

ABSTRACT

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL  
WORK STUDENTS REGARDING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION  
AT THREE HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES  
AND UNIVERSITIES

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This study explores the attitudes and perceptions among social work students about political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Eighty-four (84) survey participants were selected for the study utilizing random selection sampling. Survey participants were composed of currently enrolled social work students. The questionnaire used in the survey was comprised of two sections with a total of 25 questions (23 quantitative questions and 2 qualitative questions). Department chairs and professors, under the supervision of the researcher, administered the questionnaire to the participants. Findings of the study indicated that self-efficacy affects a student's perception of political participation and the social work

school/department education's successful linkage of practice to social action affects student attitudes of political participation. Recommendations for continued research and practice are discussed.

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AND UNIVERSITIES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Members of the social work profession are expected to advocate and be a voice for those who are silent. Section 6.04 Social and Political Action of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics states the following:

Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services, and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice. (National Association of Social Workers, 2008, para. 169)

Unfortunately, most social work interventions are disproportionately centered on individualized advocacy. This issue is evident as one searches job sites such as indeed.org, opportunityknocks.org, monster.com, and careerbuilder.com in Southeastern states such as South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. This issue poses a threat to the longevity and thread of the social work profession. This issue also poses a threat to the effectiveness of the profession to truly aid in eradicating social

issues. Most of the jobs listed on popular job search engines are of clinical nature.

Gambrill (2001) states, “The growth of social work has not honored obligations in our code of ethics, for example to inform clients, to empower them, and to offer competent services. A great disconnect continues between what we say we do and value and what we actually do” (p. 166).

There is much validity in Gambrill’s (2001) statement, especially in relation to social work and policy. Social workers have a commitment to ethics, values, etc., but have historically “kept quiet” at the table, while different policies have been enacted, with which social work professionals may not personally agree. They also continue to work in entities under ineffective policies, which are overly unjust towards social work clients, and while social workers complain with their colleagues, they rarely challenge policy. Ezell (2001) found that 90% of social workers reported advocacy as an integral part of the social work profession, but 75% of social workers who performed advocacy performed it in direct practice (Schneider & Lester, 2001). If social workers are to become more politically active, schools of social work must play a vital role.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a lack of research regarding the attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation. The few studies that addressed social workers and political participation researched social workers who already graduated from college and who were already in the field. Students of color, especially African-American social work students, lack a voice in this research subject matter. In the majority of studies,

study participants were students from predominately white institutions (PWIs) (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Swank, 2012; Lane et al., 2012).

In addition, often African Americans are the participants and not the researchers in regard to issues pertaining to African Americans. This voice is critical to research and political participation, especially in the Southeastern region of the United States where there is a continued legacy of African-American social justice/civil rights leaders striving to impact change.

This voice could help bridge the gap between social activists and the social work profession, and the past with the present. Much of the current data focused on nonsocial work students and political participation (Lane & Humphreys, 2011; Ritter, 2008; Rocha, et al., 2010). It is the goal of the researcher that this study will shed light on the how current social work education and self-efficacy may impact attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation. Schools and departments of social work are critical in strengthening the role of social workers.

The definition of political participation consists of the following: lobbying, educating populations on a social problem or a piece of proposed legislation, working on a political campaign, voting, contributing money, serving on a political action committee or party, service as a public official, presenting issues to government official, oral testimony or other communication via phone, letter, fax, or e-mail, and demonstrations/protests (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001). The method of demonstrations/protests is rarely introduced as a political act among social workers. This thought exists due to the feeling of social workers possessing “too much skill” (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001, p. 321) to demonstrate and protest.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research study is to assess the attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation at three Southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States. The participants of the study include currently enrolled social work students (BSW, MSW, PhD).

### **Research Questions**

- 1) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitude?
- 2) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception?
- 3) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation?
- 4) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and attitude?
- 5) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and perception?
- 6) Is there a statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and political participation?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses for the study are as follows:

- 1) There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitude.

- 2) There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception.
- 3) There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation.
- 4) There is no statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and attitude.
- 5) There is no statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and perception.
- 6) There is no statistically significant relationship between the self-efficacy and political participation.

### **Significance of the Study**

Findings from the study will contribute to the knowledge of attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities. These findings can be used to strengthen social welfare policy curricula/pedagogy and ultimately social work program curricula globally.

Findings will provide great insight regarding the importance of exploring factors that affect the political participation of new social work graduates. These findings will also highlight ways in which social work schools and programs can strengthen their curricula. This study is in direct alignment with the goals of the Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr., Social Work Reinvestment Act to reinvest in the social work profession as well as reinvest service to eradicate social ills. It is hoped the findings from

this study will give rise to the importance of the effectiveness and integrity of the social work profession as we move toward the future.

Also, this study is in direct alignment with the current political climate on and off campuses across the United States. Current student activism causes include anti-racism, college tuition, sexual assault, and anti-violence centered on the killings of Mike Brown (killed by white police officer), Amadou Diallo (killed by white police officer), Eric Gardner (killed by white police officer) and Trayvon Martin (killed by white neighborhood watch volunteer).

The study illustrates the need for more in depth research on the relevance and priority that political participation must take in the profession of social work, as well as, how programs can effectively train social work students to be politically active in whatever area they decide to practice. Many studies related to social work students and curriculum is focused on direct practice and interventions (Rawlings, 2012; Lord & Ludic, 2012; Forgey & Young, 2014). These areas are important; however, it is critical for social workers to be “at the table” politically regardless of their level of practice as decisions are being made regarding the profession and the people we serve.

Chapter I explores the problem, purpose, research questions and the exploration of the attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Chapter II provides a literary overview of Student Activism and Social Movements, the history of Social Work, African-American Pioneers in Social Work, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Attitudes and perceptions of Social Work students regarding political participation, and /the theoretical framework for which the study exists.



Chapter III discusses the methodology for this study and includes the research design, description of research site, sample and population, instruments used, treatment of data, and limitations of this study. Chapter IV addresses the presentation of findings. Chapter V presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the review of the literature was to lay a scholarly foundation in order to establish a need for the study. This chapter is a review of the current literature on the history student activism and social movements, social work advocacy, African-American Pioneers in Social Work, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, attitudes and perceptions of Social Work students regarding political participation, modern day political participation of students at HBCUs, and the theoretical framework for which the study exists.

#### **Student Activism and Social Movements**

Student revolutions can be traced back as early as 1848 in Germany and Austria where students were active in several movements to include equal opportunity which took place in the university environment (Lipset, 1968). In Imperial China, students helped to overthrow the dynasty in 1911 pushing China toward modernization and ideas of liberty. Students studying abroad from Asian and African countries were vital in the anti-colonization movements (Lipset, 1968). The Negritude movement, a popular African anti-colonization movement, was a cause with a foundation in literature and ideology occurred in France in the 1930s. The founders of this movement included students studying in France, such as Aimé Césaire, a Martinican literary scholar who

wrote the *Discourse on Colonialism*, a letter to the colonized expressing the barbaric attitude of the colonizer and the unhappiness of the colonized (Sharpley-Whiting, 2000), and Paulette Nardal of the “Nardal Sisters” *La Femme Dans La Cite*, a journal of feminist ideas that explored themes of exile, alienation, gender, and race. She tells of a story of an Antillean female domestic worker who experiences “displacement, hostility, and cultural and racial alienation in France” (Sharpley-Whiting, 2002, p. 10).

American student political activism bloomed in the 1960s but can be traced back to the 1930s (Beasley et al., 2001). In the 1930s, the students organized the American Youth Congress (AYC) supported by Eleanor Roosevelt. The AYC lobbied for racial justice, increased federal spending on education, and an end to mandatory participation in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) for male college students (Beasley et al., 2001). In the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson did not run for reelection due to the successes of student demonstrations against his policies regarding Vietnam (Altbach & Cohen, 1990). Students were also catalysts for change in “American values and attitudes surrounding the areas of gender, reproductive rights, music, and social norms” (Altbach & Cohen, 1990, p. 32).

Modern student activist movements vary in subject, size, and success, including: public and private school students; elementary, middle, senior, undergraduate, and graduate students; and all races, socio-economic backgrounds, and political perspectives (Fletcher, 2006). According to Altbach and Cohen (1990), “Students were also at the forefront of a major change in American values and attitudes - particularly in areas such as relations between the sexes, reproductive rights, music, and social norms” (p. 32).

Greely and Spaeth (1970) conducted a longitudinal study of 1961 alumni. Their research showed that in the years since graduation, the alumni moved away from Democratic political affiliation towards “independents,” while the net loss among Republicans was quite small. However, the alumni were far more likely to describe themselves as “liberal” than they were to describe their parents with the same term. The “independents” were more likely to be sympathetic regarding both black and student movements than the Democrats or the Republicans (Greely & Spaeth, 1970).

Even conservative independents were more radical than conservative Democrats or Republicans. Lastly, there was a change from Democratic preference among one's parents to independent, which correlated with the attendance at elite universities and liberal arts colleges (Greely & Spaeth, 1970).

Obershall (1980) focused on the theory of conflict group formation. In the United States, during the 1960s, much civil strife and social unrest, as well as non-violent collective actions, were loosely structured. Obershall describes the civil rights and black power movement, the student movement, and the anti-war movement as a “loosely structured collective action...that is created by a loose coalition of activists, part-timers and sympathizers whose boundaries are ill-defined and shifting, who lack a common, central leadership, organization and clear-cut procedures for deciding upon a common course of action” (p. 345). “If one puts broad social movements and revolutions under the microscope, one will often observe a loose structure” (p. 345). Obershall continues to express how hundreds of groups and organizations were short-lived, scattered, and lacking direct communication.

The goals of collective action are frequently collective goods, such as terminating the draft, stopping an unpopular war, getting legislation passed or repealed, and rescinding increased food prices. Collective action is often undertaken against the constituted authorities or privileged social strata protected by the authorities. Obershall (1980) concludes that even if the collective action is legal and non-violent, it does involve some effort and cost (risk of arrest, injuries and perhaps even death) to participants” (p. 345).

Jung (2011) found that other demographic variables such as gender, age, and race have a significant association with political participation. Contrary to SES (Socio-economic status), which impacts gender, age, and race, on participation is rather complicated (Jung, 2011). Contrary to the general belief that whites participate in politics more than blacks, empirical studies have documented that blacks, compared to whites, engage in politics more when socio-economic factors are taken into account (Leighley & Veditz, 1999; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Verba & Nie, 1972). Two psychological theories have been advanced to explain this pattern. Compensatory theory posits that blacks tend to be politically active in order to overcome societal exclusion and feelings of inferiority (Babchuk & Thompson, 1962; Orum, 1966). The ethnic community approach posits that people in a minority group develop strong feelings of group identity and attachment, which makes members keenly aware of group norms that call for political actions to improve the social status of the group (Jung, 2011).

Political circumstances of high importance and interests are often shared by members of the same racial group. During the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama’s candidacy for president enhanced political engagement by blacks (Jung, 2011).

Blacks were following the election more attentively, contributed more money and time to political campaigns than other Americans, and voter registration by blacks significantly increased compared to elections in the last several decades (Philpot, Shaw, & McGowen, 2009).

Ransford (1972) tested the hypothesis that working class respondents (white Los Angeles residents, N = 477) are especially antagonistic toward the black and student movements. In support of the hypothesis, working class persons and those with less than a high school education (in contrast to those higher in the occupational and educational hierarchies) are more likely to: “(a) express punitive attitudes toward student demonstrators; (b) oppose granting students more power; and (c) feel blacks are pushing too hard for things they don't deserve” (Ransford, 1972, p. 333). To locate rationales that would explain these relationships, intervening and specification variables were introduced in the analysis. These variables were respect for authority, belief in the American Dream, belief that the needs of the working man are neglected, and perceived powerlessness.

### **The Atlanta Student Movement**

The students of the Atlanta University Center (AUC), a consortium of HBCUs, presented an agenda to focus on jobs, housing, voting, hospitals, law enforcement, and access to public facilities such as movie theaters, concert halls and restaurants (Burns, 2010).

We want to state clearly and unequivocally that we cannot tolerate, in a nation professing democracy and among people professing Christianity,

the discriminatory conditions under which the Negro is living today in Atlanta, Georgia — supposedly one of the most progressive cities in the South. (Burns, 2010, p. 76)

The collective actions of these students catapulted a national student movement. The past executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Ella Baker, traveled to North Carolina to organize student leaders and together they formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She worked with students on how to orchestrate nonviolent protests (Burns, 2010).

On “Black Friday,” the busiest shopping day of the year, AUC students headed out to the stores and were backed by older black supporters and a few white students from Emory University and Agnes Scott College (Burns, 2010). The boycotts and other political demonstrations continued throughout the holiday shopping season. “Downtown businesses suffered, and Atlanta's white leadership was ready to negotiate, but it would take almost another year before restaurants in Atlanta integrated” (Burns, 2010, p. 119). Across the country, student activists protested segregation at restaurants and hotels, on Greyhound buses, and in precincts. “Many of the Atlanta Student Movement leaders went on to play roles in the national civil rights movement. Julian Bond would become communications director of SNCC and later serve in the Georgia House of Representatives” (Burns, 2010, p. 120).

Morris (1981) argues that the Southern sit-in movement of 1960, though it appears to have developed in the spontaneous manner described by classic collective behavior theory, actually grew out of pre-existing institutions and organizational forms. The spread of the sit-ins followed the networks of these pre-existing institutional

relationships. Factors internal to the black community--churches, colleges, protest organizations, and leaders--were responsible for nurturing and developing the movement. The analysis is based on primary data collected from archives and interviews with civil rights leaders (Morris, 1981).

Obershall (1978) explores that the decline of the 1960s movements in the United States--the civil rights, black power, anti-war, and student movements sometimes collectively referred to as the Movement--in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has, so far, not been satisfactorily explained. Because the movements are recent history, there are problems about sources and information. There is an overabundance of data, much of it still unexploited, undigested, and unassessed for validity and accuracy, yet some important pieces in the puzzle are still missing.

Obershall (1978) argues

Student Nonviolence Coordination Committee (SNCC) field workers tended to be college graduates or college dropouts from a working class, Southern black background. SNCC's drive ran into the realities of Southern resistance and violence when its staffers and supporters were harassed, shot, beaten, and jailed. (p. 1257)

SNCC was also the first major movement organization to experience the tensions and divisions besetting the Social Movement Organizations (SMOs). Obershall (1978) concludes to express the internal tensions between white liberals and radicals and black SNCC members, eventually were resolved when SNCC opted to become all black.



### **Black Student Movements at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)**

Claybrook (2013) examines the Black Student Movement at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) from 1968 to 1978 revealing

how the climate and influence of Black Power energized and mobilized Black students to navigate and negotiate the university in their quest to demand respect, as well as their request for the social and academic resources they needed to maximize their college experience. (p. 1)

The creation of the Black Student Union (BSU), the Office of Black Student Services (OBSS), and the African-American Studies Department (AFAM) institutionalized the Black Student Movement at LMU. The “unfavorable and hostile conditions on campus led to the formation of the BSU” (Claybrook, 2013, p. 1), which became a central black student organizing body. When LMU responded respectfully to black students illustrating the institutional sincerity about their concerns, the students responded in kind, although trying to maintain as much as institutional power as possible (Claybrook, 2013).

Claybrook (2013) expresses this history cannot be taken for granted. The Black Students’ Union, the African-American Studies Department, and the Afro-American Studies Program presently called the Office of Black Student Services are the long lasting success of the Black Student Movement at LMU. It gave birth to and institutionalized a movement demanding respect and an asserting of their humanity (Claybrook, 2013). Lastly, Claybrook posits that it is extremely important to recognize and analyze the “history and context of Black Power and the Black Student Movement not only to understand their genesis, but also to understand our contemporary responsibilities to Black students, their history and culture, and their humanity” (p. 15).

According to Rogers (2012), hundreds of thousands of black students forced the institutionalization of the discipline of Black Studies as part of a larger Black Student Movement between the years of 1965-1970 that diversified higher education. The abundance of student protests and conferences led to the institutionalization of Black Studies in 1969 (Rogers, 2012). The discipline of Black Studies was institutionalized when black students walked into their dorm rooms in the fall of 1969.

Several Black students died; hundreds of Black students were injured and imprisoned; thousands of Black students were suspended and expelled; tens of thousands of Black students sacrificed their education through waging protests; hundreds of thousands of Black students participated in this vicious protracted freedom fight, this national Black Student Movement that not only institutionalized Black Studies, but compelled the diversification of higher education. (Rogers, 2012, p. 36)

Preer (1992) explores Richard P McCormick's description of the demonstrations on three New Jersey campuses in 1968 and 1969, and subsequent efforts to meet the demands for more black students and faculty, better support services, and programs in Afro-American studies. McCormick notes that after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., there was a shift in the demands and goals of the protesters, from integration to black power. He also notes the greater interest of white students in antiwar protests.

According to Pitts (1976), Orum addresses the task of examining variables involved in civil rights protest by black students in the South, from 1960 to 1964. He examined the dimensions of political participation such as protests by black students. Pitts noted that Orum also explored characteristics and motivations of protesters, as well

as at economic and social conditions that might be connected with protest activity.

Orum's sample consisted of 3,500 black seniors in 50 predominantly black colleges and universities in 1964 as part of a larger study by the National Opinion Research Center on the plans for graduate study of black and white college seniors (Pitts, 1976).

Orum examined three independent sets of conditions which may help explain black student protests in the period of the 1960s: (1) students' backgrounds and values; (2) their college-based activities and attitudes; and (3) variations in certain structural characteristics of the students' colleges and of the communities in which they existed (Pitts, 1976).

Pitts (1976) points out that Orum's findings consist of the following: (1) there was high political participation in campus organizations (particularly political organizations), and a critical attitude favoring innovation in the college; and (2) the direct link between student protest participation and whether the student's college was a residential college was situated in a community with a relatively small, stable, and thriving black population. Lastly, according to Pitts, Orum concludes economic forces may be critical in fostering protest in black youth, but they take the form of tensions in the larger community rather than the student's personal history and situation. Thus, the black students' efforts were not prompted much by their own frustration but by the social and economic condition of the local black population (Pitts, 1976).

Mati (2005) presented his experiences of studying at the Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. His first political responsibility on campus was to oversee a Black Students Movement table to enlist new members. The black students advocated daily for their right to higher education. A serious attempt at co-option of an educated

black middle-class element was central to the apartheid regime's strategy. The political consciousness of the black middle class in those began and ended mostly with color frustrations. Mati stated that, "Rhodes University failed many young men and women who could not perceive the meaning of academic freedom outside freedom of the individual and for society" (p. 196).

Although the institution tended towards complacency, there were many outstanding individuals distinguished by their courage and commitment among the lecturers and professors. Mati (2005) concludes with describing one of the most critical moments for Rhodes University being the case of African history. Black students had to work hard to retain the African History course under the administration of conservative liberals. Their contention was to drop African history under the determination that it was unimportant (Mati, 2005).

### **Historical Perspective of Social Work**

According to Wilkins (2014), black slaves were cared for on plantations, free blacks developed group support mechanisms as a rule of thumb, and all black people were excluded from care under early Poor Law provisions. To fully understand the historical delivery of social services to African Americans or members of the black community, one needs to take into account that in the early development of social welfare services, African Americans were cared for in separate historical spheres or excluded from governmental provisions under segregation customs. It is important for social work students to understand this duality and recognize that the early development of social welfare services transpired under parallel systems. This knowledge provides a

context for understanding and appreciating the African-American and/or black experience in the United States and North America (Wilkins, 2014).

Jane Addams and other pioneers in the settlement house movement were politically active in campaigning for changes at the neighborhood and ward level (Addams, 1910). It was not until 1976 that NASW's National Board of Directors established a political action committee (PACE) and endorsed Jimmy Carter (Wolk et al., 2013).

The Freedman's Bureau signified the first federal assumption of social welfare responsibility (Olds, 1963). Black people were excluded from predominately white Charity Organization Societies and settlement houses in the 1800s and 1900s. Blacks created their own agencies in response to this exclusion (Jackson, 1978). During the depression era (1929-1940s), social workers sought to ameliorate the misery experienced by millions of people by lobbying elected officials to adopt more humane policies (Wolk et al., 2013). For example, subsequent to the passage of the Social Security Act and federally supported public welfare, social workers convinced legislators to adopt merit systems in the public social services (Leighninger, 1987).

During the Progressive Era (1890-1920), African-American social workers' practices were concerned with race work, which personalized problems to alleviate human suffering and organized and developed organizations to change the system (Carlton-LaNey, 1999). The race women and race men who engaged in this emerging social work profession were of the "talented tenth," the educated elite of African-American community (Dubois, 1970). Dominelli (1989) states:

The subtle dynamics of personal, institutional and cultural racism permeate the routine minutiae of social work policy and practice and these, combined with the strategies white social workers utilize to avoid the tricky task of confronting racism in their work, mean that black people's needs receive short shrift. (p. 392)

At the 1915 National Conference of Charities and Correction, in Baltimore, Maryland, a peculiar event occurred. Abraham Flexner expressed “social work was not a full profession” (Austin, 1983, p. 374). This event occurred at a critical point in history which challenged the current stance of the social work profession and also aided in the future intellectual development of the social work profession. The “Flexner myth” operates as a nonscientific assumption with uncontested validity (Austin, 1983).

The 1915 conference was a breaking point in the social work profession due to the climate growth of individuals interested in the social work profession. Volunteers at charity agencies were soon replaced with case workers. Positions were created in child welfare agencies created positions to investigate foster homes and existing settlement houses had full-time volunteers and paid staff (Austin, 1983). There was also a spring in new organizations tasked with specific social problems and problems unique to geographical areas.

These organizations were created by a group of elite women who were first generation graduates of northern women's colleges, from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds and were seeking a “career” rather than the traditional roles for women at that time, to include marriage, faith and homemaking (Austin, 1983).

Opportunities for “established” professions, which meant male dominated professions such as medicine, law, and clergy, were limited.

The profession of social work opened many doors for women to establish a career in a field that was female dominated (Austin, 1983). Flexner’s interest in social welfare heightened as he began giving lectures at the New York School in 1905, emphasizing social work should focus on policy – “wholesale social welfare” rather than case-by-case assistance-“retail welfare” (Austin, 1983, p. 359). Flexner also called for social work education curriculum to focus on “practice based wisdom” in preparing individuals to be “case-workers” first and “social investigators” second (Austin, 1983, p. 359). Austin (1983) provided insight to “debunking” Flexner’s myth:

The societal function of any single profession cannot be understood within some general category of occupations labeled as professions. The recognition of any occupation as a profession by its own participants and by others depends largely on the societal importance of the tasks that are performed, the role of individual judgments in carrying out those tasks, and the degree of preparation, including mastery of specialized bodies of knowledge, that is required to make consistent and wise judgments. (p. 374)

Throughout the history of the social work profession, there has been constant drive for professional recognition from universities, intellectual organizations, and other professions. The goal of linking research and practice continues to be one of the main factors in “proving” social work’s position as a profession (Austin, 1983). Austin (1983)

concludes with this statement as to how social workers should move into the future of the profession:

Indeed, it seems quite apparent that recognition as a profession is not granted by others, whoever those others might be, but is something that is established, bit by bit, an occupational group through its own efforts.

Indeed, the most important constituency for establishing public creditability as a profession maybe practicing social workers. When, or if, social workers themselves believe that social work is an established profession, and act on that belief, other groups in society are likely to agree. Basically, an occupation is recognized as a profession when it asserts a right to be accorded such recognition by other professional groups and can make it hold. (p. 374)

According to Wilkins (2014), social welfare in the United States and North America evolved from both public and private services which were temporary or reactionary. Prior to the New Deal, most of safety net oriented federal programs social welfare services were residual. Historically, even residual services were provided under segregation customs in most communities (Wilkins, 2014). Through the New Deal initiative, legislations such as the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Social Security Act, and Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) were enacted. Francis Perkins, a social worker, was elected as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor in which she drafted much of the New Deal legislation (Imler, 1997). In Karen Ferguson's *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta*, she states social workers associated with Atlanta



University were able to secure jobs in the welfare programs administered under FERA through the New Deal (Ferguson, 2002).

After World War II, an apparent reduction in social work political activity led some to call upon social workers to use their expertise and professional responsibility to raise their voices on the significant issues facing clients (Patti & Dear, 1975; Smith, 1979; Wade, 1966). Ribicoff (1962) stated the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare attempted to increase social workers' political assistance for many programs, observing that social workers had been absent too long from the halls of Congress. In the 1993, NASW Delegate Assembly, representatives supported an initiative to increase the number of social workers running for public office (Wolk et al., 2013).

As the United States prepares for the 21st century, many professional social workers are honoring their traditional commitments to the poor and disenfranchised through participation in policymaking. Like any social work practice venture, political activity requires commitment, expertise, and training to be successful (Wolk et al., 2013). From contributing to a national health care proposal to working on welfare reform, social workers are individually and collectively striving to influence political decision making at all levels of government (Wolk et al., 2013).

The social work profession's status as a profession usually depends on the presence of three conditions: (1) a recognized body of knowledge that can be transmitted and certified; (2) a defined and legitimized area of activity; and (3) a code of ethics regulating the exercise of the profession (Greenwood, 1957). Wakefield (1988) argued that the identity of a profession--what makes it distinctive--depends more on the uniqueness of its goals than on its technology. His point seems especially pertinent at a

time when technologies change rapidly and are often shared across professional boundaries. This last feature is certainly conspicuous in the people-helping professions, which share, to a large extent, the same body of theoretical knowledge.

In the field of mental health, for example, an amateur observer would have difficulty distinguishing between the modes of intervention of a psychiatric social worker, a clinical psychologist, and an educational counselor. Given that the range of social work roles is quite broad and that, for the most part, social work does not have a monopoly over these roles, Wakefield (1988) proposed that it is in the clarification of its goals that social work will distinguish itself from the other human services professions. His proposal for clarifying social work goals is derived from Rawls' (1971) interpretation of the terms of social contract in liberal democracies.

A survey of social work roles and interventions in the Western world reveals two common denominators: (1) primary involvement in facilitating access by deprived populations to basic social goods such as health care, food, shelter, income, education, and work; and (2) commitment to clients' self-determination based on the shared belief of human dignity. These two goals, according to Wakefield (1988), are what define the uniqueness of the social work profession. Social work has been more devoted to the implementation of the goal of self-determination than to social justice and policy practice is a necessary means to the implementation of the neglected goal of social justice (Specht, 1990).

If the value of social justice is taken to mean a commitment to ensure equal access for all basic social goods, then the typical roles of social workers as case managers and therapists fall short of that goal (McDonough, 1993). This is not to deny the merit or

necessity of those roles, but rather to point out that their objective is not to ensure a more equitable distribution of opportunity. Progress toward social justice requires direct involvement in the formation and modification of social policy.

Unfortunately, even in countries where welfare policy is most advanced and social workers have gained considerable recognition as service deliverers (France, Switzerland, Ukraine), their presence at the level of policy development and program leadership is hardly felt (Tilburg Institute, 1989).

Most often, the decision makers who define the contexts within which social workers practice their profession tend to have backgrounds in economics, law, management, and politics. This fact raises two problems. First, it subordinates the exercise of the social work profession to purposes and regulations that are not informed by and often not consistent with the goals and values of social work (Billingsley, 1964; Rein, 1970). Second, decisions that are likely to have a great impact on the lives of the recipients are made by people who have little or no direct knowledge of that constituency or contact with their circumstances (Billingsley, 1964; Rein, 1970).

Policy decisions are predominantly made from the top down without input from the ground up. In sum, the absence of social workers from social policy practice is damaging to the identity of the profession and to the clients whose interests they should represent and defend (McDonough, 1993). It is one thing to make the case for the need for social work policy practice; it is quite another thing to assume that social workers are ready to engage in such practice. Either in response to their long exclusion from policy making and management or because of other influences in the development of the

profession, direct interpersonal practice is greatly emphasized in schools of social work to the detriment of policy practice (Reisch & Wenocur, 1986; Specht, 1990).

The lack of information and training in policy practice leaves the graduates of schools of social work uncertain about their expertise and easily paralyzed by the misconception that social policies are dictated by economic imperatives that cannot be altered. Economics, with its disciplinary conventions and professional language, has perpetuated two myths: first, that its pronouncements are scientifically neutral, and second, that no experts are ill equipped to voice preferences and evaluate outcomes (e.g., Waring, 1988).

The resulting economic determinism has encouraged a view of social welfare as an imposition or as a concession tolerated by the economically productive sector (European Center for Social Welfare Training and Research, 1987). This interpretation gave rise to a distinctive view of the mid-1970s crisis of the welfare state. The fiscal difficulties that many of the Western countries suffered were attributed to the fiscal drainage caused by welfare programs.

There are visible signs that the historical neglect of policy practice in social work is starting to be redressed. As Wyatt (1991) noted, interest in this area has grown in the past few years. Contributions establishing the interactive links between direct practice and policy and the impact of interpersonal methodology on policy have emerged both in social work and in related social science literature (Hull, 1987; Pierce, 1984; Resser & Epstein, 1990; Seidman & Rappaport, 1986). A significant part of this literature is devoted to the definition of practitioner roles and focuses on the expansion of direct practice (Pierce, 1984; Schorr, 1985; Wyers, 1991).

Approaches to policy practice in its own right are present in some of these works as well (Flynn, 1992; Heffernan, 1992; Jansson, 1990; Mahaffey & Hanks, 1982). However, these authors fail to argue for policy practice as an intrinsic part of social work identity that should be addressed not as an evolution of traditional methodologies but as an imperative for intervention mandated by the social justice goal in social work (McDonough, 1993).

The making of social welfare policy, as of any other type of policy, is a political process. The analyses of the dynamics of policy making, including examination of legislative and judicial processes, strategies of influence, and assessment criteria is abundant in social work writings. Clear guidelines on how to use that information is scarce but not totally absent, thus the information does provide a critical foundation for a methodology of policy practice (McDonough, 1993).

### **African-American Pioneers in Social Work**

African-American pioneer social workers of the Progressive Era (1890-1920) were concerned about the private troubles of individuals and the larger public issues that affected them. They were strongly aware of their relationship between the community they served and there was little physical, social, or economic distance between the workers and their clients. They lived in the same communities and shared the same societal problems. For the African-American social work pioneers, community practice comprised of micro and macro components (Carlton-LaNey, 1999).

Contemporary African-American social work pioneers are important sources of information; yet, knowledge about these scholars is not readily available and their

perspectives have not been uncovered (Bent-Goodley, 2003). Like early social work pioneers, “in the context of their times and circumstances, there is a large, rich storehouse of strategies and movements” (White & Hampton, 1997, p. 115) that we can use to prepare social workers for the future. Pioneers can be defined as individuals who have made significant “contribution to the betterment of the human condition [with] evidence of a sustained record of achievement over a period of [a minimum of] 25 years” (NASW, 1999, p. 2).

In Carlton-LaNey’s (1999) examination of African-American social welfare progressive era pioneers (1890-1920), she uncovered seven core elements of their practice. First, the pioneers used a race lens to understand life events and to make decisions about issues. Second, they used a holistic approach to practice that included using whatever methods were necessary to resolve problems. They were not separated by distinctions of direct service or macro practice but instead used their knowledge and skills to change individuals, communities, and societal circumstances (Bent-Goodley, 2001).

Third, the pioneers operated from an Afrocentric paradigm in that they were focused on sustaining, engaging, and being responsive to the African-American community. Fourth, the web of affiliation denotes that the pioneers often knew each other and worked together on issues or within organizations. This collective response was seen as necessary to be effective (Bent-Goodley, 2006).

Fifth, the pioneers worked towards and believed in the development of organizations and institutions to engage in multilevel change. Sixth, the pioneers engaged in philanthropy, using their personal funds to create institutions. Seventh, the

pioneers believed in the wholly impossible, or the idea that people can achieve despite the odds against them.

The pioneers focused on the following principles and values: self-help, race pride, mutual aid, societal and societal debt. These principles and values served as the foundation for community practice and institutional development for African Americans. Social Work pioneers were both “cause and function” focused (Bent-Goodley, 2006).

According to Wilkins (2014), well into the 1960s, because of racial segregation, in many communities, dependent children of color were placed in adult jails. To prevent such harsh treatment, African-American social reformers such as Janie Porter Barrett, Fredericka Douglass, Sprague Perry, and Carrie Steele worked to create alternative services. Barrett and Perry worked through the African-American women's clubs movement to establish the first juvenile facilities for African-American adolescent girls in their respective communities.

Carrie Steel Logan, known as the Mother of Orphans, founded the first orphanage in Atlanta, GA, which has been in operation since 1888. Their activities led to more inclusive mainstream home finding and child placement provisions for African-American children (Wilkins, 2014).

### **Inabel Burns Lindsay**

Inabel Burns was the founding dean of the Howard University School of Social Work (HUSW) thus becoming the second accredited school of social work serving predominantly black students (NASW Foundation, 2004). She also was instrumental in the development of the social work program at Atlanta University (Brown et al., 2011).

She was an early scholar of the role of race, class, gender, and ethnicity in social work education thus shaping HUSSW's "socio-cultural curriculum" (Brown et al., 2011, p. 151).

This curriculum, grounded in cultural thought, caused the profession of social work to understand the impact of racial oppression on American Americans in the United States. Throughout the works of Lindsay, she understood that simply working in individual advocacy does not bring about change without change in the mezzo and macro systems. Thus, it is critical to link change with culture and socioeconomic systems of power, class and institutionalized racism (Brown et al., 2011).

According to Brown et al. (2011),

Lindsay's social-cultural perspective is grounded in the following outcomes which derive from the influence of human behavior: (1) culture of the target client; (2) informed by the culture of target client; (3) situated in the context of the environment; (4) advocates for systemic change which incorporates cultural perspective across delivery systems. (p. 55)

Initially, Lindsay's cultural perspective was centered on her work with black clients, but by her retirement in 1967, her perspective shifted to include "ethnic minorities, women, older persons, as well as persons with disabilities" (Brown et al., 2011, p. 157).

### **Dorothy I. Height**

Dr. Height held many positions in government and social service organizations, but she was best known for her leadership roles in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). At the



YWCA, Dr. Height's presence and hard work urged the agency to take responsibility to address injustice. Of her years at the YWCA, Dr. Height was proudest of her efforts to direct the attention of the organization to issues of racial justice (NASW Foundation, 2014). In 1937, Mary Mcleod Bethune, founder of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) "took notice of Height while she was an assistant executive director of the Harlem YWCA" (Williams, 2011, p. 10).

At this time, Height also worked as an escort (and mentee) to first lady and humanitarian activist, Eleanor Roosevelt. Impressed by her assignment, Bethune became a mentor to Height and invited her to join the quest for women's rights with NCNW. Height worked tirelessly "to meet the social, economic and political need of women and provide them with needed services" (Williams, 2011, p. 10).

As was the case for many other black women activists during the civil rights movement, Height was not invited to speak at many important public events even during her service as NCNW president. The Movement was reserved for male dominated activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Williams (2011) shared a few leadership lessons to be learned by Height:

- 1) Discern one's purpose in life and pursue it with passion;
- 2) Mentor capable, smart young people to build future generations of leaders;
- 3) Cultivate diverse coalitions and wide-ranging networks to develop spheres of influence; and
- 4) Bridge racial, gender and political divides. (p. 11)

**Whitney M. Young, Jr.**

Whitney M. Young, Jr. became the first dean of Social Work at Atlanta University (Clark Atlanta University) in 1954 (Houston, 2009). Young gave his first attention to seeking greater financial support from both University and federal funds. His term at the School was co-occurring with the Brown vs. Board of Education decision on school desegregation which made it possible for white students to be admitted to the School of Social Work (Adams, 1981). As late as 1961, the School's graduates still were subject to placements at segregated agencies. One of his activities while dean was his boycott of the Georgia Conference on Social Welfare due to their "lack of Negroes in leadership" (Adams, 1981, p. 16).

In 1961, Young was selected as the executive director of the National Urban League. Under his leadership, this organization grew, funding doubled, gained corporate support of black causes and employment, increased participation in civil rights, and the March in Washington (Houston, 2009).

The current mission of the National Urban League states the following:

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its local affiliates through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy. Today, the National Urban League has 95 affiliates serving 300 communities, in 35 states and the District of

Columbia, providing direct services that impact and improves the lives of more than 2 million people nationwide. (nuli.iamempowered.com, 2014)

Young was elected as the first African-American President of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) bringing visibility to social workers as civil rights supporters. He promoted social work as a profession that could advocate for social change (socialworkers.org, 2009). He became heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement such as chair of the Atlanta Council on Human Relations, organizer of the Community Action Assembly to fight poverty in black neighborhoods, proposed a Marshall Plan to increase opportunities for blacks, started a New Trust program address poor housing, inadequate healthcare and education for blacks, and was a co-founder of Atlanta's Committee for Cooperative Action (Houston, 2009). Young's Marshall Plan, which was partially used by Lyndon B. Johnson in his War on Poverty Initiative, proposed \$145 billion in spending over 10 years in order to support integration, cities, community development and leadership skills for African-American youth, social programs, and affirmative action.

The detailed plan is outlined in his two books, *To Be Equal* (1964) and *Beyond Racism* (1969) (Bevel, 2014). In his book *To Be Equal* (1964), Bevel argued there is still injustice due to years of inequality. Young urged, in this sense, the Negro is educationally and economically malnourished and anemic. He used the image of two runners in a race: "Runner A, well-equipped, wearing appropriate shoes and on a cinder track; and runner B, barefoot and running on sand. If runner B were given equal running conditions, there would still be injustice due to unequal starting points" (Young, 1964, p. 25). Young went on to say, "It is not a special treatment but simple respect to provide

him for a brief period with special vitamins, additional food, and blood transfusions” (p. 25).

### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

During the post-Emancipation era (1865-1877), black Americans took advantage of the education offered by HBCUs. Since slavery prohibited them from obtaining an education, the pursuit of a formal education became significantly important. They believed that education would help them assert themselves as equals.

Blacks have always thirsted for knowledge and a formal education (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Most HBCUs, especially in the South, were established after the American Civil War to educate freed blacks with the assistance of northern religious missionary organizations (Episcopal, Methodist, Catholic churches, etc.). Most HBCUs are located in the slave states. According to Brown et al. (2004), while most institutions of higher education catered only to the white male socially-elite.

HBCUs opened their doors to both blacks and poor whites (Manzo, 2000). Furthermore, they provided education to students of all ages, despite limited resources. Indeed, HBCUs have had an ongoing commitment to educate students who are chronically underserved and have the least in terms of human and social capital. According to Allen and Jewell (2002), historically, HBCUs were founded specifically to educate black Americans as most of them were refused admission elsewhere.

Although the Morrill Act provided funding for the operation of these institutions, it did not provide financial endowments that matched those of predominantly white land-grant institutions (Harris & Worthen, 2004). As a result of federal legislation and

funding, the number of HBCUs mushroomed over the 20th century; particularly the number of public land-grant HBCUs, which are affectionately known as the 1890 universities (Harris & Worthen, 2004). There were nearly 130 HBCUs by 1960. Not all of these survived; in 2010, there were at least 103 HBCUs in America, representing approximately 3% of all postsecondary institutions (Hirt et al., 2006).

There are 106 HBCUs in the United States, including public and private, two-year and four-year institutions, medical schools and community colleges. Historically, they admitted students of all races, and in recent years some have lost their black majorities (Bluefield State/West Virginia State). Currently, there are 18 public land-grant HBCUs, representing 17% of all HBCUs and 0.45% of all institutions in the nation (Hirt et al., 2006).

Although HBCUs represent a relatively small proportion of all postsecondary institutions in the United States, they educate 14% of black undergraduate students and confer approximately 24% of all undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees each year (Stewart et al., 2008). While land-grant institutions were established to focus on agriculture and industrial work, today land-grant HBCUs offer a wide range of degrees in subjects that include education, engineering, physics, theology, and agriculture.

As articulated by Roach (2001), as the need for more skilled workers increase, many HBCUs are focusing on programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They pioneered today's concept of the Minority Serving Institution, which includes Tribal Colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) as well (Roach, 2001). The Carnegie Foundation (2000) identified 3,941 accredited degree-granting institutions in the nation.

Along with growing issues HBCUs face, such as stretched budgets, dwindling endowments, decreases in loans to lower income students and an increasingly financially driven accreditation process, Malveaux (2013) discusses the issue of how HBCUs are affected by the recent changes with the Parent PLUS loan disbursement. Parent PLUS loans are awarded based on a parent's credit score and were valid for the entire academic 4 years. With little notice, in October 2011, the Department of Education tightened the application of credit rules, making it more difficult for parents with less-than-perfect credit reports to be approved for the loan (Malveaux, 2013).

When the 2011 school year approached, so many families were denied PLUS loans and HBCUs rapidly lost 14,000 students. Many newly admitted students could not matriculate as freshmen or transfers, while others had to drop out because they could not pay the full cost of attendance (Malveaux, 2013).

Malveaux (2013) shared the story of Walter Kimbrough, 46, the seventh president of Dillard University, also known as the "hip-hop president" by students and colleagues. He is one of the nation's youngest college leaders, having served eight years as president of Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, before taking the helm at Dillard last year. He believes HBCUs are under siege (Malveaux, 2013). Malveaux quotes Kimbrough as saying, "There is a fear of a Black planet, or a fear of Black intelligence," (p. 7). Kimbrough went on to say, "Our colleges are repositories of Black knowledge, which some would like to ignore. We are plagued by low endowments but also by our nation's indifference to our service. We prepare students for graduate and professional school" (Malveaux, 2013, p. 7).

We take first-generation students and make them career-ready. High black unemployment rates and lower black wealth make it difficult for parents to help finance their child's education, and we do our best to provide what the parents can't. Yet because of the financial circumstances some of our students come from, some students get jobs while they are matriculating, and these jobs undermine their academic success. "They feel an obligation to help at home, which may increase their loan indebtedness" (Malveaux, 2013, p. 7).

Malveaux (2013) further explains the complicating matters for universities such as Dillard are deductions in federal education spending. Federal departments that contract and work with HBCUs have seen funding reduced by more than \$115 million between 2010 and 2011. Yet, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan extols the value of HBCUs.

If we are serious about the President's goal of leading the world in graduation rates...and if we are serious about giving young folks a path to middle class, I don't think we can get there without the critical role HBCUs play in educating students of color. (Malveaux, 2013, p. 9)

Duncan and his team acknowledge that the stricter application of the Parent PLUS rules due to federal cuts and sequestration were poorly communicated. And he indicated that parents who were denied loans this year could possibly be approved if they reapply. But Duncan knows all too well that the situation is more complicated than reinstating PLUS loans, because when programs like Work-Study and other grants are cut by \$51 million, that reduction in funding disproportionately affects HBCU students (Malveaux, 2013).

Even with these cuts, many schools continue to enroll students, or hold on to those on the verge of dropping out for financial reasons. The colleges may pay the price later when accrediting institutions, known for their focus on finances, may choose to penalize them because of the amount of debt they carry (Malveaux, 2013). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits most HBCUs, as most are located in southern states. While the SACS denies any bias, Leonard Haynes, former interim president at Grambling University from 1997 to 1998 and former head of the White House Initiative on HBCUs, notes, “There is a perception that the SACS has a bias against small schools, and those with lower endowments. Many of these are HBCUs” (Malveaux, 2013, p. 10).

According to Deghani (2001), for more than 150 years, HBCUs have provided access to higher education for many African-American students. While the nation has struggled, often violently, to pursue the ideal of equal educational opportunity, these colleges and universities continue to be a critical force in American higher education, enriching a great tradition of educational choice and diversity in this century. HBCUs inspire and enhance opportunities for leadership and citizenship by mentoring and supporting students as well as providing remedial programs that address the educational need of their communities (Deghani, 2001).

The first school of social work for African Americans was established in 1920 as the Atlanta School of Social Work. This was an independent institution whose mission was to provide professional education for African Americans. The institution’s overall objective was to assist individuals in their quest to obtain knowledge and skills necessary to serve the African-American community. The early curriculum of the Atlanta School of



Social Work reflected the belief that those serving African-American people needed not only basic social work education but also additional learning directed specifically towards the African-American community (HBCU1 Website, 2014).

The following are current mission statements of Social Work programs at HBCUs located in the Southeastern region of the United States: “prepares social work professionals, practitioners and leaders with knowledge, skills and abilities to address culturally diverse human and social issues locally, nationally and globally” (HBCU1 Website, 2014); “advances social and economic justice by preparing students for competent, empowering clinical practice with vulnerable children, adults and families of diverse backgrounds. In its efforts to enhance the dignity and rights of all people, particularly of historically oppressed populations” (HBCU2 Website, 2014); and, “educates students who demonstrate a heightened sense of social consciousness to be creative, responsible social work professionals committed to the search for solutions to problems poverty and varied forms of oppression in society while preserving the heritage of African-American people” (HBCU3 Website, 2014).

### **Social Work Curriculum and Black Community Activism**

Accreditation standards (Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards) for social work programs require curriculum content on both diversity and social welfare/ social work history (2008 EPAS standards 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.8) (CSWE, 2008). The integration of the content on the black community and black pioneers in the social work curriculum affirms the personal identity of black students and heightens the awareness of students from all races and cultures. This process of affirmation and awareness improves

the learning environment and fosters an understanding, which has the potential of promoting more authentic client interventions. In addition to complying with the policy statements on diversity and social welfare, historical examples may be identified which provide historical perspectives on women's roles or link to other required content areas such as values and ethics, or methods content such as community practice, fostering both vertical and horizontal curriculum integration of content on the black community (Wilkins, 2014).

According to Wilkins (2014), community activism among black women was prevalent during the Progressive Era (1890-1920) through individual activism and the national and state level organization of Black Women's Clubs. The Black Women's Club Movement focused on social problems in the African-American community and tended to be geared toward responding to the unmet needs of families and children. A special emphasis was placed on the growth and development of young girls. The "womanist consciousness" (black feminism) that formed the social ethic of these middle and upper class black women activists can be considered a form of community feminism.

These women activists were sometimes referred to as Race Women or Race Mothers. The womanist philosophy focused on racial uplift ("Lifting as We Climb") or improving living conditions in the black community and supporting black men to assume the traditionally established male roles (Wilkins, 2014).

Wilkins (2014) notes that women are rarely included in the social work curriculum components describing social welfare historical developments but need to be included to teach all students how people of color were cared for in segregated communities. This approach also provides students with vital information about identity,

resiliency, and methods used for coping with exclusion and discrimination. Rather than see African Americans as always victims, students learn to appreciate mutual aid, self-help and other activities within the black community that helped African Americans overcome victimization and respond to unmet human need such as works by Andrew Billingsley and Jeanne Giovanni (Wilkins, 2014).

According to Wilkins (2014), community feminism can also be found in the activities of the women associated with the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), a Pan-African movement founded in Jamaica in 1914 by the politically controversial historical figure, Marcus Garvey. Based on his humanitarian concerns, Marcus Garvey intended for this voluntary association to respond globally to the health and social care needs in the African Diaspora. During the early 1920s, there was a membership of about six million people and hundreds of branches throughout the United States and other parts of the world.

Wilkins (2014) points out that Garvey formed the Black Cross Nurses' Association, in 1920, as an auxiliary of the UNIA. The Black Cross Nurses Association was modeled after the American Red Cross, an organization that denied admission to these black nurses. The Black Cross Nurses Association was an enduring legacy of the UNIA and the Garvey movement well into the 1980s in the country of Belize in Central America. During the early decades of the twentieth century, there was universal concern about sanitary and health conditions in crowded urban communities as well as rural areas (Wilkins, 2014).

According to Wilkins (2014), health care disparities were pronounced in the African-American community where disproportionate numbers of people became

stricken with diseases such as tuberculosis. There were higher infant mortality rates and more problems with poor nutrition. The Black Cross Nurses Association was committed to community health education and improving the health conditions and standards in the black community (Wilkins, 2014).

In the United States, among other activities, the Black Cross Nurses organized soup kitchens and helped the homeless. The association also responded to the needs of black people during times of disasters such as floods. In 1921, for example, Black Cross Nurses in Cleveland, Ohio were reported to have fed over 6,000 unemployed African-American men and women. According to Wilkins (2014), in Belize, the association focused on community hygiene, child welfare, family and infant health care. Well into the 1980s, Belizean Black Cross Nurses supplemented the work of governmentally sponsored health clinics. Significant contributions were made to maternal and child health care in Belize (Wilkins, 2014).

### **Political Attitudes of Social Work Students**

Most social work students had been interested in working with individuals and families in direct practice and very few social work programs had political practice and electoral politics field placements (Wolk et al., 2013). There is evidence that political education increases feelings of competency and that competency, in turn, increases political activity. Social workers are more likely to be active when they feel they are politically efficacious (Hamilton, 1998). Similarly, Rocha (2000) found that students who were taught policy practice skills through experiential learning felt more competent and

were more politically active after graduation than others who were taught with more traditional methods of learning.

In various studies by Ager et al. (2003-2005), so much of the research on political activity indicates that social workers in direct practice are less active than their macro-practice counterparts and that education enhances self-efficacy and action suggests direct practice social work students may be receiving limited skill-based, policy practice content in the classroom. There is already a substantial amount of literature decrying the micro/macro separation in schools of social work (Ager, 2005; Austin, Coombs, & Barr, 2005; Johnson, 1998; Rocha & Johnson, 1997; Rocha & McCarter, 2003/2004; Taylor, Austin, & Mulroy, 2003).

According to Miller et al. (2009), given the role of social justice self-efficacy in social justice interest and commitment, young adults may benefit from intentional and structured mechanisms including informal community service or more formal service learning experiences such as a social issues course (O'Brien et al., 2006). These experiences would likely facilitate the development of social justice self-efficacy beliefs and increase positive outcome expectations (Bandura, 1997).

Similarly, establishing a mentor program that may, for example, allow younger or less experienced students to learn from older or more experienced students might help to increase college student's self-efficacy by way of vicarious learning, performance accomplishments, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1986). Ultimately, these mentoring relationships might facilitate college students' advocacy on campus and in the community.

In addition, it may be beneficial to provide social justice–specific career guidance for those interested in selecting careers that fulfill their interest in and commitment to social justice. Finally, assisting college students and young adults in the community in identifying and building social support systems might foster and bolster social justice interest and commitment.

For example, in person or online, social justice advocacy groups might be an effective and efficient mechanism for facilitating social justice interest and commitment and for developing plausible strategies for dealing with social barriers to advocacy. Social justice advocacy groups could provide support as well as serve as a structured platform to share information and resources regarding local, national, and international social justice advocacy efforts (Miller et al., 2009).

Swank (2012) identifies factors inspiring greater political participation among undergraduate social work students (N=125). The students were separated into self-identified liberals and conservatives. For liberals and conservatives, belonging to an activist network and maintaining activist identities were crucial to different modes of activism (Swank, 2012).

“Moreover, the perceived legitimacy of traditional institutions predicted protest actions of liberals and conservatives, whereas notions of collective efficacy influenced only electoral activism” (Swank, 2012, p. 245). Lastly, demographic status mattered only for conservative students, as female and African-American conservatives were less likely to protest than male and Euro American conservatives (Swank, 2012).

Swank and Fahs (2011) explores the development of peace activism among undergraduate social work students. This exploration includes how social statuses,

political contexts, and collective action frames affect the likelihood of students joining the movement against the Afghanistan war (2001 to current). After analyzing data from a multi-campus sample of Bachelors in Social Work (BSW) students ( $n = 159$ ), results show that peace activism was predicted by level of education as well as perceptions of proper foreign policy, the relative efficacy of social movement tactics, and identification with specific activist ideals. Finally, being situated in activist networks fostered greater peace activism while the ascribed statuses of race, class, and gender were poor predictors of peace activism (Swank & Fahs, 2011).

### **Political Perceptions of Social Work Students**

As Gordon (1994) and other scholars have noted, “Students generally see policy skills and policy courses as peripheral to their interests” (Gordon, 1994; Jansson, 1999; Wyers, 1991). Becoming involved in political activity, however, is not a requirement in most field practicum experience even if anecdotal evidence exists students are more likely to become involved in political activity if they have had some sort of active participation while in school (Wolk et al., 1996).

According to Hamilton and Fauri (2001), the Civic Voluntarism Model suggested variables related to professional associations, political engagement, and resources can explain why Americans are politically active. The following section discusses predictor variables in the current study according to these three criteria. Knoke (1982) noted individuals integrated into membership associations are most likely to engage in political participation.

In order to determine the effect of membership on social workers' political activity, the current study asked respondents to indicate whether, in the past two years, they had been recruited by a social work association to vote for or against a certain candidate, or had engaged in another political activity. Recruitment by a professional association to vote or to contact a government official is a significant predictor of political participation ( $p < .0005$ ) in the current study, reflecting the importance of associations in mobilizing members for electoral or legislative activity.

Conway (1991) reviewed factors which might explain differences in the general populations' political participation, noting that studies had shown positive relationships between psychological variables, including perceived effectiveness in the performance of political activities and political participation. The regression analysis confirmed that respondents' scores on the SPSC are significant predictors of overall political participation ( $p = .004$ ), indicating that individuals who identify themselves as politically efficacious are more politically active.

Conway (1991) asserted that individuals who perceive themselves as efficacious may also follow political and public affairs more closely. The regression analysis suggests that individuals' interest in political or public affairs is a significant predictor of political participation ( $p = .008$ ) in this study. Individuals who are interested in and aware of public affairs may also develop participatory knowledge, skills, and abilities, in order to increase their effectiveness.

Resources available for political participation, including income, age, and education, have been correlated with increased participation in the general public (Verba et al., 1995). Income and education were not significant predictors of social workers'



political participation (Parker & Sherraden, 1991; Wolk, 1981). Although age was not utilized as a predictor of political participation in the current study, neither annual family income in 1996 nor years since receipt of the MSW were significant predictors of political participation, as measured by the PPS (Political Participation Scale).

Wagner (1989) reported recent graduates of MSW programs are at the peak of their political activity. Future researchers of social workers' political participation may want to test whether age or years since receipt of the MSW can explain differences in political activity. If age is a predictor of political participation for social workers, as it is for the general population, this finding would support models which view political participation as a lifelong process (Conway, 1991).

The variables related to political socialization were included to determine whether the respondents' upbringing nurtured an interest in political affairs and, possibly, an attraction to social work. None of the factors were significant predictors of respondents' political participation. Only one factor, the frequency of political discussions in respondents' households when respondents were 16 years old, met the criteria for entry into the regression analysis, but this factor was not a significant predictor of participation as measured by the PPS (Political Participation Scale). This finding suggests a need for further study of the effects of political socialization on social workers' political participation and their choice of social work as a profession and a vehicle for engaging in social change (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001).

Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) examined changes among graduate students (N=52) in perception of social worker empowerment and commitment to client empowerment through social justice advocacy. The pre-test data showed most entering MSW students

possessed important beliefs about empowerment for themselves as social workers and for members of oppressed population groups. It also showed that, during their graduate education, significant positive change occurred in both aspects of empowerment, and social worker empowerment and commitment to client empowerment were positively associated (Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006). The results of this study indicated the “belief in a just world has a significant, positive effect on worker empowerment, and an internal locus of control is associated with social worker empowerment and commitment to client empowerment” (Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006, p. 105).

### **Political Participation of Social Work Students**

According to Ritter (2008), since 2008, only nine studies have been conducted on social workers’ political participation. Six studies involved professional social workers and three involved social workers in other subsets (Ritter, 2008). Education consistently has been found to be one of the most important components in influencing political participation. Those with higher levels of education are more likely to vote and participate in other forms of electoral activity (Conway, 1985; Verba et al., 1995). Political participation requires a particular attitude about politics and knowledge/skills/behavior, which is initiated and developed in social work programs (Wolk et al., 2013).

Some anecdotal evidence indicates that social work students who participate in political activity while in school will be more likely to participate post-graduation (Hull, 1987; Witherspoon & Phillips, 1987), yet no definitive data has been gathered on the scope of political training at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Wolk et al., 2013).

African-American social workers are found to be more politically active than any other racial group (Ezell, 1993; Reeser & Epstein, 1990; Wolk, 1981).

Although varying somewhat in their findings, several older studies on social workers' political involvement (Ezell, 1993; Parker & Sherraden, 1992; Pawlak & Flynn, 1990; Reeser & Epstein, 1990; Wolk, 1981) found that professional social workers are more politically active than the general population, and as least as active as other professional groups (Wolk et al., 1996).

In determining political activity, these studies surveyed political behaviors (beyond voting) in the areas of government relations and electoral politics. Findings indicate that although social workers are very likely to vote (Parker & Sherraden, 1992), they are less likely to engage in more direct political behaviors such as campaigning or testifying (Wolk, 1981). In addition, those in macro-level social work positions are more likely to participate than direct practitioners (Ezell, 1993; Pawlak & Flynn, 1990; Wolk, 1981). These studies suggest that becoming involved in policy decisions requires a particular attitude about politics, and specific knowledge, skills, and political behavior. It is asserted here that the most likely setting for these to be initiated and developed is in social work programs (Wolk et al., 1996).

Although research suggested that social workers were somewhat involved in political activity, the 1980s were alarming to many who felt that the profession was becoming a training ground for psychotherapists. Specht and Courtney (1994) have persuasively argued that social work has abandoned its historic mission to the poor in favor of popular psychotherapies with the middle class (Wolk et al., 1996).

Other studies (Aviram & Katan, 1991; Rubin & Johnson, 1984) indicate that more incoming social work students are interested in providing direct practice counseling--and, in many cases, private practice counseling to socially prestigious clients--than in any other practice specialty. Conversely, relatively few students express interest in working with the poor and/or other disenfranchised groups. Even more disturbing is the finding that these attitudes change little from the time students enter a social work program until they graduate (Rubin, Johnson, & DeWeaver, 1986).

To offset these circumstances, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has articulated, in its latest curriculum policy statement, the importance of teaching knowledge and skills in the political process (CSWE, 1994). However, despite definitive curriculum expectations, no research exists on the degree to which these standards are observed (Wolk et al., 1996).

A longitudinal assessment of Learn and Serve American Higher Education (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999) found a small but significant relationship between volunteerism in high school and college, and the propensity to volunteer in the future. Melchior's (1998) evaluation of Learn and Serve America School and Community Based Programs (LSASCB) found that the most significant difference between service learning participants and a comparison group was on service leadership, "the most direct measure of students' attitudes toward service itself" (p. 25). Melchior's follow-up study, a year later, found that the only lasting effects of service learning were "marginally significant positive impacts on service leadership, school engagement, and science grades" (p. 25).

Markus, Howard, and King (1993) also found that students enrolled in courses with a service requirement were significantly more likely to rate volunteering as

personally important. Most studies that find that service affects civic participation, combine measures of service participation and measures of political participation (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1999; Miller et al., 2009).

In other words, there is no conceptual or analytic distinction between service activity and political activity. Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, and Geschwind's (2000) study is one of the few to differentiate community service activity and political activity. They concluded, political activity is least associated with service learning, while campus activity and involvement in societal problem solving are moderately associated. The expectation of participation in future volunteer work or community service shows the strongest association with service learning (Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000).

Swank and Fahs (2014) expressed concern that, while social workers advocate against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and restrictive reproductive practices, there have been virtually no studies on the reasons behind their feminist activism. To address this oversight, this study documented the extent of feminist activism among American undergraduate social work students ( $n = 159$ ). When moving to explanatory analysis, the data suggested that feminist activism was related to greater educational attainment, knowing activist peers, recognizing heterosexism, and internalizing a commitment to social justice. Moreover, electoral activism was tied to the rejection of traditional gender norms in the family and perceptions of social movement tactics were crucial to protesting for women's rights (Swank & Fahs, 2014).

Mizrahi and Dodd (2013) analyzed perspectives on the goals of the social work profession and social activism of a cohort of MSW students before and after graduation

from their graduate program. This study explored how preexisting values, experiences, and background characteristics affect beginning and ending students' views of the goals of social work, and also whether they anticipate being socially active in the future, utilizing a range of strategies to effect change. The results uncovered students from all methods began with a dual (micro and macro) view of social work goals and much activism, and then left the MSW program with the same confirmed person-in-environment perspective and a commitment to all types of social activism in even greater numbers (Mizrahi & Dodd, 2013).

Anker et al. (2008) explored tools for using civic engagement as a method of creating meaningful community bridges, combating racism and effecting social change. One of the most diverse campuses in the United States, the State University of New York, College at Old Westbury, has a tradition of civic activism, service and social justice. The students' work on Gulf Coast hurricane relief in New Orleans inspired the College to establish the Community Engagement and Partnership Center (CEPC), housed in the First-Year Experience Program, to develop collaborative agreements with community partners (Anker et al., 2008).

CEPC restructured the First-Year curriculum to include a course-embedded, community-based learning experience for all students, creating a unique model of collaboration that identifies civic engagement and diversity as core values of an Old Westbury education. Community partners were selected for their commitment to fostering social equity, youth development, educational empowerment, sustainability and/or environmental justice, and an expressed interest in, and need for, diversity in its volunteer base. Old Westbury's civic engagement model integrates academic study and

analysis with field experience, challenging students to confront the big questions facing society, today, in real world settings (Anker et al., 2008).

Students work in groups in culturally diverse, underserved and underrepresented communities, challenging prejudices and assumptions, while promoting the development of intercultural understanding, team-work, communication and leadership skills.

Learning outcomes and an assessment plan were developed and implemented from the outset (Anker et al., 2008). Understanding diversity is an integral part of the community-engagement curriculum. The First-Year Reader, *The Ethics of Engagement: Educating Leaders for a Just World*, produced by faculty, includes readings in race, class, and gender. Students are tasked with analyzing the goals and delivery of service in their community placements, while class discussions involve the exchange of multiple cultural perspective (Anker et al., 2008).

In conclusion, this chapter provided a review of the current and past literature on political participation as related to social work. The literature review covered the history and current literature on student activism and social movements, the social work profession, African-American pioneers in social work, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, political attitudes, political perceptions, and political participation of social work students.

Furthermore, this literature review is relevant to this study as it attempts to shed light on the current discussion of the factors which promote political participation in social work students and, in turn, social workers post-graduation who work in the field. First, the United States carries a long legacy of student activism especially among black

student activists. Black student activists in the 1960s-1970s demonstrated the necessary attitudes and along with collective will needed to impact social change.

Second, in most research regarding the history of the social work profession, the story begins with Jane Adams, the “mother” of the social work profession due to her work in the settlement house movement. This method of discussion is replete without mention of how African Americans were excluded from the governmental provisions due to segregation and discrimination. Thus, African Americans created their own systems of social services to meet their own needs.

The social work profession has endured many changes and shifts throughout history. As in the past and even today, the profession strives for recognition as a profession. The social work profession throughout history has remained a profession designed to meet the multi systemic needs of marginalized people domestically and abroad.

Third, schools can help students by assisting them in the development of political skills, such as writing, delivering testimony, meeting with government officials, and working in political campaigns (Hamilton & Furi, 2001). Schools could also help by inserting empowerment by way of curriculum, pedagogy, and in the overarching school environment.

Fourth, the African-American pioneers of the social work profession have provided best practices that we can use to prepare social workers for the future, but their perspectives are not overtly integrated into curricula. Fifth, HBCUs have been the pillar of African-American communities for centuries. HBCUs graduate some of the most influential people in history across the span of academic disciplines. Also, HBCUs face a



multitude of issues to include lack of funding and socioeconomic challenges of the students.

Sixth, although incoming social work students are interested in providing direct practice counseling--and, in many cases, private practice counseling--schools and departments of social work can aid in the connecting political participation with the “client paradigm” across systems. Seventh, social workers are more politically active than any other profession, but practitioners who serve in direct practice are less active. Eighth, many social work programs lack opportunities for students to engage in social welfare advocacy practicums.

Lastly, self-efficacy has a significant impact on motivation to engage in political activity. Schools and departments of social work would benefit from the integrated peer and faculty mentoring, career guidance, and a variety of field placement opportunities, to include those entities that practice political action.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The following theoretical framework is used to gain better understanding of this study, the problem introduced, and provide the best approach in an effort to answer the aforementioned research questions posed in this study. Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory was used to better elucidate the academic and pedagogical underpinnings of this descriptive and explanatory study. Components of the Social Learning Theory, such as modeling, self-efficacy and social justice efficacy, will be integrated into the further discussion of political participation in social work students. This section concludes with

the introduction of a conceptual path to social work student political participation and a summated analysis.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura (1997) stated people learn by observation, and modeling, attention, retention, motivation, and reproduction are factors of learning. Also, mental status is important to learning as self-efficacy and sense of accomplishment are a part of change movement (Kretchmar, 2008). In regard to attention, if subjects such as policy are relatable and interesting, students are far more likely to dedicate full attention to learning.

In regard to retention, students learn more efficiently if they are able to store information for use when incited to make critical connections. In regard to motivation, the use of reward/punishment in the form of evaluation or grades is effective in learning. In regard to reproduction, students learn if they can reproduce the knowledge they learn from the classroom and put policy advocacy into practice (Kretchmar, 2008).

Bandura's (1997) research examines how one develops mastery of occupational roles or competencies through what he refers to as "mastery modeling." He described the development of complex competencies as involving the acquisition of knowledge and skills through this type of modeling. His outline of the modeling method that produces the best results includes three major elements:

First, the appropriate occupational skill are modeled to convey the basic rules and strategies; second, the learners receive guided practice under simulated conditions so they can perfect the skills; third, they are helped

to apply their newly learned skills in work situations in ways that will bring them success. (Bandura, 1997, pp. 440–441)

Crain (2000) points out that, although people might overestimate their abilities, Bandura believes “optimistic self-efficacy is beneficial” (p. 203), especially in life that often presents “disappointments, setbacks, impediments, and inequities” (p. 203). Along with his interest in self-efficacy, Bandura (2001) has put forth equal effort in studying human agency – our ability to control our personal destinies.

On the basis of Bandura’s 1968 social-cognitive theory, social justice self-efficacy is defined as a dynamic and domain-specific set of beliefs regarding an individual’s perceived ability to perform particular tasks across intrapersonal (e.g., self-awareness and monitoring), interpersonal (e.g., educating others about social inequity and encouraging others to become involved in advocacy), community (e.g., conducting a community-specific needs assessment and establishing an outreach program), and political/institutional (e.g., challenging discriminatory policies and practices) domains (Miller et al., 2009). According to Crain (2000), Bandura identified self-efficacy as more than a self-perception of competency, but as an assessment of one’s perceived confidence in his other ability to carry out specific skills in a particular set of circumstances and thereby achieve a successful outcome.

Crain (2000) points out that Bandura believes self-efficacy has a significant impact on motivation, such that an individual will work hard when he or she believes they are good at a task – such as math – even in the face of obstacles, but will put forth less effort and be more likely to give up when she or he doubts their abilities. Studies

have demonstrated that students who believe they are good at a subject will perform better than those who don't, even when actual ability levels are equal (Crain, 2000).

Petrovich (2004) further described Bandura's concept of self-efficacy as being derived from four types of experiences: (1) vicarious experiences, in which one observes valued role models performing tasks or skills; (2) enactive mastery, in which one successfully practices a skill or behavior; (3) verbal persuasion, in which one receives encouragement and support from valued others; and (4) physiological and affective states, in which one learns to keep one's emotions and physiological arousal at a self-supporting versus harmful level (Petrovich, 2004).

Essentially, social work students are expected to have all four of these experiences during their field practicum. The mastery of social work skills is almost dependent on a supportive environment in which the student can practice the skills learned in the classroom (Petrovich, 2004). The 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) is moving the social work profession closer to being a competency-based profession by outlining 10 social work competencies that must be demonstrated by social work students (CSWE, 2008).

Citizens who believe that they can influence the political system are likely to take action in the pursuit of their goals even at the cost of personal risk. In this contribution, political efficacy is described as self-beliefs that lead people to feel politically efficacious and to engage actively in politics, and on the role of personality traits in sustaining such beliefs (Vecchione, 2008).

A significant number of studies have addressed the role of political efficacy in sustaining political interest and participation (Craig, 1979). Surprisingly, despite the vast

literature on political efficacy, little attention has been paid to Bandura's (1986) work on perceived self-efficacy and social-cognitive theory, which embeds self-efficacy beliefs in a comprehensive theory of personality (Vecchione, 2008). Political self-efficacy, which is posited in perceived self-efficacy, namely demonstrates beliefs people have about their capacity to master tasks and situations, and is at the root of efficacious behavior and successful adaptation in manifold domains of functioning (Bandura, 1997).

Recently, a new measure has been conceived to assess political self-efficacy (Caprara, Vecchione, Capanna, & Mebane, in press), focusing on the activities that are required to promote one's own ideals among peers, potential followers and adversaries, or in other words, to actively participate in and to compete in the political context of modern representative democracies. Politicians have shown higher scores on perceived political efficacy than party members, who, in turn, outscored non-partisan voters (Vecchione, 2008). Social justice self-efficacy is important because it impacts: (a) the choices a person makes regarding engagement in social justice advocacy; (b) the effort an individual puts forth in advocacy; (c) how long an individual persists in social justice advocacy in the face of obstacles; and (d) how an individual feels about social justice advocacy (Bandura, 1997).

As noted by Holloway (2008), the 2001 EPAS focused on the assessment of educational outcomes, whereas the 2008 EPAS further developed the process of assessing educational outcomes with the development of practice competencies that measure behavioral outcomes. Social work programs are assigned the task of finding ways to measure the achievement of those competencies as part of the accreditation and

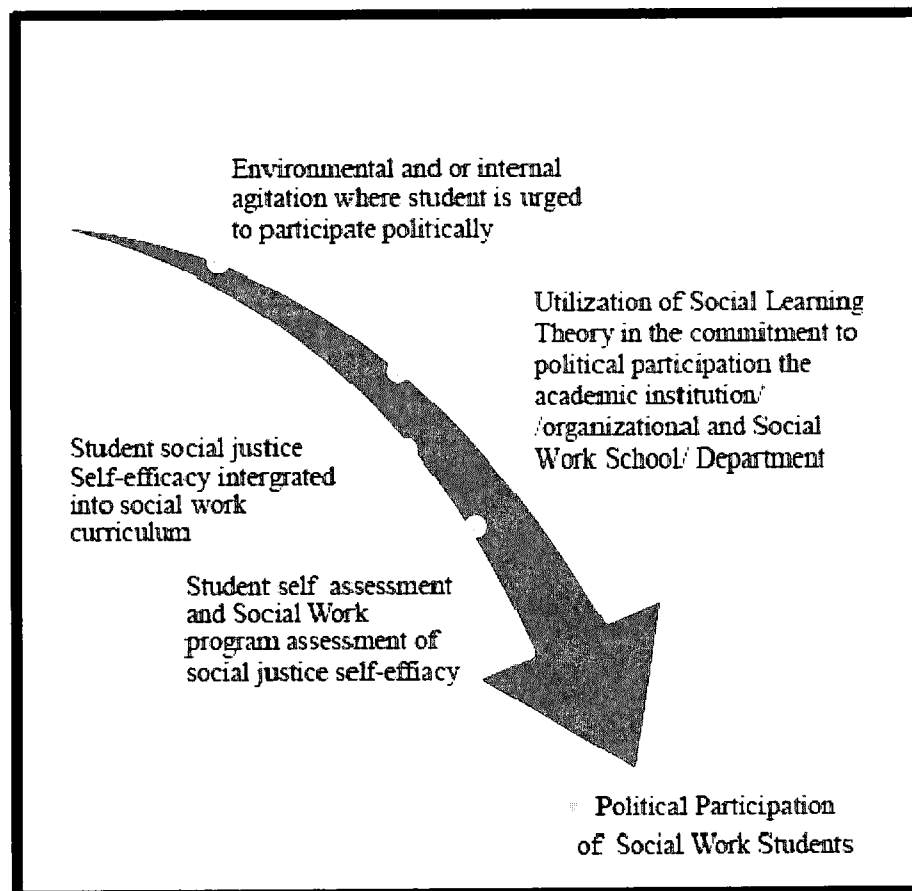
reaffirmation process. Social work as a profession has historically struggled with measuring the outcomes of our interventions.

This struggle is not limited to the field. Garcia and Floyd (2002) identified key difficulties social work programs encountered in addressing the 2001 EPAS outcome measure standards (standards 1.4 and 1.5); one of those difficulties included an overreliance on measures whose reliability and validity have not been proven. Petracchi and Zastrow (2010) noted that a comprehensive measure of a program's outcomes should be systematic, ongoing, and use multiple measurement instruments. A growing body of literature supports the use of self-efficacy measures in measuring social work educational program outcomes. A number of self-efficacy measures exist.

Holden and colleagues (2003, 2005) developed, tested, and refined the Foundation Practice Self-Efficacy scale (FPSE), a scale they created to measure their program objectives. They designed the FPSE specifically to measure the self-efficacy of foundation year master's level social work students based on CSWE's Educational Policy 3.0: Foundation program objectives as outlined in the 2001 EPAS (Holden et al., 2003). Holden et al. have tested the scale and demonstrated its reliability and validity through replication of their original research numerous times (Holden et al., 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005; Rishel & Majewski, 2009).

Holden et al.'s (2003, 2005) research has focused on refinement and testing of the scale with masters level social work students included an overreliance on measures whose reliability and validity have not been proven. Petracchi and Zastrow (2010) noted that a comprehensive measure of a program's outcomes should be systematic, ongoing,

and use multiple measurement instruments. A growing body of literature supports the use of self-efficacy measures in determining social work educational program outcomes.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Path to Social Work Student Political Action

Figure 1 presents a conceptual path demonstrating a pathway to ensure social work student political action. The model is comprised of the following components: a) environmental and or internal agitation where student is urged to participate politically; b) utilization of Social Learning Theory in the commitment to political participation by the academic institution/organization and Social Work School/Department; c) student

social justice self-efficacy integrated into social work curriculum; and d) student self-assessment and social work program assessment of social justice self-efficacy.

In summary, as evidenced by the prior research of student activism, the major indicator to political participation was environmental and or internal stimuli which sparked political participation. In the 1960s, specifically, political participation was sparked by the agitation of a multitude of civil and human rights violations, such as discriminatory voting, access to public facilities, and transportation, etc.

Recently, student activism has been sparked by the multiple accounts of police brutality inflicted on United States citizens which has disproportionately targeted people of color, specifically black males. Also, agitation can be sparked by continuous curriculum connection to current events and the existing social justice pedagogy in the schools and departments of social work which also urges attention to the plights of marginalized people.

Institutional/organizational commitment has proven to be important as evidenced by the multiple mentions of academic institutions and organizations (N.A.A.C.P., ACORN, AUC, Fisk University, Tennessee State University, etc.) in the literature who have demonstrated a commitment to political action.

By the use of the social learning theory alone, schools/departments of social work would provide the opportune environment where students could gain the opportunity to adopt political participation as a learned behavior. Students gain the opportunity to observe integrity while witnessing social work academicians adhere to the vow of political participation as expressed in the NASW Code of Ethics. As stated previously,



political efficacy has been proven as a factor in sustaining political interest and participation (Craig, 1979).

Social justice self-efficacy determines the level of engagement, effort, longevity, and feelings about political participation. For example, students' political self-efficacy can be nurtured by individualized instruction catering to the student's personal attitudes and perceptions regarding political participation.

As stated previously, in regard to student self-assessment and the social work program's assessment of social justice self-efficacy, a growing body of literature supports the use of self-efficacy measures in measuring social work educational program outcomes which fall in compliance with the EPAS. Also, student self-assessment and personal awareness is a practice which is embedded in social work curriculum and pedagogy. Lastly, as social work schools/departments link curriculum with practice to action, students have the opportunity develop confidence in their abilities to promote change as they are being nurtured in an environment which promotes such.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Chapter III presents the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. The following are described: research design; description of the site; sample and population; instrumentation; treatment of data; and limitations of the study.

#### **Research Design**

A descriptive and exploratory research design was employed in this study with the use of a mixed method approach. The goal of the study is designed to ascertain data in order to describe and explore attitudes and perceptions of social work students about political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

A descriptive and explanatory research design allowed for the descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Also, this research design facilitated the explanation of the statistical relationship between current institution's social work curriculum, self-efficacy, attitude, perception, and political participation of social work students regarding political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

### **Description of the Site**

The research study was conducted at three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The surveys were administered electronically to the participants through an e-mail and analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

### **Sample and Population**

The target population for the study consisted of currently enrolled social work students (BSW, MSW, PhD). The currently enrolled students are classified into the following statuses: Part-time BSW/MSW, Full-time BSW/MSW/Ph.D., and Advanced Standing MSW students. Participants were solicited through personal phone calls and a permission e-mail sent to Social Work department chairs at all sites. Eighty-four surveys were collected.

### **Instrumentation**

This research study used a mixed method approach. The survey consisted of a total of 25 questions for quantitative analysis, whereas 2 of the 25 questions were used for qualitative analysis. Section I solicited demographic information about the characteristics of the participants, which are concerned with gender, age group, racial category, marital status, education, social work education, and level of licensure. These questions provided information for the presentation of a demographic profile on the respondents of the research study. Section I of the survey consists of 10 questions (1-10). Section II, measured by a Likert Scale, ascertained answers to questions regarding perceived job duties post-graduation, personal interest, current institution's social work

education, self-efficacy, and attitudes and perceptions of social work students about political participation. Of the 15 questions (11-25), selected questions were used as independent and dependent variables for the study.

### **Treatment of Data**

Statistical treatment of the data employed descriptive statistics to include frequency distribution and cross tabulations. One-test statistic was employed. Chi Square was used to test whether there is a statistical significance at the .05 level of probability among variables in the study. Frequency distribution was used to analyze each of the variables of the study in order to summarize basic measurements. A frequency distribution of variables was used to develop a demographic profile and to gain insights about the respondents of the study. Cross tabulations were used to demonstrate the statistical relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables. Cross tabulations were conducted between the factors of the current institution's social work education, self-efficacy, attitude, perception, and political participation.

The operationalization of the dependent and independent variables used in this study are depicted in Figure 2. The figure summarizes how each variable was measured by the instrument employed in the current research project.

Variables	Measurements
Attitude  *Dependent Variable	"Feelings of adequate guidance" "Enjoyment"  Measured by Likert Scale using the variable of "ATTITUDE" which consists of Question 10 "I have had adequate guidance on how to include action" and Question 18 "I enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare policy curriculum at my current institution".
Perception  *Dependent Variable	"Thoughts of necessity" "Feelings of competency"  Measured by Likert Scale using the variable of "PRECEPT" which consists of Question 11 "I will not need to be politically active in my desired job" and Question 23 "I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks".
Political Participation  *Dependent Variable	"Lobbying, educating populations on a social problem or a piece of proposed legislation, working on a political campaign, voting, contributing money, serving on a political action committee or party, service as a public official, presenting issues to government official, oral testimony or other communication via phone, letter, fax, or e-mail, and demonstrations/protests" (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001).  Measured by Likert Scale using the variable of "PARCIP" which consists of Question 12 "Every social worker is obligated to political participation" and Question 22 "I am satisfied with my level of political participation".
Self-Efficacy  *Independent Variable	"Confidence in abilities to carry out tasks"  Measured by Likert Scale using variable of "INFLUE" which consists of Question 14 "It is unlikely I would have much influence even if I tried to affect social policy".
Institution's social work education  *Independent Variable	"Also used simultaneously with the term "curriculum" to encompass the facets of social work to include theoretical based research and practice."  Measured by Likert Scale using variable of "CURRENT" which consists of Question 9 "My social work education at my current institution successfully links practice and social action".

Figure 2. Operationalization of Variables

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were two limitations of the study. The first limitation of the study involved the timing of the collection of surveys. The surveys were collected during the months of May-July 2014, which were the months of finals, graduation, and summer vacations. During initial phase of this study, rapport was developed with the department chairs of each University. Assurance was given by each department head that survey links would be distributed to students in a timely manner.

The second limitation involves nature of the social work profession. Due to the feminization of the social work profession, the respondents were predominantly female. Overall, the male perspective, as well as that of other genders, is needed in terms of recruitment and research in order to strengthen the social work profession.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study in order to describe and explore the attitudes and perceptions among social work students regarding political participation at three Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are organized into two sections: demographic data and research questions and hypotheses.

#### **Demographic Data**

This section provides a profile of the study respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the following: gender, age, relationship status, institute of attendance, area of interest in social work, current enrollment status as a student, race, current social work degree program enrollment, current social work track interest, and desired job post-graduation.

The target population for the research was composed of currently enrolled social work students (BSW, MSW, PhD). The currently enrolled students are classified into the following statuses: Part-time BSW/MSW, Full-time BSW/MSW/Ph.D., and Advanced Standing MSW students. Eighty-four currently enrolled social work students were selected utilizing convenience sampling from the selected sites.

As indicated in Tables 1-4, the typical respondent of the study was an African-American female, single, under 30 years old, a full-time MSW student interested in working with children and family, both clinical and macro tracks, and is undecided regarding desired job post-graduation.

Table 1

*Demographic Profile of Study Respondents (N=84)*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	67	80.0
Male	17	20.0
Transgender	0	0.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	5	6.0
21-29	44	52.0
30-39	17	20.0
40-49	12	14.0
50-60	6	7.0
60 and older	0	0.0



Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Relationship Status		
Single	46	55.0
Single, cohabitating with partner	5	6.0
Married	25	30.0
Widowed	2	2.0
Divorced	6	7.0
Institute of attendance		
SWHBCU 1	32	38.0
SWHBCU 2	32	38.0
SWHBCU 3	20	24.0
Current enrollment status as a student		
Part-time Undergraduate Student	5	6.0
Full-time Undergraduate Student	30	35.0
Advanced Standing Graduate Student	3	4.0
Part-time Graduate Student	14	17.0
Full-time Graduate Student	32	38.0

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Racial Category		
African American	61	73.0
Hispanic	3	4.0
White	14	17.0
Asian	1	1.0
Native Hawaiian other Pacific Islander	1	1.0
Other	4	5.0
Current social work degree program enrollment		
BSW	31	37.0
MSW	43	51.0
PhD	10	12.0
Current social work track interest		
Macro	10	12.0
Clinical	22	26.0
Both	52	62.0

Table 1 depicts the demographic profiles of the study participants. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of students (80%) were female, 52% were between the ages of 21-19, and 55% were single. In addition, 38% were from HBCU 1 and HBCU 2, 38%

were full-time graduate students, 61% were African American, 51% were in the MSW program, and 62% were interested in both micro and macro practice.

Table 2

*Q5 Area of Interest in Social Work (N=84)*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Q5 Area of interest in social work		
Mental Health	11	11.0
Children and Family	17	17.0
School of Social Work	8	8.0
Veterans/Military Social Work	4	4.0
Youth in Foster Care	1	1.0
Substance Abuse	4	4.0
Forensic and Criminal SW	1	1.0
Disabled	1	1.0
Academia	1	1.0
Undecided/No Response	16	16.0
Public Health	1	1.0
Public Administration	2	2.0
At Risk Youth	3	2.0
General Counseling	8	8.0

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Q5 Area of interest in social work (continued)		
Incarcerated Individuals	1	1.0
Geriatrics	2	2.0
Policy and Social Justice	1	1.0
Urban Studies and Planning	1	1.0
Probation Parole	1	1.0

Table 2 is a qualitative analysis of fill in the blank responses from Q5, which inquired about the respondent's area of interest in social work. As indicated in Table 2, the majority of students (17%) were interested in working with children and families.

Table 3

*Q10 Desired Job Post Graduation (N=84)*

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Mental Health /Substance Counselor	5	5.0
Children/Youth and Family Counselor	8	8.0
School of Social Worker	10	10.0
Veterans/Military Social Worker	5	5.0
Caseworker/ DFCS	4	4.0
Private Practice Clinician	3	3.0
Clinical Social Worker	6	6.0
Social Work Consultant	1	1.0
Graduate Education	4	4.0
Hospital Social Worker	5	5.0
Hospice Social Worker	1	1.0
Professor	6	6.0
Undecided	23	23.0
CEO/Executive Director	1	1.0
Theater/Creative Arts	1	1.0
Probation Parole	1	1.0

Table 3 is a qualitative analysis of fill in the blank responses from Q10, which inquired about the respondent's desired job post graduation. As indicated in Table 3, the majority of students (23%) were undecided about their job post-graduation.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

There were six questions and six null hypotheses in the study. This section provides an analysis of the research questions and a testing of the null hypotheses.

Research Question 1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitude regarding political participation?

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitude regarding political participation.

### **Current Social Work Education and Attitude**

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. ATTITUDE (attitude regarding political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q18 ENJOY: I enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy education.

Table 4 is a frequency distribution of the sub-facet of the institution's current social work education among eighty-four (84) currently enrolled social work students.

Table 4 also indicates whether or not the students agreed or disagreed that their social work education successfully links practice and social action.

Table 4

*Frequency Distribution of sub-facet of the institution's current social work education (N=84)*

Value	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution	57	67.9	27	32.1	84	100.0

As shown in Table 4, the majority (68%) of currently enrolled social work students agreed the social work education at their current institution successfully links practice and social action.

Table 5 is a cross tabulation of institution's current social work education by ATITUDE (attitude regarding political participation). It shows the relationship between the institution's current social work education (Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution) and ATITUDE (Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q18 Enjoy: I enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare policy education at my current institution) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 5

*Cross tabulation of institution's current social work education (Q9) by ATTITUDE (N=84)*

	ATTITUDE					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q9 CURRENT: My social work Education at my current institution						
Agree	48	48.0	2	2.0	50	50.0
Disagree	9	9.0	25	25.0	34	34.0
Total	57	57.0	27	27.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .000						

As indicated in Table 5, the majority (50%) of students agreed there was a relationship between the social work education at their current institution and their attitude regarding political participation. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is rejected ( $p=.000$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables (the institution's current social work education and attitudes) at the .05 level of probability.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception of political participation?



Hypothesis 2:            There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception of political participation.

### **Current Social Work Education and Perception**

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. PRECEPT (perception of political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q 23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks.

Table 6 is a cross tabulation of institution's current social work education by PRECEPT (perception regarding political participation). It shows the relationship between the institution's current social work education (Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution) and PRECEPT (Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 6

*Cross tabulation institution's current social work education (Q9) by PRECEPT (N=84)*

	PRECEPT					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q9 CURRENT: My social work Education at my current institution						
Agree	14	14.0	36	36.0	50	50.0
Disagree	9	9.0	25	25.0	34	34.0
Total	23	23.0	61	61.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .877						

As indicated in Table 6, the majority (50%) of students agreed the social work education at their current institution successfully links practice and social action. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is not rejected ( $p=.877$ ), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables (the institution's current social work education and perception) at the .05 level of probability.

Research Question 3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation?

Hypothesis 3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation.

**Current Social Work Education and Political Participation**

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. PARCIP (political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation and Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation.

Table 7 is a cross tabulation of institution's current social work education by PARCIP (political participation). It shows the relationship between the institution's current social work education (Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution) and PARCIP (Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation and Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 7

*Cross tabulation institution's current social work education (Q9) by PARCIP (N=84)*

	PARCIP					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution						
Agree	26	26.0	24	24.0	50	50.0
Disagree	16	16.0	18	18.0	34	34.0
Total	42	42.0	42	42.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .657						

As indicated in Table 7, the majority (50%) of students agreed the social work education successfully links practice and social action. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is not rejected ( $p=.657$ ), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables (the institution's current social work education and participation) at the .05 level of probability.

Research Question 4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and attitude regarding political participation?

Hypothesis 4: There is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and attitude regarding political participation.

### Self-Efficacy and Attitude Regarding Political Participation

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. ATITUDE (attitude regarding political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q18 ENJOY: I have enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy education.

Table 8 is a frequency distribution of self-efficacy of current social work education of eighty-four (84) currently enrolled social work students. Table 8 also indicates whether or not the students agreed or disagreed they would have much influence even if they tried to affect social policy.

Table 8

*Frequency Distribution of sub-facet of self-efficacy (N=84)*

Value	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence	16	19.0	68	81.0	84	100.0

As shown in Table 8, the majority (81%) of currently enrolled social work students disagreed they would unlikely have much influence even if they tried to affect social policy.

Table 9 is a cross tabulation of self-efficacy by ATITUDE (attitude regarding political participation). It shows the relationship between self-efficacy (Q14 INFLUE: It

is unlikely I would have much influence) and ATITUDE (attitude regarding political participation (Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q18 ENJOY: I have enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy education) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 9

*Cross tabulation of self-efficacy (Q14) by ATITUDE (N=84)*

	ATITUDE					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence						
Agree	9	9.0	7	7.0	16	16.0
Disagree	48	48.0	20	20.0	68	68.0
Total	57	57.0	27	27.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .877						

As indicated in Table 9, the majority (68%) disagreed that is unlikely they would have much influence on policy if they tried. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is not rejected ( $p=.877$ ), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables self-efficacy and attitude) at the .05 level of probability.

Research Question 5: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and perception of political participation?

Hypothesis 5: There is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and perception of political participation.

### **Self-Efficacy and Perception Regarding Political Participation**

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. PRECEPT (perception of political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks.

Table 10 is a cross tabulation of self-efficacy by ATTITUDE (attitude regarding political participation). It shows the relationship between self-efficacy (Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence and PRECEPT (Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q 23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 10

*Cross tabulation of self-efficacy (Q14) by PRECEPT (N=84)*

	PRECEPT					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence						
Agree	8	8.0	8	8.0	16	16.0
Disagree	15	15.0	53	53.0	68	68.0
Total	23	23.0	61	61.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .024						

As indicated in Table 10, the majority (68%) disagreed that it is unlikely they would have much influence on policy if they tried. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is not rejected ( $p=.024$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship between the two variables self-efficacy and perception) at the .05 level of probability.

Research Question 6: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and political participation?

Hypothesis 6: There is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and political participation.



### **Self-Efficacy and Political Participation**

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. PARCIP (political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: (Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation) and (Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation).

Table 11 is a cross tabulation of self-efficacy by PARCIP (political participation). It shows the relationship between self-efficacy (Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence) and PARCIP (Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation and Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation) of social work students, and indicates whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Table 11

*Cross tabulation of self-efficacy (Q14) by PARCIP (N=84)*

	PARCIP					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence						
Agree	7	7.0	9	9.0	16	16.0
Disagree	35	35.0	33	33.0	68	68.0
Total	42	42.0	42	42.0	84	100.0
df= 1 (p) Chi-Square = .578						

As indicated in Table 11, the majority (68%) disagreed that is unlikely they would have much influence on policy if they tried. When the chi square statistical test was applied, the null hypothesis is not rejected ( $p=.578$ ), indicating a statistically non-significant relationship between the two variables (self-efficacy and participation) at the .05 level of probability.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to answer four questions concerning the attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation at three southeastern Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In particular, are there a significant relationships between the current institution's social work education, self-efficacy, attitudes, perceptions, and political participation?

In Chapter IV, the results of the survey conducted, which aided the researcher in answering the presented questions, were presented, analyzed and summarized. The presentation included demographic data, and other information, pertinent to the research questions and relevant hypotheses based on a random sample of 84 participants. The conclusions and recommendations of the research findings are presented in this chapter. Recommendations are proposed for future discussion for schools/programs of social work, deans, department and program chairs, professors, students, and accrediting bodies. Each research question is presented in order to summarize the significant findings of interest. This section concludes with recommendations and implications for social work practice.

Research Question 1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitude?

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. ATTITUDE (attitude regarding political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q 18 ENJOY: I have enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy education.

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of currently enrolled social work students agreed successfully links practice and social action (see Table 4). The relationship between the institution's current social work education and attitudes regarding political participation was statistically significant using chi-square (*p*) (see Table 5). The attitude a student has regarding political participation depends on if the student feels their social work education at their current institution successfully links practice and social action.

Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception of political participation?

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. PRECEPT (perception of political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q 23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks. The relationship between the institution's current social work education and perception of political participation was statistically non-significant using chi-square

(*p*) (see Table 6). The perception a student has regarding political participation does not depend on if the student feels their social work education at their current institution successfully links practice and social action.

Research Question 3: Is there a statistically significant relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation?

In this study, the institution's current social work education can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q9 CURRENT: My social work education at my current institution. PARCIP (political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation and Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation. The relationship between the institution's current social work education and political participation was statistically non-significant using chi-square (*p*) (see Table 7). The act of political participation does not depend on if the student feels their social work education at their current institution encouraged political participation.

Research Question 4: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and attitude regarding political participation?

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. ATTITUDE (attitude regarding political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q10 GUIDE: I have had adequate guidance on how to include action and Q 18 ENJOY: I enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy curriculum. The majority (81%) of

currently enrolled social work students disagreed they would unlikely have much influence even if they tried to affect social policy (see Table 8). The relationship between the self-efficacy and attitude was statistically non-significant using chi-square ( $p$ ) (see Table 9). Self-efficacy does not affect student's attitude regarding political participation.

Research Question 5: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and perception of political participation?

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. PRECEPT (perception of political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: Q11 ACTIVE: I will not need to be politically active in my desired job and Q 23 COMP: I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks. The relationship between the self-efficacy and perception was statistically significant using chi-square ( $p$ ) (see Table 10). Self-efficacy does affect student's perception regarding political participation.

Research Question 6: Is there a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and political participation?

In this study, self-efficacy can be best explained by utilizing the following sub-facet: Q14 INFLUE: It is unlikely I would have much influence. PARCIP (political participation) is best explained by utilizing the following two sub-facets: (Q12 OBLIG: Every social worker is obligated to political participation) and (Q22 SATIS: I am satisfied with my level of political participation). The relationship between the self-efficacy and political participation was statistically non-significant using chi-square ( $p$ ) (see Table 11). Self-efficacy does affect the act of political participation.

### **Recommendations**

Studies concerning the attitudes and perceptions and social work students are frequently limited to analyzing social workers currently working in the field. The nurturing and instruction of political action must be concentrated in the schools and departments of social work in order to aid the promotion of political participation in social work students.

As the result of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Schools and Departments of Social Work would benefit from the diversification of field practicum opportunities that encompass political action.
2. Schools and Departments of Social Work would benefit from the integration of peer and faculty mentoring, and career guidance in order to enhance the self-efficacy of students.
3. Schools and Departments of Social Work should organize more career planning activities to aid students post-graduation. As indicated in Table 3: Q10 Desired Job Post Graduation, the majority (23%) responded “undecided” when asked about their desired job post-graduation;

### **Implications for Social Work Practice**

The social work profession as a whole must adopt political action as a “practice.” Schools and Departments of Social Work could play a vital role in preparing students for the opportunity of public service. The administration of professional organizations such as NASW and CSWE, etc., could aid in the promotion of political activity through

programming. Also, the social work profession as well as the entities in which we serve, would benefit from the introduction of more policies conducive to the integrity of the profession to engage in political action.

Social workers must continue to explore the area of social work students and political participation. Many studies related to social work students and curriculum is focused on direct practice and interventions (Rawlings, 2012; Lord & Ludic, 2012; Forgey & Young, 2014). Also, the profession of social work would benefit from the investigation of additional factors which may affect a student's level of political participation.

Social workers would benefit from the promotion of continuing education opportunities regarding Social Welfare Policy just as other "individual advocacy" topics are offered (Ezell, 2001; Schneider & Lester, 2001; Gambrill, 2001). In addition to professional organizations, schools and departments are capable of providing policy/advocacy themed trainings. This may encourage current students, as well as those practitioners in the field, to engage in political activity.

Schools and Departments of Social Work would benefit from the integration of the Conceptual Path to Social Work Student Political Action (See Figure 1: Conceptual Path to Social Work Student Political Action). The use of this model could strengthen the connection of curricula and practice and ultimately promote political participation in social work students. Also, more modalities to help better understand social work and political participation may enhance student's political activism.

More research is needed on the exploration of the Afrocentric perspective in social work. This lens was developed at the Atlanta University School of Social Work



during the civil rights era in response to the ineffective lens of Eurocentric oriented theories and paradigms used to address the conditional and social problems of non-European populations (Adams, 1981). Curriculum grounded in cultural thought, allows the profession of social work to understand the impact of racial oppression on American Americans in the United States.

The students of Schools and Departments of Social Work would benefit from the integration of the works of black social work pioneers in the curriculum. Black pioneers in the social work curriculum affirm the personal identity of black students and heightens the awareness of students from all races and cultures. This continuous issue may aid in more cultural awareness, overall, in the social work profession, in addition to the affirmation and nurturance of marginalized students. This process of affirmation and awareness improves the learning environment and fosters an understanding, which has the potential of promoting more authentic client interventions (Wilkins, 2014).

In conclusion, activism is an important part of citizenship domestic and abroad. Students in particular did and still have the spark to play active rolls in the changes they wanted to see in the world. The social work profession has a long history of change promotion, but we have been “the last people to arrive at the party.” Especially with the current sequence of events and the timing of the current Social Work Reinvestment Act, Now is the time to activate our political power to truly aid in the well-being of people.

There are many valid reasons why people choose the social work profession or vice versa. Just as choosing to work with children in poverty, incarcerated individuals, the aging population, etc.; the role of political action should be just as important as treatment and interventions. If we as social workers continue to ignore the power and our

ethical commitment to political action, we may continue to do more harm than good in helping people to help themselves. Schools of social work are vital in helping to shape the attitudes and perceptions students have regarding political participation.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### Attitudes and Perceptions of Social Work Students Regarding Political Participation

##### Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to explore the attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation at three Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This is a research project being conducted by Melissa Green, LMSW at Whitney M. Young, Jr., School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are currently a social work student (BSW, MSW, PhD) at one of the participating universities.

##### Nature of Study

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized. The procedure involves filling an on-line survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. There are 25 questions. There is no financial compensation for participating in this study. There are no risks involved in this study. The benefits to the subjects regarding their participation in this research will be used to help further the research of attitudes and perceptions of social work students regarding political participation, in effort to strengthen social welfare policy curricula/pedagogy and ultimately social work program curricula globally.

##### Confidentiality

Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with Clark Atlanta University representatives.

## APPENDIX A

(continued)

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Margaret Counts-Spriggs at [mspriggs@cau.edu](mailto:mspriggs@cau.edu). This research has been reviewed according to Clark Atlanta University IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

## APPENDIX B

### ELECTRONIC SURVEY

1. Gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender

2. Age

- ☐ 18-20
- ☐ 21-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-60
- ☐ 60 or older

3. Relationship Status

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Single - cohabitating with partner
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced

4. Institute of Attendance:

- ☐ Clark Atlanta University
- ☐ Albany State University
- ☐ Savannah State University

## APPENDIX B

(continued)

## 5. Area of Interest in Social Work:

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## 6. Current enrollment status as a student.

- ☐ Part-time Undergraduate student
- ☐ Full-time Undergraduate student
- ☐ Advanced standing graduate student
- ☐ Part-time graduate student
- ☐ Full-time graduate student

## 7. Racial Category:

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other

## APPENDIX B

(continued)

8. Current social work degree program enrollment:

☐ BSW☐ MSW☐ PhD

9. Current social work track interest:

☐ Macro☐ Clinical☐ Both

10. Desired job post graduation:

---

## APPENDIX B

(continued)

What are your attitudes and perceptions about political participation?  
 Chose only one answer per row.

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
11. My social work education at my current institution successfully links practice and social action						

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
12. I have had adequate guidance on how to include action in to my professional role.						

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
13. I will not need to be politically active in my desired job post-graduation						



## APPENDIX B

(continued)

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
14. Every social worker is obligated to political participation.						

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
15. I wish my school would initiate more activities to encourage me to be politically active						

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
16. It is unlikely I would have much influence even if I tried to affect social policy.	0	0	0	0	0	0

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
17. I wish I knew more about impacting political processes.						



## APPENDIX B

(continued)

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
21. The Social Welfare Policy curriculum at my currently enrolled institution encourages me to become politically active.	12	12	2	2	1	1

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
22. I had an interest in political participation prior to my enrollment at my current institution.	12	12	2	2	1	1

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
23. I have an Social Welfare Policy professor at my current institution who encourages me to become politically active.	1	1	1	1	1	1

## APPENDIX B

(continued)

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
24. I am satisfied with my level of political participation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
25. I do not feel competent to perform policy-related tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## APPENDIX C

### SPSS PROGRAM ANALYSIS

```
TITLE 'ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS'.  
SUBTITLE 'BY MELISSA D. GREEN'.  
DATA LIST FIXED/  
ID 1-3  
GENDER 4  
AGE 5  
RELAT 6  
EDU 7  
ENROLL 8  
RACE 9  
DEGREE 10  
TRACK 11  
CURRENT 12  
GUIDE 13  
ACTIVE 14  
OBLIG 15  
POLIC 16  
INFLUE 17  
KNOW 18  
MEMBER 19  
ENCOUR 20  
ENJOY 21  
CURRIC 22  
INTER 23  
PROFESS 24  
SATIS 25  
COMP 26.
```

```
COMPUTE ATITUDE= (GUIDE+ ENJOY)/2.  
COMPUTE PERCEPT= (ACTIVE+ COMP)/2.  
COMPUTE PARTICP= (OBLIG+ SATIS)/2.
```

## APPENDIX C

(continued)

## VARIABLE LABELS

ID 'Questionnaire number'  
GENDER 'Q1 My gender'  
AGE 'Q2 My age group'  
RELAT 'Q3 My relationship status'  
EDU 'Q4 Institute of attendance'  
ENROLL 'Q5 Enrollment status'  
RACE 'Q6 My race'  
DEGREE 'Q7 Degree Program'  
TRACK 'Q8 Social work track'  
CURRENT 'Q9 My social work education at my current  
institution'  
GUIDE 'Q10 I have had adequate guidance on how to include  
action'  
ACTIVE 'Q11 I will not need to be politically active in my  
desired job'  
OBLIG 'Q12 Every social worker is obligated to political  
participation'  
POLIC 'Q13 I wish my school would initiate more activities  
to encourage me'  
INFLUE 'Q14 It is unlikely I would have much influence'  
KNOW 'Q15 I wish I knew more about impacting political  
processes'  
MEMBER 'Q16 I am a member of NASW or NABSW'  
ENCOUR 'Q17 The organizations of membership mentioned above  
encourage'  
ENJOY 'Q18 I enjoy(ed) my Social Welfare Policy curriculum'  
CURRIC 'Q19 The Social Welfare Policy curriculum at my  
current institution'  
INTER 'Q20 I had an interest in political participation'  
PROFESS 'Q21 I have a Social Welfare Policy professor'  
SATIS 'Q22 I am satisfied with my level of political  
participation'  
COMP 'Q23 I do not feel competent to perform policy-related  
tasks'.

## VALUE LABELS

GENDER  
1 'Male'  
2 'Female'  
3 'Transgender'/'

## APPENDIX C

(continued)

## AGE

- 1 '18-20'
- 2 '21-29'
- 3 '30-39'
- 4 '40-49'
- 5 '50-60'
- 6 'Over 60'/'

## RELAT

- 1 'Single'
- 2 'Single, cohabitating with partner'
- 3 'Married'
- 4 'Widowed'
- 5 'Divorced'/'

## EDU

- 1 'SWHBCU1'
- 2 'SWHBCU2'
- 3 'SWHBCU3'/'

## ENROLL

- 1 'Part-time undergraduate student'
- 2 'Full-time undergraduate student'
- 3 'Advanced Standing graduate student'
- 4 'Part-time graduate student'
- 5 'Full-time graduate student'/'

## RACE

- 1 'AfriAmerican/Black'
- 2 'Hispanic'
- 3 'White'
- 4 'Asian'
- 5 'American Indian or Alaskan Native'
- 6 'Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander'
- 7 'Other'/'

## DEGREE

- 1 'BSW'
- 2 'MSW'
- 3 'PhD'/'

## TRACK

- 1 'Macro'
- 2 'Micro'
- 3 'Both'/'

## APPENDIX C

(continued)

## CURRENT

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'
- 5 'Strongly Disagree'
- 6 'Not Applicable'/'

## GUIDE

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'
- 5 'Strongly Disagree'
- 6 'Not Applicable'/'

## ACTIVE

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'
- 5 'Strongly Disagree'
- 6 'Not Applicable'/'

## OBLIG

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'
- 5 'Strongly Disagree'
- 6 'Not Applicable'/'

## POLIC

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'
- 5 'Strongly Disagree'
- 6 'Not Applicable'/'

## INFLUE

- 1 'Agree'
- 2 'Strongly Agree'
- 3 'Disagree'
- 4 'Neutral'



## APPENDIX C

(continued)

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

KNOW

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Neutral'

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

MEMBER

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Neutral'

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

ENCOUR

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Neutral'

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

ENJOY

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Neutral'

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

CURRIC

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

4 'Neutral'

5 'Strongly Disagree'

6 'Not Applicable'/

INTER

1 'Agree'

2 'Strongly Agree'

3 'Disagree'

## APPENDIX C

(continued)

4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## PROFESS

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'  
3 'Disagree'  
4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## SATIS

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'  
3 'Disagree'  
4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## COMP

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'  
3 'Disagree'  
4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## ATTITUDE

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'  
3 'Disagree'  
4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## PERCEPT

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'  
3 'Disagree'  
4 'Neutral'  
5 'Strongly Disagree'  
6 'Not Applicable'/

## PARTICP

1 'Agree'  
2 'Strongly Agree'

## APPENDIX C

(continued)

3 'Disagree'  
 4 'Neutral'  
 5 'Strongly Disagree'  
 6 'Not Applicable'/.

## MISSING VALUES

GENDER AGE RELAT EDU ENROLL RACE DEGREE TRACK CURRENT GUIDE  
 ACTIVE OBLIG POLIC INFLUE KNOW MEMBER ENCOUR ENJOY CURRIC  
 INTER PROFESS SATIS COMP ATITUDE PERCEPT PARTICP(0) .

## BEGIN DATA

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## APPENDIX C

(continued)

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06922315722144331322111431  
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## APPENDIX C

(continued)

```

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0832312113325555552222222
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END DATA.

```

```

RECODE CURRENT GUIDE ACTIVE OBLIG POLIC INFLUE KNOW
(1 THRU 2.99=1) (3 THRU 6.99=3) .
RECODE MEMBER ENCOUR ENJOY CURRIC INTER PROFESS SATIS
(1 THRU 2.99=1) (3 THRU 6.99=3) .
RECODE ATITUDE PERCEPT PARTICP COMP
(1 THRU 2.99=1) (3 THRU 6.99=3) .

```

```

FREQUENCIES/ VARIABLES GENDER AGE RELAT EDU ENROLL RACE
DEGREE TRACK CURRENT GUIDE ACTIVE OBLIG POLIC INFLUE KNOW
MEMBER ENCOUR ENJOY CURRIC INTER PROFESS SATIS COMP ATITUDE
PERCEPT PARTICP
/STATISTICS=DEFAULT.

```

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