

Political Social Work Activity on a Continuum: Six Profiles
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Donna Greco
Lisa Rand
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Introduction

We embarked on this project with the idea that we would interview two sets of social workers: those involved in political social work and those not involved in political social work. We intended to compare and contrast the groups and discuss efficacy, motivation, struggles, barriers and any pertinent emerging themes. What we discovered surprised both of us.

Part I: The "non" political social workers

In an effort to synthesize and apply the themes that emerged out of the literature on political social work, I interviewed three clinical social workers who are currently practicing in the field of substance abuse in group work, case work, and administrative capacities. I was specifically interested in exploring how clinical social workers incorporate social justice in their work, the barriers social workers face in getting politically involved, and conceptualizing ways to address and overcome those barriers. The experiences, feelings, motivations, and aspirations of all three social workers made the theories and concepts in the literature come alive and helped me to better understand-in realistic terms-how social workers are impacted by the climates of their agencies, the limitations of their resources, and confines of their job descriptions.

Although the sample is clearly too small to generalize to the larger population, the personal stories and experiences of the three participants served to reinforce the struggles social workers face in upholding the principle of social justice while both pushing against and working with the forces of managed care and the trend to pathologize social problems, how the issues of efficacy and relevance foster or inhibit social workers' participation in political activities, and what barriers prevent clinical social workers from accessing and participating in political activities.

Interview Process

In constructing interview questions and establishing a framework in which to discuss political social work, of particular interest to me, were the following themes: the ethical obligations of all social workers to promote social justice through social change, barriers that obstruct the political activities of clinical social workers, and recommendations for removing those barriers. Drawing from the work of Margaret Domanski, Nancy Humphreys and the Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work (IAPSW), Maryann Mahaffey, James Wolk, and the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics, I developed closed and open-ended interview questions about social work roles and prototypes, the efficacy and relevance of the political process as it pertains to social workers and their clients, barriers that obstruct the political involvement of clinical social workers, and professional experiences, motivators, and inhibitions as they pertain to political social work (Domanski, 1998; Humphreys, 2002; Mahaffey, 1987; Wolk, 1996; NASW, 1996). A copy of the interview questions are attached as Appendix A.

Section I: Exploration of political social work involvements

The first set of questions was designed to assess whether or not clinicians were doing or have done political social work in addition to their therapeutic work; to gauge the levels of past and current political involvements and whether or not those levels increased, decreased, or stayed the same; and to determine what roles participants felt were within or outside of the realm of social work. Interviewees were asked to check off the activities (including a range of clinical therapy with individuals, families, and groups, agency administration and policy making, committee and organizational membership, advocacy on behalf of individuals, families, groups, and/or causes, activism and community organization, lobbying, and campaign and/or election work) that they did in the past, currently do, and feel fall under the guise of social work.

Section II and III: Barriers and motivators for political involvements

The second set of questions sparked open discussions about the political process, how clinicians feel about this process, whether or not they feel they can be effective contributors to this process, and whether or not they feel political issues as directly affect the well-being of clients. The third set of questions addressed the possible barriers in terms of time, information, and other resources and attitudes, values, perceptions, inhibitions, and fears that obstruct the political involvements of social workers. Finally, the last question was open-ended and intended to open up a discussion of the issues in more depth and breadth, including motivators, experiences, and thoughts on political social work.

Defining political social work:

For the purposes of the interviews and this paper political social work encompasses the following activities: committee member (contributes to, staffs, or leads agency/local/state/national committee to help shape policies and programs), organizer (help organize clients/community members to participate in decision-making process), observer (observe local/state/national legislative activity), community participant (affect public policy through participation in organizations, associations, and/or unions), communicator (keeps informed about policy issues and shares information with family, friends, and colleagues), advocate (advocates for or on behalf of individuals, groups, or organizations), voter (votes in elections), voting bloc (votes as part of a bloc that makes a difference), individualist (contacts government officials on personal/political policy concerns), lobbyist (engages in an association's or organization's lobbying campaigns), persuader (attempts to persuade others how to vote), collaborator (participates in, organizes, or maintains a group for resolutions of government or agency policy problems), campaigner (works for political part/candidate), witness (attends or testifies at public or congressional hearings), activist (participates in an organized demonstration in support or protest of government policy), trainer (shares political expertise with others), political social worker (runs election campaigns, works in elected official's office), elected official (runs for or serves in elected office) (Domanski, 1998; Humphreys/IAPSW, 2002).
The Interviews

Social worker I: Group and Caseworker

The interviews and discussions revealed that all three interviewees "do" a range of political social work activities, but do not define such

involvements as "political". All three clinical social workers currently engage in a range of political social work activities to varying degrees. At one end of the continuum is a group and caseworker who had previously participated in a wide range of political social work activities, such as committee work, influencing public policy and funding through participation in advocacy groups, contacting government officials about policy problems, and attending demonstrations, but had become less involved in political social work activities over time. She attributed the decline in her political activity to several compounding factors: lack of time, information, and motivation, job responsibilities are limited to clinical activities and do not easily lend themselves to non-therapeutic activities due to the emphasis on managed care reimbursements, family responsibilities, a feeling of futility and disenfranchisement in the face of the political process, intimidated by the process, building, culture, and protocols, and a rationalization that since other people are doing political social work, there is no need to get involved.

This clinician stated that she would like to get more involved politically, despite her suspicion that the decision-making process is sometimes arbitrary and based on the interests of those with power and not on those who are marginalized. Her motivation for becoming a social worker was initially more politically grounded. Over time, her practice with clients has evolved away from a structural focus. Although cognizant of the structural, political, and social forces that impact clients, her work with substance abusing clients is focused less on social change and more on helping individuals take responsibility for their choices in life, change their behaviors, lead healthy substance-free lives, and adapt to their communities and systems. This clinician said that the climate of the agency plays a significant role in her political inertia. She expressed a desire to hear more about policy issues in staff meetings and what she can do to influence change, to feel connected to the larger agency and political activities, and would welcome an opportunity to testify at public hearings with colleagues.

Social Worker II: Administrator

In the middle of the continuum is an administrator whose political activities seemed to remain the same over time. Political activities included the following: serving as committee and board member for inter- and intra-agency groups, organizing clients to become involved in decision-making processes, keeping informed about legislative issues and activities, engaging in discussions with family members, friends, and colleagues about public policy issues, advocating on behalf of individuals, families, and groups, and contacting government officials about policy concerns. This administrator's job responsibilities are inherently political. She is expected to attend committee meetings, work on agency policies and procedures and remain informed about federal and state policies that affect the agency, its staff, and clients. Although this social worker blends political activities with her everyday responsibilities as a clinician and clinical supervisor, she still feels that her job responsibilities and time restrict her from getting more politically active. Her social work training was in group work and case work, but this administrator was motivated to change career paths after years of seeing clients discriminated against by systems that seemed arbitrary and unnecessarily punitive. She believes that policies shape practice and directly affect clients and feels that the political process is worthwhile and effective, and that she can contribute to this process. Still, despite her current level of political involvements, this administrator wishes to

become more politically active.

Social Worker III: Group Worker

On the other end of this continuum is a group worker whose political activities have continued to increase over time. These activities include the following: agency committee member and community civic association member, organizing clients to participate in decision-making process, such as protesting the WIC program's closing and testifying at public hearings, staying informed about public policy issues, engaging in discussions with family members, friends, and colleagues about public policy and social welfare issues, advocating on behalf of individuals, families, groups, and causes, voting, attempting to persuade others how to vote, rallying support for political party candidates, contacting government officials about public policy concerns, attending and testifying at public hearings, participating in organized demonstrations, and sharing political expertise with others. This social worker stated that her involvements in policy issues and activities have increased over time due to what New Federalism, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, an undermined and sabotaged attempt at creating universal health care in America, and cuts in mental health and social service programs nationally and in Connecticut.

This group worker feels the political process is worthwhile and effective, but understands that many people feel they can not make a difference and do not have a voice. She shared how impressed and inspired she was by the clients with whom she works and their motivation to get involved in the political process and be heard. But she acknowledges a perception that politics are "dirty" and that those with power manipulate the system to serve their interests and needs. On the one hand, this social worker discussed the corruption in politics and on the other hand, shared her sources of inspiration-including Ron Dellums-for becoming and staying involved in the political process.

This social worker was inspired to become a social worker because of her fascination with groups and her experience growing up in an African American community, where people took care of each other. She worries that the emphasis on the individual in America is fragmenting communities, families, and groups and individual clients are bearing the burden of social problems on their shoulders alone. This group worker says "it's a magical thing" when individual clients come together on an issue and work together. She cautioned that if the profession of social work does not bridge the schism between micro- and macro-workers, return to grassroots organizing, and challenge the policies that continue to fragment communities of people, social work as a profession will be no better than the HMO's and corporations that blame the victim for social problems. Despite her current fervor of activity in political issues, this social worker desires to become more involved in the future. She discussed time limitations and the immediate needs of clients as barriers that sometimes impede her political social work. But she consistently blends group work with issues of social justice and social action and can not imagine social work being at all effective without this balance.

Discussion

Ethical principle: Social workers challenge social injustice

The NASW Code of Ethics sets the foundation for ethical social work practice. Social work practice rests on the pillars and values of service, social justice, the dignity and worth of every person, the importance of human relationships, and work that is grounded in integrity and competence

(NASW, 1996). In conducting interviews and teasing out themes in the literature, I continued to ask the following question: if all social workers are ethically obligated to pursue social justice through social change, how do clinical practitioners contribute to and make this goal operational in their individual and group encounters with clients (NASW, 1996)? I was relieved to discover that clinicians blend therapeutic interventions with political activity. It is argued that clinical social workers contribute to social justice and social change by understanding clients in terms of their strengths, in the contexts of their environments and power relationships (Swenson, 1998). Through case management, advocacy, mediation, counseling, organizational change, and community education, clinical social workers pursue social change, promote awareness and sensitivity of the community to issues impacting clients, and try to ensure that clients have access to resources (Swenson, 1998; NASW, 1996).

Conversely, it is argued that social workers of the 1980's, despite their recognition that social problems are structurally rooted, are less likely to engage in activist and social change activities in therapeutic encounters than their 1960's predecessors (Reeser & Epstein, 1987). Reeser and Epstein distinguish between social work as a social justice cause and social work as a functional development of professional knowledge, and argue that social workers practice the latter (Reeser & Epstein, 1987). This theme emerged in the interview with Social Worker I, whose practice has evolved away from political causes and towards more of an individual adaptation to the injustices of the environment.

Barriers that obstruct social workers from political action

Some of the barriers that were identified by the social workers I interviewed were the following: lack of time, crisis needs of clients require immediate clinical interventions, political action falls outside routine job responsibilities, pressure to make money through third-party reimbursements (or agency climate), feelings of futility, disenfranchisement, and disenchantment in the face of the political system, feeling intimidated by the decision-making process, building, culture, and arena, lack of motivation to get involved, and the rationalization that since other people are politically active, one more person won't make a difference.

Discussions with all three social workers reinforced the themes in the literature around barriers and factors that fuel and hinder social workers' political activities. Despite all three social workers' willingness, interest, and desire to become more politically active, the barriers listed in the preceding paragraph compound and intensify and prevent these social workers from materializing their aspirations. James Wolk's examination of motivation theories is useful in analyzing the barriers that obstruct social workers' political action (Wolk, 1996). Wolk discusses motivation in terms of efficacy and relevance. According to Wolk, social workers' perception of their own efficacy in the political arena is critical in motivating them to become involved (Wolk, 1996). Efficacy includes one's disposition, belief that he/she can make a difference and impact the decision-making process, possession of necessary skills and resources, and trust in governmental decision-makers' responsiveness and opportunities for change (Wolk, 1996). Relevance is discussed in terms of social workers' belief that the political system has a direct impact on clients' resources, decision-making capacities, and control over their lives and alternatives (Wolk, 1996). Political inactivity stems from a distrust in both the system and in one's ability to make a difference, while political activity is the result of distrust in the system being offset by high trust in one's ability to be

effective (Wolk, 1996).

In the case of Social Worker I, political and personal distrust result in political inertia. In the case of Social Worker II, a distrust of systems and their policies was the catalyst for her political action and interest in making changes. In the case of Social Worker III, a distrust of the political process is balanced by her belief in individual politicians who have upheld the interests and values of social work and in her ability to make a difference and magnify her voice in the context of groups and communities. A central theme in all three discussions was the importance of efficacy and relevance in influencing the political activities of social workers. There are a variety of factors that motivate and obstruct the political activity of social workers, such as agency climate, time, job responsibilities, and a lack of information and skills. However, a fundamental trust in the political process, confidence in one's ability to contribute to that process, and belief that policy directly shapes practice and the lives of clients were at the heart of discussions.

Part II: The political social workers

In order to explore the backgrounds, motivations and struggles of social workers who have chosen political social work as their area of practice, I interviewed three social workers currently practicing at varying levels of political social work. For the purposes of this portion of the paper, political social work will be framed around the roles and activities as defined by Domanski and expanded upon by Humphreys and the Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work, specifically; committee member, organizer, observer, community participant, communicator, advocate, voter, voting bloc, individualist, lobbyist, persuader, collaborator, campaigner, witness, activist, trainer, political social worker and elected official (Domanski, 1998; Humphreys/IAPSW, 2002).

Due to the small size of this group, I do not believe their experiences can be generalized to all social workers, so I conducted the interviews with the goal of learning the ways in which these social workers became involved in politics, how their backgrounds might have influenced that involvement, what struggles they face practicing in the political realm and their suggestions for encouraging more social workers to become involved in political social work. I constructed five open-ended questions to guide the process, but allowed for a great deal of latitude during the interviews for emerging themes or thoughts, hoping to elicit thoughtful reflection from these three individuals. The questions are attached as Appendix B.

As with the first group of three, these three were involved in political social work at varying levels. Although each of these interviewees identified him or herself as a political social worker now, they did not always "do" political social work. Each holds a masters degree in social work and one is currently pursuing a masters degree in public health. While some portion of each of their positions is by definition "political", it is the rest of their work and their conceptualization of the work that I believe truly makes them political social workers. Each of their positions could be held by a non social worker, but it is indeed the experience they bring to the work that makes it political social work.

The Interviews

Social worker A: Program Manager, private, not for profit agency

This social worker's road to political social work began with an undergraduate internship as a behavioral specialist in a hospital setting. This experience combined with volunteer work at an agency serving those

affected by HIV/AIDS, exposure to community organizing while pursuing his masters degree and the guidance of a few mentors in his graduate work helped him to see that despite the four years he had spent doing case management, there was more work he needed to do on a different level.

The first experience he had with political social work came while working at a clinic that served children affected by HIV/AIDS shortly after earning his masters degree in social work. The agency involvement was minimal, but sparked his interest and in the end, was the only thing that kept him in the position. It was at this time, he began to see the difficulties in balancing clinical work and the macro advocacy work. Still, he had a desire to do more, but felt, and interestingly enough still feels, that one cannot effectively do both direct practice and macro level advocacy at the same time. He gradually moved into positions that met more of his need to address social reform and systemic change. Currently, he is involved in community organizing and political social work around the prevention of underage drinking.

During the interview, his motivation was clear: he believes firmly that policy work affects more people and that the betterment of all people should be the ultimate goal of all social workers. He also stated that he gets as much satisfaction from the passage of a piece of legislation he helped craft than he did when a therapy session went well. In fact, he says he often feels better, knowing that the policy will improve the lives of many.

When I asked him about his struggles, he stated that political social work simply isn't difficult for him. In fact, he believes that the title of social worker lends him the "strength of goodness", that in addition to the unique skills social workers bring to the political process, their motivations are rarely questioned. His largest obstacle is the perception of social workers as helpless overburdened souls, one he believes we have brought upon ourselves. He added that the work he does now, namely prevention, is difficult in that those in and outside of the profession still don't grasp that prevention is the answer to heavy caseloads.

Social Worker B: Political Director of a private, not for profit professional association

This social worker first became involved in political social work as a community organizer only after working on a psychiatric unit of a hospital. Although she loved the work, she felt she was too emotionally involved with clients and needed a change. While raising two young children and putting herself through graduate school, she was hired by a local citizen's action group and became their health care organizer. In this position, she worked on Medicare assignment, CONNPACE and other health care initiatives. It was in this position that she discovered the difficulties of working in politics and felt the realities of shrinking resources and conservative politics. It was also here that she was inspired by the work of others around her, drawing on the energy of a few mentors to guide her.

What is most interesting about this social worker's path to her current position is that she went back and forth several times from community organizing to direct service over several years. When I asked her why she did this and how she balanced her desire to organize and affect change while she was doing direct practice, she stated that she had always been involved in politics at some level and the progression from micro to macro and back again was natural for her. She could easily see the need for macro advocacy while she was in direct practice and while doing community organizing, she longed for the meaning of a one on one relationship. The ease at which she has blended the micro and the macro is something from which our profession could learn.

In her current position she is involved in electoral politics, working on the agency's legislative agenda, visiting schools of social work to educate them about the agency's political work and working with the other agency's on various coalitions to try to influence policy that affects all the parties involved. She feels as if this position was the answer to her frustrations with shrinking resources both in her community and direct work.

She now feels strongly that organizing members involved primarily in direct practice is the best way for her to use her experience and position to better the lives of a larger number of people.

This social worker identified one major barrier in her current work, which may or may not be particular to political social work. Since taking her position seven years ago, she believes coalition work has become more difficult, perhaps more politicized, and that interpersonal relations often impede the collaborative efforts on which she works.

Social Worker C: Appointed to a position in state government

This social worker is perhaps the most unlikely candidate for political social work, on the surface. Before deciding on social work as a profession, he majored in theater, tried to make it as an actor, worked at a large financial services firm, worked in retail for ten years and worked at Lincoln Center as an usher! Although he was employed as a teacher's aide in a program for the mentally retarded right out of high school, it would be the first of many positions he would hold before being appointed to his current position.

The turning point in the road to social work came during a trip to Washington, D.C. An agency he had been volunteering with organized a trip to Washington to view the AIDS quilt. He had been volunteering with this agency as a "buddy", one who is matched with an patient in the end stage of AIDS, to offer support. While he was on the mall, walking around the quilt, he ran into a woman, a social worker, who asked him what he did for a living. He told her and also told her about the buddy program and she said, "That's social work." When he returned from his trip, he enrolled in classes and began the pursuit of his masters in social work.

He identified the Code and the lack of involvement of many social workers as his motivation for the highly political position he holds. He feels as if social justice is the heart of our profession and that if you aren't pursuing it, you are part of the problem. He identified one main struggle to his current practice namely, the failure of many to recognize that what he is doing is social work. It is important to note that he does not identify himself by his title or by his party affiliation first. He is a social worker and although that confuses some people and draws criticism from inside and outside the profession, he is adamant in his belief that social workers are uniquely able to pick up on cues and coordinate efforts in any setting. As likes to say, "Information is currency" at the Capital and the more information he can glean from someone, the more he can work the various relationships around him, the more able he will be to help more people. He believes that most social workers believe they are doing enough and suspects that belief coupled with a lack of time and resources is the reason more are not involved.

Discussion

Micro beginnings, Mentors and Community Organizing orientation

Despite the diversity of experiences of the three social workers I interviewed, three themes emerged that appeared to bring these social workers to political social work practice; extensive clinical practice with particularly vulnerable populations, the existence of a mentor to guide them

and formal or informal exposure to community organizing.

I must say that the clinical beginnings of each of these now very political social workers was not only a shock to me, but has helped me cast a new light on the micro side of social work. Each of these social workers dealt with the deinstitutionalization of either the mentally retarded or the mentally ill due to the movement to empty residential facilities in the late 1980's. While I'm not suggesting that one must do this type of work to be inspired to do macro advocacy, each one of them mentioned the frustrations surrounding this work and that it lead them to see that no matter how much work they did with individuals, the larger political climate was dictating their work. Despite their switch to the macro side of the practice, none of the three expressed any disdain for clinical practitioners as is often the case with macro practitioners. In fact, each expressed the exact opposite. While they valued the work they are doing and believe it to be ultimately better for more people, each expressed respect and compassion for their clinical counterparts. The divisive attitude often found among social workers today was simply not present with these three professionals.

Secondly, the existence of a mentor seemed to help each of these social workers find their way to their current work. For one, it was an eight grade teacher, for another a professor and for the other a co-worker. Although each had very different paths, this mentor helped them recognize and capitalize on their strengths as social workers which they ultimately channeled into political social work. While I'm not sure what value this has to the general population of social workers, it was a good reminder for me that individuals have the power to influence others to pursue social justice.

Lastly, the exposure to community organizing seems to have influenced these clinical social workers to make the leap to macro practice and ultimately political social work. The inherent political nature of much of the work they did such as AIDS/HIV activism and lack of resources around deinstitutionalization may have influenced their awareness more so than if their clinical practice was with victims of domestic violence or substance abusers - it is hard to say. I found it quite interesting that despite their beginnings, work experience and interest, each found their way to community work and eventually to the community organizing method at the University of Connecticut.

Although the findings from the available research have shown that the feeling of political efficacy is essential for acting politically (Wolk, 1996), these social workers appeared more focused on the importance of the process rather than the results. While I am certain each believes he or she can have an impact on the political process, none mentioned it as a motivational factor for performing the work. Each spoke of victories and defeats and the "chipping away" at poorly written bad policies. Each acknowledged that clinical work provides more immediate results, but that they had learned to deal with the process of slow change, each holding to the belief that the pursuit of social justice was worth the frustrations of practicing political social work. It appeared to me as though this pursuit takes precedent over their feelings of effectiveness.

Joint Recommendations

Again, we began this project with the thought that we would have two distinct group and that in the end, we would come up with recommendations for practice from their struggles. The groups surprised us again by not only having thoughtful recommendations for involving more social workers in political activities, but by sharing many of those views across the groups.

Schools of Social Work

Two of the six social workers interviewed states that schools of social work have a responsibility to engage all students in political activities as a standard curricular component of advocacy and ethics in social work. As Fisher, et al. explain, "Political Social Work groups similarly minded students and faculty...to live up to the mission of social and economic justice embodied in the history and stated values of the social work profession" (Fisher, 2001). It is for this reason that one of the social workers profiled spends a portion of her time in her current position visiting schools of social work and educating students about the political process and the ways to get involved.

Demystify the Process

Two of the social workers stated that the process needs to be made simple for those social workers who do not practice in the political arena social work. One went so far as to say that it the responsibility of macro social workers to make macro advocacy simple for micro practitioners. (He also believes it is the responsibility of those in direct practice to communicate their needs to those advocating for larger change.) In an effort to demystify the political process, political social workers can continue to share their expertise with their clinical colleagues by providing in-services and hands-on practical guides to getting involved in the political arena. One social worker sees both "sides" of the profession as a tool for the other. Just as one might use a diagnostic tool or a particular strategy in their work, practitioners should use each other to affect change.

Focus on the issues

One social worker believes that social workers would get involved if the issues they are asked to get involved in are winnable and if they matter to them personally or to their clients. He believes issue oriented politics is the way to draw in most practitioners and that once they become involved, they will realize they can do more and that they can be successful. He also suggested introducing social workers and social work students to the non-traditional roles social workers are performing in order to make political social work practice more legitimate and more real.

Recognition

Recognizing that it is difficult to control the climate of private agencies and ensure that staff and clients have opportunities to participate in agency, community, state, and national policy making activities, the profession of social work can look to and applaud those model agencies that already combine direct services and advocacy. Broad public awareness and education campaigns about the political, economic, and structural roots of social problems such as poverty, discrimination, unemployment, homelessness, and other areas of interest might influence the missions, principles, and obligations of agencies to their clients and larger community. If community members demand that their agencies respond to their needs for advocacy and legislative representation, perhaps agencies will be more inclined to promote political action inside and outside of their clinics. Agencies need to know that it is not enough to help the individual only. The bar is being raised by agencies out there and other agencies need to be encouraged to rise to it. To a quote from Saul Alinsky,: "The most unethical of all means is the non-use of any means" (Alinsky, 1967).

Our final thought

We believe what we learned from all this might be the most valuable piece of information for all social workers. Our own preconception about what clinical practitioners are doing (or not doing) were shattered with discovery of the activities the first three were involved in. In turn, the macro practitioners lack of judgmental attitude about their clinical counterparts, the utter respect and sense of compassion was not only unexpected, but inspirational. We know the divide exists in the profession and believe it to be the worst aspect of our profession and something that no one really wants to talk about. We believed that we would find a divided group, a group that was clearly lacking in something the other group possessed and it appears as though nothing could be further from the truth. As unlikely as it may seem, perhaps political social work can be the bridge across the divide. Smashing the perceptions we have of each other can only be a positive step in ensuring that we learn to respect each other, teach each other and ultimately, vow that the pursuit of social justice is not optional, but something we will ultimately have to do together.

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Appendix A

1. In the past, have you ever engaged in any of the below activities either in your personal life or in relation to your social work practice? (Check all that apply.)

- ___ Clinician: provides individual, family, and/or group counseling services.
- ___ Committee member: contributes to, staffs, or chairs agency, local, state, national committee to help shape policy or programs.
- ___ Organizer: organize clients to participate in issues/policies/decision that affect them at the local, state, or national level.
- ___ Observer: observe local, state, national legislative activity on TV, internet, or in person.
- ___ Community participant: affect public policy through participation in groups.
- ___ Communicator: keeps informed about political and social policy issues,

engages in discussions with family, friends, and colleagues.

___ Advocate: advocates for or on behalf of individuals, groups, or organizations with family, coworkers, and decision makers.

___ Voter: votes in elections (primary, local, state, or national).

___ Voting bloc: votes as part of a bloc that makes a difference (i.e., gender gap).

___ Lobbyist: undertakes at least one contact, such as calls or correspondence to government officials on a local, state, or national policy problem.

___ Lobbyist: engages in an association's or organization's lobbying campaigns.

___ Persuader: attempts to persuade others how to vote, persuades decision makers on policy issues.

___ Collaborator: participates in, organizes, or maintains an organization or group for resolutions of government or agency policy problems.

___ Campaigner: works for political party/candidate.

___ Campaigner: attends constituent meetings.

___ Individualist: contact government officials on personal or local political or policy concerns.

___ Witness: attends or testifies at public or congressional hearings.

___ Activist: participates in an organized demonstration in support or protest of government policy.

___ Trainer: shares political expertise with others.

___ Political social worker: runs election campaigns, works in elected official's office.

___ Elected official: runs for or serves in elected office.

2. Currently, do you engage in any of the below activities either in your personal or professional life? (Check all that apply.)

___ Clinician: provides individual, family, and/or group counseling services.

___ Committee member: contributes to, staffs, or chairs agency, local, state, national committee to help shape policy or programs.

___ Organizer: organize clients to participate in issues/policies/decision that affect them at the local, state, or national level.

___ Observer: observe local, state, national legislative activity on TV, internet, or in person.

___ Community participant: affect public policy through participation in groups.

___ Communicator: keeps informed about political and social policy issues, engages in discussions with family, friends, and colleagues.

___ Advocate: advocates for or on behalf of individuals, groups, or organizations with family, coworkers, and decision makers.

___ Voter: votes in elections (primary, local, state, or national).

___ Voting bloc: votes as part of a bloc that makes a difference (i.e., gender gap).

___ Lobbyist: undertakes at least one contact, such as calls or correspondence to government officials on a local, state, or national policy problem.

___ Lobbyist: engages in an association's or organization's lobbying campaigns.

___ Persuader: attempts to persuade others how to vote, persuades decision makers on policy issues.

___ Collaborator: participates in, organizes, or maintains an organization

or group for resolutions of government or agency policy problems.

___ Campaigner: works for political party/candidate.

___ Campaigner: attends constituent meetings.

___ Individualist: contact government officials on personal or local political or policy concerns.

___ Witness: attends or testifies at public or congressional hearings.

___ Activist: participates in an organized demonstration in support or protest of government policy.

___ Trainer: shares political expertise with others.

___ Political social worker: runs election campaigns, works in elected official's office.

___ Elected official: runs for or serves in elected office.

3. Which of the below activities do you feel fall under the guise of "social work"? (Check all that apply.)

___ Clinician: provides individual, family, and/or group counseling services.

___ Committee member: contributes to, staffs, or chairs agency, local, state, national committee to help shape policy or programs.

___ Organizer: organize clients to participate in issues/policies/decision that affect them at the local, state, or national level.

___ Observer: observe local, state, national legislative activity on TV, internet, or in person.

___ Community participant: affect public policy through participation in groups.

___ Communicator: keeps informed about political and social policy issues, engages in discussions with family, friends, and colleagues.

___ Advocate: advocates for or on behalf of individuals, groups, or organizations with family, coworkers, and decision makers.

___ Voter: votes in elections (primary, local, state, or national).

___ Voting bloc: votes as part of a bloc that makes a difference (i.e., gender gap).

___ Lobbyist: undertakes at least one contact, such as calls or correspondence to government officials on a local, state, or national policy problem.

___ Lobbyist: engages in an association's or organization's lobbying campaigns.

___ Persuader: attempts to persuade others how to vote, persuades decision makers on policy issues.

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___ Trainer: shares political expertise with others.

___ Political social worker: runs election campaigns, works in elected official's office.

___ Elected official: runs for or serves in elected office.

4. How do you feel about the political process?

Do you feel it is a worthwhile and effective process? Please explain.

Do you feel you can be effective in the political process? Please explain.

Do you feel political issues directly affect the well-being of your clients?
Please explain.

5. If you could, would you become more politically active (i.e., participate in more of the activities you did not check off above)? (Circle yes or no.)

Yes No

6. If you answered yes to question 5, what do you identify as the barriers that obstruct your political participation? (Circle check all that apply.)

- Time
- Job Responsibilities
- Feel disenfranchised by entire process
- Information
- Intimidation (of the process, building, culture)
- Motivation
- Feelings of futility
- Can better serve clients by providing individual/group counseling
- Other (please explain)

7. If you answered no to question 5, what do you identify as the reasons for your disinterest in political activities? (Check all that apply.)

- Social workers do not belong in the political arena.
- I can be more effective by providing direct services to clients.
- The political process is a waste of time; I won't be heard anyway.
- I became a social worker so that I could work with people, not with bureaucracies.
- Other (please explain.)

8. What would be the most effective interventions in serving your clients?
(Check all that apply.)

- 1:1, group, family counseling
- Advocacy
- Case Management
- Committee Work
- Change policies and programs (i.e., eligibility, access, and services)

___ Other (please explain.)

9. If you have any experiences, questions, or thoughts about political social work that we have not yet addressed, please share them here.

Motivation to become a social worker

Political social work experiences

Recommendations for removing barriers that obstruct political action

Practicing ethical social work and striving towards social justice

Questions 1 - 3 were drawn from the work of Margaret Domanski (Domanski, M. (1998). Prototypes of social work political participation. *Social Work*, 43(2), p. 156-167) and the Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work, at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work (Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work. (2002). *Social workers in politics: Choose your next role (hand-out)*. West Hartford, CT: University of Connecticut School of Social Work, Institute for the Advancement of Political Social Work.).

Appendix B

1. Please tell me a little bit about how you became a social worker, including both your academic and working history
2. When did you first become involved in politics? In political social work? Why do you think it happened when and how it did?
3. Was doing political social work a natural progression for you? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the struggles of "doing" political social work? What is the most difficult aspect for you?
5. How do you think we can encourage more social workers to become involved in politics?