7TH EDITION

THE POLICY-BASED PROFESSION
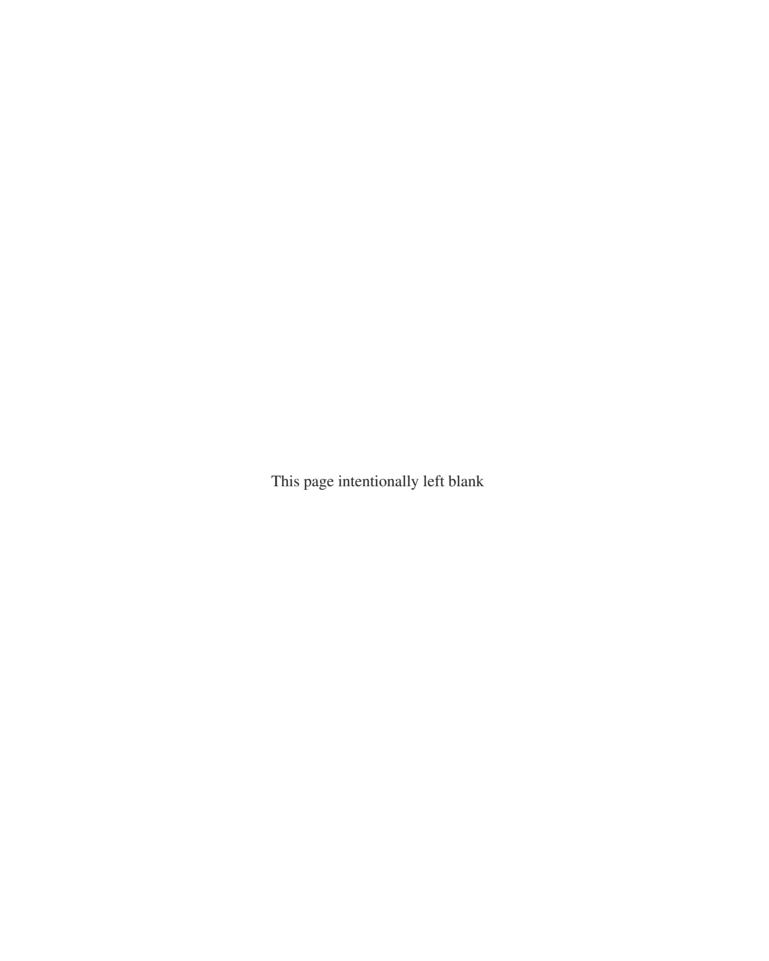
An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers

PHILIP R. POPPLE | LESLIE LEIGHNINGER

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Preface

For the seventh edition of *The Policy-Based Profession: An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers,* Dr. Robert Leighninger, editor of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare,* has been added as a named author. Bob has, in fact, been a shadow author since the very first edition of this book, but as his contribution has slowly grown, it has become obvious that he deserves formal recognition. Thanks to Bob for everything he has contributed to this book.

This book is written for students at both the baccalaureate and master's level of social work education. It is organized into four sections. The first outlines a policy-based model of the social work profession that explicitly recognizes the social welfare policy system as a major factor in social work practice, and in fact as a defining criterion of the social work profession. The second section presents a model of policy analysis that divides the task into three major facets of the policy context: historical, economic, and social. The third section of the book applies the policy analysis framework to representative policies and policy issues in the fields of public welfare, aging, mental health, substance abuse, health, child welfare, and immigration. The final section, "Taking Action" expands the book's treatment of the increasingly important area of politics and social welfare policy, and the social work profession's continually increasing emphasis on policy practice as an area of interest.

The previous edition of this book included, for the first time, a chapter on health policy. This was done, of course, in recognition of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) as an important addition to our country's safety net. Because we now have Donald Trump as president and the Republicans control both houses of Congress, the ACA is under serious attack, although all indications are that the act will prove much more resilient that its attackers ever imagined. Because health care is one of the major social welfare policy areas currently in play, we have made significant revisions, updates, and expansions to the health policy chapter.

For the seventh edition we have added, also for the first time, a chapter on immigration policy. We have done this for two major reasons. One is that immigration is now front and center as a major social justice issue with the current president's attempts to restrict immigration by proposing to build a wall on the border with Mexico and by placing what amounts to a ban on immigrants from majority Muslim countries. The second reason, of course, is that many social work clients are immigrants, and many of them are undocumented, so immigration policy is critical to their well-being; the social workers who assist them must be familiar with this policy area. On a more personal note, all of the authors either currently or recently have been affiliated with universities that are Hispanic-serving institutions. We have watched the struggle of students brought to this country as small children, who have done everything right, who are now earning professional degrees and facing the huge barrier to beginning their careers of being (through no fault of their own) undocumented. We were heartened by President Obama's executive order establishing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

(DACA) program and are hopeful that Congress will turn it into black letter law. By the time this book is published, the DACA issue will likely have been resolved. Parts of the immigration chapter will undoubtedly remain permanently relevant. This chapter explains that our country has periodically gone through periods of intense anxiety about immigration and has often responded in ways that are not constructive, but it has always emerged from the crisis ever more diverse and ever stronger. We are confident that this will happen once again.

Every chapter in this new edition has been updated to cover the most recent research, theories, and political developments related to each field of practice presented. Significant new material includes the problem of drug dependence among military veterans, the opioid epidemic, and the problem (and often tragic results) of social media bullying. In each area covered, we have purposefully avoided presenting a comprehensive (and soon outdated) overview of all current policies. Rather, our intent has been to choose a current example of a major social welfare issue within each policy area. Using these examples, we have sought to acquaint students with a process and skills for understanding policies that they can continue to apply in their professional practice. We hope that by teaching students to use a policy analysis technique, which we have termed *practitioner policy analysis,* we will equip them with a skill that will be useful throughout their careers and from which they can develop additional policy practice skills.

New to This Edition

The seventh edition of *The Policy-Based Profession: An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers* has been thoroughly updated to reflect current issues that affect social work policy:

- Content regarding the relevance of historical analysis in social welfare policy analysis has been strengthened (chapter 4).
- In keeping with the increasing emphasis in social work education on teaching policy practice skills, the relationship of policy analysis to practice with individuals, families, and small groups has been strengthened throughout.
- The health chapter (chapter 9), while acknowledging that it cannot keep up with the ongoing struggle to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, does discuss some of the favorite policies of those who favor repeal, specifically individual health savings accounts and separate high-risk insurance pools. There is also an example of a little discussed health care reform approach—concierge medicine.
- This edition includes a new chapter on immigration (chapter 11). The chapter discusses the epic drama of our glorious and not-so-glorious history of wave after wave of new arrivals and how each welcomed (or didn't) the next wave. Readers are challenged to decide whether current immigration stimulates or weakens our economy, whether it threatens the jobs of high-tech engineers and construction workers or creates new jobs in both areas, whether keeping the right people out of the country is worse than letting the wrong people in, whether immigrants commit more or fewer crimes than native-born citizens, whether refugees are carefully vetted before being allowed into the country or they just walk in, and other perplexing and debatable issues.
- Additional attention is directed to program evaluation as a policy analysis technique (chapters 10 and 13).

- Additional case vignettes illustrating the importance of understanding social welfare policy for direct practice social workers have been added throughout.
- Chapter 8 combines and updates the material formerly presented in the separate mental health and substance abuse chapters. The new chapter includes material on the opioid epidemic, problems faced by returning veterans, and recent responses to suicides caused by cyberbullying.
- The seventh edition includes updates on research and theory references, as well as references to the most current material (all chapters).

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Social Welfare Policy and the Social Work Profession

For me the realization of the importance of policy to social work practice came in a blinding flash, or an epiphany, as my theologically inclined friends would say. As a social work master's student, I had had little interest in policy, preferring to spend my time learning psychopathology, therapeutic techniques, group process, and all of the other sexy stuff taught in a typical social work graduate program. When I graduated, I became a training specialist for a large state department of social services; my primary assignment was to train the child welfare staff. In my new position, I developed and provided training programs on behavior modification techniques, risk assessment, and transactional analysis. I even included a session on an early version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. The only time I ever thought about policy was during the session for new employees in which I would discuss office hours, dress code, sick leave, vacation, and retirement.

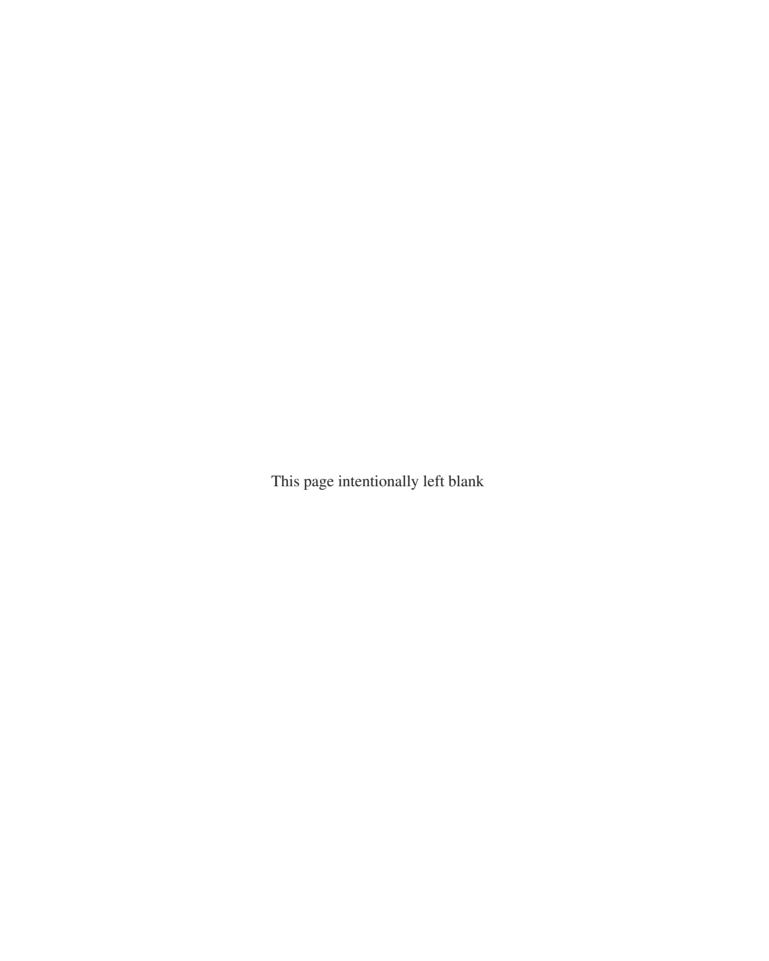I'm not sure whether it was because state office staff thought I was especially good or because they thought I was especially obnoxious, but I became the person of choice to supply mandated training in regions lacking training specialists. So I was sent to the largest office in the state—which had a staff so hostile that they had run out three training specialists in less than a year—to provide a series of three-day training sessions on how to fill out a new form.

This was a guaranteed loser for me. The staff hated state office; hated training; and, most of all, hated forms. I asked the director of training why she didn't just issue the staff guns and then dress me in a shirt with a target on it. The director told me not to worry; this was going to be great. This was not merely a simple bureaucratic form we were asking the staff to use but really a system to train them in principles and techniques of task-oriented social services (which the state office had begun to call TOSS). The staff would fill out a simple form for each of their cases, a form that would require them to select and prioritize from a standard list of codes, one or more goals for each case and then to list objectives required to reach each goal. The form would be updated each month with progress monitored by a computerized information system. The director showed me all the professionally developed curriculum material I would be supplied with to teach the staff this new problem-solving approach to social work practice.

When I began my first training session, it was as big a nightmare as I had imagined. The staff argued every step of the way. They said that task-oriented social services and the problem-solving method were fine, but they were already using this approach without the use of any long and complicated form. They argued that the reporting system would just get in the way of their work. They presented case after case that none of the preselected goals would fit. One guy, wearing the uniform of the professional radical of the era (beard, semilong hair, denim workshirt, American flag tie), selected a chair at the back of the room, leaned it against the wall, and promptly

fell asleep. I figured that as long as he didn't start snoring I would consider the day a success. He did, and I didn't.

The training was held on the campus of a college with a school of social work. By the end of the first day, I was thoroughly depressed and wandered over to the school in hopes of finding someone who could help me salvage this disaster. I ran into an acquaintance who was a professor of social policy. As she liked to keep tabs on activities of the Department of Social Services, she was happy to talk to me. She patiently listened to a lengthy tirade about my day, looked at the training material, and said, "Of course this is going badly. This form has nothing to do with social work practice and the staff knows it. This form has to do with social policy, but your state office staff doesn't think the field staff can understand and appreciate policy. They think the staff will only respond to issues if they are presented in terms of direct practice." Over takeout Chinese food, she spent much of the evening explaining social service funding to me, pointing out that the state could receive reimbursement from the federal government for 90 percent of the cost of services related to family planning, 75 percent for social services to welfare-eligible children, but less than 50 percent for services to children not eligible for welfare. She said, "Obviously, the state wants to report services in the categories where they will receive the highest match. The higher the rate of reimbursement, the greater the amount of services the state will be able to provide. Staff can understand and appreciate this; why don't you just tell them?"

Following the professor's advice, and with an armload of books and photocopied journal articles she lent me, I returned to my hotel and stayed up most of the night revising my curriculum. The next morning, I faced my now more-hostile-than-ever class and explained that we were going to approach the TOSS form from a slightly different angle. I spent about an hour discussing social service funding streams and how the state could maximize services by accurately reporting services to the federal government. I then deconstructed the form to show how, although it might have some slight relation to task-oriented social services, its actual purpose was to get the best reimbursement rate we could for services provided. To my surprise, the staff had become quiet and attentive; they were even showing some glimmer of interest. At the end of my presentation, the guy at the back of the room, who had resumed leaning against the wall but had not fallen asleep, leaned forward so the front legs of his chair hit the floor with a crash, and almost yelled, "Oh, I get it. This form's to screw the feds. I can do that!" I responded that I preferred to view it as a system to maximize the federal reimbursement the state could legitimately claim under existing laws, but if he wished to view it as screwing the feds, that was all right with me.

Once I made the purpose of the form clear, teaching the staff how to use it was relatively simple. In fact, we finished the training session a whole day early. I surveyed the class to see how they would like to spend the time left. They decided that they would like to discuss new techniques of social work practice, as long as the techniques did not involve any state office forms.

—Philip Popple

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The state office administrators in the example given in Part One assumed that the social workers to be trained would not be receptive to a social policy explanation because of what Bruce Jansson refers to as the mythology of autonomous practice. By this Jansson means that social workers tend to approach practice under the assumption that they and their clients are relatively insulated from external policies. This mythology has led the profession to develop practice theories that focus heavily on the individual dimension of problems, causing a general disinterest in their *policy* context. Jansson (1990) states, "This notion of autonomous practice has had a curious and persistent strength in the social work profession" (p. 2). This perception of social policy also appears internationally, as illustrated by a study of the social policy curriculum in Australia. The author, Philip Mendes (2003), states that "in practice social policy seems to be peripheral to most social work courses in Australia" and that "social work students [have] the impression that social policy is simply about theoretical knowledge, without any need for practical application" (p. 220). In this chapter, we argue that the mythology of autonomous practice has been directly related to social work's efforts to achieve professional status. These efforts have been based on a flawed theory of what professionalization means, a theory that equated autonomy with private practice and that assigned primary importance to the development of practice techniques.

**Thoughts for
Social Work Practice**

The practice perspective that differentiates social work from other helping professions is referred to as person-in-environment. The environment part of this equation includes a client's family, job, finances, and so forth. It also includes the policies providing the client with critical resources and services. Think about the benefits to a client of his or her social worker understanding these policies, that is, not being prey to the myth of autonomous practice.

**Thoughts for
Social Work Practice**

Do you agree or disagree with the concern of some social workers that defining the focus of social work as moving people from dependence to interdependence makes it a social control profession? Could this also make it a social change profession?

We will argue that looking at social work within a more up-to-date and accurate theory of professions leads to the conclusion that policy is not only relevant to the day-to-day activities of social workers but is also central to the definition and mission of the profession. We will also argue that the profession's recent emphasis on competencies demands that social workers' mastery of policy must go beyond simply understanding it as the context of practice to the development of demonstrable skills (Council on Social Work Education, 2015; Petracchi & Zastrow, 2010). Before we can get to these topics, however, we must first look at the function of social work in society and how policy became relegated to secondary status in the profession, a victim of social work's professional aspirations.

THE TARGET OF SOCIAL WORK— THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Stuart (1999) observes that "social work's unique and distinctive contribution to American life, often expressed as a dual focus on the person and his or her environment, resulted from a specific frame of reference that linked clients and social policy" (p. 335). By this Stuart means that we do not limit our concern to a person's intrapsychic functioning; we also seek to understand and manipulate factors in the environment that contribute to his or her problems. Some of these environmental factors are close to the person—for example, family, job, and neighborhood. However, people are also affected by factors in the larger environment—affirmative action laws, public welfare programs, United Way fund-raising campaigns, church positions on social issues, and the like. The social work profession is distinctive for its interest in all these factors and issues.

The Social Function of Social Work

Social work's concern with person-in-environment stems from the profession's social function. Social work is the core technology in the social welfare institution, the institution in society that deals with the problem of dependency. Dependency occurs when an individual is not adequately fulfilling a role (e.g., providing physical care for his children) and social institutions are not providing adequate supports to enable the individual to fulfill a role (e.g., good quality, affordable child care is not available), and these situations cause problems for the community that require a response. By this we mean that every person in society occupies a number of social positions or statuses (mother, teacher, consumer, citizen, etc.), and attached to each of these positions are a number of social roles (nurturing children, communicating information, shopping, voting, etc.). These positions and roles are located within social institutions that support people in their efforts to meet role expectations successfully. For example, the role of employees occurs within the economic institution, which

must be functioning well enough to provide jobs for most people. When an individual is doing everything necessary to fulfill a role and the appropriate social institutions are functioning well enough to support the person's role performance, we have a situation we refer to as interdependence (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

When most people and institutions are functioning interdependently, society operates smoothly. However, when people fail to perform roles adequately or social institutions fail to support people sufficiently in their role performance, social stability is threatened. Common examples of individual role failure are as follows:

- A woman is unemployed because she has difficulty controlling her temper.
- A single father leaves his two-year-old son at home alone for an extended time while he goes fishing.
- A fifteen-year-old does not attend school because he prefers to sleep late and play video games.

Examples of failure of social institutions to support individual role performance are as follows:

- A woman is unemployed because Wall Street financiers have bought the company for which she worked, sold off its assets, and laid off most of its workforce (Alexander, 2017).
- A single father leaves his two-year-old son at home alone while he works because there is no affordable day care available.
- A fifteen-year-old with a learning disability does not attend school because the school does not offer a program that meets his special needs.

The Dual Targets of Social Work

Because of the dual focus of the social welfare institution, the social work profession also has two targets. One target is to help individuals having difficulty meeting individual role expectations. This is the type of social work generally referred to as social work practice with individuals, families, and small groups, also referred to as *micropractice* or clinical social work. The other goal of social work is to deal with those aspects of social institutions that fail to support individuals in fulfilling role expectations (Atherton, 1969). This type of social work, sometimes referred to as *macropractice* or social work administration, policy, and planning, is what we are concerned with in the study of social welfare policy.

The Dominance of Micropractice

Social workers have long recognized that micro- and macropractice are complementary, but they have generally emphasized the micro, individual treatment aspect of the profession. The early social work leader and theoretician Mary Richmond referred to the dual nature of social work as *retail* and *wholesale,* saying, "The healthy and well-rounded reform movement usually begins in the retail method and returns to it again, forming in the two curves of its upward push and downward pull a complete circle" (Richmond, 1930, pp. 111–112). By this she meant, according to Richmond scholar Peggy Pittman-Munke (1999), that social work policy should be designed

> to utilize the rich material gathered through painstaking casework in a way which
> causes the problem to wear flesh and bones and breathe, to aggregate the data

to present statistics which will convince policy makers of the need for reform, to organize and mount a successful campaign to see the legislation become a reality, and then to use case work as a way to evaluate the outcome of the legislation.

Another early leader, Porter R. Lee, referred to these aspects of social work as *cause* (working to effect social change) and *function* (treatment of individual role difficulties). He felt that function was the proper professional concern of social work. Lee (1937) argued that a cause, once successful, naturally tended to "transfer its interest and its responsibility to an administrative unit" that justified its existence by the test of efficiency, not zeal—by its "demonstrated possibilities of achievement" rather than by the "faith and purpose of its adherents" (pp. 4–9). The emphasis of the function was on "organization, technique, standards, and efficiency." Fervor inspired the cause, whereas intelligence directed the function. Lee felt that, once the cause had been won, it was necessary that it be institutionalized as a function to make the gains permanent. He saw this as the primary task of professional social work.

The opinions of Richmond and Lee have continued to represent the position of the vast majority of social work professionals. Practice with individuals, families, and small groups to treat problems of individual role performance continues to be the focus of most social work. Even though social workers will admit that problems with social institutions are at the root of most client problems, we have tended to persist in dealing primarily with the individual client. There are three main reasons for this tendency: (1) The individual is the most immediate target for change, (2) U.S. society is generally conservative, and (3) social work has chosen to follow a particular model of professionalism throughout most of the twentieth century.

The Individual Is the Most Immediate Target for Change

An individual with a problem cannot wait for a social policy change to come along and solve the problem. For example, the main reason a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) mother runs out of money before the end of the month is, no doubt, the extremely small amount of money she receives, an *institutional* problem. If the size of the mother's grant were to increase, her problem might well disappear. However, this is not going to happen in the near future, so the social worker must concentrate on aspects of the mother's behavior that can be changed to stretch out her small budget and to help her develop skills in manipulating the system to ensure that she receives the maximum benefits to which she is entitled.

The Conservative Nature of U.S. Society

Another reason for the social work profession's strong emphasis on individual role performance is that U.S. society is rather conservative and firmly believes in the notion of individualism. We strongly believe that people deserve the majority of credit for any success they experience and, conversely, deserve most of the blame for any failures. We resent, and often make fun of, explanations of people's personal situations that attribute anything to factors external to the individual (Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1965). Explanations that attribute poverty, for example, to factors such as the job market, neighborhood disintegration, racism, and so forth, will often be dismissed as "bleeding-heart liberal" explanations. In a society characterized by such attitudes, a model of social work that concentrates on problems of individual role

performance is obviously much more readily accepted and supported than one that seeks environmental change.

Professionalization

The final explanation of social work's emphasis on treating individual causes of dependency and de-emphasizing institutional causes is little recognized but of key importance. This is the model of professionalism that social work subscribed to early in the twentieth century, and social work's subsequent efforts to achieve professional status have been based on this model. It is to this model that we now turn.

SOCIAL WORK'S PURSUIT OF PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Social work as a paid occupation has existed for only a little over 100 years. From the very beginning, those engaged in the provision of social services have been concerned, some would say preoccupied, with the status of their activities in the world of work, specifically with gaining recognition as a profession rather than simply as an occupation.

When social workers began to organize to improve their status, there was a conflict between those who thought the new profession should concentrate on institutional causes of dependency (social welfare policy) and those who were more interested in developing techniques and knowledge useful for helping individuals experiencing role failure (social work practice). Social work leaders such as Samuel McCune Lindsey at the New York School of Social Work, Edith Abbott at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, and George Mangold at the Missouri School of Social Economy argued for a profession based on social and economic theory and with a social reform orientation. Mangold (1914) stated:

> The leaders of social work . . . can subordinate technique to an understanding of the social problems that are involved. . . . Fundamental principles, both in economics and in sociology, are necessary for the development of their plans of community welfare. . . . Courses in problems of poverty and in the method and technique of charity organizations are fundamental to our work. But the study of economics of labor is quite as important, and lies at the basis of our living and social condition. . . . The gain is but slight if our philanthropy means nothing more than relieving distress here and helping a family there; the permanent gain comes only as we are able to work out policies that mean the permanent improvement of social conditions. (pp. 86–90)

On the other hand, a number of social work leaders believed that the new profession should concentrate on the development of practical knowledge related to addressing problems of individual role performance. The Charity Organization Society leader Mary Richmond advocated using case records and the experiences of senior social workers to train new workers in practical techniques of work with individuals. Frank Bruno (1928) argued that social work should be concerned with "processes . . . with all technical methods from the activities of boards of directors to the means used by a probation officer to rectify the conduct of a delinquent child" (p. 4).

The debate regarding the focus of the new social work profession came to a head at the 1915 meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Correction. Abraham Flexner, famed critic of the medical profession, had been asked to prepare a paper for the

conference analyzing social work as a profession. Flexner (1915) began his analysis with the first clear statement of traits that differentiate professions from "lesser occupations." He asserted that

> professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self-organization; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivations. (pp. 285–288, 581, 585)

Following his definition of profession as a concept, Flexner measured social work against this definition. He found that social work strongly exhibited some professional traits—it was intellectual, derived its knowledge from science and learning, possessed a "professional self-consciousness," and was altruistic. However, in several important criteria, mainly those of educationally communicable technique and individual responsibility, Flexner found social work lacking.

Regarding social work's lack of an educationally communicable technique, Flexner felt the source of the deficiency was the broadness of its boundaries. He believed that professions should have definite and specific ends. However, "the high degree of specialized competency required for action and conditioned on limitation of area cannot possibly go with the width and scope characteristic of social work." Flexner (1915) believed that this lack of specificity seriously affected the possibility of professional training. "The occupations of social workers are so numerous and diverse that no compact, purposefully organized educational discipline is possible" (pp. 285–288).

In the area of individual responsibility, Flexner (1915) felt that social workers were mediators rather than responsible parties.

> The social worker takes hold of a case, that of a disintegrating family, a wrecked individual, or an unsocialized industry. Having localized his problem, having decided on its particular nature, is he not usually driven to invoke the specialized agency, professional or other, best equipped to handle it? . . . To the extent that the social worker mediates the intervention of the particular agent or agency best fitted to deal with the specific emergency which he has encountered, is the social worker himself a professional or is he the intelligence that brings this or that profession or other activity into action? (p. 585)

Social workers took Flexner's message to heart such that "Is Social Work a

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The conditions under which clients receive services are a direct result of social welfare policy.

Profession?" is probably the most frequently cited paper in the social work literature. David Austin (1983) asserts that Flexner's "model of an established profession became the most important organizing concept in the conceptual development of social work and, in particular, social work education." Following the presentation of the paper, social workers consciously set out to remedy the deficiencies identified by Flexner, mainly the development of an educationally communicable technique and the assumption of "large individual responsibility."

In the area of technique, the profession chose to emphasize practice with individuals, families, and small groups, or *social casework* as it was then called. The committee charged with responding to Flexner's paper stated, "This committee . . . respectfully suggests that the chief problem facing social work is the development of training methods which will give it [a] technical basis" (Lee, 1915, pp. 576–590). The committee felt that the social work profession had the beginning of an educationally communicable technique in the area of social casework and that the profession should narrow its focus to emphasize this. This view was institutionalized in 1919 when the American Association of Professional Schools of Social Work was founded, dominated by educators who subscribed to the Flexner model for the profession. At an early meeting, it was voted that students receive training in casework, statistics, and community service. F. Stuart Chapin, director of the Smith College Training School for Social Work, proposed that social legislation be included as a fundamental curriculum area. This was voted down, based on the argument that social legislation lacked clarity and technique and was not suitable for fieldwork. Likewise, settlement house work was considered to be unsuitable for professional education. Settlements emphasized "mere neighborliness" and were opposed to the idea that their residents were more expert than their neighbors (Lubove, 1965). Thus, within a relatively few years following Flexner's paper, social work had all but eliminated knowledge and skills related to social policy from the profession's domain, substituting a nearly exclusive focus on techniques demonstrated as useful in helping individuals solve problems of role functioning.

The second area in which Flexner considered social work deficient in meeting the criteria of professionalization is that of "assuming large individual responsibility." Flexner was referring to what is now generally termed *professional authority* or *autonomy*. According to Greenwood (1957), "In a professional relationship . . . the professional dictates what is good or evil for the client, who has no choice but to accede to professional judgement." Professional autonomy is closely related to professional expertise because it is on expertise that authority or autonomy is based.

Although neither Flexner nor any other theorist said it directly, social workers have come to equate professional autonomy with a private practice model of service delivery. Two reasons for this interpretation come to mind. The first is that Flexner's model of a profession was based on medicine, which he viewed as the prototypical "true" profession. Because the predominant model of medicine during most of the twentieth century was private practice, social workers naturally assumed that private practice was the key to autonomy. The second reason is that a person with no boss—as is the case in private practice—is obviously autonomous. But whatever the reason, the result of this interpretation has been to push social work further away from policy toward an individual treatment model of practice. As Austin (1983) has observed,

> the emphasis on distinctive method also reinforced a focus on the casework counseling interview as the core professional technique in social work. This was

a technique that could most readily be adapted to a private-practice model—a model that has been viewed by many practitioners as a close approximation to the medical model of professionalism that Flexner had in mind. (p. 369)

In summary, for better or for worse, the adoption of a model of professionalization based on Flexner's criteria caused, or perhaps simply accelerated, the trend in social work to define the profession as being focused on role difficulties of individuals (casework) and to de-emphasize concern with the institutional causes of role failure (social welfare policy). Social workers were concerned with identifying and demonstrating an educationally communicable technique. Casework with individuals and families appeared to be more promising than a concern with social welfare policy, which was—and still is—amorphous and hard to conceptualize. Social workers were also concerned with being able to practice autonomously, which they came to associate with private practice. The types of professional roles associated with social policy almost always occur in large organizations, which have traditionally been viewed as threats to autonomy. The definition of professional autonomy as ideally occurring in private practice has furthered the perception of social welfare policy as tangential to the social work profession.

Thus, social workers' concern with professionalization has been an important reason for the relatively low interest in social welfare policy in the profession. It appears, however, that this model of professionalism contains some major errors. Flexner's model of professionalism was based on medicine; it assumed that medicine was a prototypical profession and that, as other occupations began to achieve professional status, they would increasingly resemble medicine. It is now apparent that medicine, rather than being a prototypical profession, was in fact an anomaly (Ritzer, 1975). For various social and political reasons, medicine was able to escape both the corporation and the bureaucracy, and thus was able to control its domain completely and determine most of its own working conditions (Starr, 1982). However, rather than social work developing and becoming more like medicine, things have moved in quite the opposite direction.

Medicine is now coming under the control of the corporation and the bureaucracy and, in terms of occupational organization, is coming more and more to resemble social work. These developments indicate errors in the Flexner model of professions and call for a reexamination of the concept. This reexamination should develop the concept so that professionalism can be understood without assuming that professionals should be private practitioners and high-level technicians. In the following section, we attempt such a reexamination.

THE POLICY-BASED PROFESSION

The model developed by Flexner might well be termed the *market-based profession*. This model, based on the medical profession in the early part of the twentieth century, assumes that the professional is essentially a small-business person. The product that the professional is selling is his or her expertise. The basic relationship, illustrated in Figure 1.1, is dyadic. The consumer comes to the professional stating a problem, the professional diagnoses the problem and prescribes a solution, the consumer requests the solution that the professional provides, and the consumer pays the bill. The demonstration of specific techniques is key in the market-based model because these represent the "products" that the professional is selling. Autonomy is assumed in this model to result from the fact that the professional is his or her own boss.

Figure 1.1
The Market-Based Profession

Two general developments accelerated over the course of the twentieth century and indicate that the market-based model of professions no longer reflects reality accurately, if it ever did. The first is that the trend in all professions has been for professionals to become employees in organizations rather than private practitioners. Even medicine, long viewed as the ideal independent profession, shows signs of an eroding independent practice base. Paul Starr (1982) observes:

> The AMA [American Medical Association] is no longer as devoted to solo practice either. "We are not opposed to the corporate practice of medicine," says Dr. Sammons of the AMA. "There is no way that we could be," he adds, pointing out that a high proportion of the AMA's members are now involved in corporate practice. According to AMA data, some 26 percent of physicians have contractual relationships with hospitals; three out of five of these doctors are on salary. . . . Many physicians in private practice receive part of their income through independent practice associations, HMOs [health maintenance organizations], and for-profit hospitals and other health care companies. The growth of corporate medicine has simply gone too far for the AMA to oppose it outright. (p. 446)

Although the number of social workers in private practice has steadily increased in recent years—and, as social workers succeed in their efforts to be eligible for third-party reimbursement (insurance), this number will increase even more—it is certain that a high proportion of social workers will continue to earn their living within organizational settings. Thus, a common work setting for professionals in many fields has become a public or private bureaucracy rather than a private practice.

The second development that indicates the market-based model of professions is outdated is that professional practice, even in private settings, is increasingly subject to the dictates of external bodies. The psychiatry profession developed the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* in response to pressure from insurance companies to classify various treatments for insurance reimbursement. This manual is now the bible guiding the practice of mental health professionals, regardless of what they may feel about the evil of labeling. The practice of lawyers is subject to the dictates of banks, title companies, and state and federal justice departments, as well as the entire court system. Before a physician can hospitalize a patient, an insurance company generally has to approve the proposed treatment for payment; once the patient is in the hospital, the length of stay is usually determined not by the patient's physician but by the insurance company, managed care organization, or governmental agency that will eventually pay most of the bill.

Figure 1.2
The Policy-Based Profession

Social workers in "private practice" receive most of their income through membership in managed-care panels, where they are paid by large insurance companies or HMOs. The list of examples could go on and on to illustrate our point that even professionals who are in so-called independent practice are now subject to all sorts of influences and controls by external organizations.

The model of professionalism reflecting occupational reality in the twenty-first century is called the *policy-based profession*. This model, illustrated in Figure 1.2, is based on a triadic relationship. The triad is composed of three systems—the professional system, the client system, and the policy system. The policy-based model recognizes that, although a professional provides services on behalf of a client, it is often not the client who requests the services, defines the problem, or pays the professional.

Recognizing that professions are now predominantly policy-based rather than market-based leads to two major revisions of the traditional way of looking at professions, each contributing to the argument that social welfare policy must be a central concern of the social work profession. The first regards the matter of expert technique and the second regards practice within an organizational setting.

Expert Technique

According to Flexner and all the social theorists following him who subscribe to the market-based model, an occupation becomes recognized as a profession by developing techniques in the same way a business develops a product: by marketing the technique and, if successful, "accomplishing profession," to use Robert Dingwall's (1976) term. This process, however, does not follow from what we know of the history of professions. All professions were recognized as professions *before* they had any particularly effective techniques. This includes medicine, which was not particularly effective until the twentieth century. Many professions—the clergy, for example—do not now and probably never will have such techniques. By pursuing this trait (developing marketable techniques), social workers have defined a number of areas as outside the scope of the profession, generally areas related to social welfare policy, because they were not seen as amenable to the development of specific, educationally communicable techniques.

Rather than expert technique, *social assignment* appears to be crucial for an occupation to be recognized as a profession. Professions exist for the purpose of managing

problems critical to society; the successful profession is recognized by society as being primarily responsible for a given social problem area. Medicine is charged with dealing with physical health, law with management of deviance and civil relations, engineering with the practical applications of technology, education with the communication of socially critical knowledge and skills, and social work with the management of dependency. All professions have wide and complex bodies of knowledge, and all have a theory base. However, the degree to which this knowledge and theory is translated into educationally communicable techniques varies widely. Medicine and engineering have rather precise, educationally communicable techniques; law and the clergy have techniques that are somewhat less precise. Rather than specific techniques, these professions base their authority on mastery of complex cultural traditions. The important point is that the possession of technique is not what is crucial for the development of a profession; rather, what *is* crucial is the identification of one occupation over others to be given primary responsibility for the management of a social problem (Popple, 1985).

Professional Practice within an Organizational Context

Traditional theory, based on Flexner's work, equates professional autonomy with the autonomy of the independent practitioner who is his or her own boss. Over the course of the twentieth century, more and more professionals came to work in traditional bureaucratic organizations, and the question arose whether this development erodes the very basis of professional autonomy. The theoretical position that argues this most forcefully is called *proletarianization*. This thesis emphasizes the loss of control that professionals supposedly experience when they work in large organizations. According to Eliot Freidson (1984),

> this thesis stems from Marx's theory of history, in which he asserts that over time the intrinsic characteristics of capitalism will reduce virtually all workers to the status of the proletariat, i.e., dependent on selling their labor in order to survive and stripped of all control over the substance and process of their work. (p. 3)

Supposedly, in organizations, the authority of the office is substituted for the authority of professional expertise. In other words, a person working in a bureaucracy is required to take direction from any person who occupies a superior position in the organization, regardless of whether the person has equal or greater expertise in the professional task being performed. Thus, when employed in an organization, a professional does not have autonomy.

Sociologists who have studied professionals working in organizations have found that the fears of losing professional autonomy in such settings have been greatly exaggerated. Instead, the organizations in which professionals typically work—hospitals, schools, law firms, social agencies, and so forth—have developed as hybrid forms that deviate from the ideal type of bureaucracy in order to accommodate professionals. Freidson (1984) states

> studies [of professionals in organizations], as well as more recent developments in organizational theory, call into question the validity of the assumption that large organizations employing professionals are sufficiently bureaucratic to allow one to assume that professional work within them is ordered and controlled by strictly bureaucratic means. (pp. 10–11)

A number of developments have enabled professionals to work in organizations while maintaining sufficient autonomy to perform their professional roles. First, professionals have come to be recognized as a special group under U.S. labor law because they are expected to exercise judgment and discretion on a routine, daily basis in the course of performing their work. In other words, discretion is a recognized and legitimate part of their work role. Second, professionals are subject to a different type of supervision than are ordinary rank-and-file workers. Ordinary workers are generally supervised by someone who has been trained as a manager, not as a worker in the area being supervised. Professionals, however, generally are entitled to expect supervision only from a member of their own profession. In social agencies, supervisors, managers, and often even executive positions are reserved for persons trained and licensed as social workers (Freidson, 1984, pp. 10–12).

SOCIAL WORK AS A POLICY-BASED PROFESSION: PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Recognizing that social work is a policy-based rather than a market-based profession clarifies and legitimizes the place of social welfare policy as a central concern. First, the policy-based model, while recognizing that the development of technique is important for any profession, also recognizes that functions do not need to be excluded from a profession's concern simply because they are not amenable to the development of narrow, specific procedures. This recognition legitimizes the inclusion of policy content such as policy analysis, administration, negotiation, planning, and so forth. Such inclusion has often been questioned because it was viewed as not being amenable to the development of "educationally communicable techniques." Second, the policy-based model recognizes that the social work profession will probably always exist in an organizational context and that social work's long experience in providing services within this context should be viewed as a strength rather than a weakness of the profession. Finally, the policy-based model explicitly recognizes the policy system as a major factor in social work practice and emphasizes that understanding this system is every bit as important for social work practitioners as understanding basic concepts of human behavior.

A number of roles within social work are described as policy practice roles, including roles mentioned previously—planner, administrator, policy analyst, program evaluator, and so on. In the years following the Flexner report, there was a good deal of debate whether these were really social work practice roles or something else, perhaps public administration. Tortured rationales were often developed that defined these roles as casework techniques applied to different settings and populations. The 1959 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) curriculum study, for example, concluded, "As the administration project progressed, it became more and more clear that what we were discussing in the preparation of social work students for executive level positions was social work [practice] in an administrative setting and not administration in a social work setting" (Spencer, 1959, p. 9). Over the years, however, these roles have come to be defined as legitimate areas of social work practice without resorting to defining them as social casework applied to a different setting. Many graduate schools of social work now offer a concentration in administration, policy, and planning, often called macro social work practice.

Social Welfare Policy and Social Work Competencies

Largely driven by changes in standards set by the educational accrediting body, the CSWE, the social work profession in recent years has become increasingly concerned with specifying and measuring competencies, that is, what graduate social workers can demonstrate that they can actually do. It is interesting to note that the definition of competencies and discussions around this topic almost exactly tracks what Flexner called "educationally communicable techniques" almost a century ago. The difference is that we now recognize that social work responded to Flexner's critique by developing a far too narrow conceptualization of what social work competencies are. If you will recall from our previous discussion, following Flexner, social work moved to define the social work technique as almost exclusively practice with individuals, families, and small groups, at the time called social casework. It is interesting to understand that historians recognized the folly of this approach far earlier than social workers. Roy Lubove, for example, wrote in 1965, "If social work could claim any distinctive function in an atomized urban society with serious problems of group communication and mass deprivation, it was not individual therapy but liaison between groups and the stimulation of social legislation and institutional change" (pp. 147, 106–107, 220–221). Over the past fifty years, administration and policy, which has become known as macropractice, has assumed a major role in the definition of professional social work. However, it has only been since the 2008 revision of social work school accreditation standards, which were carried forward into the 2015 standards and emphasized the demonstration of competencies, that is, techniques that have been educationally communicated, that the profession has turned to the difficult issue of demonstrating the skills that macrolevel social workers can actually demonstrate.

The 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), the document that the CSWE uses to accredit undergraduate and master's level social work programs (doctoral level programs are not accredited by the CSWE), identifies "engage in policy practice" as one of nine competencies that schools must demonstrate they are teaching students. Four areas of knowledge, values, and skill are identified as contributing to this competency:

- Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development.
- Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within these settings.
- Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy.
- They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. (CSWE, 2015)

In the following chapters, we address each of these areas of the competency. For the historical knowledge area, we not only include information on the history and development of each of the major areas of social welfare services, we also include information aimed at developing skills in historical research methods, including the importance and use of primary source material, so social workers reading this text will be competent

to update this knowledge on their own. For the second area, policy practice, we have included chapters on politics and on how social workers can take action to improve policy. For the third area, understanding influences that affect social policy, we include seven chapters looking at how these influences affect policies in the areas of poverty, aging, mental health, health, child welfare, and immigration. The final competency area, policy analysis, formulation, implementation, and evaluation, is the main focus of this book. For this we provide a detailed policy analysis outline in the introduction to Part Two, three chapters expanding and elucidating the outline, and the seven chapters mentioned above illustrating the use of the outline to analyze major social welfare policies.

Policy Practice as a Social Worker Role

Social welfare policy has always been part of the education of social workers. For most of the twentieth century, it was taught as part of the foundation curriculum for reasons similar to American history being taught to high school students. American history is taught based on the belief that this content, while of little applied value, is necessary information for students to understand their role as citizens. Likewise, social welfare policy content used to be considered to be of little practice value but was necessary for social workers to understand and value their function as professionals. This view began to change in the 1980s when scholars such as Bruce Jansson (1984) began to argue that policy should not be simply a foundation area but also a specialization that has come to be called policy practice. More recently, Jansson (2008) has begun to differentiate what social workers do as *policy advocacy*, which he sees as a specialized part of policy practice. *Policy practice* is seen as a function of anyone or any entity (General Motors, for example) who wants to establish new policies, improve existing ones, or defeat the policy initiatives of others. Policy advocacy, according to Jansson (2008), is policy practice that aims to help relatively powerless groups improve their resources and opportunities.

For the purposes of this text, we define policy practice as that aspect of social work macropractice that is concerned with policy advocacy, development, and analysis within the framework of social work values, particularly the value of social justice. The other two major aspects of social work macropractice, community development and organizing, and organizational management and leadership, are outside the scope of policy practice. The major methods of policy practice are identified as legislative advocacy, reform through litigation, social action, and social welfare policy analysis (Figueira-McDonough, 1993). The latter method is the major focus of this text.

One final question about policy practice: Is it a role reserved for specialists or is it part of the role set of all practicing social workers? Our answer to this is that it is both. A number of social workers, trained at the MSW level with specializations in macropractice, spend their careers as policy practitioners. Examples of such positions in other careers are legislative aide to a Congress member, policy analyst for state agencies such as departments of mental health, and lobbyists for social welfare organizations such as the Child Welfare League of America. In this text, however, we are most concerned with the policy knowledge and skills needed by direct-practice social work practitioners whose major role is not policy. Although policy may not be the major concern of a frontline social worker (a child protective services worker, for example), this worker's professional responsibilities still involve policy concerns. As Rocha (2007) has noted ". . . if a social worker has a client who experiences a problem maneuvering through the maze of social programs and we assist her or him in gaining resources, then we are performing case

advocacy. But if we see client after client having the same problem, then it becomes a waste of valuable time and resources to individually advocate for each client. That is when policy practice comes into play."

The Importance of Understanding Social Welfare Policy for the Direct-Practice Social Worker

This text, as previously mentioned, is not aimed mainly at social workers preparing for specialized policy practice roles. It is also aimed at people interested in more traditional direct-practice roles with individuals, families, and small groups. In this chapter, we have argued that the study of policy is relevant, in fact a *necessity,* for this group because policy is built into the very fabric of social work practice just as much as the study of human behavior. Social work's concern with policy is a logical extension of our person-in-environment perspective. Up to this point, this discussion has been rather abstract and theoretical. The reader is justified at this point in looking for specific examples of the ways policy affects direct practice. The following, although not a complete classification of ways that policy directly relates to practice, offers a few of many possible examples.

Policy Determines the Major Goals of Service

A basic component of social work practice is the setting of case goals. As illustrated by the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, the range of possible goals is not entirely up to the judgment of the individual social work practitioner but rather is greatly restricted, and sometimes actually prescribed, by agency policy. A good example of this is shown in child protective services. For a number of years, protective service policy was based on goals that have come to be referred to as "child rescue." The idea was that when the level of child care in a home had sunk to the level of neglect or abuse, the family was probably irredeemable and the appropriate strategy was to get the child out of the home to a better setting. Based to a certain degree on case experience and research results, but probably more on the outcomes of a number of lawsuits, policy is now shifting to the goal of family preservation. This means that, before a child is removed from the home, the social worker must demonstrate that a reasonable effort has been made to help the family while the child is still in the home. The point is that family preservation now figures prominently among the goals of child protection social workers, not because thousands of social workers have individually come to the conclusion that this is the most appropriate goal, but because policy now specifies that this be the goal of choice.

Policy Determines Characteristics of Clientele

Policy analyst Alvin Schorr has pointed out how agency policy, often in subtle ways, determines the type of clients that social agency staff will deal with. If the agency wishes to serve a middle-class clientele, they can attract this type of client and discourage poorer clients by means of several policy decisions. First, by locating in the suburbs, the agency services become more accessible to the middle class and less so to poorer segments of the population. Second, what Schorr (1985) terms *agency culture* can be designed to appeal to the middle class—whether the waiting room is plush or bare and functional, whether appointments are insisted on or drop-in visits are permitted, whether the agency gives priority to clients who can pay for services, whether the agency has evening and weekend hours or is open only during the day, and so forth.

Policy Determines Who Will Get Services

Ira Colby (1989) relates a situation in which an anonymous caller contacted a state department of social services to report that a fourteen-year-old girl had been at home alone for several days with nothing to eat, and the caller wanted the department to "do something." The supervisor who was working intake that day

> was torn about what action to take. On the one hand, [she] wanted to send a worker out to verify the referral and provide any and all available services; yet, the department's policy clearly classified this case as a priority three—a letter would be sent to the caretakers outlining parental responsibilities. . . . In [this state], each child protective services' referral is classified as a priority one, two, or three. A priority one requires that a worker begin work within twenty-four hours after the agency receives a referral; a priority two mandates that contact be made within ten days; a priority three requires no more action than a letter or phone call. Cases are prioritized based on a number of variables, including the alleged victim's age and the type and extent of the alleged abuse. (Colby, 1989, p. v)

Most social workers are employed in agencies with policies specifying who can and who cannot receive services and some method of prioritizing services.

Policy Specifies, or Restricts, Certain Options for Clients

Policy often requires that a social worker either offer or not offer certain options. For example, social workers who are employed by Catholic Social Services are generally forbidden to discuss abortion as an option for an unplanned pregnancy. Social workers at a Planned Parenthood center are required to explore this option. When one of the authors began work for a state welfare department, during the first six months of his employment, he was explicitly prohibited by agency policy from discussing birth control with welfare recipients. During the last six months of his employment there, policy was changed to explicitly *require* him to discuss birth control with all welfare recipients.

Policy Determines the Theoretical Focus of Services

Although less common than the other examples, in certain instances agencies have policies that require social workers to adopt a certain theoretical orientation toward their practice. For a number of years there was a schism in social work between the diagnostic school (followers of Sigmund Freud) and the functional school (followers of Otto Rank). Social agencies sometimes defined themselves as belonging to one school or the other and would not employ social workers who practiced according to the other perspective. Currently, some agencies define themselves as behavioral, ecosystems, feminist, and so on, and frown on other approaches being applied by their staff. One of the authors once prepared a training curriculum for child protective services workers on behavioral principles; it was rejected by the state office training division because "this is not the way we wish our staff to practice."

CONCLUSION

Although few social workers enter the profession because of an interest in social welfare policy, every social work practitioner is in fact involved in policy on a daily basis. Social work agencies are created by policies, their goals are specified by policies, social

workers are hired to carry out policy-specific tasks, and the whole environment in which social workers and clients exist is policy-determined. We often think of policy in terms of social legislation, but it is much broader than that. As Schorr (1985) has noted,

> [P]ower in terms of policy is not applied on a grand scale only; the term "practitioner" implies consideration of policy in terms of clinical relationships and relatively small groups. These may be as consequential as or more consequential for the quality of everyday life than the large-scale government and private hierarchical actions that are more commonly regarded as policy. As practitioners practice policy, they may choose any of a variety of instruments. They may simply decide differently about matters that lie within their own control, they may attempt to influence their agencies or they may take on more deep-seated and, chances are, conflict-ridden change. These are also choices that practitioners make.

The problem with which we began this chapter shows why social work students who desire to be direct practitioners need to study social welfare policy. The answer should be clear by now. Because social work is a policy-based profession, practitioners need to be sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, the dynamics of three systems—the client system, the practitioner system, and the policy system. Human behavior in the social environment curriculum concentrates on the dynamics of the client system, the social work practice curriculum concentrates on the practitioner system, and the social welfare policy and services curriculum focuses on the policy system. All three are equally important to the preparation of a direct-practice social worker.

2

Defining Social Welfare Policy

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The last time Bud hit her, something deep inside Sarah snapped. She yelled; screamed; hit him with a sixteen-ounce can of pork and beans; and finally, after regaining some control, called the police. By the time the officers arrived, Bud had agreed to move to his brother's, at least for a while. After four years of physical and emotional abuse, Sarah just wanted to take her four-year-old daughter Megan, get out of the situation, and begin putting her life back together. However, it seemed that at every step there was some policy or other to contend with.

First, there was the problem of getting untangled from the criminal justice system. Sarah really did not want Bud to go to jail; she just wanted him out of the house. She explained this to the police officers when they arrived and requested that the complaint be dropped. They said they would like to do that, but department policy stated that an arrest had to be made any time there was a domestic violence complaint. After Bud spent the night in jail, Sarah explained the same thing to the judge. The judge said that it was his policy in domestic violence cases to send the perpetrator to prison unless the couple agreed to attend marital counseling. Sarah and Bud agreed to do this, even though Sarah was not optimistic about it.

The next problem was in complying with the judge's order. Sarah first called their medical insurance company, who explained that their benefits policy paid for marital counseling only if alcohol or drug abuse was the cause of the problem. Simple relationship difficulties were not covered. Sarah then called the mental health unit at the Methodist hospital; they told her that their policy excluded clients who were seeking counseling due to a court order. The hospital board felt that involuntary clients were not motivated and therefore would not benefit from treatment. Finally, Sarah was able to get an appointment with a social worker at the local YWCA women's center.

Bud lasted in counseling exactly one session. He said that the social worker, Julie Draughn, was a "feminazi" and he wasn't about to listen to her. Sarah was not surprised at Bud's reaction, but she thought what Julie had to say was kind of nice and was certainly food for thought. Julie believed that social policy in the United States was evolving from a traditionally patriarchal, hierarchical system, one that forced women into dependent roles, into a more egalitarian system that freed women from subservience, at the same time placing greater demands on them for independent contributions. She tried to explain to Bud that this policy evolution would also eventually free men from burdens that had often crushed them in the past, but he wasn't having any of it. His last words to Sarah were that if she was so damn liberated she had better not count on him for any support at all, financial support included.

After Bud made good on his threat and refused to contribute anything to Sarah and Megan's expenses, Julie Draughn referred Sarah to the state Department of Human Resources (DHR) office to apply for assistance. The eligibility worker at DHR told Sarah that state policy required that a child support order be obtained before she would be eligible for any help. When she did obtain an order, the amount, $400 per month, when combined with the small income she received from a part-time job, exceeded the maximum that eligibility policy allowed for receipt of financial assistance. Eligibility policy for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps) is somewhat less stringent (income less than 125 percent of the poverty level), so Sarah and Megan at least got some food assistance. In a similar fashion, Sarah found she was eligible for rental assistance under a policy referred to simply as Section VIII, which would enable her to get a decent apartment for a very affordable rent. However, when she visited the housing authority office, the worker explained that Section VIII is a capped program, not an entitlement program, meaning that eligible applicants such as Sarah can be helped only until the program's revenue-sharing grant runs out. She was told that they were currently out of money and that she would be placed on a waiting list with an average wait time of two-and-a-half years. After two of the court-ordered support payments, Bud disappeared, never to be seen again, so Sarah and Megan were able to qualify for public assistance.

Two years after her separation and subsequent divorce, Sarah has become somewhat of an expert on social welfare policy. After her living situation became stabilized, Sarah researched the educational assistance policy and was able to develop a strategy to obtain assistance with tuition, books, and day care while she attended a local university to obtain a degree and a teaching certificate. However, halfway through the program, public assistance policy changed; it no longer permitted recipients to attend a four-year program. Sarah was forced to drop out of the teacher education curriculum and reevaluate her options, finally deciding to enroll in the local two-year technical college in a dental assistant training program. She is still working part-time but carefully monitors her income to be sure that it does not exceed the maximum allowable for the various benefits she receives. She occasionally feels guilty about not contributing as much as she possibly can to her own support, but she realizes that the purpose of all these policies is to encourage her to become a self-supporting, tax-paying citizen, and that is exactly her own goal.

Sarah's story illustrates the vast impact of policy on social welfare clients, but more important for our purposes in this chapter, it illustrates the multiple meanings of the term *social welfare policy* and hence some of the difficulties in discussing and studying the subject. The term *social welfare policy* sometimes refers to broad social philosophy, sometimes to the narrowest administrative rule. When people use the term *policy*, they are usually referring to the actions of government, but social welfare policy often involves activities of the voluntary sector of the economy, of religious groups, and (more and more) of profit-making businesses. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the many meanings of the term *social welfare policy* and to clarify the way it is used in this text.

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY—BASIC DEFINITION

To define the concept of social welfare policy, we must break the concept into its two constituent parts—*social welfare* and *policy*. We dealt briefly with the term *social welfare* in Chapter 1, where it was defined as the institution in society that deals with the problem of dependency. Recall that by *dependency,* we mean situations in which individuals are not fulfilling critical social roles (a parent is not adequately caring for a child, a person is unable to support him- or herself financially, a child consistently breaks the law, etc.) or in which social institutions are not functioning well enough to support people in their role performance (the unemployment level is so high that a person cannot get a job despite being qualified, for example). The social welfare institution deals with these situations in order to help maintain social equilibrium.

Policy is a rather loose and imprecise term for which there is no generally accepted definition in the academic literature (Pal, 2009). Some frequently cited definitions are as follows:

- A purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern.
- Policy implies choice, that is, decision-making possibilities within a range of feasible alternatives.
- A "standing decision" characterized by behavioral consistency and repetitiveness on the part of both those who make it and those who abide by it.
- In its most general sense, the pattern of action that resolves conflicting claims or provides incentives for cooperation (Anderson, 2011; Eulau & Prewitt, 1973; Frohock, 1979; Pal, 2006).

  As the term is generally used, *policy* means principles, guidelines, or procedures that serve the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making.

  Thus, the very simple beginning definition we will use for the term *social welfare policy* is: principles, guidelines, or procedures that serve the purpose of maximizing uniformity in decision making regarding the problem of dependency in our society. This seems simple enough but, as you will see in the remainder of this chapter, *social welfare policy* is a slippery and elusive term.

FACTORS COMPLICATING THE DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY

Complicating any attempt to reach a clear and simple definition of *social welfare policy* is the fact that the term is used in many different ways by many different people and to refer to many different things by any one individual. The following sections discuss some aspects of the term that can lead to a lack of clarity and precision in its use.

Social Welfare or Social Well-Being?

A recent development, one that may or may not turn out to be a long-term definitional problem, is the advocacy by some in the policy sciences to eschew the term *welfare* and substitute it with the term *well-being*. The reasons given for advocating this change are etymological, arguing that the term *welfare* actually means having a good trip or journey and that, to quote Dean (2012), "In using the term well-being, however, I am focusing *not* on how people 'fare' (on their goings or doings), but on their 'being' (on the essence of their lives)" (pp. 1–2).

It is interesting that the rationale for changing the term *welfare* to *well-being* is stated as a matter of definitional clarity when it is doubtful that this is the real motivation. A much more likely reason for this change is the fact that the term *welfare* carries with it a high negative stigma in western society. The term *stigma,* as used by sociologists, refers to an aspect of a person's life that ruins his or her identity. The stigmatized individual is a person whose social identity calls into question his or her full humanity—the person is devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others and, as a consequence, is denied full social acceptance. There is no doubt that in U.S. society considerable stigma is attached to the term *social welfare* and consequently to the receipt of social welfare services. By attempting to change the term *welfare* to *well-being,* policy analysts are doing the same thing that virtually every state in the union has done by changing the name of the Department of Public Welfare to another, supposedly more positive name like the Department of Family and Children's Services, in a public relations attempt to make the whole enterprise more appealing to society as a whole (Popple & Leighninger, 2011).

In this text, we will continue to use the older and more widely accepted term *welfare*. While we sympathize with attempts to reduce the stigma attached to the provision and the receipt of social services, we think that the arbitrary change of terms only leads to conceptual ambiguity.

Thoughts for Social Work Practice

Social workers and other social welfare advocates are constantly trying to lessen the stigma of benefit programs for the poor by changing their names from, for example, charity to welfare to human services. The latest welfare reform effort changed "aid" to "temporary assistance." In what ways, if any, do you think the population served by social workers benefits from these name changes?

Social Welfare Policy and Social Policy

As you become familiar with the literature of social work and social welfare, you will find that the terms *social welfare policy* and *social policy* are often used interchangeably. This practice can be misleading because the terms do not have exactly the same meaning. Social welfare policy is a subcategory of social policy, which has a broader and more general meaning. David Gil (1992), for example, uses the term *social welfare policy* to refer to societal responses to specific needs or problems such as poverty, child maltreatment, substandard housing, and so forth, and uses *social policy* to refer to efforts to "shape the

The provision of parks for relaxation and recreation is an example of social policy, but not of social welfare policy.

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overall quality of life in a society, the living conditions of its members, and their relations to one another and to society as a whole" (p. 3). In a similar fashion, Hartley Dean (2012) defines social policy as

> . . . the things you need to make life worth living: essential services, such as healthcare and education; a means of livelihood, such as a job and money; vital but intangible things, such as love and security. Now think about the ways in which these can be organized: by government and official bodies; through businesses, social groups, charities, local associations and churches; through neighbors, families and loved ones. Understanding these things is the stuff of social policy.

Martin Rein says that social policy is "not the social services alone, but the social purposes and consequences of agricultural, economic, manpower, fiscal, physical development, and social welfare policies that form the subject matter of social policy" (Dear, 1995; Gil, 1992; Rein, 1970).

The term *social policy* is frequently used in a philosophic sense. As Gil (1992) observes, when used in this sense, the term refers to the collective struggle to seek enduring social solutions to social problems and conveys a meaning almost the opposite of the term *rugged individualism*. When used in this sense, social policy is equated with the struggle for equality in social and economic life. The term *social policy,* as used by many theorists, "goes far beyond conventional social welfare policies and programs. . . . Core functions of social policies [are viewed as] the reduction of social inequalities through redistribution of claims, and access to resources, rights, and social opportunities" (Gil, 1992, p. 3). Much of British writing on social policy, notably that of Titmuss and Marshall, reflects the social policy as the social philosophy approach. These writers view social policy as synonymous with increasing government involvement in social life and the pursuit of greater equality, equity, and social justice (Blakemore, 1998).

Thus, *social policy* is a term that includes some elements that we exclude from our definition of *social welfare policy.* Items such as libraries, parks and recreation, and various aspects of the tax codes and of family law are included in the domain of social policy because they deal with the integrative system and the overall quality of life. The continuing struggle of humanity for equality is also a central feature of social policy discussions. Although these things are clearly related to *social welfare policy,* they are not central to the way we use the term in this text. We do not include these ideas in our definition of the domain of social welfare policy because they are not related to the problem of dependency or to specific categorical programs.

Social Welfare Policy as an Academic Discipline and a Social Work Curriculum Area

There is an additional complication for the social worker seeking to understand the term *social welfare policy:* The term has somewhat different meanings when used to refer to an area of academic inquiry as opposed to an area of the social work curriculum. As an area of academic inquiry, social welfare policy is a subfield of sociology, political science, history, economics, and—of course—social work. In addition, over the past decade or so, a number of academic schools and departments have emerged specifically for the study of policy; social welfare policy is a basic area of study in these schools. As the term *social welfare policy* is used in these disciplines, it refers nearly exclusively to the activities of

government. In addition to the definitions cited earlier, scholars in these disciplines generally add something similar to the following:

- Public policy covers all areas in which governments make decisions: the economy, immigration, transportation, international relations, the military, the environment, health care, education, and social services. (Anderson, 2011, p. 3)
- Public policy is the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or affect government positions of authority. (DiNitto, 2016, p. 2)
- Public policy is what governments do, why they do it, and the difference that it makes. (Dye, 2006, p. 11)
- Social welfare policy is anything the government chooses to do, or not to do, that affects the quality of life of its people (Gerston, 2004, p. 32). Although many social workers in the area of social welfare policy share the traditional academic definition, the term is often used by social workers in a broader fashion. As will be discussed in the next section, many social welfare services are provided by private nonprofit, many times religious, agencies. These agencies have policies that affect social workers and their clients and must be understood if social workers are to comprehend their working environments fully. Also, an increasing number of services are being provided by the profit-making sector. Day care for children, disabled adults, and the elderly; residential and foster care for children; home health services; behavioral health care; retirement and nursing homes; and low-income housing are only a few examples of rapidly growing social welfare services provided by the profit-making sector (Ryan, 1999). Scholars in traditional policy areas would be quick to point out that services provided by private nonprofit agencies and by private businesses often receive a portion of their funding from government programs and so should probably come under the heading of actions of government. This is true, but it is also true that the social workers employed by these organizations are not government employees, and the programs come under a wide range of policies that are entirely nongovernmental in nature.

The term *social welfare policy* also refers to a specific area of the professional social work curriculum. The accrediting body of social work programs is the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards of CSWE, under the heading "Engage in Policy Practice," specifies that social workers

- are knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation
- identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services
- assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services
- apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice (CSWE, 2015, p. 8)

This definition encompasses the term *social welfare policy* as used in traditional academic disciplines but also contains tangential areas. Thus, in social work programs, it is not uncommon to find courses with titles such as The Social Work Profession or Social Welfare History included as part of the social welfare policy curriculum.

Also, in the social work curriculum, *social welfare policy* often refers to a practice method, *policy practice,* as defined in Chapter 1. Policy analysis, as taught in the traditional academic disciplines, is central to the method but additional, generally *interpersonal,* skills are also included that are usually not central to these other fields. Jansson (1994) identifies four basic policy practice skills needed by social workers:

> They need analytic skills to evaluate social problems and develop policy proposals, analyze the severity of specific problems, identify barriers to policy implementation, and develop strategies for assessing programs. They need political skills to gain and use power and to develop and implement political strategy. They need interactional skills to participate in task groups, such as committees and coalitions, and persuade other people to support specific policies. They need value-clarifying skills to identify and rank relevant principles when engaging in policy practice. (p. 25)

These are skills familiar to anyone educated as a generalist social work practitioner, but they are applied in a different context. In a later work Jansson (2008) added negotiation as a specific skill needed by macro social work policy practitioners saying: "Macro policy advocates have to be effective negotiators. They need to make concessions that appear reasonable, yet they cannot be perceived as 'pushovers' who will always back down" (p. 158). This skill will be addressed in some detail in Chapter 13.

Thoughts for Social Work Practice

In what ways do you think policy practice skills are similar to, and in what ways different from, micro skills taught in social work practice classes?

Social Workers Are Interested in Social Welfare Policy in All Sectors of the Economy

Although social welfare is generally thought of as the responsibility of government, keep in mind that the social welfare system in the United States grew out of activities of the private sector; the government assumed responsibility very reluctantly. It would not be an overstatement to say that the social work profession itself is a result of policies of private, voluntary, social welfare agencies. In the nineteenth century, private agencies joined to form Charity Organization Societies specifically for the purpose of developing policies and procedures that would rationalize dealing with the growing problem of dependency in large cities. Shortly thereafter, the agencies realized that a major barrier to the rationalization of philanthropy was the lack of qualified staff. The agencies then began to formulate policies for training and hiring personnel; this eventually resulted in the emergence of social work as a profession (Popple, 2018).

During the course of the last century, the government assumed a larger and larger role in the provision of social welfare services. However, the private sector still provides a significant proportion of services. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011) reports that in 2011, the United States spent 19.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on public social service programs and 9.2 percent of GDP for private social programs. Thus, the private sector of the economy still provides approximately 32 percent of all social welfare services and benefits, a very significant proportion (Kirkegaard, 2015, p. 3).

Private social service agencies have policies that affect their employees and clients in much the same manner as governmental policies. For example, the United Way organization has policies in every area that, to use our earlier definition of policy, set down principles, guidelines, and procedures that maximize uniformity in decision making for

member agencies. Examples are policies that set criteria and procedures for an agency to become affiliated with the United Way, establish priorities for funding, establish financial accounting and reporting standards and procedures, and suggest personnel procedures and guidelines.

It is apparent that the private, for-profit sector is becoming increasingly important in the social welfare enterprise. Ryan (1999) observes that

> the real revolution is that the social service market is now accepting providers that have a decided for-profit bent. In marked contrast with earlier years, when for-profits were excluded from the social services—frowned upon as unfit partners for government—the public sector now sees business not as a pariah but as a role model. This radical transformation in public-sector attitudes has spurred—even dared—for-profits to move into the social services delivery system. (pp. 129–130)

For-profit nursing homes, adult and child day care, home health services, alcohol and drug treatment centers, managed-care mental health systems, phobic and eating disor-

der clinics—all have appeared on the scene in recent years. Like public and voluntary agencies, all these for-profit organizations have policies that affect clients and staff. As we will discuss in the chapters on physical and mental health, policies of profit-making agencies present a special concern to the social work profession because of the high potential for conflict between providing services that are in the best interest of the client and services that are most profitable for the organization.

There is a tendency to define policy as only public policy. To understand fully the context in which they practice, social workers need to understand the policies of all three sectors of the social welfare system and the interaction among them.

Social action activities are generally aimed at macrolevel policies.

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The Multiple Levels of Social Welfare Policy

An additional point that needs to be dealt with before we can fully define social welfare policy is that policy exists on several levels. The policies at the various levels are referred to as macro-, mezzo-, and microlevel policies.

Macrolevel Policy

Macrolevel social welfare policy involves the broad laws, regulations, or guidelines that provide the basic framework for the provision of services and benefits. Most macro-level policy is generated by the public and the private nonprofit sectors. The macrolevel

policy arena we most commonly think of is the public sector, in which macrolevel policies take the form of laws and regulations. Examples are Title XX of the Social Security Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Older Americans Act. After passage, all of these acts were translated into detailed federal regulations that specify issues of implementation, evaluation, and so forth. The private nonprofit sector also generates macrolevel policies to guide its efforts to deal with problems of dependency. For example, the 200th General Assembly (1988) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) developed an eighty-three-page policy statement on health care that dealt with health care benefits for church employees and with the church's stand on the general problems of the health care system. The private for-profit sector responds to, and attempts to influence, macrolevel policies more than it generates such policies on its own.

Mezzolevel Policy

Mezzolevel (midlevel) policy is administrative policy that organizations generate to direct and regularize their operations. Every social worker who has ever worked for a state social services department is familiar with the ritual followed with new employees: A supervisor will help a new employee pull up three or four lengthy manuals on the organization's website with instructions to spend the day reviewing them. There will generally be a personnel policy manual, which sets out all the rules and regulations regarding pay, benefits, insurance, office hours, holidays, evaluations, grievances, retirement, and the like. Then there will be a financial policy manual, which outlines procedures and forms for budgeting, purchasing, travel, supplies, financial reporting, and so on. Finally, there will be one or more manuals outlining the policies governing the particular program area in which the social worker is employed. For example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or food stamp, program will have manuals describing intake, eligibility, recordkeeping, what is and is not appropriate to discuss with an applicant, referrals, and so forth.

Much of mezzolevel policy is, of course, in direct response to macrolevel policy. For example, SNAP (food stamps), as set out in federal regulations, requires that state welfare departments respond to an application within thirty days, except in cases in which the family is expected to have an income for the month of less than $150 and less than $100 in cash and savings, in which case the department must respond within seven days. The macrolevel federal regulations containing this policy are sent to the state agencies, which must translate it into mezzolevel policy by setting out specific procedures so the department can comply with the policy of the federal Food and Nutrition Service.

Microlevel Policy

Microlevel policy is what happens when individuals such as social workers translate macro- and mezzolevel policy into actual service to clients. As we discussed in Chapter 1, social work is a profession with a good deal of autonomy, which means individual social workers have great latitude for interpreting and implementing a given policy. The political scientist Michael Lipsky (2010) refers to social workers as "street-level bureaucrats" who, he says, "make policy in two related respects. They exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they interact. Then, when taken in concert, their individual actions add up to agency behavior" (p. 17). Recognizing the importance of microlevel policymaking rests on the following question: If Congress passes a law stating that individuals are entitled to a certain benefit (macrolevel policy)

and state and local agencies develop regulations and procedures for delivering the benefit (mezzolevel policy), but the social workers charged with delivering the benefit do not support the policy and obstruct the process to an extent that few people actually receive the benefit, what actually is the policy? The policy is that people do not get the benefit.

The following example illustrates the importance of microlevel policy far better than any theoretical discussion. One of the authors was at one time the training director for a large region of a state social services department. He would periodically get requests from the state office to conduct training for the food stamps program staff on eligibility policy. The request would be the result of complaints from college students who had applied for food stamps and whose applications had dragged on and on over one technicality after another, in spite of the fact that the macro- and mezzolevel policies clearly stated that college students who met other eligibility requirements were eligible to receive food stamps. The problem, however, had nothing to do with the staff not *understanding* eligibility policy. Rather, the eligibility determination workers tended to be women who, due to one life situation or another (marriage, pregnancy, husband becoming unemployed, etc.), had dropped out of college after two years (the amount of college required for a food stamps eligibility worker position) and taken a job with the department of social services in order to support their families. The attitude of the workers in this particular office was "When I needed money, I dropped out of school and got a job; I didn't expect the government to support me." They collectively felt that the policy of making college students eligible for food stamps was wrong. As a result, they had developed techniques to discourage applications from this group, and if a student persisted in applying, the workers would do everything possible to slow the process further. The result? The actual policy in this particular office was that college students were not eligible for food stamps.

Many people would say that the existence of microlevel policy significantly different from macro- and mezzolevel policy is an indication of bad management. Effective management should be able to bring individual practice into line with organization policy. Due to the nature of their work, however, this is not possible with social workers. As Lipsky (2010) observes, because problems resulting from microlevel policy

> would theoretically disappear if workers' discretion were eliminated, one may wonder why discretion remains characteristic of their jobs. The answer is that certain characteristics of the jobs of street-level bureaucrats make it difficult, if not impossible, to severely reduce discretion. They involve complex tasks for which elaboration of rules, guidelines, or instructions cannot circumscribe the alternatives. (p. 32)

This situation is the result of two factors: "First, street-level bureaucrats often work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats . . . [and] second, street-level bureaucrats work in situations that often require responses to the human dimensions of situations" that are too varied and complex to reduce to routinized procedures (Lipsky, 2010, p. 24).

Recognition of the existence of microlevel policy provides one of the strongest arguments for the promotion of policy-driven professions such as social work. If the performance of workers cannot be controlled by standardized work rules, as is the natural practice in bureaucracies, then controls must be internal to the workers. The most effective means of developing these internal controls is through professional training and

socialization in certain values and a code of ethics. The food stamps eligibility workers described here, incidentally, were not professional social workers. At one time they would have been, but in the late 1960s, in what was known as separation of services, eligibility functions in welfare departments were redesignated from professional social work positions to high-level clerical jobs. One of the rationales for this change was that social workers exercised too much individual discretion and that clerical-level staff would be more amenable to organizational control. The result appears to have been the creation of a workforce that is effectively under the control of neither organizational rules nor professional ethics and standards of behavior.

SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY—A WORKING DEFINITION

By now it should be apparent that there is no one correct (or incorrect, for that matter) definition of *social welfare policy*. The term is broad and general, and its definition is similar to the story of the blind people describing an elephant—how you define it depends on which part you are in contact with. The upshot is that it is crucial for people addressing the subject of social welfare policy to be clear on how they are using the term. For our purposes in this text, we will use the following definition:

Social welfare policy concerns those interrelated, but not necessarily logically consistent, principles, guidelines, and procedures designed to deal with the problem of dependency in our society. Policies may be laws, public or private regulations, formal procedures, or simply normatively sanctioned patterns of behavior. Social welfare policy is a subset of social policy. Social welfare policy as an academic discipline is less concerned with specific policies than it is with the process by which those policies came into being, the societal base and effects of those policies, and the relationship between policies. Those studying social welfare policy as an area of the professional social work curriculum share the concerns of the traditional academic disciplines but have as primary concerns the relationship of policy to social work practice and the ways that social workers, both as individuals and as members of an organized profession, can influence the policy process.

CONCLUSION

This text is aimed mainly at people training to be direct-service social work practitioners. Therefore, our major goal is to help develop skills of policy analysis that will enable practitioners to understand and, when possible, affect the policy context of their practice. We will pay a great deal of attention to macrolevel policy in the public sector because this is the area having the greatest effect on social work practice. However, we will also devote significant attention to mezzo- and microlevel policy, in recognition of their great impact on social work practice, and to the influence of the voluntary sector and for-profit sector policy.

Social Welfare Policy Analysis

In Part One, we sought to identify policy as central to the social work profession and to define the term. It logically follows that if policy is as important as we assert, then it is important to develop systematic means of studying and understanding policy in all its dimensions. This is the goal of Part Two. We begin by discussing what policy analysis is (a very slippery subject in its own right), and then move on to discuss the analysis of various dimensions of social welfare policy. We will basically follow the outline presented below. Before you become overwhelmed with the level of detail presented, note that we are presenting this as a way of simplifying the immensely complex subject of policy analysis, not as a model to be actually applied in all its detail by a social work practitioner. This outline can be applied at any level of detail, from one very specific policy (i.e., the Older Americans Act) to a general policy area (i.e., social welfare policies enacted to deal with the problems of elderly citizens). It is not always necessary to apply the whole framework in every policy analysis; policy analysts in the real world selectively apply various parts of the outline, guided by the specific policy they are concerned with and the purpose of the analysis. In Part Three of this book, we will demonstrate how practitioner policy analyses are done, using examples from poverty, aging, health, mental health, substance abuse, and child welfare.

POLICY ANALYSIS OUTLINE

   I. Delineation and Overview of the Policy under Analysis
       A. What is the specific policy or general policy area to be analyzed?
       B. What is the nature of the problem targeted by the policy?
           1. How is the problem defined?
           2. For whom is it a problem?
       C. What is the context of the policy being analyzed (i.e., how does this specific policy fit with other policies seeking to manage a social problem)?
       D. Choice analysis (i.e., what is the design of programs created by a policy and what are the alternatives to this design?)
           1. What are the bases of social allocation?
           2. What are the types of social provisions?
           3. What are the strategies for delivery of benefits?
           4. What are the methods of financing these provisions?
  II. Historical Analysis
       A. What policies and programs were previously developed to deal with the problem? In other words, how has this problem been dealt with in the past?
       B. How has the specific policy/program under analysis developed over time?
           1. What people, or groups of people, initiated and/or promoted the policy?
           2. What people, or groups of people, opposed the policy?

    C. What does history tell us about effective/ineffective approaches to the problem being addressed?

    D. To what extent does the current policy/program incorporate the lessons of history?

III. Social Analysis

    A. Problem description

       1. How complete is our knowledge of the problem?

       2. Are our efforts to deal with the problem in accord with research findings?

       3. What population is affected by the problem?

          a. Size

          b. Defining characteristics

          c. Distribution

       4. What theory or theories of human behavior are explicit or, more likely, implicit in the policy?

       5. What are the major social values related to the problem, and what value conflicts exist?

       6. What are the goals of the policy under analysis?

          a. Manifest (stated) goals

          b. Latent (unstated) goals

          c. Degree of consensus regarding goals

       7. What are the hypotheses implicit or explicit in the statement of the problem and goals?

IV. Economic Analysis

    A. What are the effects and/or potential effects of the policy on the functioning of the economy as a whole—output, income, inflation, unemployment, and so forth (macroeconomic analysis)?

    B. What are the effects and/or potential effects of the policy on the behavior of individuals, firms, and markets—motivation to work, cost of rent, supply of commodities, and so forth (microeconomic analysis)?

    C. Opportunity cost; cost/benefit analysis

V. Political Analysis

    A. Who are the major stakeholders regarding this particular policy/program?

       1. What is the power base of the policy/program's supporters?

       2. What is the power base of the policy/program's opponents?

       3. How well are the policy's/program's intended beneficiaries represented in the ongoing development and implementation of the policy/program?

    B. How has the policy/program been legitimized? Is this basis for legitimation still current?

    C. To what extent is the policy/program an example of rational decision making, incremental change, or change brought about by conflict?

    D. What are the political aspects of the implementation of the policy/program?

VI. Policy/Program Evaluation

    A. What are the outcomes of the policy/program in relation to the stated goals?

    B. What are the unintended consequences of the policy/program?

    C. Is the policy/program cost-effective?

VII. Current Proposals for Policy Reform

3

Social Welfare Policy Analysis

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Marian Mochozuki has been awarded a contract by her state Department of Mental Health to evaluate an experimental program to provide supported employment for people with developmental disabilities. Instead of working with high-functioning clients in sheltered workshops, the program will attempt to place the lowest-functioning clients in real jobs, for real pay in real community businesses. There will be job coaches at the work sites. Pay will be adjusted according to the efficiency of the worker using Department of Labor standards so that the employer will not be subsidizing the workers. Otherwise this will be real work in the community, not "work activities."

Marian believes in full participation of program staff in the design, execution, and interpretation of the evaluation. The first step will be a discussion with program staff to find out their perceptions of what they are trying to accomplish and their criteria for success. This may sound unnecessary because the project has a mission statement in writing, but Marian knows that sometimes there is a discrepancy between what staff members think they are doing and what the mission statement says they are

supposed to be doing. Staff members are unlikely to buy into the evaluation unless they know that the evaluators understand their work.

The evaluation will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data will be collected by questionnaires to be filled out monthly. This is extra work for staff workers, so it is important that they believe it is worthwhile. Marion has worked with evaluators who regard program staff as cattle to be herded into the barn and milked. Under those circumstances, the data produced can be sloppy, incomplete, or even false. Therefore, when she pilot-tests the instrument with a sample of the staff, Marian adds after every question another question: "Is this information useful to you?" She tries as much as possible to trim the items to those generally regarded as useful.

To supply qualitative data, open-ended interviews will be conducted on-site with a sample of program participants, their parents, job coaches, the job recruiter, and employers. Marian will also try to find an employer who was asked to participate and declined. This will provide insight into the obstacles faced by the program in the community. Interviewing participants whose IQ is unmeasurable in many cases and who may or may not talk is a challenge, but an attempt will be made. Interviewing parents may seem less problematic, but there are challenges there as well. Marian knows that parents are going to be reluctant to criticize the program. They have a major stake in the program's continued operation. If it is closed down, their son or daughter will have lost an important opportunity. And this is not a market situation: There is no other place to go. So criticisms will be elicited carefully.

After the evaluators have done a preliminary analysis of the data, a conference will be held to report their findings to program staff. This must be built into the evaluation budget, not organized on the fly. Staff members may well have different interpretations, and these will be discussed at the conference. Evaluators will take them into consideration when they submit their final report.

Thoughts for Social Work Practice

Why is it important that those being evaluated fully support the evaluation? Beyond what was done in Marian's evaluation, can you think of other ways to gain a buy-in from program staff being evaluated? How might managers, staff members, clients, and community members have different interpretations of the data? What do you think the maximum length of a questionnaire should be?

Sometimes a policy study appears that is so interesting and well written that people read it for relaxation and enjoyment. Joseph Stiglitz's (2012) *The Price of Inequality* is one example. This, unfortunately, is a rare occurrence. Generally, people read policy literature for practical reasons, namely, to gain an understanding of the dynamics of our collective response to various social problems. Policy analyses are read to answer questions such as: How do we deal with poverty? What do we do about health care for people who are sick but have no insurance and no money? What is being done to help children who are being mistreated? Is our response to drug abuse the best one and, if not, what other options are available?

When you seek the answers to questions such as these, you will first consult the policy analysis literature. Two aspects of this literature will puzzle you, at least initially. First, you will notice that the policy analysis literature is spread all over the library. Some are shelved, as you would expect, with the social work literature. You probably won't be too surprised to find some policy material with sociology, political science, history, and economics. A small amount, less predictably, will be with business, and a rather substantial amount will be with religion and philosophy.

Second, once you have ferreted out sources on a policy issue (for example, on antipoverty policy), you will find that, though different sources deal with the same topic, the approaches look very different. Some policy analyses look like literature, being composed mostly of stories. Some look like mathematics texts, with lengthy and complex formulas, tables, and graphs. Some look like stories in a newspaper or magazine (in fact, may *be* stories in newspapers and magazines). To help prevent the confusion you may experience in simply identifying and locating sources of policy analysis, we must discuss the policy analysis field.

THE MANY MEANINGS OF POLICY ANALYSIS

Like most terms and concepts in the study of social welfare policy, the term *policy analysis* tends to be used in vague and inconsistent ways. David Bobrow and John Dryzek (1987) refer to the policy analysis field as "home to a babel of tongues." The late Aaron Wildavsky, a leading figure in the policy analysis field, argued that it is unwise to even try to define the term, saying, "At the Graduate School of Public Policy in Berkeley, I discouraged discussions on the meaning of policy analysis. Hundreds of conversations on this slippery subject had proven futile, even exasperating, possibly dangerous" (Wildavsky 1979, pp. 2, 3, 16). He referred to policy analysis as that which "could be learned but not explained, that all of us could sometimes do but that none of us could ever define." Although we sympathize with Wildavsky's frustration, we believe that, at least for social workers whose primary interest is not policy, it is necessary to deal with the term before any progress can be made in learning policy analysis skills. The definition we like is based on the one offered by the Canadian political scientist Leslie Pal (2006): "Policy analysis is the disciplined application of intellect to the study of collective responses to public problems." This definition is sufficiently broad to include the wide range of policy analysis approaches we describe but is still precise enough to exclude many other types of social work knowledge-building activities.

A key to defining and dealing with the term *policy analysis* is the recognition that it is broad and general. In many ways, it is analogous to the term *research,* which we all realize means many different things depending on how it is used by different people in different contexts. We all recognize the difference between a husband saying to his wife, "We need to do some research on state parks before we plan our summer vacation," and a social worker saying, "I have received a $250,000 grant to do research on the relationship between drug usage and marital instability." In a similar fashion, the term *policy analysis* is used to refer to everything from the processes citizens use to familiarize themselves with issues prior to voting, to a multiyear, multimillion-dollar project to set up and evaluate programs using different approaches to financial assistance.

Table 3.1 presents a typology for categorizing different approaches to policy analysis. The table identifies four major dimensions on which policy analysis approaches vary. The first is the sophistication required of the person conducting the analysis. From the top of the table downward, the sophistication required diminishes. For the top two types, academic social science research and applied policy research, the analyst is generally educated at the doctoral level in policy analysis or in a related social science or applied social profession such as public administration or social work. These analysts generally spend a large proportion of their time conducting policy studies that are read and critiqued by other policy researchers and/or by actual policymakers. Because their purpose is to create new knowledge, the results are generally published in fairly accessible sources. These may range from books and articles available in a good library to proceedings of professional conferences that may be widely circulated; to monographs and reports available in microform and on the Internet; to photocopied in-house reports, which are less widely distributed. Because of the rigorous nature of the methods and the wide availability of results of these types of analyses, they often form the database for other approaches to policy analysis.

The next two approaches, social planning and agency planning/policy management, are generally conducted by professionals educated at the master's or doctoral level in applied social professions, often social work. They generally have specialized in

Table 3.1   Approaches to Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis Approach	Purpose	Consumer	Method
Academic social science research	Constructing theories for understanding society	Academic community	Rigorous empirical methodology, often quantitative
Applied policy research	Predicting or evaluating impacts of changes in variables that can be altered by public and/or private programs	Decision makers in the policy area	Formal research methodology applied to policy-relevant questions
Social planning	Defining and specifying ways to ameliorate social problems and to achieve a desirable future state	The "public interest" as professionally defined	Survey research, public forums, expert and/or citizen panels
Agency planning/ policy management	Defining and clarifying agency goals; explicating alternatives for achieving those goals; evaluating outcomes of attempts to achieve those goals	Boards of directors, funding agencies, interested citizens	Databases, management techniques (Program Evaluation Research Technique, flow charting, decision analysis), survey research, public forums, expert and/or citizen panels
Journalistic	Focusing public attention on social welfare problems	General public	Existing documents, expert sources (professionals, scholars, people affected by the problem)
Practitioner policy analysis	Understanding the policy context within which an individual social worker functions	The social worker doing the analysis	Existing literature, government and other documents available on the Internet, expert sources
Citizen policy analysis	Clarifying issues for participation as an involved citizen in a democracy	The citizen involved in the analysis of elected officials that citizen wishes to influence	Existing literature, elected and appointed officials

Source: Adapted from D. L. Weiner and A. R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004), p. 26.

policy/planning/administration in graduate school. Policy analysis usually constitutes only a small proportion of their jobs, with most of their time being devoted to running an agency, coordinating a community social service program, monitoring program compliance, or any of a number of other macropractice roles. The results of these analyses are generally published in-house and are distributed to members of the organization employing the analyst as well as interested community persons.

The next two types are journalistic and practitioner policy analysis. The people who do these analyses generally are not educated specifically in policy analysis, and policy research is only tangential to their primary professional role. However, they need to develop a fairly sophisticated understanding of complex policy issues. The journalist needs to communicate with the general public, and the social work practitioner needs to understand relevant policy in order to function effectively on a daily basis. Journalistic policy analysis is generally presented in either written or electronic form in the public media and is generally based entirely on the work of academic social science researchers or applied policy researchers, usually supplemented by original reporting on the effects (both intended and unintended) of policies on beneficiaries. It is important to note that, although journalistic policy analysis is not based on original research, this in

no way detracts from its importance. The inspiration for the massive social programs of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s is generally credited to an essay review of several policy studies, notably Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962), written by journalist Dwight McDonald (1963) and published in *New Yorker Magazine*. Randy Shilts's *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (1987) has had a significant impact on AIDS policy. Practitioner policy analysis is the focus of the remainder of this text, so it won't be described further here.

The lowest level of sophistication is that of the citizen analyst. The purpose of this type of analysis is for a person to obtain the information required to carry out the responsibilities of an informed citizen. Although we classify this as the least sophisticated approach to policy analysis, we should note that many citizens become quite skilled in studying policy. This type of analysis is the major focus of voluntary citizen groups such as the League of Women Voters.

The next three dimensions of the approaches to policy analysis (purpose, consumer, and method) are sufficiently explained in the table. The main point is that, when you read policy analysis literature, you need to identify which approach to analysis the author is using. Most of the literature concerns the top two levels of sophistication and is generally read by people who identify themselves as policy analysis professionals. This literature can be frustrating for the social work practitioner who has neither the time nor the inclination to become skilled in the application of highly sophisticated, often mathematical, techniques such as difference equations, queuing models, simulations, Markov chains, and the like. Fortunately, in recent years a literature has been developing that addresses the needs of practitioners (Chambers & Wedel, 2013; Irwin, 2003; Hudson, Lowe, & Horsfall, 2016).

METHODS OF POLICY ANALYSIS

In addition to different approaches to policy analysis, different methods may be employed within any of the approaches. A number of different schemes have been developed for differentiating among methods of policy analysis. Our discussion categorizes policy analysis as descriptive analysis, process analysis, or evaluation (Gilbert & Terrell, 2013; Pal, 1987).

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive policy analysis can be further subdivided into four types: content, choice, comparative, and historical analysis.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is the most straightforward type of policy analysis. This is not the type of content analysis where qualitative data in texts are subjected to quantitative analysis. It is simply a description of an existing policy in terms of its intentions, problem definition, goals, and means employed for achieving the goals. Content analysis is most often employed by agencies charged with administering a policy and is generally published in manuals, brochures, and annual reports of the agency. Occasionally, special interest groups such as the National Association of Retired Persons will publish content analyses of policies under which members may receive benefits.

Content analysis is generally not widely circulated to the general public and rarely is published in standard academic outlets. One of the most accessible, and certainly the most useful, sources of content analysis is the *Green Book* (House Committee on Ways and Means, 2016), which is available on the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means website. It provides descriptive information about federal assistance programs under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee, such as Social Security, Medicare, Supplemental Security Income, Unemployment Insurance, Railroad Benefits, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Support Enforcement, Child Care, Social Services Block Grant, Child Welfare, and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. In addition, the *Green Book* has appendices covering Federal Benefits and Services for People with Low Income, Social Welfare Programs in the Territories, Federal Benefits for Noncitizens, and Poverty.

Choice Analysis

Largely developed by social workers Neil Gilbert, Paul Terrell, and the late Harry Specht, choice analysis is a systematic process of looking at the options available to planners for dealing with a social welfare problem. Gilbert and Terrell (2013) describe this type of analysis as dealing with choices that "may be framed in program proposals, laws and statutes, or standing plans which eventually are transformed into programs. The elements of this framework, of course, are not physical structures of the sort a microscope might reveal. Rather, they are social constructs that are used in the intellectual process of making choices" (pp. 42–43). The four primary dimensions of choice are described in some detail below.

Bases of allocations The first dimension of choice involves the following question: *What are the bases of social allocations?* Gilbert and Terrell use the phrase "social allocations" to describe decisions about who will benefit from a policy. They draw two major distinctions in allocation: universal and selective provision. In the first case, "benefits [are] made available to an entire population as a social right" (Gilbert & Terrell, 2013, p. 710). Universalism assumes that all citizens are "at risk," at some point, for common problems. The classic exam of universal benefits is Social Security for the elderly and those with disability. Unemployment insurance is another example of a benefit made available to an entire group of people—those who have worked a specified length of time and are now unemployed. Since the 1930s, provision for these groups of people has been considered a basic right and therefore a responsibility of the government. Eligibility depends solely on characteristics such as age and prior attachment to the workforce. Factors such as present income or geographic location are irrelevant.

The alternative to universal allocation is selectivity. In the language of social welfare policy, *selectivity* has a specialized meaning: the allocation of benefits based on individual economic need. This is generally determined through an income test (called a "means test"); those below a certain income level are eligible to receive benefits. Students often get confused about this concept because *selectivity* suggests a variety of ways to distinguish who will be provided for (such as all mothers of young children, all nearsighted people, or all intelligent high school students seeking college scholarships). The best way to understand selectivity in social welfare is to remember its tie to income level and the fact that there is no national consensus that the benefits are a fundamental right of the recipient.

Social welfare policymakers also speak of "universal versus categorical" distinctions. In this context, the word *categorical* refers to particular groups of poor people, for