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EIGHTH EDITION

Becoming An Effective Policy Advocate

FROM POLICY PRACTICE TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

BRUCE S. JANSSON

Council on Social Work Education *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* by Chapter

The Council on Social Work Education's Educational *Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)* requires all social work students to develop nine competencies and recommends teaching and assessing 31 related component behaviors, listed as Educational Policy (EP) Competencies 1–9 below. Multicolor icons and end of chapter "Competency Notes" connect these important standards to class work in the chapters identified below with highlighted light blue type.

	The 9 Competencies and 31 Component Behaviors (EPAS, 2015):	Chapter(s) Where Referenced:
Competency 1	**Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior:**	
a.	Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW *Code of Ethics*, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context.	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14
b.	Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations.	2, 3, 10
c.	Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication.	6, 9
d.	Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes.	1
e.	Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.	
Competency 2	**Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice:**	
a.	Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.	1, 2, 5, 7, 9
b.	Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences.	
c.	Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.	8
Competency 3	**Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice:**	
a.	Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
b.	Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12
Competency 4	**Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice:**	
a.	Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research.	2
b.	Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings.	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11
c.	Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.	1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 14

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Preface

I invented the concept "policy practice" in a book that was published in 1984 when I discovered that policy texts and curriculum hardly discussed how social workers might actually work to reform policies. I greatly expanded my discussion of policy practice in the first seven editions of this book in 1990, 1994, 1999, 2003, 2008, 2011, and 2014—and in this eighth edition. I use the term "policy advocacy" to describe policy practice that aims to help vulnerable populations obtain needed rights, opportunities, services, and benefits. I also provide a multi-level policy advocacy framework that includes micro policy advocacy (at the level of individuals and families), mezzo policy advocacy (at the level of organizations and communities), and macro policy level (at the level of legislatures, elected officials, and political campaigns). This expanded framework makes clear that policy advocates engage in policy practice at each of these levels. They help clients gain eligibility to social programs that improve their lives (micro policy advocacy), reform agency and community policies when they are detrimental to clients' needs (mezzo policy advocacy), and reform government policies to improve their effectiveness in addressing the needs of Americans and persons in other nations (macro policy advocacy).

Other changes in this eighth edition include the following:

- Using many examples from the presidential election of 2016 and its immediate aftermath to illustrate electoral politics and ethical issues throughout the text.
- Adding participation in social movements as a style of policy advocacy along with analytic, electoral, legislative advocacy, and implementation styles in Chapter Three.
- Discussing possible policy choices that might be made by President Trump during the early years of his presidency in Chapter Three.
- Discussing massive migration from the Middle East, terrorism that has crossed international boundaries, strategies to decrease climate change, and efforts by the United Nations to eradicate extreme poverty in developing nations in Chapter Five.
- Discussing why President Obama believes in retrospect that he could have placed a massive infrastructure program on the policy agenda during his first term in Chapter Six—and why he believes this was a mistake with the benefit of hindsight.
- Moving discussion of policy briefs from Chapter Eleven to Chapter Eight—and greatly expanding my discussion of ways to construct and present them.
- Adding throughout the text many contemporary examples of evidence-based policies, such as research that establishes that it is more effective to help alcoholics manage their use of alcoholic beverages than to persuade them to abstain, that establishes that low-income youth who move from inner city locations to more affluent neighborhoods often obtain higher wages than youth who remain even if these wage improvements often only appear a decade or so subsequently, and that establishes the economic inequality causes many other problems such as poor school performance and higher rates of incarceration.
- Adding a motivational style of persuasion to other presentation strategies in Chapter Nine.
- Using the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, in 2015 and beyond to illustrate policy practice in Chapter Ten.

- Including new materials about the use of social media in legislative and electoral campaigns to enact new policies, including web sites that students can visit that illuminate it in Chapters Eleven and Twelve.
- Including bio-sketches of Professor Nancy Humphreys, DSW; U. S. Senator in Michigan Debbie Stabenow, MSW; and former California Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada, MSW as examples of policy-related careers that social workers can emulate in Chapter Twelve.
- Discussing important issues encountered by social workers during implementation of policies, such as the lack of integration between mental health and physical health services in Chapter Thirteen.

The following table describes which core competencies and practice behaviors in the EPAS standards of the Council on Social Work Education are included in each chapter. As can be seen in this table, this text covers many of them.

The 9 Competencies and 31 Component Behaviors (EPAS, 2015):	Chapter(s) Where Referenced:
Competency 1 – Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior:	
a. Make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context	1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 13, 14
b. Use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations	2, 3, 10
c. Demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication	6, 9
d. Use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes	1
e. Use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior	
Competency 2 – Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice:	
a. Apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	1, 2, 5, 7, 9
b. Present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences	
c. Apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies	8
Competency 3 – Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice:	
a. Apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
b. Engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12
Competency 4 – Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice:	
a. Use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	2
b. Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11
c. Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 14

Competency 5 – Engage in Policy Practice:	
a. Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services	1, 3, 4, 8, 9
b. Assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14
c. Apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Competency 6 – Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	
a. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13
b. Use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies	2, 6
Competency 7 – Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	
a. Collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies	6, 7, 13
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies	
c. Develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies	9
d. Select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies	
Competency 8 – Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	
a. Critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies	2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies	2, 6, 7, 9, 10
c. Use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice	6, 11, 13
d. Negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies	1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10
e. Facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals	
Competency 9 – Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:	
a. Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	3, 4, 6, 7, 13
b. Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	7, 12, 13
c. Critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	6, 14
d. Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels	12

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Some faculty may wonder whether policy practice and policy advocacy require sufficient space in the curriculum of their schools to merit a textbook devoted entirely to them. They should consider several rationales for giving policy practice and policy advocacy a strong presence in foundation policy courses. First, the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) requires social workers to engage "in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully." They cannot fulfill this ethical obligation if they lack knowledge and competencies to shape policies that allow persons to have these resources, employment, services, and opportunities. Second, many social-work students are not familiar with policy practice and policy advocacy—and are unlikely to engage in them if they receive only superficial coverage of them, such as from a single chapter in a textbook. Third, students need sufficient time to understand policy practice and policy advocacy because they are multifaceted interventions that include analysis, politics, values, and interactional skills—skills that are used singly and in tandem. Fourth, policy practice and policy advocacy occur at micro, mezzo, and macro levels—meaning that all social workers can and should engage in policy advocacy including ones primarily engaged in clinical practice with individuals and families.

This book makes policy advocacy accessible to students in many ways. It is organized around the eight policy tasks that are identified in the Policy Advocacy Framework in Chapters One and Three. These tasks include deciding what is right and wrong in order to determine whether and when to initiate policy advocacy **(Task 1);** navigating policy and advocacy systems in agency, community, governmental, or legislative settings **(Task 2);** engaging the agenda-setting task **(Task 3);** analyzing problems **(Task 4);** writing proposals **(Task 5);** enacting policies **(Task 6);** implementing policies **(Task 7);** and assessing policies **(Task 8).** This framework also describes analytic, political, value-clarifying, and interactional skills to implement these eight tasks at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. These tasks are illustrated in a diagram that presents the multi-level framework in Chapter Three. It discusses NASW's Code of Ethics in Chapter One as it asks social workers to make policy advocacy an important part of their work.

This book contains many case illustrations and brief video clips that portray the work of policy advocates to bring policy advocacy to life. The three-minute video clips feature policy advocates as they discuss the policy tasks and skills in specific situations. *Note for instructors: To access the videos featured in this textbook, log into* ***http://login.cengage.com*** *and view materials in the Social Work CourseMate for Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate, 8th Edition.* Other strategies aim to make policy advocacy accessible to students. Each chapter begins with a "Policy Predicament" that students address at the end of each chapter with policy practice concepts provided in that chapter. Examples include the Occupy Movement in Chapter One, strategies to decrease inequality in the United States in Chapter Six, and movement of juvenile offenders from incarceration to community diversion projects in Chapter Fourteen.

The following strategy is used to organize the chapters in this edition:

- Chapter One defines policy practice and policy advocacy, discusses why social workers have an ethical duty to engage in them, identifies challenges in providing advocacy, and urges students to join the reform tradition of the social work profession, and discussing ethical reasoning.
- Chapter Two provides four rationales for engaging in policy practice and policy advocacy including political.

- Chapter Three presents a multi-level model of policy practice and policy advocacy that features eight tasks and four skills, as well as advocacy practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels including ethical, analytic, political, and electoral ones.
- Chapters Four and Five discuss Task 2 by analyzing, respectively, the "playing field" of policy practice in the United States and in global arenas.
- Chapter Six discusses Task 3 by analyzing how policy practitioners and policy advocates place issues on policy agendas.
- Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine discuss Tasks 4 and 5 by presenting and using a six-step model of policy analysis that analyzes how policy practitioners and policy advocates engage in policy analysis, develop proposals, engage in debates, and make effective presentations. Chapter Eight discusses how policy advocates construct policy briefs.
- Chapters Ten, Eleven, and Twelve discuss Task 6 by analyzing how policy practitioners and policy advocates develop and use power resources, develop political strategy, use social media, and engage in ballot-based advocacy.
- Chapter Thirteen discusses Task 7 by analyzing how policy practitioners and advocates impact policy implementation.
- Chapter Fourteen discusses Task 8 by analyzing how policy practitioners and advocates assess policies.

Acknowledgments

Twenty-nine people, including myself, have contributed video materials and written materials to this book, including written Policy Advocacy Challenges and video clips. I thank Rebecca Kendig, and Ron McClain, as well as the late Russell Henderson, for their still-relevant video clips, as well as Bob Erlenbusch's superb video clips drawn from his extensive advocacy for homeless persons in Los Angeles, California, Washington, DC, and Sacramento, California.

Reviewers of the manuscript that led to this edition include the following:

- Ohenewaa White-Ra, Alvernia University
- Corinne Warrener, Clark Atlanta University
- Sharon Goldberg, Adelphi University
- Gloria J. Davis, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- Cassandra J. Bowers, Wayne State University
- Gwenelle O'Neal, West Chester University
- Francis Xavier Roque Origanti, Avila University
- Rachael Richter, Western New Mexico University
- Jose Ramos Jr, California State University, Northridge
- Rose McCLeary, California State University, Bakersfield
- Rosalie Ambrosino, Our Lady of the Lake University
- Michael Cronin, Monmouth University
- Carla A. Fagan, Methodist University
- Joshua Bender, California State University, Dominguez Hills
- Janie Brazier, Longwood University

Thanks to my wife, Betty Ann, for her support during this revision process.

An Invitation to Students Using This Text

Please view this text as an opportunity to expand your horizons and to gain skills in policy practice and policy advocacy in agency, community, governmental, and legislative settings. This course, too, will allow you to fulfill the requirement in NASW's Code of Ethics that social workers engage in advocacy.

This book contains many materials designed to make this topic user-friendly and practice-oriented including:

- A multi-level model of policy practice and policy advocacy that provides tools for all social workers, regardless of their specialization and including clinical students, to become policy practitioners and policy advocates.
- Three-minute video clips spread throughout the book that explain concepts relevant to policy practice and policy advocacy by experienced policy practitioners. These are accessible through MindTap for Social Work. MindTap, a digital teaching and learning solution, helps students be more successful and confident in the course—and in their work with clients. MindTap guides students through the course by combining the complete textbook with interactive multimedia, activities, assessments, and learning tools. Readings and activities engage students in learning core concepts, practicing needed skills, reflecting on their attitudes and opinions, and applying what they learn. Videos of client sessions illustrate skills and concepts in action, while case studies ask students to make decisions and think critically about the types of situations they'll encounter on the job. Helper Studio activities put students in the role of the helper, allowing them to build and practice skills in a non-threatening environment by responding via video to a virtual client. Instructors can rearrange and add content to personalize their MindTap course, and easily track students' progress with real-time analytics. And, MindTap integrates seamlessly with any learning management system.
- Policy Advocacy Challenges spread throughout the book that give real-life examples of specific policy issues and policy-practice strategies.
- Many Internet sites relevant to policy practice and policy advocacy throughout the book.
- Discussion of ways you can use social media to develop campaigns for specific policies.

Consider this text to have a policy faculty of 30 people including myself. They are:

1. Gail Abarbanel, MSW and LCSW, the founder and Executive Director of the Rape Treatment Center in the Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center.
2. Mimi Abramovitz, DSW and Professor in the School of Social Work and Director of the Social Welfare Program of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, who has written extensively on social policy issues in such areas as welfare and policy discrimination against women.
3. Michele Baggett, a documentary filmmaker with extensive experience in the mass media. She is a native of New Orleans who filmed most of the video clips in this book at sites in New Orleans and Los Angeles. She recently obtained her MSW at the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work of the University of Southern California.

4. Alicia Case, MSW, who contributed a policy presentation she made while a student at the Suzanne-Dworak-Peck USC School of Social Work.
5. Laura Chick, MSW, the former Controller of the City of Los Angeles and the first woman to win an election for a citywide office in Los Angeles. She was appointed Inspector General of the California Office by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in April 2009 to oversee $50 billion of stimulus funds given to California by the stimulus program enacted by Congress in early 2009.
6. Stephanie Davis, MA, the Research Librarian at the University of California at Irvine.
7. Anneka Scranton, MSW, DPA, a policy advocate for many decades, who volunteers with the Global Fund for Women and organizes members of churches in the central coastal regions of California to become policy advocates.
8. Ron Dear, DSW, Emeritus Associate Profession, who was a lobbyist for the University of Washington for many years in Olympia where he was a faculty member at the School of Social Work of the University of Washington.
9. Sarah-Jane Dodd, MSW, PhD, an associate professor at the School of Social Work at Hunter College, who has written extensively on ethics and who helped with the development of a prior edition of this book.
10. Bob Erlenbusch, PhD, formerly Executive Director of the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness and President of the Board of the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington, DC. He is currently the Executive Director of the Sacramento Coalition to End Homelessness.
11. Ralph Fertig, JD and MA, former Clinical Professor at the USC Suzanne-Dworak School of Social Work. He was a freedom rider in the civil rights movement, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washing Planning and Housing Association, Executive Director of the War on Poverty in City of Los Angeles, and a federal administrative judge.
12. Emanuel Gale, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Social Work and Gerontology at the School of Social Work at the California State University at Sacramento.
13. Rachel Gardner, MSW, who contributed a Policy Advocacy Challenge to this book that describes an array of policy practice actions by members of her MSW class at the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.
14. Gretchen Heidemann, MSW and PhD, contributed Policy Advocacy Challenges, Internet sites, on-line teaching and learning aides, and a revised teaching manual to this book and is currently a community-based consultant and researcher as well as instructor at the USC Suzanne-Dworak School of Social Work.
15. The late Russell Henderson, MSW and LCSW, the organizer of the Rebuilding Louisiana Coalition, a lobbyist with the Louisiana legislature for 25 years, and teacher of social policy and community organization at Dillard University in New Orleans.
16. Robert Hernandez, MSW and senior lecturer at the Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, who contributed a policy presentation on homelessness.
17. Rachel Katz, MPP, a program analyst in the Finance Department of the City of Long Beach, California, contributed some Policy Advocacy Challenges to this book.
18. Dennis Kao, MSW and Ph.D., an associate professor at the School of Social Work at California State University at Fullerton. He served as an advocate for many years with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center focusing on immigrant rights.
19. Rebecca Kendig, MSW and LCSW, the Executive Director of Case Services Management of the Youth Empowerment Project in New Orleans.
20. Patsy Lane, MSW, the former Director of the Department of Human Services of the City of Pasadena.

21. Ron McClain, MSW, LCSW, and JD, the President and CEO of Family Service of Greater New Orleans.
22. Victor Manola, MSW, PhD, who has been reelected to the City Council of the City of Artesia in Los Angeles County and is mayor of the City of Artesia. He is Program Director of Claremont Lincoln University.
23. Carolyn Ryan, MSW, who contributed a policy presentation she made while a student in the USC School of Social Work.
24. Ramon Salcido, DSW, formerly an associate professor at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work who has consulted extensively with political candidates and headed the School's macro concentration for many years.
25. Bob Schneider, PhD, and Emeritus Professor at the School of Social Work of Virginia Commonwealth University, who founded Influencing State Policy and has written extensively on advocacy.
26. Sam Taylor, DSW and Emeritus Associate Professor from the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, who has been a community organizer and policy activist for many years.
27. Jessica Van Tuyl, MSW, who has a special interest in the mental health needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, and questioning youth.
28. Ali Wagner, MSW, who contributed a policy presentation made while she was an MSW student at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.
29. Elaine Sanchez Wilson, MPP, former journalist helped revise this book into its seventh edition.

I am the Margaret W. Driscoll/Louise M. Clevenger, Professor of Social Policy and Social Administration at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work at the University of Southern California. I invented the term *policy practice* to help social workers gain skills to become policy practitioners and advocates and developed the first multi-level policy practice framework. I truly hope that this interactive text with a faculty of 29 people will broaden your social work practice so that you can engage in policy practice and policy advocacy to make our society a more humane place for vulnerable populations.

Becoming Motivated to Become a Policy Advocate and a Leader

part 1

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Soup kitchen on the streets in hard times

Policy Practice and Policy Advocacy as the Fourth Dimension of Social Work Practice

Many social problems that require the determined work of social reformers beg creative solutions in the United States and in the world. Social workers should engage in policy advocacy to become leaders to create a more humane society, including reducing income and other kinds of inequality between vulnerable populations and the general population. This provides theory and policy-advocacy skills to help social workers address the 12 **Grand Challenges** (major social problems) that the social work profession faces in contemporary American (American Academy of Social Welfare @aaswsw.org). They include:

1. Ensure health development for all youth
2. Close the health gap
3. Stop family violence
4. Advance long and productive lives
5. Eradicate social isolation
6. End homelessness
7. Create social responses to a changing environment
8. Harness technology for social good
9. Promote smart decarceration
10. Reduce extreme economic inequality
11. Build financial capability for all
12. Achieve equal opportunity and justice

This book provides tools, theoretical and applied, to enable social workers to be agents of change with respect to these and other social problems.

This book discusses an intervention that has emerged relatively recently in the social work profession: policy practice and policy advocacy. We define *policy*

practice as efforts to change policies in legislative, agency, and community settings by establishing new policies, improving existing ones, or defeating the policy initiatives of other people. By this definition, people of all ideological persuasions, including liberals, radicals, and conservatives, engage in policy practice. People who are skilled in policy practice increase the odds that their policy preferences will be advanced. By *policy advocacy*, we mean policy practice that aims to help relatively powerless groups, such as women, children, poor people, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, gay men and lesbians, veterans, and people with disabilities, improve their resources and opportunities. Policy advocacy also seeks to reduce economic inequality so that the gap between the top 1 percent and the bottom 50 percent is reduced. If policy practitioners seek to change policies, policy advocates seek to help powerless groups improve their lot and to decrease economic inequality.

Chapter One argues that policy practice and policy advocacy are as important to social workers as their other three intervention disciplines: direct service, community, and administrative practice. Social workers must be conversant with social policies and able to seek changes in these policies to advance values such as social justice and fairness and the well-being of citizens and specific groups. They also need to work to change the composition of government to increase the likelihood that decision makers will seek policies that truly help citizens. We argue that policy advocates often encounter barriers, such as opposition from persons and groups with different values, entrenched interests, and mistaken beliefs about the causes and nature of specific social problems and issues. Since policy changing work is often associated with controversy and conflict, policy advocates must obtain perspectives and skills that enable them to be effective change agents. By becoming policy advocates, we join social reform traditions not only in American society but also in the social work profession as we seek policy reforms in communities, social agencies, local governments, state governments, and the federal government, as well as through the courts and in the electoral process. We discuss key attributes that policy advocates need, such as persistence, the ability to tolerate uncertainty, and core values such as social justice.

Chapter Two articulates four rationales for participating in policy advocacy: ethical, analytic, political, and electoral ones. We engage in policy practice for ethical reasons such as to advance social justice. We seek evidence-based policies. We advance the needs of vulnerable populations in legislative and other political venues that are often dominated by special interests. We seek to increase the number of elected officials in government who are willing to support legislation that promotes the well-being of vulnerable populations.

Joining a Tradition of Social Reform

chapter 1

POLICY PREDICAMENT

Occupy Movement and Inequality

> "We are the 99 percent. We are getting kicked out of our homes. We are forced to choose between groceries and rent. We are denied quality medical care. We are suffering from environmental pollution. We are working long hours for little pay and no rights, if we're working at all. We are getting nothing while the other 1 percent is getting everything."—quoted text from the We Are the 99 Percent Campaign, part of the Occupy Wall Street Movement

In September 2011, a group of protestors joined a battle cry to "Occupy Wall Street" and gathered in Zuccotti Park, located in Lower Manhattan's Financial District. Decrying social and economic inequality, high unemployment rates, corporate corruption, and a host of other issues, the protestors set up sleeping bags and blankets, and later tents, in the plaza. They vowed to remain there until society was made more equitable. Although the encampment was forcefully dissolved months later, the group sparked a flurry of mass demonstrations in cities across the country. With the world watching, these Americans, tired of the status quo, were inspired to voice their discontent and demand social justice. Senator Bernie Sanders (D., Vt.) made the reducing of inequality the key theme of his bid for the Democratic nomination for the presidency in 2016, even winning 26 states in his contest with Hillary Clinton, the former First Lady and Secretary of State. Clinton, in turn, adopted some of Sanders' positions during the Democratic primaries and during the Democratic Convention. Donald Trump won the presidential race in 2016 partly due to votes of angry white voters who contended politicians of both parties had abandoned them as manufacturing plants exited the U.S. for foreign nations. See Policy Practice Challenge 1.7 to analyze why policy advocates need to work to decrease economic inequality in the United States.

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Soup kitchen on the streets in hard times

LEARNING OUTCOMES

We discuss in this chapter a tradition of social work advocacy that long has existed within both American society and the social work profession. In particular, students will be prepared to discuss how policy advocates do the following:

1. Seek changes in policies to improve the well-being of members of vulnerable populations
2. Seek policy reforms that are in the general interest, advance social justice, and enhance equality
3. Seek evidence-based policies
4. Work from an ecological or systems perspective
5. Change many kinds of policies, including government and agency ones, as well as formal and informal ones
6. Prioritize policy changes that assist oppressed populations by advancing their civil rights, meeting their needs, and reducing their economic inequality
7. Encounter and surmount barriers to reform
8. Join a tradition of social reform in American society and in the social work profession
9. Develop attributes that enable them to become effective policy advocates
10. Work to make government more responsive to human needs and social justice by participating in electoral politics

Focus of This Book: A Hands-On Framework for Reforming Policies

The National Association of Social Workers requires social workers to engage in "Political and Social Action," as outlined in the society's Code of Ethics.

It states that:

EP 1a
EP 2a
EP 3a
EP 3b
EP 5c

1. "Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice.
2. Social workers should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups.
3. Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.
4. Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability."

This book provides a hands-on, policy advocacy framework to be used to reform policies in agency, community, and legislative settings, as well as to help clients obtain benefits and rights to which they are entitled. It identifies eight specific tasks that policy practitioners and policy advocates undertake to change policies in a framework discussed at the outset of Chapter Three. The first two chapters of this book are devoted to defining such terms as policy practice and policy advocacy as well as discussing why social workers

should engage in **policy practice** and **policy advocacy** in the first place. All remaining chapters in the book are devoted to each of these eight tasks. Consider this book, then, as a road map to fulfilling social workers' ethical commitment to promoting social justice.

Diversity and Policy Advocacy

When discussing **diversity**, most people focus on the unique cultures and perspectives of specific groups, such as women, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, gay men and lesbians, persons with physical and mental disabilities, older Americans, and children. Indeed, clinicians need extensive knowledge of different cultures and perspectives when working with members of various groups, lest they be insensitive to their needs and preferences.

But social workers risk ignoring many of the social and economic needs of these groups if they limit themselves to the knowledge of their cultures and perspectives. Members of each group have experienced various kinds of discrimination and prejudice in American history, both in distant times and in recent history; discrimination and prejudice remain active in contemporary society, even though civil rights and other protections have been enacted. Moreover, each of these groups experiences *structural discrimination*—a series of obstacles that, singly and together, interfere with the advancement of their members into the social and economic mainstream of American society.

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American society has a variety of **vulnerable populations**, who have experienced discrimination and prejudice over an extended period and whose members' well-being (as measured by economic and other criteria) often reflects the structural barriers they have encountered. These vulnerable populations include **racial groups**, **sociological groups, dependent groups, nonconformist groups, model groups**, and **economic groups**. Racial groups, such as African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, have been subjected not only to overt racism in personal interactions with employers, teachers, physicians, the police, and people in other professions but also to policy discrimination as reflected in schools, training programs, housing, community amenities, and correctional and law enforcement programs that give poorer services or fewer resources to them than they give to Caucasian populations. Sociological groups include women, older persons, and people with disabilities, who are often expected to assume relatively dependent roles in society, either in places of employment or in the broader society. They are often denied access to certain kinds of jobs, promotions, and roles within decision-making bodies because of widespread beliefs that they are incapable of moving beyond residual or lower-level roles within society. Disabled persons are often encouraged by the medical system to be dependent. Dependent groups, such as children, must often rely upon society for basic amenities, such as financial assistance, health care, dental care, and adequate housing, but are often given inadequate governmental support because they lack political clout. Nonconformist groups are subjected to discrimination because they are widely viewed as violating important social norms, such as sexual norms by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning population (**LGBTQQ**); social norms (criminal offenders and juvenile delinquents); or social expectations (persons with mental illnesses). Model groups, such as Jewish Americans, Asian Americans, and some white ethnic Americans, are denied resources and services because many Americans believe they have no social problems. Economic groups include persons in low- and moderate-income groups who often lack sufficient resources, well-paying employment, or stable employment. Lack of resources, in turn, precludes them from some life options that are available to more affluent persons, such as safe neighborhoods, adequate housing, and economic security.

Discrimination against members of vulnerable populations, either expressed in personal encounters with others or through policy discrimination, often shows up in statistical measures of the economic and social well-being of members of specific vulnerable populations. Members of racial groups tend to have, for example, fewer resources, lower life expectancies, and poorer educational achievement than Caucasian populations. Women are more likely to be poorer than men, particularly when they are single heads of households. Persons with physical and mental disabilities are far more likely to be poor than other members of society. Gay youth are more likely than nongay youth to commit suicide. Children are more likely than adults to live in poverty.

A critic might ask, "But don't these differences in economic, health, and other measures of well-being stem from the intrinsic problems of members of these vulnerable populations (such as medical problems in the case of the disabled) or from the culture or work ethic of members of impoverished groups?" It is true; members of these groups do sometimes contribute to their own problems. For example, a disabled person may simply choose not to seek employment because he or she has accepted the norms of dependency widely ascribed to disabled persons or because he or she possesses a mental problem such as depression. Similarly, low-income persons of color sometimes exacerbate the problems of other persons in their communities by resorting to violent behavior or abusing drugs.

Yet efforts to generalize actions of specific persons to entire populations are doomed to failure. When entire groups have economic, education, health, and other indicators of well-being that are sharply divergent from the dominant population, we can rightly surmise that external forces and policies impact them adversely and contribute to these outcomes. When a disproportionate percentage of single female heads of households is immersed in poverty, we can rightly ask what factors, singly and in tandem, affect or influence the economic outcomes of this population so that, as a group, its members suffer disproportionate poverty when compared to double-headed families or single females with no children.

When examining structural discrimination, we identify policies; familial, cultural, community, and economic factors; and life experiences that *systematically* shape the lives of specific groups, so they fall behind other groups that are not subject to structural discrimination. We can understand why such groups as low-income African Americans or single heads of households lag behind white males with college degrees in income only by examining a constellation of factors that systematically impinge on them. In the case of low-income, inner-city African Americans, such factors include the following:

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- Overt discrimination on the basis of race
- Subtle discrimination that relegates African Americans to poorly paid positions and education tracks that steer them away from college preparation
- Segregated communities that are distant from places of employment
- Lack of family and community role models who have secured higher levels of education
- Overcrowded schools
- Low expectations from school personnel, including excessive tracking
- Childhood poverty exacerbated by governmental policies such as the absence of family allowances
- Family and personal stress stemming from poverty
- Lack of recreational programs
- Exposure to violence, such as from gangs

- High rates of mortality among adolescent males
- Lack of user-friendly health systems that provide preventive services
- Lack of well-paying, accessible, and stable employment
- Lack of access to the old-boy networks that give some people an inside track to jobs and educational opportunities
- Repressive treatment by police, courts, and the justice system
- Extreme inequality as compared to the rest of the population

If we compare suburban white children, whose parents have college educations, with African American inner-city residents, the harsh workings of structural discrimination immediately become evident. These suburban children rarely confront these barriers, and if they do encounter specific ones, they rarely encounter a constellation of barriers. It is not surprising that suburban white residents are often unsympathetic to inner-city African Americans. Assuming from their own experiences that a level playing field exists, many of them believe that the inner-city residents lack personal characteristics, such as the work ethic, that would bring them out of poverty.

Consider single women with children who have high school diplomas or less. Regardless of their ethnicity, these women are likely to secure only relatively low-paying work because they cannot compete for the higher-paying jobs usually filled by persons with higher levels of education. As single parents, moreover, they must frequently support their children without financial assistance from another parent. Because the United States does not fund day care for many women for sustained periods, their meager paychecks are often depleted by day-care costs. Because employers are not required by law to provide fringe benefits, many low-wage-earning women do not have health insurance, so they must obtain health care for themselves or their children in crowded, difficult-to-access public clinics. Some of these women cannot afford cars, so they must use a time-consuming public transportation system that sometimes does not even have routes convenient to their workplaces. It is small wonder, then, that millions of poorly educated single mothers and their children remain mired in poverty for extended periods, no matter how hard they work to achieve a better economic standard. As with inner-city African Americans, poverty brings additional stresses to individuals and families who must struggle to make ends meet, who cannot afford amenities that others take for granted, and who often must live in blighted communities where rents are relatively low (see Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.1).

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We should not merely take a short-term perspective when we examine the effects of external forces and policies. Most African Americans, for example, were deprived of land, civil liberties, and education in the 19th century and well into the 20th century—often relegated to rural areas of the South where they lived in appalling poverty. Unlike white immigrants from Italy, Ireland, and Eastern Europe, they were not allowed to participate in the emerging industrial order of northern cities in the 19th century. African Americans began moving to the North in large numbers only well into the 20th century. They were consigned to play catch up under appalling conditions in northern cities, such as segregated communities, exclusion from trade unions, hiring and promotion prejudice in the workplace that consigned them to unskilled and uncertain jobs, poor health care, and poor schools—not to mention police brutality, discriminatory treatment by courts, and excessive rates of incarceration. Policy developments of preceding eras, then, impeded the ability of contemporary African Americans to achieve parity with white Americans, whose upward economic assent was built upon generations of their children obtaining education, access to economic opportunity, and the accumulation of assets (such as savings and houses).

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Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.1

Mapping Structural Discrimination

Note for instructors: To listen to this audio clip, or any videos featured in this textbook, log into your MindTap course for Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate, 8th Edition. On the Learning Path, select the "Additional Resources" folder.

Take any vulnerable population that lags behind the general population on specific social or economic indicators, for example, single mothers, released prisoners, or unemployed persons. Identify a constellation of factors that lead to structural discrimination against this group by contrasting it with another group in the population that is not as subject to structural discrimination.

Identify specific kinds of policy reforms that have been enacted to ameliorate such structural discrimination. What additional reforms would help the subgroup's members improve their economic and social status?

Why are social workers' clinical skills not sufficient to redress structural discrimination?

Listen to the audio clip and discuss how the economic recession of 2007–2009 impacted families. Specifically, discuss the circumstances that forced the Greens into a homeless shelter and the barriers to their ability to acquire their own housing again. How did such factors as the availability of jobs, minimum wage policies, and the costs of housing and child care impact this family? What are some of the differences between single mothers with children and intact couples with children in situations of homelessness? What policies could assist these two subpopulations in transitioning out of homelessness? Do you agree with the shelter director that the root cause of homelessness is poverty and that the government has a responsibility to help the poor? If so, what policies would you recommend to combat poverty as the root cause of homelessness?

Because of the effects of long-term oppression on members of these populations, we should sometimes favor **compensatory strategies**, such as extra tutoring or smaller classes in schools, outreach health services to encourage persons who do not usually use the health care system services to do so, or providing community-based services in areas where persons are particularly impoverished. Similarly, **affirmative action** is sometimes needed to move members of vulnerable populations more rapidly into employment and education—particularly when we conclude that their members would not otherwise achieve parity with the dominant population in the foreseeable future. African Americans and Latinos often perform at lower levels in schools that are segregated by race partly because segregated schools often have poorer teachers and less adequate facilities and partly because poverty has negative effects on parents and their offspring such as forcing them to focus on basic survival.

When identifying a variety of factors that lead certain vulnerable populations to lag behind the dominant population with respect to specific indicators of well-being, we must beware of several dangers. These include excessively stigmatizing groups, viewing them as excessively dependent, or relying on panaceas. Many individuals do make it up and out despite structural discrimination, such as African Americans who enter professions, single heads of households who successfully juggle raising children and careers, and persons with paraplegia who use technology to care for themselves and enter the workforce. Nor should we view members of vulnerable populations as passive victims of fate. American history is replete with advocates' determined efforts from these groups to mobilize resources, self-help projects, networks, alliances, and policy advocacy to better their condition. Our challenge is to empower them to develop creative solutions for overcoming barriers they encounter

and provide them with social policies that allow them to obtain resources, housing, and services from different levels of government and the private sector. We should not succumb to the belief that specific policies will have a magical effect. To help single mothers improve their economic condition, for example, we need multiple, interacting policies that help them improve their lot, such as greater funding for child care, increases in the minimum wage, expansion of the *Earned Income Tax Credit* (EITC), which gives low-income workers a tax rebate), increases in housing subsidies, more training and remedial education, and expansion of food stamp subsidies and health insurance for children and families.

In policy practice and policy advocacy, then, social workers must consider diversity at more than just the cultural level. This allows social workers to address environmental factors that stack the deck against a subgroup's members and that powerfully shape their collective destinies. Social workers can use policy advocacy to remedy or address problems such as the following:

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- The *feminization of poverty*, with roughly one-fourth of American children living in impoverished households
- Inner-city poverty concentrations of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans
- Extraordinary differences in educational attainment between white people and many people of color
- Large disparities between men and women in earnings and high-level positions in employment
- Disproportionate poverty among persons with physical and mental disabilities
- Discrimination against gay men and lesbians
- A dearth of services for people who abuse substances
- Impoverished frail older people
- Inadequate safety net programs to allow low-income persons to overcome excessive economic problems
- Violence against women (see Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.2)
- Lack of affordable housing for tens of millions of Americans

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.2

Enhancing the Rights of Children Who Are Sexually Assaulted in School

Gail Abarbanel, MSW, LCSW, Executive Director, Rape Treatment Center, Santa Monica–UCLA Medical Center

As a social worker, I view social policy reforms as a way to give meaning to the experiences of my clients, as well as a means to serve them better. The following case example illustrates these two functions. Jennifer, a 12-year-old girl attending a Los Angeles middle school, was raped by another student, during the school day, on the school campus. After she reported the crime, she was re-victimized by her eighth-grade classmates, who ridiculed and harassed her. Jennifer was also ostracized by some of her friends, who informed her that their parents had told them that they could no longer associate with her.

When the school district scheduled a disciplinary hearing, Jennifer received very little notice and no information about the procedures. When Jennifer and her parents arrived at the hearing, they were told that this 12-year-old child would have to go into the hearing room alone. No one was allowed to accompany her—no parent, no counsel, no support

(Continued)

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.2 (Continued)

person—while she was subjected to cross-examination by the accused student's representative. The accused student, however, was allowed to have his parents and a legal representative present to support him during the entire proceeding.

Jennifer had been profoundly traumatized by the rape. She was too fragile psychologically, as most other 12-year-old children would be, to testify under the conditions set by the school district. However, she was informed by school officials that, without her testimony, there would be no disciplinary action. The hearing was postponed.

As a result of the Rape Treatment Center's (RTC's) efforts on the victim's behalf, when the hearing was finally held, Jennifer was allowed to be accompanied by an American Civil Liberties Union attorney.

However, the attorney was required to remain silent. The school district officials seated Jennifer very close to, and directly opposite, the father of the boy who had raped her. The accused student's representative who questioned Jennifer insulted and taunted her. She also asked Jennifer to demonstrate some of the degrading things that had been done to her during the assault, an abusive practice called "reenactment" that would not be permitted in most legal proceedings involving either child or adult victims.

The hearing process was devastating for Jennifer. She was powerless, just as she had been during the rape. Again, she was re-victimized—this time by the school district's disciplinary system.

As the founder and director of the RTC at Santa Monica–UCLA Medical Center and a longtime advocate for victims of sexual assault, I intervened to protect this child, *and* I sought a remedy that would provide legal protection for other child victims and would prevent this kind of discriminatory treatment in the future. I turned to Assemblywoman Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica), our representative in the state legislature. Together, we drafted legislation to establish rights for children who are sexually assaulted in their schools.

Under the new law, which became effective January 1, 1997, child victims are given many of the same rights afforded to accused students in school disciplinary hearings, such as the right to have a support person accompany them during their testimony and to request a closed hearing. In addition, the victim's irrelevant sexual history is protected from disclosure. Sexual assault victims have had these rights in the criminal and civil justice systems for many years. However, in most states, the education codes recognize only the rights of accused students while overlooking the needs of victims. The new law corrects this inequity.

Passage of this legislation is only a first step. Students must be informed about the new rights and protections available to them if they are victimized. Schools must change their policies and procedures to implement the reforms required by the new law. The RTC has an established, school-based, sexual abuse prevention program that reaches thousands of students each year, as well as administrative personnel in schools throughout the community we serve. This program has enabled us to educate school personnel and students about the new law. Fifteen years later, in 2012, it educates new student cohorts and teachers.

Advancing the Public Interest at Home and Abroad

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While policy advocates often focus on problems and issues affecting vulnerable populations, they also tackle problems of citizens in general, which we call the public interest. They want child-care services, for example, that improve the developmental and cognitive well-being of *any* children who use them. They want schools that provide

first-rate counseling services to children so that any children who develop mental health or substance abuse problems can obtain quality services. They want preventive services that diminish the incidence of major social problems that afflict citizens whether or not they are members of a vulnerable population. For example, policy advocates seek laws that disallow smoking in public places and require health-risk notifications on cigarette packages, seek antipollution measures, fight for better public transportation systems, and seek a living-wage policy for all workers.

As we discuss in Chapter Five, policy advocates do not limit their activity to the United States. With the reduction of trade barriers, for example, many American corporations have relocated their operations abroad to escape high wages, antipollution regulations, provision of benefits to workers, and corporate taxes they confront in the United States. To the extent that they impose inhumane practices on other nations in a quest to expand their profits, policy advocates battle for international standards that govern wages and pollution and seek to protect wages of American workers who are often given an ultimatum to accept lower wages to forestall their company from replacing their jobs with lower-wage workers abroad. Some controls need to be placed upon corporations to limit their ability to move abroad so that large numbers of American workers do not lose their jobs as has occurred in the past five decades. Issues of immigration across national borders are germane, as well, to policy advocates who grapple with how to protect immigrants' rights in the United States. Since policy advocates are interested in the well-being of persons no matter their location, some of them pursue issues of global social justice, such as how wealthy nations such as the United States can assist third-world nations address poverty and such illnesses as AIDS.

Using an Ecological Perspective

An *ecological or systems perspective* is highly useful in policy advocacy. As our discussion of vulnerable populations suggests, citizens' lives are impacted negatively and positively by multiple factors, including economic, cultural, social, community, and physiological factors, as well as discrimination or prejudice. Policy advocates seek policies that help vulnerable populations improve their economic and social condition.

What Policy Practitioners and Policy Advocates Seek to Change

Policy advocates aim to change social policies. This book uses a simple, problem-solving definition of **social policy** as "a collective strategy that *prevents* and *addresses* social problems." Our definition is similar to that of the late Richard Titmuss, an English social policy theorist.[1] Defining social policy as goal-driven problem solving has several advantages. First, it makes clear that policies are established to prevent and address social problems that include the following:

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- Victimization of persons by landlords, corporations, businesses, realtors, restaurant owners, and others by providing them with unsafe rentals, providing them unsafe products, not providing consumers with sanitary food, and not paying employees sufficient resources to allow them to survive. These kinds of problems are often addressed by **regulations** such as the federal minimum wage, housing codes, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and local living wage.
- Inability of citizens to meet their survival needs, thus imperiling their nutritional, housing, health, and other basic needs. These kinds of problems lead to **needs-meeting policies** that provide to citizens basic health and economic benefits, such as food stamps,

Medicaid and Medicare health benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and rent-supplement programs.

- Inability of citizens to find employment or obtain skills and knowledge to find employment that can meet their basic needs. These kinds of **opportunity-enhancing policies** include public education, job-training programs, and vocational education.
- Inability of citizens to cope with mental health, marital, substance abuse, and familial problems. These **social service policies** include a wide range of mental health, child welfare, and substance abuse programs.
- Inability of citizens to navigate complex service-delivery systems. **Referral and linkage policies** establish case management, ombudsman, and outreach programs.
- Discriminatory treatment of members of specific vulnerable populations by employers, schools, public facilities, transportation companies, landlords, and others. **Civil rights policies** prohibit specific infringements of the civil rights of vulnerable populations' members, including the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, local antihate laws prohibiting attacks on members of vulnerable populations and defiling places of worship, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- Violations of human rights such as opposing infringements of civil liberties and legal rights of persons from the Middle East in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.
- Excessive inequality between low- and high-income persons. **Equality-enhancing policies** target resources to low-income populations, such as the federal EITC as well as a host of programs such as Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, Supplementary Security Income (SSI), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps). They also reduce the income of affluent persons with progressive taxation of them through federal, state, and local taxes, raising inheritance taxes, decreasing tax expenditures like deductions of mortgage-interest payments on second and third houses, and disallowing tax havens in offshore accounts.
- Inability of low-income Americans to accumulate assets such as savings accounts and real estate. **Asset accumulation policies**, such as federal legislation stimulating individual investment accounts, give citizens tax incentives and resources to initiate savings accounts and purchase houses.
- Lack of public amenities necessary for recreation and commerce for citizens. Federal, state, and local governments enact **infrastructure development policies** that promote construction of roads, parks, bridges, and public transportation.
- Lack of sufficient jobs in certain portions of cities to support their citizens. Various levels of government offer **economic development policies** such as tax incentives and loans to businesses that locate themselves in low-income areas.
- Low rates of participation in the political process by low-income persons that increase the disinclination of government to adequately fund programs to help them. Policies geared toward *facilitating political participation and increasing the political power of oppressed populations* include state and federal policies that prohibit excessive campaign contributions by special interests and that reapportion political districts so that they do not discriminate against persons of color.
- Insufficient resources devoted to specific problems or issues by governments or even specific agencies or organizations, which require **budget-changing policies**.
- **Protective policies** that help persons who are subject to abusive or violent behaviors and actions of others, such as protective services programs for children and policies that protect women from battering.

Second, our definition of social policy includes **prevention** because policy advocates want not only to address existing social problems but also to prevent them when possible. Much like public health advocates have succeeded in obtaining many antismoking,

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gun-control, and auto-safety measures that have saved many lives and averted injuries, social work advocates have put in place early detection programs for mental health problems such as depression, programs to prevent youth from leaving school prematurely, programs that help isolated elderly persons join day-treatment programs, and day-care and job-training programs to help persons improve their economic condition.

Third, our definition implies the need to find **evidence-based policies** that ameliorate or solve specific social problems. Take the example of the huge public housing projects that were constructed in major cities during the 1950s and 1960s. While they *did* provide living spaces for low-income persons, they exacerbated other social problems by overcrowding residents, not providing recreational spaces, and not linking the projects to social, medical, employment, and other services. Or take the case of Alcoholics Anonymous that tried to persuade alcoholics to abstain from alcoholic beverages. Recent research has found that this strategy is effective for only a small number of alcoholics—and that helping them manage their use of alcoholic beverages is often more effective (see the "Bad Science of Alcoholics Anonymous, Atlantic Monthly, 2015 accessed at http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/04/the-irrationality-of-alcoholics-anonymous/386255/).

Fourth, our definition of social policy includes policies that are geared toward improving defects in the operations of agencies that implement specific social policies. Imagine, for example, that a legislator succeeds in enacting legislation that provides prenatal services meant to decrease premature births and birth defects. Imagine, as well, that the person who sponsored the legislation finds, several years later, that it has had little impact on the rates of premature births or birth defects in an inner-city Latino area. Assume that the legislator also discovers that neither bilingual nor outreach staff have been hired, that clinic hours are limited to daytime hours, and that programs are located at inconvenient sites for Latinos, such as at a distant public hospital. The following are problems in the human services systems that are often the targets of policy reform in specific agencies, specific service networks, or legislation establishing new programs.

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- **Fragmentation**. Barriers make it difficult for clients or consumers to obtain services from multiple programs.
- **Discontinuity**. Clients cannot obtain consistent, accessible services over a period of time.
- **Lack of access**. Barriers make services hard to use at specific sites.
- **Discrimination**. Service providers are hostile or indifferent to specific kinds of clients.
- **Creaming**. Providers deliberately seek clients with less serious problems.
- **Wastage**. Different providers serve the same population for the same problem, or services are not provided efficiently.
- **Lack of outreach**. Providers make little effort to seek persons who do not currently use services.
- **Incompetent staff**. Staff are asked to perform tasks for which they have little training.
- **Lack of cultural sensitivity**. Providers make little effort to match their services to the cultural perspectives of the clients they serve such as by having bilingual staff or staff versed in specific cultures.
- **Inadequate funding**. Services are funded at such low levels that important activities are compromised or deleted.

Our definition of social policy as collective strategy to prevent and address social problems makes clear that policies are developed in many places, as the example of commitment procedures for people with mental illness illustrates. Policies may come down from the highest levels, including state mental health officials, county mental health departments, various courts, and even federal authorities. Although these *high-level policies* influence their work, staff in county mental health units may implement them in strikingly different

ways. The staff at one county hospital may commit many more persons than the staff at another hospital, because each defines *imminent threat* differently.

Social welfare policies are often divided into mental health, health, child and family, income maintenance, school, industrial, corrections, housing, gerontology, and other sectors. This division of policies into sectors partly reflects specializations among professionals, providers, and funders, as well as specific legislative committees that write legislation in these areas. While the division of policies into these sectors allows us to identify policies that are directed to specific kinds of needs and issues, it can also contribute to excessive fragmentation between the sectors. Many consumers of health services, for example, need mental health services, but they must often go to different agencies to get them and may find their mental health needs, such as depression, not recognized or treated by health professionals. Rather than coordinating their services, specialized agencies sometimes erect turf barriers.

Social policy is a kind of ladder extending from different levels of government to persons in the population who use services or programs. Policy advocates can intervene at any point in this policy ladder or at several points. They may help individual clients gain access to specific programs to which they are eligible. They may seek to establish outreach programs so that consumers know about and use specific programs. They sometimes seek to change the policies of individual agencies, such as specific not-for-profit, for-profit, or public agencies. They may seek to change the policies or regulations of higher-level agencies in counties, municipalities, or townships. They may seek redress in state or federal venues. Or they may seek court rulings that place restrictions on how local mental health agencies commit mental patients involuntarily to mental institutions.

Our definition of social policy eliminates the problem of establishing rigid boundaries between social policy and other kinds of policies. Most commentators agree that public welfare, child welfare, medical, and job-training policies are social policies, but they are less certain about income tax, environmental, economic, transportation, and other policies. Our definition suggests that specific policies *become* social policies whenever they influence social problems. For example, income tax proposals that increase or decrease the resources of poor persons become social policies when they affect poverty and unemployment. By the same token, tax policies that regulate how corporations depreciate their equipment are not social policies unless they can be shown to be relevant to such problems as poverty and unemployment.

Thus far, we have emphasized the content or substance of policies by focusing on the kind of social problems that specific policies address. Now we turn our attention to the different types of policies. **Statutes** are policies enacted by local, state, and federal governments' legislation. **Policy objectives** (or mission statements) specify the goals of specific policies, such as "enrolling 500,000 children in Head Start Centers by a specific date." **Rules and regulations** constrain the activities of officials, staff, and consumers. For example, they require mental health personnel to have legal counsel when they wish to commit someone involuntarily to a mental hospital so that their rights are safeguarded. The operations of publicly funded programs are shaped by administrative regulations issued by government agencies, including who is eligible, what kinds of staff are hired, how records are kept, and the content of services.

Budgets are a kind of policy because they determine what resources are devoted to specific, enacted policies—resources that determine whether a policy will be effective and who will receive it. Budgets also determine priorities, such as what programs are emphasized. **Taxes** are policies that profoundly impact the resources of specific persons. During the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009, and its aftermath, advocates fought hard in Washington, DC, to obtain payroll tax relief for 160 million workers. Senator Bernie Sanders argued in the presidential primaries of 2016 that persons in the top 1 percent of the American economy should pay far higher taxes with proceeds to be used to fund social programs for people in the bottom 50 percent.

Court rulings are another important kind of policy. Courts have made many rulings, for example, that require social workers to protect the confidentiality of information given to them by clients, patients, or consumers. They sometimes rescind cutbacks in services and benefits. They are sometimes controversial, such as the *Roe v. Wade* ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973 that overruled state laws that made abortions during the first trimester illegal and a ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court in 2016 that overturned a law of the Texas legislature that required physicians who helped women abort their children to use hospital operating rooms.

Formal or written policies can certainly be considered social policy, whether they are issued by legislation or they are court rulings, administrative guidelines, or budget documents. **Informal or nonwritten policies** qualify as social policy. When written policy contains relatively vague and ill-defined terms, officials must often develop informal policies to fill in the gaps. For example, some laws restrict involuntary commitment to persons who pose an imminent danger to themselves or others. Staff who require a strict standard may resist committing someone who has not actually attempted suicide but threatened to commit it, whereas other staff may believe that merely threatening suicide falls within this restriction. Though such standards may not be recorded in official policy, they are policies because they have the same effect as written policy because they profoundly shape the actions of direct-service staff and their administrators. Informal policies shape the actions of staff in child welfare agencies. Staff in one child welfare agencies may view their job exclusively as helping children who have been seriously abused or neglected. Staff in another child welfare agency may also prioritize constructing preventive programs to reduce levels of child abuse, such as by educating parents who are at risk of abusing their children, about parenting or linking their services with schools, medical services, and job-training programs.

Without suggesting that any of them is more or less important than the others, we might distinguish four categories: (1) official, written policies; (2) informal, unwritten policies; (3) personal orientations toward policy, such as an aversion to specific rules or a strong support of a specific policy; and (4) personal policy actions, such as obeying or disobeying a policy in a specific work setting. Bisno calls the fourth type "policy-in-action," whereas I have named it **actualized policy**.[2] All of these policy-related categories are important in social policy.

Many kinds of policies cause or help to resolve specific social problems (see Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.3).

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.3

Multiple Policies Impacting Single Motherhood

Based on your own knowledge, discuss how single motherhood may be caused or sustained by the following kinds of policies. You might consider policies regarding housing, police, shelters, substance abuse, mental health, schools, child welfare agencies, or any other organization.

- Formal policies at federal, state, and local levels
- Policy objectives
- Rules and regulations
- Budgetary issues
- Court rulings
- Statutes
- Informal policies

Also consider what kinds of policies different groups in your community might favor, including business groups, activists, social service agencies, hospitals, elected officials from districts of different levels of income, realtors, and various kinds of civic groups.

Policy Advocacy as a Developmental Process

Policies seldom emerge suddenly, but always during a developmental process. Policy advocates need to both understand this process and be able to work skillfully within it. We identify and discuss eight tasks you will employ in order to become an effective policy advocate.

1. Policy advocates begin their work by *deciding what is right and wrong*. They are willing to commit effort to policy advocacy because they believe the status quo is flawed for both ethical and analytic reasons.
2. They have to decide where to focus or direct their advocacy intervention *when navigating policy and advocacy systems*, such as by deciding whether to change local, state, or federal policies or to focus on public policies or policies of a specific organization.
3. When presenting problems to agency, community, and legislative decision makers, advocates engage in *agenda-setting tasks*.
4. When they use social science research that probes their causes and analyze policy options to find a solution that they prefer, practitioners perform *problem-analyzing tasks*.
5. Practitioners *develop proposals* when they create solutions to specific problems in an effort to improve agency services. Proposals may be relatively simple, such as those that change an agency's intake policies, or complex, such as ones that establish major social programs.
6. Practitioners engage in *policy-enacting tasks* when they develop strategies to have a policy approved by legislative bodies or by agency staff. When complex political processes are involved, strategy may consume major amounts of time and resources and demand frequent revisions. On other occasions, strategy may consist of one presentation at a critical meeting or personal discussions with highly placed decision makers.
7. *Policy implementation* involves identifying why a policy has not been adequately implemented and developing corrective strategies.
8. *Policy-assessing tasks* require evaluating a policy and deciding what changes to make if the evaluation is negative.
9. We should note, as well, that policy advocates often work to elect public officials who are responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations as well as the general population. The presidential election of 2016 pitted, for example, a relatively conservative party and candidate (Donald Trump) against a moderate/liberal candidate (Hillary Clinton). Policy advocates had to select one of them by gauging whose policies would increase income equality most effectively, advance the well-being of vulnerable populations, and address the needs most effectively of the general population.

Policy advocates also use four basic skills as they engage in each of the stages of the policy development process:

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1. *Analytic skills* are used to obtain data, identify policy alternatives, compare their relative merits, and develop policy recommendations. They are used to discover evidence-based policies when they exist.
2. *Political skills* help practitioners assess the policies' feasibility, identify power resources, and develop and implement political strategy.

3. *Interactional skills* help practitioners make contacts, develop networks, build personal relationships, identify old-boy networks, communicate effectively, and facilitate coalitions and committees.
4. Policy practitioners use *value clarification* or *ethical reasoning skills* to decide what policies increase economic equality, advance social justice, and address ethical principles like protecting clients' self-determination.

We discuss these tasks and skills in more detail in Chapter Three.

Challenges Encountered by Policy Advocates

EP 4b
EP 4c

Policy advocacy is often challenging for several reasons. Policy advocates often face a crowded field. They often encounter opposition. Policy advocacy often requires considerable time. Policy advocacy takes place not only with respect to domestic issues but also with respect to global ones. Policy advocates often have to use the Internet as well as library resources to gain knowledge about specific policies, advocacy groups, current issues, and promising reforms (see Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.4).

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.4

Using the Web as a Policy Advocate

Gretchen Heidemann, MSW, Ph.D.

As a social work student, you have a wide range of resources you can use to learn more about policy issues and to stay informed about the issues relevant to your studies and clients.

LIBRARIES

Libraries are the best source of information because their mission is to serve the people in their community by providing access to information. Your local public library or your university or college library is not only a place to find books on your topics, but it is the place to find librarians, who can help you form your research strategies and navigate the library system. Most libraries subscribe to electronic databases and catalogs that allow you to find citations and full text to articles, news, legislative information, political information, statistics, funding sources, and more. Before you start your research, visit your college or university library and talk to a librarian to get an overview of the databases your library subscribes to and how to access those tools.

GOVERNMENT DEPOSITORIES

Some university and college libraries are government depositories. This is a federal program that provides thousands of government documents for research and community purposes. If you're looking for any kind of federal government information, a government documents library is the place to start. Check with a librarian at your institution to see if there is a library in your area that collects government documents. The federal government is also publishing many documents on the Web. In the following chapters, you'll learn more about how to find that information.

(Continued)

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.4 (Continued)

THE INTERNET

The Web is, in general, a great tool for finding information. Searching the Web is easy, and the quality of search engines has improved greatly since the Internet became part of the public consciousness.

The following are a few recommendations for information related to policy advocacy:

USA.gov. The federal government's search engine, connecting you to government agencies, reports, statistics, and much more. **www.usa.gov**

Thomas. Search congressional legislation, including bill summaries and status, congressional records, schedules and calendars, and what issues are on the congressional floor right now. **http://thomas.loc.gov/**

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Find out about our professional organization's grassroots advocacy efforts, legislative advocacy network, political action committee, and government relations. **www.socialworkers.org/advocacy/default.asp**

Political Blogs. Weblogs, or *blogs*, can be a great source of information on current events and political issues and often include posts by both professional political pundits and average citizens. There are countless blogs from all ends of the political spectrum. For a list of blogs, visit **http://directory.etalkinghead.com/** or **http://bloggerschoiceawards.com**

Social networking sites. Social networking sites, such as Facebook (**www.facebook.com/**), Twitter (**http://twitter.com/**), and Tumblr (**www.tumblr.com**), can be a great way to follow and support electoral candidates, join social and political causes, and connect with others who share similar political interests and concerns.

Local, state, and federal government sites. Many cities, states, and the federal government have mandates to make information accessible to citizens on the Web. A good place to start looking for information on policy issues relevant to your community is your city or state website (e.g., City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois State website).

IssueLab: More than 400 nonprofit organizations contribute their research to this site, which hosts a searchable directory of topics ranging from children and youth to homelessness, human rights, immigration, and prison reform. **www.issuelab.org/home**

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A Crowded Field

Unlike direct-service work, for example, policy advocates rarely have the field to themselves because social policies impact many people and interests including public officials, taxpayers, agency personnel, and clients. The field becomes even more crowded when social policies impact large numbers of people and require considerable resources such as major pieces of social legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act, increasing the federal minimum wage, providing free college tuition to millions of students, or providing free child care to single mothers.

Influencing Tangible Interests of Persons, Groups, and Corporations

When examining interests, policy advocates often ask, "Who benefits from the status quo, and who believes their practical interests would better be met by some or major reforms?" As persons who have sought to reform American medical care have frequently discovered, pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, health plans, providers, and manufacturers of medical devices have often blocked needed reforms. These powerful interests hire lobbyists and give funds to politicians and political parties that support policies that

advance their tangible interests as illustrated by the extraordinary power of the National Rifle Association with respect to the regulation of gun ownership in the United States. Consumers are often underrepresented in political maneuvering around important policies unless policy advocates mobilize them.

Divergent Values and Ideologies

People often support or oppose policies because they believe the policies impinge on their fundamental values. These *divergent values* were highly apparent in the presidential election of 2016 that pitted liberals against conservatives that would determine not only who would be elected president, but who would control the House of Representatives and the Senate. We discuss values and ideology at greater length in Chapter Two.

Making Time Commitments to Policy Advocacy

Policy advocacy requires time. Social workers, who are hard-pressed just to engage in their direct-service work, must find ways to include policy advocacy in their professional work, as well as in their private lives. They have to take on issues outside their agencies, often negotiating with their administrators to take on issues that are important to the clients' well-being. They need to be members of task forces, planning groups, and **National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** committees. Social workers are increasingly running for offices of local planning groups, school boards, city councils, and legislatures at state and federal agencies. Policy advocacy includes working to secure the time to engage in policy advocacy in places of social work employment such as agencies and community groups from supervisors and administrators, such as by showing them the **NASW Code of Ethics** that requires social workers to engage in policy advocacy.

Globalization and Policy Advocacy

As we discuss in more detail in Chapter Five, policy advocacy must span international boundaries due to the accelerating movement of capital and labor between nations and due to global warming. Large numbers of immigrants now exist, for example, in virtually every state—immigrants who are subject to considerable prejudice, poor working conditions, and low pay. The movement of jobs across national boundaries often adversely impacts American workers and undermines their ability to get wage concessions from employers as both Senator Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump contended in the presidential primaries in 2016—and as Hillary Clinton came to support despite her prior support of existing trade treaties. Scientists almost unanimously contend that global warming will endanger vast numbers of persons in coastal areas in the United States and elsewhere if it is not decreased through an array of preventive measures such as use of wind and solar power.

Becoming an Effective Policy Advocate

This book gives you tangible skills and orientations to become an effective policy advocate. We now discuss some of these skills and orientations.

Developing a Vision

Policy advocates need a vision of a preferred state of affairs in specific agencies, communities, regions, states, or the nation. If we cannot envision an ideal state of affairs, we are unlikely to find fault with existing policies. This vision derives from our values,

beliefs, and ideology as well as from a desire to help vulnerable or oppressed people who receive inferior or negligible assistance. The vision is promoted and fueled by discontent with existing policies and institutions that fail to measure up to NASW's Code of Ethics.

Vision is not only a driving force, but can also enhance a practitioner's political interests and build his or her credibility. A person has succeeded in communicating that vision when others describe him or her as someone who "has principles," "really cares," and "is committed to changing things." By contrast, we tend to mistrust people who we feel are "only in it for themselves" or who "bend with the wind." Of course, inflexibility and dogmatism detract from policy practice, so people have to compromise between pragmatism and the beliefs or values that constitute their vision.

Social workers can create a vision by learning how policies have evolved in specific agencies and communities. They should also understand the policy implications of broad theoretical frameworks, such as an environmental approach. The vision may derive from identifying with the needs and aspirations of powerless or oppressed populations.

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Historical perspectives sensitize us to the discrimination, racism, **inequality**, and suffering that have prompted various policy reforms. We have inherited the missions of the reformers before us, including some of the profession's founders, such as **Jane Addams**, who devoted remarkable energy to policy practice in a society that lacked the policies that we now take for granted. In a compelling argument, Jerome Wakefield contends that "distributional justice" provides a central mission for the social work profession, distinguishing it from other professions and traditional psychotherapy.[3]

Seeking Opportunities for Policy Advocacy

To be effective advocates, social workers must ask: "What systemic or environmental factors cause or exacerbate specific kinds of problems that my clients experience?" (See Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.5.) We can try to change policies in the community or our agencies, for instance, on task forces or committees. Within our agencies, as part of our employment, we can modify policies that we view as deficient or develop new programs. In each case, we take a broader perspective that allows us to see factors that adversely affect our clients and need to be remedied.

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Social workers can engage in policy advocacy outside their working hours by helping advocacy groups, working with their professional association, or participating in political campaigns. They can work to educate the public about important issues in their communities by participating in forums, writing letters to the editor or op-ed pieces, or working with the mass media to disseminate information.

Policy advocacy sometimes aims at ambitious changes such as the enactment of legislation but often seeks more modest changes such as changing a specific policy in an agency or even initiating a policy proposal in a staff meeting.

Taking Sensible Risks

Policy advocates have to be sensible risk takers. It is unwise to squander finite amounts of time and energy on trivial or hopeless causes, even though ethical considerations sometimes prompt us to participate in difficult battles. We also need to be willing to take risks. As we discuss in Chapter Ten, some of us refrain from seeking policy changes because we underrate our own power (or that of our allies) or exaggerate the power of our opponents. Indeed, failures of omission are as important as errors of commission. In some cases, it is better to commit errors in trying to correct flawed policies than to avoid participating at all.

Balancing Flexibility with Planning

Policy advocates must develop plans to guide their work, but they must also be able to improvise during unexpected events. Planning helps organize their work into a purposeful, coherent pattern and clarifies which tasks to accomplish. Improvising allows them to seize unexpected opportunities, counter their opponents' arguments, and adopt new strategies that they did not anticipate in an earlier game plan. A policy practitioner makes plans by asking: "In light of the time and risk that I wish to take, what actions and arguments will help me obtain my objectives?" They need to improvise strategies as events unfold.

Being Appropriately Assertive

Policy advocates must be appropriately assertive if they wish to change policies in agencies, communities, and legislatures. They have to initiate discussions with key decision makers or locate intermediaries who can assume this role. They must learn not to be intimidated by powerful persons such as authority figures, legislators, and government officials. Yet they need to carry themselves in ways that do not unnecessarily antagonize possible allies or persons who might prove helpful in making specific policy changes. Such a noteworthy person as Eleanor Roosevelt, who was shy and withdrawn as a younger woman, gradually developed skills that made her a highly successful policy advocate.

Developing Multiple Skills

Advocates who believe they can reduce policy practice to a simple set of recommended rules or a single style are likely to be disappointed when they discover that those rules or that style are not useful in some situations. Policy advocates need an array of analytic, political, interactional, and value clarification skills to use, singly or together, in specific situations and during extended policy deliberations.

Being Persistent

Policy advocates often need persistence, as the inspirational lives of such social reformers as Jane Addams and Martin Luther King, Jr., suggest. These people had an ability to persevere even in the face of repeated defeats and formidable obstacles. Unlike some of their colleagues who left reform causes after early battles, Addams and King maintained their devotion to social reform. Indeed, Jane Addams, who founded the pioneer social settlement Hull House in 1889, persevered not only during the Progressive Era but also during the 1920s to support innumerable social reforms. If Martin Luther King, Jr., had not been assassinated, he would likely have been active in social reforms for decades more. Every community has particularly dedicated social workers who participate in many policy frays in their agencies and communities, and in broader arenas, even while they perform heavy direct-service, administrative, or community work functions. We can learn from people who have this ability, and we can seek to emulate them.

Tolerating Uncertainty

Policy advocates must be able to tolerate uncertainty, because policy practice often lacks structure and boundaries. While relatively few people participate in specific direct-service transactions, an open field often exists in policy practice that draws new people into issues. Policy advocates often do not know what to expect when they initiate a proposal. Will it be associated with conflict, consensus, or apathy? How much time and energy an issue require?

When evaluating the outcomes of specific episodes of policy advocacy, we should take into account the degree of difficulty encountered. People who undertake difficult

tasks or encounter formidable opposition will lose relatively frequently, no matter how skilled they are. Conversely, people who work only on simple issues will probably emerge victorious on numerous occasions. If we were to evaluate policy practitioners solely on the basis of their policy victories, we would risk giving high marks to excessively cautious people.

The need to be persistent is illustrated by the battle to develop a "public option" in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that gives health consumers a public insurance option in addition to private insurance options in the insurance exchanges in states that were created by the ACA. While they lost in 2009 and 2010, they were delighted to hear Hillary Clinton support the public option in 2016 as she campaigned for the presidency partly due to pressure that Senator Bernie Sanders placed on her. When the ACA is markedly changed or terminated in the Trump Administration, policy advocates have to work hard to see that the 20 million persons insured by it retain sufficient health coverage.

Combining Pragmatism with Principles

Policy advocates must often compromise for political reasons. With respect to controversial issues in organizational, community, and legislative settings, people rarely realize all of their goals. Yet there is a danger of making premature or excessive compromises that unnecessarily dilute a policy practitioner's goals. There is no simple way to resolve the tension between a pragmatic desire to achieve policy gains and a desire to retain provisions that a policy practitioner values.

The Rewards of Policy Advocacy

An overview of recent American history shows that policy advocates have improved considerably the well-being of millions of Americans.[4] Assume, for example, that Medicaid had not been created in the mid-1960s. Without Medicaid, the health care needs of low-income populations, already seriously underserved by public clinics, would have reached catastrophic proportions because local and state governments lack the resources to address them. Older citizens who have exhausted their Medicare benefits would be unable to rely on the Medicaid program, and hundreds of thousands of them would be forced into nursing homes even worse than those they would have encountered in the 1970s. Many persons with AIDS, often financially devastated by the expense of medical procedures, would receive no services unless physicians and hospitals donated them.

Indeed, we can proceed through each of the major enactments of the 1960s and the succeeding decades and render a similar prognosis. Assume, for example, that Medicaid, SSI, and the food stamp program did not exist. Would that not have led to a homeless population many times the size of that existing in the 1980s and 1990s? Would economic inequality in the United States, already far greater than in European nations and Canada, not have become even worse? Considerable progress has also been made in addressing poverty among older persons; challenges to the civil rights of vulnerable populations; unemployment and lack of services for persons with disabilities; malnutrition; the health needs of certain groups in the population, such as persons with kidney failure; the preschool needs of low-income children; and psychological conditions such as depression. Many persons of color markedly improved their economic and social situation in the decades following the 1960s, and many African Americans and Latinos entered the middle and upper-middle classes, partly as a result of affirmative action and civil rights laws that prohibited job-related discrimination.

Nor do we have to look to the distant past to find policy enactments that have greatly improved the lives of many Americans. If Congress enacts a massive rebuilding of American infrastructure during the presidency of Donald Trump, for example, hundreds of thousands of Americans may obtain well-paying jobs.

We should not ignore the short-term humanitarian function of social programs. Even when they do not solve social problems, they provide resources and support to people who are experiencing such problems as unemployment, catastrophic health conditions, and mental trauma. Whether we are guided by specific religious teachings or by ethics, we realize that persons who experience hardship or trauma need assistance to diminish their suffering. This simple maxim guided the giving of alms to impoverished people in the Middle Ages, the providing of economic resources to impoverished people during recessions and the Great Depression in the United States, and the development of shelters for homeless people in contemporary society.

In many cases, problems that had seldom been recognized in prior eras were publicized and addressed by new policies because of the determined work of policy advocates. Rape, child abuse, Alzheimer's disease, spousal abuse, reading and learning disorders, discrimination against gay men and lesbians, and the needs of people with disabilities have existed throughout American history, but they have come to be widely recognized as important problems only recently. Victims of rape, for example, were subjected to punitive treatment, such as imputations of blame by judges and doctors, until many jurisdictions enacted laws that protected their rights. People with developmental disabilities were often placed in institutions in the 1950s instead of being mainstreamed in schools, communities, and employment. Children with reading difficulties were routinely dropped from school rolls in the 1950s, whereas now they often receive special services. Policy reforms emanated from a heightened public awareness of these problems and contributed to the public's knowledge of them, as individuals saw social programs' benefits to themselves, their relatives, and their friends. Moreover, social programs have often raised public expectations about the rights and needs of specific groups in the population. In 1950, Americans commonly assumed, for example, that people with paraplegia would be bedridden and institutionalized. By the 1990s, many Americans were aware of these individuals' rights and capabilities, including access to mechanized wheelchairs, independent living arrangements, occupational therapy, and employment. We can reasonably argue that the nation would have suffered harm in the absence of reforms enacted in the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the Great Society; expansions of civil rights and entitlements in the 1970s; the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 1990; the expansion of the EITC in the 1990s; and the Stimulus Plan of 2008 to 2011 geared to restarting a faltering economy.

Reformers have also prevented the enactment of many reforms that would have harmed many Americans. Some conservatives have wanted to, for example, bar gay men and lesbians from teaching in public schools, retain antisodomy laws of states that would allow gay men to be imprisoned for engaging in consensual sex with other men, bar immigration of gay men and deny them citizenship, exclude gay men and lesbians from civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination by employers, and ban gay men and lesbians from the military. Only by assertive action through legislative and legal channels were advocates able to overturn these policies or their enactment.

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While specific policies have failed or have had mixed results, the combined effects of social reforms have transformed the lives of tens of millions of Americans in positive ways. Most contemporary Americans cannot remember and can barely comprehend the institution of slavery, imprisonment for indebtedness, capital punishment for relatively minor crimes, poorhouses, 14-hour workdays, unsafe working conditions, child labor, routine

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C

Demonstrators march on the White House during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, calling for voting protections and an end to police brutality against African Americans

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.5

Identifying Policy Improvements That Have Helped Your Grandparents, Parents, and Yourself

Identify at least one grandparent and parent and their dates of birth. Identify your date of birth. In small groups, identify at least two major social policies that have improved the well-being of each of these persons, including yourself. Be as concrete as possible about how these specific social policies at the local, state, or federal level have benefited these relatives as well as yourself. Then identify at least one social problem of your relatives or yourself that was not—and that is not—addressed sufficiently by existing social policies. Discuss how it might be addressed. Report your findings to other members of your group and to other members of your class.

denial of civil rights, lynching of African Americans, flagrant violations of the legal rights of radicals, the incarceration of people who publicly discussed birth control, the routine firing of gay men and lesbians, widespread malnutrition, and the denial of education to persons with disabilities.

Of course, many important social problems persist, such as recent slaying of African American males by police, racial divisions, disparities between low-income persons of all races and ethnicities and persons in the top 10 percent of the economic order, and many other social problems. Entrenched or conservative interests sometimes have the resources and power to circumvent or defeat policy advocates. Or when new policies have been enacted, they may receive inadequate resources or may be sabotaged by opponents during implementation. In such cases, advocates are still amply rewarded by the realization that

they gave policy reform their best effort and that they have joined legions of prior reformers who fearlessly tackled difficult issues. Some of these failures led to tangible victories farther down the road, educating citizens to the need for policy reforms and inspiring other reformers at some future point to resume the reforming effort.

Changing the Composition of Legislators, Presidents, and Governors

EP 3b

Good policies can only be enacted if decision makers have commitment to enacting policies that improve the well-being of vulnerable populations. Policy advocates have had striking successes both in American history and in recent years. The Democratic Party, which has been somewhat more reformist than the Republican Party during and since the New Deal, has often controlled one or both chambers of Congress as well as the presidency. Progressive governors and mayors have often been elected in state and local jurisdictions and are frequently members of state assemblies and senates, city councils, and boards of supervisors. Had this *not* been true, the many policy reforms of the last 80 years would not have been enacted. These successes are frequently in jeopardy when public officials take office who do not seek policies that ordinary citizens need. Policy advocates cannot be discouraged by setbacks of single elections or even multiple ones. In Chapter Twelve, we discuss many ways that policy advocates can participate in the electoral process, such as volunteering during campaigns, serving as official campaign aides, registering voters, initiating or working on propositions that are placed on the ballot, and donating (or raising) funds to and for specific candidates or parties. We also discuss how policy advocates can actually build public service careers by running for elective office themselves and taking civil service or appointive positions in government agencies. A recent survey found that 416 social workers have run for political office in recent decades at local, state, and federal levels—and eight persons with MSW degrees held office in the U.S. Congress in 2009.[5]

Getting Started

Some readers of this book may think, "It is fine for others to participate in policy advocacy, but it isn't something I can do." For persons who envision careers limited to counseling or administration, for example, the world of policy advocacy can sound daunting. It is more complex. Its outcomes are sometimes uncertain. It requires time commitments and knowledge of new subjects such as policy analysis and politics.

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Do remember two things, however: Policy advocates seldom act alone; they usually work in tandem with existing advocacy groups or with persons who have experience in policy advocacy. Many of you will select an issue or policy that interests you while you are reading this book. You will soon discover that some persons and groups have already done policy advocacy work with respect to it. In some cases, lobbyists for NASW or other professional organizations closely linked to social workers will be quite familiar with your issue or policy. So you may be volunteering for them or working in concert with them or, at the very least, learning about specific issues from them. In succeeding chapters, we will discuss how you can forge linkages with persons and groups familiar with your issue.

Remember, as well, that many social work students have not only read about policy advocacy, but have also actually made a strong beginning, even during their professional training, in critically analyzing existing policies and seeking changes in them, either in their field placements or in policy advocacy projects. (See Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.6 for a social work student's description of the efforts she and her classmates took to stop the passage of a California proposition that would have cut funding for mental health services in spring 2009.)

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.6

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Social Work Students Fight Cuts in Mental Health Spending

Rachel Gardner, MSW from the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work

Our policy class was divided up into groups for an advocacy project. My group was assigned to focus on mental health. We really had no idea where to begin. I suggested we look into how the economy is affecting services rendered to mental health clientele. A group member found an article about how the governor was proposing to cut funding for Prop 63, the Mental Health Services Act of 2004, in order to solve the California budget crisis. The proposition, which was placed on a special election ballot in May 2009, would have taken $460 million away from mental health services. We made the following efforts to stop passage of the proposition and preserve funding for mental health services: (1) lobbied at the state capitol, (2) had two articles printed in the media (*Long Beach Press Telegram* and *Orange County Register*), (3) attended a meeting with the governor hosted by the *LA Times* in which a group member's question was chosen and addressed by the governor, (4) attended and addressed the Costa Mesa mayor and city councilperson, which was broadcast on Channel 24, (5) interviewed mental health clients about how the budget cuts would affect them, (6) cosponsored a public forum about the special election propositions, (7) networked with Prop 63 coauthor about what actions we could take locally, (8) made presentations in classes for students in the Mental Health concentration on how budget cuts would affect future employment opportunities in the mental health field, (9) cosponsored a "brown-bag" event for all University of Southern California students to attend during their lunch break with a guest speaker, (10) created an online petition to go to the governor, (11) created a special group on MySpace, (12) created a special group on Facebook, (13) created a blog, (14) created and distributed a flyer on how the proposition would affect the community, (15) attended and participated in the Great American Write In, and (16) networked with NASW.

Becoming Leaders

Policy advocacy provides a route toward leadership in the profession and society. By seeking to change social policies that impact vulnerable populations, policy advocates change existing rules, policies, and budgets. As they assume these broader functions, they become leaders who are recognized by their peers and others as trying to make a difference in the lives of citizens. The need for leaders who take the initiative in addressing social issues is illustrated by issues such as homelessness that are sustained by inadequate social policies, economic forces, and social problems.

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.7

The Imperative to Decrease Inequality in the United States Through Policy Advocacy

The United States has the highest rates of inequality among industrialized nations as computed by the ratio of the aggregate income of top 20 percent the American population to the bottom 20 percent.[1] Nations with relatively low-income inequality include Japan (3.4–1); Finland, Norway, and Sweden (roughly 4–1); the Netherlands and Germany (roughly 5.2–1), and Ireland, France, Canada, Spain, and Switzerland (roughly 5.8–1). By contrast, the United States has a ratio of total income of the top 20 percent to total income of the bottom ratio of almost 9—meaning that the top 20 percent of the population possesses nine times the income of the bottom 20 percent or far higher amounts than the other nations.

Policy Advocacy Challenge 1.7 (Continued)

We need to worry about extreme income inequality in the United States for several reasons. We know that poverty causes many social problems, so it is not surprising that people in the lowest 20 percent of very unequal nations have far higher levels of homelessness, mental illness, physical illness, life expectancy, unemployment, substance abuse, chronic health conditions, imprisonment, teenage births, and low educational attainment than people in the lowest 20 percent in the other nations. The discrepancy in longevity of women in the top 10 percent and the bottom 10 percent in the United States illustrates the negative impact of poverty. If women in the top 10 percent have longevity of 88 years, women in the bottom 10 percent have longevity of only 75.5 years.[2] People in the lowest 20 percent in the United States are more likely to have an array of social problems, as well, because they are feel marginalized because their aggregate income is so much lower than other residents. They are more likely to live in distressed communities as compared to their counterparts in nations with less inequality. They are less likely to receive benefits from safety net, health, employment, housing, and other programs than their counterparts because people in the top economic echelons in highly unequal nations are very affluent partly *because* they pay low taxes. They are far less likely to vote in elections than counterparts in more equal nations because they are more likely to view themselves as relatively powerless.

Many ethicists, such as John Rawls, view extreme inequality as immoral particularly in affluent nations like the United States as we discuss in Chapter Two. Pope Francis said "extreme poverty and unjust economic structures that cause great inequalities" are violations of human rights.[3] President Franklin Roosevelt proposed an "economic bill of rights" in 1943 that would entitle every America to work, food, clothing, recreation, a decent home, medical care, and education.[4] Policy advocates can develop evidence-based proposals to reduce income inequality in the United States as we discuss in subsequent chapters.

To see how our health is powerfully shaped by social and economic determinants, such as our social class and our level of education, view a four-minute segment of the PBS Documentary titled "Unnatural Causes" by going to www.pbs.org/unnaturalcauses/video_player.htm?hourone. For more information about how the social environment and existing policies affect health care, go to www.pbs.org/unnaturalcauses/explore_learn.htm and click on Overcoming Obstacles to Health: Report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the Commission to Build a Healthier America. Then click on "Overcoming Obstacles to Health" and review that charts and text on pp. 1–30. Then discuss the following questions.

1. What evidence suggests that social-economic factors are often more important than genes in shaping differences in the health of low-income persons and persons of color as compared to relatively affluent persons of Caucasian background?
2. What kinds of social and economic factors shape health outcomes and why?
3. Will expansion of health coverage, such as in national health insurance, end these "health disparities"?
4. Why are low-income persons of color often less likely to follow healthy lifestyles, such as through diet and exercise, as compared to more affluent persons of Caucasian background?

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[1]Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, "Income Inequality and Social Dysfunction," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 493–511.
[2]Sabrina Tavernise, "Disparity in Life Spans of the Rich and the Poor Is Growing," New York Times, February 13, 2016.
[3]Catholic News Agency, October 1, 2009. Retrieved March 13, 2013.
[4]Franklin Roosevelt, *Public Papers, 1943*, 41–42.

Joining the Reform Tradition Within Social Work

Most professions are relatively conservative and are concerned mostly with licensure, training, and the enhancement of the remuneration of their members. Like public health, which also has had a strong activist tradition, social work has had a social reform tradition extending back to the formation of the social work profession. Such founders of social work as Jane Addams militantly supported an array of social reforms in the Progressive Era at the beginning of the 20th century, including housing codes to protect tenants, governmental inspection of food to avert illness, factory regulations to protect workers, and pensions for single mothers with children to avert dire poverty.[6]

In succeeding eras, many social workers joined this reform tradition by working for policy reforms in local, state, and federal jurisdictions. Their work was bolstered by numerous theorists who developed a systems or environmental perspective on human behavior, arguing that social inequality, blighted neighborhoods, inadequate resources, unemployment, environmental pollution, discrimination, and economic uncertainty cause human suffering and contribute to such clinical conditions as depression and poor health.[7]

But narrower perspectives about social work coexisted with the reformist vision of Addams. Even at the profession's outset, such persons believed the profession should focus on casework, with scant involvement in social reform.[8] Myriad other theorists in succeeding decades adhered to this narrower view of the profession as they developed numerous clinical strategies that gave scant importance to environmental factors, discrimination, or poverty.

Narrower perspectives are deficient on at least three grounds, however, as is discussed at more length in Chapter Two. By failing to address the societal factors that contribute to inequality, they neglect such values as social justice and fairness. With attention riveted exclusively on the problems of individuals, they do nothing to reform the human services delivery system so that it will provide services that are congruent with recent medical and social science findings. By abandoning the political arena, they allow other groups, with values and perspectives in opposition to the needs of clients, consumers, and citizens, to dominate public policy.

EP 3b
EP 5a
EP 5b
EP 5c

Honest differences of opinion often do exist among social workers. They may disagree about the merits of specific policies. They may support different political candidates. They may draw upon conflicting research findings to support their preferred policies. Yet we are linked by shared commitment to social justice even as we may differ about how best to advance it.

What You Can Now Do

Chapter Summary

You are now equipped with an orienting perspective that will start you on the road to becoming a policy advocate. You can do the following:

- Articulate an ethical rationale for becoming a policy advocate from a social justice perspective.
- Define social policy.
- See the imperative to find evidence-based policies.
- Identify an array of policies, formal and informal, that shape human services and the well-being of specific vulnerable populations as well as the public interest.
- Distinguish between policy practice and policy advocacy.
- Identify specific barriers to policy advocacy.
- Discuss different ideologies.
- Identify social reform traditions in the nation and the profession.

- Identify some attributes of effective policy advocates.
- State why policy advocates often try to change the composition of government.
- Understand how homelessness provides a context for policy advocacy, and demonstrate why it is needed to help vulnerable populations.

Chapter Two discusses ethical, political, and analytic rationales for participating in policy advocacy.

Competency Notes

EP 1a Apply NASW's Code of Ethics to practice (pp. 4, 20, 25)

EP 1d Use technology to facilitate practice outcomes (p. 18)

EP 2a Communicate importance of diversity (pp. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13)

EP 2c Manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies (p. 5)

EP 3a Understand and apply social justice to practice (pp. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 23, 26)

EP 3b Engage in social, economic, and environmental justice (pp. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 23, 25, 26, 28)

EP 4b Apply critical thinking to research (p. 17)

EP 4c Translate research evidence to policy (p. 17)

EP 5a Identify social policy that impacts well-being (pp. 10, 11, 16, 20, 28)

EP 5b Assess how policies impact service delivery (pp. 16, 20, 28)

EP 5c Apply critical thinking to advocate for policies (pp. 4, 16, 20, 28)

EP 6a Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment (p. 13)

EP 8d Advocate for diverse clients and constituencies (p. 13)

Endnotes

1. Richard Titmuss, *Commitment to Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1968), p. 156.
2. Conversation with Wilbur Finch, who attributed this phrase to Herb Bisno.
3. Jerome Wakefield, "Psychotherapy, Distributive Justice, and Social Work, Parts 1 and 2," *Social Service Review* 62 (June & September 1988): 187–210, 353–384.
4. Bruce Jansson, *The Reluctant Welfare State*: *Engaging History to Advance Social Work Practice in Contemporary Society*, 8th edition (Belmont, CA: Cengage, 2015.
5. Shannon Lane and Nancy Humphreys, "Social Workers in Politics: A National Survey of Social Work Candidates and Elected Officials," *Journal of Policy Practice* 10, no. 3 (2011): 225–244.
6. For example, see Carol Meyer, *Social Work Practice: A Response to the Urban Crisis* (New York: Free Press, 1970); see also Carel Germain and Alex Gitterman, *The Life Model of Social Work Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
7. Mary Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917).
8. Harry Specht, "Social Work and the Popular Psychotherapies," *Social Service Review* 64 (September 1990): 345–347.

Suggested Readings

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Brian Hogwood and Lewis Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 12–31.

Martin Rein, *Social Policy: Issues of Choice and Change* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 5–8.

Richard Titmuss, *Commitment to Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1968), p. 156.

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Mimi Abramovitz, "Should All Social Work Students Be Educated for Social Change?" *Journal of Social Work Education* 29 (Winter 1993): 6–11, 17–18.

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Policy Practice and Policy Advocacy in Specific Settings

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Herman Resnick and Rino Patti, *Change from Within: Humanizing Social Welfare Organizations* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1980).

Ramon Salcido and Essie Seck, "Political Participation Among Social Work Chapters," *Social Work* 37 (November 1992): 563–564.