

IASSW FUNDED PROJECT: FINAL REPORT

Where Knowledge, Social Work and Social Policy

Meet:

**A Cross-National Perspective on the Involvement
of Social Work Academics in Social Policy**

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Executive Summary

The goal of the project was to explore the interface between social work academia and social policy in diverse societies by studying the involvement of social work academics in the policy-formulation process in four countries – Israel, Portugal, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom. Given social work's commitment to social justice and policy practice, it was assumed that academia is a crucial route for the profession to further these values. The first study of its kind, the findings of this cross-national effort revealed that social work academics do indeed engage in policy-related activities though the level of engagement is only moderate. While differences between the country cohorts emerged, it was clear that social work academics in all the four nations engage most in more active, public sphere routes of influence within the policy arena and in activities aimed at affecting policies in conjunction with traditional social work partners, such as service users and other social workers. The findings also underscored the sense among social work academics that academia has a role in influencing society and that they have a personal role in influencing the social work profession and the social policies and social welfare institutions in their societies. The level of social work educators' engagement in policy practice is

clearly dependent upon various factors but it is most clearly associated with an academic's sense of efficacy and a conviction that he or she has the competencies necessary to engage in policy-related activities. Given the potential contribution of social work academics to the policy formulation process and their position as educators and role models, it is imperative that social work academics have the tools and support needed to increase their policy involvement.

Introduction

This is the final report on the IASSW funded project " Where knowledge, social work and social policy meet: A cross-national perspective on the involvement of social work academics in social policy". The goal of the project was to explore the interface between social work academia and social policy in diverse societies. The project was co-ordinated by Prof. John Gal of the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and undertaken between August 2013 and May 2015.

The participants included leading social work scholars from four different countries - Prof. Idit Weiss-Gal from the Shapell School of Social Work at Tel Aviv University; Prof. Francisco Branco from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon; Dr. Gisela Negron-Velazquez from the Department of Social Work at the University of Puerto Rico; and Prof. Hugh McLaughlin and Dr. Jo-Pei Tan from Manchester Metropolitan University.¹

In order to achieve its basic goal, the project focused on the role of members of the faculties of schools of social work in social policy formulation in four countries across the globe. The involvement of social workers in this type of activity has been termed "policy practice". This refers to activities carried out by social workers as an integral part of their professional work aimed at influencing the formation and adoption of new policies or the modification or preservation of existing ones, whether at the organizational, local, national or international levels (Gal and Weiss-Gal 2013). Though there is some evidence that social

¹ Prof. McLaughlin and Dr. Tan graciously agreed to replace one of the original members, Prof. Elaine Sharland, who was unable to continue in the project.

work academics (SWAs) in different countries do indeed seek an active role in the policy process, there has been no systematic attempt to study this form of practice. Consequently, significant empirical knowledge of this phenomenon is lacking, despite its potential contribution to scholarship and training within social work.

As such, this project sought to clarify the role of social worker academics in the social policy formulation process in the various countries and the factors associated with this. Based on this analysis, the project endeavored to identify the implications of a cross-national comparison of engagement of social work academics in policy practice for research and practice.

Theoretical Foundations

The role of academics in addressing social challenges has captured the attention of thinkers virtually since the advent of academia. This societal role has been the subject of much interest (Kurzman and Owens 2002) and, no less important, of fierce debate (Bond and Paterson 2005; Burawoy 2005; Brym and Nakhaie 2009). Of late, the growing expectation by governments for an identifiable impact of universities on society has led to renewed interest into this relationship (Macadam 2013).

This study sought to shed light on the academia-policy nexus in the social policy arena. Unlike much of the existing research on the place of academics in society, which often focuses on the receiver side of this relationship (decision-makers) or the policy results of academics' involvement in this arena (Crona and Parker 2011; Richardson 2013; Smith 2013; Buckley et al. 2014), here activities undertaken by academics take center stage. More specifically, the aim was to

understand whether, and how, social work academics (SWAs) attempt to affect the social policy formulation process and what are the factors associated with this.

Due to social work's commitment to social change and its avowed focus on addressing the needs of populations adversely affected by social problems or by inadequate policies (Adams et al. 2009; IFSW, 2014), the underlying assumption was that SWAs would seek to play an active role in the social policy process.

While there is some evidence that SWAs in different countries do engage in policy processes (Sherraden et al. 2002; Kaufman 2004; Chandler 2009; Strier 2011), attempts to study systematically this engagement and the factors associated with them are rare (Landry et al. 2001; Mary 2001).

Academics as Policy Actors

Policy making is a multiple-actor process that incorporates both formal and informal actors (Howlett 2007). In recent decades, the governance discourse has noted that policy deliberations have moved beyond the "core executive" that traditionally dominated decision-making to include additional levels of government and an array of actors (Richards and Smith 2002; Kooiman 2003).

Public institutions of higher learning are perceived as policy actors in that one of their missions is to provide politically and socially relevant knowledge to government agencies (Birkland 2005). Similarly, individual academics, research institutions and think tanks have all been identified as policy actors seeking to influence the policy decision-making process (Bulmer 1986). As noted above, the emphasis upon academic impact on society and the recent focus on evidence-based policy in diverse fields, among them social work (Gambrill 2006) and

social policy (Nutley and Webb 2000; Head 2008), provided major – though contested (Nevo and Slonim-Nevo 2011; Newman, 2011) – impetus to interest in the role of academics in policy formulation processes.

Scholarship concerning academics' engagement in the policy process seeks to explore the interaction between the academic and policy worlds. In a pioneering effort, Knott and Wildavsky (1980) created a hierarchy of stages of utilization of research by policymakers. Since then, both anecdotal and more systematic data offered an insight into the degree to which academics seek to influence the policy process, the ways through which this occurs, and the complexities involved in it (Weiss and Bucuvalas 1980; Maton and Bishop-Josef 2006; Kothari et al. 2009; Bogenschneider and Corbett 2010; Contandriopoulos et al. 2010; Smith 2010).

Only a limited number of quantitative studies have focused on the provider side of this phenomenon. Landry et al. (2001) found that nearly 50% of Canadian scholars in the social sciences reported that they often transmit their research findings to practitioners, professionals and policy makers. A mixed methods study of the civic and economic attitudes and engagement of academics in Scotland and England (Bond and Paterson 2005) revealed that the vast majority of academics thought it important that higher education institutions provide advice to policy makers. A majority of the respondents were involved in at least one of the different routes examined. Interviews with academics also identified varied forms of civic engagement, among them policy-change activities. A more recent study of Australian social science academics revealed that over half of the respondents reported that their research led to applications by nonacademic end-users (Cherney et al. 2012).

An additional perspective on the academic-policy interface identified forms that interventions by academics into the policy process take. In most cases, these focused on knowledge dissemination, which traditionally includes policy-related research (Vedung 2010; Ward et al. 2011), the preparation of policy papers (Huberman 1990; Ahmad 2008), and the dissemination of research findings through personal communication (Lavis et al., 2003). Additional forms of policy engagement were policy consultations (to governmental bodies, think tanks or third sector organizations), leadership or membership in formal committees or taskforces, and even decision-making positions (Bond and Paterson 2005; Donnison 2000; McLennan et al. 2005). Finally, they also included more proactive efforts - the use of the media (Sommer and Maycroft 2008; Orr 2010), testifying before policy committees (Chandler 2009), and collaboration with advocacy organizations and service users as advisors or participants in social action (Kaufman 2004; Strier 2011).

SWAs as Policy Actors

Influencing social policy is regarded as an important professional task within the social work profession. This core commitment is reflected in national social work codes of ethics (BASW 2012; Weiss-Gal 2013), in definitions of social work (CSWE 2010; IFSW, 2014), and in the social work literature (Dominelli 2004; Marston and MacDonald 2012; Ritter 2013).

Policy practice (Jansson 2014) is a conspicuous component of social work education in the US (Byers 2014). It is also an emerging topic in social work education in other countries such as Israel (Weiss-Gal 2013), Australia (Zubrzycki and McArthur 2004) and the UK (Gregory and Holloway 2005). A

growing volume of research identifies social workers as policy actors in different countries (Mendes 2013; Hoefer 2013; Gal and Weiss-Gal, 2013; Vukovic and Babovic 2014), and there are vigorous calls from social work academics to social workers to expand and strengthen their involvement in policy processes (MacKinnon 2009; Goldberg 2012).

As is the case for scholars within other professional schools in higher education, SWAs have a dual role. They seek to balance the creation of knowledge and its dissemination in an academic setting with their commitment to a profession and its field. This generally encompasses an emphasis on the applied formulation of knowledge and its dissemination, training, and frequent interaction with professionals and clients. In social work, this also entails (in principle, at least) a professional commitment to impact society through social policy interventions and an emphasis on collaboration with clients, communities and their advocates.

However, knowledge on SWAs' involvement in policy processes and the factors associated with this is limited. Most of it emerged from case studies that focus on collaboration between SWAs, students, practitioners, advocacy organizations or service-users in order to influence social policies (Sherraden et al. 2002; Kaufman 2004; Chandler 2009; Strier 2011; Patterson et al. 2014). These indicated that SWAs initiated policy changes and, with their partners, engaged in diverse policy activities. Among them were documenting social problems, organizing the community, placing social problem on the agenda through conferences, demonstrations, the media and direct contacts with policy makers. One quantitative study on the political activity of SWAs and field instructors concentrated on a narrow spectrum of primarily political/electoral forms of

participation. Among others, it found that 76% of the respondents had participated in demonstrations, 27% had testified before a legislative committee and 40% had done so before a community committee (Mary 2001). In a cross-disciplinary study, Landry et al. (2001) underscored that academics in social work in Canada contribute significantly more to the application of knowledge to policy than academics in other social sciences. However, these studies did not focus specifically on SWAs' engagement in the social policy process and offer little on the forms that this takes and the factors associated with this.

The study presented here sought to assess the levels of SWAs' engagement in a wide variety of policy-related activities in different countries. These ranged from traditional knowledge dissemination activities, advisory roles and media appearances, and through to social action. In addition, in order to shed more light on their engagement, the study also assessed the SWAs' levels of involvement in distinctive stages of the policy process. While the policy stages model is primarily a heuristic tool (Jann and Wegrich 2007), it can be a useful way to structure the interface between academics and the policy process and to better understand the junctures in the policy process at which SWAs were most likely to participate. Finally, the study examined the extent to which SWAs perceived they have an impact on policy processes. By doing so, it sought to undertake a comprehensive examination of the involvement of a sector of academics in social policy formulation.

Factors Influencing Academic Involvement in Policy

The literature identifies institutional and individual factors likely to influence the levels of involvement of academics in the policy process. Institutional factors

include the organizational structure in universities (Jacobson et al. 2004; Cherney et al. 2012), the norms and incentives that dominate academia and levels of institutional encouragement (or discouragement) to engage in the community (Bond and Peterson 2005; Walt 2005). Jacobson et al. (2004) identified promotion guidelines, funding allocations, research structures, and the lack of a knowledge transfer orientation as obstacles for academics seeking to engage in policy-related activities. Based on these claims, this study examined the association between levels of organizational support (from the university administration and the school of social work) for policy involvement and the level of involvement in policy among SWAs.

Individual factors, identified in the literature, include role perceptions (regarding the role of academia and academics in society or the community), personal resources with regard to policy involvement (time, knowledge on policy issues and competencies) and status (academic rank) (Kaufman 2004; Bond and Paterson 2005; Haynes et al. 2011). Finally, researchers claimed that academics' personal status within the university arena (e.g., position, tenure) will play a role in their policy involvement (Haynes et al. 2011). As such, both competences and academic status are examined in the current study.

In order to examine the association between SWAs' role perceptions and their involvement in policy, Burawoy's (2005) path-breaking work on public sociology was employed. This distinguished between four types of knowledge production within sociology – public, policy, professional and critical – and was recently applied to social work (Hardy 2013). Public sociologists engage primarily in producing reflexive knowledge for the general public. Policy sociologists produce

instrumental knowledge intended to serve the needs of specific clients. Professional knowledge enriches instrumental debate in academia, while critical knowledge generates a reflexive debate within the academic community. As social work, unlike sociology, is a vocational and professional academic field with a strong emphasis on enriching professional practice, a fifth type of knowledge production was incorporated in this study – the development of social work practice (DSWP). In other words, scholars will seek to produce knowledge that enhances and furthers social workers' interventions. The underlying assumption was that an academic's perception of the academia-society nexus is linked to levels of policy engagement. Thus, the way SWAs perceive the societal role of academia and their academic roles will determine their level of involvement in policy processes. More specifically, a greater identification with public and policy roles will be linked to higher involvement in policy processes.

The Project

Due to the paucity of knowledge concerning the levels of involvement of SWAs in a wide range of policy activities and the factors that associated with this, the project had two specific aims. These were to better understand: 1) the levels of involvement of SWAs in policy and their perceived impact on the social policy process; and 2) the institutional and individual factors associated with this. Based on this analysis, the study sought to identify the implications of a cross-national comparison of engagement of social work academics in policy practice for research and practice.

Method and Research Tools

The project researchers surveyed social work faculty in each of their countries – Israel, Portugal, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom. Details pertaining to the specific research populations in each of the countries and the surveys will be presented in each of the country sections below.

All the researchers employed identical research tools, developed and validated by the Israeli participant and the coordinator. In the absence of existing questionnaires tapping the study variables, questionnaires were developed specifically for the study in two stages. Initially items were formulated for each variable based on previous literature and related questionnaires. The contents were then validated by four retired social work academics in Israel and were revised.

Level of involvement in policy activities was measured by a 20-item scale, which covered a range of potential activities that academics can undertake in order to influence social policy based on previous research and case studies (e.g. Sherraden et al. 2002; Bond and Paterson 2005). The question was: "During your career as a SWA, how often have you engaged in the following activities in order to influence social policy?". This question was accompanied with the following clarification: "Social policy covers policy in one or more of the following areas: welfare, social security, personal social services, rehabilitation, education, health and mental health, housing, employment, immigration and food security". The respondents were asked to indicate their response on a four-point scale that included: 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = a few times, 4 = frequently. Internal consistency of the scale was good ($\alpha=0.90$). Each respondent received an overall

score that was calculated as the means of responses to all the 20 items. The higher the scores, the more the SWA was involved in the social policy formulation process.

Level of involvement in stages of the policy process was measured by a 5-item scale. The question was: "During your career as a SWA, to what degree have you engaged, alone or with collaborators, in: 1. Placing a social problem on the agenda; 2. Placing a policy limitation on the agenda; 3. Formulating policy alternatives; 4. Planning policy; 5. Evaluating policy. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=never to 5= very extensively was employed. Each respondent received five scores, one for each item. The higher the scores, the more the SWA engaged in the stage.

Perceived impact on policy makers and policy advocacy organizations was measured by a six-item scale that was adapted from existing scales (Knott and Wildavsky 1980; Landry et al. 2001; Cherny et al. 2012). It explored the degree to which the respondents perceived that policy makers and advocacy organizations utilized their research or recommendations. The participants were asked to indicate their response on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1=never to 5= very extensively. Each respondent received six scores, one for each item. The higher the score, the greater the respondent`s perceived impact on the policy process.

The perceived social role of academia was measured by a three-item scale which asked respondents to express their degree of agreement with the claim that academia has a responsibility to: 1. "assist society to solve its problems"; 2. "critique the existing social order"; 3. "change power relations in society". A

Likert scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree, was employed. The internal consistency was good ($\alpha=0.80$). The score for each respondent was based on the mean response to the three items. The higher the score, the greater the respondent's support for the social role of academia.

The level of perceived personal role as a SWA was measured by a fifteen-item scale that relates to Burawoy's (2005) four types of academic roles: public, policy, professional, critical, and a fifth type of role specific to SWAs. The statement was: "As a faculty member in social work, my role is...". A Likert scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree, was employed. A principal components factor analysis yielded five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which jointly explained 76.32% of the variance. The first, "a policy role" consisted of four items (e.g. "my role is to assist policy makers to deal with social problems") ($\alpha=0.87$). The second, "a critical role" consisted of three items (e.g. "my role is to enhance the understanding of the social causes of personal deprivation among faculty members") ($\alpha=0.87$). The third, "a professional role", consisted of three items (e.g. "my role is to develop knowledge that will contribute to scientific debate ") ($\alpha=0.67$). The fourth "a public role" consisted of two items (e.g. "my role is to influence the way in which social problems are understood by the general public") ($\alpha=0.65$), and the last, "a social work practice role", consisted of three items (e.g. "my role is to develop knowledge that will contribute to social workers") ($\alpha=0.85$). Five scores were calculated based on the mean response on the items in each factor. The higher the score, the more the respondent agreed with the role.

The level of perceived policy involvement competencies was measured by a five-item scale. The respondents were requested to assess the degree to which they had the knowledge, skills, motivation, commitment, and self-efficacy to influence social policy on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= not at all to 5= to a large extent. The internal consistency was high: $\alpha=0.90$. The score for each respondent was based on the mean response to the five items. The higher the score, the greater the respondent's perceived competencies to engage in policy-related activities.

Perceived support for policy involvement by the academic environment was measured by a nine-item scale, which assessed the degree to which the academic perceived support for policy involvement by the university administration and the administration, colleagues and students at the school of social work. A Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree, was employed. A principal components factor analysis yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which jointly explained 68.3% of the variance. The first, "university administration support" consisted of three items (e.g. "the administration encourages faculty involvement in activities intended to influence social policy") ($\alpha=0.71$). The second, "school of social work administration and colleagues' support" consisted of five items (e.g. "The Dean of my school encourages involvement of faculty in activities aimed at influencing social policy") ($\alpha=0.84$). The third, "student support" consisted of one item: "The students in my school expect faculty to seek to influence social policy" ($\alpha=0.85$). Three scores were calculated based on the mean response on the items in each of the factors. The higher the score, the greater the perceived support for policy involvement.

The following sections of the report describe the findings in each of the countries studied.

Israel

In Israel social work is a well-established profession that has been fully integrated into academia for almost six decades and enjoys, in cross-national comparative terms, high professional status (Weiss-Gal 2004). Moreover, training for policy involvement has become more prominent in Israeli schools of social work over the last decade (Weiss-Gal 2013). Finally, Israel is a welfare state that has been influenced significantly by neo-liberal policies and has undergone major periods of retrenchment in recent decades. Its poverty and inequality levels are higher than most other welfare states (Gal in press). These have led to growing public attention to social issues and, in the summer of 2011, to mass protests over the spiraling cost of living and cuts in social services (Rosenhek and Shalev 2014).

The research population consisted of all 252 faculty members of the ten schools of social work in Israel (excluding adjunct lecturers and field instructors). After receiving authorization from the Tel Aviv University ethics committee, the study questionnaires were e-mailed to all these faculty members using Qualtrics, which protects the participants' anonymity. Institutional websites served as a primary source for the e-mail addresses of the scholars. All the participants signed consent forms prior to their participation. Three rounds of distribution were undertaken between August and October 2013. At the end of this process, 143 SWAs consented to participate in the study and completed the questionnaires (a response rate of 57%).

Seventy five percent of them were women and their mean age was 52.5 (SD=9.60). Ninety percent of the respondents had Ph.Ds, over half were tenured (56%) and 68% were full-time faculty members. The rank of 41% of the respondents was lecturer, 24% were senior lecturers, and 31% were associate or full professors (In Israel there are four academic ranks – lecturer, generally untenured, senior lecturer, generally tenured, associate professor, tenured, and full professor, tenured). Most of the respondents (70%) had a social work degree, and 63% practiced social work before becoming faculty members. Of those without social work degrees, the largest group (16%) was graduates of psychology or of behavioural sciences.

Results

Levels of involvement in each of the 20 policy-related activities are presented in table 1. The overall mean level of involvement of Israeli SWAs in the policy process was 2.01 (.62).

Table 1: Levels of policy involvement in Israel: Means, SDs and Distribution (N=143)

Form of Policy Engagement (Abbreviated)	M (SD)	Never	Once/Few	Frequently
Participated in protest activity	2.75 (1.04)	20%	56%	24%
Interviewed in the press	2.65 (1.00)	20%	61%	20%

Served in a policy-related committee	2.54 (1.20)	31%	41%	28%
Advised an advocacy organization	2.43 (1.14)	32%	48%	20%
Assisted in organizing service-users	2.22 (1.05)	34%	54%	13%
Worked with students	2.21 (1.00)	32%	59%	9%
Participated in a policy-related activity by social workers	2.18 (1.05)	39%	53%	9%
Advised policy makers	2.16 (1.16)	44%	40%	16%
Advised a policy-related committee	2.15 (1.13)	44%	43%	13%
Formulated a position paper	2.11 (1.02)	37%	53%	10%
Sent publications to policy makers	2.10 (1.09)	44%	45%	11%
Published an article in the press	1.92 (1.02)	48%	44%	8%

Testified in a legislative committee	1.92 (1.04)	49%	42%	9%
Participated in a coalition	1.91 (1.09)	52%	37%	11%
Analyzed policy on behalf of policy makers or an advocacy organization	1.80 (1.05)	59%	33%	8%
Chaired a policy-related committee	1.64 (1.01)	68%	24%	8%
Organized a protest activity	1.57 (0.95)	70%	24%	6%
Was a speaker at a demonstration	1.37 (0.77)	78%	20%	3%
Participated in an appeal to the courts	1.37 (0.75)	78%	20%	2%
Wrote a blog in a social network	1.26 (0.74)	88%	8%	4%

As can be seen, over half of the SWAs engaged at least once in 13 of the 20 activities examined. The most widespread activities that SWAs undertook in

order to influence social policy were participating in protests, press interviews, serving in a policy-related committee and advising an advocacy organization.

Activities, which sought to affect policy along with students, advocacy organizations, service users and practitioners were also prevalent.

Advising policy makers or policy committees, formulating a position paper, and sending publications to policy makers were less common. Nevertheless, most SWAs reported having engaged in these types of activity once or more. By contrast, writing a blog, participating in an appeal to the courts and speaking at a demonstration were much less widespread.

Levels of involvement in the policy stages are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Levels of involvement of SWAs in Israel in policy stages: Means, SDs and distribution (N = 143)

The stage:	M (SD)	Never	Extensively / Very extensively
Placing a problem on the agenda	3.07 (1.27)	13%	49%
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	2.65 (1.29)	24%	28%
Formulating policy alternatives	2.50 (1.36)	33%	24%
Planning policy	2.08 (1.28)	46%	17.5%
Evaluating policy	2.17 (1.27)	44%	20%

The table shows that placing a policy problem on the agenda was the most common form of involvement with nearly a half of all the respondents saying that they engaged in this extensively or very extensively. By contrast, planning and evaluating policies was much less common. Over 40% of the Israeli SWAs said that they had never engaged in these policy stages.

Table 3 shows the levels of perceived policy impact.

Table 3: Perceived impact of SWAs in Israel: Means, SDs and distribution (N=143)

The item:	M (SD)	Never	Extensively /Very Extensively
<u>Policy makers:</u>			
Read publications	2.65 (0.14)	33%	10%
Cited publications	2.60 (0.16)	45%	12%
Drew upon recommendations	2.68 (0.15)	36%	18%
<u>Advocacy organizations:</u>			
Cited publications	2.99 (0.16)	35%	19%
Drew upon recommendations	3.03 (0.15)	29%	17%

The table indicates that between 10-20 percent of the SWAs believed that policy makers extensively or very extensively read or cited their publications, drew upon their recommendations or actually adopted them. Between a third and nearly a half of the SWAs said that policymakers had never done so. The perceptions regarding impact upon advocacy organizations indicated slightly higher perceived impact .

The means and standard deviations for the predictor variables for policy involvement and the Pearson correlations with the level of involvement in policy are presented in table 4.

Table 4: The explanatory variables in the Israeli case: Means, SDs and Pierson Correlations with Academic Policy Practice (APP) (N=143)

The variable:	M (SD)	Involvement in APP
Perceived academic environment support:		
Students	3.76 (1.08)	0.04
School of social work	3.39 (0.89)	-0.01
Academic institution	3.15 (0.92)	0.13
Perceived social role of academia	4.09 (0.78)	0.19*
Perceived personal role:		
DSWP	4.65 (0.63)	0.15
Policy	4.37 (0.67)	0.40***

Professional	4.25 (0.66)	0.30***
Public	4.23 (0.73)	0.29***
Critical	3.97 (0.91)	0.20**
Perceived policy practice competencies	3.41(1.02)	0.65***

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 4 shows that most of the predictors (perceived role of academia, four out of five of the perceived personal roles, and perceived competencies) were statistically significantly correlated with level of engagement in policy activities. In contrast, no significant correlations were found between the three facets of perceived organizational support and levels of policy involvement.

The means scores in table 4 also show that SWAs regarded their students as the strongest source of support for policy involvement, followed by the school administration, with support by university administration the lowest. In a one-way ANOVA with repeated measures a significant difference emerged ($F(2,284)=21.59, p<0.001, \eta^2 =0.13$). Pair comparison tests yielded significant differences between all three organizational facets.

With regard to perceived roles as academics, the findings showed a significant difference between the five roles ($F(4,568)=29.25, p<0.001, \eta^2 =0.17$). Pair comparison tests yielded significant differences between `DSWP` and the other roles, between `Policy` and all the other roles except `Professional`, and between `Critical` and all the other roles. SWAs identified most with the role of `DSWP` and were least supportive of the critical role.

In order to examine the total and unique contribution of the predictor variables to the explained variance in level of policy involvement, a four-step hierarchical regression was performed (table 5). Tenure and academic rank were entered in the first step. The perceived role of academia was entered in the second step. In the third step, four of the five types of academic roles - public, policy, professional and critical - were entered (since DSWP was not significantly correlated with policy involvement, it was not included in this analysis). The perceived competencies variable was entered in the fourth step.

Table 5: Regression coefficients (B, β) of the explained variance of SWAs` Academic Policy Practice (APP) in Israel

Step		<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>B</i>	R^2	ΔR^2
1	Academic position	0.25	0.07	0.33***		
	Tenure	-0.05	0.11	-0.04	0.12***	.12***
2	Academic position	0.28	0.06	0.37***		
	Tenure	-0.05	0.10	-0.04		
	Social role of academia	0.21	0.06	0.26***	0.18***	.06***
3	Academic position	0.25	0.06	0.33***		
	Tenure	-0.01	0.10	-0.01		
	Social role of academia	0.07	0.07	0.09		
	Public	0.11	0.08	0.13		
	Professional	0.12	0.09	0.13		

	Policy	0.23	0.10	0.25*		
	Critical	-0.05	0.07	-0.07	0.30***	0.12***
4	Academic position	0.19	0.05	0.24**		
	Tenure	-0.02	0.08	-0.01		
	Social role of academia	0.02	0.06	0.03		
	Public	0.10	0.07	0.12		
	Professional	0.11	0.07	0.11		
	Policy	0.06	0.08	0.07		
	Critical	-0.07	0.06	-0.11		
	Competencies	0.34	0.04	0.56***	0.53***	0.23***

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

As can be seen, the predictor variables explained a total of 53% of variance in the level of policy involvement. Tenure and academic rank contributed 12% to the explained variance and were statistically significant. SWAs with tenure and higher academic ranks engaged more in policy activities. The perceived role of academia added another 6% in the second step. The greater the respondents' support for the social role of academia, the greater their involvement in policy activities. In the third step, the four roles added another 12% to the explained variance but only the policy role made a significant contribution. The more the SWAs identified with the policy role, the greater their involvement in policy activities. Perceived competencies contributed another 23% to the explained

variance. The greater the SWAs' perceived policy-related competencies, the greater their involvement in policy.

In the fourth step, the β coefficients of the variables decreased when the perceived competences variable was entered. This suggests that competencies may mediate the relations between the perceived social role of academia and identification with an academic's policy role and level of policy involvement. Indeed Sobel tests showed that competencies did indeed mediate between perceived role of academia and policy involvement ($z=3.33$; $p<0.001$) and between identification with a policy role and policy involvement ($z=4.95$; $p<0.001$).

Portugal

Social work is an historical and consolidated occupation in the social welfare system in Portugal. Nevertheless, it remains relatively weak and lacks a specific code of ethics or power of accreditation. Social workers comprise a small professional group when compared with professionals in the fields of education or health care. Social workers are employed primarily in the fields of justice (25.4%), social security (24.4%) and health (21.7%). In addition, a significant proportion are to be found in local government agencies (13.8%) (Branco 2010). Lacking official data, the only indicator that we can use to determinate the evolution and current dimensions of this professional group is the number of graduates in social work. According to Branco (2009), there were 14,875 social work graduates in Portugal in 2009. There are currently 20 recognized social work programs in that country. Social work programs have been a recognized

academic field within the university system since 1998 and, in addition, a number of programs have also been established in polytechnics since 2003. There are several master programs but only a few doctoral programs in social work (Rodrigues and Branco 2009).

The research population in the current study was drawn from a list of potential participants created with the cooperation of most of the institutions of higher education with accredited social work programs at the undergraduate, graduate and PhD levels in Portugal. A total of 408 faculty members were identified. Using an online server service, the questionnaire was sent to all the academics in the database between 20 October and 20 December 2014. In all, 113 valid responses were received. These (N=113) consisted of 55 (48.7%) graduates in social work, 17 (15%) in sociology, eight (7.1%) in psychology and the remainder in different scientific areas. With regard to the academic discipline of the respondents' doctoral studies, 24 (21.2%) were in social work, 17 (14.2%) in sociology, five (4.4%) in the social sciences, (3.5%) in psychology and the rest in different scientific areas. 79 (69.9%) of the respondents were female and 34 (30.1%) male.

Results

Levels of involvement in each of the 20 policy-related activities are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Levels of policy involvement in Portugal: Means, SDs and distribution (N=110)

Form of Policy Engagement (Abbreviated)	M (SD)	Never	Once/Few	Frequently
Worked with students	2.57(1.11)	26%	60%	23%
Participated in protest activity	2.44(1.07)	31%	56%	14%
Assisted in organizing service- users	2.38(1.08)	33%	54%	14%
Interviewed in the press	2.22(1.05)	37%	54%	9%
Participated in a policy-related activity by social workers	2.22(1.07)	38%	52%	10%
Advised policy makers	2.20(1.10)	39%	48%	13%
Published an article in the press	2.20(1.06)	38%	52%	10%
Analysed policy on behalf of policy makers or an advocacy organization	2.08(1.05)	42%	49%	9%
Advised a policy-related committee	2.05(1.04)	44%	48%	8%
Formulated a position paper	2.04(0.96)	38%	56%	6%

Member of policy-related committee	2.02(1.08)	46%	43%	11%
Participated in a coalition	1.98(1.10)	51%	38%	11%
Advised an advocacy organization	1.86(1.03)	55%	39%	6%
Sent publications to policy makers	1.84(1.05)	56%	37%	7%
Organized a protest activity	1.47(0.82)	71%	26%	3%
Wrote a blog in a social network	1.45(0.94)	79%	14%	7%
Participated in an appeal to the courts	1.33(0.78)	82%	14%	4%
Was a speaker at a demonstration	1.30(0.68)	81%	17%	2%
Testified in a legislative committee	1.29(0.66)	81%	17%	2%
Chaired a policy-related committee	1.25(0.72)	87 %	9%	4%

As can be seen in the table, there is a relatively low overall level of engagement in policy practice activities on the part of Portuguese SWAs. The overall mean level of involvement of Portuguese SWAs in the policy process was 1.95 (.63).

Nevertheless, over half of the SWAs engaged at least once in 10 of the 20 activities examined. The most widespread activities that Portuguese SWAs undertook in order to influence social policy were working with students, participating in protest activities and assisting in organizing service-users. Press interviews, working with practitioners and advising policy-makers were also relatively prevalent.

By contrast, the Portuguese SWAs least engaged in activities related to committees, namely testifying in a legislative committee or chairing a policy-related committee, though serving as a member of policy-related committee and advising a policy-related committee were slightly more prevalent.

The levels of engagement of Portuguese SWAs in various stages of the policy process are shown in table 7.

Table 7: Levels of engagement of SWAs in Portugal in policy stages: Means, SDs and distribution (N=103)

The stage:	M (SD)	Extensively / Very extensively	
		Never	
Placing a problem on the agenda	2.48(1.24)	32%	11%
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	2.37(1.16)	35%	7%
Formulating policy alternatives	2.25(1.16)	37%	7%

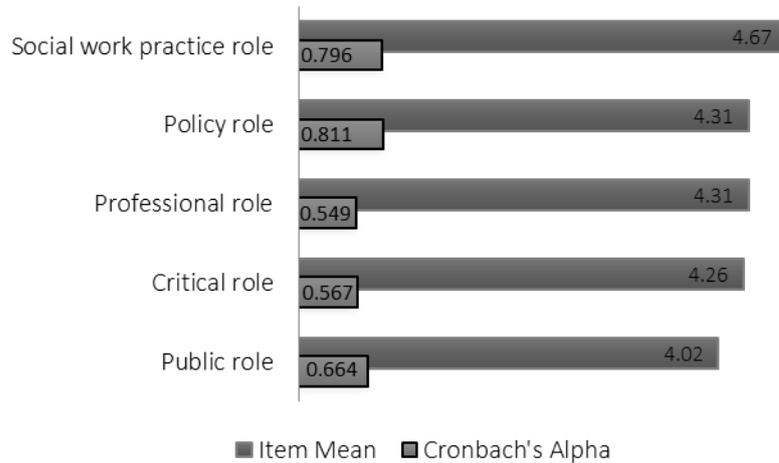
Planning policy	1.93(1.19)	54%	7%
Evaluating policy	2.16(1.25)	42%	10%

The table shows low levels of engagement in policy stages by the Portuguese SWAs. Over thirty percent had never engaged in any of the stages. Of the various stages, placing a problem on the agenda was that in which the SWAs were most engaged, while planning policy was the least common, with over half of the academics having never engaged in it.

With regard to the Portuguese SWAs' perceptions as to the social role of academia (which include a commitment to assist society in solving its problems, critiquing the social order and changing power relations in society), the mean score was 3.76 (SD = 0.77). This can be regarded as a moderate level of support for the social role of academia.

Employing the Burawoy (2005) typology of the roles of academics in society (and an additional role focussing on social work practice), we examined the preferences of the Portuguese SWAs regarding different personal roles as academics. The findings are depicted in figure 1.

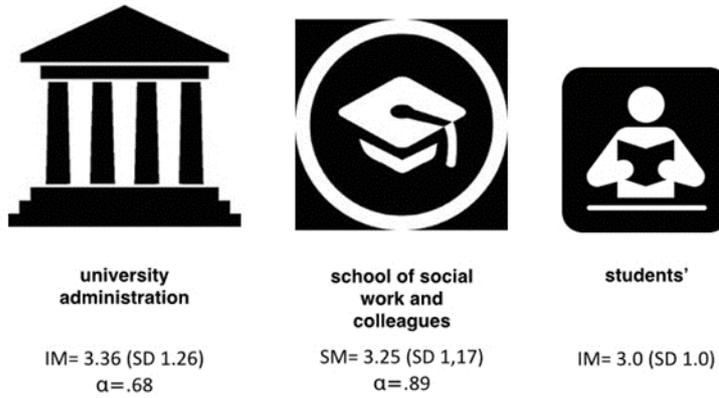
Figure 1: The perceived role of SWAs in Portugal (policy role, critical role, professional role, public role and social work practice role)



The findings in figure 1 indicate that the social work practice role is that with which the SWAs most identify. This is followed by the policy role, the professional role and the critical role, all of which receive similar levels of support. The public role is, comparatively, the perceived personal role with which the Portuguese respondents identified least.

The perceived level of support for engagement in policy-related activities by the academic institutions in which SWAs are employed was examined in relationship to support by the university administration, the school of social work and colleagues' support and that of students. The findings are presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: The perceived level of support for engagement in policy within academic institutions by SWAs in Portugal



The findings in the Portuguese case, as illustrated in figure 2, indicate that the support for policy engagement that SWAs received from their academic environment (the university administration, the school of social work, and students) was positive but moderate.

Table 8 presents the associations between the predictor variables and the level of engagement of Portuguese social work academics in policy-related activities.

Table 8: The associations between the predictor variables and level of engagement in Academic Policy Practice (APP) by SWAs in Portugal (N = 106)

The predictor:	Engagement in APP	
	Pearson <i>r</i>	Significance level

Perceived academic environment support		
Students support	.39 **	.000
School of social work support	.31 **	.001
University administration support	.32 **	.001
Perceived social role of academia	.06	.523
Perceived personal role		
Developing social work practice	.10	.276
Policy	.11	.263
Professional	.02	.801
Public	.04	.663
Critical	.15	.130

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

The table does not reveal any statically significant level of relationship between the level of engagement in policy related activities and the perceived social role of academia or the perceived personal role. It does show that the level of perceived academic environment support ($p<0.01$) is associated with engagement in policy-related activities even though this is relatively weak ($r = 0.39$ and $r^2 = 15\%$ or less).

Puerto Rico

Social work first emerged in Puerto Rico at the end of the 1920's. Its inception was highly influenced by the social work movement in the USA, but also by the diversity of social and economic problems on the Island, particularly in the rural areas. Under military governments, social workers on the Island intervened mainly through the development of localities (Estremera-Jiménez 2015). This community model became the primary method of intervention used by social workers in rural communities around the Island with the main purpose of integrating all citizens into the mainstream of society (Guardiola-Ortíz 1998; Negrón-Velázquez and Zavaleta- Calderón 2003; Estremera-Jiménez,2015). The formal creation of the profession was established in 1934 by Law # 41- ("Ley el Proyecto de regulación del Trabajo Social en Puerto Rico"). In 1940 this law was revised, changing its name to Law # 171. Although a few parts of law 171 have been revised since then, the social work profession is still regulated by this law. As of today, there are approximately 7,000 licensed social workers in Puerto Rico. Most social workers are employed by a governmental agency known as the Department of Children and Family Services, and in the school setting.

Puerto Rico has twenty undergraduate and four graduate social work programs. The reconceptualization of the social work profession that is still occurring in Latin America and in Puerto Rico recognizes policy practice as an essential tool for social change and to achieve social and economic justice. Integrating this method in the daily life of social work practice has been recognized as an effective and powerful mechanism for social change. Thus, social work scholars in Puerto Rico are expected to teach social work skills for policy practice to guide

students to becoming successful advocates for just social welfare policies, which is consonant with current global social work trends. This mission becomes more complicated if we take into consideration that a recent study among social work undergraduate exiting students in eight countries of Latin America, including Puerto Rico, showed that the field of macro practice, which includes policy practice and administration, was not the preferred field of practice for this future generation of social workers (Negrón-Velázquez 2014a,b).

In Puerto Rico, social work education is considered as one of four core factors that facilitate the practice of this profession on the Island: Complex social problems is the first factor, followed by efforts to raise consciousness about the profession. The third factor relates to the availability of social work services (Guardiola-Ortíz, Guemárez Cruz and Rivera Casiano 2007). In spite of this recognition, Guardiola and her colleagues explain that the field of social work education has been criticized, mainly because it frequently emphasizes work with individuals and not with communities or at the social policy level.

The field of social policy has been globally recognized as an essential tool to manage social inequities and to pursue economic development and social justice. However, Puerto Rico has a particular political situation that discourages these professionals to become more involved in policy practice. As a colony of the United States, social policies have been created mainly in the United States and then transferred to Puerto Rico. Social workers are expected to implement these policies without questions.

A study conducted on the Island among legislators to explore their perceptions about the involvement of social workers in the field of policy practice showed

that legislators did not know the functions and roles that these professionals can assume (Guardiola-Ortíz and Serra-Taylor 2002). Although they considered social work an important profession, they noted that social workers hardly ever create or initiate social policies, and they believed this situation was due to their lack of knowledge regarding legislative procedures. The lack of initiatives to create policies that respond to needs of citizens also emerged in the present study.

From January 31, 2015 through March 30, 2015 the data collection process of the present study was conducted. The sample framework of social work academics in Puerto Rico was constructed using three main sources: 1) mailing lists of diverse organizations such as the Puerto Rican Association of Schools of Social Work (ANAETS); 2) online information available from social work programs in Puerto Rico; and, 3) direct communication with program directors (email, telephone calls). At the beginning of this stage, 235 email addresses were identified. After eliminating duplicates, wrong addresses and people, a total of 195 eligible SWAs were identified throughout the Island.

The questionnaire was distributed online to all eligible SWAs in Puerto Rico. The data collection process was managed directly by the Principal Investigator (Dra. Negrón-Velázquez), and two undergraduate research assistants (Viviana Rivera-Mulero, Psychology Department; Ashley González Pagán, Economics) using a Monkey Survey. In a two months period and after several attempts to increase participation, 84 SWAs completed the online questionnaire, for a response rate of 43%. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The majority of participants were females (80 %). Most participants (n=44, 57%) had a master degree in social work, and 59% were not permanent professors in their social work program. Half of the sample worked as a part time SWA. The other half were full time professors.

Results

Levels of involvement in each of the 20 policy-related activities are presented in table 9.

Table 9: Levels of engagement in policy by SWAs in Puerto Rico: Means, SDs and distribution (N=84)

Form of Policy Engagement (Abbreviated)	M (SD)	Never	Once/Few	Frequently
Participated in protest activity	3.12 (.96)	10%	48%	42%
Participated in a policy-related activity by social workers	3.06 (.90)	8%	56%	36%
Worked with students	2.99 (.95)	10%	56%	34%
Served in a policy-related committee	2.71 (1.11)	22%	49%	29%
Participated in a coalition	2.61 (1.11)	20%	51%	29%

Assisted in organizing service- users	2.91 (.88)	10%	66%	24%
Formulated a position paper	2.50 (1.10)	26%	52%	22%
Analyzed policy on behalf of policy makers or an advocacy organization	2.35 (1.09)	30%	52%	18%
Interviewed in the press	2.52 (1.00)	24%	61%	15%
Advised a policy-related committee	2.49 (1.01)	24%	62%	14%
Advised policy makers	1.97 (1.09)	48%	40%	12%
Advised an advocacy organization	1.73 (.98)	48%	40%	12%
Published an article in the press	2.09 (1.04)	38%	51%	11%
Chaired a policy-related committee	1.91 (1.11)	54%	35%	11%

Organized a protest activity	1.82 (1.07)	57%	33%	10%
Wrote a blog in a social network	1.72 (1.06)	63%	27%	10%
Sent publications to policy makers	1.71 (.99)	59%	33%	8%
Was a speaker at a demonstration	1.79 (1.04)	59%	33%	8%
Testified in a legislative committee	1.82 (1.02)	58%	36%	6%
Participated in an appeal to the courts	1.58 (.88)	66%	31%	3%

Note: The scale ranged from 1(never); 2(once); 3 (a few times); and 4 (frequently).

The overall mean level of SWA involvement in policy-related activities was 2.29 (1.04). Participants showed high levels of engagement in the following activities: (42%) participated in protest activities; (36%) participated in a policy related activity organized by social workers; and worked with students to influence social policies (34%). About one third of the participants had served in a policy-related committee and in a coalition, while 24% had engaged in assisting service users to organize (see table 9).

Meanwhile, participants showed low levels of engagement in activities related to the dissemination of their personal and professional views, such as writing a blog in a social network (10%), and sending their publications to policy makers (8%). About 10% had organized a protest activity, only 6% had testified in a legislative committee, and 3% participated in an appeal to the courts.

These trends show a profile of SWAs incline to support activities organized by others to influence social policy, but less willing to engage in initiatives created by them to directly influence social policies.

The next table reports on Puerto Rican SWAs' level of engagement in the various stages of the policy process.

Table 10 : Levels of engagement by SWAs in Puerto Rico in policy stages: Means, SDs and distribution (N=84)

The stage:	M (SD)	Never	Extensively / Very extensively
Placing a problem on the agenda	2.47 (.95)	16%	46%
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	2.42 (.97)	18%	44%
Formulating policy alternatives	2.56 (.93)	13%	51%
Planning policy	2.19 (1.07)	35%	40%

Note: The scale ranged from 1=never to 5= very extensively.

More than half of SWAs showed extensive engagement in evaluating policy (57%), and in formulating policy alternatives (51%). Close to half of the SWAs (46%) engaged extensively in placing a social problems in the agenda, and in placing a policy limitation on the agenda (44%). However, the initial stage of the policy formulation process was not very attractive to SWAs. In this case, only 40% engaged extensively in policy planning.

The next results pertain to the perceptions held by Puerto Rican SWAs regarding their impact on policy makers.

Table 11: The perceived impact of Puerto Rican SWAs: Means, SDs and distribution (N=84)

The item:	M (SD)	Never	Extensively /Very extensively
<u>Policy makers:</u>			
Read publications	3.28 (2.05)	30%	13.5%
Cited publications	3.17 (2.11)	37%	13.7%
Drew upon recommendations & adopted proposals	3.09 (1.98)	31%	13.6%
<u>Advocacy organizations:</u>			
Cited publications	3.04 (2.02)	34%	13.6%

Drew upon recommendations	3.08 (1.92)	31.1%	12.2%
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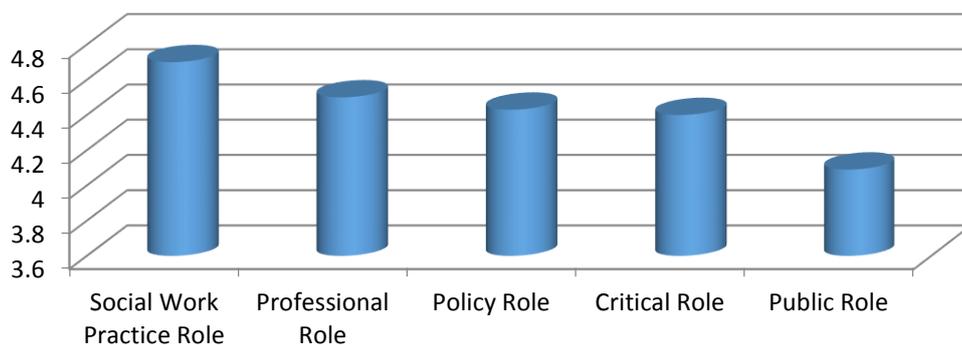
Table 11 shows that more than one third of participants did not perceive themselves as having an impact on policy makers. Around a third of SWAs in Puerto Rico perceived that their publications have never been cited by policy makers (37%) or an advocacy organization (34%); and 31% perceived that their policy recommendations had never been taken into account by policy makers. Less than 15% of participants reported that policy makers read their publications and took their recommendations into account through the diverse stages of policy formulation.

According to the findings in the figure below (see Figure 3), social work SWAs perceive that their most important role in the academia is to influence the *practice* of social workers [M 4.7, SD .75] particularly the way in which they perceive social problems. This subscale showed a substantial internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha of .91). The second most important role for social work scholars was their *professional role* [4.5, .84]. This role includes creating scientific knowledge and theory development. The internal reliability of the professional role subscale was .75.

The *policy role* emerged as the third most important perceived social role among SWAs, with a substantial internal reliability of .85. This role was followed by the *critical role* and the *public role*. The *policy role* [4.43, .86] refers to the responsibility of SWAs to influence the way in which policy makers and the public perceive social problems and how to handle them. The *critical role* [4.40, .95] emphasizes the responsibility to promote critical thinking skills among

SWAs, policy makers and the general public. Its internal reliability emerged as .76. Meanwhile, the **public role** subscale [4.09, 1.12] yielded a substantial Cronbach Alpha of .85. This factor was concerned with influencing the way in which the general public perceive and understand social problems.

Figure 3: Perceived roles as SWAs in Puerto Rico



When asked about the degree to which they had the knowledge, skills, motivation, commitment, and self-efficacy to influence social policy, respondents felt they had the necessary commitment [4.37, SD .8] followed by the necessary knowledge [4.25, .77] to influence social policy. Third, they had the motivation [4.17, SD .96] and, fourth, the skills [4.09, SD .95] to do this task. Finally, they reported to be self-efficient [3.97, SD 1.0] and capable to influence such area of intervention (see figure 4). The internal consistency of this scale was substantial (.85). The mean value and standard deviation for the scale as a whole was 3.02 (1.31).

Figure 4: Perceived personal policy competencies among SWAs in Puerto Rico

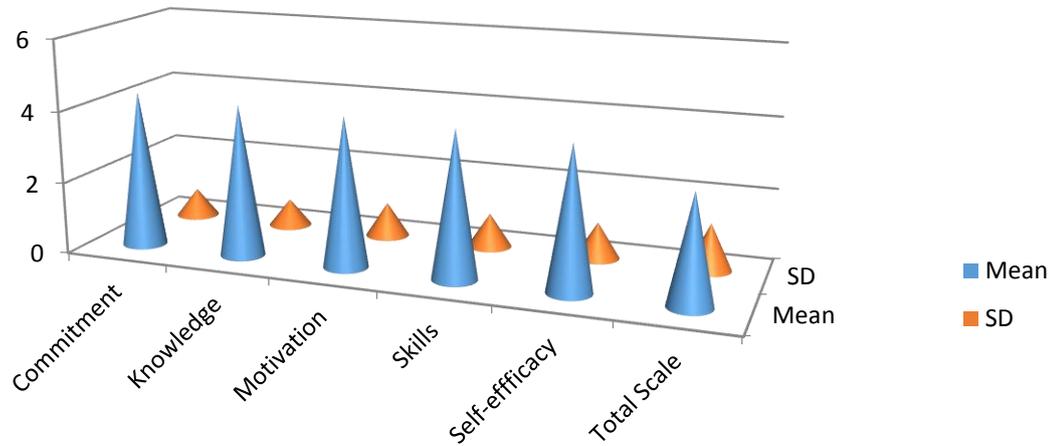


Figure 5 presents data regarding the perceived support for policy engagement by the academic institutions in which Puerto Rican SWAs are employed. SWAs perceived that they had relatively high levels of support from students [3.92, SD 1.25] regarding their practices to influence policy. This support was also perceived from their school and colleagues [3.02, SD 1.27]. The university administration [2.61, SD 1.5] was the least supportive entity as perceived by the respondents. The mean for the total scale of nine items was 2.99, and the standard deviation was 1.31. The internal consistency of the scale was substantial (.85).

Figure 5: Perceived support for policy involvement for Puerto Rican SWAs

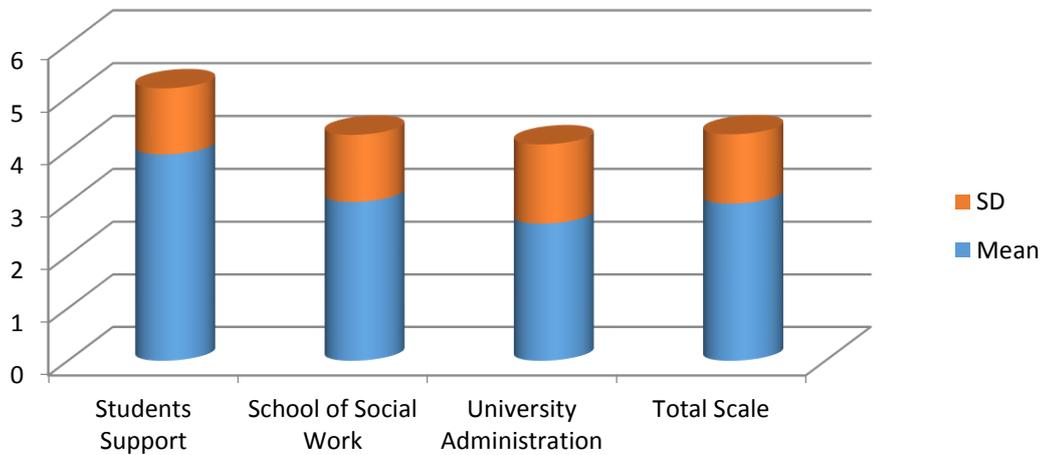


Table 12 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients of several variables. The results yielded a significant association at the 0.05 level between the perceived academic environment support, particularly students ‘support, and the level of engagement in Academic Policy Practice (APP). APP was also significantly related to the perceived social policy practice competencies at the 0.01 level. These findings suggest that, as support from students and self-perceived competencies to influence social policy increases, the higher the level of engagement to influence policy among SWAs.

Further regression analyses (see Table 13) show that the selected independent variables did not explain the level of engagement in policy practice. However, this model explained close to 40% (AR2) of the variance.

Table 12: The associations between the predictor variables and level of engagement in policy (N=77)

The predictor:	Engagement in APP
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Perceived academic environment	
support:	
Students support	.278*
School of social work support	.139
University administration support	.246
Perceived social role of academia	.178
Perceived personal role:	
Developing social work practice	.078
Policy	.181
Professional	.053
Public	.109
Critical	.053
Perceived policy practice competencies	.571**

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Table 13: Regression coefficients (B, β) of the explained variance of SWAs`

APP

Step		<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
1	Academic position	5.18	1.46	.654	.428	.394
	Tenure					

2	Academic position	5.18	1.46	.654	.428	.394
	Tenure					
	Social role of academia	.190				
3	Academic position	5.18	1.46	.654	.428	.394
	Tenure					
	Social role of academia	.190				
	Public	-.096				
	Professional	.040				
	Policy	.135				
	Critical	.067				
4	Academic position	4.61	1.40	.635	.404	.366
	Tenure					
	Social role of academia	2.35				
	Public	-.016				
	Professional	-.076				
	Policy	.158				
	Critical	.030				
	Competencies	.298				

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

United Kingdom

This section focusses upon how SWAs within the four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) influence social policy. In recent years, social work education in the UK has become a contested domain whereby SWAs have been criticized by both employers and politicians for not supplying suitably qualified and competent social work practitioners able to practice from day one. Moriarty *et al.*, (2011 p. 1531) have noted there is 'a fundamental distinction between those who view qualifying education as a developmental process and those who view it as an end in itself'. These opposing views have sharpened following the financial crisis and the introduction of 'austerity measures' whereby employers have experienced reductions in their budgets and have needed newly qualified social workers that could be operating with full caseloads as quickly as possible (Carpenter *et al.* 2015). The influential Social Work Taskforce's Report stated that; 'Educators need to share in the real challenges posed in service delivery and avoid any temptation to criticise from the sidelines' (SWTF 2009, 1.25).

Since then, there has been a parliamentary report (All Party Parliamentary Group for Social Work 2013), and then the: 'Ludicrous, but telling spectacle of two reviews of social work education in 2014 commissioned simultaneously by two separate government departments.' (Bamford 2015, p. 28). One of these reports eschews the international definition of social work, criticises an over reliance on anti-oppressive practice and seeks to redefine social work as local authority child protection practice (Narey 2014). It is against this backdrop of a profession under siege, that SWAs have sought to operate. This coupled with a

neo-liberal context in which market values are predominant and been seen as essential for progress and where the focus has been on reducing dependence and spending on welfare. There is a continued attack on those in receipt of welfare whereby the government has sought to reduce welfare state provision and spending, sought to expand choice and opportunity and promote a 'mixed economy' in which the public, private and voluntary sectors all play their part, often in completion.

Alongside these trends there has also been a belief in managerialist practices. This views costs as being controllable through competition, where the state monitors quality to identified standards and where there has been a reduction in the power of professionals or trade unions when these are constructed as placing their own interests above those of the customer (Wilson et al. 2008). At the time of writing the UK has just elected a Conservative government to power suggesting that there will be no change in this direction of travel, but more likely that it will speed up and the need for SWAs to influence social welfare policies will become even greater.

Social work in the UK is an all graduate profession in which students can qualify at graduate or post graduate level except in Northern Ireland where this at undergraduate level only. Within the UK there are two main types of university; the pre-1992 universities which tend to be more research active and post-1992 universities whose funding is usually more dependent on student numbers. The two types of universities also tend to call similar posts by different names so a lecturer in a pre-1992 university is equal to a senior lecturer in a post -1992

university and a senior lecturer in a pre-1992 university is equivalent to a principal lecturer in a post-1992 university.

An electronic survey was distributed via the listserve of the Joint Universities Council Social Work Education Committee (JUC SWEC) to its individual university representatives and an electronic communications board for SWAs. Both of these routes were circulated twice but after a poor response, the authors wrote to each of the representatives of the Social Work Research Committee (JUC SWEC) to increase the response rate to 111, although not all the respondents answered all the questions. At present there is no accurate count of the number of social work academics but noting Moriarty *et al's* (2008) this would suggest a reasonable response rate although it is interesting to speculate why it was so difficult to get a sample of this size.

Over half of those who responded to the survey were female (54.2% n=52) with an average age of 53.32, most held a permanent position (94.1% n= 95) and were likely to be a senior lecturer in a post 1992 university or lecturer in a pre-1992 university. Academics were likely to have spent 13.16 years in social work practice before entering academia where they have been employed for the last 9.52 years. This assumes that that there is a single direction of travel from being a practitioner to becoming an academic. Whilst this may be true in most cases, it is not so in all. There are social workers who hold both academic and practitioner posts and those who have moved in and out of academia. Interestingly a third of those who responded occupied academic positions as professors, suggesting professors may be over- represented in this sample.

Table 14 below identifies a range of engagement activities undertaken by social work academics. The overall level of the engagement of UK SWAs in policy-related activities was 2.27 (.59). From the table it is clear there is a wide diversity of engagement activities. Of these activities on a scale of 1-4 (where 1 was never, 2 once, 3 a few times and 4 - frequently), the most frequent form of engagement activities were assisted in organizing service users (M=3.06), participated in a coalition (M=2.89), served in a policy-related committee (M=2.81) and participated in a policy related activity by social workers (M=2.80). The least likely forms of engagement were participated in an appeal to the courts (M=1.43), testified to a legislative committee (M= 1.44), was a speaker in a demonstration (M=1.55) and organized a protest activity or wrote a bog in a social network M=1.71).

Table 14: Levels of engagement in policy in the UK: Means, SDs and distribution (N=111)

Form of Policy Engagement (Abbreviated)	M (SD)	Never	Once/Few	Frequently
Participated in protest activity	2.75 (1.04)	20.4%	54.6%	25%
Interviewed in the press	2.47 (1.05)	27.5%	57.8%	14.7%
Served in a policy-related committee	2.81 (1.01)	16.2%	56.7%	27%

Advised an advocacy organization	2.42 (1.05)	25.7%	55%	19.3%
Assisted in organizing service-users	3.06 (.88)	10%	58.2%	31.8%
Worked with students	2.48 (1.09)	25.7%	53.2%	21.1%
Participated in a policy-related activity by social workers	2.80 (1.02)	16.4%	55.4%	28.2%
Advised policy makers	2.55 (1.07)	25.7%	55%	19.3%
Advised a policy-related committee	2.61 (1.07)	22.7%	54.6%	22.7%
Formulated a position paper	2.40 (1.06)	30.3%	55.9%	13.8%
Sent publications to policy makers	2.21 (1.12)	41.8%	45.5%	12.7%
Published an article in the press	2.24 (1.08)	34.2%	51.3%	14.4%
Testified in a legislative committee	1.44 (.82)	73.9%	23.4%	2.7%

Participated in a coalition	2.89 (1.02)	15.3%	53.1%	31.5%
Analyzed policy on behalf of policy makers or an advocacy organization	2.18 (1.09)	41.4%	48.6%	9.9%
Chaired a policy-related committee	1.86 (1.11)	58.7%	31.2%	10.1%
Organized a protest activity	1.71 (.98)	60.4%	34.2%	5.4%
Was a speaker at a demonstration	1.51 (.87)	70.9%	26.4%	2.7%
Participated in an appeal to the courts	1.43 (.83)	75.7%	21.6%	2.7%
Wrote a blog in a social network	1.71 (1.05)	64.9%	26.1%	9.0%

Note: The scale ranged from 1(never); 2(once); 3 (a few times); and 4 (frequently).

As can be seen from Table 15, the majority of SWAs engaged in influencing social policy with over half of the respondents reporting that they had frequent experience of formulating social welfare policy alternatives (65.2%), placing social problem on the public agenda (61.5%) or had engaged in placing a welfare

policy limitation on the public agenda (57.8%). Less than half of SWAs (41.4% on both questions) had been frequently involved in formulating social welfare policy or evaluating social welfare policy.

Table 15: Levels of engagement in policy stages in the UK: Means, SDs and distribution (N=111)

The stage:	M (SD)	Never	A few times/ Frequently
Placing a problem on the agenda	3.50 (1.17)	11.9%	61.5%
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	3.27 (1.39)	22%	57.8%
Formulating policy alternatives	3.49 (1.16)	11%	65.2%
Planning policy	2.86 (1.32)	26.4%	41.5%
Evaluating policy	3.35 (1.32)	15.7%	41.5%

Note: The scale ranged from 1=never to 5= frequently.

Examples of this engagement include being seconded to government, giving evidence and advising parliamentary committees, chairing or acting as an expert to government committees, speaking at party political conferences, speaking and writing to Members of Parliament, giving interviews to the media and publishing research in national newspapers, engaging with local authorities on key issues, providing position papers, lobbying with service users and speaking at public and open evenings.

Having indicated that there was a high level of engagement in seeking to influence social welfare policy, the perceived impact of these actions is somewhat less (see table 16). The means of reading, citing and drawing upon recommendation's by the national government, local government or by advocacy organisations were all within the "a few times' category (on a 1-5 scale with 1 never and 5 very extensively). There was a slight increase in terms of impact with advocacy organization over policy makers, but this was still quite marginal.

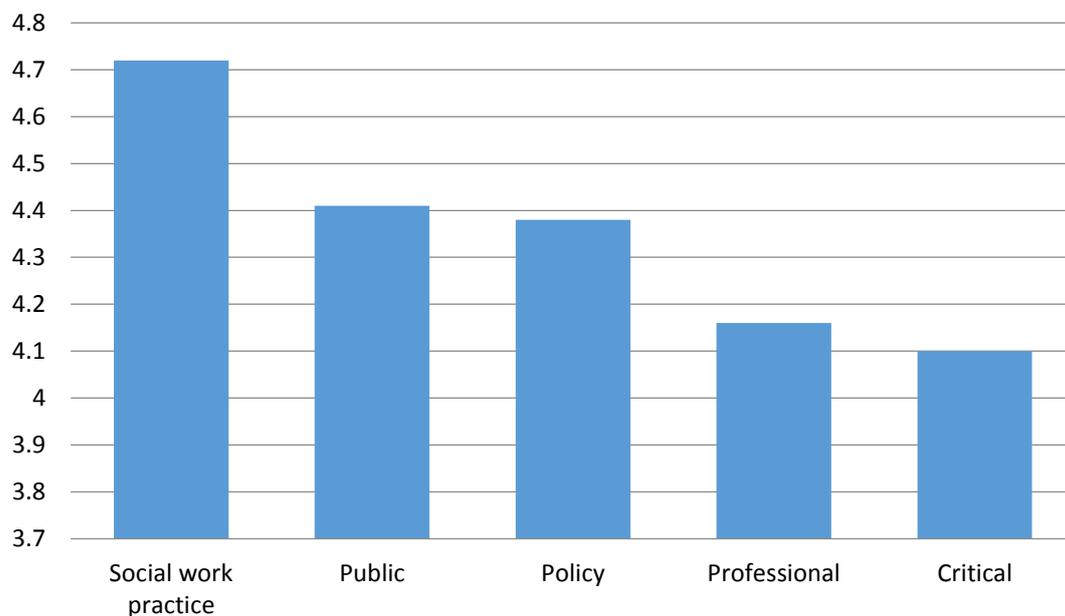
Table 16: Perceived impact of SWAs in the UK: Means, SDs and distribution (N=111)

The item:	M (SD)	Never	Extensively /Very extensively
<u>Policy makers:</u>			
Read publications	3.30 (1.73)	13.6%	7.3%
Cited publications	3.16 (1.80)	19.3%	6.4%
Drew upon recommendations	3.17 (1.74)	17.3%	6.3%
<u>Advocacy organizations:</u>			
Cited publications	3.38 (1.71)	12.8%	10.1%
Drew upon recommendations	3.47 (1.70)	10.3%	10.3%

Note: The scale ranged from 1=never to 5= Very intensively; 6=Don't know.

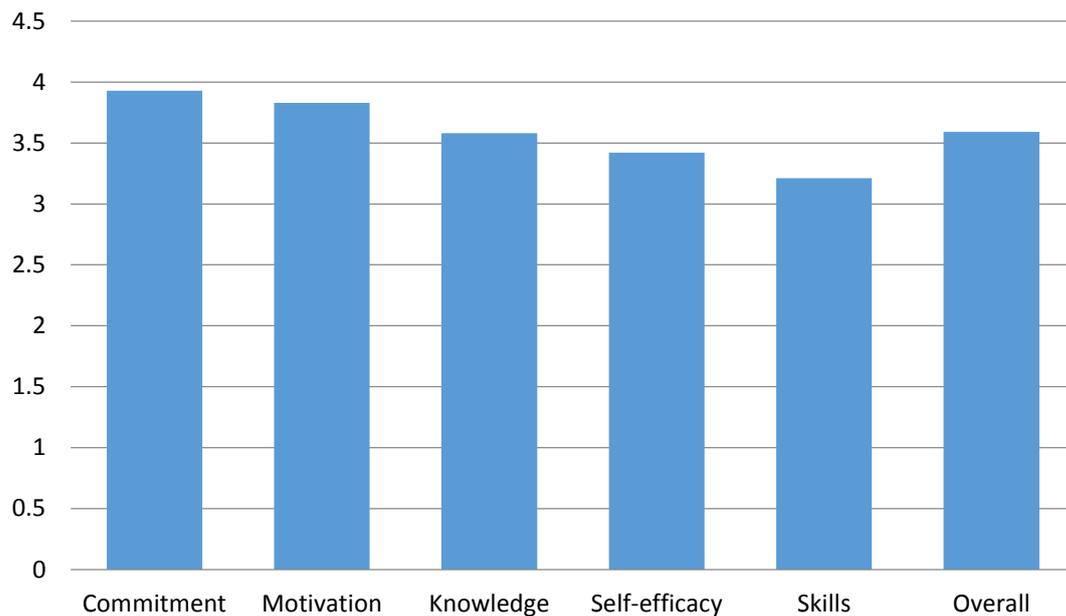
When the questionnaire respondents were asked about their role as SWAs on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) all the results clustered between the agree and strongly agree section of the scale (see figure 6). This suggests that all five roles were significant for SWAs. However, it was not surprising that the nearly everyone indicated that their role was concerned with influencing and developing social work students for practice (M = 4.72) followed by influencing the general public and how they think about social problems (M= 4.41). This was then followed by seeking to influence welfare policy (M=4.38). Slightly fewer academics agreed that their role should also include developing knowledge and influencing their fellow academic professionals (M=4.16) and also agreeing about the importance of the need to promote critical social thinking (M=4.10).

Figure 6: The perceived role of SWAs in the UK



The SWAs were asked to identify the degree (on a scale of 1-5 where 1 was not at all and 5 to a large extent) to which they had the required competencies to influence welfare policy. The highest scored item (see figure 7) referred to having a commitment to influencing welfare policy with a mean of $M=3.93$ and 38 (34.2%) of respondents indicating 'to a large extent' and none indicating 'not at all'. The second highest competency referred to was having the motivation ($M=3.83$), followed by having the knowledge to influence welfare policy ($M=3.57$). However when asked whether they had the self-efficacy or skills to engage effectively in influencing welfare policies, the results were less positive ($M= 3.42$ and $M= 3.21$ respectively).

Figure 7: Personal policy involvement competencies of SWAs in the UK



Having identified that SWAs are committed and motivated to influence welfare policies but identifying the need for greater skills and self-efficacy, it is important to examine how their universities support them in achieving this. On a scale of 1-

5 where 1 = 'not at all' and 5 to 'a large extent' the greatest influence on SWAs is the department or school in which they are employed (M=3.58) followed by the influence and expectations of students (M=3.49) and lastly their university administration (M=3.32) (see figure 8). These mean scores were all very similar with only a mean difference between scores of 0.26.

Figure 8: Support within academic institutions for SWAs' policy involvement in the UK

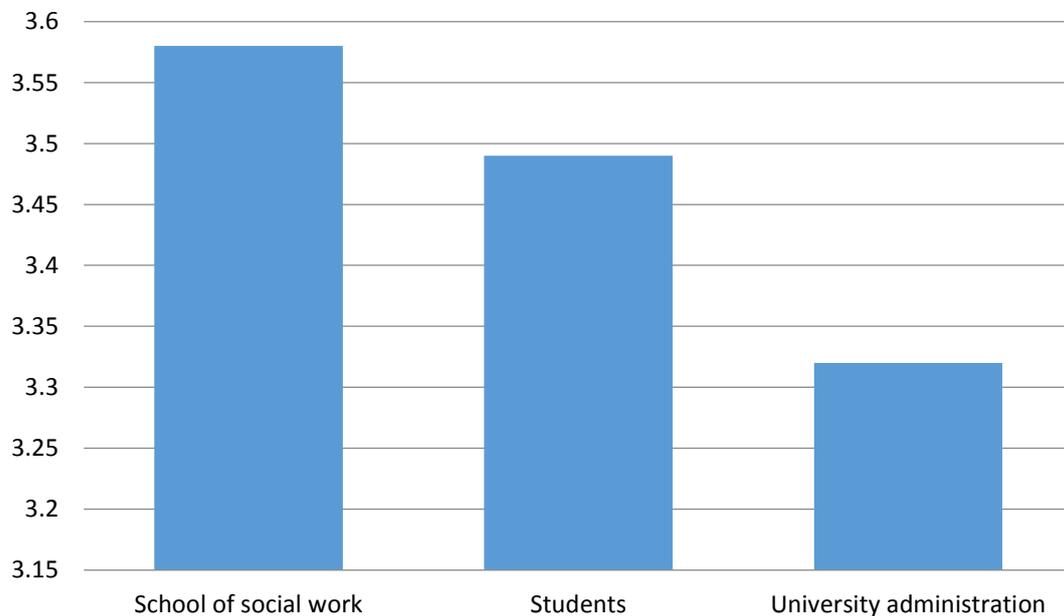


Table 17: The associations between the predictor variables and the level of engagement in policy in the UK (N=111)

The predictor:	Engagement in Policy
Perceived academic environment support:	
Students support	0.14

School of social work support	0.22*
University administration support	0.43***
Perceived social role of academia	0.04
Perceived personal role:	
Developing social work practice	-0.12
Policy	0.21*
Professional	0.12
Public	0.09
Critical	0.05
Perceived policy practice competencies	0.72***

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Table 18: Regression coefficients (B, β) of the explained variance of SWAs` policy involvement in the UK

Step		B	SEB	B	R^2	ΔR^2
1	Age (years)	.02**	.01	.29**	.24	.24
	Gender (Male)	.35**	.11	.29**		
	Seniority (Years)	.02	.01	.17		
2	Age (years)	.02*	.01	.27*	.32	.11

	Gender (Male)	.32**	.11	.27**		
	Seniority (Years)	.01	.01	.09		
	School support	-.04	.06	-.08		
	University support	.22**	.07	.40**		
3	Age (years)	.02*	.01	.24*	.36	.04
	Gender (Male)	.40***	.11	.33***		
	Seniority (Years)	.02	.01	.17		
	School support	-.01	.06	-.03		
	University support	.18**	.07	.33**		
	Perceived personal role (policy)	.16*	.07	.22*		
5	Age (years)	.01	.01	.12	.63	.26
	Gender (Male)	.25**	.08	.21**		
	Seniority (Years)	.01	.01	.07		
	School support	-.08	.04	-.16		
	University support	.11*	.05	.19*		
	Perceived personal role (policy)	.08	.05	.11		
	Competencies	.42***	.05	.62***		

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Based on the result from correlation analysis, only background variables and other predictors that have significant relationship with level of engagement were included in a series of multiple regression models to predict the level of engagement of SWAs in policy practice. In the final model 4, a substantial 63% of the variance of the model was explained by predictors that include age, gender, seniority in academia, support from university administration, support from the school of social work, perceived role in policy development and level of perceived personal policy involvement competencies. Specifically, the most significant unique factor is level of perceived competencies, followed by gender and support from university administration for engagement in policy practice. This means that academics who are male, perceived greater competencies in policy involvement and received more support from university administration are more likely to engage in policy practice.

It is clear from these results although SWAs may currently feel challenged by the external world they remain committed and motivated to become more effective in influencing welfare policy and that this could be best supported by their university administration and developing policy influencing skills.

Discussion

This cross-national study undertook a quantitative examination of the involvement of faculty members in social work in the social policy formulation process in four different countries – Israel, Portugal, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom. In all, 451 academics employed in schools of social work in the four countries participated in the survey.

While there were differences in the findings of the researchers in the four countries, a number of commonalities also emerged. The findings showed that SWAs were involved in diverse policy-related activities and with varying levels of intensity. The overall mean level of involvement in these activities can be described as moderate and it varied from 1.95 (.63) in Portugal, 2.01 (.62) in Israel, 2.27 (.59) in the UK to 2.29 (1.04) in Puerto Rico.

Table 19 offers a comparative perspective of the policy-related activities undertaken most by SWAs in our study.

Table 19: The most common ("frequently undertaken") policy-related activities among SWAs

Israel (N=143)	Portugal (N=103)	Puerto Rico (N=84)	UK (N=111)
Participated in protest activity	Worked with students	Participated in protest activity	Assisted in organizing service users
Interviewed in the press	Participated in protest activity	Participated in policy-related activities by social workers	Participated in a coalition
Served in a policy related committee	Assisted in organizing service users	Worked with students	Served in a policy related committee

Advised an advocacy organization	Interviewed in the press	Served in a policy related committee	Participated in policy-related activities by social workers
Assisted in organizing service users	Participated in a policy-related activity by social workers	Participated in a coalition	Participated in protest activity
Worked with students	Advised policy makers	Assisted in organizing service users	Advised a policy-related committee
Participated in policy-related activities by social workers	Published an article in the press	Formulated a position paper	Advised policy makers

Table 19 clearly shows that there is marked similarity in the activities most frequently undertaken by SWAs in the different countries. In all of the four, working with service users and social workers are frequently undertaken policy related activities as is participation in protest activities. In most of the countries, working with students and serving on policy related committees are also among the more frequent policy-related activities undertaken by SWAs. The findings also reveal that SWAs tended to engage most in more active, public sphere routes of influence within the policy arena (such as participation in protests and serving

in a policy related committee) and in activities aimed at affecting policies in conjunction with traditional social work partners (service users and practitioners). The types of policy-related activities generally associated with academics - advising policy makers and policy committees, formulating a position paper and sending publications to policy makers - were generally less common among SWAs.

However, differences between the countries also emerge. Thus, in the Portuguese sample, there is a greater tendency to employ the mass media while among UK SWAs advising policy makers and policy committees is more common. Unlike the other cohorts, Israeli SWAs tend to work more frequently with advocacy organizations and participating in a coalition was a more common form of policy-related activity among Puerto Rican SWAs than among social work faculty in the other countries studied.

Table 20: SWAs' involvement in policy stages - M(SD)

	Israel	Portugal	Puerto Rico	UK
The stage:	(N= 143)	(N= 103)	(N= 84)	(N= 111)
Placing a problem on the agenda	3.07 (1.27)	2.48(1.24)	2.47 (.95)	3.50 (1.17)
Placing a policy limitation on the agenda	2.65 (1.29)	2.37(1.16)	2.42 (.97)	3.27 (1.39)

Formulating policy alternatives	2.50 (1.36)	2.25(1.16)	2.56 (.93)	3.49 (1.16)
Planning policy	2.08 (1.28)	1.93(1.19)	2.19 (1.07)	2.86 (1.32)
Evaluating policy	2.17 (1.27)	2.16(1.25)	2.68 (.99)	3.35 (1.32)

The findings regarding engagement in various stages of the policy process reflect divergences between the countries. While SWAs in Israel and Portugal are involved more in the initial stages of the process and tend to focus upon placing issues and policy limitations on the agenda, this is not the case in Puerto Rico and the UK. In Puerto Rico there is greater involvement in the formulation and evaluating policy stages, while in the UK SWAs appear to be involved to an equal degree in most of the policy formulation stages. It is interesting to note that SWAs in all the four countries are least involved in the planning policy stage.

Table 21: Perceived impact - M(SD)

The Item	Israel (N= 143)	Puerto Rico (N= 84)	UK (N= 111)
<u>Policy makers:</u>			
Read publications	2.65 (.14)	3.28 (2.05)	3.30 (1.73)

Cited publications	2.60 (.16)	3.17 (2.11)	3.16 (1.80)
Drew upon recommendations	2.68 (.15)	3.09 (1.98)	3.17 (1.74)
<u>Advocacy organizations:</u>			
Cited publications	2.99 (.16)	3.40 (2.02)	3.38 (1.71)
Drew upon recommendations	3.03 (.15)	3.08 (1.92)	3.47 (1.70)

Assessing their impact upon policy makers and advocacy organizations, the data from three countries (this data is missing in the Portuguese case) indicates that SWAs generally perceive of their impact as moderate, at best. The impact upon advocacy organizations is higher than that on policy makers in all of the three countries, possibly indicating that advocacy organizations are more accessible or more likely to seek assistance in thinking about policy than formal policy makers. Another conclusion that emerges from the table is that clearly the Puerto Rican and UK SWAs assess their impact as greater than that of their Israeli colleagues.

Table 22: The explanatory variables

The variable:	Israel (N = 143)	Portugal (N = 106)	Puerto Rico (N = 77)	UK (N = 111)
Perceived academic				

environment				
support:				
Students	3.76 (1.08)	3.00 (1.0)	3.92 (1.25)	3.49 (1.53)
School of	3.39 (.89)	3.25 (1.17)	3.02 (1.27)	3.58 (1.24)
social work				
Academic	3.15 (.92)	3.36 (1.26)	2.61 (1.50)	3.32 (1.09)
institution				
Perceived				
personal role:				
DSWP	4.65 (.63)	4.67 (.43)	4.70 (.75)	4.72 (.82)
Policy	4.37 (.67)	4.31 (.63)	4.43 (.86)	4.38 (.81)
Professional	4.25 (.66)	4.31 (.72)	4.50 (.84)	4.16 (.82)
Public	4.23 (.73)	4.02 (.79)	4.09 (1.12)	4.41 (.79)
Critical	3.97 (.91)	4.26 (.75)	4.40 (.95)	4.10 (.91)
Perceived	3.41(1.02)		3.02 (1.31)	3.59 (.87)
policy				
practice				
competencies				

With regard to support from the academic environment for policy-related activities, in all the four countries the level of support by both the university administration and the school of social work is perceived by the respondents as mediocre to moderate. These findings appear to indicate that SWAs do not sense that the institutional environment encourages their involvement in policy

processes. However, apart from the Portuguese cohort, SWAs in all the other countries rate support for their policy-related activities among students as stronger. This is particularly the case for Puerto Rico and Israel.

Looking at the perceived personal roles of the participants as social work academics, clear-cut similarities emerge. The SWAs in all the four countries tend to strongly identify with all the five role types, though (perhaps not surprisingly) this is greatest with that of the development of social work practice. It would appear that the scholars do regard playing a societal role as an integral part of their academic activities. In the context of this study, the high level of support for a policy role among the SWAs in all the four countries is of particular interest.

Despite the SWAs' marked support for their policy role, the findings regarding their perceived personal competencies to engage in policy-related activities is only moderate (here again the data from the Portuguese cohort is missing).

Thus, while SWAs are committed to engaging in policy, they are less confident regarding their ability to actually do so.

Table 23: Pierson Correlations with Academic Policy Practice (APP)

The	Israel	Portugal	Puerto Rico	UK
variable:				
Perceived				
academic				
environment				
support:				

Students	0.04	0.39**	0.28*	0.14
School of social work	0.01	0.31**	0.14	0.22*
Academic institution	0.13	0.32**	0.25	0.43***
Perceived social role of academia	0.19*	0.06	0.18	0.04
Perceived personal role:				
DSWP	0.15	0.10	0.08	-0.12
Policy	0.40***	0.11	0.18	0.21*
	0.30***	0.02	0.05	0.12
Professional				
Public	0.29***	0.04	0.10	0.09
Critical	0.20*	0.015	0.05	0.05
Perceived policy practice competencies	0.65***		0.57**	0.72***

Not unexpectedly, the strongest association with engagement in policy-related activities among SWAs is with competencies. Clearly, SWAs will be more likely to engage in policy-related activities if they sense that they are competent to do so.

Differences between the countries emerge with regard to the association between institutional support and perceived academic roles and engagement in policy. While in two of the countries (Portugal and the UK) the academic institution is strongly associated with policy involvement and in Puerto Rico this is true of student's support, in the Israeli case there is no association. By contrast, in the Israeli case role perceptions are strongly associated with the policy engagement of SWAs, though this is not the case in the other cohorts.

This study has three main limitations. The first is its cross-sectional nature, which enables us to learn about associations between variables but not about causality. Second, the findings are based on self reporting. This creates the possibility of social desirability impact and they are obviously are memory-dependent. Finally, through cross-national, it focuses on faculty members of schools of social work in only four countries, which inevitably limits generalizations based on its findings.

Its limitations notwithstanding, this study of SWAs' activities in the social policy arena sheds some new light on the role of social work academia in different countries in the social policy formulation process and the factors associated with it. The first quantitative, cross-national study of the policy role of faculty members of schools of social work, it shows that SWAs seek to influence social policy beyond the limited confines of research dissemination, which has been the focus of most inquiry in the academia-policy nexus literature. While the level of engagement is sometimes low and uneven, it does indicate that SWAs in different countries seek to move beyond their academic roles and to make good on a

commitment to social change, an integral component of the social work profession.

The findings of the study have implications for social work practice and education. Social work educators often enjoy a privileged position in society. They have access to resources and knowledge, and have the status and employment position that can enable them to play a role in the policy formulation process in their societies. This alongside their other academic and teaching roles. As such, they can contribute to the furthering of social justice in their societies and serve as crucial partners to the effort of other social workers, advocates and service-users in their social policy efforts. It would appear that SWAs do play this role but clearly there is much room for enhancing it. The findings of this study indicate that strengthening their sense of efficacy to engage in policy can contribute to this effort.

As social work educators, a policy role is not only important in of itself but it is also crucial for two other reasons. By engaging in policy practice, SWAs can better bring this knowledge to the classroom and be better able to demonstrate to students first-hand how they can emulate this role. Moreover, by engaging in policy-related activities, social work educators can serve as role-models for their students and thus enthuse them to follow in their footsteps.

If social justice and policy practice are the key social work values that the literature claims them to be, then social work academics can play a major role in the profession's effort to further these values. Their efforts and the impact of these on society and their students are important and should be encouraged.

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