INTRODUCTION

Policy advocacy has become a central component of both the social work field and higher education in the profession. Not only does public policy at multiple levels (international, federal, state, county, local) have tremendous influence on the range and quality of the services offered by social workers, but the most important route to social justice is also often through effective engagement in the policy arena. Moreover, policy advocacy cannot simply be the domain of experts in the area; it is the responsibility of all social workers and others who consider themselves allies for social justice matters. In the following chapters, I attempt to provide justification for this position. Although most professionals will not specialize in policy practice, all must be capable of navigating these waters when the need arises. Fear, anxiety, or frustration regarding such intervention is unacceptable if social workers are to work as best they can on behalf of their clients and live up to the profession's code of ethics.

Most would agree that the profession currently faces unparalleled challenges in the assessment of social problems and in the development and implementation of social policies related to them. The nation seems to be increasingly divided, and people are constantly talking across one another—invoking different "policy languages," one might say (Bishop, 2008; Haidt, 2012; Lakoff, 1996). Partisans on each side of the political divide often feel that what appears perfectly logical and obvious to them makes no sense to those on the other side. Rising frustration and anger, intensified by the chronic use of social media and other platforms that are not conducive to constructive civil discourse, lead many to want to simply withdraw from the debate altogether. At the same time, people are inundated with policy-related information and propaganda and have difficulty telling the difference between the two. They also do not have the luxury to explore complex social issues in the depth that they deserve.

Perhaps most important, policy making is ostensibly an emotional enterprise, but people experience frustration because they falsely believe that it is governed by reason, and they fail to understand why rational arguments and facts do not carry the day. Moreover, even what seems to constitute a fact is today increasingly and purposefully obscured by various political stakeholders to press their personal narratives.

My hope is that, among other things, this book will provide cogent reasons why practicing social workers, professors, students, clients, and others who consider themselves to be allies for social justice concerns should not move to the political sidelines out of frustration but should rather take a more active role in policy engagement. The more one understands political systems and how they affect the social services network as a whole, the greater comfort one will have working in an environment that at first appears alien and perhaps even manifestly corrupt. This landscape is discomforting to many people for various reasons, but the negative attributes of the political system, and there are surely many, are not an excuse to refrain from engagement. This political system, imperfect as it may be, is the only one this country has. Despite its flaws, it is also a system that will occasionally greatly benefit those in need or, conversely, add to their struggles.

The primary point of this book is that social workers must not only be involved in the policy arena, but should especially be aware of and engaged in problem framing. I contend that this initial stage of the policy-making process is by far the most important one, because framing drives which social policies and therefore social services are developed and maintained. A key component of social problem analysis is metaphoric framing: understanding how language (as well as images) is used to describe a particular social problem. As I emphasize in this book, language is weighty, in that even what appear to be superficial rhetorical differences can dramatically change the way people feel about a problem and therefore the potential policy responses and services that are supported. Especially in the policy arena, language is also purposeful, with specific terms, images, events, and stories being purposefully used to present a desired picture of the social problem. This picture, moreover, serves specific stakeholder interests and is designed to funnel money and resources down prearranged pathways.

The endpoint of these funding pathways is where these decisions primarily affect social workers. Which pathway is selected explains why some

services are funded more readily than others; why some clients have greater access than others; why some treatments are more favored than others; and why some agencies or services develop, expand, or fail to thrive. Problem framing is of vital importance in what social workers do. In addition, framing also has an impact on the social work profession and the public sanction that is (or is not) provided in support of the profession. Social workers are left with two choices: either adapt to the existing problem–policy pathway or be engaged in the process of attempting to change it. Not only does the former option mean relegating oneself to a particular service delivery typology, but it may even require an uncomfortable adaptation of one's values and ethical beliefs, because varying service delivery typologies may carry with them differing views of both problem etiology and the theoretical approach to the issue or treatment. Certain policy pathways carry with them the inherent perspective that marginalized individuals are to blame for their condition, and others place greater blame on the larger systems within which those individuals live.

As many readers can no doubt surmise, metaphoric framing stands as a form of social constructionism. The meaning of particular terms and images is not fixed, but changes on the basis of cultural and historical circumstances (Burr, 1995). As Gergen (1999) wrote, being able to deconstruct language has emancipatory potential because it opens to people new vistas for understanding. He added that "there is substantial work on the ways discourse is subtly used to maintain power relations, to derogate certain groups of people, and to silence those who might upset the status quo" (p. 80). Changing one's metaphors and the way in which groups, problems, or policies are described and conceptually understood is perhaps the best way to augment dialogue with those who view issues from a different perspective. Social work educators frequently discuss the importance of using multiple perspectives in conceptualizing issues. Drawing on different metaphors can assist educators in gaining this new perspective. Moreover, understanding metaphors can allow one to grasp more fully why one holds a perspective on a particular issue.

Although this book focuses specifically on linguistic and conceptual metaphors, I should note that a variety of communication vehicles may carry metaphoric meaning and support or oppose particular framings (Indurkhya, 1992). Images and photographs, for example, are often designed with metaphoric intent. In his book *Faces of the Enemy,* Sam Keen (1986) provided a description of the ways in which war posters have

been designed to support entrenched, dehumanizing views of the enemy during wartime, and Garland-Thomson (2001), in her book chapter "Seeing the Disabled," provided both positive and negative examples of visual images as modes of framing people with disabilities. In two of his books, Sander Gilman (1984, 1988) provided insight into how, over the course of time, mental illness has been depicted through various types of images. In his book *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography,* Martin Berger (2011) not only described the importance of photography in the context of the civil rights movement, but moreover analyzed which particular depictions were "acceptable" to different audiences, and therefore which framings of protests were likely to be widely disseminated, usually because they fostered the existing narrative of the media source or region. Often, as one might assume, verbal and pictorial descriptions have worked together in fostering a particular frame.

As I describe in chapter 2, select themes have been used over time for the purpose of dehumanizing or inciting fear of marginalized community groups. These themes are often recycled in different eras and generally work in a largely subliminal manner. Periods that are marked by dehumanizing and fear-based rhetoric are also characterized by efforts to formally or informally limit the rights of such groups. Formal methods of restriction will normally be at the level of social policy. As alluded to earlier, because these periods of dehumanization are marked by high emotion (anger, fear, anxiety), they are not highly responsive to rational arguments in support of the oppressed group. Rather, social workers need to understand why specific metaphoric themes are being used and make the public cognizant of them. We need to shed light on political manipulation and how (and why) it works, especially when the rights or even lives of vulnerable groups may be at risk.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

This book consists of two sections. The first three chapters provide an overview of metaphoric themes and their importance in social policy. Chapter 1 includes a brief literature review of metaphors in social work. Previous published works in social work and related fields have almost exclusively dealt with the use of metaphor in the context of clinical practice, with very little being written about the relationship between metaphors and public policy. As I describe in chapter 3, however, this has been a burgeoning area

of research outside of the profession. Understanding the use of metaphor analysis in clinical practice is beneficial because it informs metaphoric deconstruction in regard to policy, and vice versa. In both domains, social workers must be aware that metaphors can tell one much about what is being communicated and why.

The second chapter specifically takes up two related issues. First, I look at research, much of it fairly recent, into how metaphors may affect, even subconsciously, the way that people think about and respond to social issues and make decisions related to them. Not only do metaphors play an integral role in decision making, but they may also reveal much about implicit bias. Second, I take up the relationship between pejorative metaphor themes and devalued subgroups and explore how various linguistic and conceptual metaphors have been used to denigrate specific groups. This discussion sets the stage for the more in-depth discussion provided in chapters 4 and 5. I also discuss the issue of metaphoric themes in relation to the public image of the social work profession itself.

In chapter 3, I consider in greater depth the relationship between metaphors and public policy and the importance of this form of policy advocacy for the social work profession. As alluded to earlier, the past few decades have seen an explosion of research demonstrating the relationship between various metaphor themes and public policies. This topic is especially important because many of the issues that social workers deal with are emotionally charged, and therefore stakeholders are likely to invoke metaphors that have a subconscious emotional impact.

In the second section of this book, chapters 4 and 5 provide more detailed examples of metaphor themes as they have been used over time to denigrate vulnerable populations and support restrictive social policies. In chapter 4, I focus on dehumanization and objectification themes, and in chapter 5 I highlight fear-based rhetoric and images. Both historical and contemporary examples are used, and for the former I principally use primary source writings from alarm periods. Although most of the examples are from the United States, I periodically pull in some from other nations, particularly Nazi Germany. The use of denigrating metaphors in the Nazi era is important in part because to a large extent dehumanizing propaganda became institutionalized in Nazi Germany. Although negative verbal and pictorial depictions of marginalized groups have been used for centuries, Hitler, in conjunction with leading Nazis such as Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, and Julius Streicher,

was the first to create a vast propaganda infrastructure to support his measures of control and extermination (Burleigh, 1994).

Although most of the historical examples I draw from (for example, immigration restriction, anti-Semitism, racial segregation, Japanese internment) are generally well known to readers, one period of social injustice I highlight that I should briefly explain is the eugenics movement in the United States. This movement, which peaked during the 1920s, held that the nation could become stronger by controlling reproduction, especially by limiting births among the least desirable elements of the population. These groups, many of whom were diagnosed as feebleminded or morons, presumably had large numbers of children and threatened to overwhelm the nation (Kennedy, 2008; O'Brien, 2018; Trent, 1994). Eugenicists contended that, together with undesirable immigrant groups, these people also threatened to dilute the racial makeup of the nation. As a result of these and other arguments, policies such as involuntary sterilization and forced institutionalization laws were passed in many states to control the birth rate among such people (Reilly, 1991). As one might assume, the U.S. eugenics era informed later Nazi eugenics policies. Important for the purposes of this book, similar forms of image making took place in each nation to dehumanize people with disabilities and other victims of eugenics policies (Kühl, 1994; O'Brien, 2013).

The brief final chapter of the book details implications of this work for the social work community. It addresses the inclusion of metaphoric content not only in policy, but also in research, diversity, and practice courses; the role of social workers as policy advocates; and short-term policy challenges for the profession. I also briefly discuss important ethical considerations related to metaphor analysis. For example, although one might assume that a response to pejorative metaphors would be to replace them with more positive metaphors, this can be problematic because even the latter generally constitute stereotyping.

My hope is that this book will provide readers with greater insight into the meaning behind people's words, as well as the ways in which conceptual metaphors guide people's thinking. Over the past decade, many in the social work profession have, like other Americans, become greatly concerned about the state of the nation's politics, as well as trends such as the growing political divide, negative campaigning, and the infusion of ever more corporate money into politics. Instead of allowing these and other disconcerting political developments to drive people away from

politics, countervailing winds provide hope for the future. Many people are becoming increasingly engaged and taking part in activist campaigns. Although there are certainly drawbacks to social media, they have, in an age of mass media homogeneity, allowed many smaller voices to make themselves heard and allowed for a multitude of opinions. Many young people are coming to understand the importance of being engaged (such as by voting) to shape the future. Just as social workers have an interest in the strengths perspective when viewing client issues, they need to focus on positive trends that can be found in the intersection of politics and social work and find ways to take advantage of and expand on these positive trends. Perhaps the metaphors that are implicitly drawn from framing policy practice themselves need to be changed.