SOCIAL WORKERS AND USE OF SOCIAL ACTION INTERVENTIONS WITH
CLIENT SYSTEMS

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Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

SOCIAL WORKERS AND USE OF SOCIAL ACTION INTERVENTIONS WITH CLIENT SYSTEMS

by

Emma Tiffany

This research examines social workers’ use of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool with client systems. Social work is grounded in the systems perspective with an understanding that clients are affected by both the internal and external environments in which they live. If we apply this perspective to micro level practice, with the social work mission of pursuing social justice and social change, then we must recognize the need for incorporating macro interventions in micro practice. The dependent variable in this study is the utility of social action as a tool of intervention. The independent variables are factors which inhibit or support social workers using social action as an intervention with client systems, including education of the social worker, diversification of the profession, and rise of professionalism. The three main questions guiding this research study are: To what degree do social workers agree that social action can and should be incorporated into their practice? To what degree are social workers currently using social action interventions in their practice? If we can develop a definition of social action as a teachable and usable intervention tool, can social workers improve the use of social
action in everyday practice? This descriptive survey sampled 200 social workers, using systematic random sampling, from a publicly accessible database of 10,627 social workers who are in the social work registry for the state of California. A total of 32 social workers responded, an equivalent of 16.0% of those surveyed. This study did confirm that the independent variables of professionalism, diversification and education affect utilization of social action interventions by social workers. This study also demonstrated that while social workers are using social action interventions, the social work profession does not have a shared definition of social action. Therefore, defining social action and teaching social action interventions to all social work practitioners, can make social action a more accessible social work tool and connect micro practice to the social work mission of social justice and social change.

________________________________, Committee Chair
Francis Yuen, DSW

____________________________
Date
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research examines social workers’ use of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool with client systems. Study of this phenomenon is particularly relevant to social work as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) code of ethics obligates social workers to actively engage in political and social action to ensure justice for the populations we serve (NASW, 2008). In addition, as clients and social welfare programs we serve become increasingly threatened, cut and dismantled by the economic crisis, the need for social action increases. Therefore, it is critically important to conduct a study which examines social action as an effective intervention strategy with client systems.

Background of the Problem

The economic crisis in California has led to an increase in the number of people who need the assistance of social programs and a decrease in the funding for health and human service programs (California Budget Project, 2008; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008). However, the increased cuts to health and human service programs and decreased services for marginalized populations are a result of policy decisions. Historically, social action has demonstrated to be an effective means for stimulating macro level policy change and generating lasting social change (Blau, 2007; Katz, 2002). Therefore, the policies can be changed if the people take action to influence the decision making. Social workers, who have an ethical obligation to fight for social justice for “disenfranchised,
marginalized and vulnerable populations,” should be taking part in direct social action to influence California’s economic policymaking (NASW, 2008). Unfortunately, a recent study conducted by Rome and Hoechstetter (2010) showed that less than 20% of social workers surveyed were engaging in direct social action activities and more surprisingly of those surveyed “politically empowering clients was the most ambivalent” data set (p. 116). Therefore, there is not only an obligation and need for social action, there is also the question: how can social workers effectively use social action as an intervention strategy with client systems?

The fundamental premise for this study is that social action is a valuable and effective means of intervention with client systems, as well as necessary in our current environment of budgetary cutbacks which are severely impacting health and human services for vulnerable populations (California Budget Project, 2008; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008). The secondary premise of this study is informed by feminist and empowerment theories which encourage social workers to politically empower client systems through micro, mezzo and macro interventions (Corey, 2005; Johnson & Rhodes, 2010). The premises of this study inform us that social workers are theoretically motivated and politically pushed to engage in social action interventions with client systems. However, this leads to the fundamental questions of this study: are social workers engaging in social action interventions? And, how do social workers engage in social action interventions in everyday practice?
The major problem researched by this study is the ambivalence social workers have toward using social action as an intervention strategy (Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010); while social workers in general value social action, many practicing professional social workers report being unclear of how to incorporate social action into practice (Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). The secondary problem is to characterize and define the use of social action as an appropriate and plausible intervention for all levels of social work practice. If we can define social action interventions, then social action can be become a more accessible tool for social work practice.

This study is relevant to the history of social work, understanding that social workers have an historical and ethical stake in social justice and social action (NASW, 2008; Breton, 2005; Drumm, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1995; Steinberg, 2006; Withorn, 1984). In addition, this study is particularly relevant to contemporary social work practice, which is being seriously impacted by budget cuts and economic policy decisions. Therefore, this study will prove to be valuable to social work as a profession and the client systems with which social workers intervene.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Social workers have an obligation and commitment to social justice and engaging in social action is one avenue where social workers possess a commitment to affect change upon the system (NASW, 2008). In addition, social work was founded through a course of social action (Breton, 2005; Drumm, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1995; Steinberg, 2006; Withorn, 1984). However, research demonstrates a decline in use,
attitude and belief in social action by social workers (Breton, 2006; Epstein, 1970; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010; Specht & Courtney, 1994). If we can identify characteristics of social action which can be used as intervention tools and strategies, then we can improve social worker use of social action and improve the lives of the clients we serve. In this study this researcher examines social action as an intervention tool and identifies ways in which social action can be used as part of everyday social work practice.

**Purpose of the Study**

The information obtained by this study can be used to increase the knowledge of intervention strategies and tools to be used by social workers. Secondly, this information can be used to increase social worker involvement in social action and better serve the social worker’s ethical obligation to social justice for the clients served. If social action interventions can be identified and well-defined, then social workers can better meet the ethical obligation to social justice, have a greater impact on systemic problems and impact economic policy issues which negatively affect client systems. Finally, engaging client systems in social action empowers the people social workers serve, by offering clients a means by which to affect change on their environments.

**Theoretical Framework**

The primary theoretical framework employed by all social workers is the systems perspective. If we utilize the systems perspective and person-in-environment framework in all levels of social work practice, then all social workers should be considering the
affects of the larger system and social environment on every individual client. Therefore, a portion of all social work practice needs to include linking client services to social and political reform (Cummins, Byers, & Pedrick, 2011). One primary avenue of accomplishing the social work mission of social justice and connecting the individual client to the macro social environment that impacts the client is social action.

Conflict perspective informs us that imbalances in wealth and power have a severe impact on the wellbeing of the client systems social workers serve (Johnson & Rhodes, 2010). Furthermore, Johnson and Rhodes (2010) articulate that our client’s problems are “social and structural not individual” (p.7). To address these imbalances social workers use empowerment theory as a “proactive response to assist people who experience systematic forms of harassment and oppression through consciousness-raising and enhancing self-efficacy” (Johnson & Rhodes, 2010, p. 7). In addition, feminist theory informs us that one of the primary objectives of the social work profession is to empower marginalized groups and organize communities to take action (Corey, 2005). Using a conflict perspective with empowerment and feminist theories, social workers are informed that all client problems have a “social, cultural and political context” (Corey, 2005, p. 350), which must be addressed in all forms of practice with client systems. Therefore, we must incorporate social action interventions in our work with client systems, as clients’ problems can never be resolved within a vacuum.
Definitions of Terms

Client systems: These include individuals, groups, communities and peoples that social workers engage with on a therapeutic level and represent the interests of on a political level.

Professionalism: a belief in presenting a neutral self in order to operate effectively as a therapeutic ally or public representative.

Social action: An action intended for reforming social issues.

Therapeutic Intervention Tool: A teachable, definable, replicable technique that can be practiced on an everyday basis with client systems in micro, mezzo and macro fields of social work practice.

Assumptions

1. Social work was founded upon the principles of engaging in social action to promote social justice.

2. Social workers have an ethical obligation to engage in activities which promote social justice for disenfranchised and marginalized populations.

3. Social action is one activity which supports the agenda of promoting social justice.

4. Social action can be used in all levels of social work practice.
Justification

Although the social work profession has transformed and changed since its beginnings, the fundamental values and ethics of social work practice continue to be based on an understanding of individual problems being linked to systemic problems and a quest for social justice (NASW, 2008; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Withorn, 1984). In addition, social action has been identified as an essential means for assisting disempowered and disenfranchised client systems with feeling empowered (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Kuttab, 2010; Wilson, Minkler, Dasho, Wallerstein, & Martin, 2008). However, the profession has been challenged with the dilemma of how to merge the professional self with a quest for social change, as well as how to incorporate a political agenda into everyday practice (Breton, 2006; Epstein, 1970; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). This study provides insight into this dilemma, as well as offering a definition of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool. Therefore, social workers can return to pursuing social action in everyday practice.

Limitations

This study is limited to a database of registered social workers in California. Therefore, this study is not able to be generalized to the entire country, or the entire field of social work. This study does not attempt to determine all of the factors which contribute to this phenomenon, as it is limited by the questionnaire format and does not include open-ended questions. Although this researcher attempted to examine factors
which contribute to this phenomenon and offers some potential solutions, this study does not solve the problem.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review will be to examine social action interventions, exploring if they are vital, necessary, obligatory, and practical for social work practice. First, the review will cover the current state of social work, reviewing the current political and economic climate in the United States, demonstrating the increased demand for social action, the critical role of social workers to be engaging client systems in action and the underrepresentation of social workers engaging in social action interventions (Breton, 2006; California Budget Project, 2008; Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Carniol, 1992; Freire, 1990; Hacker, 2006; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010; Stuart, 1999).

Secondly, the review will examine the barriers which inhibit social workers from engaging in social action, including historical changes in the value of social welfare and practice of social action, the rise of professionalism, the gaps in social work education and the diversification of the profession (Breton, 2006; Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Epstein, 1970; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Mendes, 2003; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Shaffer, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Stuart, 1999; Thompson, 1994; Withorn, 1984). Thirdly, the review will demonstrate how social action continues to be a part of social work’s mission and serves to benefit client systems (Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). Finally, this review will reveal how social action can be used as a practical daily therapeutic intervention tool with all client systems.
Current State of the World and Social Work

The economic crisis in the United States is creating an increased need for health and human services, as well as social safety nets and social workers, as the changes in the economy leave an increase in the number of people struggling to survive (California Budget Project, 2008; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008). However, the loss of revenue stream at state and federal levels has left policy makers and voters with complex decisions regarding the distribution of funding. Unfortunately, the decision makers are decreasing funding to vital health and human service organizations, decreasing the social safety net, increasing economic insecurity and human suffering (California Budget Project, 2008; Hacker, 2006; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008). This paradox leaves many vulnerable client systems without needed assistance. Therefore, we need to call upon social workers, who have a commitment to social justice and social welfare, to organize the poor and challenge the state’s decision making (NASW, 2008). It is imperative to utilize social action “in times when the interests of the poor are irreconcilable with the interests of the powerful state (Lough, 2008, p. 539).” However, while Hall (2010) argues the American people are returning to use of social action, Rome and Hoechstetter (2010) found that social workers continue to show poor participation in demonstrative social action.

The profession of social work was founded with a strong value in social justice, understanding the person-in-environment and the need to impact the environment in order to help the individual (Carniol, 1992; Epstein, 1970; Freire, 1990). With this unique
perspective and understanding of the individual and systems, social workers become an essential connection between clients and politics (Breton, 2006; Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Carniol, 1992; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Stuart, 1999). As Breton (2006, p. 35) states, “practice is political,” meaning for individuals, families and communities who are disempowered and disenfranchised by larger systems, social workers carry the pivotal role of bridging these systems and effecting positive and just social change (Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Carniol, 1992; Freire, 1990; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Stuart, 1999). If social workers do not assist client systems with civic engagement and social action, clients and communities will be left without the needed leadership for fighting for social justice. However, research over the past forty years has indicated a decline in the social work profession’s engagement in social action, as well as a decline in the use of political and social critique when engaging with client systems (Breton, 2006; Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Epstein, 1970; Mendes, 2003; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010; Shaffer, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Thompson, 1994; Withorn, 1984).

For example, Breton (2006) describes a three phase transition away from social action engagement by social workers, involving the professionalism movement away from practicing with passion and towards a scientific process, adopting Freudian psychology and losing a pure person-in-environment focus, and specialization, differentiating micro, mezzo and macro practice. While others argue that social workers have strayed from engagement in social action due to an increased focus on casework rather than large systems intervention (Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Specht &
Courtney, 1994). In addition, a recent study by Rome and Hoechstetter (2010) found that of those surveyed “politically empowering clients was the most ambivalent” data set, where only 42% of those surveyed acknowledged engaging in politically motivated interventions with client systems (p. 116). Furthermore, the social workers surveyed in this study reported having a strong desire to be more socially active, yet lacked the knowledge or tools for accomplishing this feat. In addition, a study by Rome, Hoechstetter and Wolf-Brenigin (2010) proclaimed that although “there are distinct advantages to encouraging clients to advocate for themselves” (p. 217), social workers are facing an ethical dilemma around how to engage these client systems with social action interventions.

As the need for services increases and the funding and public support for services decreases, the demand for social justice should be growing louder (California Budget Project, 2008; Hacker, 2006; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Withorn, 1984). While social workers should be the most evident group to be leading the fight for justice, support for social action by social workers has weakened by historical paradigm shifts, as well as professionalism, education and diversification (Breton, 2006; Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Epstein, 1970; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Mendes, 2003; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010; Shaffer, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Stuart, 1999; Thompson, 1994; Withorn, 1984). Furthermore, if we consider the argument that personal change and social change are interdependent, then we must validate social action as an essential therapeutic intervention with client systems (Breton, 2006). If social workers can be
taught how to engage client systems in social action, then social action can be used as a therapeutic intervention tool. Therefore, it is important to examine these changes and barriers which inhibit social workers from engaging in social action interventions, in order to understand how social work can reintegrate social action interventions and continue to pursue social justice for client systems.

Changes and Barriers to Social Workers Engaging in Social Action

This review will now more closely examine the barriers which inhibit social workers from engaging in social action, including historical changes in the value of social welfare and social action, the rise of professionalism, the gaps in social work education and the diversification of the profession (Breton, 2006; Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Epstein, 1970; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Mendes, 2003; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Shaffer, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Stuart, 1999; Thompson, 1994; Withorn, 1984). Social workers have an historical and ethical obligation to social action (NASW, 2008). However, the literature demonstrates that while social workers continue to value and agree with the need for action, social workers are not engaging in social action activities and the majority of social workers do not actively encourage clients to engage in social action activities (Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). In this time of economic crisis, where the programs and clients we serve are being threatened, it becomes increasingly imperative to study this phenomenon and identify the dominant causes for the reduction in action, in order to remedy the problem
and offer social workers social action interventions as a tool for empowering client systems and affecting social change.

**History.**

The original social workers fought for social justice by empowering clients to protest, strengthening communities through organization, offering aid to groups of individuals who lived outside of the system, advocating for a social safety net, and developing a social welfare system (Breton, 2005; Carlton-LaNey, 1999; Shaffer, 2006; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Wilkerson-Freeman, 2002; Withorn, 1984). For example, feminist social workers in the 1930’s used New Deal policies to offer services to African-American women who had previously not had access to services (Wilkerson-Freeman, 2002). Although the policies were not written with the intention of serving these women, social workers engaged in subversive political action to ensure resources were accessed by previously marginalized communities of women. In addition, early African-American social workers practiced community organizing interventions to empower impoverished and disenfranchised African-American communities to take collective action towards improving their communities and increasing their political influence on the system (Carlton-LaNey, 1999). Furthermore, Shaffer (2006) argued that early school social workers were more actively involved in advocating for changes to school policies, where post-1920’s social workers became more focused on case management than engaging in action to influence school policy.
However, many of these original social workers were practicing during the Industrial Revolution and Great Depression, where America’s economy and culture were more rural focused, less urban, and less professionally driven (Specht & Courtney, 1994; Withorn, 1984). Some authors pinpoint the violence associated with social action, particularly that of the 1960’s civil rights demonstrations, as a leading cause for the profession of social work and professionalized cultures to be distancing themselves from activist roots (Lough, 2008; Withorn, 1984). It does appear that, as the American society changed and shifted away from industrialism, towards an economy based primarily on professionals, public acceptance of social action decreased, as did social worker engagement and support of social action interventions with client systems (Breton, 2006; Lough, 2008; Withorn, 1984).

During the past century, there has been an increase in professionalism in the American economy and simultaneously a decrease in public use and acceptance of social action, as well as a decrease in the social safety net that was established after the Great Depression (Hacker, 2006; Lough, 2008; Withorn, 1984). One could postulate that professionalism promotes cooperation and obedience, and without the collective social action which pushed policy makers in the past, protection of the poor and investment in health and human services has decreased (Blau, 2007; Fox Piven & Cloward, 1991; Katz, 2002). Furthermore, the monumental paradigm shift which occurred in the 1980’s and 1990’s away from social protection and towards personal responsibility has generated public ambiguity on the role of government in providing social welfare (Naples, 1998;
Hacker, 2006). This shift has further alienated and disenfranchised the people who rely upon social services.

In addition, the rise and fall of the middle class, labor unions and technological advancement have each had a significant impact on the decline in social services and the decline in social action (Byron, 2011; Wachter, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The rise of the middle class was aided by the social safety net established in the early part of the 20th century (Hacker, 2006). As the economy declines, the classes in America have become more polarized and we are experiencing a significant decline in the middle class and an increase in economic insecurity for the American family (Byron, 2011; Hacker, 2006, U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This increasing economic instability is due in large part to the decline in investment of the social programs that were established to help protect people from the downswings of capitalism (Hacker, 2006). Without these social support programs we will continue to see a decline in the middle class. Therefore, we must be empowering people to advocate for the preservation of the social safety net. The social welfare programs of this country help protect the middle class and preserve economic equality, a part of the social work mission towards social justice (NASW, 2008).

Furthermore, the decline in labor unions has impacted the people’s ability to organize and fight for social justice. The increase in professionalism and a more professionalized economy is only one reason why we have seen a decline in labor unions. Labor unions have also decreased as the corporation and globalization of manufacturing
has increased (Wachter, 2007). Unions were one of the primary users of social action as an intervention to protect the working and middle classes. Unions also protected the mission of the corporation and the middle class by fighting for fair wages and ensuring workers could afford the goods produced. As the American paradigm shifted towards personality responsibility, away from social safety nets and corporations became increasingly accountable to stock holders rather than workers, the power and effectiveness of unions decreased (Wachter, 2007). With this decrease in power, union organizations decreased, the middle class decreased and the use of social action decreased. This leaves the vulnerable poor without the union as a platform for organization. Therefore, social workers are increasingly needed to be community organizers and assist workers to fight for social protections, in order to ensure a more socially just system.

Finally, one must consider how the major changes in technology have impacted social action over the past fifty years. In the 1960’s, more traditional forms of social action were employed, including demonstrations, marches and rallies, in order to advance social justice and civil rights. More recent social action activities rely much more heavily on the use of technology, the internet and social networking websites. This has been demonstrated by the large use of social media in Egypt’s revolution in 2011, as well as the current actions of the political group Anonymous, who uses computer hacking as a means by which to take social action (Shane, 2012; Taylor, 2011).
Social workers are utilizing tools to promote social justice, including assisting clients to access food stamps and housing, identifying and protecting clients from abuse and neglect, and training staff to treat clients ethically and respectively (NASW, 2011). However, social action remains an effective and under-utilized strategy for accomplishing social work’s mission (Lough, 2008; NASW, 2008; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). Looking at the historical changes that have damaged the social safety net and increased economic disparities between the upper and lower classes, it is reasonable to conclude that the mission for social justice is not being met (Naples, 1998; Hacker, 2006; Withorn, 1984). Therefore, it becomes increasingly imperative for social workers to develop social action as a therapeutic tool for intervention, which meets the need for maintaining a professional self and allows social workers to continue to fulfill their essential role as the leaders of the fight for social justice.

**Professionalism.**

Professionalism in social work includes maintaining neutrality, a shift in the profession to clinical practice over community and macro practice, fear of repercussions and loyalty to one’s agency of employment (Breton, 2006; Epstein, 1970; Mendes, 2003; Shaffer, 2006; Thompson, 1994). A study by Epstein (1970) found that while in general the social work profession continues to embrace social justice and action, the more an individual social worker embraces professionalism, the less that social worker engages in action. The development of the professional self, the need to develop a scientific
profession and maintain neutrality are values that are often described in the literature as shifting the practice to clinical social work and casework (Breton, 2006; Shaffer, 2006). However, many argue, including Van den Bergh and Cooper (1989) that the division of professionalism and clinical practice from political work and activism is unnecessary and social workers cannot truly help clients to change their personal lives, without involving clients and practitioners in affecting change on their environment (Breton, 2006; Van den Bergh & Cooper, 1989).

In addition to professionalism being linked to clinical practice, it is also linked to the social worker’s obligation to her agency (Mendes, 2003; Thompson, 1994). Many social workers fear that engaging in action will cause them to face consequences and retaliation by their agency of employment (Thompson, 1994). More troubling is that many social workers, particularly publicly employed social workers believe their agency has the legal right to retaliate if one engages in social action (Mendes, 2003; Thompson, 1994). This fear may be magnified by the economic climate we are currently facing, where many social work jobs are being eliminated and many social workers are facing unemployment, layoffs and pay reductions (California Budget Project, 2008; Parrott, Cox, Tristi, & Rice, 2008). Therefore, social workers may not be engaging in social action to benefit their clients because the personal cost to the social worker’s livelihood is too high. However, by not engaging in action, social worker jobs will continue to be cut along with programs and services to clients. Finally, Rome, Hoechstetter and Wolf-Brenigin (2010), found that only 18.4% of social workers “indicated that their agencies prohibit social workers from encouraging clients to be politically active” (p. 217).
Therefore, while older research may show agency restrictions to be a major problem, current studies show that this is may no longer be a relevant barrier.

**Education.**

The literature suggests that social workers are not being adequately prepared in academia to take action or to use social action as an intervention tool with client systems (Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Luck, 2007; Madden & Wayne, 2003; Mendes, 2003; Thompson, 1994). Mendes (2003) argues that one factor which contributes to poor educational preparation is the separation between practice and policy courses, if policy and action were taught as part of practice, students may be better prepared when they enter the professional field. Others argue that while social work and sociology professors value action and personally engage in politics, many professors believe that teaching politics and encouraging action in the classroom is inappropriate and possibly not allowed by their campus of employment (Davis, Cummings, & MacMaster, 2007; Luck, 2007).

In addition, many studies have confirmed that social workers in the field are under prepared and lack a strong knowledge base of the law and politics which would assist social workers in taking action (Madden & Wayne, 2003; Mendes, 2003; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Thompson, 1994). For example, Thompson (1994) found that while many social work professionals are limited by policies and laws restricting political engagement, particularly public employees, many social workers are unaware of that these policies do not restrict them from engaging in all forms of social action.
Furthermore, few agencies have policies which restrict social workers from educating clients on non-partisan political issues and ways to take social action. Madden and Wayne (2003) also found that while social workers are uniquely qualified for engaging in legislative advocacy and policy work, in order to ensure policies protect the interests of marginalized groups, many social workers are not well educated on the legal process or specific tools for legislative intervention.

**Diversification and disenfranchisement.**

The engagement in social action by social workers has also been affected by disenfranchisement, which is related to the diversification of the social work profession and the concept that the range of programs being cut presents social workers with a false choice of where to direct social action efforts (Breton, 2006; Thompson, 1994). Breton (2006) and Thompson (1994) both argue that the diversification and specialization of social work has led to disenfranchisement of social workers. Therefore, social workers are facing a challenge in uniting to fight against funding cuts, rather than having solidarity in fighting for services and taking action, social workers now work in a wide variety of fields and serve a diverse population of clients with a myriad of needs. While macro level social work practice and community organizing are social work specializations, this does not mean social action should be diverted to these social work practitioners. All levels of social work practitioners can engage client systems in social action interventions aimed to develop a more equitable and socially just system. In addition, the false dichotomy of specialization between micro, mezzo and macro work
leads social workers to believe that these fields are not connected and harms social workers’ ability to develop a cohesive stance on political issues (Breton, 2006).

**Social Action and Empowerment**

Despite the identified barriers, the social work profession and social workers continue to value social action and the pursuit of social justice (NASW, 2008; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010). In addition, social action interventions are included as part of the feminist model of practice and empowerment theory, two key theoretical frameworks which guide social work practitioners (Corey, 2005; Johnson & Rhodes, 2010). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that individuals experience positive psychological changes when they engage in collective and effective social action (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Lough, 2008; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010; Wilson, et al., 2008). Rome, Hoechstetter and Wolf-Brenigin (2010) state that “there are distinct advantages to encouraging clients to advocate for themselves” (p. 217). For example, in reference to social action Lough (2008) states, “encouraging participation acknowledges individual dignity and human worth and the importance of self-determination in shaping life outcomes” (p. 541). In addition, a study by Kuttab (2010) found that there was no way to effectively achieve individual feelings of empowerment in systemically disenfranchised and disempowered individuals, without engaging those individuals in social change. Therefore, social action interventions become necessary for the social work profession to uphold its mission for social justice and to adequately assist individual clients with therapeutically feeling empowered.
Social Action as a Therapeutic Intervention Tool

Having demonstrated the need for increasing use of social action, one is left questioning the accessibility of using social action as a therapeutic intervention tool. In contradiction to Fox Piven and Cloward’s (1971) argument that it is nearly impossible to perform politically motivated work as a social work practitioner working within the system, there are practical and effective means by which social workers can integrate social action into everyday practice. Social workers can engage client systems in a form of social action which can be defined as a therapeutic intervention tool by using social action as a means by which to assist a client in achieving personal empowerment (Breton, 2006). Furthermore, these therapeutic social action intervention tools are unique to social work practitioners, as social work practitioners are the only clinicians practicing with the unique understanding of the connection between personal change and societal change; the person-in-environment, systems perspective.

However, as demonstrated in this literature review, social action must be adapted to a practical tool to be accessible to the professional social worker; a tool that can be taught to social workers in the classroom and practiced by social workers in the professional field. Breton (2006) defines social action as “collective action by a group directed toward some societal end” (p. 33). On the other hand, Lough (2008) argues that “social action is facilitated by rapid change through militant advocacy” (p. 536). Finally, Barker (1999) defines social action as a “coordinated effort to achieve institutional change to solve a social problem, fight injustice or improve quality of human life” (p.
These definitions can be considered traditional definitions of social action. A more modern definition of social action, which incorporates the professionalization of the American culture, changes in society and technology, and all levels of social work practice, would state that social action is any action intended to reform social issues. Therefore, social action does not need to include a large group, a collaborative or coordinated effort, violence, or force. Rather, social action can be performed by one individual who is taking an intentional step towards addressing a social issue in the pursuit of social change.

Pitt (n.d.) argues that small steps can be taken to affect large change and in this way each individual can engage in independent forms of social action on a daily basis, including passing out flyers, placing a political sign in one’s own yard or car, or writing letters to local papers. Using this philosophy for the micro level social worker, social action can be incorporated into individual sessions with clients by acknowledging to clients the societal context of problems and assigning clients homework in the form of letter writing, petition signing, and joining community groups. This type of micro intervention can empower clients and lead clients on the path towards taking power over their lives, connecting to larger systems and making societal change. In addition, a micro level worker can utilize technology by encouraging clients to share ideas for political change on social networking websites, join a chat group discussing social issues and reforms, or review a politically progressive website. Finally, many people and social activists are recognizing that choices in how one spends money can be political action. For example, the Komen foundation recently ceased funding to Planned Parenthood and
many people demonstrated social unrest by purposefully giving funds to Planned Parenthood instead of Komen, pushing Komen to resign its decision and re-fund Planned Parenthood (CNN Wire Staff, 2012). Therefore, micro level social work practitioners can educate individual clients about the political power of spending habits and encourage clients to take daily social action by making politically motivated choices with every dollar spent.

The majority of the research on using social action as a therapeutic intervention tool falls under social workers leading groups or working on the mezzo level with communities and organizations. One of the primary and most well researched forms of social work practice is group work (Breton, 2005; Drumm, 2006; Steinberg, 2006). One of the major premises to social group work is the development of empowerment and mutual aid between group members which is meant to heighten an individual’s awareness of her/his ability to relate to others and engage in social change (Breton, 2005; Drumm, 2006; Steinberg, 2006). Steinberg (2006) argues that the ethical practice when performing social group work is to promote members to take social action and engage in systemic change. Furthermore, Drumm (2006) argues that the development of positive and empowering relationships in groups, leads the individual group members to engaging in social activism outside of the group.

In addition to social group work, there has been research on school social work and the development of programs which foster the personal empowerment of individual children through engagement in social action (Kaplan, 1997; Wilson et al., 2008). Peer
mediation programs are being developed in K-12 schools across the country (Kaplan, 1997). These programs are meant to address bullying and empower students to resolve their own interpersonal conflicts (Kaplan, 1997). As a result of giving students the power to resolve their own conflicts and effect change, these programs build and foster each individual student’s capacity to engage in and impact social change (Kaplan, 1997). In addition, the YES! program which is being used and studied in junior and high schools is focused on engaging high-risk youth in social action projects within the school setting (Wilson et al., 2008). This research has found that encourage high-risk youth to engage in and adequately accomplish social action projects, significantly decreases youth engagement in risk behaviors, such as drug taking and violence and significantly improves youth self-esteem and performance in school (Wilson et al., 2008).

Finally, social workers can engage in therapeutic social action interventions on the macro level. These interventions are vast and can include lobbying for social welfare, campaigning for reforms which positively affect the lives of clients, testifying at public hearings and writing letters to politicians. There are laws and workplace policies which limit social worker in engagement in some forms of political action (Thompson, 1994). However, these limits are most commonly linked to actively campaigning in the workplace, or engaging in action which would negatively impact one’s employer (Thompson, 1994). One example of effective macro level social action is therapeutic jurisprudence, or engaging in policy and legislative analysis aimed at advocating for socially just laws (Madden & Wayne, 2003). Furthermore, social workers are one of the few professions dedicated to the pursuit of social justice and educated in policy, history
and human development, making social workers the most well suited individuals to be pursuing macro interventions towards societal change (Madden & Wayne, 2003; NASW, 2008; Stuart, 1999).

The above examples of therapeutic social action interventions can all be accessed by social workers as tools for pursuing the social work mission of social justice and maintaining the professional self. These tools are only a few examples of a plethora of available interventions and can be adapted and expanded upon to be applied to all levels of social work and many of the populations with which social workers intervene. In opposition to the older definitions of social action which include radical demonstrations and potential for violence, a new definition of social action, more attuned with our modern professionalized culture, should state that social action is any action intended for reforming social issues. Therefore, social action can be conducted at all levels of social work practice and be considered a therapeutic intervention tool. If social workers can integrate therapeutic social action interventions into everyday practice, then social workers can both improve the lives of individuals and groups and positively impact the environments with which people live. Social workers would then have a tool for meeting the social justice aspects of the social work mission, including effecting positive, lasting change on individuals and systems.

**Conclusion**

Although there are common themes that prevent social workers from taking social action and the literature confirms that social workers support social action, there may also
be stigma regarding social action as a means for adequately affecting change (Lough, 2008; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Rome, Hoechstetter, & Wolf-Brenigin, 2010). Social action has been stigmatized as a violent and ineffective means of political intervention (Lough, 2008). However, as this literature review has demonstrated, social action does not need to include violence and can be conducted therapeutically. In addition, history demonstrates that many major social policy changes and social justice movements were generated by large movements of social action (Blau, 2007; Katz, 2002). Furthermore, social action does not need to involve violence and can be accomplished through minor everyday interventions including handing out informational fliers, posting a protest sign in one’s front lawn, educating a client on his/her rights and resources, speaking at a public hearing and writing one’s legislators (Pitt, n. d.; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010). Therefore, we must identify social action as a viable and effective therapeutic intervention tool, in order to improve intervention in the political process, effect change and hold social workers to their values of fighting for social justice for vulnerable populations (NASW, 2008).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study examining the use of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool for social workers to use with client systems. The dependent variable in this study is the utility of social action as a tool of intervention. The independent variables are factors which inhibit or support social workers using social action as an intervention with client systems, including the education of the social worker, diversification of the profession, and an increase in professionalism. The three main questions guiding this research study were: To what degree do social workers agree that social action can and should be incorporated into their practice? To what degree are social workers currently using social action interventions in their practice? If we can develop a definition of social action as a teachable and usable intervention tool, can social workers improve the use of social action in everyday practice?

The survey instrument used for this study was developed by the researcher using a table of specifications as a tool for organizing questions by variables. The above social action activities were measured by rating scales on the survey instrument. The researcher made efforts to ensure the instrument was valid and reliable by using similar, not identical, scales and questions employed by similar research studies. Reliability and validity of the instrument were also strengthened by employing multiple questions to measure the same variable. Two examples of the rating scale questions used in this survey, where survey participants were asked to give responses on a scale of strongly
agree to strongly disagree, include: “Educating clients on political issues (e.g. initiatives, legislation, ballot measures) is part of the social work mission,” and “assisting clients with becoming advocates for others is part of the healing and empowerment process.” Multiple answer questions were also used in this survey. For example, research participants were asked: “If I were asked to develop an M.S.W. program, which courses would I most wish to include (please identify three).”

This study is a quantitative, descriptive, survey using an electronic questionnaire through survey monkey. This design benefited this research study by offering statistically valid data, through accessing a large sample size and obtaining quantifiable data (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). As this study did not employ a qualitative design, it did not obtain an understanding of personal experience and was limited by the survey questions and scales on the questionnaire (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). However, the design chosen by this researcher was the best choice for this particular study in that it set to describe a phenomenon within three pre-established independent variables and did not set to explore unknown variables or develop a theory on the topic (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010).

The threats to internal validity in this study were the extent to which the research subjects were able to determine the intention behind the questions on the survey instrument (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). To address this concern questions were framed in a way “that did not give clues about preferred or more desirable responses” (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010, p. 195). For example, it was important to determine if the research subjects value the use of social action in their current practices. Therefore, a question
related to values would not read: “Do you value social action as a means of intervention with client systems in your practice?” Rather, it read: “Assisting clients with becoming advocates for others is part of the healing and empowerment process.”

This survey included a sample of 200 social workers. This researcher acquired access to a publicly accessible database of 10,627 social workers who are in the social work registry for the state of California. This researcher then used systematic random sampling, selecting a primary name at random and every tenth person beyond the first person selected, until a sample size of 200 was gained. The strengths of systematic random selection are that the sample selection was not influenced by the researcher, increasing the validity of the data (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). Stratified random sampling and proportional stratified sampling could have benefited this study, as the researcher could have grouped the data by age or region and test for statistical differences between these groups (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). However, time and access to personal information of the population being sampled made systematic random sampling the most efficient means for conducting this study. Finally, the unit of analysis was individual social workers, sampled from the database of registered social workers in California.

Data was collected through a survey using an electronic questionnaire. Ethical considerations were taken into account and participants were assigned a pin number as to ensure anonymity. Informed consent to participate was gained by each participant in this study, which assured participants that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained, promoting candid and honest responses to the questions. In addition,
participation in the study was voluntary and respondents were permitted to skip any question or cease participation at any time during the course of the survey. As participation was voluntary, this study may have been limited by respondents who were interested in the research topic. Participants were encouraged to participate by the researcher through a letter attached to the survey. There was no monetary incentive for participation, as it was impractical to pay the maximum of 200 respondents, which limited response to the survey. However, the survey was sent out a second time to those subjects who did not respond to the first survey, in order to increase the response rate. A total of 32 surveys were completed for an overall response rate of 16%.

The data was initially analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics to gain an understanding of the data collected as it applied to the sample studied (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). It was important to find means, medians and ranges, in order to determine which themes were most prevalent for the sample studied. This researcher then looked to find if any independent variables were having a strong effect on the dependent variable of social action interventions for the population sampled. The themes and relationships identified were then tested using inferential statistics on SPSS software to gain statistically valid insight into the data that could be applied to the general population of social workers (Leedy, & Ormond, 2010). The statistical analysis was aided by the quantifiable nature of the electronic questionnaires administered for this study. The data analysis was guided by the research questions and the nature of the data collected.
Protection of Human Subjects

The Protection of Human Subjects application was submitted and approved on October 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2011 by the university Committee for Protection of Human Subjects, as a minimal risk study. This study did not place human subjects at any greater risk then the subjects face on a daily basis from performing daily activities in their work. The research subjects were provided confidentiality and anonymity by coding each subject with an anonymous number. The participants’ responses to the survey were kept confidential, as no names or identifying information were included in the storage of the data or in the presentation of the data in this study. In addition, the electronic nature of the data was protected by the highest level of data encryption software available to the researcher.

Furthermore, voluntary participation in this study was maintained by requiring the research subjects to agree to an Informed Consent to Participate and by allowing subjects to cease participation at any point while taking the survey. An Informed Consent to Participate was presented as the first step in the online survey and each participate was required to read and accept the terms of the Informed Consent to Participate before gaining electronic access to the survey. A copy of the Informed Consent to Participate can be found in Appendix A.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This was a descriptive study set to examine social workers’ use of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool with client systems. Studying this phenomenon is particularly relevant to social work as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) code of ethics obligates social workers to actively engage in political and social action to ensure justice for the populations we serve (NASW, 2008). In addition, as clients and social welfare programs we serve become increasingly threatened, cut and dismantled by the economic crisis, the need for social action increases. Therefore, it is critically important to conduct a study which sets to examine social action as an effective intervention strategy with client systems.

Social workers have an obligation and commitment to social justice and engaging in social action is one avenue where social workers possess a commitment to affect change upon the system (NASW, 2008). The information obtained by this study can be used to increase the knowledge of intervention strategies and tools to be used by social workers. Secondly, this information can be used to increase social worker involvement in social action and better serve the social worker’s ethical obligation to social justice for the clients we serve. If we can identify characteristics of social action which can be used as intervention tools and strategies, then we can improve social worker use of social action and improve the lives of the clients we serve. Furthermore, social workers can better meet the ethical obligation to social justice, have a greater impact on systemic
problems and economic policy issues which negatively impact client systems, and empower client systems.

The dependent variable in this study is the utility of social action as a tool of intervention. The independent variables are factors which inhibit or support social workers using social action as an intervention with client systems, including education of the social worker, diversification of the profession, and rise of professionalism. The three main questions guiding this research study were: To what degree do social workers agree that social action can and should be incorporated into their practice? To what degree are social workers currently using social action interventions in their practice? If we can develop a definition of social action as a teachable and usable intervention tool, can social workers improve the use of social action in everyday practice?

Data Presentation

In Part 1, the researcher presents the data which speaks to the first research question around social workers and value of social action. The data will be displayed by defining the survey respondents using statistical representation and a narrative describing the typical survey respondent. Second, there will be an exploration of the original assumptions of the study that social workers do value social action yet there has been a decline in the use of social action as an intervention with clients. In Part 2, the researcher presents the data representing the second and third research question regarding social workers current use of social action in practice and the definition of social action. This describes the degree to which the three major variables, education, diversification and
professionalism, affect the dependent variable of social action as an effective intervention tool. In addition, there will be presentation of data which reflects social workers own engagement in social action interventions and whether social workers in this study are using social action interventions with client systems. In Part 3, the researcher displays the unexpected and emerging findings from this study, including indications for future studies and the relationship between social workers and funding for service provision.

**Part 1: Primary Findings**

This survey sampled 200 social workers. This researcher acquired permission to use a publicly accessible database of 10,627 social workers who are in the social work registry for the state of California. This researcher then used systematic random sampling, selecting a primary name at random and every tenth person beyond the first person selected, until a sample size of 200 was gained. A total of 32 participants responded, an equivalent of 16.0% of those surveyed. Of the respondents, 28.1% ($n=9$) were male and 71.9% ($n=23$) were female. The mean age was 41-50, while the mode was 51-60, with a standard deviation of 10 years. The mean and mode for the ethnicity of the survey participants was Caucasian ($n=16$), with the second largest group being Latino/Latin American/Hispanic ($n=6$). All respondents had a minimum education level of MSW/MSSW/MA ($n=32$), and 2 respondents had PhDs. Of the respondents, 34.4% ($n=11$) had 11-20 years of experience in the field, the mode being 11-20 years with a standard deviation of 10 years. Micro practice was the mode for primary level of practice
at 50% \((n=16)\). The non-profit sector was the mode for primary field of practice at 81.2% \((n=26)\).

A composite report of the typical person who participated in this study was written to illustrate the survey results with a narrative depiction for the reader. The typical survey respondent was a Caucasian woman between the ages of 51-60. She has an MSW degree and has worked in the field for 11-20 years in micro level social work practice in the non-profit sector. She believes in the use of social action as part of fulfilling the social work mission. However, she believes social workers used to be more radical than they are today.

Although she does not judge herself as a user of social action, she does choose to employ macro level interventions with her clients. For example, she states that she does not include interventions intended for reforming social issues in her intervention plans and she expresses that agency restrictions and a high workload interfere with a social worker’s ability to organize. She also states that she has not been instrumental in successfully organizing a social action campaign in the past two years and does not often find that her agency supports her in engaging clients in social action activities. However, when asked about her specific interventions with clients she does report encouraging clients to vote and participate in community organizations, assisting clients to participate in advocacy, educating clients on political issues which affect their ability to receive services, training clients to testify at public hearings, and encouraging clients to write
letters to legislators. She also personally writes letters to legislators, participates in rallies and marches, and develops innovative programs to address social issues.

The average survey respondent does value social action and is currently employing interventions which are intended for reforming social issues. However, she does not label these interventions as social action. Although, she reports wanting more education on individual, group and child and family intervention strategies, and lack of government as the largest barrier to social work practice, she does not recognize that many of the individual intervention strategies she is using can be classified as social action interventions.

**Test of major hypotheses.**

The first major hypothesis of this study was that social workers do value social action, yet there has been a decline in the use of social action as an intervention with clients. There were several questions on the survey which attempted to test this hypothesis. Table 1 below, demonstrates responses to questions related to value of social action.
Table 1

*Value of Social Action as an Intervention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assisting clients with becoming advocates for others is part of the healing and empowerment process</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>3.1% (n=1)</td>
<td>15.6% (n=5)</td>
<td>40.6% (n=13)</td>
<td>34.4% (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating clients on political issues is part of the social work mission</td>
<td>9.4% (n=3)</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>12.5% (n=4)</td>
<td>56.3% (n=18)</td>
<td>15.6% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to educate clients on political issues which affect their ability to receive services</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=0)</td>
<td>68.8% (n=22)</td>
<td>18.8% (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking action intended for reforming social or political issues is an integral part of the healing process for most clients</td>
<td>6.5% (n=2)</td>
<td>19.4% (n=6)</td>
<td>22.6% (n=7)</td>
<td>32.3% (n=10)</td>
<td>19.4% (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers used to be more radical</td>
<td>3.1% (n=1)</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>25.0% (n=8)</td>
<td>56.3% (n=18)</td>
<td>9.4% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the above table demonstrates that most respondents do value social action as an intervention with client systems and do agree that social workers used to be more radical, it was important to identify the differences between which respondents answered favorable towards social action and which responded unfavorably. To do this, the questions related to value of social action were scored, where: “strongly disagree” = -2, “disagree” = -1, “not sure” = 0, “agree” = 1, and “strongly agree” = 2. Each individual respondent was then awarded a “value of social action” score based on responses to the
value questions and to show a respondent’s relative position in regard to this issue. The total possible scores ranged from -8 to 8. The mean and mode for individual respondents was 4 and the standard deviation was 3.78. Respondents were divided into groups by age, grouping together those between the ages of 21-60 \((n=16)\) and those 51 and older \((n=16)\). The scores of each group were added together to gain a cumulative score that ranged between -128 and 128.

The result of this scoring system demonstrated that respondents between the ages of 21-50 \((n=16)\) had a cumulative score of 31, while respondents 51 and older \((n=16)\) had a cumulative score of 62. A correlation test of the data found a Pearson’s \(r\) correlation coefficient of 0.63. Therefore, the data demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between age and value in social action. An independent t-test \((t=0.48, \text{df}=67, p=0.0013)\), found a significant difference in older social worker respondents having a higher value in social action interventions when compared to younger social worker respondents. This supports the hypothesis that value in social action appears to be declining in the younger social work professionals.

Identifying that social workers do value social action, the next question pertains to whether social workers are currently using social action interventions. The survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to whether the individual social worker felt that she or he was engaging in social action interventions as part of his or her social work practice. These questions were given the same rating scale as above, with a total score ranging between -8 and 8, in order to demonstrate a respondent’s relative
positions in regards to this issue. The mean for these questions was -2, the mode was 0, and the standard deviation was 2.8. A correlation test found a Pearson’s $r$ correlation coefficient of 0.38, a moderate correlation between value in social action and use of social action. An independent t-test ($t=0.48$, $df=67$, $p=0.000048$), found that while the respondents do value social action and do recognize that the profession values social action, the respondents do not see themselves as utilizing social action in practice.

However, in contradiction to the above results, the respondents were asked questions which attempted to determine which activities they were currently using in practice. Looking at the responses to these questions it would seem that while the results demonstrate that social workers are not employing social action interventions, this is not entirely correct. Many of the interventions social workers are using in practice could easily be considered social action interventions. When asked which activities, the respondents encourage clients to engage in, the three most common answers were: vote (74.1%, $n=20$), volunteer or participate in community organizations (63.0%, $n=17$), write letters to legislators (51.9%, $n=14$) and 7 respondents skipped this question, suggesting they do not encourage clients to engage in any of activities listed. When asked about specific social action activities that the respondents encourage clients to engage in as part of their social work practice the response was: writing letters to legislators (68.2%, $n=15$), attending rallies or marches (59.1%, $n=13$), speaking at public hearings (36.4%, $n=8$), with 12 respondents skipping the question, suggesting that a third of those sampled do not encourage clients to engage in any of those activities. Finally, when asked how the individual respondent would act if she or he learned that a piece of social justice policy or
legislation were being dismissed due to lack of popularity in the state or country, the top three answers were: encourage clients to write letters to legislators (72.4%, \( n=21 \)), organize a group of affected clients to advocate (44.8%, \( n=13 \)), write letters to legislators (27.6%, \( n=8 \)), and 5 respondents skipped the question. See Table 2 on subsequent page.

The above data demonstrates that social workers are using social action interventions, encouraging clients to: vote, write letters to legislature, testify at public hearings, and participate in advocacy. In addition, social workers are conducting outreach with schools, and developing innovative programs to address social problems or needs. However, social workers do not believe that they are engaging in social action interventions. Rather, social workers are stating that they do not incorporate social action into treatment plans.

**Part 2: Secondary Findings**

This section explores the data representing the degree to which the three major variables, education, diversification and professionalism, affect the dependent variable of social action as an effective intervention tool. A score marking each respondent’s use of social action interventions was obtained by scoring two questions on the survey pertaining to use of social action interventions: “in the past two years, I have been instrumental in successfully organizing a social action campaign,” and “how often do you incorporate tasks into your intervention plans that are intended for reforming social issues?” To understand the relative position of respondents in regards to use of social
Table 2

**Most Common Interventions of Survey Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions (paraphrased)</th>
<th>Most Common Answer (mca)</th>
<th>2nd mca</th>
<th>3rd mca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interventions you would include for client experiencing racial bullying at school</td>
<td>Outreach with school (78.1%, n=25)</td>
<td>Develop program for racial bullying (37.5%, n=12)</td>
<td>Individual therapy (34.4%, n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions you would employ if services to victim of domestic violence are cut due to state budget</td>
<td>Community resource referral (68.8%, n=22)</td>
<td>Individual therapy (40.6%, n=13)</td>
<td>Assisting client to participate in advocacy (34.4%, n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting a group with homeless women and shelter was closing due to budget cuts</td>
<td>Utilize group time to prepare group to speak at public hearing (75%, n=24)</td>
<td>Utilize group time for members to share feelings on the issue(62.5%, n=20)</td>
<td>Provide psycho-education to the group (31.3%, n=10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you encourage clients to</td>
<td>Vote (74.1%, n=20)</td>
<td>Volunteer in community organizations (63%, n=17)</td>
<td>Write letters to legislators (51.9%, n=14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of interventions in your treatment plans that are intended for reforming social issues?</td>
<td>Not that often (40.6%, n=13)</td>
<td>Sometimes (40.6%, n=13)</td>
<td>Never (12.5%, n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions for teen client repeatedly running away from home because her family required her to work</td>
<td>Family therapy (53.1%, n=17)</td>
<td>Assist client in self-advocacy (40.6%, n=13)</td>
<td>Call CPS (34.4%, n=11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
action, scores were developed by rating responses on a scale of -4 to 4. The mean score for use of social action interventions based on number of responses was -2, the mode was -2, and the standard deviation was 1.24.

In the first variable of professionalism, the researcher explored the effect of professionalism on use of social action interventions. Table 3 below, demonstrates that over half of the respondents reported that their agency would at least sometimes support them in engaging in social action activities. However, the second most common answer for barriers to engaging clients in social action was “agency restrictions.” While “agency restrictions” was the second most common answer, this response only included 37.5% (n=12) and the data demonstrating that one’s agency supports social action activities demonstrates that 60.9% (n=18) report that their agency does support them, at least sometimes, in “encouraging clients to engage in social action activities.” Therefore, the data appears to show that one’s professional agency is not a barrier to the use of social action interventions.
Table 3

**Professionalism and Social Action**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Most Common Answer (mca)</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; mca</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; mca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My agency supports me in encouraging clients to engage in social action activities</td>
<td>Sometimes (33.3%, n=10)</td>
<td>Never (30%, n=9)</td>
<td>Most times (27.6%, n=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The greatest barriers to social workers engaging in social action</td>
<td>Too high of workload (59.4%, n=19)</td>
<td>Agency restrictions (37.5%, n=12)</td>
<td>Lack of Interest (31.3%, n=10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, a correlation test was run comparing scores on professionalism to use of social action interventions, producing a Pearson’s $r$ correlation coefficient of 0.36, a mild to moderate correlation between the variables. An independent t-test ($t=0.48$, df=67, $p=0.0096$), found that a respondent’s sense of professionalism has a significant impact on the respondent’s use of social action. In this test, respondents were scored based on responses to questions regarding role of agency and professionalism on a scale of -4 to 4, in order to demonstrate a respondent’s relative position in regards to professionalism. The mean score for professionalism was -2, the mode was -2, and the standard deviation was 2.7. The scores on professionalism were correlated to the scores on use of social action interventions to find if a relationship existed between the two variables. This demonstrates that while professionalism and agency do impact the use of social action interventions, it is a moderate correlation.
To measure the effect of the second variable, educational preparation on use of social action interventions, respondents were asked several questions on their educational preferences and preparation in the field of social work. When asked what courses the respondents would choose to include in an MSW program, the top three most selected courses were: “diverse therapeutic interventions” (65.6%, n=21), “group dynamics and intervention” (46.9%, n=15), and “child and family practice” (43.8%, n=14). However, when asked about the major challenges to the social work profession, the second most selected response was: “not enough education on large system intervention” (54.8%, n=17). This data suggests that while social workers do find education in therapeutic interventions with individuals, groups and families, they also recognize that inadequate educational preparation in larger system interventions, interferes with their ability to successfully utilize social action interventions.

In addition, scores were developed based on responses to questions regarding education preparation, in order to demonstrate the respondents’ relative position in regards to this issue. The mean score for educational preparation was 0, the mode 2, and standard deviation was 2.22. A correlation test comparing educational preparation to the use of social action interventions produced a Pearson’s $r$ correlation coefficient of 0.26, a weak correlation. However, an independent t-test of educational preparation to the use of social action ($t=0.48$, df=67, $p=0.0001$), found that the relationship between the variables was statically significant. This data suggests that educational preparation has a weak impact on use of social action interventions.
To understand the role of diversification of the profession on use of social action interventions, the survey respondents were asked to select responses on “why social workers do not engage in social action.” The responses to this question reflected that the respondents mostly did not see diversification as a problem, “ability to organize” 28.1% \((n=9)\), fourth most common answer and “too many diverse needs” 21.9% \((n=7)\) fifth most common answer. Presented in Table 4 below, the other notable findings were in the mean scores of use in social action interventions amongst professional roles.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Role</th>
<th>Public Mean Score</th>
<th>Non-Profit Mean Score</th>
<th>Private Mean Score</th>
<th>Micro Mean Score</th>
<th>Mezzo Mean Score</th>
<th>Macro Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>-2.55</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above data demonstrates that respondents working in the public sector have the highest use of social action interventions, while mezzo and macro level workers have the lowest. However, there was no significant difference between scores of non-profit, private and micro level workers. This data demonstrates some differences between professional roles and engagement in social action.

Part 3: Emerging Findings

The emergent findings of this study demonstrated a need for further research on social workers and access to funding. In Table 5 below, the data demonstrates that survey
respondents did not feel they knew how to access funding and this may impact a social worker’s ability to engage in social action campaigns and advocate for clients. In addition, many survey respondents determined that “lack of government funding” (67.7%, n=21) and “not enough education on large system intervention” (54.8%, n=17) are the largest problems facing the profession. However, the survey respondents reported wanting more training on: “diverse therapeutic interventions” (65.6%, n=21), “group dynamics and intervention” (46.9%, n=15), “child and family practice” (43.8%, n=14), rather than training on seeking funding or large system intervention. This demonstrates a need for future studies addressing the value paradox between the type of education social workers seek and the needs of the profession that social workers identify.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have knowledge on how to access funding for social action campaigns</td>
<td>6.3% (n=2)</td>
<td>56.3% (n=18)</td>
<td>15.6% (n=5)</td>
<td>21.9% (n=7)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past two years, I have been instrumental in successfully organizing a social action campaign</td>
<td>25.0% (n=8)</td>
<td>62.5% (n=20)</td>
<td>3.1% (n=1)</td>
<td>9.4% (n=3)</td>
<td>0.0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was designed to explore the use of social action as an intervention with client systems, rather than the impact of funding on the social work profession. However, as the economic crisis is influencing the effectiveness and operation of social programs,
lack of funding has become a major problem in the social work field. Although the social work profession strives to pursue social justice, including securing funding for social services, the results of this study demonstrate a discrepancy between the profession’s acknowledgement of a funding problem and the pursuit of action to address the problem. This phenomenon requires further examination and research in order to inform the social work profession of the severity of the problem and identify solutions. If social workers do not prioritize the security of funding, it will become increasingly difficult to pursue social justice and provide services to the clients social workers serve.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study examined the use of social action as a therapeutic intervention tool with client systems. The research study assumes that social action is a valuable tool for social workers to employ at every level of client intervention in order to affect change upon the systems that impact clients’ daily lives and meet the social work mission towards social justice. The research study examined whether social workers believed social action was part of the social work mission, if social workers currently value social action as an intervention tool, in what ways social action interventions were and were not being incorporated into practice, and the barriers that exist to including social action interventions in practice. The research also examined the themes identified in the literature review that create barriers to using social action interventions, including: historical changes in perception and use of social action, professionalization of social work practice, diversification in the profession that led to disenfranchisement of social workers, and educational perpetration for using social action as an intervention tool.

This research study did find similar themes to the literature, including older social workers being more radical than younger social workers, the profession leaning more towards micro work than community work and the profession valuing social action. In addition, the major variables of education, diversification of the field and professionalism were found to impact social worker use of social action interventions. However, these were moderate correlations, demonstrating that the variables were not impacting social
worker engagement in social action to the degree that the literature suggested. In contradiction to the literature, this study found that social worker engagement in social action interventions may not have declined to the degree discussed in the literature. For example, when asked to choose intervention strategies with clients, social workers often identified the intervention strategies intended for reforming social issues. Therefore, the social workers who participated in this study are actively employing social action interventions with individual client systems, implying that social action interventions are still widely utilized for individual client systems.

**Implications for Social Work**

This study can impact all levels of social work practice. It suggests implications for utilizing the systems perspective and integrating micro and mezzo level practice with macro practice. Social work is grounded in the systems perspective with an understanding that clients are affected by both the internal and external environments in which they live. If we apply this perspective to micro level practice, with the social work mission of pursuing social justice and social change, then we must recognize the need for incorporating macro interventions in micro practice. Social action interventions, actions intended for reforming social issues, are one means by which social work practitioners can offer individuals and families a means by which to affect change upon the larger systems that impact their lives. Therefore, social action interventions set social workers apart from other helping professionals. As the profession is becoming more micro oriented, it is possible that social work as a profession needs to re-define social action and
teach social workers how to incorporate social change interventions in work with individual clients. Social workers must be empowering clients to engage in changing these larger systems as part of our everyday social work practice.

This study did examine and find support for themes found in the literature, there are many barriers which inhibit social worker engagement of use of social action interventions. First, social workers are impacted by professionalism, which is most commonly displayed by limitations towards engagement in action, set forth by the agencies in which social workers are in employed. This study found a moderate correlation between professionalism and engagement in social action activities, demonstrating that a sense of maintaining a neutral and professional image, coupled with agency restrictions, moderately prevent social workers from utilizing social action interventions.

In addition, this study confirmed the themes in the literature that education and diversification have an impact on social worker engagement in social action. Although social workers in this study confirmed that they did not receive enough education in macro and systemic change interventions, they stated having a greater interest in receiving education on individual, group and family interventions. This data represents the problems of specialization in the social work profession, where many social workers and schools of social work teach social workers to choose between focusing on micro or macro work. If education programs and social work professionals more thoroughly embraced the systems perspective, then the profession would make better progress.
towards meeting the mission of social justice. The systems perspective informs us that large systems and the macro environment affect the well being of the individual and family. Therefore, to help improve the well being of the individual client, micro practitioners must assist individual clients with making personal change as well as affecting change on the larger environment which also impacts the individual’s life. This demonstrates a need to re-define social action as a treatment tool and teach social action intervention skills to all social practitioners.

However, this study shows that social workers do value social action and are currently employing interventions which are intended for reforming social issues. Although social workers do not label these interventions as social action, many are employing interventions intended for reforming social issues. For example, while most social workers in this study stated that they do not engage in social action interventions with clients, when asked to identify intervention strategies that they would employ in specific scenarios, the interventions intended for acting to reform social issues were chosen more than other interventions. These interventions include: teaching clients how to advocate for themselves, encouraging clients to vote and write letters to legislators, educating clients about issues and to speak at public hearings, conducting outreach to the community, and developing innovative programs.

Although Social workers want more education on individual, group and child and family intervention strategies, and identify lack of government as the largest barrier to social work practice, social workers do not recognize that many of the individual
intervention strategies they use can be classified as social action interventions. In order to meet the social work mission of achieving social justice, we must be employing intervention strategies set at reforming social issues. The person-in-environment perspective is unique to social work and manifests in micro level work with individuals as an understanding that we must work to reform the individual’s social environment as well as the individual’s psychological system. Therefore, we must re-define social action, identify social action as any action intended for reforming social issues and make social action accessible to micro level social workers to use as therapeutic interventions with individual client systems. In addition, taking action to improve the larger social system, serves a purpose to social work professionals by providing encouraging the system to provide greater investment in social programs, creating more jobs for social workers.

**Evaluation and Conclusion**

This study produced two finding that could benefit from further research. One of the variables that this study attempted to explore was the influence of diversification in the profession on social action participation. However, the results of this survey were inconclusive due to the small sample size of the study and a sample that was weighted heavily by micro level practitioners. In addition, this research found that while social workers do identify funding issues as a major barrier to social work practice, identifying funding sources, program development and grant writing were of lower interest to the social workers surveyed. This discrepancy between needing funding and seeking funding could be a major barrier to social work practice and should be explored more thoroughly.
This study found differences between an individual’s level of social action engagement and his/her area of social work practice. For example, individuals who identified themselves as micro workers had higher scores on social action engagement than macro workers. However, this study did not have enough variation between different respondents’ areas of social work practice to run significant data analysis of this finding. Therefore, a future study could be designed to examine this phenomenon and attempt to determine whether this finding is significant and if so, what forces influence this variation.

Although the literature would lead one to believe that public sector employees and micro level social work practitioners have the greatest barriers to engagement in social action, public employees and micro workers had some of the highest scores in support of social action. This could be due to micro workers having closer proximity to clients and more direct engagement with clients than macro workers who manage and direct agencies. In addition, the public sector employees may be more affected by government funding and in more need of action, resulting in a greater representation of public employees in support of social action. The discrepancies between the literature and the findings in this study could benefit from more research.

In addition, the results of this study demonstrated that while social workers do identify funding as a major barrier to social programs and social change, funding was not a high priority when conducting interventions or when seeking education. Although social work programs are underfunded and facing drastic budget cuts, the social workers
in this study did not prioritize gaining education in grant writing or developing innovative programming to gain grant funding. In contradiction to the need for funding, the survey respondents stated wanting more education in individual therapeutic interventions and prioritizing individual and group therapy over seeking funding to maintain and expand programs. This research study did not set out to explore this discrepancy and did not find conclusive data on this subject. However, this appears to be an important area to explore in further research, in order to understand why social work practitioners are not taking direct action to secure financial stability in their own field.

Although this study produced many interesting findings, it was limited by the number of respondents and participation bias. The data in this study represents a small and select group of social work practitioners, those who live in California, are registered for licensure, and who chose to participate in a study on social workers and social action. If this researcher were to do this study again, it would be beneficial to reach a more diverse group of social work practitioners and offer incentives to increase survey participation. In addition, the survey instrument designed for this study was not conducive to the quantitative nature of the research which complicated numerical data analysis. In future studies, this researcher will have more insight into developing a research tool that produces results which are easier to quantify.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Research Participant,

You are asked to participate in a thesis study by Emma Tiffany, an MSW student at California State University, Sacramento to explore the use of social action interventions by social work professionals in practice. I have been requested to take part in this study because I can provide information on my involvement in social action interventions with client systems with which I work. I will be one of about 200 participants who will be asked to complete this electronic questionnaire. I will be asked what some people consider to be sensitive questions about my belief and participation in social action as a form of intervention with client systems. However, there is minimal risk expected as the survey was designed to ask questions that pertain to everyday work situations and you have the right not answer any question that you do not want to answer.

By submitting the completed survey, you are agreeing to participate in this research study entitled, "Social Workers and Participation in Social Action Interventions.” Your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used, namely survey monkey. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data. If you complete this anonymous survey and submit it, this researcher will be unable to remove anonymous data from the database should you, the participant wish to withdraw it. However, you may choose to cease participation at any point during the survey and not submit your responses. This is a voluntary study and participants are under no obligation to participate. The questionnaire may generally take about 20 minutes.

This study is confidential. Nothing learned about you by the researcher will be told to anyone else. The study will remove identifying information from my survey by attaching a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to each survey, rather than a name or any other identifying information. At the completion of the study all identifying information will be destroyed and only the compiled content of the surveys will be kept. Everything you say will be strictly confidential and any reports or other published data based on this study will appear only in the form of summary statistics or condensed account without the names of or other identifying information about the participants.

In addition, the CPHS requires that any data collected from human participants over computer networks be transmitted in an encrypted format. This helps to ensure that any data intercepted during transmission cannot be decoded and that individual responses cannot be traced back to an individual respondent. The highest level of data encryption available will be used, through Survey Monkey. Researchers are cautioned that encryption standards vary from country to country, and that there are legal restrictions regarding the export of certain encryption software outside U.S. borders. A server will be
used for data storage. Therefore, any personal identifying information will be kept separate from the data, and the data will be stored in an encrypted format.

If I have any questions about the study, I can ask the researcher or her advisor:
Researcher: Emma Tiffany emmatiffanyXXXX@yahoo.com (209)768-XXXX
Research advisor: Dr. Francis Yuen fyuen@csus.edu (916)278-7182

By choosing the “I accept” option below, you are agreeing to participate in this research study.

I accept

I do not accept
APPENDIX B

SURVEY

Gender (Please choose one): Male □ Female □ Other □

Age (Please choose one): 21-30 □ 31-40 □ 41-50 □ 51-60 □ 61+ □

Ethnicity (Please choose one): Asian American/Pacific Islander □ Native American □ African American □ Caucasian American/White □ Latino/Latin American/Hispanic □ Other:

___________

Years in social work field (please choose one): 0-5 □ 6-10 □ 11-20 □ 21 or more □

Level of education (Please choose highest completed): BA/BSW □ MSSW/MSW/MA □ PhD □

What are your primary fields of practice (Please choose no more than three): Micro □ Mezzo □ Macro □ Private □ Public □ Non-Profit □ Other □

1. Educating clients on political issues (e.g. initiatives, legislation, ballot measures) is part of the social work mission

   Strongly disagree □ Disagree □ Not sure □ Agree □ Strongly agree □

2. Assisting clients with becoming advocates for others is part of the healing and empowerment process.

   Strongly disagree □ Disagree □ Not sure □ Agree □ Strongly agree □

3. It is important to educate clients on political issues (e.g. legislative policies, line item vetoes) which affect their ability to receive services

   Strongly disagree □ Disagree □ Not sure □ Agree □ Strongly agree □

4. Taking action intended for reforming social or political issues (e.g. domestic violence, welfare policy) is an integral part of the healing process for most clients.

   Strongly disagree □ Disagree □ Not sure □ Agree □ Strongly agree □

5. My agency supports me in encouraging clients to engage in social action activities (e.g. letter writing, giving public testimony, attending rallies)

   Never □ Sometimes □ Most times □ All of the time □
6. I received practical skills for engaging clients in social action activities in my social work education program

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

7. If I were asked to develop an M.S.W. program, which of the courses below would I most wish to include (Please circle three):

Diverse Therapeutic Interventions   Child and Family Practice   Community Organizing
Strategies for Engaging Clients in Social Action   Group Dynamics and Intervention   Policy
Lobbying and Advocacy   Mediation and Restorative Justice   Grant Writing and
Program Evaluation   Business Management and Administration   Other (be specific): ____________

8. Social workers used to be more radical

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

9. I have knowledge on how to access funding for social action campaigns

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

10. In the past two years, I have been instrumental in successfully organizing a social action campaign

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

11. The three major challenges to the social work profession are:

Lack of government funding   Poor communication amongst social work professionals   Too radical   Too conservative   Not enough education on large system intervention
Not enough education on therapeutic interventions   Lack of title protection
Not enough education on group and family interventions   Overly focused on professionalism
Uncooperative clients   Other (be specific): ____________

12. Circle two of the following interventions that you would include in your treatment for an African American child client who experienced racial bullying in school:

Referral to community organizations   Outreach with the school   Individual therapy
Group treatment   Radical social action   Develop innovative program for school bullying
Organize community awareness activities   Other (be specific): ____________

13. What are two interventions you would employ if services to your client who is a victim of domestic violence are not available or accessible due to state budget cuts:
14. How often do you incorporate tasks into your intervention plans that are intended for reforming social issues?

Never □ Not that often □ Sometimes □ Most of the time □ All of the time □

15. If you were conducting a group with homeless women and the local shelter was being threatened for closure due to budget cuts, would you (Please pick two):

Utilize group time to prepare group members for speaking at the next public hearing
Utilize group time for group members to share feelings on the issue
Provide psycho-education to the group on coping with stress
Other (be specific): __________________________

16. If you were working with a 15 year old female client who was repeatedly running away from home because her family required her to work to pay household bills, which interfered with her ability to attend school, what interventions would you employ (Please pick two):

Call CPS □ Individual therapy with the fifteen year old □ Family therapy
Referral to employment agency for adult family members □ Contact the school
Educate fifteen year old on her legal rights □ Assist fifteen year old in self-advocacy with family □ Other (be specific): __________________________

17. Do you encourage clients to (Please circle all that apply):

Testify at public hearings □ Vote □ Write letters to legislators □ Engage in political groups
Attend rallies or demonstrations □ Volunteer or participate in community organizations with a political agenda

18. Do you engage in any of the following social action activities as part of your social work practice (Please circle all that apply):

Writing letters to legislators □ Speaking at public hearings □ Attending rallies or marches

19. How would you respond to learning about a new social justice policy or legislation that was being dismissed because it was not popular in the state or country (Please choose no more than three):
Organize a group of affected clients to advocate  
Write letters  
Encourage clients to write letters  
Encourage coworkers/friends/neighbors/relatives to write letters  
Wait for another time  
Give public testimony  
Prepare clients to give public testimony  
Organize a rally or march  
Display signs in your yard  
Distribute informational materials to the public  
Eat popcorn and watch a movie

20. Identify two items that you see as the greatest barriers to social workers engaging in social action:

Expense  
Ability to organize  
Agency restrictions  
Insufficient skills  
Lack of education  
Lack of interest  
Too many diverse needs  
Too high of work load  
Don’t see the effectiveness of social action  
Other (be specific): _______________________


APPENDIX C

LETTER OF SUPPORT TO ACCESS REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER DATABASE

National Association of Social Workers California Chapter
1016 23rd Street • Sacramento, CA 95816-4910 • (916) 442-4565 • (800) 538-2565
(E-mail) naswca@naswca.org • FAX (916) 442-2075 • http://www.naswca.org

October 12, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:
This letter is in support of a research thesis project proposed by Ms. Emma Tiffany, a MSW student at California State University, Sacramento. The California Chapter is assisting Ms. Tiffany on her project which intends to survey social workers in California in order to gain insight into the value and utilization of social action as an intervention with client systems by social work practitioners. NASW will provide access to California social workers for this research through a public access database.

Sincerely,
Janlee Wong, MSW
Executive Director
REFERENCES


