

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

SOCIAL WORKERS AND POLITICAL ACTION:

IF THERE IS A WILL, IS THERE A WAY?

MARLENE M. LUMB

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

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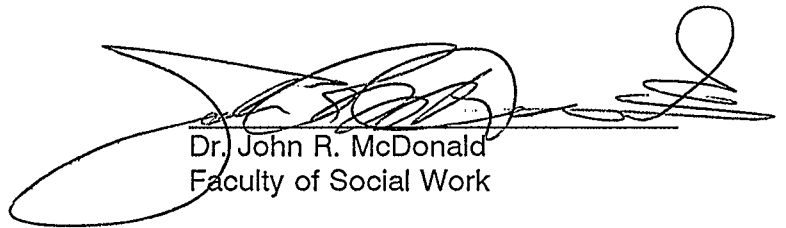


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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled, "Social Workers and Political Action: If There is a Will, Is There a Way?" submitted by Marlene Lumb in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.



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Dr. H.K. "Morris" Baskett
Faculty of Continuing Education

August 24, 1992
Date

ABSTRACT

Historically, social work has always been distinguished from other professions by its commitment to social change as a means to achieve and ensure the rights of the individual.

This piece of research was conducted to determine if social workers do subscribe to this commitment, specifically through participation in political action as a means of achieving social change. The study also gathered information to determine whether the attitude about political action was reflected in activity in the field. Finally, the study sought data on factors that enhanced or inhibited social workers in their ability to be politically active.

Randomly selected members of the Alberta Association of Social Workers were mailed a questionnaire that asked for responses about attitudes, actions and enhancing and inhibiting factors regarding their political action.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the responses to the questionnaire and led to the following conclusions being drawn.

1. Members of the Alberta Association of Social Workers indicated strong attitudinal support for a professional obligation to be politically active. They were even stronger in their belief that the Association had an obligation to be politically active.
2. Males, over the age of 35 years, were the most likely to be politically active. The type of caseload a social worker had was the only other demographic factor that was statistically significant. Those with an urban caseload were more likely than those with rural caseloads to be politically active.

3. Respondents were more positive in their attitude about political activity than they were in their actions.
4. Respondents were more politically active than members of the general public but they were not as active as other professionals.
5. The three factors most seen to encourage social workers to be politically active were: the Code of Ethics, personal life factors and the support of fellow work colleagues.
6. The factors most seen to discourage social workers in being politically active were: confidence in the political process, understanding of the political process, their position in the work setting and their employers' policies and practices.

The implications of these findings are discussed and recommendations for further research are given.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank the members and executive of the Alberta Association of Social Workers for their support and assistance in this project. Several of the respondents added comments of encouragement to their replies and this was greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Dick Ramsay for his help in the completion of this thesis. In particular, I especially appreciated his ability to encourage me in looking at the theoretical base of social work dynamics. Dr. Lynn McDonald also made contributions. Thanks also are extended to my committee members, Dr. John R. McDonald and Dr. H. K. Baskett.

A word of thanks must go to a good friend, Paula Gubbels for the technical assistance she provided. Her affirmations will long be remembered.

Finally, I wish to extend special thanks to my parents, Ruby and Alfred Pahl, sisters and extended family and friends who offered continued support and listened to my many trials and tribulations while completing the thesis. Without their being there for me I would not have begun the work and, therefore, would not have come to the joy and pride of seeing it reach completion.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Kathy and David and me. It is given as evidence to the belief that "where there's a will, there's a way" as well as to the knowledge that we deserve the things we work for.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the political attitudes and advocacy actions of social workers in Alberta, and to consider those factors which inhibit or enhance these attitudes and actions. The data collected by the researcher is analyzed and conclusions are drawn from questions related to theoretical significance, policy development and practice issues. In terms of theoretical significance: Does advocacy have a place in the value base of social work? Do organizational and/or educational models enhance the ability of social workers to fulfil their roles as advocates? In the area of policy development: Do social workers feel it is a part of their role in today's society to influence social policy or does this role lie with other professionals? In terms of practice issues: If advocacy is an appropriate role for social workers, what means are appropriate and ethical?

Concepts of Social Change, Social Action and Advocacy

The study questions will be explored in the context of two related concepts: social change and social action. Social change is seen as macro level change that will impact society and this societal impact will then impact on it's individual members. Social action includes those planned and purposeful actions which are undertaken to effect social change. These types of actions may be of two types: class actions (macro advocacy) or case actions (case advocacy). Advocacy that takes place on behalf of the individual is recognized as case advocacy. Generally, this type of advocacy would not initiate social change on a large scale. It is class advocacy that this

study will be focusing on, that is, advocacy actions that are intended to effect change for groups of people.

Historically, social work has always been distinguished from other professions by its' commitment to social change as a means to achieve and ensure the rights of the individual. Gummer writes that the "one function of social work that has the strongest claim to legitimacy in the public domain is the care of the dependent, deprived and demoralized citizens of the society" (Gummer, 1979, p.19). Indeed, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (C.A.S.W.) has embellished this function by making the following statement in its Code of Ethics of 1983:

The functions of social work include helping people to develop individual and collective social problem-solving skills, enhancing self-determination and the adaptive and developmental capacities of people: advocating, promoting and acting to obtain a socially just distribution of societal resources and facilitating connections between people and their societal resources. (Ramsay, (Ed.) 1983, p.2).

The meaning of social change has been addressed by many authors over the years. Social change and social action go hand in hand. As conceptualized by Khinduka and Coughlin (1975),

social action is a strategy of social change, the locus of the intervention being some unit at the macro or intermediate level: it is a strategy neither of behavior change at the individual or group level nor of revolution. Planned social action always involves an intelligent diagnosis and use of power in organization and community change. (Khinduka & Coughlin, 1975, p.12).

This study concerns itself with this level of social change and class advocacy social action as it is used to achieve social change. Social change includes three concepts according to Khinduka and Coughlin. These are (a) the scope of change,

(b) the use of power in effecting and resisting change, and (c) the change strategies employed. Accepting the premise that social change will be necessary if we are to meet the needs created by our ever-changing society, the concepts of scope of change and change strategies employed become secondary to the concept of use of power. The extent of power will influence the two aforementioned concepts.

Concept of Power

David Woodsworth (1977) suggests that power consists of possessing and controlling social and physical resources as well as controlling decision-making processes regarding the rules and means of distributing these resources. Holding this concept of power in mind, further consideration is given to the two theoretical spectrums of power within a capitalist society.

Within a capitalist society, power is viewed in two spectrums by most theorists. One view holds that power is divided among many diversified interest groups and is pluralistic in nature. The second view contends that pluralism does not exist in fact, but only in appearance. The argument is given that in fact, society is elitist and in the control of a few (Carniol & Woodsworth, 1976; Khinduka & Coughlin, 1975).

David Woodsworth delineates three issues which every society, whether pluralist or elitist must resolve. These simply put are to (a) determine what resources are available, (b) decide who needs what portion of the resources, and (c) decide how to deliver these portions to those who need them. While simple in appearance, these issues have no simple answers. Beyond the absolute necessities for survival, decisions around what is needed are manipulated by cultural and social beliefs and by political and economical conditions.

It would seem a valid step in logic to assume that those who make these decisions are those who hold considerable power. If one plans to effect change, he/she must already have this power or actively seek to redistribute power in his/her favor. The assumption that a redistribution of power will be necessary to effect a redistribution of resources is also logical. Thus change strategies to be employed are consciously chosen depending on who holds power.

The Role of Social Work

Much has been written to support the assumption that social work serves those who, by virtue of their position in society, have no voice and no power. Statistical information collected by Drover (1981), Lithwick (1971), Porter (1965), Young (1981) and others shows that economic power in the United States and Canada is held by a very small percentage of the population. As these studies span several years, a pattern of entrenchment of the wealthy elite in both countries can be seen. It would seem unlikely that the few who hold this economic power would willingly give it up. It can be expected they will protect their economic power. As governments are charged with distributing resources, one can clearly see it is in the interests of the economically powerful to be active in influencing the politically powerful.

Marchak (1975) studied various ideological perspectives as they related to the Canadian scene. In this study, the relationship between politics and the economy is often raised. Kuusisto and Williams (1981), John Porter (1965) and the Spicer Commission (1991) provide further Canadian data that tends to support the notion that politics and the economy go hand in hand. In Canada, neither economic or

political power is seen to be distributed justly. It behooves the social work profession then to actively seek a redistribution in the political realm to effect just redistribution in the economic realm. Does the profession meet this challenge?

As the current economic trend in Canada continues to limit resources available to various human service programs, the ethics and means of meeting the challenge issued become more and more intense. At the same time, it becomes more and more obvious that the challenge must be met if social work is to remain a legitimate field of practice. This poses the following questions:

1. Does the practice of social work continue to retain the same value base regarding social change and advocacy now as may have been historically rooted in the profession?
2. Can a theoretical framework be adapted that will include social work's heuristic value base while still offering practical models of practice (technologies) that will enable social workers to meet client needs?

Chapter 2 of this study reviews current literature pertinent to the questions posed. Chapter 3 discusses various models of social service management as they pertain to the delivery of services to clients as well as how they accommodate the social work profession. The conceptual framework that informs this study is outlined in this chapter as well. Chapter 4 asks the research questions and outlines the methodology used in the research. Chapters 5 and 6 will deal with the data analysis of the results collected for the study. Finally, Chapter 7 will draw conclusions from the research and discuss implications of the study. Areas for further research will also be suggested.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The history of social work has been documented by many authors in the past seventy years. A review of this documentation leaves the reader with a clear picture of a profession that seems governed by two dichotomies. Paul Halmos aptly refers to ". . . the predicament of those who, in trying to better the condition of man, are caught between deep and private needs on the one hand and grave public demands on the other hand" (Halmos, 1978, p. 12). He labels these needs and demands the "personal" and the "political." Who does social work serve and what means of service should be used? Does social work seek/promote/advocate social change at the individual or societal level on behalf of individual clients or large categories of sufferers? Over the years of development of social work as a profession (or semi-profession as some would believe), the chasm between these two streams has generated a great deal of writing. It is the political stream that is highlighted in this research.

The Political Role of Social Work

Daniel Thursz (1966) wrote of three underlying views regarding social action (the political) by social workers. First, he emphasized that the profession could not be preoccupied with status and acquiring professional attributes such as ownership of technology and defining a distinct knowledge base. Social action had to be more than just a philosophical stance. (Others such as Gummer (1979) and Patti (1984) have agreed with this view). Second, social work education was designed to promote concepts of conflict that eroded the value of community organization and social

action. Thursz writes that caseworkers were asked to value consensus, good will and tolerance and to avoid confrontations. Third, Thursz states that social work cannot be wholly scientific: "It is at best a combination of art and science, based on scientific data and method — but based also on value commitment and value judgments" (Thursz, 1966, p. 14). Value judgments make up a part of social work while science is to be value free. Thursz did not want social workers to fear making decisions because they could not be definitively logical. As social workers have come to know in recent times, more and more emphasis has been placed on scientific "accountability" in program planning and client service. In the profession's fervor to prove itself accountable it would do well for us to remember Thursz's comments and not be afraid to admit that social work is not wholly scientific..

Predicting the Future of Social Work

Having referred to professional accountability, the researcher is reminded of the article written by Lindenfield in 1976. At that time, Lindenfield, Albert and Barnes were asked by the University of Toronto to present their views on where social work would be in 1990. Lindenfield wrote that the future of social work depended on workers helping clients in their environment at that particular moment in time. She feared social work had become too tied to psychoanalytic theory and lost ground on its advocacy role. She felt that social work could easily be assumed by other professions if this trend continued and noted that social workers had become therapists while nurses were now practitioners. It would seem that Dr. Lindenfield felt that losing the advocacy role and helping the client in his environment in the present

would mean social work had lost its original value base and, therefore, its original claim to legitimacy.

Albert wrote that social work would have to have an increasing awareness of what is happening in society and of the consequences of political and economic policies. Social workers must acknowledge that social work serves a political purpose and gear to social change in the future. Albert further advised that workers in 1990 must be aware of inequality and the nature of power.

John Barnes carried the most direct message for social workers in 1990. He wrote that social work would be dead. He felt social work was not creative and did not have its own knowledge base. Social policy and social action had been given over to others who understood resource allocation problems and the delivery of services. Because of social work's failure to gain this knowledge, the profession would die.

Professionalism and Social Work

Barnes's comments regarding the "giving over" of social action has become more evident in recent years. Again, much documentation exists to show that as economic conditions changed in the early seventies, social agencies and social programs were purposively being headed by graduates of business administration programs — not social workers (Gummer, 1979, 1988; Keys and Cupaiuolo, 1987; Patti, 1984). As clinical expertise had become a focus of the profession for some while, those who were in control of financing such programs began to feel social workers were not capable of running efficient, accountable services. Those with specific training in organizational structure and function were sought to add this knowledge to social services for the sake of efficiency. Advertisements for positions called for M.B.A.

graduates or those with similar degrees. Clinical positions were also advertised as being open to those with social work or related degrees. Recent talks between the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and the government of Alberta raised this specific issue and it was made clear that as an employer, the government did not feel that social workers had skills that could be considered exclusive to the profession. Therefore, those with related degrees and similar training would continue to be considered for social work positions.

Rino Patti (1984) is one of many who acknowledges that as economic constraints increased in the eighties, social workers were ill equipped to take the lead in managing services designed to meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. Many in the field not only agreed with the fact that they lacked skills in this area but went on to suggest that such skills were beneath the high standards and values to which social work ascribes. The political, to some in the social work profession, is not a role that social workers should fill. However, the researcher would agree, as Barnes and Lindenfield have noted, that having others take on social work tasks to get a job done does lead to a loss of legitimacy for the profession. If social workers choose to change their niche in society, they must be mindful of having others fill the one they leave empty. If they choose to reclaim or assert themselves in the niche they have historically held, how will they go about doing so?

Meeting the Challenge

Social work has a strong commitment to mediating between the individual and his environment. Albert (1983) writes that there are many ways for social work to meet this historical commitment and discusses three of them. Social workers can play a

part in bridging the gap between agency decisions and those affected by these decisions. Social workers can mediate between individuals and their social context, i.e., intervene in the political process. And finally, social workers can help correct defects in some of the law's functional limitations. Such work involves making governmental decision-making processes available for public scrutiny. Albert feels this is the niche social work must fill.

In 1986, Joe Schriver also wrote of the need for social work to be involved in the political process. He was reviewing the work done by Harry Lurie in the 1920s-1950s. He wrote that Lurie found it was not sufficient for social workers to follow or support social change efforts. He was clear in his belief that workers needed to be actively involved in political action and that a purposeful education was required to be an effective political person. Schriver cited several factors that Lurie suggested had a causal effect on social workers not being political. These included such things as a fundamental conservatism in social work, a lack of skill, poor organization of the profession, a lack of group discipline among social workers, and the nature of social work education.

Mathews (1982) agreed with Lurie's comments to some extent. Mathews felt social workers may be seen as being politically active but that they were ineffective due lack of unity as a group in any purpose.

Mathews is not the only writer who feels that social work does have a political drive. Brager (1968) feels political behavior is inevitable. He suggests that social workers come to acknowledge this activity and practice a repertoire of "artful" means of influencing politics. Again, the attitude that political activity is deceitful or uncomely to the professional is not acceptable or realistic to Brager. Political action is present,

useful and a role that social workers should willingly assume. Gummer (1988), Patti (1984), and Rossi (1961) are other authors who support the view that political action is one of the most important roles a social worker can fulfil. All recommend that social workers develop skills in this area so they can be effective in achieving social change to the benefit of their clients. Since politics is the name of the game, social workers should learn the rules in order to play-particularly if they are to play to win. Social change will be the end product of social workers being involved in class advocacy through the use of social action strategies.

A Review of Previous Studies

Some researchers have addressed the issue of learning the rules. Unlike the authors researching clinical practices, those researching social action means and techniques have done few empirical studies which would support their views. As a result, much of the literature available appears to be speculative, unsubstantiated opinion. This type of work can often be easily dismissed then as "one man's opinion." Again, the most concrete look at political action by social workers has been done in the form of historical reviews of various social movements and linking them to the development of social work processes and methodology. It is time to go to the social worker directly and solicit his/her opinion in the here and now regarding the social change role (as measured by his/her use of political action as a strategy) that social work has in society.

The Woodward and Roper study.

Julian Woodward and Elmo Roper (1950) published the results of their research on the political activity of American citizens. In gathering their information,

Woodward and Roper developed the Political Activity Index. This questionnaire and scale attempted to examine the degree of political activity of individuals and the differences between the politically active and the politically "inert" citizen. Their questionnaire gathered public responses in five channels of possible influence on government officials. These channels included voting, discussing politics with others, belonging to organizations that take a stand on public issues, writing public officials and working for or financially supporting a political candidate or party. Various responses were assigned a score on the index so that an "activity rating" could be given for each respondent based on his own particular total score in relation to the total score possible. The questionnaire was given to 8000 adults chosen by random in the United States.

Results of the Woodward and Roper study led to the conclusion that only 10 percent of the population were politically very active while 73 percent were politically "inert." In a democratic society, this meant that a very few were actively following the routine means of affecting the direction of their government. Most were doing no more than exercising their right to vote. The study showed that those who were considered more politically active were likely to be better educated and better off economically.

Woodward and Roper considered some other uses for the Political Activity Index they had established. It was felt the Index could be used to compare different groups in populations, to measure progress in citizen education, to study relationships between political activity and information, to segregate target groups of people who are more likely to be interested in public issues and to provide a test group so that opinion formation processes could be studied. Indeed, some of the proposed uses of the Index would be of great interest to those who wish to increase their repertoire of

social planning strategies. The researcher was not able to locate studies that had in fact been done using the Index in any way except to compare different groups in the general population.

The James Wolk study.

One such study that did use Woodward and Ropers' Index to compare groups was completed by Wolk (1982). He used the Index to specifically study the question, "Are social workers politically active?" Wolk felt the original questionnaire did not include some forms of behavior that could be indicators of political activity and he therefore modified the instrument to address these concerns. His study did include one measure of political activity beyond voting, "Did social workers testify before any governmental committees regarding a bill under consideration?" Wolk sent the questionnaire to 20 percent of the Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers in the United States. Therefore, a total of 470 social workers were included in his research.

Wolk's research showed social workers were more politically active as a group than were average citizens. Forty-three percent of the workers were considered to be politically active and 23 percent were considered very active. The conclusion could not be made that social workers political activity was influential in legislation. However, the study showed that social workers did significantly use traditional political avenues. Wolk concluded that such authors as Ribcoff (1962), Cohen (1966), Wade (1966) and others who had written that social workers were not active politically had done so without empirical evidence. No broad measure of non-traditional political activity (ie., boycotts, sit-ins, etc.) was made.

Wolk did profile which social workers were likely to be politically active. Those workers were likely to be older (over 45 years) with more education, e.g., workers holding doctoral degrees were more active than those holding bachelor degrees. Length of practice did not appear to have a conclusive affect on the degree of political activity of the worker, while the level of salary earned by the social worker did. Those earning more money tended to be more politically active. This conclusion was also found by Woodward and Roper in their study of the general public. Some comparisons of political activity by field of practice were also made in Wolk's research. It was shown that those in community organization, administration and teaching were more active than those in direct service, ie., mental health, corrections, etc.

The Bertram Dyck study.

No Canadian studies were found that used the Political Activity Index to compare selected groups with the general population. However, a study by Dyck (1972) of 180 social workers in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba used his own questionnaire to study social workers and their political involvement. Dyck randomly selected his sample population from the membership lists of the Canadian Association of Social Workers. From the data collected, Dyck was able to draw some conclusions regarding social worker attitudes and political actions. The data analysis showed that wide discrepancies existed between what workers thought should be done politically (attitudes) and what they actually did (actions).

In fact, the results of Dyck's work regarding social worker actions in politics were so low that no statistically valid correlations could not be made between actions and attitudes. Many in the study reported strong attitudinal support for political action by social workers. At the same time, many reported that the political action they had

engaged in was done as a citizen's commitment — not a professional one. Respondents also indicated that attitudinally, they supported the use of partisan and non-partisan political action. By the limited actions reported however, it was evidenced that workers tended to use the traditional means of influencing political decisions.

In summary, social workers in Dyck's study felt political involvement was their responsibility, but they were not meeting this responsibility because of caseload commitments, personal commitments that were too time consuming, the dilemma of helping the individual or the group, disillusionment with the political process, and the lack of knowledge and skill in the political arena.

It should also be noted that some respondents were quite clear in indicating that they felt social workers had no business being involved in politics. Some felt this way because they did not believe social workers operated from a common philosophical base and therefore could not support any common cause as a group. Others felt such action undermines basic social work values. It was also observed that as many workers are, in fact, government employees, their position is a political one and their daily work was influencing government policy, so no other action was needed.

Dyck also profiled those workers who were more likely to be politically active. He concluded that males employed in private agencies were more likely to be active in politics. Dyck did caution that these indicators emerged only in studying attitudes — not the actions of workers responding to the questionnaire.

Dyck studied one further dimension of social workers involvement in political activity that no other study had considered. He asked respondents to indicate factors which impeded and which encouraged their political involvement. Those factors cited as encouraging political action included the Code of Ethics of the profession, the

political process (including the factors of familiarity with the process, feelings on it's effectiveness and feelings on the ethics used in politics) and the orientation of the respondents' school of social work. The reader is reminded that responses in this area were very low.

Factors that were seen to impede political activity by the respondents in Dyck's study included support by the professional association, conditions of employment (including work demands, organizational policies and practices and position in the organization), the political process (as described in the preceding paragraph) and factors in the respondents' personal life.

Dyck concluded that it would be difficult to not be pessimistic when faced with the results of his study. Social workers in the Western Canadian provinces at the time were clearly not having influence on social policy through government. It appeared social workers were confused about how their professional code of ethics related to their roles in practice. It was Dyck's recommendation that the professional association should restate its goals, ethics and professional claims to have them accurately reflect the behavior of their members, or actively work to have members behavior brought into line with the stated ethics. This could possibly be done by influencing schools of social work to reflect the ethics and goals of social work in their teaching as well as impacting organizations in the attempt to have them understand the role of social workers in social action. The data gathered was one of the first studies completed that implied that social work had moved away in practice if not in principle from one of it's basic claims to legitimacy. However, as no base-line data is available to consider, one must be cognizant of the possibility that social workers attitudes and actions regarding political activity may never have been congruent.

The Frederico and Puckett study.

The most recent study of social workers and political action was completed in 1988 by Margarita Frederico and T.C.Puckett. The research completed in Australia surveyed 420 social workers. Again, the Woodward and Roper Political Activity Index was modified to meet some of the deficiencies noted by Wolk in his study. Specific questions were added to look at non-traditional means of political activity.

The data gathered in Australia allowed Frederico and Puckett to profile those social workers who were likely to be politically active. In this case, these workers were younger (in contrast to Wolk's findings), had less than five years work experience in social work, and worked for voluntary organizations or were in the hospital and mental health field. It should be noted that those in government agencies and supervisors were the least likely to be politically active while those in research and community workers, eg., planners and those social workers in trade unions were the most active. There was not a statistically significant difference between the groups however.

Both the study done by Wolk and the one done by Frederico and Puckett indicated that social workers were more politically active than the general public. Twenty-three and 24 percent of the respondents respectively were politically active in these studies compared to an average of 10 percent in the general population. When compared to other professionals however this percentage differences is less impressive. Approximately 31 percent of all professionals can be said to be politically active according to the Woodward and Roper study and others (Milbrath, 1965; Aitken, 1982). Generally, higher education among professionals is seen to be the main factor in increased political activity. This increase in education also accounts for little or no discrepancies between male and female activity levels as more and more women

complete higher education. It should be noted that no measure of whether or not the political activity is done as a citizen responsibility or a professional one was included in the Frederico and Puckett research.

What Frederico and Puckett did find most significant in the results of their work was the "... reaffirmation of the polarization of opinion about social work's political responsibilities. Whilst two-thirds of the respondents seemed to support the activist approach one-third did not" (Frederico & Puckett, 1988, p. 228). This is one of the same findings that Dyck had made in his research. Like Dyck, Frederico and Puckett also made comment on what should be done about this polarization: "The social work profession should make a serious attempt to resolve the philosophical and ethical components of the debate, with the aim of developing a coherent approach to this issue " (p. 228). They also suggest that an alternate approach would be for the profession to acknowledge this division and specifically educate those workers in social action who chose this stream of social work, while others be educated to be purely clinical workers with no written expectation that they will be social activists on a broad community scale.

The current study.

The limited empirical data available to date regarding social action by social workers and their opinion of what action should be done, how it is to be done and by whom, led to the current study. Employed as a front-line social worker, the researcher has seen other workers and agency administrators come, once again, to consider political activity to be necessary in helping groups of clients have their needs met. Because economic conditions have created difficult times for many who previously were not affected by a lack of resources, the need for more organized action to

access resources is also seen to be important. Social workers can be the resource needed to form the coalitions of groups necessary to influence political decisions.

Having witnessed this shift in attitude by those the researcher has worked with, the researcher chose to study the area of political action further. After completing the literature review, the researcher felt it necessary to contribute to our understanding of political action by social workers in the Canadian setting. By using the Political Activity Index, base line data will be made available to gain a clear picture of where Canadian social workers stand in comparison to professional colleagues in the United States and Australia. The researcher hopes to confirm her observation that social workers do feel that political action is a means of advocating on behalf of groups of clients. She also chose to try to gain some beginning understanding of what factors inhibited or enhanced social workers involvement in political action. If the need to be politically active is in fact recognized by social workers, what conditions will help them meet this need on behalf of their clients and society in general? Has any change occurred since the time of Dyck's study?

Summary

In summary then, by reviewing pertinent literature on the topic of social workers and political action, the researcher was left with unanswered questions and an apparent lack of data that would help her answer these questions. The literature helped her determine what means she could use to seek the information she needed. The researcher will describe for the reader the conceptual framework that aided in the study undertaken here. Various models of social service management are summarized in the following chapter as well. Such a study of management models helped the

researcher in conceptualizing what, how and why social workers reported the attitudes and actions they did in the study. The researcher feels that the system within which a social worker performs his tasks does in fact frame the skills he uses. The system may or may not frame his attitudes.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework chosen to inform this study is that of political economy developed for social work by such authors as Zald (1970), Hasenfeld (1983) and Gummer (1979, 1980). Political action is deemed to be an effective means of advocating within the political economy framework. Some discussion of other frameworks is warranted to establish the rationale for choosing the political economy model.

Dimensions of Social Action

Chapter 2 reviewed the writings of some who felt that a polarization of opinion on political responsibilities of social workers existed, which created confusion for social workers as a group. This polarization has led to a general classification of theoretical thought into two schools: radical social work and conservative social work. Patricia Tulloch (1983) summarizes the conservative school as being somewhat negligent in considering the structural causes of oppression and the barriers to reform. Radical theorists, she writes, place too much emphasis on these structures and barriers, and this results in neglecting the possibilities of moderation, persuasion and consensus.

Tulloch suggests there are two factors which will influence social workers in their choice to ascribe to either a radical or conservative form of social action. These factors are their education and/or work environment, and their own moral or political preferences. Tulloch says social workers will choose theories that will legitimate their

own preferences. While this thesis will not address the theories of radical or conservative social work, it is important that the reader be aware of both schools of thought. It is of great importance that adherents of both schools not ignore or bypass the expectations of the poor or oppressed while advocating from their particular theoretical framework.

Description of Theoretical Concepts

Returning to the discussion of conceptual frameworks then, the study of the delivery of social services to meet the needs of society is best achieved by looking at specific organizational models. Etzioni (1969) has written that cultural, economic and political power are all to be considered in looking at organizations. Historically, studies have shown that specific forms of organizations and delivery systems have developed that reflect the cultural, economic and political forces in vogue with the society of the day Hasenfeld (1983), Perrow (1979), Scott (1987), and Weiner (1982). Major theoretical frameworks have been offered which explain how and why specific forms of human service organizations have evolved.

The bureaucratic model.

Max Weber (1947) advanced the idea that society is dominated by a power relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The power of the ruler is seen to be legitimate and the ruler is granted formal authority through written policy. As a result of this legal-rational authority, bureaucracy became a framework used by many organizations in society. The adherence to specific criteria is an attribute of bureaucracies. The criteria led to a system of control which is based on rationality. This framework does not allow for flexibility, sensitivity, variety or quick response. Rules are

rigid. While such organizational structure does enhance effectiveness, a bureaucracy does not serve well to meet nonroutine or nonuniform tasks. These tasks typically make up the work of human service organizations. Therefore, the controls set by a bureaucracy may meet the need of efficient delivery of service but the concentration of power does not allow for many to have a say in the decision-making process and so the clients of services in a bureaucratic model often have little influence over the type of service they receive. The bureaucracy becomes powerful in itself and does not easily yield to outside influence. This inequitable balance of power allows the organization to accumulate resources as it can prove itself to distribute them efficiently (if not fairly).

Scientific management.

Contrasting with the bureaucratic notion of a clear hierarchy of power, Taylor's (1947) theory of scientific management argues that cooperation between line staff and managers is essential to optimize outputs. This cooperation is to be developed through a scientific approach. Means and methods are to be carefully examined so that the best alternatives available can be utilized. Objectives and goals must be clear. Measures of achievement must be in place and they must be quantifiable. The organization must utilize the best alternatives based on the measures taken.

The difficulty with the scientific management approach is that it does not accommodate for the fact that ethical and moral decisions must be made by human service organizations. These kinds of decisions cannot always be based on facts alone. Without this identified rationality or factual basis, input is not legitimized. This lack of legitimacy lessens the organization's power and influence. This also limits the services that can be offered to clients.

Human relations model.

From the belief that individuals seek to reach self-actualization and in so doing would be able to be creative, the human relations model of organizational structure by Mayo (1945) gained popularity.

If staff were able to have their needs met, they would better be able to meet the organizational needs and use their imaginative and creative strength to enhance the goals of the work place. It would seem this model of organization is built to meet staff needs first with the belief that staff would then be better equipped to meet client needs. The difficulty with such a belief is that it minimizes the reality that there is a clear role differentiation between staff and clients. While social work is dependent on the relationship between the worker and client, the role of each is very distinct. Further, this role differentiation also exists among staff of human service organizations. Human relations theory does not account for the influence of political processes either internal or external to the organization (Hasenfeld, 1983). Political processes do impact on relationships.

Because human relations theory also fails to account for the influence of internal and external economic processes, it is not an effective framework for planning service delivery or policy making (Hasenfeld, 1983). Client needs become secondary to organizational perpetuation. Finally, the theory does not fully consider the effects of instrumental needs of the organization, eg., resource acquisition, wages, recessions, etc. Psycho-social needs of staff are given too much attention.

Herbert Simon (1979) attempted to rectify the problems of human relations theory and those of bureaucracies to create a theoretical framework that would be rational and yet give consideration to psycho-social needs of staff. His

decision-making theory failed to acknowledge environmental constraints in making choices, however.

Contingency theory.

Contingency theory as advanced by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) focused on the proposition that environmental demands would affect the way an organization was structured in terms of work units as well as affecting the types of technologies an organization would use in meeting its goals. The environment that an organization exists in can be defined as being stable or unstable. In a stable environment, the organization will best function with standardized rules and minimal functional units. In an unstable environment, the organization will require more functional units to meet the many demands being placed on the organization. Rules will need to be less standardized and decision-making will be more decentralized so responses to the environment can be more immediate and effective.

The contingency theory offers guidelines for organizational design that acknowledge the concept of environmental impact. Operationalizing the concepts of stable and unstable environments is extremely difficult however. The choice of organizational structure and use of technologies is also affected by the resources available, and existing organizational values and goals. These factors are not given consideration in contingency theory leaving a simplistic representation of organizational design as it relates to the environment.

Political economy theory.

The political economy framework, as developed for the field of social work by Zald and Wamsley (1976) addresses six critical areas in the provision of social services to clients. First, the theory allows organizations to be viewed as a whole as

well as consideration being given to their parts and processes. Second, the relationship between the environment and the organization is addressed. Third, methods of decision-making about resource allocation and niche to be occupied are studied. Fourth, the theory also looks at how service technologies used by the organization are chosen and defined. Fifth, the process by which the organization experiences change is addressed by the theory and, sixth, the theory looks at clients and their relationship to the delivery system.

The basic premise of political economy theory is that the use of power, goals of those in power, access to resources, means of production, and systems of exchange interplay to determine the service that is ultimately delivered. This interplay occurs within and without the organization. "Political" refers to forces of power and legitimation and the means by which they are acquired by the organization and distributed. Goals and tasks of the organization are defined and controlled by the elite who hold power. The "political" therefore encompasses both power and values. "Economic" refers to the means by which resources needed by the organization are acquired, processed, and distributed in and by the organization (Wamsley & Zald, 1976). The "economic" therefore, also consists of the exchange of resources. The goals of those in power can be influenced by environmental and internal forces which, in or of themselves, may not have substantial power overall, but which do hold some power over a particular issue or resource. Coalitions of these forces can be very influential. Exchanges among coalitions impact outcomes. Competition between various interest groups also impact outcomes. All of this (ie., competition, coalitions and exchanges) contribute to what Zald (1970a) refers to as the organizational constitution.

The organizational constitution changes as power relationships change. Power changes are based on access to resources and a group's ability to control these resources. The ability to have control comes from the group's ability to gain legitimacy from other groups. Thus, both political and economic forces can be seen to shape the structure and goals of the organization. As various coalitions within and without the organization strengthen their economic base, their political base is also strengthened and vice versa. As coalitions gain this strength, so too does the organization as a whole. The organization will continue to benefit from a solid political and economic base so long as it continues to respond to the political and economic environments that influence its constitution.

Internally, the organizational constitution is also shaped by political and economic forces. Choice of service technologies, division of labour and centrality of staff are all affected by who holds power and who can bring resources and power into the organization. Those work units which possess this power will hold more legitimate influence over the decision-making processes within the organization. Again, it must be remembered that this internal power will be affected by the external environment as well. Competition within and without the organization occurs depending on the scarcity of resources and the congruency of values that the various organizational constituent members hold.

Political economy theory also looks at the role of clients. If clients have either political or economic resources, they can influence the organization's decisions regarding service delivery. If clients do not have these resources or power, they may still effect decisions by having those who do hold these resources advocate on their

behalf. The researcher contends that this is the role of the social worker as their clients do not typically hold political or economic strength.

To summarize, political economy theory explains the impact of the environment on an organization's framework, goals and processes. It accounts for client impact on service delivery. Resource allocation is understood in both input and output processes. Through-put processes are seen as being environmentally and organizationally influenced as well. It is a holistic theory that lends itself well to the dynamic profession of social work.

Specifically for the purposes of this study then, the political economy framework describes certain variables that are of interest to the researcher. If social workers value advocacy as a criteria of their profession, then by what means do they meet this criteria of social work? If they are not meeting this criteria, what factors are in place that prevent them from doing so? What factors encourage social workers to meet this criteria?

The political economy framework includes the concept of political power as a significant variable in how an organization could be designed to meet the needs of the clients it serves and the staff who deliver that service. This study begins to gather information that will enable the researcher to evaluate if social workers do include the manipulation of political power in their repertoire of strategies to meet client needs. Factors in the social workers' work environment and from his/her educational background that may or may not influence his/her use of political power are also studied.

The researcher would like to clarify that this study pertains to class advocacy as opposed to case advocacy. The distinction between the two was discussed in Chapter 1 but it is important that the reader keep this distinction in his forethought as he continues to follow this study.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher will state the research questions and define the concept of political action that was drawn from the literature. The basic study design will then be described, including a discussion about the design of the survey instrument, the target population and the sample. The procedures for collecting data and completing the data analysis will be outlined. Finally, the study's limitations and ethical considerations will be described.

Having reviewed four specific studies in Chapter 2, ie., Woodward and Roper, 1950; Dyck, 1972; Wolk, 1982; and Frederico and Puckett, 1987, it became apparent that a definition of political action was needed that was not too limiting in scope. The major criticism of the Political Activity Index was the limitation of its definition of what activities could be considered political. The revisions to this Index, made by Wolk and Frederico and Puckett, attempted to address this criticism. It is important that the reader have a clear idea of what this researcher accepts as the definition of political action.

Defining Political Action

For this study, the definition of political action by Patti (1983) is used, that is, ". . . political action consists of activities intended to advance information and preferences so that they are reflected in how, when and to whom resources are allocated" (Patti, 1983, p. 96). This definition allows for an individual to classify his actions as political if he/she is purposely engaged in some activity with the intent that the activity

would result in influencing public policy decisions. Comment on how this concept of political action influenced the design of the questionnaire used in this study will be made later in this chapter.

Research Questions

To begin then, it will be useful to state the research questions so that they can be clearly linked to the methodology used in the research. These are:

1. Do Alberta Association of Social Workers (A.A.S.W.) members express support for the principle that political action is a strategy that should be a part of the social worker's repertoire of techniques used in meeting groups of clients needs?
2. Will there will be a difference between members' attitudes about political activity and their involvement in political activity?
3. Do sociodemographic factors (age, gender, level of education), professional factors (years of experience, affiliation), and organizational factors (auspices of employment, position in the place of employment) influence the attitudes of social workers regarding political action?
4. Do sociodemographic factors, professional factors, and organizational factors, as given above, influence the actions of social workers regarding political action?
5. What factors will members of the A.A.S.W. identify as influencing them in their involvement in political action?

Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional survey to collect information from A.A.S.W. members. The cross-sectional survey collects data at a specific point in time from a

sample selected to describe some larger population at that time. In this survey, data has been collected about Alberta social workers' attitudes and actions regarding political activity. The survey also collected data regarding factors that respondents considered to be encouraging, discouraging or ineffective in contributing to their political attitudes and actions.

A mailed survey questionnaire was used so that a broad, sociodemographic spectrum of social workers could be included in the study. Following approval for the study by the University of Calgary's Ethics Committee, the A.A.S.W. was approached regarding access to their membership mailing list (see Appendix A). Permission for the researcher to have access to this list was granted at a regular meeting of the A.A.S.W. executive. The questionnaire was sent along with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the study and the respondent's right to confidentiality or non-participation (the letter and questionnaire are found in Appendix B). A stamped, return envelope was also included for the respondent's convenience. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a reminder letter, a second copy of the questionnaire and an addressed, return envelope were sent to all social workers selected for the study (see Appendix C).

The researcher chose to set the time limit of one month after the second mailing of the questionnaire as the time in which returned questionnaires would be included in the data analysis. Questionnaires received after that time were excluded from the results. Only one questionnaire was, in fact, received after this date.

The Population and Sample

The population for this study was the membership of the Alberta Association of Social Workers. Individuals can apply to the Association to become members and are granted membership based on their educational or experiential qualifications as assessed by the Association. Approval of the individual's qualifications indicates he/she has demonstrated a level of competency in the field of social work and ethical adherence to the value base of social work. The researcher is aware that many social workers in the province of Alberta are not members of the Association. However, it was not possible to access those who are not members in any systematic fashion. Therefore, it was not possible to include non-members in the study.

A random sample of 150 social workers with Alberta addresses were included in the sample drawn from the A.A.S.W.'s computer system. This number represented ten percent of the population of the A.A.S.W. at the time the sample was drawn. This percentage is considered sufficiently large enough so that sampling errors can be controlled (Grinnell, 1981).

Data Collection

As indicated earlier, the nature of the study necessitated collecting data from a broad spectrum of a large population. A mailed survey instrument that could be self administered was therefore the best means available to the researcher to collect data. As this method generally is seen to typically elicit low rates of responses, steps were taken to ensure as high a response rate as possible. The survey instrument was purposively printed on one sheet of bright, yellow paper so that it would appear to be

simple and quick to complete and could be easily located by its color (Dillman, 1978, Grinnell, 1981).

From the completion of a review of the pertinent literature, the questionnaire was drawn up based on the work of previous researchers and including some modifications specific to this study. The questionnaire was pre-tested and changes were made as indicated as a result of this testing. The mailout was then carried out as described earlier.

The Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire itself consists of six sections. Section One is a series of questions designed to draw demographic information from the sample. Section Two is a replication of the Frederico and Puckett survey (which was based on the Index of Political Activity developed by Woodward & Roper, 1950). Two additional questions were added to the Frederico and Puckett instrument. The first addition asked participants to indicate if he/she was a member of a lobby group. This addition allowed the participants to identify another means of political activity that was not considered by previous researchers. The second added question asked participants to indicate if they felt their level of political activity had remained the same, increased or been reduced in the past year. This question was added as A.A.S.W. members employed by the provincial government had been called on to participate in an illegal strike against their employer in the previous year. By asking this question, the researcher was able to consider what influence the strike action may have had on the actions reported by the respondents. While other factors would have affected indi-

viduals in the course of the year, the strike was the only major, unusual factor in that time that could have affected large numbers of A.A.S.W. members.

Section Three consists of four questions which were designed to determine if social workers do feel an obligation to be politically active. The section also asked respondents to indicate their opinion on the obligation of the A.A.S.W., their place of employment and their union (if applicable) to be politically active. This section was included so that the researcher could draw some conclusions as to whether or not social workers do maintain the social work value of advocating on the behalf of others.

Section Four of the questionnaire listed ten factors that could be seen as encouraging or discouraging to a social worker in influencing his/her decision to be politically active or not. Respondents were asked to indicate how these factors influenced him/her, if they did influence him/her at all. These factors were chosen based on the work of Dyck (1972). Comparisons were then able to be drawn from his work to this study.

Section Five asked respondents to indicate how the philosophy, the knowledge base, and the skills regarding political action as taught by their school of social work influenced their decision to be politically active or not.

Sections Three, Four, and Five all leave the respondent to answer using his own definition of political action. Rino Patti's definition, as given at the beginning of this Chapter, is very useful in this context. If an individual views what he is doing (or even, intentionally not doing) as being a political action, then the researcher accepts this as fact. The researcher in this study is not attempting to measure or judge which

political actions are effective. She does seek to learn if social workers value political action (as defined by Patti) to be an obligation of the profession.

The questionnaire concludes with Section Six which asks respondents to comment on any specific thoughts the questionnaire may have led them to have regarding political action by social workers. This question is the only openended one on the questionnaire. All others (excepting for indicating age by specific year and the number of years employed) were of a simple check off type. This style of answering the questions meant respondents could complete the survey quickly.

Data Analysis

The responses given on the returned questionnaires were used to create a code book that was entered onto the computer. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSX) was then used to analyze the data. Chapters 5 and 6 will give this analysis in the following manner.

First, a descriptive analysis of the sample's demographic characteristics is given. To do this, several frequency distribution tables and percentage distributions will be presented.

Second, the data analysis provides a political activity score for each respondent based on his/her answers to questions from Section 2 of the questionnaire. These scores are presented in a frequency distribution table and percentages are given. The Chi-square test of significance and percentages were used to test for relationships as well as the strength of the relationships between various demographic variables and the respondents' political activity scores.

Third, the data is examined with respect to respondents' attitudes toward political activity. Again, tables are used to present the data and the Chi-square test of significance was computed to test for relationships between respondents' attitudes and various demographic characteristics.

Fourth, the data related to respondents' reporting of those factors they found to be encouraging, discouraging or ineffective in the influence they had on respondents' political activity is summarized.

Tables are presented and percentages are calculated. Correlations were also done using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient so that relationships between political activity scores and several, interval level data variables could be tested for strength and direction.

These variables were taken from Sections 3, 4, and 5 of the questionnaire. These Sections gathered data on the respondents' attitudes about political activity and those factors that were seen to encourage, discourage or be ineffective in contributing to respondents' political activity.

Limitations of the Study

The reader is reminded that, as with all studies, some limitations of the outcomes are unavoidable. A potential source of bias in random sampling refers to the possible non-representativeness of the sample with regard to such population characteristics as sex, age, or auspices of employment, for example. A stratified sample would have reduced such bias and the sample would then have been representative of all the selected population (Grinnell, 1981). In this study however, some population characteristics may be under or over represented. The stratified sampling

procedure could not be used as the A.A.S.W. computer system was not capable of generating such data at the time the sample was drawn. A non-computerized procedure to obtain such information would have been too costly and time-consuming.

This particular study is also limited by the fact that the sample population of social workers are members of the professional association of Alberta. The researcher recognizes that many workers are not members of the Association and that this may be a political action in itself on the part of those who choose not to be members. Access to those who are not members is not possible in any systematic way, however, so it is necessary to exclude them from the study.

It could well be that this exclusiveness of involvement in the study could be a positive factor. Such exclusiveness does ensure that standards of professional conduct have been met by the respondents and respondents are likely to identify with the Social Workers Code of Ethics. Therefore, the study is collecting data about the attitudes and actions of professional social workers from bona fide social workers.

Another limitation of the study is that it relies on the candour of the respondents. It is possible that there could be a tendency to inflate one's actions in particular. It is felt, however, that the anonymity of the questionnaire would help to minimize this concern.

The concepts of "encourage," "discourage" and "had no effect" are not clearly defined for the respondents and they are left to answer according to their own definition of the terms. This could lead to some variance in the way these questions were answered or in how their answers were interpreted.

Consideration must be given to the fact that social workers who chose to complete and return the questionnaires may have done so because of a special interest in this topic. This could then lead to a bias in the sample.

While the sample population should be representative of most social workers in Alberta, the degree to which results can be generalized to social workers in other provinces or countries may be less valid.

The current economic conditions will also influence the results of the study. In times of vast resources, less political action is required for all to have their needs met. Thus, respondents' attitudes may be influenced by this factor.

Finally, any significant policy announcements made by the political party in power at the time of the study could impact on the responses received. Political scandals, criminal investigations or accusations of wrong-doings towards the political party in power at the time of the study would also influence the results of the study as individual's attitudes are affected by such events. The researcher has no means of controlling these factors. It should be noted that the social workers employed by the Government of Alberta had indeed participated in illegal strike action in the year preceding this study. The Government is the largest employer of social workers in Alberta so this action was not insignificant to the social work profession.

Ethical Considerations

The survey was conducted on a volunteer basis. No one was forced to participate in the survey against his/her will. Both covering letters explained to the respondents that they were not obliged to participate in the study.

The respondents' identities were kept anonymous and the responses remained confidential. At no time were respondents asked to identify themselves. No means of identifying the mailed questionnaires was in place. All information was reported in aggregate form except for some direct quotes from Section 7 of the survey where respondents were invited to make any pertinent comments they wished. These quotes were non-identifying in regards to who their author may have been.

CHAPTER 5

A DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This chapter will provide the reader with a summary of the results of the survey that was mailed. A complete description of the returned questionnaires will be given. Numerically important findings and trends will be indicated. Following the descriptive analysis of the returned questionnaires, basic statistical analysis then will be given.

Rate of Response

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were mailed out. Within the time frame set out by the researcher, 105 completed questionnaires (70.0%) were returned. This can be considered an excellent rate of returned responses (Babbie, 1973). Four questionnaires (2.7%) were returned as they could not be delivered due to the intended receiver having moved. One completed survey (0.7%) was received too late to be included in the data analysis. Forty questionnaires (26.6%) were not returned. Therefore, subsequent data analysis is based on a sample of 105 (N=105).

Demographic Data

The survey instrument was intentionally designed to enable the researcher to draw some specific demographic information regarding the sample population. That information is summarized as follows.

Age and sex.

Thirty-four males (32%) and 71 females (68%) responded to the survey.

The mean age of the respondents was 41 years.

Education.

Table 5.1 gives information regarding the respondents educational background.

Table 5.1

Education of Respondents

Degree	No. of respondents	%
B.S.W.	51	48.6
M.S.W.	47	44.8
D.S.W./PhD.	1	1.0
Other	16	15.2

Note: The number of respondents is greater than 105 and cumulative percentage is greater than 100 percent as respondents could hold more than one degree of equal level (eg., a B.S.W. and a B.Ed.). Most indicated in the "other" category that they held community college diplomas. One respondent held a law degree and one held a masters in business.

Experience

Respondents were asked to indicate their experience in social work practice by actual years of primary experience in various areas. Table 5.2 summarizes the results of this question. For presentation purposes, years of experience were collapsed into specific ranges.

Table 5.2

Respondents Years of Experience by Primary Service Type

Years	Type of Service (%)				
	Management	Direct	Research	Education	Other
0-5	8	14	* 11	* 23	6
6-10	* 10	* 39	3	3	* 10
11-15	5	19	0	0	2
16-20	2	7	0	1	0
21-25	3	5	0	0	0
over 25	1	0	0	0	0
	29	84	14	27	18

Note: * denotes the years of service range with the highest frequency in each service area. Also, cumulative percentage will exceed 100 percent as many workers have experience in more than one area.

The table indicates that the majority of social workers are now, or have been, involved in direct client service with most having 6-10 years experience in this area. In the "other" category, most specified that hospital work was the specific type of practice they were in. This question created some difficulty for some respondents and it was evident that many did not answer by considering only their primary area of practice for each year they practised. The reader is advised to use discretion in interpreting the results.

Auspices of employment.

Table 5.3 has been designed to enable the reader to quickly see what type of work settings the respondents practice in.

Table 5.3

Auspices of Employment of Respondents

Type of employment	%
Private for profit agency	8.6
Private not for profit agency	15.2
Government	41.9
Private practice	17.1
Other (eg. hospitals, communities)	23.8

Note: Cumulative percent is greater than 100 percent as respondents could work for more than one employer at a time.

The reader will note that 41.9 percent of the respondents are employed by the government. It has been indicated earlier that the government is the largest employer of social workers in the province of Alberta.

Respondents also provided information which indicates that 22.7 percent of them work largely with rural clients while 77.3 percent work with a largely urban population.

Finally, the research also derived the numbers of respondents who are members of a union by virtue of their employment. The study shows that 43.6 percent of the respondents are not members of a union while 56.4 percent of them do belong to a union.

Attitudes of Social Workers About Political Obligations

Table 5.4 is a summary of the respondents answers to questions from Section 3 of the survey regarding their opinions relating to the obligation of the individual and various groups to participate in political activity on the behalf of disadvantaged persons or groups. The purpose of this section is to help the researcher draw some

conclusions regarding social workers attitudes about the role of class advocacy in the profession.

Table 5.4

Respondents Attitudes Regarding Political Obligations

Question	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
1. Do social workers have a professional obligation to be politically active?	76	(74.5) 3 missing	26	(25.5)
2. Does the A.A.S.W. have a professional obligation to be politically active?	93	(91.2) 3 missing	9	(8.8)
3. Does your place of employment have a professional obligation to be politically active?	50	(52.1) 9 missing	46	(47.9)
4. Do members of a union have an obligation re: political action?	71	(73.2) 8 missing	26	(26.8)

The findings lend face value support of the premise that social workers in the A.A.S.W. would agree that political action is a professional obligation. It is interesting to note, however, that 25.5 percent of the respondents did not support this view. This one-quarter of the respondents again reaffirms the findings of other studies which indicate that a polarization exists within the profession in regards to a social worker's political responsibilities. Frederico and Puckett found one third of their respondents indicated they did not support political responsibility as a role of the profession.

Also of interest is the discrepancy of 74.5 percent of the respondents agreeing that political activity is a professional obligation while 91 percent feel the A.A.S.W. has such an obligation. This could indicate that about 16 percent of the respondents are prepared to be involved in political activity through their professional group but not as individual professionals.

Section 7 of the survey invited respondents to make any pertinent comment they chose to. Fifty respondents availed themselves of this opportunity. Of these, 24 were explicit in their support of political action. Four respondents were negative in their comments about political activity by social workers. The remaining 22 implied support of political activity but cited discouragement and intimidation about actually being involved. Generally, the reasons given for these feelings were a lack of support from one body (A.A.S.W. often cited) as a leader, lack of confidence and knowledge in and about the political process and a fear of employers reacting negatively to staff being politically active. Some of the comments relevant to attitudes about political activity, include:

- I believe that social workers have a choice whether to be politically active.
- As advocates for our clients social workers need to be politically active.
- I do not believe that as a social worker I have the right to feel I know what is good for other people and march on their behalf to support political activity
- I have always believed that social action which usually requires political action is a part of the social work professional identity-it sets us apart from other helping professions.
- Political action/inaction is a personal choice

- Ethically and personally we get into our profession to make a difference and one of the ways to do this is to be politically active.

Conditions and Factors Affecting Political Activity

Respondents were asked about a number of factors believed to influence an individual's decision to become politically active or not. Table 5.5 tallies the results of this question on the survey. The table indicates the type of influence the factor given had on the respondent ie., positive (encouraging), negative (discouraging) or no influence at all.

The reader will note that the three factors seen by respondents to be encouraging them the most to be politically active were: 1. The Code of Ethics; 2. Factors in their personal life; and, 3. Support of their fellow work colleagues. The three most discouraging factors were: 1. Your confidence in the political process; 2. Your understanding of how the political process works; and, 3. Your employer's policies and practices and your position in the hierarchy at work. Two factors were tied for the third most discouraging factor. Of note, the factor seen to be the least influencing of all was the support of the A.A.S.W.. This factor was listed by 51.9 percent of the respondents as having no effect in influencing them in their actions. These findings appear to lend support to the premise that the Code of Ethics is a factor that encourages social workers to be politically active.

Table 5.5

Factors Affecting Political Participation

Factor	Encourages		Discourages		No Effect	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Support from the A.A.S.W.	39	(37.5)	11 (10.6) 1 missing		54	(51.9)
2. The Code of Ethics	68	(66.0)	1 (1.0) 2 missing		34	(33.0)
3. Association with A.A.S.W. members	54	(53.8)	6 (5.8) 3 missing		42	(40.4)
4. Association with non-members	50	(49.0)	7 (6.9) 3 missing		45	(44.1)
5. Employer's policies & practices	32	(32.0)	30 (30.0) 5 missing		38	(38.0)
6. Position in work hierarchy	34	(34.0)	30 (30.0) 5 missing		36	(36.0)
7. Support of work colleagues	54	(54.5)	9 (9.1) 6 missing		36	(36.4)
8. Understanding of how political process works	44	(42.3)	37 (35.6) 1 missing		23	(22.1)
9. Confidence in the political process	19	(18.4)	69 (67.0) 2 missing		15	(14.6)
10. Personal life factors	60	(57.7)	7 (6.7) 1 missing		37	(35.6)

Some comments from the respondents about factors that influence their political activity are provided:

- If you work within a Government system you are discouraged from being politically active.
- During the Division 6 strike, A.A.S.W. executive proved itself to be timid and politically inept.

This cowardice was appalling. Clients have little hope of political empowerment with this kind of guidance and example. It puts to lie the advocacy social work schools and ethics espouse.

- The most influential factor for my involvement in the political arena is my own personal experience as a member of a minority group.
- Political action by social workers can result in intimidation by the employer, especially if the work setting is in the public service.
- I have never been encouraged in any significant way to become politically active other than the occasional questionnaire in the mail from the A.A.S.W.

Social Work Education

In this portion of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the influence their school of social work had on them regarding political activity.

Table 5.6

Influence Of Education on Respondents' Political Action

Educational Factor	Encouraged		Discouraged		No Effect	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Philosophy about political action	61	(59.2)	8 2 missing	(7.8)	34	(33.0)
2. Knowledge base taught about political action	48	(46.2)	8 1 missing	(7.7)	48	(46.2)
3. Skills taught about political action	34	(33.0)	7 2 missing	(6.8)	62	(60.2)

The results given in Table 5.6 show that respondents felt the philosophy about political activity as taught by their school of social work encouraged them in their actions. It is interesting to also note that while few respondents felt discouraged by teachings of the schools of social work they attended, large numbers felt unaffected by the influence of their school of training in all areas, ie., philosophy, knowledge and skills regarding political action. Still, many commented on their social work education as follows:

- My politics courses taken as an undergraduate student were most influential in encouraging me **not** to take social work courses until later. My undergraduate school of social work actively discouraged political action taken by students at one field placement. This discouraged me. Many social work textbooks still don't acknowledge that most systems are characterized by patterns of domination and subordination. When systems are perceived as inherently equal and benevolent, there is no need for political action.
- The B.S.W. program did not provide enough information or skill development to assist a practitioner in terms of advocacy or political lobbying.
- I have no recollection of discussion of political action in my B.S.W. program at U. of C. at all!

The A.A.S.W. has been much more inspiring!

The Political Activity Index Score

As mentioned previously, Section 2 of the survey instrument duplicated former studies by asking questions which then enabled the researcher to allocate a political

activity score to each participant. This score gave the participant a numerical value for the extent of his/her level of activity in political actions.

Scoring of the index.

Participants were given one point for each "yes" checked in Section 2 of the survey for questions one through eight. For question 9, participants received one point for checking "occasionally" and two points for checking "frequently". No points were given for checking "never". Each participant, therefore had the opportunity to score 0 to 10 points. This is the same type of scoring that was used in the previous studies.

A summary of the results of this section of the survey follows in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Reported Actions of Respondents

Type of Activity	N	%
1. Signed a petition	76	73.1
2. Communicated with a politician	55	52.4
3. Participated in a lobby group activity	30	29.1
4. Participated in a demonstration	29	27.9
5. Member of a political party.	25	24.0
6. Attended a political party meeting	23	21.9
7. Member of a lobby group	20	19.4
8. Worked in the last election (Federal, Provincial, local)	14	13.7

The results indicate that the most popular means of political involvement was to sign a petition. Previous studies have shown that an individual's involvement in political activity has a cumulative nature (Milbrath, 1965). As one participates in action,

he/she is more likely to expand on the types of actions he/she becomes involved in. Signing a petition is the form of action generally accepted as requiring the least amount of time or energy to participate in a political activity (Milbrath, 1965). The other activities listed were in virtually the same order as in the Frederico and Puckett study with only participating in a lobby group and participating in a demonstration being reversed. It is interesting to note that only twenty of the participants indicated they were a member of a lobby group. As all are members of the A.A.S.W., each participant could have answered this question in the affirmative. Clearly, the A.A.S.W. is not viewed as a lobby group by its members.

In response to question 9 asking "How often do you discuss political matters with those outside of your immediate family?", 0 (0.0%) answered "never" 56 (53.8%) answered "occasionally" and 48 (46.2%) answered "frequently." One did not answer the question.

Political activity scores.

Table 5.8 gives the reader a summary of the respondent's Political Activity Scores.

Table 5.8

Political Activity Scores of Respondents

Possible Score	N	%	Cumulative %
0	0	0.0	0.0
1	8	7.7	7.7
2	* 20	19.2	26.9
3	19	18.3	45.2
4	* 20	19.2	64.4
5	12	11.5	76.0
6	13	12.5	88.5
7	4	3.8	92.3
8	2	1.9	94.2
9	4	3.8	98.1
10	2	1.9	100.0
1 missing			

Note: N=105. * denotes score with the highest frequency. The mean score was 4.

Comparing Studies

Previous studies have used a categorical means of classifying an individual's political activity based on his/her score. While each study has slightly altered the questionnaire so that the total possible score differed, comparisons could be made by using the raw data given in previous studies. Table 5.9 presents the comparisons of the studies. A score of 4 is considered to represent a politically active respondent.

The researcher of this present study has also used a political activity score of 4 as being indicative of a respondent who is politically active. This has been done so that findings could be compared to past studies. However, the researcher contends that 4 is a very low score to be considered as an indicator that one is politically active. A score of 4 could have been obtained by simply talking to others, signing a petition and recognizing one's membership in the A.A.S.W. as being a member of a lobby

group. Thus, the score of 4 could be easily obtained by doing very little in terms of action.

Former studies have also wrestled with the score at which one is considered "very politically active." It has been accepted that a score of 6 or more indicates the respondent is "very politically active." This is noted for reference later in this chapter.

The researcher believes such scoring inflates the scores of respondents and interpretation of results. Wolk commented in his own study that "These findings are important, even presuming that the social workers' scores on the instrument may have been inflated" (Wolk, 1981, p. 285). Such are the feelings of the researcher of this present study.

Table 5.9
Comparison of Studies

Author	Score by %		
	0-3	4-5	6-10
Woodward and Roper			
General public	73	17	10
Professionals	37	32	31
Wolk	53.6	23.2	23.2
Frederico & Puckett	47.7	24.0	28.2
Lumb	45.2	30.8	23.9

Woodward and Roper's study included scoring for the general population and for professionals. As one can see from Table 5.9, the conclusion could be drawn that social workers are more politically active than the general population but less active than other professional groups. There is a difference in the number of social workers who can be considered very politically active by scoring 6-10 (23.9%) and those professionals who Woodward and Roper found to be very politically active by scoring 6-10 (31.0%).

This study shows more social workers are politically active (scoring 4 or more) than the other studies showed (54.7% compared to 52.2% and 46.4%). However, this study also shows that social workers are less politically active (scoring 4 and above) than other professional groups (54.7%, 52.2% and 46.4% compared to 63%).

In comparing their political activity in the past year to their political activity in the previous years, 19 (18.3%) answered that they were more active while 34 (32.7%) reported they were less active and 51 (49.0%) indicated they had remained the same. This is a surprising outcome as generally one would have expected that the strike by government social workers in the previous year (referred to in Chapter Four) would have meant an increase in political activity for more of the respondents-not less.

From the information gathered then, there is face value support for the idea that there are important discrepancies between members attitudes about political action and their actual actions. While 74.5 percent of the respondents support the view that they have an obligation to be politically active, only 54.7 percent in fact are.

A Description of The Politically Active Social Worker

The results allow the researcher to identify the characteristics of social workers who are more likely to be politically active. Age categories of those 36 years of age and over and those 35 years of age and under were chosen based on previous studies so that comparisons could be made.

Using the t-test to test for a statistically significant difference between two means, the results show that a difference between males and females does exist. Males are more likely to be politically active. Results also show that those who are 36 years of age and older are more likely to be politically active. These findings regarding age are similar to those of Wolk, but not of Frederico and Puckett, who found that younger workers were more politically active. Wolk found females to be more politically active while Frederico and Puckett noted no significant difference between males

and females in terms of their political activity. Dyck's study showed no significance between age or sex of respondents and their level of political activity.

Table 5.10

Political Participation Score by Sex and Age

Variable	Mean	N	SD
*Sex			
Male	4.79	33	2.16
Female	3.73	71	2.07
**Age			
≤36 years	3.34	29	1.39
≥35 years	4.24	72	2.26

Note: * t-test: $t=2.58$, $df=102$, $p=.05$

** t-test: $t=1.98$, $df=99$, $p=.05$

The Chi-square test was used to test for correlations between demographic variables and the respondents' political activity scores. The researcher was interested in determining if there were differences in activity levels within the population sub-groups. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the actions of individuals would vary according to their education, auspices of employment, membership in a union, and caseload type (urban or rural). Therefore, the above noted variables were cross-tabulated with the political activity scores obtained from section 2 of the survey. The political activity scores were categorized into two groups: inactive (those scoring 0-3) and active (those scoring 4-10). The .05 level of significance was chosen as the level of confidence.

Only one relationship was found to show a difference between the variables noted and the political activity scores. The relationship between those with urban or rural caseloads and their political activity showed a statistically significant difference.

The data shows that 44 of the 73 respondents with an urban caseload are politically active while only 7 of the 22 respondents with rural caseloads are politically active. The data is given in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11

Relationship Between Respondents' Type of Caseload and Their Political Activity

Scores

Political Activity Score	Type of Caseload			
	Urban		Rural	
	N	%	N	%
Inactive	29	30.5	15	15.8
Active	44	46.3	7	7.4
Total	73	76.8	22	23.2

Chi-square = 5.51 p = 0.02

The Chi-square test indicates there is a difference in the level of respondents' political activity on the basis of the nature of their caseload. It could be that those in rural communities feel more isolated from the support of others in being politically active and therefore are less active. Another possible explanation for this difference in activity could be that less political action is required in smaller communities where services may be more accessible (although fewer in number) due to less bureaucratic procedure generally found in smaller offices.

To ascertain if there would be differences in respondents' attitudes about political activity within population subgroups, cross-tabulations were also done with the demographic variables of Section 1 of the survey and the responses from Section 3 of the survey which asked about political activity obligations. No statistically significant relationships were found by these cross-tabulations.

The Politically Inactive

To continue in the comparison of the subpopulations as defined by their political activity score, the researcher also looked at each groups' listing of encouraging and discouraging factors to their political activity. Table 5.12 list the factors for those who scored 0-3 and, therefore, are considered politically inactive.

Table 5.12

Encouraging/Discouraging Factors to Political Activity for Those Scoring 0-3

Factor	Encouraged		No Effect		Discouraged	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Support of the A.A.S.W.	22	44.9	24	48.9	3	6.1
2. Code of Ethics	30	61.2	19	38.8	0	0.0
3. Fellow A.A.S.W. members	19	38.8	28	57.1	2	4.1
4. Non-members of the A.A.S.W.	17	34.7	27	55.1	3	6.1
5. Employer's policies	12	24.5	18	36.7	17	34.7
6. Position at work	11	22.5	19	38.8	17	34.7
7. Fellow work colleagues	25	51.0	18	36.7	4	8.2
8. Understanding of politics	13	26.5	18	36.7	18	36.7
9. Confidence in politics	5	10.2	8	16.3	36	73.5
10. Personal life	26	53.1	29	59.2	4	8.2
11. Philosophy of training school	28	57.1	18	36.7	2	4.1
12. Knowledge school taught	21	42.9	24	48.9	3	6.1
13. Skills taught	16	32.7	29	59.2	3	6.1

Note: N = 49

The Politically Active

Table 5.13 gives the factors found to be encouraging and discouraging to respondents in their ability to be politically active at the 4-5 range of scoring. This score indicates that respondents are considered politically active.

Table 5.13

Encouraging and Discouraging Factors of Political Activity for Those Scoring 4-5

Factor	Encouraged		No Effect		Discouraged	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Support of the A.A.S.W.	8	25.8	15 1 missing	48.4	7	22.6
2. Code of Ethics	24	77.4	5 2 missing	16.1	0	0.0
3. Fellow A.A.S.W. members	18	58.1	11 1 missing	35.5	2	6.5
4. Non-members of A.A.S.W.	20	64.5	9 1 missing	29.0	1	3.2
5. Employer's policies	12	38.7	9 3 missing	29.0	7	22.6
6. Work position	12	38.7	8	25.8	8	25.8
7. Fellow work colleagues	16	51.6	2 3 missing	6.5	10	32.3
8. Understanding of politics	13	41.9	5 1 missing	16.1	12	38.7
9. Confidence in politics	5	16.1	2 1 missing	6.5	23	74.2
10. Personal	17	54.8	11 1 missing	35.5	2	6.5
11. Philosophy taught	19	61.3	9	29.0	3	9.7
12. Knowledge taught	16	51.6	13	41.9	2	6.5
13. Skills taught	7	22.6	21	67.7	3	9.7

Note: N = 31

The Very Politically Active

The group of respondents who scored 6-10 on the Political Activity Index also indicated which factors they found discouraging and which they found encouraging to their political activity. Table 5.14 summarizes the results. These respondents are considered politically very active by virtue of their score.

Table 5.14

Encouraging and Discouraging Factors of Political Activity for Those Scoring 6-10

Factor	Encouraged		No Effect		Discouraged	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Support of A.A.S.W.	10	40.0	14	56.0	1	4.0
2. Code of Ethics	15	60.0	9	36.0	1	4.0
3. Fellow A.A.S.W. members	19	76.0	4	16.0	2	8.0
4. Non-members of A.A.S.W.	14	56.0	8	32.0	3	12.0
5. Employer's policies	9	36.0	10	40.0	6	24.0
6. Work Position	12	48.0	5	20.0	8	32.0
7. Fellow work colleagues	14	56.0	7	28.0	3	12.0
			1 missing			
8. Understanding of politics	19	76.0	0	0.0	6	24.0
9. Confidence in politics	9	36.0	4	16.0	11	44.0
			1 missing			
10. Personal	21	84.0	3	12.0	1	4.0
11. Philosophy of training school	15	60.0	6	24.0	3	12.0
			1 missing			
12. Knowledge taught	11	44.0	11	44.0	3	12.0
13. Skills taught	11	44.0	12	48.0	1	4.0
			1 missing			

Note: N = 25

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn from Tables 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15. Those scoring in the very politically active group indicate that their understanding of the political process was an encouraging factor to them much more so than did the other

two groups of participants. This implies that a good understanding of the political process helps an individual to participate. As knowledge is something that can be acquired, it would seem social workers could be assisted in meeting their perceived obligation to be politically active by providing them with opportunities to learn more about political process.

As participants' scores increased, the support of the A.A.S.W. and other members of the A.A.S.W. appears to have been seen as a more encouraging factor on participants' political activity. This corroborates findings that 74.5 percent of the respondents agreed that political action was a professional obligation while 91 percent felt that it was an obligation of the A.A.S.W., thus indicating more support for group action than individual action. Again, this factor is one which could offer social workers more encouragement if the A.A.S.W. comes to recognize the need for it to take more of a leadership role in this area. This role could include assuming an educational base regarding political process for members. It could also include such things as making the policy stands the association does take more visible to members. Increased communication to members is important to facilitate this. Such communication would help members be better informed of the actions of colleagues so that a greater sense of power in numbers is achieved. It was noted earlier in this chapter that respondents did not feel they had gained any significant skills or knowledge about the political process from their schools of social work so it may fall to the A.A.S.W. to fill this role. Several respondents made comments regarding the role of the A.A.S.W.

- I don't believe I personally do enough. I do not support the A.A.S.W. actively in political action although I believe we must take a public stance as an association.

- . . . Role of A.A.S.W. needs to be legitimized.

A.A.S.W. also needs to consider its negative public image (ie., bleeding hearts) when making statements in "redneck" country.

- Social workers in general are used to being independent and individualistic. Also there are too many separate factions — ie., union, A.A.S.W. etc. and the A.A.S.W. is not strong enough — not enough percentage membership — it is seen as elitist and anti-government employee.

Consequently, there is no consensus and no concerted effort for political action — resulting in very little political action. It is also apparent from Tables 5.12, 5.13 and 5.14 that participants do not feel a great deal of support from their position in the work setting or their employer's policies and practices. An increase in employer support is associated with more political activity. This implies that those who are supported by the structure of the organization they work for are more likely to take on their class advocacy role. Again, changes could be made in this perceived lack of support but this area will take much longer as an attitudinal shift is likely required. If an organization is employing qualified social workers with a full understanding of the obligation those workers have towards seeking social change through social action, the organization could be structured to allow more freedom for workers to openly pursue social change. A reality that is acknowledged in the political economy framework however, is that various coalitions will decide who or what is supported with economic resources. It is incumbent on social workers then to become skilled in the practice of social change actions so that the best possible outcome can be achieved. Becoming politically active demands a great deal of responsibility — not just idealism. The researcher would not presume that employers or funders will come to accept

open social action as a professional duty readily. More likely, social action will continue to be seen as radical action or complaining for some time to come.

Finally, the reader will note that confidence in the political process increases as the level of political action increases. Perhaps those who are active tend to begin to understand the process more, see more results and therefore gain confidence. Certainly, confidence could be gained from the experience as well — even if results are not seen. Perhaps the lack of results would even encourage individuals to become more politically active to have the process changed.

Summary

The results of the study indicate that males are more likely than females to be politically active. Older social workers (those over 35 years of age) are also more likely to be politically active. Finally, those who have urban caseloads are more likely to be politically active than those with rural caseloads.

In considering attitudes about political activity, it is apparent that 74.5 percent of the respondents felt they had a professional obligation to be politically active. A full one-quarter of those who responded (25.5%) did not hold this same belief. This clearly would indicate that for many, there is incongruency between their belief system about political action as a professional responsibility and the Social Worker's Code of Ethics.

Ninety-one percent (91.0%) of the respondents did support the view that the A.A.S.W. had an obligation to be politically active. For some who don't support the view of the individual's obligation to be politically active, it would seem that they do support the idea that collective political action is appropriate. They express a need for

greater understanding of the political process to help them in this activity as well as the support and leadership of a strong representative body, ie., the A.A.S.W..

CHAPTER 6

CORRELATIONS OF VARIABLES

In this Chapter, the data from the study is examined in further detail. Correlations between major variables and political activity scores were tested to determine if there were relationships between respondents' attitudes about political action and their actions. To do this, the following attitudes as listed in section 3 of the survey were cross-tabulated with the political activity scores: (1) a social worker's obligation to be politically active; (2) the association's obligation to be politically active; (3) an employer's obligation to be politically active; and (4) a union's obligation to be politically active. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to test for the nature and significance of the relationships. Pearson's r was also used to test for correlations between variables that were thought to influence a respondent's decision to be, or not to be, politically active and their actual political activity score. The variables used here came from Sections 4 and 5 of the survey and included: (1) support of the A.A.S.W.; (2) the Code of Ethics; (3) support of other A.A.S.W. members; (4) support of non-members of the A.A.S.W.; (5) policies and practices of your employer; (6) your position in the hierarchy of your work setting; (7) support of your fellow work colleagues; (8) your understanding of the political process; (9) factors in your personal life; (10) the philosophy regarding political action of your school of social work training; (11) the knowledge base about political action as taught by your school of social work; and (12) the skills about political action as taught by your school of social work training. A number of the relationships were found to be statistically significant and a discussion of them will follow.

The .05 level of confidence was chosen as the standard to indicate a statistically significant relationship. As in the physical sciences, the following general guidelines were used to specify a weak, moderate and strong relationship: a weak relationship, $r = \pm 0.01$ to ± 0.30 ; a moderate relationship, $r = \pm 0.31$ to ± 0.70 ; and a strong relationship, $r = \pm 0.71$ to ± 1.00 (Elfson, Punyon & Haber, 1982). It should be noted that ". . . social scientists who investigate the relationship between attitudes and behaviours, on the other hand, routinely expect the relationship to be weaker, generally between 0.02 and 0.04" (Elfson, Punyon & Haber, 1982, p.199). This study will use the physical science guidelines.

Relationships Between Respondents' Attitudes and Actions

One research question asked if respondents' attitudes about political activity would be different from their actions. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to test the nature and significance of the relationships. Specifically, attitudes of respondents as listed in Section 3 of the questionnaire were correlated with the political activity scores of respondents from Section 2 of the questionnaire. Findings show that a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level of confidence exists between 3 of the variables shown and the political activity score obtained by respondents. The associations that were found are positive in direction but weak in strength.

First, results indicate that positive beliefs toward political activity as a professional obligation were weakly associated with political activity scores (.2910, $p=.002$). That is, respondents believe they have an obligation, as professionals, to be politically active but this belief is not strongly associated with actual political activity.

Second, a correlation of .1652 ($p=.049$) was found between a belief in the A.A.S.W.'s obligation to be politically active and respondents' political activity scores. Again, the relationship was positive in direction but the association was weak.

A third correlation coefficient of .1840 ($p=.037$) was found between the belief in an employer's obligation to be politically active and respondents' political activity scores. This indicates that a positive belief in an employer's obligation to be politically active is weakly associated with political activity scores.

The reader will recall that Tables 5.12, 5.13, and 5.14 in Chapter 5, showed strong attitudinal support for political activity. Given those results, one may have expected to find stronger relationships between respondents' attitudes and actions. The results suggest that respondents' attitudes about political action explain very little of the variance in political actions.

Relationships Between Factors Influencing Respondents' Political Actions and Their Political Activity Scores

Another research question asked if the influence of specific variables would impact respondents' political activity. These variables, are listed in Section 4 of the questionnaire where respondents were asked to indicate which factors encouraged them, discouraged them, or did not effect them at all in their ability to be politically active.

Statistically significant correlations were found between 5 of the variables given and respondents' political activity scores. Table 6.1 summarizes these relationships.

Table 6.1

Pearson Correlations for Factors Influencing Respondents' Political Action
by Their Political Activity Scores

Influencing Factor	Political Score (PAS)	Pearson Correlation	Level of Confidence
1. Support of A.A.S.W. members	PAS	.2780	.002
2. Work position	PAS	.2198	.014
3. Understanding of political process	PAS	.2711	.003
4. Confidence in political process	PAS	.2833	.002
5. Personal factors	PAS	.2549	.005

All of the relationships shown in Table 6.1 are positive in direction but weak in strength. For example, a correlation of .2780, $p=.002$ was found between the encouragement respondents received from fellow members of the A.A.S.W. and their political activity score. The correlation indicates that feeling supported by fellow A.A.S.W. members in political action is weakly associated with political activity.

As a second example, a correlation of .2711, $p=.003$ was found between the encouragement respondents receive from their understanding of the political process and their political activity scores. This could indicate that understanding the political process encouraged the respondents to be politically active but only to a minor extent. Because all of the associations shown are weak (or non-existent), the conclusion may be drawn that the factors given here, in and of themselves, have little or no impact on respondents' political activity. As will be shown later in this chapter, more impact is noted when various factors are combined.

Relationship Between Political Activity and Influence
of Schools of Training

The researcher did test for correlations between the respondents' political activity scores and the variables in Section 5, ie., 1) influence of the philosophy of political activity of the school of social work training, 2) influence of the knowledge base about political action taught by the school of social work, and 3) influence of the skills about political action as taught by the school of social work training. No statistically significant relationships were found. This could indicate that schools of social work are not effective in educating social workers in the value base of political action to the extent that this education is used to become politically active.

Relationships Between Respondents' Attitudes About Political Obligations

Pearson Correlation of Coefficients was also calculated to test for relationships between respondents attitudes about political action by various groups. Those relationships that were found to be statistically significant are given in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Pearson Correlations for Respondents' Attitudes About Political Action Obligations

	Attitude	Attitude	Pearson's r	Confidence
1.	A.A.S.W. obligation	Professional obligation	.4648	.000
2.	Employer obligation	Professional obligation	.3005	.002
3.	Employer obligation	A.A.S.W. obligation	.2973	.002
4.	Union obligation	Professional obligation	.2009	.020
5.	Union obligation	A.A.S.W. obligation	.4180	.000
6.	Union obligation	Employer obligation	.3826	.000

Given the information in Table 6.2, the reader will note that all of the relationships are positive in direction and that three of the relationships given are moderate in strength. The respondents' beliefs in the obligation of the A.A.S.W. to be politically active is moderately associated with the respondents' beliefs that social workers have a professional obligation to be politically active.

Another moderate association is seen between respondents' beliefs about a union's obligation to be politically active and the A.A.S.W.'s obligation to be active. The third moderate relationship is shown between respondents' beliefs about a union's obligation to be politically active and an employer's obligation to be active politically. The strength of the relationships implies that respondents generally adhere very positively in attitude to a value base that includes political activity as an obligation.

Relationships Between Influencing Factors About Political Action By Respondents' Attitudes

Table 6.3 shows the relationships that were found to be statistically significant between factors thought to influence political activity and respondents' attitudes about political activity.

All of the associations are positive in direction but weak in strength with three exceptions. One negative association was found between the encouragement a respondent feels from his/her confidence in the political process and a belief in the A.A.S.W.'s obligation to be politically active. This inverse relationship could indicate that respondents lacked confidence in the political process but still believed in the

A.A.S.W.'s obligation to be active despite this lack of confidence. The association was a weak one ($-.1973$, $p=.025$).

Table 6.3

Pearson Correlations for Influencing Factors by Respondents' Attitudes

About Political Action

Factor	Attitude	Pearson's r	Confidence
1. Support of A.A.S.W.	Professional obligation	.2275	.011
2. Code of Ethics	Professional obligation	.2734	.003
3. Support of non-members	Employer's obligation	.1783	.043
4. Employer's policies	Employer's obligation	.2032	.026
5. Work position	Employer's obligation	.3045	.002
6. Support of colleagues	Employer's obligation	.3210	.001
7. Support of colleagues	Union obligation	.2400	.011
8. Confidence in politics	A.A.S.W. obligation	-.1973	.025

Two moderate associations were also found. A correlation coefficient of .3045, $p=.002$ was found between the encouragement to be politically active that a respondent gained from his/her work position and his/her belief in an employer's obligation to be politically active. The association could indicate that when a social worker finds his/her work position leads him/her to become politically active, he/she also feels his/her employer should support him/her in this activity.

The second moderate relationship is indicated by the correlation of .3210, $p=.001$ found between the support respondents found from fellow work colleagues and their belief in an employer's obligation to be politically active. The relationship suggests that respondents who feel encouraged in their political activity by fellow

workers also believe their employer should support their actions. It seems likely that social workers who have the support of fellow workers who think as they do, would feel more confident in the expectation that they may have of their employer to also think as the employees do.

Relationships Between Factors Influencing Respondents' Political Activity

Table 6.4 shows the Pearson correlations between variables from Section 4 of the questionnaire which asked about influencing factors in political activity.

All of these associations, five of which are moderate in strength, could indicate that the variables given are likely seen to be beneficial in helping social workers be better able to participate in political activities. For example, when a social worker feels encouraged by his/her position in the work setting, he/she also feels supported by his/her employer's policies and practices in participating in political activities. The moderate association (.4828, $p=.000$) could indicate that a social worker receives stronger support when both factors are seen to be encouraging. If one variable were encouraging but the other was not, a weak or no association would be found and the social worker would be less likely to be politically active.

As another example, a correlation coefficient of .3841 ($p=.000$) was found between the support respondents felt from work colleagues and the support they felt from other members of the A.A.S.W. This could indicate that respondents who worked with other members of the A.A.S.W. felt supported in their role in regards to political activity. It is of note that the relationship between support from fellow work colleagues and non-members of the A.A.S.W. was not statistically significant. The reader is reminded that there also was no relationship found between the support of

non-members of the A.A.S.W. and political activity. It would appear that the support of fellow members of the A.A.S.W. and working with fellow members makes an important contribution to respondents' ability to be politically active, even though the support of the association as a body is not currently proven to be important.

Table 6.4

Pearson Correlations for Relationships Between Factors Influencing Political Activity

Factor	Factor	Pearsons' r	Confidence
1. Support of members	Support of A.A.S.W.	.3372	.000
2. Support of non-members	Code of Ethics	.2559	.005
3. Employer's policies	Support of non-members	.1813	.034
4. Employer's policies	Support of A.A.S.W.	.1664	.049
5. Work position	Support of A.A.S.W.	.2149	.016
6. Work position	Employer's policies	.4828	.000
7. Support of colleagues	Support of A.A.S.W.	.1995	.026
8. Support of colleagues	Code of Ethics	.1776	.040
9. Support of colleagues	Support of members	.3841	.000
10. Support of colleagues	Employer's policies	.2209	.015
11. Support of colleagues	Work position	.2158	.016
12. Understanding of politics	Support of non-members	.2000	.022
13. Understanding of politics	Work position	.1812	.036
14. Confidence in politics	Support of members	.1687	.044
15. Confidence in politics	Support of colleagues	.1984	.025
16. Confidence in politics	Understanding of politics	.4339	.000
17. Personal	Code of Ethics	.2997	.001
18. Personal	Work position	.3800	.000
19. Personal	Understanding of politics	.2367	.008
20. Personal	Confidence in politics	.2035	.020

The reader's attention is also drawn to the another moderate association shown in Table 6.4 between respondents' confidence in the political process and their understanding of the political process (.4339, $p=.000$). The strength of this associ-

ation could indicate that respondents who feel more confident about the political process also seem to have greater knowledge about the process.

Table 6.5

Pearson Correlations for Educational Factors Influencing Respondents' Political Activity

Factor	Factor	Pearson's r	Confidence
1. Philosophy of school	Support of A.A.S.W.	.2050	.019
2. Philosophy of school	Support of members	.2674	.003
3. Philosophy of school	Support of colleagues	.2376	.010
4. Knowledge taught	Support of A.A.S.W.	.1721	.041
5. Knowledge taught	Code of Ethics	.1701	.044
6. Knowledge taught	Support of members	.2197	.003
7. Knowledge taught	Support of colleagues	.3324	.000
8. Knowledge taught	Confidence in politics	.2415	.007
9. Knowledge taught	Philosophy of school	.7239	.000
10. Skills taught	Support of A.A.S.W.	.2618	.004
11. Skills taught	Support of members	.2536	.005
12. Skills taught	Support of non-members	-.2845	.002
13. Skills taught	Support of colleagues	.2482	.007
14. Skills taught	Understanding of politics	.2064	.019
15. Skills taught	Confidence in politics	.2045	.018
16. Skills taught	Philosophy of school	.5399	.000
17. Skills taught	Knowledge taught	.6077	.000

Relationships Between Educational Factors Influencing Respondents' Political Activity

Statistically significant correlations did evidence themselves in regards to the philosophy of, and the knowledge and skills about political activity taught by respondents' schools of social work. Again, while these three factors did not appear significant in relation to respondents political activity scores, relationships did exist between these factors and some of the variables thought to encourage political activity. Table 6.5 summarizes the information about those relationships that are significant.

Three of the relationships shown in Table 6.5 are moderately associated while one relationship shows a strong association.

The first moderate association to be discussed is found between the knowledge about political action taught by respondents' schools of social work training and the encouragement to be politically active that respondents received from fellow colleagues (.3324, $p=.000$). This association could suggest that the knowledge respondents received from their schools of social work about political activity could best be seen as encouraging when respondents worked with colleagues who also encouraged their activity. Perhaps, even with a good knowledge base about political action, respondents would not be politically involved if they perceived a lack of support from their work colleagues. Such an interpretation appears to be supported by the descriptive data given in Chapter 5 which indicated respondents felt the A.A.S.W. (group support) had a greater obligation to be active than the individual professional did (no group support). Similarly, respondents may feel less encouraged to be politically active, even if he/she has a good knowledge base, if he does not have the support of fellow colleagues. This could again be seen as a strong rationale for solid group leadership in the area of political activity.

A second moderate relationship was found between the encouragement respondents felt from the skills about political action taught to him/her by his/her school of social work and the encouragement the respondents felt from the philosophy about political action of their school of social work training (.5399, $p=.000$). The moderate association could mean that respondents felt that the skills they learned about political action from their school of training were validated by the school's

philosophy about political action. If this were not the case, it is unlikely a moderate relationship would have been found.

The third moderate relationship was found between the encouragement respondents felt from the skills about political action taught by their schools of training and the encouragement to be politically involved that they felt from the knowledge base about political action as taught by their school of training (.6077, $p=.000$). Again, skills are validated by respondents' knowledge. This relationship and the previous one both attest to the old adage that "one should practice what he preaches."

A strong relationship was found between the encouragement respondents received from the knowledge about political action taught by their school of training and the encouragement the respondents received from the philosophy about political action that their school of training held (.7239, $p=.000$). Perhaps, those schools holding a clear philosophy ascribing to the value of political activity also do a better job of teaching a knowledge base about political action to their students than do schools which are less clear about their philosophy in this area.

One negative correlation between the encouragement respondents felt from the skills they were taught about political action and the encouragement they received from non-members of the A.A.S.W. should be noted (-.2845, $p=.002$). While the relationship is weak, it is inverse in nature. This could indicate that while respondents felt the skills they had learned helped them to be politically active, their association with non-members of the professional body discouraged them in their actions. This may occur as non-members may not subscribe to the value base of the A.A.S.W. regarding political activity. Their nonmembership may in fact may be a negative

reaction to political activity which members then find discouraging to their own actions.

Summary

In summary, correlations noted in the chapter lend support to the premise that respondents prefer group action as opposed to individual action regarding political activity. Relationships were found between the support of other A.A.S.W. members and political action while the support of non-members showed no relationship or a negative relationship in the correlation between non-members support and the encouragement respondents felt from the skills they were taught about political action.

Various conditions and factors that influence social workers to be politically active were tested. Several positive correlations were noted and described in this chapter. However, the researcher concludes that while social workers support the ideal of an obligation to political action, they do not show this support as significantly through their actions.

Finally, no statistically significant correlations were found between the philosophy of the respondents schools of social work training, the skills or knowledge about political action as taught by the schools of training and the respondents political activity scores. This could indicate that the schools of social work training had no significant effect in educating social workers about political action so that they could translate this education into actions. Some relationships were found between the philosophy, knowledge and skills about political action that were held and taught by schools and other factors that respondents found to influence their political activity. Again, the influence had more to do with attitudes than with actions.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This Chapter will begin with a review of the five research questions presented in Chapter 4 so that the reader can link the results of the previous three chapters to them.

Review of the Research Questions

Two of the research questions dealt with sociodemographic factors that could affect the attitudes and actions of social workers. When attitudes of the respondents were tabulated, high percentages of respondents showed they agreed that political activity was a professional obligation, an obligation of the A.A.S.W., and an obligation for members of a union. Fewer agreed that the same obligation held for employers. Because of these high percentages of agreement, further testing of the relationship between sociodemographic factors and attitude was unnecessary. Some significant findings were made in relation to actions of the respondents. Males were found to be more politically active than females and older respondents were found to be more active than younger ones. Respondents who worked with urban clients were more politically active than those who worked with rural clients.

Statistically significant relationships were found between the attitudes of respondents to be politically active and their political activity scores in three areas: a belief in a professional obligation to be politically active; a belief in the A.A.S.W.'s obligation to be politically active; and a belief in an employer's obligation to be politically active. All of the associations were weak but positive, indicating that

respondents held certain beliefs and that these beliefs were associated with respondents' political activity.

Factors which were seen to encourage and/or discourage political action were considered in this study as well. In summary, those who scored in the "very active" range for political activity, tended to indicate that personal life factors, an understanding of the political process, and the support of other A.A.S.W. members encouraged them in their actions. They further indicated that their confidence in the political process, their position at work, their understanding of the political process and their employer's policies and practices were factors which discouraged them in their political activities. It is interesting to note that an understanding of the political process was seen as both encouraging and discouraging to this group.

For those in the politically "inactive" range of scoring, the factors of the Code of Ethics, support of work colleagues and personal life factors were seen to be encouraging. Discouraging factors cited were confidence in the political process, understanding of the political process and position at the work setting.

One of the research questions referred to the expected difference between social workers attitudes and actions regarding political activity. Another question asked if members of the A.A.S.W. would support the principle that political action should be a part of the social worker's role. In fact, while 74.5 percent of the respondents expressed the attitude that they did have a professional obligation to be politically active, only 54.8 percent actually were politically active. It should be noted that this percentage represents greater political activity than Woodward and Roper attributed to the general population in their study in 1950 where 27.0 percent of the population were considered active. The researcher contends that the figure for the

general population would be higher if tested again today as it is known that improved education increases the likelihood of political involvement. Certainly today, more in the general population have a better education than did those in the 1950s.

The point being made is that the difference noted between social workers and the general public in their level of activity in political action is likely less broad than the figures would indicate. This study and Frederico and Puckett's (1987) show little variation in the level of political activity of social workers since the study done by Wolk (1982). It seems likely then that the gap between social workers and the public in general would have narrowed. No current research regarding the political activity level of the general population could be located to confirm this supposition. Again, given that foundations of social work were laid on the value base of advocacy, it is significant that it appears from the data that social workers are shown to be less politically active than other professionals. Again, the reader must bear in mind that data regarding professionals is dated.

One of the research questions asked which factors respondents would identify as encouraging factors to their involvement in political activity and which factors would be seen to be discouraging.

In fact, statistically significant correlations were found between respondents' political activity and the support of other A.A.S.W. members, their work position, their understanding of the political process, their confidence in the political process, and factors in their personal lives. The correlations were weak and would suggest that respondents found these factors encouraged them to be politically active. Still, respondents indicated low levels of political activity.

No statistically significant correlations were found between political activity and the factors related to respondents' training at a school of social work. The philosophy about political action, the skills taught regarding political action and the knowledge base regarding political action as taught by schools of social work were tested for relationships with respondents' political activity scores. These findings imply that schools of training had no significant influence in enabling social workers to be politically active.

Recommendations

The results of the study have led to much thought on the part of this researcher and the opportunity will be taken here to share some of those thoughts with the reader.

The researcher began this study with the basic premise that social workers have a commitment to social action and that this commitment is what sets social workers apart from other helping professionals. From this premise, she chose to study political action as a effective means of meeting this commitment and was supported in this choice by a framework of political economy theory. This study, then, had four themes:

1. To ask social workers if they indeed accepted the obligation to be politically active on behalf of disadvantaged persons and groups;
2. If this obligation was accepted in attitude, to see if it was substantiated in actions by social workers;
3. To ask what factors encouraged or discouraged social workers in being politically active and meeting their commitment to social change; and,

4. To make recommendations that would enhance the role of political action in the practice of social work.

The Schism in Social Work

The results indicate there is a schism in the profession in terms of whether or not political action is an obligation of the profession. As the Code of Ethics states that social action is a role of social workers, it becomes evident that for those who do not accept this role, there could be confusion or frustration. As one respondent commented:

. . . I find it discouraging when the president of the C.A.S.W. (Canadian Association of Social Workers) is tied to a political policy of status quo and is limited by the job to act. I am feeling very strongly that I no longer want to designate myself as a social worker. Instead, I want to specialize and call myself a family therapist or something that doesn't designate this ambiguous state that I as a social worker find myself in.

As Frederico and Puckett (1987) and Dyck (1972) suggested after finding the same results in their studies, the researcher would agree that the profession needs to actively seek to reconcile this schism. Until this is done, social workers are caught in an ethical dilemma in relation to professional responsibility. If the profession decides to accept this difference of beliefs, it should be done openly and clearly so that proponents of each ideal can acknowledge their role and "get on with it."

Perhaps the place to begin to look for such a consolidation of thought is to our schools of social work training. As indicated by the study's results, a good understanding of the political process can be a positive factor in helping individuals bring their actions in line with their attitudes. Schools could also offer a framework for social

work students to identify and/or shape their attitudes. Specific skills and knowledge are important but so too is the philosophy that a student is exposed to during the learning process.

One respondent commented that:

. . . political-social policy work needs recognition by the profession and deserves equal accountability as do other fields of practice.

The Association of Social Workers

Several comments were received which supported the view that a strong association of social workers was important in helping social workers meet their obligations to political activity. For example:

- We need to collectively do more and be louder! The A.A.S.W. can and should be a support, leader and motivator.
- I believe a strong professional association is necessary to overcome work-place discouragement of political action.
- Social workers must organize and speak up to be heard.
- I believe we need to be more politically active and need the A.A.S.W. to take a lead role in challenging us to step forward.

It is recommended that the A.A.S.W. continue in it's efforts to advance it's members awareness of the political actions that the association does, or it's individuals members, do take. A vehicle for communication among social workers is very important to keep social workers in touch with each other. Respondents reported that receiving support from other A.A.S.W. members was an important factor in encouraging them to be politically active. Social workers need to know they are not alone in

their efforts to achieve social change through social action strategies. Further, there seems to be ample evidence to warrant the A.A.S.W. actively working to increase members' knowledge base in terms of political action. Various learning tools could be used in this process ie. workshops, articles, conferences etc. It also seems that a concerted effort needs to be made by the association to attract a larger percentage of those practising in the field of social work as members. The association must overcome its image of being elitist, as was commented on by a respondent, and be seen to be a leader in social change actions.

The Work Setting and Employer's Policies and Practices

Finally, the work setting and policies and practices of employers were seen by many to be areas of discouragement by those who are not politically active. By the same token, those who were very politically active found these factors to be somewhat more encouraging. It would seem evident that some types of organizations and/or their administrators are able to provide positive influence in helping their staff meet their obligation to be politically active. Perhaps administrators and organizations need to be enlightened as to the role of social workers in advocacy and then education and organizational design could be enhanced to facilitate this role. This observation leads into a short discussion of areas of further research.

Recommended Research

It is clear that many questions remain unanswered by the information that could be accessed within the scope of this study. Some suggested areas for future study would include:

1. A study of those organizations that have staff who are considered politically "very active" could prove useful with the focus of the study being to look for any particular organizational models or management styles that encourage and enable social workers to meet their professional obligations in the area of social action.
2. Further study to see if there are any significant correlations between social workers political activity and their specific school of training is needed. If a positive correlation is found, further study could assess what course work or philosophy exist at those schools to promote the commitment to political action.
3. A study of the general population to again assess levels of political activity between various subpopulations and the public at large. This information is needed so that comparisons can be more accurately made.
4. A study of the differences between males and females in relation to their political activity actions to determine if conclusions about such differences are gender related or influenced by other factors.
5. As the studies cited in this thesis have all used modifications on the scoring of the Political Activity Index, some further work is warranted to reach a more uniform scoring for comparison purposes. Unless studies can be closely replicated their usefulness is diminished.

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APPENDIX A
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
BY
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



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Faculty of SOCIAL WORK

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FAX (403) 282-7269

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

by

THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

The PROJECT entitled:

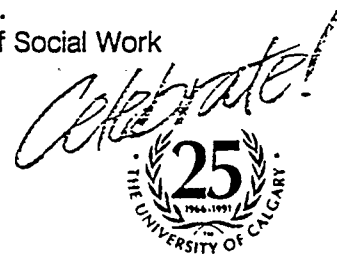
Social Workers and Political Action: If There's a Will, Is There a Way?

of Marlene Lumb (student)

in the judgement of this Committee, has met The University of Calgary ethical requirements for research with human subjects.

July 15/91
Date

RMJ
Richard M. Grinnell, Jr., Ph.D.
Research Services, Faculty of Social Work



APPENDIX B
LETTER OF REQUEST TO A.A.S.W.

July 5, 1991
927 32 St. N.W.
Calgary, AB.
T2N 2W3

Alberta Association of Social Workers
Suite 100
11831-123 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 0G7
Attention: Margaret Duncan

Dear Ms. Duncan;

I am writing to request the assistance of the A.A.S.W. in regards to research that I am doing as it relates to the thesis I am working on through the University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work.

The topic of my research is Social Workers and Political Action: If There's a Will, Is There a Way? I would like to survey social workers in Alberta about their attitudes and actions about political action as it relates to the social work profession. The mailed survey will also gather information about what factors social workers find encourage and which discourage them in their political activity.

In order for me to complete this research then, I have created the questionnaire you will find attached and ask for the A.A.S.W.'s executive to grant me permission to have access to the mailing list of the A.S.S.W. membership. The proposed research work has been approved by the University of Calgary's Ethics Committee. I will ensure that any information I receive regarding social workers who are contacted about the study will be kept completely confidential. No means of identifying respondents will be in place.

If council has any further questions about the proposed research, I can be contacted at the address given or by phone at 283-8679. Results of the study will also be made available to The A.A.S.W. on written request. I appreciate the time council will give to my request and am anxious to begin the study as soon as possible.

Yours truly,

Marlene Lumb
B.S.W., R.S.W.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE OF COVERING LETTER
and
QUESTIONNAIRE

Covering Letter to Participants

Marlene Lumb
Faculty of Social Work
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Participant:

I am asking for your help in completing research for the thesis requirements for my Master of Social Work degree from the University of Calgary. Specifically I'm requesting that you complete the attached questionnaire and return it in the enclosed pre-stamped envelope.

The topic of my research is Social Workers and Political Action: If There's A will Is There a Way? My readings to date have shown social workers are more politically active than those in the general public. Only one previous study has begun to look at factors which encourage or discourage a worker's decision to be political. The study will address this specific area as well as asking the question "Is this type of action necessary to enable social work professionals to offer better client service?"

The Alberta Association Social Workers has been made aware of the study and supplied me with a mailing list. Your name was randomly selected from this list.

Please be assured that all responses to my study will be kept completely confidential. No means of identifying respondents will be in place. Further, you are under no obligation to complete the questionnaire if you choose not to. Again however, I would very much appreciate your help in enabling me to reach graduation day.

Please complete and mail the questionnaire within 48 hours. It has been designed to only take a few minutes of your time. Again, thank you.

Yours truly,

Marlene Lumb

APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument

Section I

Please provide the following information about yourself by checking or completing the appropriate blank.

1. Sex: Male _____ Female _____
2. What was your age on your last birthday? _____ years
3. Please check your highest level of education:
B.S.W. _____ M.S.W. _____ D.S.W/Ph.D. _____ Other (specify) _____
4. Please indicate the number of years you consider your primary practice to have been in the areas given. You may mark more than one area.

social work management	_____ years
direct client service	_____ years
research	_____ years
social work education	_____ years
other (specify) _____	_____ years
5. Are you currently employed in (check more than one if applicable):

a private, not-for-profit agency?	Yes _____	No _____
a private, for-profit agency?	Yes _____	No _____
a government agency?	Yes _____	No _____
your own private practice (i.e., no agency affiliation)?	Yes _____	No _____
other (specify) _____	Yes _____	No _____
6. Do most of your clients live in:

a rural setting?	Yes _____	No _____
an urban setting?	Yes _____	No _____
7. Do you belong to a union? Yes _____ No _____

Section II

In this section, you are being asked to indicate your political actions in the recent past.

1. Are you a registered member of a political group? Yes _____ No _____
2. Are you a member of a lobby group? Yes _____ No _____
3. Have you attended one or more meetings of a political party in the past year? Yes _____ No _____
4. Have you communicated with a politician (Federal, Provincial, or Local) in the past year? Yes _____ No _____
5. Have you signed a petition destined for Parliament, the Legislature, City/Town Council, or a politician in the past year? Yes _____ No _____
6. Have you participated in the activities of a lobby group in the past year? Yes _____ No _____
7. Have you participated in a demonstration or other protest in the past year? Yes _____ No _____
8. Were you a campaign worker in the last election (Federal, Provincial, or Local)? Yes _____ No _____
9. How often do you discuss political matters with those outside of your immediate family? Never _____ Occasionally _____ Frequently _____
10. In comparing your political activity in the past year to your political activity in previous years, have you been:

More active _____	Less active _____	Remained the same _____
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------------

Section III

In this section, you are being asked to express your opinion relating to the professional obligation of various organizations to be politically active on behalf of disadvantaged persons or groups.

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Do social workers have a professional obligation to be politically active? | Yes ____ No ____ |
| 2. Does the Alberta Association of Social Workers (A.A.S.W.) have a professional obligation to be politically active? | Yes ____ No ____ |
| 3. Does your place of employment have a professional obligation to be politically active? | Yes ____ No ____ |
| 4. Do members of unions have a professional obligation to be politically active? | Yes ____ No ____ |

Section IV

In this section you are asked to indicate how the following conditions/factors affect your political activity. Please check the appropriate column to describe which factors encourage you, discourage you, or have no influence on your decision to be politically active.

- | | Encourages
You | Discourages
You | No
Influence |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. The support you receive from the A.A.S.W. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. The Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Your association with fellow A.A.S.W. members | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Your association with non-members of the A.A.S.W. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Your employer's policies and practices | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Your position within the hierarchy of your work setting | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Your fellow work colleagues | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Your understanding of how the political process works | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Your confidence in how the political process works | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Factors in your personal life (family, church, neighbours, etc.) | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Section V

In this section you are asked to indicate how your social work education has affected your political activity. Please check the column that describes which factors encouraged you, discouraged you, or had no influence on your political activity.

- | | Encourages
You | Discourages
You | No
Influence |
|---|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. The philosophy about political action of your school of training | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. The knowledge base regarding political action you were taught by your school | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. The skills regarding political action that were taught by your school | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Section VI

Has this questionnaire led you to any specific thoughts about social workers and political action?

Thank you for your early reply.

Marlene Lumb

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE OF REMINDER LETTER

August 28, 1991
927-32 St. N.W.
Calgary, AB.
T2N 2W3

Dear Participant;

About two weeks ago I sent you a survey and requested your help in completing my study entitled "Social Workers and Political Action: If There's a Will, Is There a Way"? As no means of identifying those who complete the survey is in place, I am sending reminder notices to everyone who was selected at random to be a participant in the research. If you have already returned your survey, please accept this as a note of thanks for your participation and quick response.

If you have not yet completed the survey, I am enclosing a second copy for your convenience. Perhaps you have been away on holidays and were not able to mail your response until now. If that is the case, welcome home and I look forward to hearing from you soon. The study should serve to enhance social work practices and education in the future. Therefore your thoughts and opinions are valuable.

Please forward your survey to: Marlene Lumb
927-32 St. N.W.
Calgary, AB.
T2N 2W3

Unfortunately, due to high costs, I am unable to include a second a second pre-stamped envelope for your use. Thank you for your anticipated attention to this matter..

Yours truly,

Marlene Lumb

Marlene Lumb