The Policy-Based Profession

An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers
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Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

New to This Edition

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

- Content regarding the relevance of historical analysis in social welfare policy analysis has been strengthened (chapter 4).
- In keeping with the increasing emphasis in social work education on teaching policy practice skills, the relationship of policy analysis to practice with individuals, families, and small groups has been strengthened throughout.
- The health chapter (chapter 9), while acknowledging that it cannot keep up with the ongoing struggle to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, does discuss some of the favorite policies of those who favor repeal, specifically individual health savings accounts and separate high-risk insurance pools. There is also an example of a little discussed health care reform approach—concierge medicine.
- This edition includes a new chapter on immigration (chapter 11). The chapter discusses the epic drama of our glorious and not-so-glorious history of wave after wave of new arrivals and how each welcomed (or didn’t) the next wave. Readers are challenged to decide whether current immigration stimulates or weakens our economy, whether it threatens the jobs of high-tech engineers and construction workers or creates new jobs in both areas, whether keeping the right people out of the country is worse than letting the wrong people in, whether immigrants commit more or fewer crimes than native-born citizens, whether refugees are carefully vetted before being allowed into the country or they just walk in, and other perplexing and debatable issues.
- Additional attention is directed to program evaluation as a policy analysis technique (chapters 10 and 13).
• Additional case vignettes illustrating the importance of understanding social welfare policy for direct practice social workers have been added throughout.
• Chapter 8 combines and updates the material formerly presented in the separate mental health and substance abuse chapters. The new chapter includes material on the opioid epidemic, problems faced by returning veterans, and recent responses to suicides caused by cyberbullying.
• The seventh edition includes updates on research and theory references, as well as references to the most current material (all chapters).

Pearson Enhanced eText

The seventh edition of *The Policy-Based Profession: An Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis for Social Workers* includes the following Enhanced eText features:

**Check Your Understanding:** Embedded assessment questions appear as a link at the end of each major chapter section in the Pearson eText. Using multiple-choice questions, the self-checks allow readers to assess how well they have mastered the content.

**Chapter Review:** At the end of each chapter, short-answer questions encourage readers to reflect on chapter concepts. We have provided feedback to support the development of thoughtful responses.

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Brief Contents

Part One: Social Welfare Policy and the Social Work Profession  1
   1. The Policy-Based Profession  3
   2. Defining Social Welfare Policy  20

Part Two: Social Welfare Policy Analysis  31
   4. Policy Analysis from a Historical Perspective  54
   5. Social/Economic Analysis  76

Part Three: The Framework Applied  95
   7. Aging: Social Security as an Entitlement  138
   8. Mental Health and Substance Abuse  161
   9. Health  192
  11. Immigration  246

Part Four: Taking Action  267
  14. Conclusion  307
PART ONE: SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY AND THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION  1

1. The Policy-Based Profession  3
   The Target of Social Work—The Individual and Society  4
       The Social Function of Social Work  4
       The Dual Targets of Social Work  5
       The Dominance of Micropractice  5
   Social Work’s Pursuit of Professional Status  7
   The Policy-Based Profession  10
       Expert Technique  12
       Professional Practice within an Organizational Context  13
   Social Work as a Policy-Based Profession: Practice Implications  14
       Social Welfare Policy and Social Work Competencies  15
       Policy Practice as a Social Worker Role  16
       The Importance of Understanding Social Welfare Policy for the Direct-Practice Social Worker  17
   Conclusion  18

2. Defining Social Welfare Policy  20
   Social Welfare Policy—Basic Definition  22
   Factors Complicating the Definition of Social Welfare Policy  22
       Social Welfare or Social Well-Being?  23
       Social Welfare Policy and Social Policy  23
       Social Welfare Policy as an Academic Discipline and a Social Work Curriculum Area  24
       Social Workers Are Interested in Social Welfare Policy in All Sectors of the Economy  26
       The Multiple Levels of Social Welfare Policy  27
   Social Welfare Policy—A Working Definition  30
   Conclusion  30
PART TWO: SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY ANALYSIS  

3. Social Welfare Policy Analysis  
   The Many Meanings of Policy Analysis  
   Methods of Policy Analysis  
      Descriptive Analysis  
      Process Analysis  
      Evaluation  
      Policy Analysis Methods as Ideal Types  
   Policy Analysis as Science, Art, and Politics  
   Conclusion  

4. Policy Analysis from a Historical Perspective  
   Historical Context of Social Welfare Policies  
      The Role of History in Understanding Policy  
      Examples of Policy History  
      Historical Analysis and Policy Practice  
   Methods of Policy History  
   The Benton Park Crisis Center  
   Conclusion  

5. Social/Economic Analysis  
   Delineation of the Policy Under Analysis  
   Social Problem Analysis  
   Facts Related to the Problem  
      Completeness of Knowledge Related to the Problem  
      Population Affected by the Problem  
   Theory of Human Behavior Undergirding the Policy  
   Social Values Related to the Problem  
      Achievement and Success  
      Activity and Work  
      Moral Orientation  
      Humanitarian Mores  
      Efficiency and Practicality  
      Progress  
      Material Comfort  
      Equality  
      Freedom  
      External Conformity  
      Science and Secular Rationality  
      Nationalism-Patriotism  
      Democracy
## Contents

*Individual Personality* 87  
*Racism, Sexism, and Related Group Superiority Themes* 87  
*Contradictions in the U.S. Value System* 88  

Goals of the Policy Under Analysis 88  
Hypotheses Underlying the Policy 90  
Economic Analysis 91  
  *Macroeconomic Analysis* 91  
  *Opportunity Cost* 92  
  *Effects on Individual Consumer Behavior* 93  

Conclusion 94

### PART THREE: THE FRAMEWORK APPLIED 95


Historical Analysis 104  
  *The Effort to Reform Welfare* 109  
Social Analysis 110  
  *Problem Description* 110  
  *Population* 111  
  *Relevant Research* 118  
  *Values and Welfare Reform* 119  
Economic Analysis 121  
  *Macroeconomic Issues* 121  
  *Microeconomic Analysis* 123  
Evaluation 126  
  *Is TANF Succeeding?* 129  
Conclusion 135  
  *American Values Related to Welfare Have Permanently Changed* 135  
  *Welfare Is Not the Problem; Poverty Is the Problem* 136  
  *Public Assistance Is a Social Condition, Not a Social Problem* 136

#### 7. Aging: Social Security as an Entitlement 138

The Problem That Social Security Was Developed to Solve 140  
The Social Security Act of 1935 140  
Historical Development of Social Security Programs in the United States 142  
  *Precedents of the Social Security Act* 142  
  *Creation of the Social Security Act* 143  
  *Changes in Social Security* 147  
Contemporary Analysis of Social Security 149  
  *Social Analysis* 149  
  *Political Analysis* 152
8. Mental Health and Substance Abuse  161

The Problem of Mental Illness  162
The Problem of Substance Abuse  163
The History of Substance Abuse Policies  166
History of Mental Health Policy  170
Social Analysis  172
  Mental Health  172
  Substance Abuse  173
Political Analysis  175
  Mental Health  175
  Substance Abuse  176
  Drug Testing  178
Economic Analysis  179
  Mental Health  179
  Substance Abuse  180
Separation of Treatment for Those with Mental Health and Substance Abuse  180
Emerging Policy Issues  182
  Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders–5 (DSM5)  182
  Autism and Vaccination  182
  Mental Health in Cyberspace  184
  The Mental Health of Veterans  185
  Gun Violence and Mental Health  187
  Opioid Epidemic  190
Conclusion  191

9. Health  192

The Problem That Health Policy Was Developed to Solve  193
The Proposed Solution: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010  195
  Access  195
  Costs  196
History of Health Care Policies  197
Social Analysis of Health Policy  200
Economic Analysis of Health Policy  201
  Hospitals  202
  Drugs  204
  Insurance  205

Historical Analysis 218
  The Child Rescue Movement 219
  Social Work Takes Over 220
  Child Abuse Becomes the Dominant Theme 221
  Foster Care—From Solution to Problem 223
  The Emergence of Family Preservation 227

Social Analysis 229
  Problem Description 229

Political Analysis 236

Economic Analysis 238

Policy/Program Evaluation 239

Current Proposals for Policy Reform 242

Conclusion 244

11. Immigration 246

The Problems That Immigration Policy Is Attempting to Solve 247

Historical Analysis 248
  Front Door 248
  Side Door 253
  Back Door 254
  The DREAM Act 255
  Current Immigration Process 255

Social Analysis 256
  Crime 256
  Terrorism 257
  Cultural Insecurity 259

Economic Analysis 260
  Jobs 260
  Public Resources 263

Political Analysis 264

The Current Policy Arena 265
  The Wall 265
  The Ban 265
  Deportation 266

Conclusion 266
PART FOUR: TAKING ACTION  267

   The Politics of Policymaking  273
   Models of Policymaking  275
      Who Makes Policy?  275
      How Are Policies Made?  278
   Phases in the Policy Process  281
   Legitimation  282
   Policy Implementation  283
   Conclusion  284

   Analytical Skill: Program Evaluation  287
   Interactional Skills: Negotiation and Persuasion  291
      Subprocesses of Negotiation  292
      Stages of Negotiation  294
      Strategy and Tactics in Negotiation  296
   Political Skills  299
      Building Coalitions  300
      Information Dissemination  302
      Lobbying  304
      Political Action for Candidate Election  305
      Running for Office  306
   Conclusion  306

14. Conclusion  307
   Lessons from Policy Analysis  308
      The Bottom Line Is the Bottom Line  308
      Compassion and Protection: Dual Motivations for Social Welfare Policy  308
      Ideology Drives Out Data in Social Welfare Policymaking  309
      Policymakers Are Generally More Sophisticated Than They Appear  310
      Our Expectations for Social Welfare Policy Are Unrealistic  311

References  315
Index  335