A study of political interest, competence, advocacy and awareness among social work students in the state of Georgia

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ABSTRACT
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A STUDY OF POLITICAL INTEREST, COMPETENCE, ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

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This study examined to what degree social work students participate politically. This study also seeks to understand students' political interests, competencies, advocacy efforts and awareness, which are factors that contribute to political activism among social work students. Two hundred and eleven (211) participants were selected for the study, utilizing non-probability convenience sampling. The survey participants were composed of social work students enrolled in an accredited social work program in the state of Georgia, whereas the programs are also governed by the Council of Social Work Education. The findings of the study indicated that, of the social work students, a majority disagreed that they were politically interested, competent, participated in political advocacy or aware of political issues that impact social policy.
A STUDY OF POLITICAL INTEREST, COMPETENCE, ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Despite an increase in political issues that impact the social environment, social workers have continued to focus more on individual client advocacy instead of political advocacy which influences the laws and programs implemented to enhance the lives of clients. There are many studies and evaluations of direct practice interventions among social work students and practitioners in social work literature; however, few have assessed how well social work students are fairing in the area of policy. The increased reliance on government funding by social service nonprofits, reduced government capacity as a result of budgetary constraints, and the growth of participatory processes and other collaborative governance mechanisms are trends in contemporary policy practice that have greatly influenced the way advocacy is carried out. Each of these trends has led to a change in the power relationship between social service nonprofits and government agencies and has opened up new opportunities for advocacy.

Social work literature supports the notion of the need for social workers to be politically active. Social workers have long been a part of the research process of identifying social problems that are in need of change, but we are not often included in the process of identifying the interventions that are need to positively affect the outcomes (Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, 2013). Social workers are the experts on social issues and should be prepared to advocate on the behalf of policies.
that affect clients, the community, agencies, organizations and the social work profession.

Social workers are mandated by the National Association of Social Workers’ (NASW) Code of Ethics, as well as in the accreditation standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) to advocate. This focus is reinforced in part by the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW; 2008a) and also the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education, which articulates that social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons (CSWE, 2008, p. I).

According to the NASW Code of Ethics (NASW, 2013), social justice is a social work value based upon the ethical principle, social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people (p. 9).

Section six of the NASW Code of Ethics, “Social Workers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society,” forms a strong foundation for political social work, Section 6.04(a) especially addresses this area of practice:
Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice. (p. 27)

According to Mosley (2013), policy advocacy is a concept that is of both practical and historical importance to the profession of social work and in order to keep up with developments in how advocacy is practiced at the ground level, social work research on advocacy needs to expand. Changes in government contracting and public management practices have reshaped the opportunity structure for policy advocacy, incentivizing a kind of advocacy that is routine, professionalized, and collaborative (Mosley, 2013).

Section 4.4 of the 2003 CSWE accreditation standards under which this study was originally envisioned included the following content requirements for foundation social policy courses:

Programs provide content about the history of social work, the history and current structures of social welfare services, and the role of policy in service delivery, social work practice, and attainment of individual and social well-being. Course content provides students with knowledge and skills to understand major policies that form the foundation of social welfare; analyze organizational, local, state, national, and international issues in social welfare policy and social service delivery; analyze and apply the results of policy research relevant to social service delivery; understand and demonstrate policy practice skills in regard to economic,
political, and organizational systems, and use them to influence, formulate, and advocate for policy consistent with social work values; and identify financial, organizational, administrative, and planning processes required to deliver social services (Council on Social Work Education, 2013).

Although CSWE transitioned to outcome or competency-based accreditation standards (Council on Social Work Education, 2008), the content expectations for social welfare policy instructors in undergraduate social work programs remain fundamentally the same. While effective teaching is my primary motivation, I also bring to this study a deep commitment to the macro-practice thread of the social work profession. Intentional changes made within communities and organizations over the years have profoundly impacted human well-being, in both positive and negative ways (Long, Tice, & Morrison, 2006; Segal, 2007).

In particular, I am interested in public policy and the ways in which it can impact human development, whether at the local, state, federal, or international level. A commitment and ability to incorporate macro practice strategies, including political advocacy, into one's social work practice is a commitment to adjusting social systems to meet the needs of people, rather than the other way around. Inspiring future policy practice efforts is, therefore, not only of interest to me because of CSWE requirements. Political policy practice is an essential means for creating a society in which human well-being and social justice are prioritized.

The Mandate for Political Advocacy

When contesting cultural prejudices and structural inequalities, much of social work practice has a political nature. Social workers attempt change within institutional
causes of poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, sexual violence, healthcare and other social ills by entering the political process that creates and implements detrimental policies for society (Swank 2012).

As mentioned earlier, the professional mandate for today’s social worker to be involved in political advocacy on behalf of social justice can be found in both the National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics and the profession’s educational accreditation standards. The ethical responsibility to be an advocate flows directly from the NASW Code of Ethics adopted in 1996 and revised in 1999. The National Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics includes a section entitled Social Workers’ Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society. Within this ethical code, social workers are called upon to “advocate for living conditions conducive to the fulfillment of basic human needs” and to “promote social, economic, political, and cultural values and institutions that are compatible with the realization of social justice” (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

Social workers are also expected to expand beyond their own political action activities and “facilitate informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions” (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Specifically, social workers are directed to “act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people” (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).
In addition, social workers should “prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability” (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

To prepare future professionals, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in their accreditation standards insists that social work programs should foster a commitment to political action by including content on “social or political action” (CSWE, 2001). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has also published standards that clearly call for the training of social work students in policy practice. Through these Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), CSWE describes social work’s purpose as the promotion of “human and community well-being” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). This professional purpose is “actualized” through social workers’ “quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Students of accredited social work programs are, therefore, expected to demonstrate ten core competencies as outlined in the (EPAS), one of which is to “engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008).

Under Educational Policy 2.1.8, social work students are expected to “know the history and current structures of social policies and services; the role of policy in service delivery; and the role of practice in policy development” (Council on Social Work
Education, 2008). They should be able to “analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being,” as well as “collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action” (Council on Social Work Education, 2008).

Fundamentally, these are all descriptions of attempts to change social policies for purposes consistent with the social work profession’s stated mission and values. There are a broad range of activities that can be considered legitimate means of political advocacy, including persuasion, lobbying, petitioning, testifying, public education, legal actions, and social action to achieve institutional change. Domanski (1998) conducted a national random sample survey of social work leaders in health care policy, inquiring about their participation in 44 government, private sector, and personal political activities during the 1994 health policy reform debate. From her analysis, she identifies ten prototypes of social work political participation: lobbyist, voter, campaigner, collaborator, advocate, individualist, witness, activist, persuader, and communicator. Domanski (1998) proposes these prototypes as a “reliable empirical model for political participation that integrates routine social work professional functions with their political components” (p. 156).

For the purposes of this study, political advocacy is conceptualized as actions taken to change public or governmental social welfare policies for purposes consistent with the social work profession’s stated mission and values. Additional terms commonly found in the professional literature which are understood to share a similar meaning with political advocacy include “political action,” “social action,” “civic engagement” and “policy practice.”
Statement of the Problem

Although social workers are expected to advocate for their clients, many social worker activities revolve around individual advocacy. Ezell (2001) found that 90 percent of social workers reported advocacy as part of the professional role of social work, but 75 percent of social workers who performed advocacy practiced individual, or case, advocacy. Far fewer social workers become involved in political, or class, advocacy also known as policy practice where social workers participate in the political system on a larger scale, either within or outside of their jobs. There are many reasons for this, including lack of training, not feeling competent to perform policy related tasks, restrictive employment settings, and fear of losing one's job. Depending on a social worker's place of employment, social workers can advocate more than they often assume that they can advocate (Rosenwald et al., 2012).

Because social workers are ethically bound to advocate for oppressed populations and, indeed, are among the few professionals who speak for disenfranchised populations, the extent to which they participate in the political arena has been a topic of concern in the profession for several decades.

The long relationship between social work and policy advocacy is well known. From the pioneering work of Jane Addams and her contemporaries in the early 20th century, to the rise of community organizing in the 1960s, to the current popularity of student and professional lobby days, advocacy is clearly part of social work's professional identity (Hoefer, 2006).

Unfortunately, despite the importance of policy advocacy to the profession, there are serious knowledge gaps about how rapidly changing political and institutional
arrangements may be reshaping its nature and content, for example, how policy advocacy is carried out by nonprofit service providers and what is advocated for. As stated earlier, these political and institutional shifts include increased dependence on government funds in the social service sector, reduced administrative capacity in state and local government, and a growth in opportunities to collaborate with government officials. These changes in the policy environment, partially a result of 30 years of privatization and devolution, coincide with a sharp rise in a market-based service provision ideology since the 1980s. This ideology has shifted the way that social rights are construed, how human service nonprofits interact with government, and how social services are delivered (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012).

There are continuing debates in the literature that persist about whether social work education should and does impart that presumed "traditional" social work mission and values to its students and whether these values affect students' broad beliefs about the profession and its promotion of social activism to achieve those goals (Dodd & Mizrahi, 2013). Although political activism has always been a part of social work practice, scholars believe that the extent of social worker activism as ebbed and flowed throughout history. Since the beginning of the Reagan administration, commentators have warned that the social work profession has become too micro oriented and has neglected its activist mission (Swank, 2012).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine to what degree social work students participate politically and to understand students political interest, competency, advocacy
and awareness which are factors that contribute to political activism among social work students. The study was also designed to explain, social work students' political ideology, political attitudes and barriers to activism. The participants of the study were social work students enrolled in social work programs guided by the ethical mandates of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

This study provides insights into the question about whether preexisting values, political views, experiences, and background characteristics affect students' views of the goals of social work and also whether they anticipate being politically active in the future, utilizing a range of strategies to effect change.

**Research Questions**

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. Is there political interest among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
2. Is there political competence among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
3. Is there political advocacy among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
4. Is there political awareness among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

**Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses of the study were as follows:

1. There is political interest among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

2. There is no political competence among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

3. There is no political advocacy among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

4. There is no political awareness among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.
Significance of the Study

Despite the great promises of the new millennium, there has been a continued erosion of benefits and services for populations at risk. In addition, according to Hoechstetter and Rome (2010) the United States face war and alienation abroad, an economic crisis and new hazards for immigrations at home, and profound threats to our civil liberties. Vulnerable populations that endure social and political issues such as poverty, lack of healthcare that is also accessible, unemployment, education, and immigration are all issues in which social workers are familiar. In facing these challenges, the perplexing issue is that most social workers are not active in the political arena where interventions for societal changes are made.

Many studies have shown that there is a lack of research in the areas of political policy practice among social work students and focus on civic engagement activities such as voting and being a part of a rally rather than policy development. Furthermore, it has been found that there is limited information on factors that may impede upon a student's interest in policy practices, their competence, level of engagement in political advocacy, and a student's awareness of political issues affecting vulnerable populations in the United States.

This study purports to shed some light on the perceived problems related to whether social work students are interested in political issues, have the skills and abilities to be competent in political policy practice, if they are actively engage in political advocacy, and if they are aware of both local and national political issue.

In order to achieve the goals of the social work profession, social workers must be prepared to advocate on the political level. Jansson (2014) argues that "policy practice
and advocacy are as important to social workers as direct service, community, and administrative practice” (p.1). Social workers must be conversant with social policies and able to seek changes in these policies to advance such values as social justice and fairness and the well-being of citizens and specific groups.

An abundance of the research on political activity among social workers in direct practice indicates that they are less active than their macro-practice counterparts and that education enhances self-efficacy and action suggests that direct practice social work students may be receiving limited skill-based, policy practice in the classroom. It is therefore of great significance with these data whether social work students participate in political policy practices.

**Defining Political Policy Practice**

Throughout this study, the terms political activism, policy practice, and political participation are used interchangeably to mean political activities performed within the political system, such as lobbying, educating the population on a social problem or a piece of proposed legislation through community awareness, or working on a political campaign. Thus, other types of political activity, such as demonstrations, protests, and other forms of social action designed to make change are not addressed in this study.

There are three reasons why political activity is defined in a more narrow sense in this study. First, research that reports on the political participation of social workers defines political activity as social workers participating within the political arena, which is different from activism in a social action role. Political or legislative advocacy roles have been identified by (Ezell, 2001; Jansson, 2014), as meeting with legislators, bill
drafting, monitoring legislation, lobbying and writing letter, making calls, sending emails to constituents. Second, the skill sets are different, depending on how one defines political activity.

Ezell (2001) also states that political advocacy requires persuasiveness, persistence, negotiating, assertiveness, collaboration, flexibility and being resourceful. Third, the laws that currently affect social workers in nonprofits and public agencies address lobbying and partisan political activity (for example, election campaigning), which are part of mainstream political pursuits but not social action pursuits. Therefore the focus has been narrowed to working within the political system for conciseness.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of presenting this review was to lay a scholarly foundation in order to establish a need for this study. This chapter review is a review of the current literature on political interest, competency, advocacy and awareness among social work students. The review covers a historical perspective of social work in social justice and political activism and a historical perspective of social work education, social work students in the State of Georgia and the educational requirements of CSWE were reviewed, and the ethical mandates of the NASW. This review also covers political powers of social workers, and it also explores political social work and the Congressional Social Work Caucus. Political interest, competency, advocacy and awareness articles and instruments are reviewed in order to establish an understanding for the data analysis from the responses of current social work students enrolled in an accredited social work program.

Historical Perspective of Political Social Work

According to Fine and Maxine (2013), the early settlement house movement has generally served as a starting point in claiming the roots of social justice in social work history. Through the movement, social workers were developing a critical consciousness about dramatically changing social, economic, and political conditions and their located differential impacts in the lives of poor and vulnerable groups. Settlement house workers
prominence in the late 19th century. They began to make the connections between individual problems and societal issues and to address both the systematic and the impacts of structural inequalities (Fine & Maxine, 2013).

According to Fine and Maxine (2013), Eleanor Stebner (1997) noted that the concept of the “social” was acquiring new power at the turn of the 20th century. Settlement houses were experiments in social democracy; their residents were advocates of social reform, and often, followers of the social gospel. When Jane Addams made the decision to cast her lot with the poor she embraced a concept of social justice. In her presidential address to the 1910 National Conference on Charities and Corrections, Addams spoke directly of the limits of charity and the challenges of social justice (Fine & Maxine, 2013).

Addams envisioned the group as a means for learning about democracy as people engaged in democratic group processes. Throughout social work's history, organizing efforts to combat social injustice were forged through the development of groups. For example, in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Rank and File Movement arose from within service organizations, provoked by unfair labor conditions, oppressive bureaucratic structures, and an economic system that favored corporate interests over human need (Fine & Maxine, 2013).

The powerful social and political movements of the 1960s pressed the social work profession to further examine its commitment to social justice. The civil rights movement, poor people's and welfare rights movements, women's movement, and anti-war movement demanded public and professional attention to deeply embedded social
work practices in contrast to the “charity” approach to social work gaining and economic inequalities and to the workings of structural as well as physical forms of violence. In 1973 NASW published an edited volume titled *Social Work Practice and Social Justice* that grappled with stark examples of racism and inequality as manifest in correctional, health, education, and welfare systems; the complicity of social work and social workers in perpetuating systemic injustices; and the responsibility of the profession to advocate for justice-oriented social change. The contributors analyzed the dominance of individual pathology approaches to theory and practice, which tended to bracket attention to social structures. They argued that social work had failed to live up to its professed values of human dignity, worth, and self-determination by ignoring social structures, failing to identify basic social problems and participate in their resolutions, and claiming a stance of professional neutrality regarding issues that are fundamentally political (Fine & Maxine, 2013).

According to Granstaff and Myers (2008), in 1976, NASW established its political action committee, Political Action for Candidate Election (PACE). This allowed the organization to pool money from members to support and elect politicians who were aligned with social work issues and values. In 1994, NASW made a commitment to elect more social workers into public office and to increase electoral advocacy. Since then, national and state chapters have focused efforts on educating social workers about the political process, running for office and political campaigning. Currently 48 chapters have established PACE or political action committees (Granstaff & Myers, 2013).
Social workers seeking and winning elected office are documented early in the profession. Social workers ran for office, were elected, and served as members of city councils, mayors, and members of Boards of Education. Jeanette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress in 1916, prior to women's suffrage, was also the first social worker elected to high public office. Rankin, a settlement and child welfare worker, was convinced she could improve the social conditions she encountered by running for public office and enacting social reform legislation (Weismiller & Rome 1995; Granstaff & Myers, 2013).

**Political Social Work and the Congressional Social Work Caucus**

Since at least the 1970s, formal definitions of social work practice have included intervention in the policy and legislative processes (Gibelman, 2005). While knowledge of political intervention and policy development has been an integral part of social work practice since the inception of the profession in a political setting.

According to Myers and Granstaff (2013), Dr. Nancy Humphreys, director and founder of the Institute for Political Social Work at the University of Connecticut, encouraged the profession to define political social work as a distinct practice specialization. “She distinguished political social work from ‘the responsibility every social worker has to be political.’ ‘Political social work’, she said, ‘is working in the political arena full-time using social work skills’” (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).

Politics encompasses various aspects of government, including the conduct of government, running for and holding elected office, working on political campaigns, working for elected officials, and the formation and implementation of public policy.
Macro social work practice focuses on changes and improvements in the larger society (Gibelman, 2005). Therefore, political social work can be defined as that part of macro practice that relates to the government's conduct, the making of governmental policy and running for and holding elected office. However, others define it as a specialization that contains both micro and macro elements (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).

Politicians in many arenas are called upon to assist their constituencies to navigate government agencies and services and most of them utilize their staff to facilitate this important role. Social workers are qualified and trained for these positions, which usually require short term and task-centered activities and linking people to resources. These social workers may assist people with accessing benefits and services, resolve disputes between people and government agencies, and create a group to identify and address common needs or issues (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).

The Congressional Social Work Caucus

In November 2010 during the 110th Congress, the Congressional Social Work Caucus which is bicameral authorized by the Congressional Member Organization (CMO) was founded by former Congressman Edolphus “Ed” Towns. Townes earned his MSW degree from Adelphi University, in Garden City, New York. Before entering politics, Towns worked as a hospital administrator at Beth Israel Hospital in New York City. He became the first African American to serve as Deputy Borough President of Brooklyn when he was appointed in 1976. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1982. He first introduced the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Reinvestment Act (H.R. 5447) in 2008, during the 109th

The mission of the caucus is to provide a platform in Congress that will allow approximately 650,000 social workers in the United States to engage the federal government by giving voice to their concerns and issues, and in turn providing an official presence on the Hill (Congressional Social Work Caucus, 2013).

The Congressional Social Work Caucus consists of members of the House of Representative and the U.S. Senate who are professional social workers or who generally support the ideals, principles, and issues germane to the social work profession. The Social Work Caucus participated in a number of congressional briefings and seminars in conjunction with other social work organizations such as the National Association of Social Worker (NASW), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the Social for Social Work and Research (SSWR) and the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP). These public events covered a wide range of topics such as social workers roles in the Affordable Care Act, military social work, funding for mental health research, and trauma-based practice in child welfare (Congressional Social Work Caucus, 2013).

In 2005, NASW identified 177 social workers holding elective office (NASW, 2013). As of 2007, NASW had identified 37 social workers practicing in legislative offices in the U.S. Congress. As of 2013, there were ten social workers in Congress, two in the U.S. Senate, and eight in the U.S. House of Representatives (NASW, 2013). On February 14, 2008, Representative Edolphus Towns (D-NY) and Representative
Christopher Shays (R-CT) introduced H.R 5447, the “Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young Reinvestment Act” (Social Work Reinvestment, 2013).

April 2013, Congresswoman Barbara Lee reintroduced the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young Reinvestment Act. The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young Reinvestment Act is considered the most comprehensive piece of federal legislation ever aimed at addressing the significant workforce challenges facing the profession of social work (Lewis, 2013).

The creation of the Congressional Social Work Caucus, in 2010, was the latest effort to engage policy on the federal level by social workers. The Congressional Social Work Caucus (2013), states that its primary purpose is the expansion of opportunities for social workers to engage with and influence government at the federal level. It plans to accomplish its mission and goals by hosting briefings and other events that provide opportunities for social work researchers to present their research to members of Congress and their staffs. The Caucus also has as a mission to expand opportunities for social work students to fulfill their field placement requirements in congressional offices (Congressional Social Work Caucus, 2013).

The Congressional Social Work Caucus creates an official presence in Congress for the social work profession that will allow social workers to engage with the federal government in a more meaningful manner. Whatever impact the Caucus will have, however, will depend on how members of the social work community respond to its presence. Because Congressional Members Organizations are not permitted to have resources beyond those in members’ offices, there is no one staff person whose primary
function is the work of the caucus. The issues that the Caucus will address will be those brought to it by outside organizations and individuals. A strong, independent outside organization such as the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy is needed to ensure the strength and viability of the Congressional Social Work Caucus (Lewis, 2013).

The Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy (CRISP, 2013) was created as an imitative of the Congressional Social Work Caucus. Crisp was created as an independent, nonpartisan 501(c) 4 organization that recognized the importance of the Congressional Social Work Caucus and sought to complement its mission and work in accordance to the rules of the United States House of Representatives. Dr. Charles E. Lewis, Jr. is President of CRISP and strongly believes that social workers have much to bring to the policy discussion because of their hands-on knowledge about the real-world experiences of people in all walks of life (Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy, 2013).

The National Association of Social Workers, the Council of Social Work Education, and the Society for Social Work and Research have endorsed the Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy. CRISP is committed to expanding the participation of social workers in federal legislative and policy processes and will work to expand opportunities for students to find field placements in federal government offices both on the Hill and in offices near their schools. CRISP will employ strategies to raise social workers’ awareness about the federal legislative process through seminars, conferences and webinars. CRISP envisions an increased awareness among
Brief History of Social Work Education in the United States

According to Hoffman (2013), prior to the late 19th century, education for social work was primarily conducted on an informal basis. Early social workers, included family visitors and case workers, who were trained by fellow workers. Education for social workers occurred under an apprenticeship model wherein current social workers would train new social workers on the skills needed to perform basic job functions. However, as the field of social work professionalized and grew in scope and purpose the apprenticeship model failed to keep pace with the needs of the growing. Growing charitable organization staff size, specialization within the field, and the need for professionalization compounded the failure of the apprenticeship model and led to a movement into a more formal education system in social work. Philanthropic or charitable organizations were some of the first to respond to this need for a formalized education. Some of the first professional schools in social work were started by philanthropic organizations in the late 1800s, beginning with short training programs (Hoffman, 2013).

The first classes in social work were primarily led by teachers who were seasoned workers, recruited from the practice field. As the classes grew, programs realized that they would need to further formalize the system with full-time faculty and structured course offerings to limit overlap in content being offered. The programs began by hiring social science faculty to fill positions in schools of social work. The National Conference
federal policymakers and the public of the benefits of social work in our communities, schools and work places to help our nation’s most vulnerable populations achieve self-sufficiency (CRISP, 2013).

**Political Social Workers Career Path**

The career path for political social workers takes many forms. In some cases, it starts with students who have BSW or MSW field internships in political settings such as policy advocacy organizations, with lobbyists or in legislative offices. In some cases, social workers volunteer at the community level. They may participate in political elections, serving as campaign workers and if their candidate wins, they may be hired on as staff members (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).

Political social workers serve in volunteer public service capacities, in addition to a full-time social work position. Service in this capacity includes election or appointment to school boards and being appointed to and serving on various local government committees and commissions. In some cases, social workers decide to continue working in their practice setting and run for a part-time office. This decision may be motivated by experiences of working with clients and coming to understand that the situation for clients will change only when the policy is changed (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).

Ways to enter the political arena include political social work internships, attending political meetings, building relationships with the constituency and with the key people involved in the particular area, working on a campaign, becoming appointed to a local committee or commission, and working with a political party on the local level (Myers & Granstaff, 2013).
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on Charities and Corrections provided a venue for national discussion of the emerging profession of social work and the need for appropriate training of new workers, and advanced training and specialization for senior workers. Students in these early schools had widely varying interests for pursuing classes, from an entry level “family visitor,” to advanced training in leadership of nonprofit organizations (Hoffman, 2013).

The development of schools of social work and corresponding classes opened a new discussion about the knowledge and skills necessary for practice of social work. One aspect of social work education, which became a crucial element from the very beginning, was field education. Field education is meant to give students an opportunity to apply the techniques and theories of social work in practice under the guidance of a supervisor and mentor and to “reinforce students' identification with the purposes, values, and ethics of the profession” (CSWE, 2008). As schools of social work evolved in administrative structure, the focus became one of defining and teaching the specialized knowledge unique to social work (Hoffman, 2013).

Accreditation of Social Work Programs

In 1919, the Association of Accreditation for Schools of Social Work (AASSW) was developed to accredit schools of social work. Many of the first social work programs were graduate programs started and supported by private philanthropic organizations. The majority of these schools were administratively located in a university by 1932 and the remaining were still independently administered through philanthropic organizations. The primary constituency of AASSW was graduate schools of social work located in
urban areas. In the 1930s, AASSW determined to make it the organization's policy to only accredit graduate programs in social work (Kendall, 2002; Hoffman, 2013).

Concurrent to the policy development of AASSW to accredit only graduate programs, two trends led to the development in 1943 of a second accrediting body in social work, the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA). First, the AASSW decision to only accredit graduate programs had disenfranchised a number of undergraduate programs in social work; many schools reacted by suggesting the establishment of a second accrediting body. Second, the U.S. federal government became interested in social work programs emphasizing the training of students for public positions, such as those being established in child welfare and public administration. New public service initiatives in the 30s led to the establishment of new positions for social workers. The government supported the establishment of undergraduate social work programs, especially those in public universities, or in rural areas to meet this need (Hoffman, 2013).

In 1952, the recommendation from the Hollis-Taylor report was taken up and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) was formed as the sole accrediting body in social work. The Hollis-Taylor report made an important contribution to the understanding of and improvement needed in social work education. The purpose of CSWE initially outlined in the by-laws was the "development of sound programs of social work education" (Hoffman, 2013). This purpose was later expanded to include specific activities under the purview of CSWE, including accreditation, consultation, research, and publishing. In line with the recommendations of the Hollis-Taylor report,
the CSWE began to accredit only two-year graduate programs; the exclusion of baccalaureate programs from accreditation was changed only in the 1970s. Currently, CSWE’s mission aims to promote and strengthen the quality of social work education through preparation of competent social work professionals by providing national leadership and a forum for collective action. CSWE pursues this mission through setting and maintaining policy and program standards, accrediting bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in social work, promoting research and faculty development, and advocating for social work education (CSWE, 2014).

The First Schools of Social Work

Training for social work began in the United States as early as the mid-19th Century. The Associations for the Improving the Conditions of the Poor as well as the Charity Organization Societies provided in-service training for their workers but also thought that some formal education would be required for effectively preparing their staff members. Most students of social work education believe that professional social work education began in 1898 in New York, with the preparation of professional social workers for the Charity Organization Societies. Mary Richmond, an executive with that Society, is generally regarded as the founder of professional education for social workers. This is so because of Richmond’s plea for such education and the eventual implementation of the plans she called for in a chapter in her book (Ginsberg, 2005).

Richmond helped begin a one-year program as the New York School of Philanthropy in 1898, which became the first school of social work in the United States and, beginning in 1962, the Columbia University School of Social Work. A similar effort
by others during the early 20th Century led to the development of the Chicago School for Services and Philanthropy, which became, in 1907, the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. The year of 1898 is treated as the date when the social work profession originated in the U.S. The National Association of Social Workers celebrated the centennial of the profession in 1998, (Ginsberg, 2005).

After 1905, most social workers were trained as nurses. The American Association of Hospital Social Workers was set up in 1918 to increase the links between formal education and hospital practice. In 1929, there were ten university courses in medical social work. Around this time, psychiatry and psychology began to compete with social work as the complementary discourse to medicine in hospitals. Social work practice adapted to the discourses by aligning itself more closely with psychoanalytic ideas, and became less concerned with living conditions and social health. While this detracted from the social concerns, it added a more scientific basis to dealing with patients, and challenging behaviors perceived as a mental dysfunction rather than poor moral character. The increase of social spending after World War II saw another rise in the number of social workers (Gehlert, 2006).

**Atlanta University: The First School of Social Work for African Americans**

The first school of social work for African Americans was established in 1920 as the Atlanta School of Social Work. This was an independent institution whose mission was to provide professional education for African Americans. The institution’s overall objective was to assist individuals in their quest to obtain knowledge and skills necessary to serve the African-American community.
The early curriculum of the Atlanta School of Social Work reflected the belief that those serving African-American people needed not only basic social work education but also additional learning directed specifically towards the African-American community. Forrester B. Washington, Director of the Atlanta School of Social Work from 1927 to 1947, and the Atlanta University School of Social Work from 1947 to 1954 noted in his writings, “The existence of black people in a predominantly unsympathetic hostile world is sufficient for specialized training for social work in the black community; for this position the writer makes no apologies” (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).

Membership in the American Association of Schools of Social Work was granted to the Atlanta School of Social Work in 1928, which made it the first African-American School of Social Work to be accredited in the world. On September 1, 1947, the Atlanta School of Social Work gave up its independent charter and became a part of Atlanta University. When the American Association of Schools of Social Work was renamed the Council on Social Work Education in 1952, the Atlanta University School of Social Work became a chartered member apologies (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).

In 1988, Atlanta University School of Social Work, formerly known as Atlanta School of Social Work, became Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. Two years later (2000), Clark Atlanta University named the School of Social Work after its first dean, Whitney M. Young, Jr. apologies (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).
The Whitney M. Young, Jr. School of Social Work (WMYJSSW) has maintained its accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Commission on Accreditation since 1952. The graduate program was accredited under the auspices of Atlanta University. The Baccalaureate Social Work Program was established at Clark College in 1979 and accredited in 1981. Both programs have been continuously reaccredited, since their accreditation date. Fundamental to the Whitney M. Young, Jr. School of Social Work mission, goals, and objectives is the fostering in students of a commitment to serve oppressed populations and to promote social and economic justice. Hence, the Mission of the School is shaped by its rich history and by its particular focus on educating African-American social workers. Its doors, however, have always been open to students from other racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic background apologies (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).

In order to prepare culturally competent social work professionals that are guided by an Afrocentric Perspective and capable of addressing the global challenges of the 21st Century, the Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work recognizes the need to reposition itself as a regional and national educational resource center, with international acclaim. As such, the School’s curriculum and program initiatives address the ongoing complexities of social and economic justice at the regional, national and international levels. The School of Social Work currently serves as a model for collaboration with systems of all sizes. Its educational program and model initiatives address the need to explore the impact of social, economic and racial disparity issues, especially those affecting the health and well-being of African-American children and families, with a
special emphasis on the African-American male within the context of family and develop alternative methods to reduce the disparities among these groups (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).

**Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work Mission Statement**

As stated in the Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014), the mission of the Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work is “to advance the aims of the profession through education for excellence in social work practice. The School seeks to educate students who demonstrate a heightened sense of social consciousness to be creative, responsible social work professionals committed to the search for solutions to problems of poverty, social and economic injustice, sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression in society while preserving the heritage of African-American people (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).

The School is committed to the core values of the profession, including the promotion of social justice; a responsibility to serve oppressed at-risk members of society; a strong commitment to eliminating inequality and oppression based on race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, and disability; appreciation of individual and cultural diversity; client rights to self-determination; the capacity of clients to grow and change; and the responsible application of professional values and ethics in practice. A liberal arts foundation provides the base upon which the professional self is shaped” (Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work Program Catalog, 2014).
Social Work Education Continuous Growth

Hoffman (2013) stated, "education in social work has seen considerable growth over the course of the 20th century" (p.1). Social work education in the United States began with only a few training programs established in partnership with charitable organizations at the end of the 19th century (Ginsberg, 2005; Hoffman, 2013), and had grown to 641 accredited baccalaureate and master’s programs as of the February, 2007 Commission on Accreditation (COM) meeting, and over 70 doctoral programs (Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education, 2014).

These programs represent over 7,000 faculty and administrators and over 60,000 students at the baccalaureate and master’s level (Council on Social Work Education, 2007). As of February 2014, the current number of social work programs recorded at the COM meeting was 489 accredited baccalaureate social work programs, 227 accredited master’s programs, 19 baccalaureate programs in candidacy, and 13 master’s social work programs in candidacy. There are over 60,000 baccalaureate students and over 50,000 master level students enrolled (Council on Social Work Education, 2014).

Social work education is available at the baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral level with at least one level of program represented in each of the states, as well as in the United States' Territories of Puerto Rico and Guam. Concentrations and specializations are offered in programs in many areas from practice levels, for example, direct practice, policy analysis or areas of interest such as, child welfare, medical social work, or housing policy. Current trends in social work education include the use of distance education, the call for more accountability from accrediting bodies and social work programs (Watkins...
& Pierce 2005), and work toward unification in social work professional organizations (Hoffman, 2006).

One of the rising trends, not only in social work education, but in the wider education and funding community, is the call for more accountability. This call for accountability can be seen in federal, state, and private organizations requirements for more information on outcomes, emphasis on evaluation, and discussion of need for comparability. Social work education is also responding to this growing trend by considering a new framework for the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) revision, which will emphasize competencies in social work and on-going evaluation for social work programs. Distance Education as a means for providing social work courses is also a developing area in social work. There are already some distance education and online programs in social work being provided at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. The EPAS does not specify the methods for providing course content to students (CSWE, 2001), so distance education programs are evaluated in exactly the same manner that any other program is under accreditation standards (Hoffman, 2013).

There are eight baccalaureate, and five master level CSWE (2014) accredited social work programs and two doctorate programs in the state of Georgia with over of 12,000 students enrolled and 2,500 of those students are members of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The program concentrations vary including clinical, health and mental health, child and family services, policy, and administration.
In the 2012 Annual Survey, 442 programs provided information on 15,611 students in field placements as of November 1, 2012. There was a total enrollment of 89,033 full-time and 27,307 part-time social work students. For full-time enrollment, baccalaureate programs contributed 59.3%, master’s programs contributed 38.7%, and doctoral programs contributed 2.0%. For part-time enrollment, baccalaureate programs contributed 26.7%, master’s programs contributed 70.9%, and doctoral programs contributed 2.5%. Across the 5-year period of 2008 to 2012, the full-time enrollment of baccalaureate students increased by 32.6%; the full-time enrollment of master’s students increased by 29.0% (CSWE, 2013).

From 2008 to 2012, the part-time enrollment of baccalaureate students increased by 36.8%, and the part-time enrollment of master’s students increased by 16.1%. There were 52,798 full-time social work majors enrolled as of fall 2012 in the 453 programs that provided this information, with an average of 116.6 students per program. There were 7,279 part-time social work majors enrolled as of fall 2012 in the 207 programs that reported offering a part-time program, with an average of 35.2 students. Overall, the majority of full-time students were female and under 25 years of age. Full-time students from historically underrepresented groups made up 41.8% (22,081) of the total full-time enrollment. Among full-time students, 0.8% (404) were foreign (CSWE, 2013).

Among the field placement for undergraduate students, child welfare continued to have the highest concentration of students, followed by family services, school social work, mental health or community mental health, aging/gerontological social work, and health. The most common placements listed in the other category were various types of
refugee/immigrant services or homeless/unemployment/basic needs. A total of 38,694 social work degrees were awarded for the 2011–2012 academic year; 41.2% were baccalaureate degrees, 58.0% were master’s degrees, and 0.8% were doctoral degrees (CSWE, 2013).

In 2012, 98.2% (215) of master’s programs participated in the Annual Survey. The acceptance rate (78.9%) for advanced-standing applicants from baccalaureate programs at their same institution was higher than the acceptance rate (70.9%) for advanced-standing applicants from other institutions. The new enrollment rate (84.7%) of advanced-standing applicants from their own baccalaureate programs also was higher than the new enrollment rate (73.6%) of advanced-standing applicants from other baccalaureate programs. Among fields of practice, the concentration of children, youth, and families was the most popular, followed by mental health for students (CSWE, 2013).

In master’s programs 36,531 full-time and part-time students were assigned to field placements as of November 1, 2012. Mental health or community mental health had the highest placement of students, followed by school social work, health, child welfare, and family services. The most common field placements in the other category were advocacy and youth-related areas. During the 2011–2012 academic year 22,441 master’s degrees were awarded as reported by 213 programs and there were 2,039 applicants to the 58 doctoral programs were reported. About two thirds of the applicants were female. The proportion of applicants identifying with a historically underrepresented group was 48.7% (993); 31.2% (636) of applicants were foreign (CSWE, 2013).
As reported by 58 programs, first-time, degree-seeking, newly enrolled students primarily came from a background in social work, with most (81.2%) holding a master’s degree in social work; 16.2% held graduate degrees from other fields. Very few (2.6%) newly enrolled students did not have a graduate degree. Sixty-one (61) doctoral programs provided demographic information about 413 newly enrolled students. The proportion of new students identifying with a historically underrepresented group was 43.6% (180); 14.8% (61) of new students were foreign. Students were predominantly female across enrollment status (CSWE, 2013).

The Council on Social Work Education (2013) reported that there were 307 degrees awarded by 59 doctoral programs. Five degrees were awarded as joint MSW/doctoral degrees; two degrees were awarded jointly with other departments. Most of the graduates were female. The proportion of graduates who identified with a historically underrepresented group was 36.5% (112); 11.1% (34) of graduates were foreign. Almost one half (51.5%) of graduates took 4 to 6 years to obtain their doctorates.

According to the CSWE Annual Survey (2013), approximately 28% of students were enrolled in programs that concentrated on social policy, the community and social systems compared to approximately 61% of students whose concentrations were child and family services, health and mental health and clinical practice similarly to the field placements for these students.

Poverty, Power and Social Work

Belcher and Tice (2013) examined the elite model of conceptualizing poverty. The challenge for social work is that the elite model considers the profession as an agent
responsible for executing social policy that supports the status quo. Thus, social workers have unwittingly become part of the problem. The authors argue that the way to address this problem is to transform the profession of social work from within. Among the ways to create this transformation are to focus social work education on the function of politics; strengthen field education; promote action-based research; and integrate a global perspective into practice and policy initiatives (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

Centralist programs strive to ensure that students are educated to understand micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice. Social workers are the representatives of the agencies, and yet they must be aware and constantly guard against hierarchical beliefs and practices that may be disempowering to clients (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

In a political system where nearly every adult may vote but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs? Social work activists, such as Bertha Reynolds, Paul Kellog, and Lillian Wald, often directed their work toward broader efforts in an attempt to shift the balance of power toward political and social change (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

However, despite their efforts and those of others over the decades, poverty remains a persistent social issue. Many scholarly works have been written regarding poverty, but few of these works have explored the root cause of the problem: power derived from social class. Field (2008) observes that Marx sought to distinguish between what he called a class "in itself, defined by its objective circumstances, and a class for
itself, whose members were subjectively aware of their common situation and determined to do something about it.” (p. 7–8). In the United States and worldwide, politics are central to power: those in control determine how resources are allocated and in what fashion (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

Over the years, a way of acting toward poverty emerges a set of conceptions about how to deal with it and how most effectively to provide poor relief. These conceptions represent a prevailing theme in the social welfare system reflective of the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Laws; namely, that poverty is largely the fault of the individual. Consequently, those in power or the elites of the nation marginally support welfare programs but only because they believe that their own power will be maintained by the subterfuge (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

Belcher and Tice (2013) note that the history of social work reflects a longstanding commitment to address poverty and issues associated with it. Within the profession there are two broad philosophical differences regarding the root of poverty that subsequently lead to different programs and social strategies.

In contrast, those who emphasize individual causation of poverty use psychology and a more therapeutic approach to helping. Two questions emerge from considering both philosophical perspectives: Why does poverty persist? And why has the social work profession failed in its commitment to address poverty? To answer both, this article examines poverty in the context of the elite model and offers suggestions about how the profession can better change the direction of power (Belcher & Tice, 2013).
Belcher and Tice (2013) believes that there are two basic tenets underpinning the elite model. The first is that policy does not reflect the demands of the majority of people. Thus, reluctance to embrace change is generally associated with the elite model because change would threaten the established system. Second, the model purports that the masses are uninformed and apathetic to the world around them. As a result, political parties and democratic elections are more symbolic than substantive. Dye (2005) goes on further to summarize the elite model by suggesting that it: divides society into those who have power and those who do not; draws disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic status of society; requires the elites share consensus on behalf of basic values of society, such as individual liberty, private property, and limited government; involves incremental policy change rather than revolutionary change; and allows non-elites to move into elite positions only when they accept the elite consensus.

What does this mean for the profession of social work and the role of social workers? In essence, the elite model views the social work profession as an agent responsible for executing social policy. Thus, social workers by definition, in their practice across client systems, reflect the interests and values of elites. The resulting implications are significant. Specifically, since the elite model formulates policies that do not reflect the needs of the lower economic classes, it would stand to reason that the practice of social work often ignores or excludes issues that would threaten the stability of those in power. Given the conservatism of the elite model, social work practice in an environment of incremental change in which clients are not effectively mobilized in unions or other organizations, have limited resources, and maintain only minimal
participation in the political process. Not only is such a scenario frustrating to many social workers, it suffocates the ability to address the complexities of poverty (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

An initial step to increase the power of poor and working people is to examine the role of the social work profession and to go beyond capitalism. Social workers have deferred to this position by working within the system. For example, the welfare reform of 1996 forced poor people into the labor market without many of the supports, such as child care and transportation, necessary to remain employed (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

Although Piven and Ehrenreich (2005) vigorously attacked the 1996 reforms, claiming that the marginalized and vulnerable and were organized by the right to defeat and dismantle the New Deal/Great Society political order, many social workers agreed with the 1996 reforms and continue to support other conservative platforms such as faith-based initiatives. Thus, similar to other advocacy groups, social workers are co-opted by the system (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

**Political Education**

In terms of social work education, the implicit and explicit curriculum as defined in the revised Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008) should include the political education of undergraduate and graduate students alike. If students do not understand the political nature of social work and its relationship to the power base, they cannot be expected to examine the notions of social or individual causations of poverty in conjunction with the
elite model. Students will not be in the position to advance or create new theoretical frameworks for practice designed to mobilize working and poor people.

Belcher and Tice (2013) argue that it is important for the profession to move away from textbooks and other materials that do not critically analyze the elite model. Thus, it is imperative for instructors of social policy and practice to incorporate into their class material on power, privilege, elites, and issues of poverty. Further, readings and primary texts concerning political theory, socioeconomic class structure, and economics should be infused into social work curricula to ensure that students make the connection between policy and practice across clients systems, political analysis, and action.

Furthermore, Belcher and Tice (2013), suggest that field education, which is the signature pedagogy of social work, must include aspects of community organizing and/or political action no matter what the focus of the field placement agency to be in compliance with the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). Implied in community and political activities is an increase in participatory democracy through which people gain control of their lives while confronting the status quo with demands for change. If the elite model of power is to be challenged, it will be through more informed and dynamic relationships among social workers, elected officials, and working and poor people.

The challenge for many schools of social work is that although students have a sense of clinical practice, they have little understanding of community organizing in the context of the political arena. To balance their perspective of social work, more exposure to practice with a macro focus is needed at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
To this end, it is important that every field education agency and methods class incorporate aspects of macro practice, including community organizing. If a particular agency is not capable of this, it is suggested that the social work program augment the field education experience and subsequent assignments (Belcher & Tice, 2013).

Social work educational programs across the country educate students early in their coursework on the mission, values, and ethics of the profession. This early socialization becomes the foundation for all social work practice, the assumption being that students will integrate this foundational knowledge with their professional practice. One element of this transformation from student to professional is a shift in power (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

The literature reveals a growing recognition that power is an integral part of the helper-helpee working relationship (Tew, 2006). Yet "social workers have a discordant relationship with power" (Bar-On, 2002, p. 997). Many social workers struggle with feelings of power and powerlessness, as do the clients they are seeking to assist. Bar-On (2002) advocated for the social work profession to "master the discourse of power and use it effectively" (p. 998). In order for this to occur, social work educators must engage students in critical thought regarding their perceptions and understanding of professional power in practice (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

Power is a concept that is generally understood, yet no agreed-upon definition exists. Despite its elusiveness, it is a concept that continues to receive notable attention from the social sciences. The literature on power theories reveals two organizing assumptions that contribute to the conceptualization of power. The first assumption is
that power is a relational concept that occurs between two or more persons. Power has been described as operating at the most micro levels of social relations and believed that the exercise of power was omnipresent at every level of social body (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

The second assumption is that power can only be viewed from multiple perspectives. For example, a number of theorists characterize power as a limited and restricted resource, whereas feminist scholars embrace power referring to the empowerment and strengths based philosophies as infinite and generative (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

According to Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano and Bubar (2013), several power theories both implicit and explicit now focus on social work practice. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is philosophically grounded in the empowerment of others; therefore, it is logical that a focus on the distribution of power between workers and clients would emerge and be interwoven in academic discussions (2008). The following discussion explores current theoretical and conceptual frameworks on power in social work practice.

The emergent theme on operationalizing power captures students' ability to make sense of what power is and how it looks in practice. Students seemed to embrace the notion that client empowerment was associated with the individual's ability to independently obtain and secure necessary resources without awareness of existing societal structures and forces that maintain oppression. In other words, students could be simultaneously engaged in many different types of power relationships, including
contributing to governing forces in a manner that was potentially perpetuating and
strengthening oppressive structures that they may detest (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar,
2013).

Students expressed their discomfort with the use of power in practice and
acknowledged the negative impact undue professional influence can have over others,
including oppression and behavioral control. These expressions of discomfort signify an
awareness of how the negative use of power by social workers can affect the lives of
those with whom they are working. The negative use of power is perceived as a
unidirectional authority of workers to distribute resources to clients without consideration
of other power constructs. Students were able to articulate clearly how in partnership with
clients they were able to exercise their professional power to influence the larger
structural systems. Students appeared to be more aware of the complex nature of their
relationships with clients and the need to buffer and navigate within existing power
structures such as agencies, governmental policies, legal systems (Bundy-Fazioli,
Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

Students' conceptualization of professional power appeared to be in flux. Students
had a sense of what power is and what it looks like in practice; however, when discussing
how they will wield professional power, they seemed unsure. Students were able to
articulate a deep level of understanding regarding their difficulties in conceptualizing
professional power and the immensity of the potential power differential that can exist
between social worker and client (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).
The influence of agencies, organizations, and supervisory experiences remains significant for students. Thus, if their placements or supervisors had not considered these issues themselves, the likelihood of students developing their own practice philosophies around power is less likely. In all likelihood social work programs will bring students only to a level of awareness that has been achieved by the instructor. This idea suggests implications that transcend all practice levels. In other words, social work programs can bring students only as far as their own awareness, and in turn practicing social workers can bring clients along only as far as their own awareness hence, a parallel process that has the potential to stifle attempts at partnership, collaboration, and empowerment (Bundy-Fazioli, Quijano, Bubar, 2013).

Jansson (2014) states that social workers need to demystify power and declare it a professional resource vital to both clinical work and policy practice. “Like other professional skills, power needs to be observed, modeled and practiced (Jansson, 2013).” He declares that social workers also need to see power as a policy practice in addition to their professional role. When social workers fail to exert leadership, they allow others with less commitment to clients’ wellbeing and to oppressed minorities’ needs to shape the human services delivery system.

Power is context or relationship based. Therefore, making power hard to measure and operationalize. Organizational politics involves those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty about choices (Dye, 2013).
Political Interest of Social Work Students

In this study, political interest is defined as a feeling of a person whose concern, attention and curiosity is particularly engaged in political policy practice. There is an interest in both local and national political issues; these persons enjoy political discussions and are linked to social movement organizations or associations to gain more knowledge about how to effectively impact political policy.

Students and social workers who exhibit higher levels of interest and efficacy in politics are more likely to participate in political action (Weiss, Gal, & Katan, 2006). While there is disagreement on whether political participation is declining in advanced industrialized societies, there is some rather solid consensus that a university education fosters citizens’ participatory credentials. In particular, attending college should increase citizens’ propensity to take part in conventional forms of political participation such as casting a ballot in elections or participating in a political rally, as well as unconventional activities such as membership in a social movement organization or participation in a demonstration or boycott (Stockmer, 2012).

According to Stockmer (2012), the link between higher education and political participation is well established, it is less clear which aspects of college life foster peoples’ political interest and engagement. Stockmer aims to evaluate the threefold relationship between relevant institutional, personal and circumstantial factors as independent variables; self reported political interest as the mediating variable and political participation patterns as the dependent variable. Focusing on the impact that the indicators related to students on campus experience (e.g. interaction with faculty) have on
their propensity to become politically engaged, this study is based on the results of a self-administered survey of 570 University of Ottawa (U-Ottawa) undergraduate students.

In the comprehensive analysis of political interest and political engagement patterns of U-Ottawa students conducted by Stockmer (2013), triggered distinct results. First, U-Ottawa students show high degrees of political interest when they spend more than one hour per day consumed in the news media and enhanced political participation one out of two students that has ever participated in a demonstration and one out of four students is affiliated with either a party or a social movement organization. Stockmer notes that his findings appear to be somewhat at odds with those of previous studies examining the constituents of youth political participation. He did not find support for the two established propositions that gender and participation in extra-curricular non-political activities fosters students' political interest and participation (Stockmer, 2012).

Halvor (2012) focused on undergraduate social work education in her research. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-test surveys, in order to help describe the study sample and determine the type and degree of change that occurred in students' political interest and internal political efficacy as they participated in particular social welfare policy courses. Ultimately, complete quantitative data were gathered from social welfare policy students enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program accredited or granted candidacy for accreditation by CSWE.

Quantitative data were gathered in this study for two purposes. First, it provided descriptive information regarding the student participants, both in terms of demographics
and political participation. It also provided a way of analyzing whether or not changes in
students' political interest and internal political efficacy occurred during their
participation in the social welfare policy course (Halvor, 2012).

The quantitative data from this study came from surveys completed by
undergraduate social work students enrolled in a social welfare policy course at one of
two participating social work programs in the Pacific Northwest. The sample for this
study was predominantly white, female, and of "traditional" college age. Most student
participants were not in practicum, had no paid social work experience, and were not
members of NASW (Halvor, 2012).

On the pre-test survey, students indicated their recent level of political
participation, including electoral participation, non-electoral participation, civic
engagement, and what was called "unconventional" political participation. The most
common political activities engaged in by study participants were voting in the 2008
presidential election (74%), discussing national politics with others at least once or twice
a week (71%), and gathering with others in their community or neighborhood to try to
deal with some community issue or problem (58%). The political activities in which
study participants were least likely to have participated were volunteering for a political
party or political candidate (7%), testifying at a public hearing (7%), and contacting a
federally elected official or someone on the staff of such an official about problems or
issues with which they were concerned (10%) (Halvor, 2012).

The student participants in this study were predominantly independent voters with
a strong Democratic leaning. Most students described themselves as either liberal or
moderate, in terms of their political views. The majority of study participants were registered to vote. The study indicated that almost half of the student participants described themselves as “somewhat interested” in both local and national politics (Halvor, 2012).

The study indicated that all students who completed both pre- and post-test surveys, their political interest had either increased at 68% or remained the same at 32%, as result of the social welfare policy course. No student indicated a decreased in political interest as a result of the course (Halvor, 2012).

According to Halvor (2012), the quantitative data provided a demographic and political context for the study’s sample, as well as insight into changes in students’ political interest and internal efficacy, the emphasis of this study is on qualitative data. As stated above, two social welfare policy courses were observed, after which students participated in focus groups and individual interviews.

First, students were asked to describe the impact of the social welfare policy course on their political interest and internal political efficacy. Then they reflected on ways in which their participation in the course and their instructor’s teaching methods impacted those two variables. Before considering the qualitative insights of students, Halvor (2012), believed it was helpful to have a basic understanding of the two courses purposively selected for inclusion in the study.

In summary, the instructors of the two courses represented a diversity of teaching styles and methods. Class time was structured differently. Technology and multi-media resources were used differently. Student input was incorporated to differing degrees and
in different ways. Though they both utilized experiential learning methods, they did so in
different ways. In both courses, however, the importance of political advocacy among
social workers was communicated verbally and through exposure to some of the
advocacy activities of the instructors outside of class time.

In this study, (Halvor, 2012), the quantitative data support the hypothesis that
social welfare policy courses can positively impact students' internal political efficacy,
the emphasis of this study is on the qualitative insights provided by students participating
in these courses.

Qualitatively, students confirmed and further described the impact of the social
welfare policy course on their internal political efficacy. Most students also perceived
themselves as having experienced an increase in their political interest due to
participation in the course. Those who did not perceive themselves as having an increased
interest self-identified as having entered the course with an already strong level of
political interest. Students then reflected on the process of those impacts in greater detail
(Halvor, 2012).

Political Interest and Social Networks

Theories about mobilizing structures suggest that residing in certain social
environments fosters greater political activism. Social networks, which represent webs of
recurring interactions among people and groups, always convey some sort of beliefs,
values, norms, and identities. Most people derive their worldviews and identities through
institutions and networks that praise prevailing social orders, but some networks carry
messages that political challenges are necessary, important, and worthwhile (Ritter, 2008).

The proposition that social networks shape political behaviors has drawn considerable interest in movement and participation studies (Lim, 2008). Many sorts of contextual and institutional settings can make people predisposed or receptive to political activism. The messages received in familial and peer groupings can have a major impact on political inclinations. Accordingly, studies of the general population suggest that citizens are more likely to be antinuclear, civil rights, and gay rights activists when they think that their friends and acquaintances approve of such actions. Such associations may be linked to the emotional rewards of adhering to the directives of significant others who encourage political engagement (Ritter, 2008).

Although general population studies often discover a link between referent attitudes and political activism, this has not always been the case in studies on social work activism. Some studies confirm the socialization argument. Recently, Ritter (2008) and Chui and Gray (2004) concluded that social workers were more engaged in activism when they discussed politics with colleagues and family members. Similarly, in a study of peace activism among social work students. Swank and Fahs (2011) discovered a connection between having liberal friends and protesting wars. Nevertheless, other studies yielded contradictory results. Ezell (1993) and Hamilton and Fauri (2001) found no relationship among the frequency of political conversations with one's coworkers, one's family of origin, and the amount of political activism among employed social workers (Ritter, 2008).
Although social networks often encourage the acceptance or rejection of specific collective action frames, they also serve as conduits of important information about political events. Political parties, committed partisans, and movement activists often try to motivate activism through different persuasive techniques such as face-to-face conversations, phone calls, e-mail, and direct mail. Although each recruitment pitch converted some sympathetic bystanders into activists, people were more likely to engage in political actions when they were encouraged or asked to be active by someone whom they personally knew. In fact, a 22-variable study on the general populace found that being asked to participate in a protest was the best predictor of actually appearing in a protest in the last year, as did a 17-variable study on licensed social workers (Ritter, 2008).

**Political Competence of Social Work Students**

In this study, political competence is defined as all relevant educational and experimental requirements, demonstrating the ability to carry out the task of political policy practice. Some of these skills include the ability to evaluate social problems and develop policy implementation; and political skills to gain and use power to develop and implement political strategy (Jansson, 2014). A politically competent person feels comfortable in their ability to contact legislators to share their opinion on policy issues and is confident that their social work education has prepared them to do so.

Political participation is critical for the legitimacy of democracy, yet we know little about how political competencies develop and are promoted in young adults. Many
studies show low levels of political activity among young Americans, including college students and recent graduates. Although this is widely recognized as a problem, there is little research on specific experiences and practices that show promise for increasing political understanding and involvement among young people (Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich & Purta, 2011).

Although social workers are expected to advocate for their clients, many social worker activities revolve around individual advocacy. In 2001, Ezell found that 90 percent of social workers reported advocacy as part of the professional role of social work, but 75 percent of social workers who performed advocacy practiced individual, or case, advocacy. Far fewer social workers become involved in political, or class, advocacy also known as policy practice participating in the political system on a larger scale, either within or outside of their jobs. According to Rocha, there are many reasons for this, including lack of training, not feeling competent to perform policy-related tasks, and restrictive employment settings. Although there are legal restrictions on how much social workers can participate politically, depending on their place of employment, social workers can advocate substantially more than they sometimes assume they can (Rocha, 2010).

According to Rocha (2010), there is evidence that political education increases feelings of competency and that competency, in turn, increases political activity. Social workers are more likely to be active when they feel they are politically efficacious. Similarly, Rocha (2000) found that students who were taught policy practice skills through experiential learning felt more competent and were more politically active after
graduation than others who were taught using more traditional methods of learning. The fact that so much of the research on political activity indicates that social workers in direct practice are less active than their macro-practice counterparts and that education enhances self-efficacy and action suggests that direct practice social work students may be receiving limited skill-based, policy practice content in the classroom (Rocha, 2010).

Rocha (2010) states that it is important to understand that policy practice encompasses a broad range of potential targets, from local boards to local, state, and federal legislative bodies. However, there are similar skill sets that can be used to advocate for clients at any of these levels. Maneuver through Congress at the federal level comes to mind when considering political involvement.

Skills typically needed at several target levels include using a variety of media sources to get out messages include letters to the editor, public service announcements, op-eds, news releases, interviews; learning specific letter writing, internet, and phone campaign skills; understanding when to use different types of communication styles; writing testimonials and testifying before committees; learning to use technology in advocacy plans; and, most important, learning the importance of strategically planning what types of techniques work best to attain the desired policy outcomes. The importance of planning cannot be overstated. At every step of the planning process, decisions must be made, stakeholders assessed, pros and cons of different political tactics decided on, and contingency plans made (Rocha, 2007).

Jansson (2014) has identified four policy skills in which he defines as “policy competencies” that must be used when taking concrete actions in organizational,
community, or legislative setting. These policy skills are needed for effective policy practice. He stated that practitioners need analytical skills to evaluate social problems and develop policy proposals, to analyze the severity of specific problems, to identify the barriers to policy implementation, and to develop strategies for assessing programs. Second, they need political skills to gain and use power and to develop and implement political strategy. Third, practitioners need interactional skills to participate in task groups, such as committees and coalitions, and to persuade others to support specific problems. The fourth skill needed is value-clarifying to identify relevant ethical principles when engaging in policy practice.

Social workers will be more active the more competent they feel in performing policy-related activities. Thus, integrating policy practice skills in the curriculum that all social work students take will help social workers to be more effective in the political arena. Furthermore, becoming active in professional associations that have political action committees and legislative committees allows social workers to keep abreast of the issues that come up in both state and federal legislatures and make it easier to participate. In a study conducted by Hamilton and Fauri (2001) concluded that because political self-efficacy and professional associations were the strongest predictors of political participation, educators who help students develop competency to participate politically should also encourage membership in professional associations (Rocha, 2010).
In accordance with EPAS requirements, schools of social work are required to develop methods for identifying key competencies and measuring the attainment of these competencies in advanced practice areas. Although there has been considerable focus on establishing such methods in clinical social work practice, a similar focus on identification and measurement has not been seen in macro social work practice (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

Bogo, et al. (2012), outlines the development of an evaluation tool for measuring student competency in macro level social work practice. Researchers followed a multistage process that incorporated the wisdom of experienced field instructors in identifying key competencies for practice, ranking performance levels in each competency, and evaluating the reliability and validity of the scale. The resulting Macro Practice-Based Evaluation tool includes six skill domains (learning and growth; behavior and relationships; leadership; critical thinking, analysis, planning, and implementation; professional communication; and values and ethics), each of which has five levels of student competence ranging from unsuitable for practice to exemplary. Evaluation in an experimental setting, by comparing student evaluations on the new tool and previous tools, demonstrated promising reliability and validity.

According to Bogo, et al. (2012), social work educators have shifted the focus in curriculum design from a primary attention on content and structure or what is known as inputs, to educational outcomes defined within a competency-based framework or outputs. Formerly, accreditation standards in social work prescribed educational elements
to be included in any accredited program, including essential concepts and theories to be taught in the classroom, and the nature and length of practice-based training experiences.

In contrast, the current approach defines educational or performance outcomes that must guide program design. In this model, outcomes are referred to as competencies, defined as complex practice behaviors that reflect students' integration and application of knowledge, values, and skills in practice. This shift in professional education is driven by a number of sociopolitical factors such as increasing expectations for quality; accountability to the public and to funding bodies; the need to articulate the unique and specific skills and knowledge of a particular profession to legislators and the public; and the desire to facilitate movement of professionals between jurisdictions both nationally and internationally (Gibb, 2010; Bogo et al., 2012).

Competency-based education proceeds from an articulation of outcomes, to the design of the curriculum, and finally to the development of a system of assessment of student learning. Educational outcomes assessment serves to measure the effectiveness of programs in achieving the learning and performance level they claim students have mastered upon graduation. A comprehensive assessment program includes multiple measurement methods. It thus provides data for educators to evaluate all aspects of their program including the explicit and implicit curriculum, student learning experiences, educational pedagogy, and instructors' ability to deliver the program in a way that achieves the goal of preparation for practice (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).
Accordingly, social work educators are now challenged to develop a range of assessment approaches to evaluate the outcomes of social work education—outcomes that are evidenced in practice behavior. While social work educators have always evaluated student learning, these efforts have largely involved assessing students' conceptual, written, and verbal abilities in essays, tests, examinations, journals, and class presentations. Assessment of practice competence has been primarily delegated to field education and is conducted by field instructors using a set of criteria provided by the university. It is reasonable to assess performance through examining students' abilities to carry out social work practice behaviors and roles in practice or clinical settings (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

In social work, many concerns have been raised about the ability of field evaluations to effectively differentiate between levels of student performance (Bogo, et al, 2012). Currently, the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for Social Work (EPAS) not only require the measurement of core competencies for the foundation year, but also require that master's of social work (MSW) programs describe and assess competencies in advanced practice areas. In the area of clinical social work practice, researchers have come a considerable distance in creating such tools.

Bogo, et al. (2012) states that the literature with respect to competencies in community, organization, and policy contexts (macro practice) is very limited. No doubt this is largely due to the fact that only about 10% of social work MSW practicums are in macro practice and few MSW programs offer macro concentrations. Some authors have identified core competencies for managerial and administrative practice and for social
action or advocacy practice. However, scholarly work regarding the measurement of these skills is sadly lacking. Given the requirements of EPAS, it is imperative that social work educators develop methods for reliably evaluating macro social work practice (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

Although measurement of competency in professional practice has received increased attention during the past many years, in social work, the attention has focused largely on foundational and advanced clinical competencies to the exclusion of macro social work competencies. This study sought to develop a tool for measuring student competence in macro social work environments. In doing so, it builds on previous research regarding competency in clinical practice. This work has pointed to the need for tools that consider both procedure and meta-competencies, and tools that use language that field instructors can readily identify as relevant to practice in their area (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

The process of tool development in this study began with interviews with 18 experienced field instructors in macro social work practice, specifically those in administration, community development, and policy practice. Field instructors were asked to describe the characteristics and skills of students at different levels of competency and in different skill domains. These interviews were distilled into 20 iconic vignettes intended to represent students with different levels of ability. We were careful to ensure that the vignettes retained the authentic language of field instructors as they described their students (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).
In this study, a group of four field instructors were then asked to rank the vignettes according to level of competency. There was considerable agreement between the participating instructors on what constituted student performance in each of the five categories (exemplary, ready to practice, on the cusp, needs more training and unsuitable). Interestingly, two vignettes stood out as having higher discrepancies in both category assignment and ranking. While participant raters were able to resolve these discrepancies, the discussion focused on the relative weight placed on ethical issues and procedural skills (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

Based on the reliability of the rankings of vignettes, a PBE tool for macro social work practice was developed. The tool identified competencies in six dimensions: learning and growth; behavior and relationships; leadership; critical thinking, analysis, planning, and implementation; written and verbal professional communication; and values and ethics. These dimensions arose from a qualitative analysis of the field instructor interviews. Using the vignette ranks, each dimension was anchored with detailed descriptions of student performance for each of the five levels (Bogo, Donovan, Lim, Regehr & Regehr, G., 2012).

**Political Advocacy of Social Work Students**

Advocacy is the type of social work practice most associated with the realization of social rights. In social work, advocacy practice encompasses interventions that seek to affect a specific decision, law, policy, or practice on behalf of a client or group of clients. Drawing upon concepts from the literature on power relations, advocacy entails an
attempt to influence decisions by means of efforts that would not have been made otherwise and that concern the welfare or interests of a third party that is in a less-powerful position than the one held by the decision maker (Gal & Gal, 2009).

In other words, the defining characteristic of advocacy is its focus on efforts to represent specific clients, groups, or problems in order to bring about change and, in particular, to influence those decisions pertaining to power and resources. Advocacy is distinct from other forms of practice in that it seeks to enhance the standing of individuals within a specific social system, be it the standing of a community, organization, social system, or society as a whole (Gal & Gal, 2009).

Policy advocacy can be done in support of client, organizational, or professional interests. In the literature, policy advocacy is often assumed to mean advocacy on behalf of a cause, whereas policy advocacy in support of maintaining funding is sometimes questioned. It must be recognized, however, that often organizational and client interests are aligned. Furthermore, advocacy for a cause, such as ending homelessness and advocacy for funding for a transitional housing program are often conflated, and the goal of getting money for a transitional housing program to help end homelessness is often pursued through advocating through both administrative and legislative channels. Mosley posed the question, “Who is to say that advocacy that helps maintain organizational stability is not also helping clients?” Thus, although it is often difficult to know when organizations are simply advocating in their own interests and when there is a client benefit, both are important types of policy advocacy engaged in by human service advocates (Mosley, 2013).
Ezell (2001) defined policy advocacy as "purposive efforts to change specific existing or proposed policies or practices on behalf of or with a specific client or group of clients" (p. 23). Similarly, Jenkins (1987) defined policy advocacy as "any attempt to influence the decisions of any institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest" (p. 297). Although some definitions of policy advocacy are narrower, for example, specifically mentioning a social justice focus, these broad and inclusive definitions of policy advocacy most accurately capture the wide variety of activities social workers participate in (Mosley, 2013).

In addition to Ezell (2001) definition to policy (political) advocacy, in this study political advocacy is the coordinated efforts to influence legislation, election of candidates, and broad societal change. Political advocacy also include lobbying, discussing political issues to mobilize voters and gain public opinion, working on campaigns and working with community groups that seek to influence policy.

Scholars distinguish two major types of advocacy: social, class, or structural advocacy, and case, personal, or client advocacy. Social, class, or structural advocacy embraces interventions on behalf of the large groups of individuals who share a common problem or belong to the same social class. It involves efforts to influence the policies of organizations, local authorities, services, and national-level bodies. Such efforts are typically exerted through lobbying, litigation, research, community action, public awareness campaigns, negotiation, and persuasion (Mosley, 2013).

Over the past decade, social networks have become more politically homogeneous
and moreover, the American electorate has arguably become more polarized. Although one might expect this atmosphere of partisan self-selection to correspond with a decrease in persuasive conversation, the data show the opposite trend: Not only does persuasive conversation continue to thrive; it has actually become more common over the past decade (Thorson, 2014).

Thorson (2014) examines the deliberative potential of interpersonal persuasion attempts: instances in which a person tries to show her friend, neighbor, coworker, or anyone else in her social network why he or she should vote for or against a particular candidate. Attempts to persuade are deliberate efforts to change someone else's political preferences. Persuasion attempts can occur when a person tries successfully or unsuccessfully to persuade an undecided voter or when she tries to convince someone his currently preferred candidate is the wrong choice. Persuasion attempts are not the same as influence: Influence may occur without a conscious effort on the part of the influencer. Persuasion attempts differ from regular political talk in that they are undertaken with the intention of changing attitudes rather than to inform, entertain, or deliberate (Thorson, 2014).

Thorson (2014) found evidence that interpersonal persuasion attempts may, depending on the circumstances, help to bridge the divide between partisans and effectively spread political information. A person's desire to recruit new supporters for his preferred candidate can spur him to engage in potentially uncomfortable discussions that occur across lines of political difference. Such crosscutting discussions can in turn
Attempts to persuade are also opportunities for the politically informed to share relevant information about candidate stances and issue positions with other members of their social network, especially those who are undecided, ambivalent, or politically uninvolved. Persuasive conversation may thus serve as a channel through which political information is conveyed from the more informed to the less informed (Thorson, 2014).

According to Thorson (2014), a growing empirical literature has sought to connect the theoretical attributes of deliberative talk such as civility, disagreement with others, and face-to-face discussion to specific outcomes like political tolerance, knowledge gain, or civic engagement. The concept of persuasion attempts as a form of political deliberation remains largely unexplored, as past studies of interpersonal persuasion have centered on how it might affect vote choice rather than its potential normative outcomes (Thorson, 2014).

In the early 1980s, social workers were more politically active than the general population, although one-third of the social workers who responded to his survey were not active at all. His analysis noted that the most active social workers were those who were linked to a professional association, and the least active were social workers in direct practice. Ten years later, in a study of NASW chapters, similar results were found among chapter respondents, with 35 percent of chapters classified as inactive (Rosenwld, 2012).
During the 1990s, several studies focused on what predicted or inhibited political participation among social workers. The results were quite similar and reflected what Wölk (1981) had found at least 10 years earlier. Ezell (1993) found that social workers who were the most politically active were more likely to be members of a national association, have a macro-type job, be African American, and have higher education. Hamilton (1998) found that the strongest predictors of political participation among social workers were perceived political self-efficacy, interest, and being an active member of a social work association. Pawlak and Flynn (1990) attempted to discern what factors executive directors of human service organizations used to decide on their political involvement and concluded that executives may restrict their political involvement because they misunderstand laws regarding political participation (Rosenwald, 2012).

Research continued in the 21st century to assess what factors promote or inhibit political activity among social workers. Although perceived self-efficacy and professional association recruitment remained important determinants of political participation, organizational and legal barriers surfaced more prominently. Whereas Hamilton and Fauri (2001) found that the factors most likely to predict political participation were perceived political self-efficacy and recruitment by a national association (Rosenwald, 2012).

Given the research over almost 30 years, several factors stand out as having contributed to or hindered political participation of social workers. The most important determinants of political activity reported in the 1980s and 1990s were perceived
competency, education, being in a macro-practice job, and being a member of a professional association (Rosenwald, 2012).

Although there are different theories of professional socialization, all begin with the widely held assumption that a person is socialized into roles and norms of a particular discipline while in formal training (Dodd & Mizrahi, 2012).

Lane (2011) found over 400 political social workers across the U.S. in electoral activist positions. Compared to Ritter's (2008) finding that only 21% thought their social work education contributed to their political activism. Lane found that 63% of her sample did so. Moreover, the participants, a majority of whom come from macro-oriented (36%) or combined micro/macro programs (39%), believed that the competencies social workers acquired through their social work education made them valuable contributors to social policy.

Fisher, Weedman, and Stout (2001) studied the impact of a concentration on political social work in one U.S. school of social work over an 8-year period. Although unable to compare these students with the general student body, they found that many of their graduates were instilled with values and competencies to engage in political methods of intervention. Most of their alumni moved into macro-oriented positions and some became more politically active after graduation, thus supporting the authors' view that professional education can make an important contribution to social reform.

Fisher et al.'s (2001) findings are consistent with those of two studies of the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College alumni who specialized in the community organizing and planning practice method (Dodd & Mizrahi, 2008). In all
three studies, graduates expressed many of the macro-oriented goals and values of the social work profession in particular, the person-in-environment perspective; moreover, they were engaged in myriad social activism activities on their job and/or in voluntary leadership positions. Like Fisher et al. (2001), the authors in this study concluded the value in their community organizing/political track was that both sets of alumni maintained a social change perspective (Dodd & Mizrahi, 2008).

Dodd and Mizrahi (2013) also examined political ideology and demographic factors in other studies and found that political affiliation and ideology powerfully effect social work involvement in social and political activism. Most studies have found that about 75% of social workers have a liberal ideology which is often times related to Democrats, whereas a 10% of social workers were labeled conservatives and identified as Republicans. Another 10% were identified as independent or nonaffiliated and a small group characterized as radical left.

In all studies, the radical or left-leaning social workers are reported to be the most active, especially in using the nonconventional/social action strategies, whereas conservatives have been the least active (Fisher et al., 2001; Resser & Epstein, 1990), but this does not mean that moderates and even conservatives reject the social work value base. These differences suggest the need for further research on political affiliation and activism (Epstein, 2011).

Political Advocacy Among Various Demographics

Past studies have also found that age, gender, and race/ethnicity have some relation to social activism (Reeser & Epstein, 1990), although outcomes are not always
consistent. Reeser and Epstein (1990) found that by the 1980s, women had equalized what had heretofore been an overrepresentation of men in the activist categories. Since the profession appears to be at least 80% or more women, the question is whether they are proportionately or disproportionately social actors. Domanski (1998) reported no difference by gender, although among the social workers elected to political office, almost 40% were male (Lane, 2011).

Limb and Organista (2006) reported some differences among Caucasians and students of color with respect to consistency with social work mission and advocacy for societal and institutional change. Among practitioners to the extent reported, there are mixed results in terms of race/ethnicity and activism; Reeser and Epstein (1990) found African Americans higher on activism overall, but Ritter (2007) found the opposite (Dodd & Mizrahi, 2008).

According to Brady et al. (1995), socioeconomic standing (SES) is a powerful variable that drives political participation for members of every social group in society. In the simplest of terms, a person's class location grants or impedes access to opportunities and financial resources that make political activism easier. Numerous studies argue that affluence predicts political activism in samples of the general public and collegiate undergraduates. When examining social workers, the impact of income on activism is less clear. A few studies argue that social workers are more political when they have higher incomes and more financial assets. Other studies, however, find no such relationship (Ritter, 2008).
The relationship between gender status and political participation is far from certain. Some studies suggest that up until the 1970s women were slightly less likely to vote or join political protests. Conversely, studies on contemporary populations suggest that this gender gap has disappeared or has even been reversed. Studies on a political action gender gap among social workers were more conclusive. Only one study of social workers in Hong Kong found that male respondents were more politically active. In every other study, gender failed to predict the political engagement of social workers (Ritter, 2008; Rocha, 2000; Wölk, 1981).

Transition into marriage or divorce can influence a person’s political activities. The early stages of marriage can suppress political engagement for both men and women, whereas other studies contend that long-term married people were more likely to vote. Ending marriages can also politicize women because divorced women are more likely to engage in feminist activism. Conversely, some studies concluded that marital status was a poor predictor of political practices (Swank, 2012).

**Political Advocacy and Social Work Goals**

This study conducted by Gal and Weiss-Gal (2008) sought to determine the extent to which social and professional values attribute to the goals of the profession. Social values are defined by the social workers’ political and economic orientations and their perceptions of the causes of poverty. Social values are also defined by their support for greater state involvement in the provision of welfare, and their support for universal non-mean-tested social services. These factors play a role in the social workers’ attitudes toward, and engagement in, policy practice.
The findings indicate that socioeconomic orientations and professional values have an impact on social worker’s perception of policy practice and the degree to which they are actually involved in the social welfare policy process. In particular, it was found that attitudes toward social justice played a major role in the social worker’s perceptions of, and involvement in, policy practice (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2008).

The findings of this study show associations between several features of social workers’ social and professional values and their support for, and engagement in, policy practice. As hypothesized, the more progressive the social workers’ socioeconomic orientation and the more inclined they were to attribute poverty to social and structural factors, the more support they expressed for policy practice and the more they actually engaged in it. In addition, the more the workers viewed the government as responsible for social welfare, the greater their support for policy practices (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2008).

As expected, the more importance the workers attributed to promoting social justice as an aim of the profession, the greater both their support for and engagement in policy practice. The more importance they attributed to enhancing individuals’ inner resources, the greater their support for policy practice. The less importance they attributed to exerting social control, the greater their engagement in policy practice. Of the three factors, the strongest associations were with the aim of social justice. The findings also show that social workers’ social and professional values are much more strongly associated with their support for policy practice than with their actual engagement in it. Indeed, there is only a moderate, although significant, correlation between their support for policy practice and their engagement in it—this even though
support for policy practice predicts engagement more than any of the other variables (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2008).

**Political Awareness and Social Work Students**

In this study, political awareness is defined as the process in which an individual gains an increasingly complex understanding of politics, how one's identity influence life experiences, and how one's awareness of politics and identity influence actions taken to challenge social norms by participating in political policy practices. Politically aware persons watch political debates and national news in order to conceptualize a broader view of the issues of society. They also follow the progression of legislation that interests them.

The past decade has seen increasing attention paid to the role of informal political conversation in the democratic process. Although political talk has long been understood as an important catalyst of opinion change, more recent work suggests that it also has beneficial outcomes for democracy as a whole. Even political conversation that does not meet the strict requirements of formal deliberation can lead to increased political tolerance, awareness of oppositional rationales, and political knowledge (Thorson, 2014).

Stockemer (2012) study show high degrees of political interest and enhanced political participation among students who spend more than one hour per day consumed in news media. Students who regularly discuss political topics with friends and family or frequently watch the news on TV are informed about important political topics and challenges, as well as reminded of how politics influences their daily life. This awareness
combined with a possible feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with politics in students’ close or far environment might entice them to become politically engaged. Politically interested students might also be more likely to be recruited by campaigns, parties or political organizations on and off campus. In addition, students with an affinity to politics might be pushed toward political engagement by their networks and peers, as well (Stockemer, 2012).

Anzaldúa (1999) defined her conceptualization of mestiza consciousness as a level of awareness where the possibility of uniting all that is separate such as identities based in gender, culture, sexual orientation occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its parts. That third element is a new consciousness (Hernandez, 2012).

According to Hernandez (2012), Anzaldúa's conceptualization of mestiza consciousness illustrates the process of developing one's own identities into a new consciousness that is "greater than the sum of its parts." Mestiza consciousness also indicates an active process such as balancing opposing powers or working out a synthesis, which further illustrates the connection between growing awareness and action.

Du Bois (1903) discussed his conceptualization of double consciousness, which also can be described as an awareness of his place in American society dictated by his race and how his sense of self was informed by a constant awareness of his marginalized status. Du Bois's double consciousness demonstrated action as inherent in this type of
consciousness, as did Anzaldúa (1999). Consciousness necessitates action, such as activism in the form of resistance to social norms (Hernandez, 2012).

Hernandez (2012) conducted a study to examine how Mexican American women made meaning of their undergraduate activism and its potential implications on their development toward self-authorship. The developing political consciousness model emerged from their interviews to demonstrate the process of developing increasingly complex social knowledge. The shift of motivation to engage in activism from being a peer expectation to an internalized life calling, and an increasingly complex understanding of political tactics and ability to collaborate with members and other organizations for the goal of achieving political change also emerged from these interviews.

This study provided an opportunity for women activists to share their stories about their experiences as Mexican American college women. Their recollections illustrated how they made meaning of their activism in regard to who they are today. Findings from this study revealed a new model, developing political consciousness, based on self-authorship theory, which illustrates how one's level of development may affect the meaning and motivation to engage in activism and vice versa. For the women in this study, this process of developing toward self-authorship included an increasingly complex political awareness of how their ethnicity has influenced their lived experiences and the way that they see the world (Hernandez, 2012).
Political Awareness and Self-Awareness

According to Bender, Fowler and Negi, 2010, Sue and colleagues (1982), identified three major components of culturally competent practice as knowledge, skills, and awareness. It is clear that focusing solely on social workers’ knowledge of other cultures is a limited approach. Social work scholars emphasize that, for social work practitioners, having an understanding of one’s values derived from their family, background, and position in society is vital for culturally responsive practice (Bender, Fowler & Negi, 2010).

Practitioners’ self-awareness involves knowledge of their own cultural heritage and the potential effects of their background on their work with clients (Sue, 2001). Self-awareness, therefore, entails gaining insight into one’s identity and how it positions oneself in society. This insight includes exploring such facets of self as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, socioeconomic status, and cultural background among others. A critical aspect of self-awareness for culturally responsive social work practice includes the exploration and understanding of ethnic and racial identity (Bender, Fowler & Negi, 2010).

Increased practitioner self-awareness also involves the understanding of personal ethnic and racial background within a sociopolitical and historical context. Essentially, this entails the critical exploration of personal familial history within geographic, cultural, relational, and societal contexts. This examination of ethnic and racial background facilitates self-awareness by highlighting the underpinnings of one’s own beliefs, biases, and differences. Awareness of these personal biases can enhance social
workers' consciousness to issues that may impede effective work with clients that are ethnically/racially different from themselves (Bender, Fowler & Negi, 2010).

The initial phase of graduate education is an ideal time to orient future social workers to cultural competence by facilitating students' ethnic and racial identity development, attitudes, awareness, and self-interests. An understanding of how social work students process their own background in relation to their work with diverse client systems is especially relevant as social work educator's grapple with developing students' cultural responsiveness in the classroom (Bender, Fowler & Negi, 2010).

**Political Awareness and Civic Engagement**

One of the primary purposes of liberal education for the twenty-first century is to promote social responsibility and civic engagement. The impetus for this purpose rests on current understandings of general education, including the conviction that higher education can educate students not only to gain knowledge about social systems and norms but also to be leaders in strengthening our democracy and global connections (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

Literature on service learning or community-based learning is grounded in social and political imperatives, particularly the necessity to cultivate these responsibilities in college students. The need to encourage civic responsibility is under-scored by evidence indicating that civic commitment has declined during the past twenty years. American culture suffers, according to social commentators, from extreme individualism (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).
Another indicator of civic disengagement is revealed by data from a national survey showing that college students are not interested in staying current with politics. Based on a review of studies documenting the decline in civic engagement over the past 30 years, has concluded that young Americans more than any other age group are not interested in the public sphere. Clearly, higher education has an essential role to play in promoting civic education and social responsibility among the next generation of America's leaders (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

The extent to which community-based learning promotes civic engagement depends on the integrative qualities of the program. Nieto (2000) contends that students placed with community organizations need to investigate the causes of social problems as well as social inequities for them to learn about the complexities of social issues. This type of focus dismisses students' belief that work in the community should be primarily motivated by charity and reduces the reinforcement of preconceived stereotypes and paternalistic attitudes. Densmore (2000) promotes programs that emphasize the creation of new social frameworks for students who participate in community-based experiences. Such programs should assist college students to learn about the role that institutions can play in solving social problems and the ability of the electorate to confront political agendas that resist social change (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

According to Mahoney and Schamber (2008), other advocates of community-based learning argue for programs that cultivate student learning about civic engagement from a perspective rooted in the nature of democracy. Undergirding this viewpoint is the assumption that government policies can alleviate the causes of social problems and
improves society and that citizens need to take the initiative to influence issues that affect them. Colby and colleagues (2003) contend that the cultivation of civic engagement through learning in the community should take students beyond activities such as working in soup kitchens to an understanding about how to eliminate the need for that kitchen through appropriate changes in social policies (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

Kahne (2004) indicates that participatory citizenship through community-based programs also needs to be linked with "justice-oriented citizenship" for students to work for social reform. Hence, the connection between experiential learning and theoretical knowledge about the role of government and citizens in formulating social policy is essential for helping students "to examine the structural causes of social problems and seek solutions" and to make informed policy decisions in the future (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

Many universities neglect a social justice orientation for students as a goal for general education. This fact prevents us from challenging the status quo, dulls our capacity for empathy, and neutralizes our will to agitate for change and justice. Education for social justice informs the critical analysis of social issues, the ethical evaluation of alternative courses of action, and the impetus to bring about needed changes in social policies. Researchers argue that reflecting, analyzing, and making critical judgments in relation to social, economic, and political issues are necessary for developing a critical perspective (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

In addition, Broido and Reason (2005) discuss the importance of egalitarian values in the development of this critical perspective. Freire emphasizes that education should
liberate students by rejecting oppressive, traditional pedagogical methods and advocates a pedagogy of emancipation that provides students with the knowledge, empathy, and power to develop a value-based understanding of their role in society. Ultimately, through an intentional curriculum that integrates a social justice orientation with the critical analysis of social issues and community-based learning, students can develop their intellectual, political, and ethical capacities (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

In a study conducted by Mahoney and Schamber (2008), a voluntary, community-based learning program in a required first-year, general education course, "Mentor Seminar II, Today's Decisions" was assessed. The multiple-section course, based on a common syllabus, examines contemporary social issues. The major learning objective of the course is for students to analyze social issues critically. This objective is addressed through five curricular components Decisions.

In the first component, students read and discuss articles on civic engagement in historical and contemporary contexts. For the second component, students analyze articles on contemporary social issues such as the domestic and global AIDS crisis, gay marriage, global warming, racial profiling, and educational policies in the United States. The third unit teaches students how to find information on social issues and evaluate the credibility of that information. In the fourth component, teams of four to six students research and write a twenty-five-page group policy paper on a social issue. In the fifth unit, students discuss Rubin's A Citizen's Guide to Politics in America: How the System Works and How to Work the System (2000) for developing implementation strategies for their policy papers Decisions (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).
The findings of this study (Schamber & Mahoney, 2008) support Saltmarsh's (2005) arguments that the acquisition of political knowledge and the cultivation of democratic values are benefits of community-based learning. The data showed that the community-based learners realized statistically significant gains in political awareness and social justice attitudes. Data from the students' interviews indicate that experiences in the community combined with academic research provide students with a context for realizing the relevance of social issues, grasping a personal stake in policy issues, and sympathizing with community needs Decisions (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

The interview data also reveal that informed experiences in the community can help students understand that social systems and social policies can adversely affect individuals. The grounded theory derived from the students' papers indicates that a community-based curriculum can foster in students the political knowledge of a community advocate who seeks to evaluate social policies through critically discerning value-based judgments. Thus, the study validates Saltmarsh's observations about student learning through community-based experiences Decisions (Mahoney & Schamber, 2008).

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s Citizen Participation Model, the adult learning theory and Freire’s theory of conscientization. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s Citizen Participation Model (1995) was applied to social work practitioners and tested by Ritter (2007, 2008), whose results
contribute the concepts to the focus of this study: political interest, political competence, political awareness and political advocacy.

The adult learning theory plays a primary role in the professional literature related to the teaching of political advocacy in social work and provided conceptual guidance for data collection and analysis. Freire’s theory of conscientization, or critical consciousness, helps connect process and product in a manner consistent with the social work profession’s mandate to be involved in political advocacy on behalf of social justice. Conscientization integrates a respect for the learning motivation and styles of adults with a critical analysis of power and a goal of transformative action on behalf of positive social change (Halvor, 2012).

The Citizen Participation Model

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady’s Citizen Participation Model (1995) outlined three key determinants of people’s political involvement: (1) psychological engagement, (2) resources, and (3) recruitment networks. Psychological engagement is the term used to describe a “variety of psychological predispositions toward politics” (Verba et al., 1995, p. 270). People must have a desire, interest, and degree of confidence in order to participate in the voluntary activity of political involvement. Verba et al. propose five specific constructs within the larger category of psychological engagement: (1) political interest (one’s level of interest in politics), (2) political efficacy (the degree to which one feels competent to participate in political activity), (3) political information (one’s knowledge of government and politics), (4) party identification (the degree of one’s
partisan leanings), and (5) family influences (the degree to which one’s parents were politically active while raising children).

In terms of resources, the Citizen Participation Model emphasizes three kinds: time, money, and civic skills (i.e. organizational and communication skills). Finally, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady identify recruitment networks as a key influence on people’s political involvement. People who have the psychological engagement and resources necessary to be politically active are more likely to do so when they are asked (Verba et al., 1995, p. 3). Verba et al. also theorize that recruitment networks offer opportunities for people to develop the organizational and communication skills important for political action (Halvor, 2012).

Adult Learning Theory

It is clear that adult learning theory has played a primary role in the professional literature related to the teaching of political advocacy in social work. Applied learning is believed to enhance students’ sense of the relevance and importance of policy to the practice of social work. Second, experiential teaching methods are believed to be more effective for developing political advocacy skills (Halvor, 2012).

Adult learning theory proposes a model of the adult learning process and methods believed to be particularly effective in the teaching of adults. Six core principles lie at the heart of this theory. The first is that adults need to understand why they need to learn something before they engage in the learning process. The second principle is that adult learners desire a sense of autonomy and self-direction. Third, adults bring a variety of prior experience to the classroom, which should serve as a key resource in the learning
process. Fourth, adults typically become ready to learn when life presents them with a relevant challenge or there is a need to perform a specific task. The fifth principle asserts that adults are problem-centered learners who do best when provided with a context and an opportunity to develop a sense of competency in addressing problems. Finally, the adult learning theory proposes that adults are internally motivated learners who seek intrinsic value and a sense of personal payoff through their education (Halvor, 2012).

**Critical Consciousness**

Paulo Freire’s theory of critical consciousness, integrates a respect for the learning motivation and styles of adults with a critical analysis of power and a goal of transformative action on behalf of positive social change. This integration of adult learning, critical analysis, and positive social change resonates well with the context and purpose of social work education. Critical consciousness involves the development of a critical awareness — learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions so that people can take transformative action and “create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, 2000, p. 47).

Freire (1998) argues that “to teach is not to transfer the comprehension of the object to a student but to instigate the student, who is a knowing subject, to become capable of comprehending and of communicating what has been comprehended” (p. 106). Dialogue is at the center of this exchange, for the purpose of a better understanding one’s role as an active participant in society (Halvor, 2012).

According to Halvor (2012), Hope and Timmel (1996) effectively outline six key principles of Freire’s work around critical consciousness. The first principle is that the
goal of education should be radical transformation, based on the vision of a new, more just society. Transformation occurs at the individual, community, and societal levels. Secondly, dialogue is at the heart of transformative education. It involves sharing and listening. Both teacher and student are respected as bringers and developers of knowledge. A relevant input will then challenge them to deeper thinking and further dialogue (Halvor, 2012).

Attentive listening on the part of all parties in education also contributes to an atmosphere in which people can welcome challenging perspectives. Dialogue encourages critical thinking and enhanced awareness. A third key principle in Freire’s theory of critical consciousness is the importance of “generative themes” (Freire, 2000). Through intentional listening, people are encouraged to identify for themselves the issues that are central to their learning and development. Students are encouraged to reflect on the political content of their daily lives. This requires an appreciation for the importance of strong feelings, those feelings that break through apathy and generate energy and hope (Hope & Timmel, 1996; Halvor, 2012). Freire argues that a teaching program should be based in these generative themes, as identified through the intentional listening involved in dialogue (Halvor, 2012).

Fourth, Freire argues for education based in the posing of problems and the search for solutions. Dialogue clarifies the pressing problem(s). Freire as “praxis” is this constant cycle of reflection and action, commonly refers to a fifth key principle of critical consciousness. At the same time he encourages praxis, he discourages either “pure
action” without critical analysis or “pure verbalism” without action (Payne, 2005, p. 236) (Halvor, 2012).

Finally, Freire (2000) argues that education is inherently political. He embraces a more subjective view of knowledge as ever changing and culturally informed. Furthermore, he identifies the very presence of a teacher in a school as an intrinsically political presence, something that students cannot possibly ignore. Freire’s emphasis on work and education with people who are oppressed seems appropriate to social work education in three ways (Halvor, 2012).

First, the social work profession holds as a primary goal the elimination of discrimination and oppression. Second, social workers engage with people who come from oppressive situations on a daily basis. Finally, there is an imbalance of power in the teacher-student relationship that must be acknowledged. This is not to suggest that education is inherently oppressive. However, the degree to which Freire’s principles and teaching tools are sensitive to the impact of power and focused on the empowerment of students seems particularly appropriate to the teaching of political advocacy and related knowledge (Halvor, 2012).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III presents the methods and procedures that were used in conducting the study. The following are described: research design; description of the site; sample and population; instrumentation; treatment data, and limitations of study.

Research Design

A descriptive and explanatory research design was employed in this study. The study was designed to ascertain data in order to describe internal and external factors that contribute to political social work practices among social students who attend social work programs guided by the ethical mandates of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

The descriptive and explanatory research design allowed for the exploratory descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Also, this research design facilitated the explanation of the level of political interest, competence, awareness and advocacy of social work students. The research also explores the role of education, attachment to recruitment networks, social work experiences and political ideology of the respondents who were students enrolled in a social work program in the state of Georgia.

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Description of Site

The research study was conducted in the State of Georgia. Georgia is located in the southeastern United States. The 2010 US Census reported 9,687,653 residents, making Georgia the ninth most populous state. The surveys were administered in two schools of social work programs. The Georgia site was selected because the study focuses on social work students at all levels. The faculty and administrators were cooperative, accessible and demonstrated a genuine interest in the purpose and outcome of the proposed research.

Sample and Population

The target population for the research was composed of both undergraduate and graduate social work students who were recently enrolled in an (CSWE) accredited social work program in the state of Georgia. One hundred and eleven (211) respondents were selected utilizing nonprobability convenience sampling from among the participants selected in Georgia sites for the study.

Instrumentation

The research study employed a survey questionnaire entitled Political Interest, Competence, Advocacy and Awareness. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections with a total of twenty-five questions. Section I solicited demographic information about the characteristics of the respondents. Section II employed the Political Participation Contributing Factors Index scale in order to measure the student’s level of political interest, competence, advocacy and awareness of political issues.

Section I of the survey questionnaire consisted of nine questions (1 thru 9). Of the nine questions, selected questions were used as independent variables for the study. The questions in Section I were concerned with gender, marital status, age group, education,
income, social work experience, race, political views and social work program concentration. These questions provided information for the presentation of a demographic profile on the respondents of the research study.

Section II consisted of sixteen political participation questions (10 thru 25). Section II measures to what extent political participation exist among respondents about their interest in political issues (Political Interest), their competence in political practice (Political Competence), their political advocacy efforts (Political Advocacy), and their awareness of daily political events (Political Awareness) during their social work tenure. Items on the survey were responded to on a four point continuum Likert scale. The scale was as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4 = Strongly Agree.

**Treatment of the Data**

Statistical treatment of the data employed descriptive statistics, which included measures of central tendency, frequency distribution, and cross tabulation. The test statistics for the study was chi square.

Frequency distribution was used to analyze each of the variables of the study in order to summarize the basic measurement. A frequency distribution of independent variables was used to develop a demographic profile and to gain insights about the respondents of the study.

The test statistics employed in the research study was chi square. Chi square was used to test whether there was a significant statistical significance at the .05 level of probability among the variables in the study.
Limitations of the Study

There were two basic limitations to the study. The first limitation was the number of sites visited. Because the sites consisted of only two of the eight social work programs within the state of Georgia accredited by the Council on Social Work education, it could be predicted that findings are limited to specifically students enrolled in those two social work programs. Secondly, there is no way of knowing if students critically thought about their responses. This may be due to the amount of time given by various professors for students to complete the survey.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the study in order to describe and explain the political interest, competence, advocacy and awareness among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education. This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are organized into two sections: demographic data and questions and hypotheses.

Demographic Data

This section provides a profile of the study respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the following: gender, marital status, age, social work education, their annual income, and years of social work experience, race, political views and their schools' core concentration.

A target population for the research was composed of social work students enrolled in social work programs in the state of Georgia. Two-hundred and fifteen students were surveyed using nonprobability convenience sampling from participants of the selected sites.
### Table 1

Demographic Profile of Study Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 &amp; up</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Standing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Year MSW</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year MSW</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $15,000</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000 – 34,999</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 – 49,999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 – 74,999</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 or higher</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

Demographic Profile of Study Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Social Work Experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>80.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Views</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Liberal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Conservative</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Concentration</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Policy</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Programs</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 1, the typical respondent of the study was an African American female who was never married, twenty-one to thirty years old, bachelor level student, with a salary under $15,000, up to five years of social work experience, with a moderate political view and studying in a program with a clinical concentration.
Research Questions and Hypotheses

There were four research questions and four null hypotheses in the study. This section provides an analysis of the research questions and a testing of the null hypotheses.

Research Question 1: Is there political interest participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

Hypotheses 1: There is no political interest participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

Political Interest among Social Work Students

In the study political interest was defined as a feeling of a person whose concern, attention and curiosity is particularly engaged in political policy practice. There is an interest in both local and national political issues; these persons enjoy political discussions and are linked to social movement organizations or associations to gain more knowledge about how to effectively impact political policy.

Table 2 is a frequency distribution of the sub-facets of political interest among 207 social work students. Table 2 indicates the degree of in which the respondents disagreed
or agreed with the that they were interested in local and national issues, enjoyed political and policy discussions, was a member of the National Association of Social Workers, and wished they were more knowledgeable about how to effectively impact the political process.

Table 2
Political Interest Sub-facets among Social Work Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree #</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Agree #</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in local and national political issues</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy political and policy discussions in class</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of the National Association of Social Workers</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I were more knowledgeable of how to impact politics</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 2, of the 207 students surveyed, 159 (74.5%) indicated that they agreed that they were interested in local and national issues. Social work students also agreed 146 (69.5%) that they enjoy political and policy discussions in class. However, they indicated that they were not 131 (63%) members of the National Association of Social Workers which is the leading policy organization for social workers and social work students. Of the 207 respondents, 173 (82%) indicated that they wish they were more knowledgeable about how to effectively impact the political process.
Table 3 is a frequency distribution for the computed variable political interest. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures. The following is an example of the calculation:

Table 3
INTEREST: Political Interest among Social Work Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 2.75 Std. Dev. .432

As shown in Table 3, the social work students indicated 105 (50.7%) that they just slightly disagreed with being politically interested and just slightly agreed (49.3%) that they were politically interested. Of the 207 respondents, 102 (49.3%) indicated that they agreed that they were politically interested.

Research Question 2: Is there political competence participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
Hypotheses 2: There is no political competence participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

**Political Competence among Social Work Students**

In the study political competence was defined as all relevant educational and experimental requirements, demonstrating the ability to carry out the task of political policy practice. Some of these skills include the ability to evaluate social problems and develop policy implementation; and political skills to gain and use power to develop and implement political strategy (Jansson, 2014). A politically competent person feels comfortable in their ability to contact legislators to share their opinion on policy issues and is confident that their social work education has prepared them to do so.

Table 4 is a frequency distribution of the sub-facets of political competence among 210 social work students. Table 4 indicates the degree of in which the respondents disagreed or agreed that they were competent in political social work practice.
As shown in Table 4, social work students indicated that they agreed that they were competent in political social work practice. The respondents agreed 156 (74.3%) that they were confident in their ability to evaluate factors contributing to social change, 171 (81%) felt they had an understanding of important issues faced by the United States. Of the 210 respondents 107 (50.7%) indicated that they disagreed that they felt confident in their ability to contact legislators. However, 171 (81%) agreed that their social work education adequately emphasizes the link between social work practice and social action.

Table 5 is a frequency distribution for the computed variable political competence. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures.
Table 5

COMPET: Political Competence among Social Work Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 2.74 Std. Dev. .438

As shown in Table 5, the social work students slightly disagreed 106 (50.5%) with being politically competent. Of the 210 respondents, 104 (49.5%) slightly agreed that they were politically competent.

Research Question 3: Is there political advocacy participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

Hypotheses 3: There is no political advocacy participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
**Political Advocacy among Social Work Students**

In the study political advocacy was defined as coordinated efforts to influence legislation, election of candidates, and broad societal change. Political advocacy also include lobbying, discussing political issues to mobilize voters and gain public opinion, working on campaigns and working with community groups that seek to influence policy.

Table 6 is a frequency distribution of the sub-facets of the level of political advocacy among 208 social work students. Table 6 indicates whether or not respondents talked about social and political issues or legislation, contacted legislators to share their opinion on political issues, worked on political campaigns, and participated in community groups that sought to influence policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-facets</th>
<th>Disagree #</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Agree #</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I talk about social and political issues or legislation</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>66.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I contact legislators to share my opinion on policy issues</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work on political campaigns</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in community groups that influence policy</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 4: Is there political awareness participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

Hypotheses 4: There is no political awareness participation among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

**Political Awareness among Social Work Students**

In the study political awareness was defined as the process in which an individual gains an increasingly complex understanding of politics, how one's identity influence life experiences, and how one's awareness of politics and identity influence actions taken to challenge social norms by participating in political policy practices. Politically aware persons watch political debates and national news in order to conceptualize a broader view of the issues of society. They also follow the progression of legislation that interests them.

Table 8 is a frequency distribution of the sub-facets of political awareness among 209 social work students. Table 8 indicates whether or not students watched political debates, knew who represented them in the state capital, read, listen to, or watch national news, and followed the progression of legislation that interests them.
Table 8

Political Awareness Sub-facets among Social Work Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch political debates</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>143</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know who represents me in the state capital</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>118</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read, listen to, or watch national news</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I follow the progression of legislation that</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interests me</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 8, social work students agreed 143 (68.1%) that they watched political debates, they slightly indicated 118 (55.9%) that they knew who represented them in the state capital. They also indicated 170 (80.6%) that they read, listened to, or watched national news while 134 (63.8%) indicated that they followed the progression of legislation that was of interested them.

Table 9 is a frequency distribution for the computed variable political awareness. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures. The following is an example of the calculation:
## Table 9

AWARE: Political Awareness among Social Work Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean 2.68  
Std. Dev. .467

As shown in Table 9, social work students indicated that they disagreed that they were political aware. Of the 209 respondents, 114 (54.5%) indicated that they disagreed that they were politically aware while 95 (45.5%) indicated that they agreed that they were political aware.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research study was designed to answer four questions concerning political social work practice of social work students who were currently enrolled in accredited social work programs in the state of Georgia. These social work programs are guided by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

The conclusions and recommendations of the research findings are presented in this chapter. Recommendations are proposed for future discussions for policy makers, social work students, educators, practitioners and administrators. Each research question is presented in order to summarize the significant findings of interest.

Research Question 1: Is there political interest among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

In order to determine the if there was political interest among social work students currently enrolled in the Council of Social Work Education accredited schools of social work programs, four facets of political interest were analyzed (interest in local and national political issues, feelings toward political and policy discussions in class, member...
of the National Association of Social Workers and if they wish they knew more about how to effectively impact the political process) were analyzed.

Political interest was computed based on a calculation of these four facets. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four facets for political interest were calculated by dividing the sum total of the rest of figures by the number of figures.

Of the 207 social work students surveyed, a slight majority indicated that they disagreed (50.7) with being politically interested and just slightly agreed (49.3%) that they were politically interested. Social work students indicated that they agreed (75.4%) that they were interested in local and national issues. Social work students also agree (69.5) that they enjoy political and policy discussions in class. However, they indicated that they were not (63%) members of the National Association of Social Workers which is the leading policy organization for social workers and social work students. Of the 207 respondents, (82%) indicated that they wish they were more knowledgeable about how to effectively impact the political process.

When the statistical measurement chi-square test for significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected (p=.000).

Research Question 2: Is there political competence among social work students in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?
In order to determine the if there was political competence among social work students currently enrolled in the Council of Social Work Education accredited schools of social work programs, four facets of political competence were analyzed (confidence in the ability to evaluate factors in social change, understanding of important issues facing the United States, confidence in their ability to contact legislators and their social work education emphasis on social work practice and social action) were analyzed.

Political competence was computed based on a calculation of these four facets. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures.

Of the 210 social work students surveyed, the social work students indicated that they just slightly disagreed (50.5) with being politically competent and just slightly agreed (49.5%) that they were politically competent. The respondents indicated (74.3%) that they confident in their ability to evaluate factors contributing to social change, they felt (81%) that they had an understanding of important issues faced by the United States. The respondents indicated (50.7%) that they did not feel confident in their ability to contact legislators. However, they indicated (81%) that their social work education adequately emphasizes the link between social work practice and social action.

When the statistical measurement chi-square test for significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected (p=.000).

Research Question 3: Is there political advocacy among social work students in the state
of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education?

In order to determine if there was political advocacy among social work students currently enrolled in the Council of Social Work Education accredited schools of social work programs, four facets of political competence were analyzed (talk about social and political issues or legislation, contact legislators to share their opinion on political issues, work on political campaigns, participate in community groups that sought to influence policy) were analyzed.

Political advocacy was computed based on a calculation of these four facets. In order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values (1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures.

Social work students indicated that they do not participate in political advocacy. Of the 208 respondents, 84.6% indicated that they did not participate in political advocacy while only 15.4% indicated that they did participate in political advocacy.

Sixty-six percent (66.8) of social work students indicated that they talked about social and political issues or legislation, however, (72%) indicated that they did not contact legislators to share their opinion on political issues, only (21.8%) indicated that they worked on political campaigns, and (44.5%) indicated that they participated in community groups that sought to influence policy.

When the statistical measurement chi-square test for significance, the null hypothesis was not rejected (p=.000).
Research Question 4: Is there political awareness among social work students in the 
state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the 
National Association of Social Workers and educational standards 
of the Council on Social Work Education?

In order to determine the if there was political awareness among social work 
students currently enrolled in the Council of Social Work Education accredited schools of 
social work programs, four facets of political awareness were analyzed (watch political 
debates, state capital representation, read, listen to, or watch national news, and follow 
the progression of legislation) were analyzed.

Political awareness was computed based on a calculation of theses four facets. In 
order to determine the true value or arithmetic mean of the computed variable, the values 
(1 thru 4) from the measurement scale of the four sub-facets were calculated by dividing 
the sum total of the set figures by the number of figures.

Sixty-eight percent (68.1) of the social work students indicated that they watched 
political debates, they slightly indicated (55.9) that they knew who represented them in 
the state capital. They also indicated (80.6%) that they read, listened to, or watched 
national news while (63.8%) indicated that they followed the progression of legislation 
that was of interested them.

When the statistical measurement chi-square test for significance, the null hypothesis 
was not rejected (p=.000).

In sum, the 211 social work students surveyed responded by indicating that they 
disagreed with many of the sub-facets and facets of political social work practice. A 
majority (50.7%) indicated that they disagreed that they were politically interested,
(50.5%) disagreed that they were politically competent, (84.6%) disagreed that they participate in political advocacy and (54.5%) disagreed that they were politically aware as social work students enrolled in social work programs in the state of Georgia who are mandated by the ethical standards of the National Association of Social Workers and guided by the educational standards of the Council on Social Work Education.

**Recommendations**

There are many studies and evaluations of direct practice interventions in social work literature, however few have assessed how well social work students are faring in the area of policy. The increased reliance on government funding by social service nonprofits, reduced government capacity as a result of budgetary constraints, and the growth of participatory processes and other collaborative governance mechanisms are trends in contemporary policy practice that have greatly influenced the way advocacy is carried out. Each of these trends has led to a change in the power relationship between social service nonprofits and government agencies and opened up new opportunities for advocacy. Therefore, this study makes significant conceptual and methodological contributions to the literature on political social work participation among social work students.

As a result of the findings of this study, the researcher is recommending the following:

1. Social work programs must be proactive in shaping field placements that place emphasizes on making the connection between direct practice and policy practice.
2. Educators should encourage social work students to become active in professional associations that have political action committees and legislative committees that allow social workers to keep abreast of the issues that come up in both state and federal legislatures and make it easier to participate.

3. Educators should develop assignments and exercises that offer opportunities in advocacy practice. Some of these assignments can be classroom experiences of speaking at a mock congressional hearing, developing an imaginary media campaign, or planning a community meeting. Students should also be given an opportunity to have firsthand experiences in meeting governmental officials, attending political meetings.

4. Leaders in social work must be strategic in their recruitment activities if they want to recruit into the profession a diverse group of people who embrace its values in all practice methods.

5. Faculty can place greater emphasis on integrating context and structural analysis into their teaching of clinical social work; at the same time that macro practice is infused with an interpersonal focus to keep its connection to the micro perspective.

6. Macro social workers need to network, be mentored, and socialize to improve and develop as professionals. Both formal and informal networking sessions build and strengthen connections among macro practitioners in the local community; they provide an important opportunity for the development of a social worker's professional identity.
7. Macro practitioners need to raise the visibility of macro practice social work within the social work profession as a whole.
APPENDICES
Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

A STUDY OF POLITICAL COMPETENCE, INTEREST AND ADVOCACY AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks to study the political competence, interest, awareness and advocacy among social work students in the state of Georgia. This study consists of a questionnaire with twenty-five questions and a consent form.

There are no risks to participants who agree to take part in this research. There are no known personal benefits to participants who agree to take part in this research. However, it is hoped that those who participate in this study will help research in the field of social work education, social work curriculum development, and the professional development of social service workers in the United States.

All responses to the questionnaires will remain confidential. Participation in this study is voluntary. If participants have questions about the study, they may contact the principal investigator – Demetra Stackhouse-Powe by email at dstackhouse/powe@cau.edu – or the School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University at 404-880-8561.

My signature below verifies that I have read the statement above and agree to participate in this research project.

_____________________________  ______________________________  ____________
Print Name of Participant        Signature of Participant       Date
Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

Section I. Demographic Information

Instructions: Circle the appropriate answer below. Choose only one answer for each question.

1. My gender: 1) ____ Male 2) ____ Female

2. My Marital Status: 1) ____ Married 2) ____ Never Married 3) ____ Divorced 4) ____ Separated 5) ____ Widowed

3. My age group: 1) ____ 18-20 2) ____ 21-30 3) ____ 31-40 4) ____ 41-50 5) ____ 51 & up

4. My education: 1) ____ BSW 2) ____ Advance Standing 3) ____ 1st year MSW 4) ____ 2nd year MSW 5) ____ Doctorate

5. Annual Income: 1) ____ Under $15,000 2) ____ $15,000-$34,999 3) ____ $35,000-$49,999 4) ____ $50,000-$74,999 5) ____ 75,000 or higher

6. Years of Social Work Experience: 1) ____ 0-5 2) ____ 5-10 3) ____ 11-15 4) ____ 16 or more

7. The one racial category that best describes me: 1) ____ Black 2) ____ White 3) ____ Hispanic 4) ____ Asian 5) ____ Other

8. Political Views: 1) ____ Very Liberal 2) ____ Liberal 3) ____ Moderate 4) ____ Conservative 5) ____ Very Conservative

9. The one category that best describes my school concentration:

1) ____ Clinical (Client Focused) 2) ____ Administration and Policy 3) ____ Community Based Programs 4) ____ Management

Questionnaire continues on back page. Please go to back page
Section II. How much do you agree with the following statement?

Instructions: Write the number indicating your answer (1 thru 4) in the blank space in front of each statement on the questionnaire. Choose only one answer for each item and respond to all of the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Interest</th>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Agree</th>
<th>4 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. I'm interested in local and national political issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I enjoy political and policy discussions in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am a member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I wish I were more knowledgeable about how to effectively impact the political process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Competence</th>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Agree</th>
<th>4 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel confident in my ability to evaluate the forces supporting and opposing social change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I have a pretty good understanding of the important issues facing our country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel confident in my ability to contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues (call, visit or write a letter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My social work education adequately emphasize the link between social work practice and social action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Advocacy</th>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Agree</th>
<th>4 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Talk about a social and political issues or legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues (call, visit or write a letter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Work on a political campaign</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I participate in community groups that seek to influence policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Awareness</th>
<th>1 = Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 = Disagree</th>
<th>3 = Agree</th>
<th>4 = Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. I watch political debates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I know who represents me in the state capital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I read, listen to, or watch national news</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I follow the progress of legislation that interests me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: SPSS Program Analysis (continued)

TITLE 'Political Interest, Competence, Advocacy and Awareness'.
SUBTITLE 'Demetra Stackhouse-Powe - CAU PhD Social Work Program'.

DATA LIST FIXED/
ID 1-3
GENDER 4
MARITAL 5
AGEGRP 6
EDUCAT 7
INCOME 8
WORK 9
ETHNIC 10
VIEWS 11
CATEGO 12
INTER10 13
INTER11 14
INTER12 15
INTER13 16
COMP14 17
COMP15 18
COMP16 19
COMP17 20
ADVO18 21
ADVO19 22
ADVO20 23
ADVO21 24
AWAR22 25
AWAR23 26
AWAR24 27
AWAR25 28.

COMPUTE INTEREST = (INTER10+ INTER11+ INTER12+ INTER13)/4.
COMPUTE COMPET = (COMP14+ COMP15+ COMP16+ COMP17)/4.
COMPUTE ADVOCAY = (ADVO18+ ADVO19+ ADVO20+ ADVO21)/4.
COMPUTE AWARE = (AWAR22+ AWAR23+ AWAR24+ AWAR25)/4.
TITLE 'Political Interest, Competence, Advocacy and Awareness'.
SUBTITLE 'Demetra Stackhouse-Powe - CAU PhD Social Work Program'.

DATA LIST FIXED/
ID  1-3
GENDER  4
MARITAL  5
AGEGRP  6
EDUCAT  7
INCOME  8
WORK  9
ETHNIC  10
VIEWS  11
CATEGO  12
INTER10  13
INTER11  14
INTER12  15
INTER13  16
COMP14  17
COMP15  18
COMP16  19
COMP17  20
ADVO18  21
ADVO19  22
ADVO20  23
ADVO21  24
AWAR22  25
AWAR23  26
AWAR24  27
AWAR25  28.

COMPUTE INTEREST = (INTER10+ INTER11+ INTER12+ INTER13)/4.
COMPUTE COMPET = (COMP14+ COMP15+ COMP16+ COMP17)/4.
COMPUTE ADVOCAY = (ADVO18+ ADVO19+ ADVO20+ ADVO21)/4.
COMPUTE AWARE = (AWAR22+ AWAR23+ AWAR24+ AWAR25)/4.
VARIABLE LABELS
ID 'Case Number'
GENDER 'Q1 Gender'
MARITAL 'Q2 Marital Status'
AGEGRP 'Q3 Age Group'
EDUCAT 'Q4 My Education'
INCOME 'Q5 Annual Income'
WORK 'Q6 Years of Social Work Experience'
ETHNIC 'Q7 The one racial category that best describes me'
VIEWS 'Q8 Political Views'
CATEGO 'Q9 The one category that best describes my school concentration'
INTER10 'Q10 I am interested in local and national political issues'
INTER11 'Q11 I enjoy political and policy discussions in class'
INTER12 'Q12 I am a member of the National Association of Social Workers'
INTER13 'Q13 I wish I were more knowledgeable about how to effectively impact the political process'
COMP14 'Q14 I feel confident in my ability to evaluate the forces supporting and opposing social change'
COMP15 'Q15 I have a pretty good understanding of the important issues facing our country'
COMP16 'Q16 I feel confident in my ability to contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues'
COMP17 'Q17 My social work education adequately emphasize the link between social work practice and social action'
ADVO18 'Q18 Talk about social and political issues or legislation'
ADVO19 'Q19 I contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues'
ADVO20 'Q20 Work on a political campaign'
ADVO21 'Q21 I participate in community groups that seek to influence policy'
AWAR22 'Q22 I watch political debates'
AWAR23 'Q23 I know who represents me in the state capital'
AWAR24 'Q24 I read listen to or watch national news'
AWAR25 'Q25 I follow the progress of legislation that interests me'.

VALUE LABELS
GENDER
1 'Male'
2 'Female'
MARITAL
1 'Married'
2 'Never Married'
3 'Divorced'
4 'Separated'
5 'Widowed'
AGEGRP
1 '18-20'
2 '21-30'
3 '31-40'
4 '41-50'
5 '51 & up'/
EDUCAT
1 'BSW'
2 'Advance Standing'
3 '1yr MSW'
4 '2yr MSW'
5 'Doctorate'/
INCOME
1 'Under $15,000'
2 '$15,000-34,999'
3 '$35,000-49,999'
4 '$50,000-74,999'
5 '$75,000 up'/
WORK
1 '0-5yrs'
2 '6-10yrs'
3 '11-15yrs'
4 '16yrs up'/
ETHNIC
1 'Black'
2 'White'
3 'Hispanic'
4 'Asian'
5 'Other'/
VIEWS
1 'Very Liberal'
2 'Liberal'
3 'Moderate'
4 'Conservative'
5 'Very Conservative'/
CATEGO
1 'Clinical'
2 'Administrative'
3 'Community Based'
4 'Management'/
INTER10
1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree'/
INTER11
1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / INTER12

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / INTER13

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / COMP14

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / COMP15

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / COMP16

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / COMP17

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / ADV018

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / ADV019

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree' / ADV020

1 'Strongly Disagree'
2 'Disagree'
3 'Agree'
4 'Strongly Agree'.

RECODE INTER10 INTER11 INTER12 INTER13 (1 THRU 2.99 = 2) (3 THRU 4.99=3).
RECODE COMP14 COMP15 COMP16 COMP17 (1 THRU 2.99 = 2) (3 THRU 4.99=3).
RECODE ADVO18 ADVO19 ADVO20 ADVO21 (1 THRU 2.99 = 2) (3 THRU 4.99=3).
RECODE AWAR22 AWAR23 AWAR24 AWAR25 (1 THRU 2.99 = 2) (3 THRU 4.99=3).
RECODE INTEREST COMPET ADVOCAY AWARE (1 THRU 2.99 = 2) (3 THRU 4.99=3).

MISSING VALUES
GENDER MARITAL AGEGRP EDUCAT INCOME WORK ETHNIC VIEWS CATEGO
INTER10 INTER11 INTER12 INTER13 COMP14 COMP15 COMP16 COMP17
ADVO18 ADVO19 ADVO20 ADVO21 AWAR22 AWAR23 AWAR24 AWAR25 (0).

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