justice efforts have not only been a key organizing practice of the profession, but are also ethical mandates. Kam (2014) went so far as to assert that social justice should be *the* organizing value for the profession. Despite this, many researchers claim that social workers have all but abandoned this defining mission, and that social justice is little more than a slogan or rhetoric to the profession today (Bliss, 2015; Kam, 2012; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Specht and Courtney dubbed social workers "'unfaithful angels'", having forsaken their mission to engage in social justice efforts (as cited in Kam, 2014). The consequences of such abandonment are troubling for marginalized populations. They are, however, welcome to others: "Persons opposed to social justice…love the political vacuum created when other people do not participate in the political process" (Jansson, 2014, p. 57).

The profession itself, recognizing the polarization of micro and macro practitioners within the profession, has called for a movement toward One Social Work, one profession with multiple identities (Bent-Goodley, 2014). Five principles are necessary for achievement: embracing a dual focus in micro *and* macro practice, recognizing that practice occurs at multiple systemic levels, promoting social justice and human rights, advocating for the profession itself, and accepting diversity both within the profession and within clientele (Bent-Goodley, 2014). This call to a shared professional vision which includes a recommitment to social justice practice is ambitious, yet has proven insufficient in recent years.

Researchers have shown that social workers in recent decades**,** in fact**,** do not claim social justice to be a meaningful component of practice. Recent studies have explored levels of engagement among practicing social workers and among social work students. Among practitioners, researchers have reported that social justice ideologies declined after receiving a Masters in Social Work (MSW) and that a majority of social workers disliked social justice practice (Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Other researchers reported that political participation and activism was "moderate and inconsistent", and that half of licensed social workers surveyed were considered politically inactive and believed they were not adequately prepared to engage in advocacy (Bernklau Halvor, 2012, p. 214; Hylton, 2015). In another study, the mean level of reported advocacy among practicing social workers in agencies was extremely low, and over half of participants reported having never or almost never used legislative tactics (Mellinger, 2014). Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) have also reported that social justice efforts were the least important practice goal among social workers and that only a "small minority" of social workers engaged in unconventional activities (protests, petitioning, etc.). One qualitative researcher who explored advocacy activities of homeless service managers discovered that misunderstandings of Internal Revenue Service (IRS) restrictions for nonprofits and of the term "lobbying" had led many to avoid advocacy activities in general (Mosley, 2013b). A subsection of practitioners who are members of NASW have also been surveyed. NASW members have been found to be more engaged

than nonmembers (Beimers, 2015). However, Hylton (2015) reported that 53% of NASW members surveyed were found to have low political engagement.

Social work students have also been surveyed, which offers a unique perspective of individuals who have learned social work values and skills, but have not yet entered the workforce. Reports from a study of social work students who completed the Civic Engagement Scale showed that they only engaged in an average 43% of possible political voice activities, 22% of electoral activities, and 67% of civic engagement activities (Hylton, 2015). While Swank's (2012) study of social work students showed that about 75% of students had signed petitions and about 25% had engaged in some sort of political activity, only about 5% had engaged actively in a protest or demonstration. When surveyed about practice preferences, the majority of social work students in one study preferred direct service over advocacy (Kam, 2014).

While these reports are dismal, reality is likely even worse. Direct service social workers, such as therapists and private practitioners, who are the most likely to focus the majority of their time on billable services, have been all but missing from research on social justice activity (Kam, 2014). The social work profession may have been clinging to its social justice mission through policy and education, but this has not been well reflected in practice.

The Current Political Landscape

However glum the policy practice engagement levels appear to have been in recent decades, the profession may have recently witnessed a resurgence of policy

practice. The 2016 presidential race, with candidates representing opposite ends of the political spectrum, escalated a smoldering divide not only along partisan lines, but among the American people. After decades of decline, hate crimes against Muslims, Jews, and Blacks had risen dramatically since 2015 (Bent-Goodley, 2017). With control over heated issues such as gun control, unemployment, racial tension, immigration, women's issues, and healthcare hanging in the balance, and candidates demonstrating unprecedented dishonest and unethical behavior, motivation to engage in the political sphere was high. In the month after the election of Donald Trump as president, 1,094 hate crimes were reported, and women were scared and angry: "The belittling, sexist, and stereotypical comments made about women and sexual assault rattled many to their core and retraumatized others during the election" (Bent-Goodley, 2017, p. 1). Such events began to galvanize concerned citizens of the United States, and around the world people began to not only reengage in political action, but at unprecedented levels (Przybyla, 2017).

Immediately following the presidential win of Donald Trump, one woman was moved to organize a woman's march to be held in Washington D.C. the day following the inauguration (Przybyla, 2017). The event in D.C. drew a staggering crowd of between 470,000 and 680,000 participants marching for causes that ranged from abortion and immigrant rights to anti-Trump sentiments (Waddell, 2017). However, approximately 550 additional cities around the U.S. and 100 cities worldwide held marches of their own, with an astonishing total attendance of between 3.6 and 4.6 million

participants in total, breaking the record as the largest protest ever held in the United States (Waddell, 2017).

Petitions also became a popular method of political activism. A White House petition calling for the release of President Trump's tax returns had amassed over 1 million signatures by early March 2017, making it the largest petition ever on the site by more than double (Manning & Kelly, 2017; We the People, 2017). Change.org, an online petition site, saw a similar record: a petition to persuade Electoral College voters to cast an anti-Trump vote obtained 4.9 million signatures by the day of the Electoral College vote, their largest petition to date (Change, 2016).

Phone calls and e-mails to legislators also increased dramatically about numerous issues of immediate concern to constituents. Opposition to the nomination of school choice advocate and billionaire Betsy DeVos for the Secretary of Education led tens of thousands of citizens to not only contact their own legislators, but also Republican legislators from other states and districts whose votes could have blocked her confirmation (Wheeler & Shelbourne, 2017). Two Democratic Senators alone reported receiving over 75,000 messages from constituents, and many reported having great difficulty handling the volume of phone calls and e-mails and that the number of constituent contacts had dramatically increased (Wheeler & Shelbourne, 2017).

Opposition to policy decisions of the Trump administration began almost immediately following the inauguration. One week into the presidency, President Trump signed Executive Order 13769 (2017) which suspended admittance of refugees and any

citizens of six specific Middle Eastern countries, including those with legal status in the United States. Almost immediately, individuals were detained at airports, many of whom had been living legally in the United States and were returning home. Outraged citizens flooded local airports in cities around the United States where many Democratic legislators showed up to support their efforts. Thousands of citizens are thought to have demonstrated their opposition, including over 10,000 in the United Kingdom and around the world (Collingwood, Lajevardi & Oskooii, 2017; Grinberg & McLaughlin, 2017).

Town hall meetings are another method of political engagement between constituents and legislators. Traditionally held in their home districts during legislative breaks, many Republican legislators, facing serious opposition from their constituents in the first weeks of the Trump administration, held town hall meetings during a late February 2017 break. One Senator reported that out of the more than 40 meetings he had held over the years, none compared to the 2017 town hall that packed in over 1,000 constituents, most of which demonstrated obvious frustration and anger (Ax & Stephenson, 2017). Similar scenarios played out in many other districts, and if constituents could not attend a meeting, they would protest at legislative offices or outside of packed meetings (Ax & Stephenson, 2017).

Collectively, this unprecedented activism has been called "America's golden age of political activism" (Wiggs, 2017, January 24, para. 1). Against the backdrop of decades of documented political passivity, it is a relief to observe that American's have not lost democratic spirit altogether. However, questions remain as to the sustainability

of such massive rates of activism, and how much social workers are engaging in the activism observed among the general public. In addition, it is critical to establish the factors that triggered social workers, long dormant in their advocacy efforts, to now engage. No literature was found that has of yet explored these questions in the current political landscape.

Known Predictors of Engagement

Although political activism rates among the general population have risen in the current political landscape, sustained engagement of social workers is necessary if professional mandates are to be met at satisfactory levels in the future. To do so, it is vital to understand what factors contribute to engagement so that leaders in education and in the field can make effectual changes in the profession. Researchers have established predictive variables in recent studies and while all known predictors are useful, not all, such as gender and ethnicity, can be manipulated to effect change (Beimers, 2015; Hylton, 2015; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Swank, 2012). Factors such as social media use, professional socialization, and quality of policy practice education are factors that can be utilized to effect changes in the profession if found to be predictors of engagement.

Demographic Factors

Several demographic variables have been specifically assessed in recent literature, including gender, age, experience, sexual preference, political ideologies, and race/ethnicity. Perhaps the most compelling, consistent predictor shown in research is

that of political ideology. Approximately 75% of social workers lean to the left, or toward a more liberal ideology, while only around 10% consider themselves conservative (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). According to Mizrahi and Dodd (2013), liberal ideologies had predicted higher levels of policy engagement in all studies where this variable had been analyzed. While liberal ideologies tend to mirror social work values more than conservative ideologies, the profession recognizes that cherished values of tolerance and diversity should extend to the acceptance of differing beliefs among social workers themselves (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). As an established, strong predictor of policy engagement, the profession would be wise to discover ways to enhance engagement among more conservative social workers.

The profession is overwhelming dominated by females, and Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) reported that women have been shown to engage in higher levels of social justice practice than men. Other researchers, however, found no statistically significant difference between the engagement of men and women (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). This variable should continue to be analyzed in future research.

Similar to gender, race and ethnicity has not been a consistent predictor in all research. Some researchers found that African Americans scored higher on an activism scale than Caucasians, while others found no difference (Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Beimers (2015) reported that race was found to be a predictor of increased policy practice. If it can be concluded that race and ethnicity is a known predictor of policy practice, this could inform recruiting efforts for the field.

Whether sexual preference predicts engagement has been widely ignored in the literature (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). In response, Mizrahi and Dodd's (2013) study that compared advocacy activities at entry into an MSW program and then again in their last semester, included this variable. While the students identifying as LGBTQ reported higher rates of activism upon entry, these rates caught up to their heterosexual peers by the end of their program (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Further research is needed in this area.

Contextual Factors

Swank (2012) found no demographic variable to be a consistent, reliable predictor of engagement. Rather, Swank posited that contextual issues tended to better predict engagement. Such contextual issues include work environments, engagement in social networks, and political landscapes

Policy practice education. Quality of policy practice education is imperative if the profession expects to hold social workers accountable for engaging in social justice efforts. Felderhoff et al. (2016) reported that compared to direct practice, social work students were less prepared for policy practice. Other researchers have reported inconsistent results as to the importance of policy practice education. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) reported that anywhere from 21% to 63% of social workers believed their policy practice education was a factor in promoting their social justice engagement. Lustig-Gants and Weiss-Gal (2015) compared a group of community focused social workers with direct practice social workers in Israel and found that those who engaged more in macro practice had received more policy practice training overall. The authors also

reported that a sense of efficacy in policy practice contributed to levels of engagement (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). This research suggests that minimal or substandard policy practice education is not sufficient to prepare social workers for the level of engagement mandated by the profession. Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) challenged educators to "be proactive in bringing experiential learning with a philosophical message that applies values and ideology to a range of complex situations" (p. 585).

One specific factor of policy practice education found to predict engagement is level of civic literacy (Hylton, 2015). Hylton (2015) reported that civic literacy describes basic knowledge and understanding of government as well as processes that shape policy and decision-making. Overall, civic literacy has been reported as low among citizens of the United States in general, but even lower overall for minority citizens and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2013). In a study of BSW and MSW students, Hylton (2015) found a statistically significant, moderate relationship between civic literacy and civic engagement, certainly suggesting that the more one knows about the process of decision-making and change, the more one chooses to engage. Hylton (2015) is the only researcher found to have evaluated the correlation between civic literacy and civic engagement, and this warrants further investigation since civic literacy is a factor that can be improved through curricular and program modifications and field training.

Professional socialization. Professional socialization is the process of enculturation into a profession. Inherent in this process, which begins in formal

education and continues throughout one's profession, is the transfer of professional values, identity, knowledge, ideals, ethics, and attitudes (Valutis, Rubin, & Bell, 2012). In simpler terms, professional socialization into social work involves learning from professional leaders how to think, act, speak, and write like a social worker. Through this process, a professional identity is formed, ideally grounded in the values that shape the profession, and a social worker comes to consider him or herself as a member of the group (Oliver, 2013). At best, an individual who strongly identifies as a social worker will demonstrate behaviors and decisions that naturally align with social work ideologies.

Professional socialization. Professional socialization, however, is much easier said than done, especially in the profession of social work. While social workers are entrenched in social work values, norms, and knowledge throughout formal education, many social workers go on to work within very interprofessional workplaces (Oliver, 2013). In schools, for example, social workers are very often the only social worker in the building, if not the entire district. In social service agencies, one or two social workers might be working alongside others with psychology or counseling degrees and who do not share their professional identities and core values.

Developing and maintaining a social work identity. Social work educators and practitioners themselves demonstrate a vast incongruence of professional identities. One only needs to conjure up images of doctors, nurses, or lawyers to recognize that conjuring up an image of *a* social worker is incrementally more challenging compared to the fairly well defined roles played in the aforementioned professions. Social workers can look

like the case worker investigating child abuse, the homeless outreach worker providing services on city trains, the clinical therapist in a downtown high-rise office, or the activist marching with a sign and a megaphone. According to Oliver (2013):

> …professional socialization is made more difficult by messages about social work identity which are contested, contradictory and do not translate well to the interprofessional settings…our identity scripts are highly contested. Modern social work was 'cobbled together from a wide variety of interventions, programs, and functions'…the sheer diversity of practice roles, tasks and theories has made it hard for us to build a coherent knowledge base and identity. (pp. 774-775)

The challenge, therefore, is instilling a social work identity that embodies the array of social work values into social work students who often go out into the field with little to no social work leaders or peers who support continuing professional socialization. Such values include practice at micro and macro levels, policy practice, and social justice efforts. According to Oliver (2013), many of these social workers abandoned the professional identity altogether, identifying instead with their agency, their tasks, or their title. In such cases, if policy practice is not reinforced within the workplace, the commitment to such efforts is likely to be lost along with their professional social work identity.

Institutional norms. While finding fellow social workers to help develop and maintain a professional identity can be a challenge, institutions themselves can and should play a role in promoting policy practice through the development of institutional

norms. Norms that demonstrate policy practice as a needed function of a social worker's role not only legitimize engagement but present a model for practice in which a social worker would fail to meet expectations if not engaged at the macro level (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). Gal and Weiss-Gal (2015) reported that policy practice is "inevitably linked to the environment in which the individual operates and the options for policy involvement that it offers…[and] influenced by perceptions regarding the degree to which a professional's surroundings enables this type of practice" (p. 1086). Mellinger (2014) posited that in order for advocacy to be a meaningful part of the work of individuals within an organization, the organization must maintain a formal structure for advocacy. Such a system, which could include giving employees allowance to advocate, such as time or resources, or involvement with advocacy groups that provide information and opportunities, can improve the likelihood of individual engagement (Mellinger, 2014). Social workers who work within such a system gain valuable professional experience and socialization in policy practice that can be utilized to motivate engagement.

Recruitment. Lustig-Gants and Weiss-Gal (2015) studied the factors that led social workers to engage in legislative committee meetings in an advocacy role. Of those who participated, almost half reported that their participation was a direct result of encouragement or directive of a superior (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). Furthermore, most participants who had engaged in committee meetings held supervisory or administrative roles, suggesting that social workers at these levels of employment have

more access and/or more willingness to engage in macro practice. Since recruitment and professional socialization have been found to be predictors of engagement, the policy practice experiences of social work leaders should be utilized to mentor younger and less experienced social workers into these experiences.

Social media use. Social media, often called Web 2.0 in the literature to reflect the interactional nature of these online platforms, is a skyrocketing and rapidly evolving method of social engagement and networking that has transformed much of recent activism (Bode, 2016; Sitter & Curnew, 2016). Facebook reigns as the most popular social media platform with over one billion users that make up 79% of all internet users and 68% of all adults in the United States (Facebook Newsroom, 2017; Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). However large this audience may be, there are mixed opinions about its usefulness in encouraging actual political or civic engagement. Advocates claim social media platforms make mobilization of resources and people easy and fast, while critics assert that words on a screen, typed on a keyboard, do not constitute nor encourage real engagement, or worse, contributes to less engagement by promoting the illusion of engagement (Obar, Zube & Lampe, 2012; Štětka & Mazák, 2015). Social media has the potential to significantly contribute to many of the factors theorized to predict engagement, including the provision of information, opportunity, and education; the platform for recruiting, networking, and fostering interest and motivation; the mechanism to cultivate a sense of identity with groups that share ideologies; and a sense of efficacy by observing the results of one's engagement (Jackson et al., 2011; Verba et

al., 1995). As such, it is a potential gold mine for use by the social work profession in promoting and sustaining high levels of political and civic engagement.

Clicktivism and slacktivism. As great as the possibilities for activism promotion may appear to be, some researchers are not excited about the impact of social media on engagement. The new terms "clicktivism" and "slacktivism" have emerged to describe what some consider a simplification of engagement occurring as a result of social media (Halupka, 2014). These terms, essentially identical, refer to simple, online engagement processes such as online petitions, posting or sharing links, changing a profile picture, responding to political posts, or liking pages or profiles of political leaders (Halupka, 2014). Such terms are viewed as both positive and negative, although recently researchers have begun to view them in a derogatory manner, as action "used to play down electronic versions of political participation…[they] describe 'feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. [Online activism] gives to those who participate in 'slacktivist' campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group'" (Štětka, & Mazák, 2015, para. 6). There exist now two competing beliefs about the usefulness of social media for activism. Digital pessimists are concerned that such lazy engagement is not effective at bringing about social change and, unlike active engagement that has been shown to be effective for social change, serves only to satisfy a moral imperative but could become the new social norm (Jovicevic, 2016; Sitter & Curnew, 2016; Štětka, & Mazák, 2015). Digital optimists view social media as an effective method of providing

information, mobilizing groups to action, and offering a platform for expressing opinions (Jovicevic, 2016).

The impact of social media on active engagement. The burgeoning volume of research on the impact of social media on activism is less than helpful in establishing effectiveness. Across the literature, results are overwhelmingly inconsistent and beg the question: which came first…do social media users become more engaged due to usage, or are individuals already politically engaged simply utilizing social media as a means of engagement (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Gustafsson, 2012; Halupka, 2014; Štětka & Mazák, 2015)? One empirical study found that online engagement does correlate with offline engagement at a statistically significant level (Jovicevic, 2016). Several other studies have highlighted social media use during politically charged activities worldwide (2013 Czech elections, 2013 Turkish protests, 2016 U.S. elections), reporting positive correlations between social media use and increased, offline engagement in activism (Halupka 2014, 2016; Štětka & Mazák, 2015). One example from recent events is the Women's March, where 70% of marchers reported becoming engaged offline through Facebook information and invitations (Larson, 2017). The 2010 Arab Spring uprising in Tunisia, fueled primarily through social media, led to a change in country leadership (Jovicevic, 2016). Information, it seems, leads to action when motivation is abundant.

Social media and social work. Critical to the focus of this study is the use of social media in engaging social workers in social justice efforts. Although a consensus about its effectiveness has not been attained, many view it as a potentially valuable

resource as a "pathway from online engagement to political participation" (Sitter & Curnew, 2016, p. 273). There is a paucity of research on the use of social media for activism purposes among social workers. One study from Canada evaluated how advocacy groups utilized social media, but the researcher was not able to clearly demonstrate a positive impact from social media use (Obar, 2014). Another researcher evaluated the social media campaign efforts of an advocacy group, demonstrating that several campaigns had resulted in achievement of advocacy goals (Sitter & Curnew, 2016). More research is needed in this area to determine the usefulness of social media advocacy among social workers.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on the areas of social work professional efforts to engage in social change practice. Social work as a profession boasts a strong history in such practices and the profession has developed formal values and ethical guidelines that mandate practice in both individual and system level change (Kam, 2014; NASW, 2008). However, system level and social justice change efforts have been subject to a number of barriers over the last century, including the rise of evidence-based clinical practice and chronic ambiguity about social work roles and identity in this area, which have thwarted sustained engagement in political and civic activities (Bernklau Halvor, 2012; Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd; 2013). As such, levels of engagement in these practices have been disappointing at best to the profession, although the

marginalized populations the social change is meant to benefit have borne the negative impacts of such failures to engage (Kam, 2014).

Social workers now find themselves at the intersection of several happenings that have the potential to create and sustain desired levels of practice in individual and systems-level efforts. The political and societal landscape in the United States over 2016-2017 has led to citizens engaging in active political and civic engagement at unprecedented rates, and the rise of social media is considered to be one major contributor to such mobilization (Obar et al., 2012; Sitter & Curnew, 2016). With the profession calling for a renewal in social justice efforts (Bliss, 2015), the convergence has created a "perfect storm" which, if carefully analyzed, can provide data needed to determine the effective elements for maintaining social change efforts.

Although the research illustrates numerous factors that influence level of social justice and civic engagement, little is known about the specific factors that do or do not tend to significantly influence such behavior among social workers. Although activism rates are rising in general, it is not yet known if social workers are themselves engaging at higher rates than in the past, nor what particular factors predict engagement in current times. Given such, further research is warranted to determine the current factors that most influence social justice and civic engagement.

Utilizing previous research that has pointed to predictors of engagement, such as quality education and training in policy practice (Felderhoff et al., 2015; Hylton, 2016); a strong identity in a professional, social, or work group that encourages such practice

(Jackson et al, 2011); and regular use of social media (Sitter & Curnew, 2016), this study sought to establish the strong predictors of engagement specifically among social workers. Once established, these predictors can be utilized to guide professional strategic planning designed to further engage and sustain social workers in both critical roles of the profession: individual and systems-level practice. The following chapter will describe the methodology chosen for the study, the chosen sample, instrumentation, and a discussion of the analysis that was utilized.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The research methodology of a study includes the study design, the sample and instrumentation being utilized in the study. The data analysis methods and ethical considerations are also included. In this chapter, I will describe the design, sample, instrumentation, analysis, and ethical considerations for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover factors that predict higher levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois. The social work profession exists to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people" (NASW, 2008, para.1). These objectives are met through both direct and policy practice (Brown et al., 2015; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Kam, 2014). While researchers have shown that many social work students and social workers who engage in professional organizations have been marginally engaged in policy practice, little is known about the policy practice engagement levels of wider populations of social workers at the current time (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Swank, 2012). Determining the factors that predict policy practice among social workers will help the profession strengthen or initiate strategies that increase levels of policy practice within the profession. Increasing these practices will strengthen adherence to the mission of social work, but most importantly, will benefit vulnerable populations.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I sought to discover predictive factors of policy practice among Illinois social workers. Therefore, I utilized a nonexperimental, survey, correlational design, specifically a descriptive, cross-sectional approach. The purpose of a survey design is simply to detect variables that predict an outcome (Southeastern, n.d., para. 4). Since discovering variables that predict the outcome of policy practice was the purpose of this study, this design was a suitable fit.

I used statistical analyses to determine the predictive nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the study. There are many variables that could predict level of policy practice, including age; race; sexual orientation; gender; socioeconomic status; geographical location; years of experience; political ideology; highest social work degree; and exposure to potential mobilizing factors such as politically active family, friends, or professional associates, invitations to engage, level of civic literacy, and engagement in professional networks (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013; Swank, 2012). However, in this study I focused on four variables: type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use; all factors that can be impacted by future interventions designed to improve policy practice. These independent variables were regressed on the dependent variable: level of policy practice.

I considered each independent variable a potential moderating variable for the other and ran analyses to determine if the combination of two independent variables

significantly impacted the relationship of each to the dependent variable. In addition, political identification, years of experience, level of social work degree attained, and the Illinois region where employed were considered potential confounding variables and were included as covariates in the regression model.

For this, I found that multivariate analyses were most appropriate. Multivariate analyses have three main functions. One of those functions is as a control mechanism (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015). The other functions are elaboration, which helps to clarify the relationships between multiple variables, and to predict, which helps to account for variations between variables (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). Multivariate analyses are very useful at strengthening support of a hypothesis when they are able to further validate that a relationship between two variables is not accounted for by relationships of other variables as well (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). As this type of data analysis occurs at one point in time utilizing survey data, there were no time or resource constraints other than the time needed for me to create a database of social worker contact information and the cost of gift cards used to motivate survey completion.

A hierarchical multiple linear regression was the multivariate analysis that appeared to be the most relevant statistical test for this analysis. A regression analysis generally describes relationships between multiple variables (Alexopoulos, 2010). Therefore, in this study, I analyzed each potential "predicting" variable in comparison to the outcome variable, in this case, level of policy practice. The desired outcome of this

analysis was to observe a predictive pattern with at least one independent, or predicting, variable in relationship to the dependent, or outcome, variable.

Methodology

Population

In this study, I sought to obtain responses from a population of social workers working in varied positions throughout Illinois. One threat to internal validity in this study, which was a weakness in previous studies of the same phenomenon, was in participant selection (see Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Swank, 2012). Most often, convenience samples are taken from either a group of social work students or from a group of social workers attending a conference held by the NASW (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Swank, 2012). These populations do not represent an equal distribution of social workers, especially when studying policy practice, since social workers who are members of an advocacy group, and/or are students, are more likely to be involved in a more macro level of social work (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Swank, 2012). To minimize this threat, I sought to elicit responses from a more equal distribution of social workers by sending surveys to varied sites throughout the state where social workers are employed: hospitals, schools, agencies, nursing homes, child welfare, and more. The NASW Illinois Chapter (2017) reported that over 7,000 social workers in Illinois are members of this professional organization. However, I could not find any information regarding the total amount of social workers working in Illinois.

Sampling

A strategy to obtain an equal distribution was best obtained using a quota sampling strategy. This strategy sets a minimum threshold of participants needed from each category of a particular variable, thereby ensuring adequate representation across all categories studied (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). Since I sought to include a sample from all social workers in the state of Illinois in this study and required representation from varying types of social work employment, a convenience sample obtained from an advocacy group membership list or at a school social work state conference, for example, was not sufficient to represent the entire population. A minimum of one-third of the minimum sample size from each of the three types of social work employment categories were to be required.

To choose the sample, I carried out an Internet search to find social workers employed in specific locations and fields throughout Illinois. Social workers were identified either by title or by credentials listed on websites. The e-mailed, online survey that I sent to possible participants instructed that only individuals who had obtained either a BSW or MSW and were working as a social worker in Illinois could complete the survey and that the participant would be asked to verify eligibility on the survey itself.

I used the G*power calculator to compute an appropriate sample size for this study (see Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The Linear Multiple Regression: Fixed Model, R2 deviation from zero statistical test from the *F* test family was chosen to complete the calculations as I used a regression analysis to analyze predictions between

the dependent and independent variables in the study (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Parameters entered included a medium effect size, or $f2 = .15$, $\alpha = .05$, and 80% power to reflect current research practices in the social sciences (Trochim, 2006). I used the four predictors to calculate sample size, and based on this calculation, the total sample size needed was 85.

Procedures

I sent potential participants an e-mail introducing the nature of the study and motivations to participate in the study, including the benefits to the social work profession and to clientele. A link to a Survey Monkey survey was included in the body of the e-mail text. The link brought participants to the first page of the survey, the informed consent form, which had to be signed completely before participants were allowed to advance to the survey itself. The informed consent form provided background information on the study, criteria for participation, confidentiality assurance, and any ethical considerations. It also included a link to the Survey Monkey Privacy Policy page.

The survey began with a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) that included basic demographic information such as age, race, gender, income level, and sexual orientation as well as identifying the Illinois region in which the participant was employed in a social work position. Also included were information on political identification and information regarding the participant's social work position, including type of position, population served, years worked, and level of social degree attained. I

carefully worded the demographic questionnaire to be inclusive of all types of gender and cultural identity.

Following the demographic portion of the survey, the participant advanced to the main survey which incorporated portions of several previously developed and reliable instruments (see Appendix A). Each section informed the reader of the variable the questions were intended to measure: level of policy practice, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use. I was granted permission to use the instruments by their developers (see Appendices B and C).

Finally, at the end of the survey, participants had an opportunity to enter their e-mail address to request the results of the study. This was indicated by checking a box and including the participant's e-mail address. I kept this information separate from the results of the survey itself.

Operationalization

In this study, I focused on four independent variables: type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use. The dependent variable was level of policy practice. In this section, I will present the operationalization of each variable.

Demographics

An initial demographic questionnaire collected information such as age, race, gender, income level, and sexual orientation as well as identifying the Illinois region in which the participant was employed in a social work position. Also included was

information on political identification, membership in professional associations, and information regarding the participant's social work position, including type of position, population served, years worked, and level of social work degree attained. Table 1 indicates the measurements for each continuous variable.

Table 1

Summary of Proposed Continuous Variable Measurements

Continuous Variable	Measurement				
	Scale	Subscale	Previously reported Cronbach's α	Scoring	Final Score Calculation
Level of Policy Practice	*The Questionnaires on Policy Practice* (Weiss-Gal, Gal, & Tayri-Swartz, 2013)		α=.86	No = 0 Yes = 1	Total of positive responses (yes=1), (higher scores reflect greater policy practice)
Level of Professional Socialization	*The Questionnaires on Policy Practice* (Weiss-Gal, Gal, & Tayri-Swartz, 2013)				Total of the mean results of each of the 3 main subscales (higher scores reflect higher levels of professional socialization)
		Recruiting (2 four-item subscales)	None Reported	1 (not active at all) to 5 (very active)	Mean
		Organizational Culture (4 subscales)		1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).	Mean of the 4 subscale means

(table continues)

Continuous Variable	Measurement				
	Scale	Subscale	Previously reported Cronbach's α	Scoring	Final Score Calculation
		Attitudes of agency administrators toward policy practice (3 questions)	α=.93		Mean
		Attitudes of one's direct supervisor (3 questions)	α=.91		Mean
		Attitudes of coworkers (3 questions)	α=.94		Mean
		Orientation of the organization as a whole toward policy practice (8 questions)	α=.85		Mean
		Professional Identity (4 questions)	α=.74	1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)	Mean
Level of Policy Practice Preparedness	*The Questionnaires on Policy Practice* (Weiss-Gal, Gal, & Tayri-Swartz, 2013)	Policy Practice Preparedness (4 questions)	None Reported	1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).	Mean (higher scores reflect higher levels of policy practice preparedness)
Level of Social Media Use	Social Media and Political Engagement Questionnaire (Xenos, Vromen, and Loader, 2014b).	Index of social media use of 9 social media platforms	α=.76	0 (never) to 7 (multiple times per day)	Mean of positive responses ("yes" = the platform is used) **only** (Higher scores indicate higher engagement in social media)

The Questionnaires on Policy Practice Survey

The Questionnaires on Policy Practice (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013) is a survey instrument with several subscales designed to measure a multitude of issues surrounding social work policy practice, including political efficacy, practice preparedness, and professional socialization. These questionnaires were created by Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) for use in Israel. Since Israel has a very comparable form of government to the United States, these surveys, as well as the studies published that have utilized the surveys, are very relevant to social work in the United States and to this study (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2014; Weiss-Gal, 2016). I slightly reworded some of the questions to reflect experiences within the United States. For example, "parliamentary committees" became "legislative committees," and political movement group examples were changed to reflect current political movement groups in the United States. These minor changes were not expected to impact validity as Israeli organizations were replaced with comparable, relevant organizations to American survey respondents.

Dependent Variable (DV): Level of Policy Practice

In the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) surveys, the survey titled Level of Policy Practice is designed to measure the extent of a social worker's involvement in policy practice activities. This portion of the survey was reported by the designers as having an internal consistency score of $\alpha = .86$ (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013). The survey includes 29 questions to be answered "yes" or "no", such as:

> In the last 12 months, during your professional career as a social worker, and as part of your work, have you taken part in protest activities (i.e. signed a petition, joined a protest march or rally)—in your capacity as a social worker and not as a private person—against an organizational/local/government policy that negatively affects service users? (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013, p. 3)

Participants responded to questions regarding participation in activities such as communicating with legislators, participating in electoral efforts or protesting activities, and advocating. Positive responses were calculated, yielding an individual total score between 0 and 29, with higher scores reflecting greater policy practice.

Independent Variables (IVs)

Type of social work employment. Type of social work employment, an independent variable, was measured in this section as follows: measured on a nominal, categorical scale using 1 = Direct service more than 50% (community mental health, school social work, hospital or nursing home, social service agency, hospice, child welfare, addictions); 2 = Administrative work more than 50% (administration, supervision, development, fund-raising, policy, advocacy); 3 = private practice or primarily therapy/clinical counseling.

Measuring professional socialization. Professional socialization captures multiple distinct phenomena, including professional identity, recruiting, mentoring, and organizational culture. According to the civic voluntarism model, social workers who have been actively recruited, invited to participate, and mentored into this social work

role, are more likely to engage (Verba et al., 1995). In addition, the social identity theory purports that professional socialization is a critical method of transmitting norms, roles, and values, and that it is transmitted through professional role models and organizational culture (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Professional orientations toward policy practice in social work are established through normative expectations, or the expectations established through group norms (Jackson et al., 2011). When social workers work within an environment where policy practice is observed and expected, social workers become professionally socialized into work at both micro and macro levels. The mean is taken for each subscale: recruiting, culture, and identity, and the three means are averaged to of the averaged results of each of the three subscales was to be used as the individual score for professional socialization.

Recruiting. For the purpose of this study, the recruiting measure focused on experiences with professional recruiting networks as peer recruiting was measured within the organizational culture measurements. This measurement was based on two subscales of the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) surveys that measure involvement in professional social work networks and political recruiting networks. Since the original survey originated in Israel, the organizations will reflect organizations based in the United States and Illinois, such as the Illinois chapter of the NASW, and professional social work subsets such as the Illinois Association of School Social Workers. Each subscale offered four items and participants were asked to respond by utilizing a 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (*not active at all*) to 5 (*very active*). Each scale included an "other" response that

allowed the participant to list additional organizations. Each subscale was to be averaged to produce a mean score, with higher scores indicating higher engagement in recruitment networks.

Organizational culture. The extent to which one's workplace influences engagement in policy practice will be measured utilizing four subscales of the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) surveys. These subscales included three questions each designed to measure the attitudes of agency administrators toward policy practice ($\alpha = .93$), three questions measuring the attitudes of a direct supervisor ($\alpha = .91$), three questions measuring attitudes of coworkers ($\alpha = .94$), and eight questions measuring the orientation of the organization as a whole toward policy practice ($\alpha = .85$). Every question was measured by utilizing a 7-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The questions included responses that reflect the participant's beliefs that the organization provides mentoring and training in policy practice, as well as the provision of resources and information that facilitates policy practice. For example, participants were asked to indicate level of agreement or disagreement to the statement: "My supervisor encourages and guides social workers to be involved in activities aimed at changing government policies" (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013, p. 15). No additional options were provided to social workers without supervisors or administrators, such as private practitioners, since "*strongly disagree*" is a relevant response for such respondents. Each subscale was averaged to produce a mean score and the mean scores of the three subscales was also to be averaged together, creating one mean score for professional

socialization. For both the subscale and overall scores, higher scores indicate employment in organizations that provide stronger professional socialization in policy practice.

Professional identity. Perceptions of policy practice as an important role for social workers was measured utilizing a 5-item subscale developed originally by Mary (2001) and included in the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) surveys. Participants indicated their response to four questions utilizing a 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Participants were asked to "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements" and an example statement is: "Social work, in principle, is not separable from social reform" (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013, p. 12). Weiss and Kaufman (2006) reported an internal consistency of $\alpha = .74$. The resulting scores were calculated for each respondent with an average of the four responses, with higher scores indicating a stronger professional identity of social work as a profession encompassing both direct and policy practice.

Measuring policy practice preparedness. Policy practice preparedness was measured by utilizing a subscale of the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) surveys designed to measure particular policy practice skills, such as community engagement, utilizing media for advocacy, and lobbying, attained during formal education. The participant responded to four, 5-point Likert rating scale questions ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). Participants were asked to indicate how much they learned particular policy practice skills such as "Learn about ways to influence policy" (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013, p. 10). The

total results of all subscales was to be averaged to produce one mean score for policy preparedness, with higher scores indicating stronger skill attainment in policy practice in formal social work education.

Social media use.

Social media use was measured utilizing a subscale of the Social Media and Political Engagement Questionnaire designed by Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014b). The subscale is "an index of social media use based on the frequency with which participants used nine popular social media platforms" (Xenos et al., 2014b, p. 157). Each of the nine items utilized an 8-point Likert rating scale ranges from 0 (*never*) to 7 (*multiple times per day*) and is reported to have reasonable internal consistency at $\alpha = .76$ (Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014a). The subscale was to be averaged to produce a mean score, with higher scores indicating increased engagement in social media.

For those respondents who indicated engagement in social media, three follow up questions were asked regarding the nature of their social media use in relation to policy practice activities. The questions are based on questions within a Pew Research Center (2012) survey on civic engagement and social media use. The first question asked participants to respond "yes" or "no" to whether or not they had utilized social media to engage in particular policy practice behaviors such as posting links, encouraging others to engage, or posting personal comments about issues or positions within the last 12 months (Pew Research Center, 2012, p. 54). The second and third questions asked whether or not the respondent decided to learn more about or take action on a political or social issue

because of something read on social media. Participants respond to both questions with "yes" or "no". These questions were not used in the final analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

The survey data were collected through Survey Monkey online and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 for analysis. This study applied a correlational research design using multiple linear regression analysis. Data were reviewed for errors and assumptions for each test were analyzed for multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Based on the review and results, data could have been cleaned and/or transformed utilizing accepted techniques and such actions would be reported in the results section of the study. As the research question and hypotheses demonstrated how such an analysis is a good fit for the study, they would be detailed again in that section.

RQ: How are social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use predictively related to levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale?

H_0: There is not a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use, and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

H_A: There is a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use, and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

A hierarchical multiple linear regression model was run to measure the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable while controlling for the effects of the other variables. Political identification, years of experience, level of social work degree attained, and Illinois region where employed were considered potential confounding variables and were included as covariates in the regression model. These covariates were analyzed in order to control for the possibility that effects found between the dependent and independent variables were not better accounted for by these potentially confounding variables. A *p*-value probability value was used to analyze the significance of the results and to accept or reject the hypotheses at an alpha level of .05.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

External validity is critical to minimizing threats regarding the generalizability of the results (Creswell, 2009). The population surveyed in this study was social workers in varied types of employment, with different levels of attained social work degrees, from different areas of the state: urban, suburban, and rural. While the results may be considered generalizable to the state of Illinois, they may not be generalizable in other states where political ideologies and social work positions may differ than Illinois. This

is identified in limitations. However, to minimize the threat of generalizability among social workers in Illinois, participants were culled from organizational websites where social workers are employed, so as not to oversample only social workers who are engaged with professional networks like the NASW.

Another potential threat to external validity was the current political landscape in which the data is being collected. It is likely that social work engagement in policy practice during a time of strong political division and conservative majority is higher than at other times. Therefore, the study should be replicated to determine if the results are consistent across time (Creswell, 2009).

Internal Validity

Internal validity is also important to minimize threats in the interpretation of the data and the population (Creswell, 2009). Assessing policy practice is admittedly tricky. Engagement is often cyclical and/or subject to waxing and waning throughout time. During an election year, when an interesting community issue arises, or when an individual has time to engage more in volunteer activities, engagement rates may be reported much differently than at times when one's interests and passions are directed elsewhere. Furthermore, a participant may not recall engagement efforts that are perceived as less valuable than others, like volunteering an afternoon at the shelter or participating in a boycott (Keeter et al., 2003). Therefore, it must be noted that historical events and time can impact the results. However, because the data was collected from a

one-time survey, there are no concerns about internal validity from maturation, regression, or mortality (Creswell, 2009).

It is possible that participant selection could have biased the data, as social workers who may be more engaged in policy practice may be more invested in completing a survey on policy practice (Creswell, 2009). Similarly, it may be easier for social workers with more flexibility, time, and/or experience to complete the survey, which could have biased the sample toward less or more experienced social workers. To identify this possibility, years of experience was analyzed as a potential confounding variable.

Another threat to internal validity in this study, which is a weakness in previous studies of the same phenomenon, was in participant selection (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Swank, 2012). Most often, convenience samples are taken from either a group of social work students or from a group of social workers attending a conference held by the NASW (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Swank, 2012). These populations do not represent an equal distribution of social workers, especially when studying policy practice, since social workers who are members of an advocacy group, and/or are students, are more likely to be involved in a more macro level of social work (Felderhoff, 2016; Swank, 2012). To minimize this threat, I sought to elicit responses from a more equal distribution of social workers by sending surveys to varied sites throughout the state where social workers are employed: hospitals, schools, agencies, nursing homes, child welfare, and more.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is also important to consider. This area provides assurance that the measurements used effectively measure what they are intended to measure (Creswell, 2009). For the current study, each instrument chosen to measure each variable was taken from or modeled after instruments shown to have good reliability and validity in pretesting and studies.

Ethical Procedures

The purpose of the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) approval of any research project is to ensure that studies maintain ethical principles in research and present minimal to no risk of harm to participants as well as to the researcher, the developer of any instruments used, and to the organizations represented or utilized in the study (Endicott, 2010). An application for IRB approval for the study was completed and approval obtained prior to the collection of any research data. As a survey, rather than an experimental or intervention study, there was minimal risk to the participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Since the participants were social workers reporting on their levels of policy practice, the study did not research sensitive topics nor vulnerable populations. There was no deception and proper informed consent procedures was followed with any individual completing an informed consent, including the need to clarify that participation was voluntary and that confidentiality was ensured (Endicott, 2010).

Data treatment. Data collected through Survey Monkey is nonidentifiable and cannot be connected to a participant name or contact information. Data are stored in

secure file compartments and on secure electronic file and/or or secure flash drive. Data are accessible only to myself and committee members or institutional administrators as needed for the assessment process.

Other ethical issues. No additional ethical concerns were anticipated in this study. The survey responses cannot be tied to identifying information and the survey was completed online. Therefore, there was minimal risk of a conflict of interest or power differential that could have impacted results or lead to coercion.

Summary

This quantitative study applied a correlational research design using hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis to discover factors that predict policy practice among social workers. A link to an electronic, Survey Monkey survey was e-mailed to social workers working in varied positions across Illinois. The research process, results of the survey, and the SPSS analysis are reported in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine the current rates of policy practice and the factors that may predict higher levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois. As reported in the literature review of Chapter 2, I identified four independent variables as potential predictors of increased levels of policy practice: social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use. Political identification, years of experience, level of social work degree attained, and the Illinois region where employed were considered potential confounding variables and were included as covariates in the regression model. These covariates were analyzed in order to control for the possibility that effects found between the dependent and independent variables were not better accounted for by these potentially confounding variables. This was a quantitative, non-experimental, correlational study, and I employed an online survey of social workers working in Illinois for data collection. A hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the predictive nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

The research question and hypotheses I addressed in the study were:

RQ: How are social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use predictively related to levels of policy practice among social workers in Illinois, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale?

H_0: There is not a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

H_A: There is a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use and level of policy practice, as measured by the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) policy practice engagement subscale.

A field test of the survey was conducted by three social service professionals not qualified to complete the survey. The field test was completed to determine a general time frame in which the survey could be completed and to identify any errors within the electronic survey itself. No data were collected during the field tests.

In this chapter, I will describe the data collection process and results of the survey. The chapter will include a description of the recruitment process, data collection time frame, and descriptive data of the sample. Evaluation of the statistical assumptions for the method of analysis will also be reported. Finally, the findings of the statistical analyses of the data will be described.

Data Collection

I collected data for this study using an online survey through Survey Monkey. The survey included 13 demographic questions, one of which was used to determine the independent variable of type of social work employment, and to determine quota

sampling requirements of at least 30 participants from each of the three types of employment. It also included 29 questions from a survey created by Weiss-Gal et al. (2013), that I used with permission of the authors, to determine the dependent variable of level of policy practice. An additional 10 questions were used to survey the independent variables of professional socialization and policy practice preparedness, utilizing subscales of the Weiss-Gal et al. surveys. Since the survey originated in Israel, some survey questions were reworded for relevance in the United States. For example, "parliamentary committees" became "legislative committees," and political movement group examples were changed to reflect current political movement groups in the United States. A subscale utilizing nine questions, with three final questions based on a Pew Research survey, measured the nature of social media use for respondents who indicated use of social media. The final total of survey questions was 64 questions with some additional clarifying questions for some responses.

Cronbach's alpha was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the Weiss-Gal et al. (2013) scales. Each subscale had been shown to have good to excellent reliability, except for the Professional Identity subscale that was shown to have marginal reliability at $\alpha = .60$ (Weiss-Gal et al., 2013). To determine the internal consistency for the subscales in this study, I computed a coefficient alpha for each subscale and results are presented in Table 2. Every subscale was reported to have a Cronbach's α greater than $\alpha = .81$, and three subscales showed reliability at greater than $\alpha = .90$. The subscale previously reported to be marginal showed reliability at $\alpha = .82$ for this study. Therefore,

the scale I used to measure continuous predictor variables was considered to have good to excellent internal consistency (see Yockey, 2011).

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	*N* of items
Policy practice	.889	29
Professional socialization	.908	21
Policy preparedness	.817	12

The Xenos et al. (2014b) survey measured social media use. It had been previously reported as having a Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$, indicating reasonable consistency (Xenos et al., 2014a). I conducted a coefficient alpha for this scale to determine internal consistency in this study and I found the Cronbach's $\alpha = .52$, which suggested the scale represented poor reliability. The means of the individual items ranged from .83 to 4.52, with a mean on the total scale of 13.71 ($SD = 8.03$).

Time Frame for Data Collection

I received IRB approval, # 08-24-17-0559526, to begin research on August 24, 2017 and e-mailed the survey link to the first batch of potential participants. I also posted it as a link on my personal Facebook and LinkedIn pages the same day as approval was granted. The survey was closed on November 22, 2017 per the approval of the dissertation chair, making the total data collection time frame at 90 days.

Recruitment

As described in previous chapters, I intentionally recruited participants by obtaining the e-mail addresses of employed social workers from public workplaces or private practice websites as well as recruitment from social media. Although utilizing a social work professional organization e-mail list would have reached many more social workers faster and easier, the aforementioned strategy was employed as an attempt to recruit social workers not necessarily involved with a professional organization. Involvement in a professional organization can suggest increased interest in engagement and policy practice and was therefore reserved as an "as needed" recruitment strategy (see Larson, 2017; Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012; Sitter & Curnew, 2016).

I made social media recruitment posts, including a link to the survey, three times on Facebook and twice on LinkedIn. Some posts were shared by others onto their own pages. E-mail requests for participants were sent out in batches as potential participants' e-mails addresses were discovered. Each batch received an initial e-mail and two follow up e-mails. In total, 330 individuals were e-mailed the survey link directly, although some e-mails were returned as no longer active or incorrect.

After recruiting for 6 weeks using these strategies, the quota for direct service participants had been reached, but it became apparent that the strategies were not going to be sufficient to reach the quota requirements for supervisors/administrators and private practitioners. I received IRB approval to amend the initial proposal and recruit by utilizing an e-mail list for a social work professional organization in Illinois. An

agreement was made with the NASW and InFocus Marketing, the list manager for the NASW, to rent an e-mail list with the specifications of social workers from Illinois who indicated a primary focus of practice as supervisory or private practice. The list included 1,077 social workers. This one-time recruitment e-mail was sent on November 9, 2017.

Response Rate

At the close of the survey, 126 respondents had begun the survey. One was automatically dropped from the survey due to ineligibility. Of the resulting respondents, 32 provided only partial responses and I did not include them in the final analysis of the data. The final sample included 93 eligible respondents and the survey had a completion rate of 74%. Of these 93 participants, 45 worked primarily in direct service, 20 worked primarily as supervisors or administrators, and 28 worked primarily in private practice. Due to the low completion rate and difficulties in recruitment, I will describe discrepancies between the proposed recruitment method and the final recruitment strategies in the next section.

Discrepancies in Data Collection

My proposed recruitment strategy prescribed obtaining e-mail addresses for social workers employed in Illinois from public websites. I obtained over 300 of these e-mail addresses from hospital, nursing home, private practice, school, mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, and other social service employer websites. In addition, Facebook and LinkedIn social media outlets were utilized to recruit participants. Readers of e-

mails and social media posts were asked to forward or share the link to achieve further recruiting.

The purpose of such recruitment strategies was to improve internal validity by targeting social workers not necessarily involved with a social work professional organization, from whom a convenient and extensive e-mail list could have been obtained. As I outlined in Chapter 3, these populations do not represent an equal distribution of social workers, especially when studying policy practice, since social workers who are members of an advocacy group, and/or are students, are more likely to be involved in a more macro level of social work (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Swank, 2012). Ninety-five participants who at least began the survey were recruited through these methods, but although direct service respondent quotas were met, private practitioner and supervisor/administrator quotas were not met within the final sample of eligible respondents.

To improve my prospects of obtaining the final quota sample for the other two populations, as described in the previous section, I sent a one-time e-mail blast through an e-mail list from the NASW for a rental fee. The blast was sent specifically to social workers in Illinois who listed private practice or supervisor/administrator as their primary social work function. The list was sent to 1,077 e-mails on November 16, 2017.

Between November 16 and 19, I obtained 31 additional responses. While the quota was met for private practitioners, the supervisor/administrator respondent quota remained unmet, but was only seven short of the required 30 participants. These numbers

did not reflect 32 participants who did not complete the entire survey and were dropped from the final analysis. After having no additional responses in the following days and after consulting with the dissertation chair, it was decided that due diligence was met in recruiting efforts and that I could conclude data collection.

Baseline Descriptive and Demographic Data

Upon satisfying survey participant requirements, data were imported from Survey Monkey into SPSS, Version 24, which was utilized to analyze the data. Survey items used to provide descriptive and demographic information of the participants included age, gender, race/ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, region, political identification, professional organization membership, population served, years worked, level of social work degree, and primary type of employment. Table 3 below presents the frequency and percentage of the demographic variables for the sample population. Age, income level, and years worked were measured as ordinal variables with choices offered in ranges. Other demographic variables were measured as nominal variables.

Table 3

Frequencies: Demographics

		n	%
Age	20-30	9	9.7
	31-40	27	29.0
	41-50	23	24.7
	50+	34	36.6
Gender	Female	81	87.1
	Male	12	12.9
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian/White	84	90.3
	Black	4	4.3
	Latina/Latino	2	2.2
	Hispanic	1	1.1
	Middle Eastern	1	1.1
	Other	1	1.1
Income	Up to $29,999	2	2.2
	$30,000-39,999	8	8.6
	$40,000-49,999	8	8.6
	$50,000-59,999	11	11.8
	$60,000-69,999	9	9.7
	$70,000-79,999	10	10.8
	$80,000-89,000	7	7.5
	More than $90,000	37	39.8
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	78	83.9
	Bisexual	7	7.5
	Homosexual	6	6.5
	Other	2	2.2
Region Where Employed	A suburban area	33	35.5
	A city	29	31.2
	A small town	24	25.8
	A rural area	7	7.5
Political Identification	Democrat	68	73.1
	Independent	11	11.8
	Republican	7	7.5

(table continued)

		n	%
	Other (please specify)	4	4.3
	Don't know/don't identify politically	3	3.2
NASW Membership	Yes	56	60.2
	No	37	39.8
Population Served	therapy patients/clients	23	24.7
	mentally ill	21	22.6
	students	20	21.5
	low socioeconomic status	10	10.8
	Other (please specify)	8	8.6
	health patients	3	3.2
	aging	2	2.2
	children/adolescents	2	2.2
	developmentally disabled	2	2.2
	hospice patients	1	1.1
	addictions	1	1.1
Years Worked as Social Worker	1-5 years	12	12.9
	6-10 years	17	18.3
	11-20 years	28	30.1
	21-30 years	23	24.7
	31-40 years	11	11.8
	41+ years	2	2.2
Highest Degree Earned	MSW	88	94.6
	BSW	5	5.4
Primary Type of Social Work Employment	Direct Service	45	48.4
	Private Practice	28	30.1
	Supervisor/Administrator	20	21.5

Table 4 indicates respondent levels of policy practice, professional socialization, policy preparedness, and social media use. Level of policy practice was determined by adding all positive ("yes") responses, yielding an individual total score between 0 and 29. The results indicated that respondents engaged in an average of 8.27 policy practice

activities within the last 12 months. Level of professional socialization was arrived at by adding the scores of several subscales: two subscales measured engagement in potential recruiting organizations such as professional and political organizations, three subscales that measured perception of administrator's, supervisor's, and colleagues' attitudes toward workers' involvement in policy practice, and one subscale that measured perception of organizational culture artifacts toward involvement in policy practice, such as the presence of information at a workplace on policy practice, or access to seminars where policy practice is taught. For social workers not working in settings with supervisors and administrators, such as many private practitioners, low scores (responses such as "*strongly disagree*") reflected a lack of offered opportunities to engage in policy practice whether or not the respondent had a supervisor or administrator. A final subscale measured professional social work identity in policy practice. One negatively phrased question was reverse coded. Because three of the scales measured 1-5 and four measured from 1-7, one professional socialization score was calculated by standardizing the subscale scores and summing the resulting subscales means. The results showed a range of standardized scores between -1.17 and 1.54, with higher scores indicating higher levels of professional socialization.

Level of policy practice preparedness measured how well respondents believed their BSW, MSW, and advanced studies prepared them for various policy practice activities. For this figure, the subscales were averaged to produce a mean score, with higher scores indicating stronger skill attainment in policy practice through social work

education. The mean score of level of policy preparedness was 2.42. Finally, level of social media use was calculated by utilizing scores from 0 (*never*) to 7 (*multiple times per day*) for any social media platform the respondent reported using. Two of the social media platforms offered as options, Foursquare and MySpace, received no positive responses and were eliminated from the data. The responses from the level of usage questions were totaled and divided by the amount of positive responses ("yes" = the platform is used) for each respondent. Higher scores indicate increased engagement in social media platforms. The results indicate average social media use among multiple platforms at 3.99.

Table 4

Frequency Statistics: Continuous Predictor Variables

	Level of Policy Practice	Level of Professional Socialization	Level of Policy Practice Preparedness	Level of Social Media Use
M	8.27	0	2.42	3.99
Mdn	7.00	-.07	2.42	4.20
Mode	8.00	-1.17[a]	2.00[a]	5.00
SD	5.95	.62	.83	1.56
Variance	35.42	.38	.68	2.44
Range	28.00	2.70	4.00	7.00
Minimum	.00	-1.17	1.00	.00
Maximum	28.00	1.54	5.00	7.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Of the independent variables, the types of social work employment were dummy coded in order to be utilized in the multiple regression analysis. In the sample, the category of direct practice represented the largest type of employment and thus was used

as the reference group. Because political identification, years of experience, level of social work degree attained, and Illinois region were utilized in the multiple regression model as compounding variables, level of social work degree, political identification, and Illinois region were also dummy coded, with the most represented categories "MSW"; "Democrat"; and "suburb"; respectfully, used as the reference groups. There were no missing or excluded data.

Assumptions and Analysis

Several assumptions must be met before utilizing a multiple linear regression analysis (Field, 2013). The sample size for the study is 93 participants, which is adequate given 4 predictor variables included in the analysis. To meet the assumption of normality, the plotted responses should fall into a normal bell curve distribution (Field, 2013; Green & Salkind, 2014; Yockey, 2011). The continuous independent variables were analyzed for normality. Histograms for each represented normally distributed data.

In multiple regression, the dependent variable must also be normally distributed for each population measured. For this data set, a histogram of standardized residuals indicated that the data contained approximately normally distributed errors (see Figure 1), as did the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals (see Figure 2), which showed points that were not completely on the line, but very close, and the data meets the assumption of normality (Field, 2013).

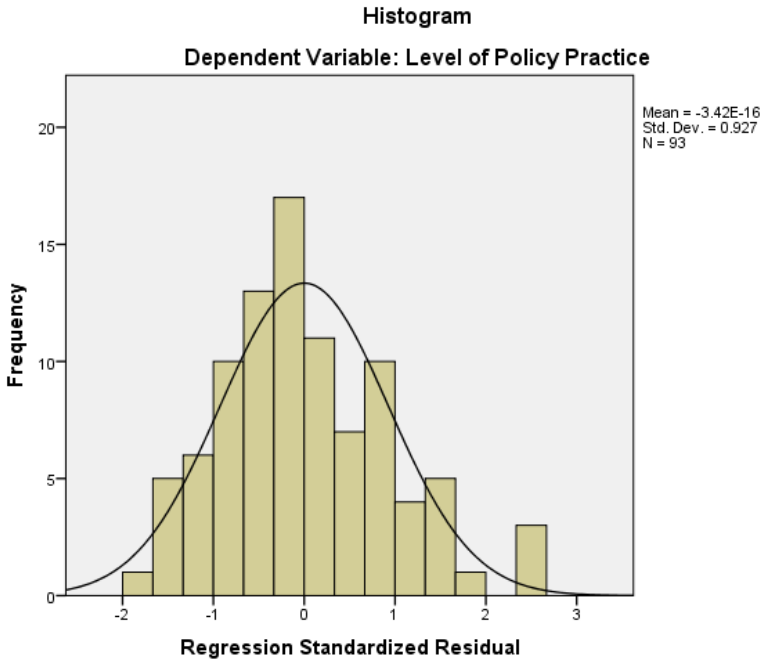

Figure 1: Distribution of the standardized residuals reveals a normal distribution. The distribution displays a bell-shaped curve.

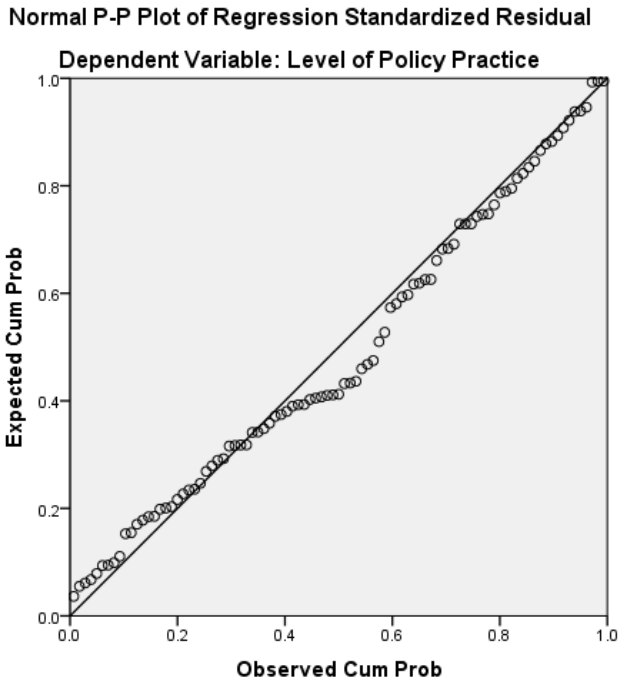

Figure 2: Plots of the standardized residuals and the standardized predicted values are normally distributed, random in nature, and indicate no violation of homoscedasticity.

The second assumption of a multiple linear regression analysis is that there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variable(s) (Green & Salkind, 2014). For this data set, a residual scatterplot of standardized residuals was consulted that revealed a linear pattern and the data met the assumption of linearity (see Figure 3).

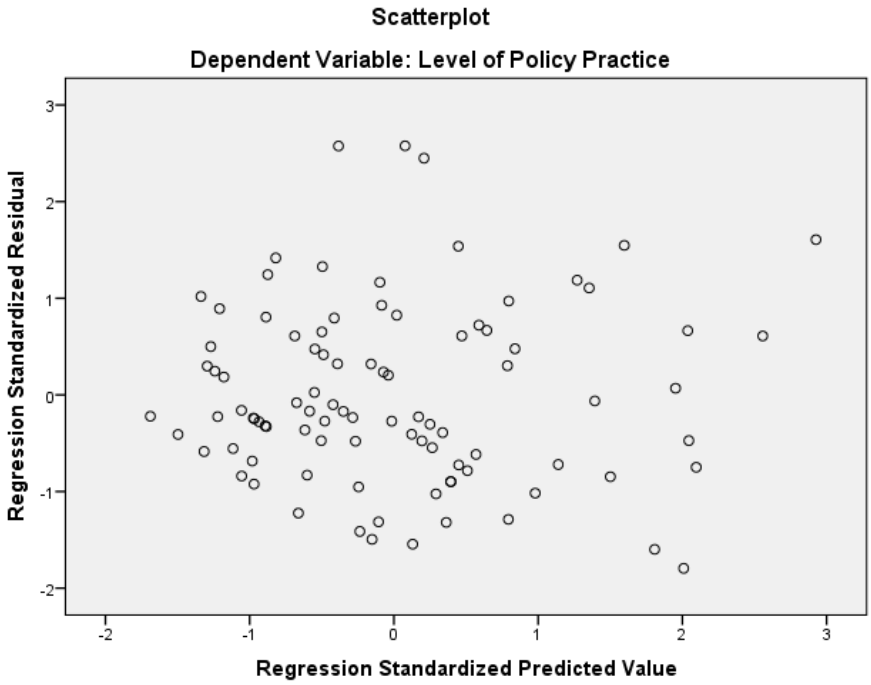

Figure 3: Residual scatterplot of standardized residuals revealed a linear pattern and demonstrates a linear relationship between the variables.

A third assumption is that of homoscedasticity and linearity independence of errors: that the variance of errors is the same for the independent variables at all levels (Field, 2013). If this is not the case, heteroscedasticity is shown. A scatterplot of the standardized residual errors was consulted that revealed a random pattern and the data met the assumption of independent errors (Figure 3). The Durbin-Watson Statistic is used to analyze the presence of correlation among the residuals. A value close to 2.0 for the Durbin-Watson Statistic is desired to demonstrate no significant correlations. This study showed a Durbin-Watson Statistic of 2.28 for the sample of 93 indicating no significant serial correlation (Field, 2013).

Finally, an assumption is made that multicollinearity does not exist. Multicollinearity exists when two or more independent variables are themselves linear. Analyses to check if the data met the assumption of collinearity indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (Level of Professional Socialization, Tolerance = .55, VIF = 1.81; Level of Policy Preparedness, Tolerance = .72, VIF = 1.38, Level of Social Media Use, Tolerance = .88, VIF = 1.14) and this assumption has been met.

Data Analysis

A data analysis was conducted for the hypothesis of the study. Table 5 shows that all correlations between the predictors and the criterion are statistically significant ($p < .01$) except for level of social media use. The highest positive correlation is between level of policy practice and level of professional socialization (Pearson's $r = .61$, $p < .001$) and the lowest positive correlation is between level of policy practice and level of policy preparedness (Pearson's $r = .35$, $p < .001$). Private practice as primary type of employment was negatively correlated with level of policy practice (Pearson's $r = -.27$, $p < .01$). One set of continuous predictors are significantly correlated with each other: level of professional socialization and level of policy preparedness (Pearson's $r = .40$, $p < .001$). Level of professional socialization is also negatively correlated with private practice as primary type of employment (Pearson's $r = -.21$, $p < .05$), but positively correlated with supervision/administration as primary type of employment (Pearson's $r = .38$, $p < .001$).

Table 5

Correlations Between Control and Predictor Variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
1. Level of Policy Practice	---	.07	.08	.04	.23*	.23	-.04	.05	.12	.45***	-.27*	.61***	.35***	.09
2. Republican		---	-.12	-.06	.29	-.19	.30	.23	-.15	-.05	-.01	-.08	-.11	.12
3. Ind.			---	-.09	-.10	.04	.10	.01	-.08	-.00	.05	-.05	.09	-.05
4. Other/no political iden.				--	-.05	-.03	-.13	-.06	-.06	.28*	-.14	-.02	.17	.03
5. BSW degree					---	-.06	.08	.29	-.13	.11	-.16	.05	-.03	.08
6. Work in city						---	-.40	-.19	.05	.16	-.14	.35***	.06	-.08
7. Work in small town							---	-.17	.03	.17	-.07	-.22*	-.17*	.22*
8. Work in rural area								---	-.12	-.05	-.19*	.06	.18*	.02
9. Years worked as SW									---	.20*	.11	.22*	-.03	-.21*
10. Supervisor										---	-.34	.38	.06	.12
11. Private Practice											---	-.21	-.12	-.08
12. Level of Professional Socialization												---	.40***	-.01
13. Level of Policy Preparedness													---	-.06
14. Level of Social Media Use														---

Note: $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

Results

The hypothesis for the study predicted that there is a statistically significant relationship between type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media use, and level of policy practice, controlling for political identification, level of social work degree, region where employed, and years worked as a social worker. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted, and the data was analyzed at an alpha level of .05. A hierarchical regression model was utilized in order to enter the confounding, or control, variables in the first block of analysis before adding the predictor variables into the model. Such an analysis also allows for a determination of the significance of each set, in accounting for the variability (R^2) in the outcome of the dependent, or outcome, variable.

Table 6 shows the statistics for the multiple regression models. The results indicated that when only the confounding, or control, variables were entered in Step 1, they were not significant predictors of increased level of policy practice, accounting for 16% of the variance in the change in levels of policy practice, $R^2_{\text{Change}} = .16$, F (8, 84) = 2.01, $p > .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .08$. When the predictor variables of type of social work employment, levels of professional socialization, policy practice preparedness, and social media use were entered in Step 2, the total variance explained by the model was 53%, $R^2_{change} = .37$, F (5, 79) = 12.16, $p < .001$. The predictor variables assessed in this study accounted for an additional 37% of the variance in levels of policy practice, after controlling for political identification, level of social work degree, region where

employed, and years worked as a social worker. Results of the final model in Step 2 revealed that two predictor variables, level of professional socialization and level of policy practice preparedness, were found to make a statistically significant contribution to the model when controlling for all the other variables. For every one unit increase in level of professional socialization, policy practice activities increased by 3.96 when all other variables were held constant ($b = 3.96$, $p < .001$). Similarly, for every one unit increase in level of policy preparedness, policy practice activities increased by 1.37 when all other variables were held constant ($b = 1.37$, $p < .05$).

Of the dummy coded categorical predictor variable of type of employment, one level was found to make a significant contribution to the regression model. Respondents with type of employment as supervisor reported an average engagement in 3.44 more policy practice activities than direct practitioners when holding all other variables constant. This was a positively significant contribution to the regression model ($b = 3.44$, $p < .05$).

Table 6

Hierarchical Linear Regression of Predictors of Policy Practice Level

	R	R^2	R^2_{change}	B	SE_B	β	t	p
Step 1	.40	.16	.16					
Constant				3.59	1.85		1.93	.06
Republican				1.76	2.57	.08	.69	.50
Independent				2.11	1.72	.18	1.23	.22
Other/no political				2.8	2.99	.10	.94	.35
BSW highest degree				6.57	2.86	.25	2.29	.02
Work in city				3.37	1.47	.26	2.28	.03
Work in small town				.33	1.67	.02	.20	.84
Work in rural area				.90	2.59	.04	.35	.73
Years worked as social worker				.82	.48	.18	1.71	.09

(table continued)

	R	R^2	R^2_{change}	B	SE_B	β	t	p
Step 2	.73	.53	.37					
Constant				2.27	2.79		.82	.42
Republican				3.11	2.03	.14	1.54	.13
Independent				2.21	1.36	.13	1.63	.11
Other/no political				-1.17	2.61	-.04	-.45	.66
BSW highest degree				4.79	2.25	.18	2.13	.04
Work in city				.15	1.25	.01	.12	.90
Work in small town				-.84	1.45	-.06	-.58	.56
Work in rural area				-2.27	2.12	-.10	-1.07	.29
Years worked as social worker				.26	.41	.06	.64	.53
Supervisor				3.44	1.47	.24	2.34	.02
Private Practice				-1.12	1.15	-.09	-.97	.33
Level of Professional Socialization				3.96	1.00	.41	3.96	.00
Level of Policy Preparedness				1.37	.66	.19	2.09	.04
Level of Social Media Use				.25	.32	.07	.80	.43

Note. *N*=93. B= unstandardized regression coefficients; SE_B=standardized error of the coefficient; β= standardized coefficient.

These results were obtained by first controlling for political identification, level of social work degree, region where employed, and years worked as a social worker. The resulting predictor variables, a combination of type of social work employment, policy practice preparedness, professional socialization, and social media, positively predicted level of policy practice among social workers in Illinois in this sample at a statistically significant level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 7, the ANOVA, demonstrates that the regression model is useful for analyzing the data, and provides additional support for the rejection of the null hypothesis. The ANOVA analyzes the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The null hypothesis was rejected as a result of this analysis ($F = 6.74$, $p < .001$) and supports that level of policy practice is better predicted by the combination of levels of professional socialization, policy preparedness, social media use, and type of social work employment when controlling for years worked as a social worker, region of work within Illinois, highest degree attained, and political identification.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for the Regression Analysis of Level of Policy Practice

Model		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
1	Regression	524.30	8	65.54	2.01	.05[a]
	Residual	2733.98	84	32.55		
	Total	3258.28	92			
2	Regression	1713.12	13	131.78	6.74	.00[b]
	Residual	1545.16	79	19.56		
	Total	3258.28	92			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Years worked as social worker, region of work, highest level of degree, political identification

b. Predictors: (Constant), Years worked as social worker, region of work, highest level of degree, political identification, Level of Social Media Use, Level of Policy Preparedness, Private Practice, Supervisor, Level of Professional Socialization

Summary

In Chapter 4, data analyses were provided with descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables utilized in the study and the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses of the study. A hierarchical multiple linear regression was the statistical analysis utilized to determine if, after controlling for the demographic variables of political identification, years of experience, level of social work degree attained, and Illinois region where employed, the independent variables of type of social work employment, and levels of professional socialization, policy practice preparedness, and social media use could predict and account for a statistically significant

amount of variance in the outcome score of the dependent variable, level of policy practice.

The hypothesis in the study was supported by the results of the data analysis. The null hypothesis was rejected. In Chapter 5, I offer a summary and interpretation of the results of the study, implications for practice and social change, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to identify factors that predict policy practice among social workers in Illinois. Analyses of these predictors are critical to the profession of social work due to the waning amount of policy practice activities in the last decades despite a professional foundation in and mandate for engagement (Bernklau Halvor, 2016; Kam, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Factors found to predict increased levels of policy practice activity among social workers can serve to guide social work leaders and educators on how to increase levels of policy practice in the profession.

Using a sample population of 93 individuals who had obtained a social work degree and were working in a social work-related position in Illinois, I assessed the predictive nature of type of social work employment, professional socialization, policy practice preparedness, and social media use to level of policy practice. These variables were controlled for by the demographic variables of years worked as a social worker, region where employed, highest degree attained, and political identification. Data were collected through an online survey and analyzed using quantitative methods.

I expected, based on existing literature, that all four predictor variables would have a positive impact on level of policy practice (see Jovicevic, 2016; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mellinger, 2014; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). While some demographic variables utilized as control variables have been intermittently shown to increase policy practice, no studies could be found that consistently identified a demographic variable,

such as sexual orientation or gender, that correlated with increased policy practice. In addition, such demographic variables offer little assistance to professional decision-makers regarding changes within the field, other than potential field recruiting strategies. For example, if Democrats were found to be significantly more active in policy practice than Republicans, the profession of social work would have little use of the data to increase policy practice among the entire profession. For these reasons, I used the demographic variables to control for their impact on the regression model.

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis I conducted to test the prediction supported the assumptions. The results showed that the set of control and predictor variables as a unit explained about 53% of the variation in level of policy practice. The demographic control variables were entered in Step 1 of the model and accounted for 16% of the variation, which was not a statistically significant amount. However, the predictor variables of the study, entered in Step 2 of the model, accounted for an additional 37% of the variation in level of policy practice, which was statistically significant at $p < .001$.

In addition, the results showed that levels of professional socialization and policy preparedness were statistically significant predictors of higher levels of policy practice. Among the dummy-coded categorical predictor variable type of employment, holding a primarily supervisory or administrative position correlated positively with level policy practice (Pearson's $r = .45$, $p < .001$), while holding a primarily private practice position

correlated negatively with level of policy practice (Pearson's $r = -.27$, $p < .01$). These were statistically significant findings.

I found additional correlations among the independent variables to be statistically significant and worth noting. First, holding a supervisory/administrative type of role correlated positively with professional socialization (Pearson's $r = .38$, $p < .001$). In addition, a primarily private practice role correlated negatively with professional socialization (Pearson's $r = -.21$, $p < .05$).

I also found significant correlations among control and predictor variables that are worth noting. While working primarily in a city correlated positively with professional socialization (Pearson's $r = .35$, $p < .001$), working primarily in a small town correlated negatively with professional socialization (Pearson's $r = -.22$, $p < .05$). In addition, more years worked as a social worker correlated negatively with level of social media use (Pearson's $r = -.21$, $p < .05$). Some additional significant correlations were found within the control variables and can be seen in Table 6, but these were beyond the scope of this study. In this chapter, I will discuss the research findings, limitations to the study, my recommendations for further research, and the implications of this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this study, I found levels of professional socialization and level of policy preparedness to significantly predict levels of policy practice and that supervisors engage in policy practice activities at a significantly higher level than direct service practitioners. With the exception of level of social media use, which was not found to predict policy

practice, all proposed predictors supported by the literature in Chapter 2 served as statistically significant predictors of the dependent variable. While current literature has established the importance of the predictors to engagement of policy practice, no studies emerged in which all variables were analyzed for their predictive impact on policy practice levels among social workers in Illinois.

Level of Professional Socialization

The results of this study indicated that increased levels of professional socialization resulted in increased levels of policy practice. Professional socialization is a process that leads to enculturation into a profession. As this is a process, socialization in social work begins in formal education (BSW, MSW) and continues throughout an individual's professional life (through training, seminars, mentoring, peer relations, etc.). Throughout this process, professional values, identity, knowledge, ideals, ethics, and attitudes are transferred to the member of the profession (Valutis et al., 2012). Ideally, the professional identity that emerges as a result of this professional socialization is grounded in the values that shape the profession, and a social worker comes to consider him or herself as a member of the group (Oliver, 2013).

Researchers have supported the concept that professional socialization improves levels of policy practice. Creating professional norms that legitimize policy practice as an integral component of social work and establishing a work environment where such activities are supported were found to enable policy practice and improve the likelihood of individual engagement (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015;

Mellinger, 2014). In historical context, organizations such as settlement houses and the COS served as facilitators of professional socialization, the former promoting macropractice and the latter promoting micropractice. Although the positive impact of professional socialization on policy practice is seen in the literature, empirical research that supports increased policy practice is limited. The results of this study were reflective of the current literature in that professional socialization can serve to increase levels of policy practice among social workers.

Level of Policy Preparedness

The results also indicated that increased policy practice preparedness predicted increased policy practice. I measured this by asking respondents of the survey to rate how well their BSW, MSW, and advanced education prepared them for various policy practice activities. Current researchers have reported inconsistent results as to the importance of policy practice education to later engagement in policy practice, but the research supports the idea that quality policy practice training has a positive impact in level of practice (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). The results of this study corroborated the findings of Lustig-Gants and Weiss Gal (2015) and Mizrahi and Dodd (2013), indicating that social workers who were well prepared for policy practice in formal education and advanced studies tended to also engage more in policy practice.

Primary Employment

Finally, the results of this study indicated that social workers whose primary work responsibilities were supervisory or administrative engaged in significantly more policy practice activities than social workers engaged primarily in direct service and that supervision correlated positively with levels of policy practice. Lustig-Gants and Weiss-Gal (2015) found that participants who engaged in policy practice activities often did so because they were directly invited by a superior and that those who engaged tended to hold supervisor or administrative roles. The results of this study indicated that supervisors do, in fact, engage more in policy practice and are well positioned to recruit and mentor other social workers in these activities. Although the correlation between type of employment and increased policy practice among social work supervisors and administrators is supported by the literature, empirical research that substantiates this is limited. The findings from this study supported the premise that supervisors do engage in policy practice more than direct service and private practice social workers.

Social Media Use

In this study, I found that social media use was not a significant predictor of policy practice. There is no doubt that social media use is skyrocketing and that it has become a rapidly evolving method of activism (Bode, 2016; Sitter & Curnew, 2016). Facebook alone boasts over 1 billion users that make up 79% of all Internet users and 68% of all adults in the United States (Facebook Newsroom, 2017; Greenwood et al., 2016). Although potentially very useful for policy practice, current researchers are

inconsistent in determining if increased social media use actually results in higher rates of policy practice (Štětka & Mazák, 2015; Zube & Lampe, 2012).

Digital pessimists are concerned that "lazy" social media engagement is not effective at bringing about social change and, unlike active engagement that has been shown to be effective for social change, serves only to satisfy a moral imperative but could become the new social norm (Jovicevic, 2016; Sitter & Curnew, 2016; Štětka & Mazák, 2015). Digital optimists view social media as an effective method of providing information, mobilizing groups to action, and offering a platform for expressing opinions (Jovicevic, 2016). Across the literature, inconsistent results regarding the correlation between social media use and policy practice lead to the question of whether social media users become more engaged in policy practice as a result of usage, or are those who are already politically engaged simply utilizing social media as a means of engagement (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Gustafsson, 2012; Halupka, 2014; Jovicevic, 2016; Štětka & Mazák, 2015). The bulk of social media research has yet to focus exclusively on social workers, and those that have investigated the correlation have produced inconsistent results (Obar, 2014; Sitter & Curnew, 2016). In this study, I found that increased social media use was not a significant predictor of policy practice, and this finding adds to the body of research of inconsistent results, although more years worked in the field did significantly correlate with less social media use. However, the low reliability of the scale used in the study must be taken into consideration with the interpretation of these results.

Civic Voluntarism Model

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks: the civic voluntarism model and the social identity theory. The civic voluntarism model suggests why some engage in policy practice, or civic engagement, and others do not. The model theorizes that having the resources to participate, being psychologically engaged in politics, and engaging in recruitment networks tends to lead to increased policy practice (Kim & Khang, 2014). Resources needed to participate in civic engagement include tangible (money, ability to travel, admission to events, etc.) and intangible (time available to participate, skills and knowledge) assets (Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015; Nygård & Jakobsson, 2013). One researcher suggested that even with access to tangible resources, intangible resources are required to carry out effective policy practice (Kim & Khang, 2014).

Psychological engagement in civics and politics also predicts active engagement (Verba et al., 1995). This engagement includes interest and motivation; efficacy (the belief that a person can make a difference); and identification (with a political party, advocacy or professional group, etc.; Bernklau Halvor, 2016; Kim & Khang, 2014; Lane & Humphreys, 2015; Weeks & Holbert, 2013, p. 217). No matter how well equipped and motivated an individual is for policy practice, there must also be something or someone that mobilizes them into action. Recruitment involves direct efforts by another person or group to engage an individual in civic or political activity (Kim & Khang, 2014; Nygård & Jakobsson, 2013). A person can be well equipped with resources and psychological

engagement but fail to utilize them unless recruited (invited, mentored, offered opportunities) by others, such as peers or supervisors or political, professional, and religious leaders (Kim & Khang, 2014).

The civic voluntarism model proposes that social workers who have the resources, motivation, and networks to engage are more likely to engage in policy practice. The Settlement House Movement is an example of providing both workers and clients with the resources, motivation, and networks to engage in policy practice, forging the path toward a macrofocus within the profession (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012). The COS, in comparison, focused on interventions at the individual level and did not provide resources, motivation, or networks (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012). As a result, the COS perpetuated the belief that individuals, rather than systemic issues, were to blame for social problems (Kam, 2014; Makaros & Weiss-Gal, 2012). Since professional socialization and policy practice preparedness contain many factors associated with resources, motivation, and network availability, this theory was a suitable fit as a part of the theoretical framework for this study.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory proposes that group identity becomes part of one's self-concept and is based on knowledge of being a part of the group and the significance perceived from that membership (Jackson et al., 2011). A group identity creates norms and expectations that prescribe behavioral orientations, such as engagement in policy practice among social workers (Jackson et al., 2011). Again, professional groups such as

the Settlement House Movement and the COS represented powerful initiators of group identity, identities which either encouraged a dual focus of practice or a singular focus on individual interventions. Professional identity as a social worker, a key factor in professional socialization, was supported in the present research as a predictor of increased levels of policy practice.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, a random sampling of social workers in Illinois was recruited to complete an online survey. Attempts were made to make the survey accessible to a wide array of social workers, including the use of social media platforms and e-mail invitations to a random group of social workers whose employment emails were publicly accessible on the internet. E-mail invitations to professional group members were used only after the majority of participants had already been recruited and only targeted private practitioners and supervisors. While a quota sample of private practitioners, direct service workers, and supervisors was proposed for the study, the requisite quota for supervisors could not be obtained within a reasonable collection period and through reasonable efforts. I theorize not only that supervisor lack of time impacted these recruitment strategies, but also that there are significantly less social workers in a supervisory or administrative role than there are direct service or private practitioners. Therefore, I am reasonably satisfied that the sample population was representative of the population of social workers in Illinois and not a threat to external validity. The

decreased number of supervisors in the study, however, is considered a limitation to the results of the study.

The social media use scale was found to be a poor indicator of engagement in social media (Cronbach's $\alpha = .52$). Used with permission from the authors, the scale asked respondents to rate level of usage for any social media platform used. Initially, the mean of results for each platform were calculated, however, since the result for many platforms was 0 (no use), the results did not measure what was intended to be measured. One could have reported high engagement in Facebook, for example, but no engagement in any other platform, which produced a very small mean score. On the other hand, an individual reporting a "1" (1x/month) for many different platforms could have produced a higher mean score even though the individual had much less engagement. To remedy this problem, the results for each platform were added and divided only by the number of platforms that each participant reported using. This increased the reliability of the scale, but still failed to fully account for the fact that high engagement in just one platform was a better indication of social media use for the purposes of measuring the potential for policy practice than low to moderate engagement in several platforms. While the final score utilized is reasonably expected to reflect general levels of usage, a more robust scale of measuring social media use should be developed.

Similarly, the policy practice scale also reflects some limitations in robustly measuring engagement. While it boasts high reliability, the scale asks respondents to indicate only "yes" or "no" to a series of 29 different policy practice activities. This

assumes that increased policy practice occurs by engaging in many different forms of practice, when in fact a social worker may be highly involved with only a couple policy practice activities. In addition, the survey questions on policy practice were created in Israel and adapted for use in the United States. While only minor wording and choices were changed to reflect similar organizations or practices in the United States, it should be noted that this could have been a limitation of the study. However, the scale is reasonably expected to reflect general policy practice engagement. Since no other scales were found in the literature that measured policy practice among social workers, this too is a subject for further research.

Recommendations

Prior research has shown the policy preparedness, professional socialization, social media use can lead to higher levels of policy practice among social workers. There are, however, multiple factors that influence why someone engages in this expected form of social work practice (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Hylton, 2015; Kam, 2014; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Mizrahi & Dodd, 2015). The results of the present study suggest the need for further research in several areas.

To further parse out specific indicators that predict policy practice, qualitative studies with populations who do engage in policy practice would be beneficial to help determine what led to their engagement. In addition, further details on how social media is utilized could be obtained qualitatively. Further research in best practices for policy preparedness could include longitudinal studies comparing groups who did and did not

receive specific policy practice educational curricula or programs. Such programs might include advanced civics, experiential opportunities, or formal mentoring programs for new social workers in the field (Hylton, 2015; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2013).

Additional research focusing on professional socialization is warranted. The study revealed a plethora of significant findings with this variable. Specifically, the differences in professional socialization among those working in cities versus small towns should be further explored.

Further research in the development of robust scales to measure policy practice and social media use should be undergone. Both scales measure breadth, but not depth, of engagement. For example, an individual may be heavily involved in policy practice in just a couple activities measured on the scale, but because of the binary nature of the scale ("yes" or "no") for each activity presented, the policy practice score would be low when accounting for negative responses among all the other options.

Finally, this study should be reproduced with larger sample sizes and in additional regions of the country. The sample used in the current study represents the population of social workers in Illinois. Considering the differences in regions around the United States, the population does not represent other states or regions and larger samples sizes can improve reliability of the findings.

Implications

Civic engagement is the backbone of a democratic society. Each citizen is offered the opportunity to voice concerns, beliefs, and desires for policies that impact themselves

and others. Social workers are uniquely indoctrinated to advocate for those most marginalized in society. One of the most profound provocations for engaging in policy practice was quoted in Chapter 2 and bears repeating here: "Persons opposed to social justice…love the political vacuum created when other people do not participate in the political process" (Jansson, 2014, p. 57). If social workers do not advocate for the rights of those least able to advocate for themselves, the field of individuals with the training and will to advocate diminishes significantly, and the political vacuum will fill with powerful individuals most likely to advocate only for the elite.

If professional socialization in policy practice is to be cultivated among the entire profession beyond formal education, then professional organizations and social work leaders must make concerted efforts to incorporate policy practice into the dissemination of a social work identity. To do this, a consistent message must be endorsed: *social workers engage in policy practice.* This can be accomplished when social work leaders: (a) exemplify engagement, (b) share engagement information, and (c) invite others to engage with them. Professional organizations must disseminate information on policy practice, such as current legislation, methods of advocacy, and inclusion of policy practice education within seminars and conferences. Since individuals not members of professional organizations would not have access to such information, policy practice education could be included as a required topic of training to maintain licensure.

For the most difficult to reach social workers, those who do not hold professional membership, who are not licensed, and who do not work within strong social work

networks, social work educators must indoctrinate a social work identity that includes policy practice during formal education. This must extend well beyond the one or two required policy courses to include: (a) professional socialization from an entire department of faculty well-versed in policy practice, who demonstrate policy practice in vivo, and who invite and mentor students to engage with them; (b) incorporation of policy practice throughout the core curriculum; and (c) exemplification of the importance of relational engagement with policy leaders (agencies, boards, legislators, etc.) by creating opportunities to engage with such leaders in and outside the classroom. As presented by Lustig-Gants and Weiss-Gal (2015), faculty have a responsibility to instill norms demonstrating that policy practice is an expected function of a social worker's role. This not only legitimizes engagement but presents a model for practice in which a social worker would fail to meet expectations if not engaged at the macro level.

Social workers themselves must learn to advocate for their professional responsibilities among supervisors who are not social workers. Since policy practice activities are not billable, clinical functions, and not always as valued by other social service professionals, social workers should feel empowered to: (a) explain professional obligations; and (b) requesting allowances to advocate such as time, resources, educational opportunities, or involvement with advocacy groups that provide information and opportunities (Mellinger, 2014).

Policy preparedness must be primarily promulgated by leaders and educators. For example, civic literacy, or knowledge of governmental systems and how to engage

within them to bring about policy or legislative change, has been found to predict higher levels of policy engagement (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013). Civic literacy has been reported as low among citizens of the United States in general, but even lower overall for minority citizens and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2013).

Civic literacy and knowledge in policy practice activities are factors that can be improved through field training, and curricular and program modifications. Many BSW and MSW programs require only one course that focuses on policy practice. Not only should such courses be very robust, but consideration of additional advanced courses and opportunities could be added to core curricula. For social workers in the field, trainings in policy practice should be regular offerings, and information about policy practice should be readily accessible to social workers at employment sites and through other organizations that support social workers (websites, conferences, trainings).

Another recommendation for improving policy preparedness is to incorporate learner-centered, active learning strategies. Students today are the first generation to have grown up fully immersed in technology, and tend to process information differently (Roehl, Ready, & Shannon, 2013). Social work educators must adapt by incorporating teaching methods that actively engage these students. Roehl et al. (2013) described this shift as moving from a teaching-centered paradigm to a learner-centered paradigm. One example is utilizing a flipped classroom model, wherein asynchronous video or lecture viewing is assigned for preclass preparation, allowing valuable class time to be utilized

for problem-solving, conceptualizing, and cooperative learning with the instructor (Roehl et al., 2013). For subjects challenging to apply to fieldwork strictly from textbook and lecture learning alone, such as policy practice, a flipped classroom also allows for the application of experiential learning, through video or hands on experiences, before processing in the classroom.

Social media is a powerful resource for policy practice engagement. Within the framework of the civic voluntarism model, social media can provide many of the resources, motivation, and recruiting needed for engagement. Similarly, social media can help to shape a strong social work identity of policy practice among the profession. Still, social media use in regard to policy practice is challenging to measure. A user must be connected with individuals and pages that promote policy practice in order to have adequate access to the resources. In my own policy courses, I have encouraged students to utilize social media as a policy practice resource by providing a list of social media pages that inform on and invite policy engagement and have also assigned a project wherein students use technology and social media to advocate for their own policy of choice.

Conclusion

The profession of social work laid a strong foundation in social justice from the inception of the profession. Social work leaders were change agents, recognizing the need not only to provide assistance to individuals in need, but to assess systems that led to such needs, and to work at improving broken systems. Policy practice is that branch of

social work through which broken systems are addressed and social justice can be achieved.

However strong this foundation, social work as a profession has struggled to maintain a focus on policy practice. A growing divergence between clinical practice and policy practice has led to decreased rates of policy practice among social workers, which directly impacts the marginalized populations social workers are tasked with protecting. As social work leaders seek methods of reigniting and reengaging the profession in this critical practice, this study demonstrates that increasing professional socialization and policy practice preparedness among social workers, and utilizing leaders to recruit, train, and mentor other social workers, can lead to the increased policy practice engagement sought after by the profession.

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Appendix A: The Social Work Policy Practice Survey

Social Work Policy Practice Survey

Demographics

This data is required for research purposes and **not** to identify the respondents.

There is no way to identify the respondent through the data collection.

Age:

1=20-30
2=31-40
3=41-50
4=50+

Gender:

1=Male
2=Female
3=Other

Race/Ethnicity:

How would you classify yourself?
1=Asian/Pacific Islander
2=Black
3=Caucasian/White
4=Hispanic
5=Latino
6=Middle Eastern
7=Other ethnic group: _____

Income level

Which of the following groups of annual incomes fit your household? Please note: this means all net income of all members of your household, including salaries, welfare, pensions, income from business, dividends or any other sources of income):
1=Up to $29,999
3=$30,000-39,999
4=$40,000-49,999
5=$50,000-59,999
6=$60,000-69,999
7=$70,000-79,999
8=$80,000-89,000
9=More than $90,000

How would you describe your sexual orientation?
1-Heterosexual
2-Homosexual
3-Bisexual
4-Other: _____

Illinois region in which the participant is employed in a social work position

Which of the following best describes the area in which you live:
1=A city
2=A suburban area
3=A small town
4=A rural area

Political identification

Generally speaking, are you a *democrat*, a *republican*, an *independent*, or something else?
1=Democrat
2=Republican
3=Independent
4=Other: _____
99=Don't know/don't identify politically

Membership in professional associations
Are you currently a member of NASW? Yes No
If no, which answer best describes why not:
1-too expensive
2-don't perceive a benefit to membership
3-have never considered membership
4-other: _____

Are you currently a member of any specialty professional organizations (Illinois Association of School Social Workers, North American Association of Christians in Social Work, etc.)? Yes No
If yes, which one(s): _____

Population served
What is the primary population you serve?
1=mentally ill (inpatient or outpatient)
2=students (schools, regional office, truancy)
3=health patients (hospital)

4=low socioeconomic status (homeless, social services, charities, refugees/immigrants)
5=hospice patients
6=therapy patients/clients (private practice, sexual assault victim services)
7=children/adolescents (child welfare, residential)
8=addictions
9=aging (nursing home, agency serving elderly)
10=criminal justice (detention facility, parole officer, probation)
11=developmentally disabled
12=adoption
14=Other: _____

Years worked in a social work position:
1-1-5 years
2-6-10 years
3-11-20 years
4-21-30 years
5-31-40 years
7-41+ years

Level(s) of social work degree(s) attained (check all that apply).

1- BSW

2- MSW

Primary type of social work employment:

1=Direct service-more than 50% (community mental health, school social work, hospital or nursing home, social service agency, hospice, child welfare, addictions)
2=Administrative work-more than 50% (administration, supervision, development, fund-raising, policy, advocacy)
3=private practice or primarily therapy/clinical counseling
4=other:_____

Level of involvement in policy practice

Survey from Weiss-Gal, Gal, & Tayri-Swartz. (2013), adapted for use in the U.S.

Internal consistency found in the Taush sample (n=123) was α=.86 (Taush, 2011). Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.87. Scale validation reveals a high

Pearson correlation of four general questions with 29-scale tool in both the Taush and pretest samples (r=.65).

For each question, please circle the answer that best describes your policy practice *within the last 12 months*:

***In the last 12 months*, during your professional career as a social worker, and as part of your work, have you:**			
1	Approached (formally or informally) policymakers[1] (alone or with colleagues) by mail, e-mail, phone, by sending study findings, or in a personal meeting, to try and convince them to support or to object to a specific policy proposal?	Yes	No
2	Approached (formally or informally) policymakers (alone or with colleagues) by mail, e-mail, phone, by sending study findings, or in a personal meeting, to inform them about a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy, related service users?	Yes	No
3	Approached celebrities, or advocacy organizations, or the social work association, in order to convince them to put pressure on policymakers to pay attention to a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy, related to service users?	Yes	No
4	Used the media (even if not on your initiative) to promote awareness to a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
5	Approached (alone or with colleagues) service users in order to get feedback about the organization so to improve it?	Yes	No
6	Analyzed (alone or with colleagues) a problem in an organizational\local\government policy, in order to encourage the public or policymakers to bring about change in the policy?	Yes	No
7	Helped service users to organize a campaign against an organizational\local\government policy that negatively affects them?	Yes	No

[1] Policymakers can be administrators in your organization or policymakers in local level (city officials), administrators of other welfare organizations and policymakers at government level (state or federal legislators, government agency administrators, Secretaries, etc.).

8	Been a permanent member of a committee or any professional team dealing with a problem related to service users, or with planning or changing policy on an organizational\local\government level?	Yes	No
9	Been a member of a planning and building committee or submitted objections (alone or with colleagues) to such committees?	Yes	No
10	Been a non-permanent member of any committee dealing with a problem related to service users, or with planning or changing policy in organizational\local\government level?	Yes	No
11	Taken part in meeting of the city (or the local authority) council, in the locality where you work, dealing with policy issues (even if you didn't speak at the meeting), whether you were invited or participated at your own initiative?	Yes	No
12	Written an opinion column or a letter to the editor of a newspaper (local, national or professional) about a problem related to service users, an unanswered need or about problems or limitations in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
13	Written blogs, or commented in other people's blogs, about a problem related to service users, an unanswered need or about problems or limitations in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
14	Written a column or a letter to any internet site or to your organization's site, about a problem related to service users, an unanswered need or about problems or limitations of an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
15	Been part of an organized appeal to a court on behalf of a service user, to bring attention to an issue related to service users or to a problem with an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
16	Taken part in legislative committees meetings (even if you didn't speak at the meeting or if you participated at your own initiative)?	Yes	No
17	Taken part in protest activities (e.g. signed a petition, joined a protest march or rally) – in your capacity as a social worker and <u>not</u> as a private person –	Yes	No

	against an organizational\local\government policy that negatively affects service users?		
18	Joined – in your capacity as a social worker – a coalition or a forum working to promote or change policies?	Yes	No
19	Acted to bring to your colleagues attention an unanswered need or problems or limitations in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
20	Presented to a policymaker (alone or with colleagues), at a personal meeting or by sending a letter or submitting a paper, a solution to a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
21	Taken part in an activity planned by a social worker organization that aimed to support or change a policy?	Yes	No
22	Participated in a seminar or a conference, planned to bring to the attention of the public or of policymakers, a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy, related to service users?	Yes	No
23	Participated with colleagues or drafted alone an opinion paper about a policy?	Yes	No
24	Participated in an appeal to a Federal Court about any aspect of your work or related to service users?	Yes	No
25	Invited (alone or with colleagues) policymakers to visit your organization or the community/neighborhood you work in, to address a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy, related to service users?	Yes	No
26	Tried to educate service users and to increase their awareness to a problem in an organizational\local\government policy that affects them, in order to encourage them to act for policy change?	Yes	No
27	Increased the awareness of individuals or groups in the community (through personal meetings, handing out written material, organizing meetings or lectures to give information etc.) about a problem affecting them or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy?	Yes	No
28	Undertaken in your workplace (alone or with colleagues) a study on problems and needs in the community, or on programs and services, in order to increase	Yes	No

	the awareness of the public or policymakers, and in order to influence a policy?		
29	Contacted colleagues from other organizations to discuss a problem or a limitation in an organizational\local\government policy, related to service users?	Yes	No

Recruitment

Recruitment networks

Involvement in professional social work recruitment networks:

Please rate how active you are currently in the following organizations:		**0 Not 142ctive at all**					**5 Very active**
1	The National Association of Social Workers	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	A social work specialty professional organization (Illinois Association of School Social Workers, North American Association of Christians in Social Work, etc.)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	A non-social work specialty professional organization (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Illinois Elementary School Association, etc.)	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Other: _____ (please specify a name)	0	1	2	3	4	5

Involvement in political recruitment networks:

Please rate how active you are in the following organizations:		**0 Not active at all**					**5 Very active**
1	An advocacy movement or organization (e.g. “Women’s March”, an advocacy coalition)	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Political party (e.g. Republican, Libertarian)	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Political movement (e.g. “Our Revolution [Bernie Sanders], “Alt Right”, “Make America Great”)	0	1	2	3	4	5
4	Other political recruitment network: _____ (please specify a name)	0	1	2	3	4	5

Professional Socialization

Perception of the way in which organizational culture perceives workers' involvement in policy practice

Perception of administrator's attitudes toward workers' involvement in policy practice:

Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.93.

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements There are no “right” or “wrong” answers – your opinion is what’s important		**1 Strongly disagree**						**7 Strongly agree**
1	The head of my department/agency encourages social workers to participate in	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	activities aimed to change local (city/authority) policies							
2	The head of my department/agency encourages social workers to participate in activities aimed at changing government policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	The head of my department/agency encourages social workers to participate in activities aimed at changing the policies of the department	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perception of supervisors' attitudes toward workers' involvement in policy practice:

Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.91.

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements There are no "right" or "wrong" answers – your opinion is what's important		**1 Strongly disagree**						**7 Strongly agree**
1	My direct supervisor encourages and guides social workers to be involved in activities aimed at changing departmental policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	My direct supervisor encourages and guides social workers to be involved in activities aimed at changing government policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	My direct supervisor encourages and guides social workers to be involved in activities aimed at changing local (city/authority) policies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perception of colleagues' attitudes toward workers' involvement in policy practice:

Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.94.

	Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements There are no "right" or "wrong" answers – your opinion is what's important	**1 Strongly disagree**						**7 Strongly agree**
1	In my department, social workers involved in activities aimed at changing the policies of the department are viewed positively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	In my department, social workers involved in activities aimed at changing government policies are viewed positively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	In my department, social workers involved in activities aimed at changing local (city/local authority) policies are viewed positively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Perception of organizational culture artifacts toward involvement in policy practice:

Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.85.

	Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements There are no "right" or "wrong" answers – your opinion is what's important	**1 Strongly disagree**						**7 Strongly agree**
1	In my department information about the methods social workers can use to contact policymakers is readily available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2	In my department there are specific discussions and meetings about policy issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	In my department, being involved in influencing policies helps workers' careers and promotion prospects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	My department has staff meetings about policy issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	In my department, being involved in influencing policies hurts workers' careers and promotion prospects	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	My department has seminars or education sessions about the ways social workers can influence policy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	In my department, social workers are sent to seminars or conferences about policy change	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	In my department there are publications about social workers being involved in influencing policies (in the portal, website, on a notice board)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Professional Identity

Perception of social action as part of social work profession:

Items taken from Mary's (2001) 'Agreement with Statements Regarding Politics and Social'

questionnaire. Internal consistency found in the Weiss & Kaufman sample (n=141) was α=.74. Internal consistency found in the pretest sample (n=47) was α=.60.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:		1 Strongly disagree				5 Strongly agree
1	As a social worker, to effectively access resources for one's clientele, one must have some understanding of political systems	1	2	3	4	5
2	Social work, in principle, is not separable from social reform	1	2	3	4	5
3	Part of a social worker's ethical responsibility to society involves engaging in political activities	1	2	3	4	5
4	Social work is inherently political	1	2	3	4	5

Policy practice preparedness

This question is based on a study of policy practice preparedness (Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015).

To what extend did you learn how to influence policy during your social work studies?

5-poing Likert scale question ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a large extent)

Formal policy practice training:

During your bachelor level studies, how much did you:		1 Not at all				5 Very much
1	Learn about ways to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5
2	Learn about motivating and employing the community as a tool to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5

3	Learn about using the media to influence policymakers and their decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
4	Learn about lobbying?	1	2	3	4	5
During your masters level studies, how much did you: (if you didn't study for a masters degree, please skip to the next question):						
5	Learn about ways to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5
6	Learn about motivating and using the community as a tool to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5
7	Learn about using the media to influence policymakers and their decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
8	Learn about lobbying?	1	2	3	4	5
During your advanced studies (e.g. in-service training, seminars and training outside work), how much did you:		**1 Not at all**				**5 Very much**
9	Learn about ways to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5
10	Learn about motivating and using the community as a tool to influence policies?	1	2	3	4	5
11	Learn about using the media to influence policymakers and their decisions?	1	2	3	4	5
12	Learn about lobbying?	1	2	3	4	5

The following question was adapted from Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014b) and seeks to discover information about social media use.

How often do you use any of the following websites or social media platforms, if at all?
1=Less 1x/month
2=1x/month
3=2-3 times/month

4=1x/week
5=2-3 times/week
6=Daily
7=Multiple times/day

	Use? (yes/no)	If yes, how often (see above)
1-Facebook	_____	
2-Twitter	_____	
3-LinkedIn	_____	
4-YouTube	_____	
5-Instagram	_____	
6-Pinterest	_____	
7-MySpace	_____	
8-Google+ (not Google search, docs, or drive)	_____	
9-Foursquare	_____	

The following questions were adapted from a Pew Research Center (2012) survey on civic engagement and social media use.

If you answered "yes" above that you use a social media platform, have you utilized social media to engage in particular policy practice behaviors such as posting links, encouraging others to engage, or posting personal comments about issues or positions within the last 12 months (Pew Research Center, 2012, p. 54).
1-Yes
2-No
3-Don't know

In the last 12 months, has there been a time when you decided to LEARN MORE about a political or social issue because of something you read on a social networking site?
1-Yes
2-No
3-Don't know

In the last 12 months, has there been a time when you decided to TAKE ACTION involving a political or social issue because of something you read on these sites?
1-Yes
2-No
3-Don't know

Please rate your level of agreement or non-agreement to the following statement: "Social media is an effective form of advocacy."
Rate 1-7, with 1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree

Appendix B: E-mail Correspondence with Dr. Weiss-Gal Regarding use of *The Questionnaires on Policy Practice*

Dawn, you have my formal permission to use sections of the questionnaire for your dissertation. The questionnaires were developed by us with our students and were translated into English in 2013.
With regard to the questionnaire on policy practice training, as only part of the respondents related to their training at all stages of their SW education (BSW (the degree that grants social work qualification) , MSW, on-site training), in our publications we only relate to their BSW training. The reliability in four studies on social workers (600 participants) is good but I will only be able to give you the actual alpha in two seeks when our holidays end and I can get back to my files on campus. I suggest that you take into account the differences in the systems and perhaps relate only to pp training in the basic SW education program.
Idit

Prof. Idit Weiss-Gal, PhD.
Head
Bob Shapell School of Social Work
Tel Aviv University
Israel

From: Dawn Broers [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Friday, April 7, 2017 12:46 AM
To: idit Weiss < XXXXXXXX>
Subject: FW: scale

Hello again Dr. Weiss-Gal! I hope this finds you well!
I have decided I would like to use several subscales from your questionnaire packet for my dissertation research and was hoping you could provide me with a bit more information.

1. I would like to formally request your permission to use these sections of your questionnaire for my dissertation research.
2. Is there a date on the survey I can use for citation purposes?
3. For the "Policy Practice Training" scale on page 10, is there any available information about reliability, such as a Chronbach's alpha?

I believe that is all the additional information I need. Thank you again for your work and willingness to assist in providing materials for my research!
Dawn Broers

From: idit Weiss [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Monday, March 06, 2017 11:44 PM
To: Dawn Broers < XXXXXXXX>
Subject: RE: scale

Dear Dawn
I am so happy to hear that you have found my work relevant for your research. If you are looking for a questionnaire that measure social workers engagement in policy practice, I think that the attached questionnaires may be relevant for you. I am also attaching an article which used some of the scales there, and another article which is going to be published in the International Journal of Social Welfare.
All the best and good luck
Idit

Prof. Idit Weiss-Gal, PhD.
Head
Bob Shapell School of Social Work
Tel Aviv University
Israel

From: Dawn Broers [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Sunday, March 5, 2017 11:28 PM
To: idit Weiss < XXXXXXXX>
Subject: scale

Dr. Weiss-Gal, I am humbled to be able to write to you! I am a PhD student in Social Work Policy Practice and currently writing my dissertation on predictors of policy practice in the U.S. As you likely know, your work dominates the literature in this area and I have a very high level of regard and respect for your research as I am passionate about the same subject.
I have been disappointed by existing scales measuring policy practice that will be useful in measuring the array of policy practice activities in which social workers engage. However, I am intrigued by the scale utilized in your recent work:
Weiss-Gal, I., & Savaya, R. (2012). Teaching policy practice: A hands-on seminar for social workers in Israel. Journal of Policy Practice, 11(3), 139-157.
I was hoping it might be possible to obtain a copy of that scale for consideration of use in my own research?
With great regard,
Dawn Broers, MSW, LCSW

Appendix C: E-mail Correspondence with Dr. Xenos Regarding use of *The Social Media and Political Engagement Questionnaire*

Dear Dawn,

Thanks for your email, and I'm thrilled that you found the social media use items useful. I am happy to give you permission to use the items, with a citation to the Xenos et al. article. The three of us (Ariadne, Brian, and I) all worked on the survey items together. I do not have any additional reliability calculations other than the one that you mentioned – and of course I would encourage you to calculate (and I would be curious to see) the reliability in your sample.

Please let me know if I can be of any further help, and good luck with your project.

Best,
Mike

Michael A. Xenos
CAPs Professor and Department Chair, Department of Communication Arts
Affiliate Faculty, Department of Life Sciences Communication
Affiliate Faculty, School of Journalism & Mass Communication
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*
University of Wisconsin-Madison

From: Dawn Broers [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Monday, April 3, 2017 11:42 AM
To: Michael Xenos <XXXXXXXX >
Subject: RE: social media scale

Hello Dr. Xenos! I hope this finds you well. I want to thank you for sending me your Social Media and Political Engagement questionnaire. I would like to use the social media use survey question 8 in my dissertation research. I have a couple questions for you in regard to this:

1. I would like to formally request permission to utilize this portion of your survey.
2. For citation purposes, there is a title and date offered on the document, but no authors. Should I cite the Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014) study it was used in or would you prefer the questionnaire to be cited directly? If so, did all 3 authors participate in the creation of the survey?

3. I have Chronbach's alpha on Q8 from the Xenos et al., 2014 article. Is there any other reliability data on the instrument that would be helpful?

Thank you again for your assistance in my dissertation work and I look forward to hearing from you again!
Dawn Broers

From: Michael Xenos [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2017 12:34 PM
To: Dawn Broers < XXXXXXXX>
Subject: RE: social media scale

Dear Dawn,

Thanks for your interest in our work! I'm not exactly sure which scale you may be referring to – so I'm simply attaching a copy of our full questionnaire. This will include a lot of stuff that wasn't mentioned in the iCS paper you read, but I hope that it's helpful to you.

Best,
Mike

Michael A. Xenos
CAPs Professor and Department Chair, Department of Communication Arts
Affiliate Faculty, Department of Life Sciences Communication
Affiliate Faculty, School of Journalism & Mass Communication
Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*
University of Wisconsin-Madison

From: Dawn Broers [XXXXXXXX]
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2017 9:58 PM
To: Michael Xenos < XXXXXXXX>
Subject: social media scale

Good evening Dr. Xenos! My name is Dawn Broers and I am a faculty member in the social work department atXXXXXXXX. I am working on my dissertation for a PhD in Social Work Policy Practice, which will focus on, among other variables, social media use as a predictor of policy practice among social workers. I have found the social media use scale you utilized in the Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014) study to likely be a perfect fit for measuring this variable in my study and was hoping I might be granted permission and access to utilize it.
I appreciate your consideration!
Dawn R. Broers, MSW, LCSW