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Predictors of Feminist Activism among Social Work Students in the United States

Eric Swank & Breanne Fahs

While social workers advocate against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and restrictive reproductive practices, there have been virtually no studies on the reasons behind their feminist activism. To address this oversight, this study documented the extent of feminist activism among American undergraduate social work students (n = 159). When moving to explanatory analysis, our data suggest that feminist activism was related to greater educational attainment, knowing activist peers, recognizing heterosexism, and internalizing a commitment to social justice. Moreover, electoral activism was tied to the rejection of traditional gender norms in the family and perceptions of social movement tactics were crucial to protesting for women's rights.

Keywords: Activism; Collective Behavior; Feminism; Political Participation; Self-concept; Social Movements

Introduction

While the intensity, scope, and tactics of challenging patriarchy is always evolving, the impulse to battle against sexism has remained an enduring feature of post-Second Wave Women's Liberation Movement (1960s–1970s). Although feminist organizations take unique forms, goals, and tactics in different countries (Beckwith, 2000; Ferree, 2003), feminist social movements across the globe have ushered in some major changes in legislation, social norms, and perceptions about proper gender roles (Phillips, 2006; Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, & Su, 1999).

Social workers from feminist, critical, antiracist, structural, and gay affirmative perspectives have always aligned with anti-oppressive and social change approaches to social work (Dominelli, 1996; Lyons & Taylor, 2004; Mmatli, 2008; Wehbi & Straka, 2011). The social work profession in the United States promotes political activism in

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the preamble for the National Association of Social Workers code of ethics by stating: 'Social Workers promote social justice and social change . . . [through] direct practice, community organizing, social and political activism'. Other professional organizations base much of their missions around politically mobilizing social workers and their clients (e.g., Social Welfare Action Alliance or the Association of Community Organization and Social Administration).

While social workers clearly engage in political activism for many causes (Collins & Wilkie, 2010; Han & Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Ritter, 2008; Swank, 2012), the extent to which social workers do feminist activism is unknown. Empirical studies of social worker have ignored feminist engagements and have instead explored the gender attitudes of social work students (Black, 1994; Freeman, 1990; Lincoln & Koeske, 1987; Munson & Hipp, 1998; Seymour, 2012; Vinton, 1992) and professors (Woodford, Luke, Grogan-Kaylor, Fredriksen-Goldsen, & Gutierrez, 2012). This current study rectifies this lack of knowledge by concentrating on the factors that may inspire feminist activism among people in training to become social workers (undergraduate social work students). More specifically, this research is driven by three questions. (1) What proportion of undergraduate social work students engage in feminist activism? (2) What are the contextual and social psychological antecedents to this feminist activism? (3) Are demographic factors such as gender and educational attainment connected to involvement in political mobilizations for gender justice?

With a focus on factors that may inspire and hinder activism, this work integrates some insights from many academic disciplines. The much-cited resource model of political science guides this study's theoretical conceptualizations (Brady, Verba, & Scholzman, 1995), as does the empirical literature on feminist activism among the general US populace (Ayres, Friedman, & Leaper, 2009; Henderson-King & Stewart, 1999; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). This work also taps the nascent literature on general activism among social work students (Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Han & Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Rocha, 2000; Weiss & Kauffman, 2006) and employed social workers (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Ritter, 2008).

Literature Review

Variable selection in this study was partially guided by the resource model of political participation (Brady et al., 1995). Offering a succinct answer as to why people remain politically disengaged, the resource model asserts: because they can't, because they don't want to, or because nobody asked (Brady et al., 1995, p. 271). The notion that "they can't" suggests a dearth of necessary resources to be political. While crucial resources may come in many forms, these authors emphasize the importance of financial situations, educational attainment, free time, and civic skills. The claim that of they don't want to' deals with a lack of psychological engagement in politics. This indifference to politics is sometimes seen as political ignorance, but the resource model assumes that lack of participation is more of a reaction to a lower sense of political efficacy and greater levels of individualism. The

'nobody asked' idea implies that people are isolated from the recruitment networks that mobilize citizens into action.

They Can't: Income, Educational Attainment, and Gender Cleavages

The resource model assumes that educational attainment and higher incomes leads to greater political engagement (Brady et al., 1995). Greater educational attainment often leads to greater levels of feminist activism for all citizens (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1999), with the effects of education being the strongest when classes directly focus on gender inequities (Duncan, 1999; Nelson et al., 2008). Among social work students, some studies contend that exposure to feminist content in classrooms fosters a greater commitment to feminist activism (Abram, Schmitz, Taylor, Tebb, & Bartlett, 2001; Black, 1994; Lincoln & Koeske, 1987; Munson & Hipp, 1998; Vinton, 1992), while other studies suggest that participation and completion of certain academic courses inspires many sorts of political activism (Butler & Coleman, 1997; Fahs, 2012; Morrison Van Voorhis & Hoestetter, 2006; Rocha, 2000; Van Soest, 1996). However, a few studies cautioned that finishing a course on oppression did not lead to higher advocacy intentions (Van Soest, 1996; Weiss & Kaufman, 2006) even while it may serve a clear consciousness-raising role (Fahs, 2012).

The resource model contends that sexism in the workforce and the feminization of poverty generally undermines female political participation (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). However, they do admit that the gender gap in activism is often reversed when the political mobilization challenges male privileges. Studies of feminist activism in the general population often note that men are less likely than women to call themselves feminists and engage in feminist activism (Liss et al., 2004). Some studies have also found that men in social work were more likely to accept traditional gender roles (Black, 1994), less desiring of gender equality (Spivey, 2006), and more oblivious to male privilege than their female counterparts (Taylor, 1994). However, gender differences might be less pronounced among social workers because there may be a higher proportion of feminist-identified men in this profession (Han & Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Ritter, 2008; Rocha, 2000; Vinton, 1992).

They Don't Want to: Framing Grievances through a Feminist Consciousness

Gender hierarchies are created and reproduced when men and women embrace traditional gender roles as being proper, normal, and inevitable. Feminist challenges to sexist practices, such as sexual double standards, intimate partner violence, or gender pay inequities, are often correlated with a rejection of traditional gender expectations. A feminist consciousness, as conceptualized by Gurin, Miller, and Gurin (1980), has four interrelated beliefs that justify gender rebellions: (a) common fate, or the notion that what happens to women in general is important to understanding what happens in one's own life; (b) power discontent, the idea that women lack power and influence in society; (c) system blame, the understanding that women's lack of power is unjust and caused by systemic forces; and (d) collective orientation, awareness that the best

way to remedy such unjust situations is through working with other women collectively, rather than individually.

Perceptions of gender injustice and system blame

Feminist activism often requires the rejection of traditional gender expectations (Nelson et al., 2008) or the recognition of sexist power imbalances in society (Cole, Zucker, & Ostrove, 1998; Duncan, 1999; Kelly & Breilinger, 1995; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012). For example, Liss et al. (2004) noted that feminist activism was most common among women who agreed that 'relationships with most men stunt my growth' and Ayres et al. (2009) concluded that unwanted sexual attention was a strong predictor of feminist activism. Studies also find that sexual prejudice generally stunts feminist activism because heterosexist assumptions are integral to conventional gender roles (Ayres et al., 2009; Duncan, 1999; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012). Likewise, MSW students who scored low on just world scales were more inclined to advocate for women, people of color, and LGBTs (Han & Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Morrison Van Voorhis & Hoestetter, 2006; Swank, 2012; Van Soest, 1996).

Power discontent and perceptions of feminist power

Women may reluctantly endure or cooperate with sexist practices when they think they cannot alter the status quo via feminist interventions. Accordingly, a few studies found that women were more likely to join feminist mobilizations when they felt that they had a firm grasp of political affairs and when they thought the women's movement was powerful (Cole et al., 1998; Duncan, 1999). Similarly, other studies have supported the importance of efficacy perceptions in activism among social work students (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Ritter, 2008; Swank & Fahs, 2011). Conversely, some studies insist that a sense of efficacy is not a pre-requisite to feminist or liberal activism (Kelly & Breilinger, 1995; Schussman & Soule, 2005).

Common fate, collective orientations and feminist identities

Perceptions of one's collective and personal identities can influence reactions to sexism. Belief in gender collectivism, or the notion that women need to work together to create change, can be a strong predictor of collective feminist activism (Duncan, 1999; Liss et al., 2004). Similarly, personal commitments to ending all forms of social injustice can be equally important to feminist activism (Kelly & Breilinger, 1995; Nelson et al., 2008). Moreover, many studies suggest that the acceptance of the label 'feminist' also predicts feminist activism (Ayres et al., 2009; Duncan, 1999; Liss et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 2008).

In studies of social workers, ethical reasons for activism seem especially important when assessing why people do or do not engage in activist behaviors (Swank & Fahs, 2011). Studies of Israeli and Californian Social Work students discovered a greater willingness to be politically involved when students saw a congruency between social work values and social action (Han & Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Weiss & Kaufman, 2006).

Nobody Asked: Social Networks and Mobilizing Structures

Feminist social movements depend on established networks and organizations to create, recruit, and retain potential activists (mobilizing structures). Many sorts of contextual and institutional settings can make people predisposed or receptive to political activism. Accordingly, being exposed to feminism, either through interactions with feminist friends or family members, may directly increase participation in feminist activism (Liss et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 2008). While social networks often encourage the acceptance or rejection of traditional gender scripts, they also serve as conduits of important information about political events. Political parties, committed partisans, and movement activists often try to motivate activism through different persuasive techniques (e.g., face-to-face conversations, phone calls, email, direct mail, etc.). While each recruitment pitch has had some success in recruiting some sympathetic bystanders into activism, people were more likely to engage in political actions when they were encouraged or asked to be active by someone whom they personally knew (Ritter, 2008; Schussman & Soule, 2005; Swank & Fahs, 2011).

The following analysis explored the links of feminist activism to seven resource, feminist consciousness (framing), and mobilizing structures (activist networks) variables. By regressing feminist activism scales on the variables of gender, education level, gender role perceptions, the recognition of heterosexism, power interpretation, activist identities, and activist recruitment networks, this study identified the factors that distinguished between more or less politically active undergraduate social work students.

Methods

Sample

This Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved study drew upon the impressions of 159 Bachelors of Social Work (BSW) students in the United States (participation was anonymous and voluntary). To establish a stratified sample, this study selected respondents through two channels. By seeking a pool of fully engaged student activists, the lead researcher distributed surveys at several college-based protests throughout the Midwest and South (Indiana University, Ohio State University, University of Kentucky). Most of these protests focused on antiwar activism, but one focused on women's rights (protests occurred from Winter 2001 through Spring 2002). At each protest site, the researcher tried to sample as many individuals as possible and each protester was asked to complete the survey before they left the event. Thirty-four of our 159 BSW participants were derived from these protests.

To create a comparison group of less politically active college students, this study also distributed surveys to students who belonged to 12 colleges throughout the United States (Autumn 2000). We initially separated all public campuses into research, doctoral, masters, or baccalaureate clusters (using the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education). This creation of four clusters gave us access to students from many sorts of colleges, including large research campuses and smaller

state-run commuter colleges. Next, three schools were randomly selected from each of the four strata. After selecting these 12 colleges, we contacted faculty from each institution (via email). Professors in the natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, social work, and business were asked to administer surveys in their classrooms as student attitudes have previously differed by such majors (Astin, 1993). With participation being purely voluntary, 28 of the 338 contacted professors decided to distribute and collect the surveys during one of their class sessions (8.2%).¹ Four of these professors taught in BSW programs and these professors provided access to 125 undergraduate social work students. [See Swank and Fahs (2012) for analysis of activism for the entire sample.]

In total, 159 BSW students completed the survey. As expected, this sample had a higher proportion of women (89.3% Female). The racial breakdown seemed to mirror that of many public institutions, with 85% Euro-American, 7% African-American, 5% Latino(a), and less than 1% Native or Asian-American participants. Likewise, the age pyramid conformed to familiar trends as the mean age was 26.4 years old and 48% of the students were between 18 and 22 years old (standard deviation equals 9.5 and the mode was 22 years-old).

Measures

We measured feminist activism based on a political activities approach. Respondents were given a checklist of many different ways to be politically active (Barnes, 1999). Two of the behaviors in this study addressed electoral means of influencing governmental policies (e.g., writing a letter to a politician and signing a petition) while two other items dealt with more unconventional and protesting tactics (e.g., going to a legal demonstration and engaging in civil disobedience). Students were also asked about the political causes that motivated such actions. If the student indicated that they engaged in any of these political actions for women's rights they were deemed feminist activists. In total, 39 of the 159 students indicated that they had engaged in some form of electoral feminist activism and 23 had protested for women's rights. Finally, two additive scales were constructed for electoral or protest activities on gender equality (see table 1 for details).

Several of the independent variables were measured through dichotomous dummy variables. For gender, respondents were asked 'what is your sex?' (Female = 1,

Table 1 Univariate Statistics for Electoral and Protest Feminist Activism ($n = 159$)

Item	Number yes	Percent yes	Mean
Sign a petition	38	24%	
Write a letter	21	13%	
Electoral scale (range 0–2)			0.37
Go to a lawful demonstration	23	15%	
Do civil disobedience	7	4%	
Protest scale (range 0 to 2)			0.18

Male = 0). The variable, activist recruitment networks, dealt with issues of access to peers who shared relevant information about ongoing or future political campaigns: 'Have any friends ever asked you to go to a political event?'. To code the dichotomous responses, yes equaled 1 and no equaled 0. For educational attainment, students were asked 'Please indicate your highest level of education' (Freshman = 1, Senior = 4).

All of the feminist consciousness frames were measured through Likert scales. Perceptions of unfair gender norms were addressed by two single-item variables. Support of traditional gender roles was traced through an item that assessed the traditional division of labor in families: 'Everyone in the family should take responsibility for child care and housework' (Strongly Agree = 1). To address modern heterosexist beliefs (Morrison & Morrison, 2003), we focused on the recognition of heterosexual privilege: 'Too often heterosexuals are unfairly accused of being homophobic' (Strongly Agree = 1).

The concept of collective efficacy was assessed through interpretation of the potential efficacy of different movement tactics. To address perceived social movement power, four items asked about how much signature drives, demonstrations, and sit-ins helped the social movement achieve its goals (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.650$) (Helped a lot = 5; Hurt a lot = 1). Total scores in this additive scale ranged from 4 to 20.

Activist identities were detected through a five-item composite scale on politicized self-concepts (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.700$). The first two questions dealt with the extent that people felt obliged to protest: 'I see myself as someone who is involved in promoting social justice' and 'I feel guilty when I am politically active' (similar to Kelly & Breilinger, 1995). Another item dealt with support for collective efforts to assuage injustice: 'If we leave well enough alone, eventually men and women will be treated equally' (Strongly Agree = 1). Finally, to address the belief that the respondent must remain active in order to compensate for the political apathy of others, we posed: 'I must be politically active since most people are politically inactive' (Strongly Agree = 5).

Results

Descriptive Findings

Table 1 identifies the extent of feminist behaviors among social work undergraduate students. As a whole, this aggregate was not especially politically active. Throughout their entire lifetime only one-quarter of the students had ever participated in the easy and relatively risk-free task of signing a petition for women's rights and even fewer partook in collective challenges to sexism (15% went to a lawful demonstration or 4% had engaged in civil disobedience). This finding echoes earlier research which found that the majority of social work students lacked feminist commitments that translated as political activism. Analysis from the 1980s notes that between 26% and 33% of the MSW students in their study called themselves feminists (Freeman, 1990; Lincoln & Koeske, 1987).

Explanatory Findings

Our objective was to determine the direct associations of resource, mobilizing, and collective action frames with electoral and protest activism for women's rights. To assess the relative strength of the seven predictor variables, Table 2 displays the results of two Ordinary Least Square Regressions. Each regression contains the full model as we simultaneously regressed all of the independent variables on a single dependent variable. As expected, the sample met all of the assumptions to run these statistics (constant variance, independence, and normal distributions). Multicollinearity diagnostics also suggested low variance inflation factors (VIFs) in each regression because the VIF was below 1.36 for every independent variable. With a pairwise treatment of missing data, any person who failed to answer an item was automatically removed from the regressions in this study.

The regressions suggest that the resource variables were the weakest predictors of feminist activism in a multivariate context. When holding the consciousness and social network variables constant, only educational attainment displayed significant direct associations to electoral and protest activities ($\beta = 0.16$ and 0.18 , $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). Gender failed to offer any significant relationships with either electoral or protest behaviors, suggesting that women in this sample did not engage in more feminist activism in a multivariate context.

The framing and feminist consciousness variables had mostly significant results. When exploring the electoral realm, three of the feminist consciousness factors were significant. Gender conservatism generally dampened feminist activism as supporting traditional gender roles and modern heterosexist beliefs both had direct associations with electoral feminist activism ($\beta = -0.16$, -0.17 , $p < 0.05$). Activist identities, or the commitment to social justice, were even more crucial to feminist engagement in electoral realms ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, perceptions of social movement power did not have a direct effect on engaging in electoral activism.

Several of the feminist consciousness factors displayed significance when examining protest politics. Net of the effects of the other regressors, having an activist identity

Table 2 Ordinary Least Squared Regressions for Electoral and Protest Feminist Activism ($n = 159$)

Predictor variables	Electoral activism			Protest activism		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Female	0.12	(0.16)	0.05	0.00	(0.10)	0.00
Educational attainment	0.17	(0.07)	0.16*	0.13	(0.01)	0.18**
Support traditional gender roles	-0.10	(0.05)	-0.16*	-0.02	(0.03)	-0.04
Modern heterosexist beliefs	-0.13	(0.05)	-0.17*	-0.11	(0.03)	-0.21**
Social movement power	0.05	(0.04)	0.09	0.05	(0.02)	0.13*
Activist identity	0.04	(0.01)	0.22**	0.04	(0.01)	0.22**
Activist recruitment network	0.34	(0.10)	0.24**	0.30	(0.06)	0.31***
R ²		0.33***			0.37***	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$.

dramatically elevated protesting behaviors ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) while having heterosexist beliefs that ignore LGB discrimination deterred such activities ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, perceptions of greater social movement power enhanced feminist protest participation ($\beta = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$) while supporting traditional gender roles did not have a direct significant relationship to feminist protesting.

Lastly, the mobilization factor of recruiting networks furnished some of the largest coefficients in the study. Even after controlling for all other factors, being asked to participate in a political event inspired both types of feminist activism especially well ($\beta = 0.24$ and 0.31 , $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion

By exploring feminist activism among BSW students, this study has offered a unique look into a retrospective sample of activists and non-activists. While feminist activism was relatively rare among our sample, our analysis reveals the value of an integrated theoretical model by demonstrating the importance of looking at political activism from a broader and more comprehensive lens. Variables from each of the resource, consciousness, and mobilization theories yielded significant results.

Only one of the resource factors—educational attainment—drove feminist activism. With greater educational attainment being significant, activism was more prevalent among the students who have completed more coursework. This finding might be the result of effective classroom interventions or issues of self-selection among social work majors, as students who objected to feminism may have left the social work major during their junior and senior years in college. While this bodes well for the significant work of social work educators, future research should try to identify what sorts of content and assignments are better at inspiring feminist political engagement than others, as consciousness-raising, certain readings, and direct activism assignments all have an impact on student learning and political engagement (Fahs, 2012).

The rest of the resource variables were statistically insignificant. Gender never reached significance, which could be an artifact of having few men in the social work major, but it is also likely that men who voluntarily join social work are more attuned to gender inequities than men who avoid social work (also, the gender gap could be larger in other majors).

Our data also collectively suggest that feminist consciousness variables were important to feminist activism. The recognition of heterosexist discrimination (modern heterosexism) along with activist identities were significant forces behind all types of feminist activism. That is, feminist frames became salient when students combined an awareness of the systematic subjugation of sexual minorities along with a rejection of individualistic responses to sexism and a perceived obligation to do something to end such oppression. Questions of collective efficacy only reached significance for protest behaviors, which suggests that perceptions of social movement power mattered only for collective action. In contrast, supporting traditional gender roles only had a direct association with electoral practices. The insignificant link

between protest actions and division of labor concerns may indicate that social workers did not view collective protests as the best way to change their own domestic situations with husbands, brothers, partners, and sons.

The study also highlighted the importance of peer relationships and it indicates that being embedded in pre-existing activist networks mattered for engagement in activism. Accordingly, these findings suggest that a good deal of political preparation must occur before a student actively takes up the struggle for women's rights. While belonging to recruitment networks predicted feminist activism, different measures of mobilization variables may be crucial as well. Early socialization in families, schools, or churches can lead to the sort of perceptions that block or enable feminist activism.

Strengths and Limitations

This study offered some theoretical and methodological contributions to the existing literature. This is the first study to systematically explore feminist activism among undergraduate social work students. Our list of predictor variables was theory driven and the breadth of variables lessened the chance of interference from extraneous or spurious variables. Moreover, our implementation of a stratified sample allowed for the comparison of students who did and did not engage in feminist activism. This juxtaposition of activist and bystander qualities allowed for a greater specification of the motivations behind feminist activism. Also, our distinction between electoral and protest behaviors highlighted the conditional importance of several of the framing-feminist consciousness factors. Finally, our sample of students from different colleges throughout the nation lowered problems of representativeness as this study was therefore less inclined to suffer from the idiosyncratic side effects that occur when studying a single campus.

Still, several research decisions could have undermined this study's accuracy and generalizability. First, the results of this sample may not apply to other countries since the predictors of feminist activism may be nation-specific. Second, the sampling procedures were not identical for activist and comparison groups so problems of selection bias exist. Third, the small number of men in the sample could have underestimated the importance of gender on feminist activism. Fourth, the use of college students did not provide enough diversity of answers to test key social status factors for the resource model (race and family income measures produced especially small cell sizes for students of color and affluent students). Fifth, measurement errors regularly reside in survey data. Our focus on traditional definitions of political behavior could have missed many forms of cultural activism (e.g., working at domestic violence shelters, refusing to cook dinner for a male spouse, or rejecting patriarchal efforts to manage one's body). The strength of activist identities could have been stronger if we asked about the presence of feminist self-labels. Problems of over-demanding recall could have also hurt our network measures, in that people may have difficulty remembering whether anyone asked them to join a political event. Questions of social desirability may be especially relevant to our activist identity measures, as participants may want to sound socially desirable to themselves by overstating the

amount that they fight for social justice. Finally, single-item measures for complicated frames like modern heterosexism or traditional roles can clearly miss some crucial elements of this multidimensional phenomenon. It is possible that feminist attitudes toward child care, body management, sexual double standards, domestic violence, sexual harassment or assault, or workplace inequalities could also motivate social workers into feminist activism.

Implications for Social Work Education

This paper can inform social work education in several ways. With injustice frames being essential to protest activities, clearly social work programs should try to motivate activism by revealing the discriminatory and exploitative nature of many United States institutions (systematic sexism, racism, classism, heteronormativity, ageism, etc.). Moreover, there is some evidence that students are more politically active after they take a class on sexism (Abram et al., 2001; Black, 1994; Lincoln & Koeske, 1987; Vinton, 1992) or any form of oppression (Morrison Van Voorhis & Hoestetter, 2006; Rocha, 2000; Van Soest, 1996). Similarly, with activist identities being important in most cases, professors must reveal the connections between client well-being and injustices in families, agencies, and political arenas. Likewise, educators must try to convince students that politics is not a spectator sport, that is, social work ethics requires direct involvement in political struggles. Moreover, educators should make assignments and exercises that offer opportunities for students to practice advocacy and political engagement. Some of these assignments could be classroom experiences of speaking at a mock congressional hearing, developing an imaginary media campaign, or planning a community meeting (Hoefler, 1999). Assignments could also work to place students' bodies at the center of feminist political engagement (Fahs, 2012). Equally important, students should be given an opportunity to have first-hand experiences in meeting governmental officials, attending political meetings, knocking on doors, chanting at protests, or doing some grassroots fundraising. In fact, some studies argue that political activism among students increases after colleges offer policy practice experiences outside of the classroom (Rocha, 2000). Finally, the profession as a whole can modify its curriculum. Programs can augment their policy classes by providing more courses on social action, connecting students to issue-based advocacy groups, and offering greater access to political field practicum placements [Wolk, Pray, Weismiller, and Dempsey (1996) estimated that less than 20% of BSW programs offer field practice in electoral politics and policy advocacy]. While these programs will not convert every student into a full-fledged activist, such efforts will likely lessen the widespread complaint that social work programs too often inadequately prepare students for policy practice and political activism.

Note

- [1] Clearly this response rate was neither high nor random. Professors who never read email automatically removed themselves from the sample and the willingness to distribute the

surveys was not constant throughout the different sorts of schools and disciplines. For the sample of all professors, around 2% of the Research professors distributed surveys, while 13% of professors at masters-granting universities did so. Likewise, less than 1% of Chemistry, Biology and Physics professors assisted in this project while professors in Political Science, Sociology and Social Work were most receptive to requests for participation (11%). Of the social work professors who actually distributed surveys, all of them taught research or policy classes.

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