

THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TRAINING ON THE POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE AND INTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

by

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT**The effects of digital civic engagement training
on the political knowledge and internal political efficacy of social work students****Christian Mason****The University of Texas at Arlington, 2022****Supervising Professor: Richard Hoefler**

It is an ethical obligation for social workers to be civically engaged because the issues central to the profession, like poverty, are public issues. One widely used method to examine civic engagement is the civic voluntarism model developed by Verba et al. (1995). Furthermore, an emerging arena for civic involvement is the digital environment and its potential use as a training ground. This study was a pilot study to determine if a brief training in digital civic engagement for social work students could lead to an increase in the internal political efficacy and political knowledge of social work students. While this study could not determine statistical significance because of a small sample, it did find that the top reason for nonengagement was a lack of time and that disabilities and illness might be unexplored hindrances to civic involvement. Future research might consider repeating the study with a sampling plan that follows the academic calendar and with strong incentives.

Keywords: civic engagement, civic voluntarism, social work students

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who supported me throughout its development.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM FORMULATION

Introduction

Democracy in America is threatened by increasing political apathy and those seeking to weaken democratic norms and institutions. This issue is not unique to the United States. Worldwide democracies are being undermined by authoritarian populism and disengagement with democratic political processes (Ortega & Garvin, 2019). The Social work profession must work to address this threat and remember its history of democratic support dating back to the Gilded Age (Toft, 2020). In recent years, social work research has begun to examine the profession's role in democracy in the face of authoritarian populism and the erosion of democratic norms (Lee & Johnstone, 2021; Ortega & Garvin, 2019). Yet, the question of engagement is not new. Since the genesis of social work, the question of how to engage democracy has been considered, symbolized by the publication of Jane Addams' *Democracy and Social Ethics* (Addams, 1902). Today's social workers must follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and not reject their ethical responsibility to democracy, lest their clients lose many of their hard-fought freedoms.

Pragmatically speaking, the issues central to the profession are public issues and require public engagement to address. However, beyond the pragmatic, there is also an ethical responsibility to engage. It is a duty at the heart of the profession codified in the Code of Ethics (NASW, 2021) and Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for the Council on Social Work Education (2015) which call social workers to engage political and social systems to expand social justice. However, beliefs about the profession's responsibility are not enough. Ethics require action. The founding mother of social work, Jane Addams, wrote "action is indeed

the sole medium of expression for ethics.” (Addams, p. 273, 1902). Since those words were written, democratic participation and social work ethics have been linked. Furthermore, the rise of anti-democratic authoritarian populism poses an existential threat to the social justice and human rights goals of the profession (Lee & Johnstone, 2021; Toft, 2020). Social workers have a responsibility as professionals and as citizens to engage in, and promote engagement in, democratic systems for the furtherment of social justice and human rights (Burke, 2011; Toft, 2020).

One method for social workers to live out this ethical obligation is through civic engagement. While civic engagement has many definitions, one method of understanding the concept is through civic voluntarism, or any voluntary action taken in the public realm (Greenfield et al., 2021; Verba et al., 1995). While the literature suggests that the social work profession is more civically engaged than the general population, there is room for it to grow in its civic commitments (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015; Kwon Ilan et al., 2020; Ostrander et al., 2021; Ritter, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Swank, 2012). Schools of social work can implement programs to increase the civic engagement of social work students. Instructing social work students in political engagement has the potential to increase their involvement when they graduate and become practicing social workers by building civic skills, increasing knowledge, and boosting political efficacy (Ritter, 2013). While there are many traditional forms of civic engagement, an emerging area students can begin practicing civic involvement is in the digital environment (Ostrander et al., 2017).

Purpose of the Study

This study will be a pilot study that uses the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) developed by Verba et al. (1995) to examine the political involvement of social work students and explore

using digital engagement to increase involvement. The CVM theorizes that people do not engage for three reasons: a lack of resources, a lack of psychological engagement, or they are not connected to recruitment networks. Two elements of psychological engagement are of particular interest to this study: political knowledge and political efficacy.

Previous research has established that civic involvement in digital spaces could increase political activity and potentially decrease political apathy in those engaging (Davis et al., 2002; Gross, 2021; Zhang et al., 2010). Many social work students might already be engaging in political activities online or have some familiarity with the concept that could be built upon (Apgar, 2021; Felderhoff et al., 2016). Additionally, digital engagement is a potential on-ramp to engagement, especially for those with low political self-efficacy who might not be comfortable engaging in person (Ostrander et al., 2017). This study seeks to understand whether a short training in digital engagement can increase the political knowledge and internal political efficacy of social work students.

Significance to Social Work

As stated previously, the problems relevant to social work are public and political and require engagement in the political realm to address (Lee & Johnstone, 2021; Toft, 2020). If social workers are not involved, then the values and knowledge of the profession will not be represented in policy discussion. Social workers must be civically involved to shape how these problems are addressed on the community, state, and federal levels for the sake of those served by the profession. One method to increase the involvement of professional social workers is to increase the involvement of social work students before they become professionals. Boosting the civic engagement of social work students could lead to those students being more civically involved when they become licensed social workers. The increased involvement of social

workers would allow the profession to amplify its values and expertise in policy discussion to secure more just policies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will explore the political engagement of social workers in traditional and digital methods of engagement. It will begin by establishing the ethical mandate for social workers to be politically engaged and examine how politically active social workers and social work students are. The exploration of political engagement among social workers and social work students will be through the lens of the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) and its three components of resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks (Verba et al., 1995). Finally, digital civic engagement will be explored, and the use of the electronic arena as a method to increase the civic involvement of social workers and students.

Ethics

Social workers have an ethical obligation to engage political systems. This imperative is established in the Social Work Code of Ethics and by the Council of Social Work Education. Section 6.04 of the Social Work Code of Ethics lists the profession's commitment to social and political action (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). This commitment to public involvement is also a component of social work education. Under Competency 5 of the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for the Council on Social Work Education, social work students should be able to "advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice" (Council on Social Work Education, 2015) (p. 8). With this mandate, social work students should possess some knowledge of the political process and have the skills for political engagement when they graduate (Ostrander et al., 2018). Furthermore, most social workers agree that civic engagement and political involvement are not

just individual civic duties but also professional duties (Apgar, 2021; Felderhoff et al., 2016; Veeh et al., 2019). Beyond individual and professional responsibility, civic engagement is good for democracy. With the increasing influence of money, lobbyists, antidemocratic rhetoric, and increasing amounts of distrust in the political process, citizen engagement is critical to restoring trust in the validity of democratic institutions (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Lee & Johnstone, 2021; Safadi & Lombe, 2012).

Current Engagement

Many social workers and social work students appear to take this ethical obligation seriously as members of the profession, as a whole, are more civically engaged than the general population (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kwon Ilan et al., 2020; Ritter, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Weiss-Gal, 2017). However, many studies on this topic contain small unrepresentative samples which don't differentiate between engagement as a professional and engagement as a private citizen (Weiss-Gal, 2017), potentially, blurring the true picture of engagement for the profession. Nevertheless, the current evidence suggests higher rates of engagement.

While the profession might be more engaged than the general population, most of their engagement is limited to activities requiring a minimal investment of time, such as voting or donating to a political campaign. Activities requiring a more substantial commitment of time like volunteering for a political campaign, running as a candidate, or serving on a community board are far less common (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015; Ostrander et al., 2017, 2018; J. A. Ritter, 2007; Swank, 2012; Weiss-Gal, 2017). It is worrisome that some studies have found that close to half of social workers seldom or never engage politically, very rarely doing more than voting (Ostrander et al., 2021; J. A. Ritter, 2007). Thus, while the profession might be more

engaged than the general population, there is still an opportunity for growth. However, the question remains why are some social workers civically engaged while others are not?

The Civic Voluntarism Model

To better explain why some people are politically engaged and others are not, Verba et al. (1995) developed the civic voluntarism model (CVM). The CVM posits that there are three reasons an individual does not engage, “because they can’t; because they don’t want to; or because nobody asked” (p. 15). These three reasons can be formed into three components: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. Individuals may not engage because they lack the resources of money, time, or skills to engage. Individuals may not engage because they lack psychological engagement in the form of political interest, political efficacy, family influence, political knowledge, or partisanship. Finally, individuals may not engage because they are not involved in social networks that can connect them to engagement opportunities. These networks might be churches, civic groups, academic clubs, or any association that could connect an individual to a broader social movement. While the CVM has been used to measure the involvement of the general American electorate (Verba et al., 1995), it has also been applied to study the involvement of social workers and was found to account for much of the variance between those involved and those not involved (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; J. Ritter, 2008).

One element of the CVM that is central to the purpose of this study is political efficacy. While all elements of the model are important, previous research has found that political efficacy is vital to whether a person engages or not (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Ostrander et al., 2018; Verba et al., 1995). Political efficacy can be divided into two levels: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. Internal political efficacy is the belief that one can affect political

systems; whereas external political efficacy is the belief that political systems are receptive to change (McClendon et al., 2020; Ostrander et al., 2017, 2021). The combination of both internal efficacy and external efficacy is overall political efficacy (Ostrander et al., 2021). Unfortunately, while many social workers are interested in political activity, many lack a sense of internal political efficacy and do not view themselves as qualified to engage politically (J. Ritter, 2013; J. A. Ritter, 2007). Fortunately, political efficacy can be increased and is influenced by the different elements of the CVM. For example, possessing and practicing civic skills can boost feelings of political competence and efficacy (Beaumont, 2011; Halvor, 2016; Hamilton & Fauri, 2001). Furthermore, a sense of political efficacy can grow from a history of education, training, and practice (Lane et al., 2012; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015; McClendon et al., 2020; Nowakowski-Sims & Kumar, 2021). One reason for this could be that possessing civic skills or knowledge makes political engagement feel less daunting, thus boosting efficacy (Verba et al., 1995).

Political knowledge is another element of psychological engagement relevant to this study. Unfortunately, civic knowledge among social workers and social work students is many times inadequate (McCabe et al., 2017; Ostrander et al., 2018; J. Ritter, 2008; Rome & Hoehstetter, 2010). McCabe et al. (2017) found that while social work students have more civic knowledge than the general population, over a third of them failed a basic civics test. While a lack of civic knowledge is undesirable in the citizens of democratic nations, A lack of civic knowledge among social workers is a further issue because it hampers their ability to fulfill the profession's mission and limits their capacity to advocate on behalf of their clients (Hylton, 2015; McCabe et al., 2017). At a minimum, social workers should possess some understanding

of the political process and government functions to adequately advance social justice and human rights goals (Ostrander et al., 2018).

Digital Civic Engagement

Research has long examined the effects of mass media on civic engagement, but with the emergence of the digital environment, research has begun to examine new media as a method to increase engagement and decrease political apathy (Davis et al., 2002; Gross, 2021; Zhang et al., 2010). There has also been an interest in how the internet might lead to the emergence of new areas for political engagement (Cho et al., 2020) or lead to more offline engagement (Gross, 2021; Rice et al., 2012; Twenge, 2013). Nevertheless, the literature is mixed on whether online activity leads to offline civic engagement. Some studies have found that internet use is associated with a small increase in some civic activities, such as volunteering or signing petitions, but little connection to increased political activities like voting (Twenge, 2013; Zhang et al., 2010). Still, other studies found that online political activity could translate to offline activity in some cases. For example, while general internet use on its own might not lead to more political activity, the use of the internet for specific political activities might lead to more overall civic engagement (Gross, 2021; Rice et al., 2012). Although, there is concern that the digital environment might hurt democracy by allowing the spread of misinformation and the rise of authoritarian populist groups; education on how to utilize digital spaces to combat these forces may strengthen democracy (Vogels et al., 2020).

While there are many ways to digitally engage, Cho et al. (2020) categorized four main types of digital civic engagement: reading and sharing the news, writing emails to decision-makers, advocacy on social networking sites (SNS), and belonging to online civic or advocacy

groups. While this is not an exhaustive list of online civic activities, it provides a structure for a discussion on digital engagement.

Reading newspapers, especially local news, has long been linked with increased civic activity and community attachment, and doing so online might carry similar benefits (Barthel et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2010). Additionally, those with a positive view of online civic engagement and higher internal political efficacy are more likely to share news online (Bhagat & Kim, 2022). Fortunately, most social workers already read and share news to stay informed on current events and social causes (Apgar, 2021; Felderhoff et al., 2016). However, the reliance on internet news raises concerns over misinformation and whether schools of social work are teaching students the skills to discern fact from fiction (Meade, 2016). In the current age of misinformation and post-truth, social workers and students must have the critical thinking skills necessary to engage new media and political systems (Fenton & Smith, 2019; Hitchcock & Young, 2016; Lee & Johnstone, 2021). Furthermore, identifying trustworthy and accurate news is important because such news is more likely to influence people and boost the internal political efficacy of the sharer (Bhagat & Kim, 2022).

While letter writing is a long-held civic practice and skill (Verba et al., 1995), the digital environment brought the ability to send emails to elected officials. Many social work programs have already incorporated email writing as part of their policy courses (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hoefler, 1999; Tower & Hartnett, 2010). Further studies have begun to examine contacting elected officials by email during a policy course. Students who contact elected officials during a policy course experience increased internal political efficacy and confidence in their ability to engage in political action (Tower & Hartnett, 2010). Yet, few studies have examined how or if students continue to engage elected officials after completing their policy courses.

Political activity on SNS continues to grow from where it was at the beginning of the century (Smith, 2013). Furthermore, SNS are beginning to be viewed as legitimate avenues for political activity. Most Americans view SNS activism as important to achieving political goals and about half of Americans have performed some political action using said sites (Anderson et al., 2018). While many Americans use SNS for political action, liberals are more likely than conservatives to do so (Anderson et al., 2018; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). However, those who are politically active on SNS tend to be active in traditional forms of civic engagement as well (Oser et al., 2013; Smith, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). Yet, SNS may still lead to more engagement by increasing resources, recruitment networks, and the development of civic skills (Gross, 2021). SNS may also provide a forum for interpersonal discussion about politics which could lead to increased political engagement (Zhang et al., 2010). While there is limited research on SNS use in higher education for civic instruction, some studies have shown it to be beneficial (Bowen et al., 2017; McClendon et al., 2020; Ostrander et al., 2017). For example, social media advocacy has been identified as a method for social work students with low political efficacy to begin engaging in civic activities (Ostrander et al., 2017).

The final online civic activity is belonging to an online civic or advocacy group. While online groups are not a complete substitute for offline groups, belonging to an online group could act as a recruitment network which can lead to a small increase in political involvement in all age groups (Park & You, 2021). About one-third of Americans have taken part in an online political group (Anderson et al., 2018). Gross (2021) also found that participation in online groups was tied to the development of civic skills and an increase in political actions requiring a commitment of time. Furthermore, the digital environment has created many new tools for organizations to involve members. For example, advocacy groups can now involve more

members in the decision-making process, potentially making said groups more democratic (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018).

Social work organizations might also utilize the internet and act as recruitment networks. Many social work organizations have an online presence to share information with social workers. However, these organizations often do not utilize their web presences to provide advocacy action steps; leaving would be advocates informed but undirected (Bowen et al., 2017; Edwards & Hoefler, 2010). Education on digital advocacy could train social work students and professionals on how to use these new online tools to motivate action (Edwards & Hoefler, 2010).

Summary

Social workers have an ethical obligation to engage political systems formally established in the Code of Ethics and the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (Council on Social Work Education, 2015; National Association of Social Workers, 2021). While social workers and social work students might be more civically engaged than the general population (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kwon Ilan et al., 2020; Ritter, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoehstetter, 2010; Weiss-Gal, 2017) there is still plenty of room for improvement because many of their actions are limited to activities requiring only a small investment of time (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015; Ostrander et al., 2017, 2018; J. A. Ritter, 2007; Swank, 2012; Weiss-Gal, 2017). The CVM can be used to better understand why some social workers engage and others do not. The model understands engagement through three categories: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks (Verba et al., 1995). This study is particularly interested in psychological engagement and its subcomponents of political knowledge and political efficacy; both of which are vital to engagement and social work fulfilling its social justice and human rights goals (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015;

McCabe et al., 2017; Ostrander et al., 2018; Verba et al., 1995). The digital environment has the potential to increase political efficacy in social work students (Ostrander et al., 2017; Tower & Hartnett, 2010). While there are many digital civic activities, there are four main categories: reading and sharing the news, writing emails to decision-makers, advocacy on social networking sites (SNS), and belonging to online civic or advocacy groups (McCabe et al., 2017).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This study is a pilot study exploring whether a short training in digital engagement can increase the political knowledge and efficacy of social work students. This study used a survey design combined with self-paced training in digital engagement. The survey measured the elements of the CVM, reasons for nonengagement, and intended future involvement. The short training was inspired by previous work that showed short training could prepare students for advocacy and could increase intended future involvement (Lane et al., 2012). Participants were gathered from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social work.

Research Question

According to the CVM developed by Verba et al. (1995), civic knowledge and political efficacy are central to political engagement. Further research has found that possessing civic knowledge could boost political efficacy (Beaumont, 2011; Halvor, 2016; Lustig-Gants & Weiss-Gal, 2015). Additionally, the digital environment could be a place for those with low political efficacy to begin involvement and practice civic activities (Ostrander et al., 2017). This study asks if training in digital civic engagement could lead to an increase in civic knowledge and political efficacy among social work students.

Methods

Design

This study uses a survey design to evaluate data to determine if a single training in digital civic engagement might lead to an increase in civic knowledge and political efficacy in social work students. The study uses instruments developed by Hofer (2022) to measure the three

components of the CVM model developed by Verba et al. (1995). The training was developed in partnership with the Social Policy Education Advocacy and Knowledge (SPEAK) program at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. The survey and training were delivered electronically using the program QuestionPro and were self-paced.

Sampling

This study used convenience sampling to draw students (n=11) from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. All participants were over the age of 18 and Bachelor of Social Work or Master of Social Work students currently enrolled at the University.

Participants were gathered using a recruitment flyer (see appendix D) that was included in the school of social work weekly newsletter and provided to social work student organizations and peer leaders. Participants who completed the survey were given a certificate in digital advocacy and entered a drawing for a \$20 gift card.

Materials

This study uses a research instrument developed by Hoefer (2022) that was also applied to social work students at a large metropolitan university in North Texas. Hoefer developed this instrument by drawing from previous studies on political engagement and the CVM. However, the instrument was modified slightly by adding two questions about social media civic engagement.

The digital engagement training was developed in partnership with the SPEAK program at the University of Texas at Arlington (*UTA School of Social Work: SPEAK (Social Policy Education, Advocacy, and Knowledge)*, 2022). The training consists of 6 short videos totaling approximately 30 minutes in length. The videos cover the four digital advocacy activities developed by Cho et al. (2020): reading and sharing the news, writing emails to elected officials,

posting on social media, and belonging to online advocacy groups. The training also covers discovering an advocacy passion as an introduction.

Measures

This study uses a survey design with the primary outcome measures of political knowledge and political efficacy. Additionally, this study measures the three components of the CVM model: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. Participants completed a pre-test, received intervention in the form of training, completed a post-test, and then completed a follow-up post-test a week later. The pre-test gathered demographic information, current engagement, intended future engagement, reasons for not engaging, and beliefs about engagement.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is any voluntary action taken in the public realm (Greenfield et al., 2021; Verba et al., 1995). Current civic involvement was measured by asking participants about their current civic activities. Future political involvement was measured by asking participants about activities they plan to engage in in the future.

Resources

Resources are money, time, and skills (Verba et al., 1995). Money was measured by asking participants about their economic status. Time was measured by asking participants why they do not engage and whether they feel they have the time to engage. Skills were not measured because it was beyond the scope of this study and would have required a more in-depth survey design that would have distracted from the primary research goal of political efficacy and knowledge.

Psychological Engagement

Psychological engagement is the combination of political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge, and partisanship (Verba et al., 1995). Political interest was measured by asking participants if they discuss politics with family and ranking their interest in politics. Political efficacy is the combination of internal and external political efficacy. Internal political efficacy was measured by asking participants how they perceive their ability to affect political systems. External political efficacy was measured by asking respondents how receptive political systems are to change. Political knowledge was measured by asking participants how well informed they feel and if a lack of knowledge is a barrier to engagement. Partisanship was measured by asking participants questions about their beliefs regarding the role of government.

Recruitment Networks

Recruitment networks are social networks that can connect people to political movements. These networks could be churches, civic groups, academic clubs, or any association that could connect an individual to a broader social movement (Verba et al., 1995). Recruitment networks were measured by asking participants whether they are a part of any civic or non-civic organizations.

Protection of Human Participants

This study posed minimal harm to participants. Participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation was not at risk of being affected by the study. Before beginning the pre-test, participants were given an informed consent detailing the participants' rights and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix C). While this study refrained from collecting unnecessary personal information, to send the certificates and the follow-up participants were given the option to provide their student email addresses. However, students

could choose to withhold their email addresses and still participate in the study. However, withholding the email address prevented the participant from receiving the certificate, follow-up post-test, and being entered into the gift card drawing. To protect participants, email addresses were not connected to response data. Beyond emails, no other personally identifiable information was collected.

Procedure

Participants accessed the study through an online link contained on the recruitment flyer. The pre-test measured each element of the CVM, resources, psychological engagement, recruitment networks; and political involvement (see Appendix A). Before sampling, institutional review board approval was obtained. Before beginning the survey, participants were required to agree to the informed consent. After completing the pre-test students were taken to the pre-recorded digital civic engagement training. An optional worksheet was provided to students to help them track their process, but they were not asked to submit the worksheet. After the training, a post-test was administered to measure the variables again (see Appendix B). Finishing the training and post-test qualified students for a digital advocacy certificate. After completion participants were given the option to share their email to receive the certificate. Emails were kept separate from other data to protect the privacy of research participants. One week after the completion of the training, participants were asked to complete the post-test again as a follow-up to determine if the changes lasted. Completion of the second post-test entered students into a drawing for a \$20 gift card. A random number generator was used to select the gift-card winner. Data from pre and post-tests were analyzed with descriptive statistics to better understand any possible changes in variables.

Data Analysis

This study used descriptive statistics for data analysis. Data analysis was performed in Microsoft Excel after being exported from QuestionPro. Variables were grouped into resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. Each variable was comprised of subcomponents. Resources were comprised of time and socio-economic status. Psychological engagement was comprised of internal and external political efficacy, family influence, political interest, partisanship, and political knowledge. Recruitment networks were comprised of nonpolitical groups and political groups. Answers to Likert questions were assigned a numerical score from zero to four and linked to a subcomponent of one of the variables. Arrays were then built from the answers and descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, median, and standard deviation.

Summary

This study is a pilot study that seeks to understand whether a short training in digital civic engagement can increase the political knowledge and efficacy of social work students. This study uses a survey design and training in digital engagement developed in partnership with the SPEAK program at the University of Texas at Arlington. The CVM was used as a framework to measure the civic engagement of social work students with a particular interest paid to political efficacy and political knowledge. The sample was a convenience sample comprised of BSW and MSW students at the University of Texas at Arlington. Participants accessed the survey and training through a link provided in the recruitment flyer and completed a pre-test that measured resources, psychological engagement, recruitment networks, current civic engagement, and intended future engagement. Participants completed a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up post-test a week later. Descriptive statistics were used to present results and inform future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This study was a pilot study to determine if a short training in digital civic engagement could increase the internal political efficacy and political knowledge of social work students. The sample (n=11) was small, and the majority was older, whiter, and more female than the population. The sample was engaged in some civic activities requiring a small investment of time, like voting, but was not involved in many activities requiring more time, such as organizing a protest. In line with this, the top reason given for nonengagement was a lack of time. Because this was a pilot study, the sample size was too small to determine statistical significance for the psychological engagement variables. Therefore, descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and standard deviation were used to present and measure results.

Presentation of findings

This study used an online survey and instructional training videos. Participants were recruited using a flyer distributed to social work student organizations, social work peer leaders, and the social work department newsletters. However, the survey received a low response rate garnering only a small sample (n=11) on the pre-test. There was also a high rate of attrition with the post-test having a sample of (n=8) and the follow-up having a sample of (n=4). Furthermore, the participants did not reflect the overall student body at the university trending older, whiter, and lacked any male participants. When it came to age, participants trended older with an average age of 43.5 years. A slight majority (55%) identified as White with some identifying as Asian (9%), Black (27%), or Hispanic (9%). Most participants identified as middle-income with two identifying as low-income and one as high-income (see Table 1). Interestingly, while no

participants identified as upper-middle-class, 28%, a plurality, had incomes between \$100,000 and \$124,999 (see figure 1). Furthermore, no males took part in this study, there were ten women and one nonbinary individual who participated. This is an overrepresentation of white students in the survey, who make up 34.6% of the social work program, and an underrepresentation of males who make up 10.7% of the program (*Enrollment and Student Profile, 2022*).

Table 1

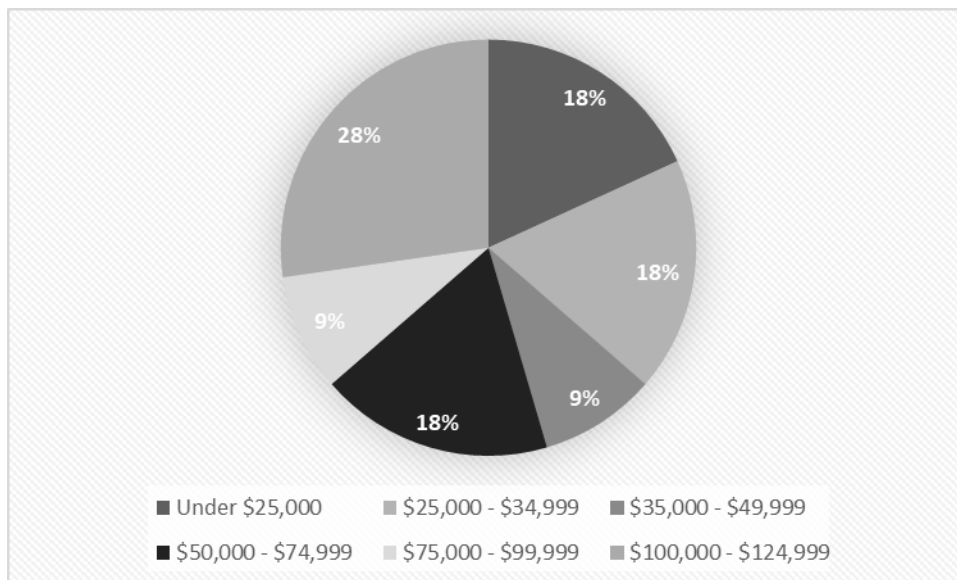
Demographic characteristics of participants at pre-test

Characteristics		
	n	%
Age		
20-29	2	18%
30-39	1	9%
40-49	5	45%
50-59	3	27%
SES		
Low-Income	2	20%
Lower-Middle Income	0	0%
Middle-Income	7	70%
Upper-Middle Income	0	0%
High-Income	1	10%
Race		
Asian	1	9%
Black or African American	3	27%
Hispanic	1	9%
White	6	55%
Gender Identity		
Female	10	91%
Nonbinary	1	9%

Note: N=11. Participants were on average 43.5 years old (SD = 10.5).

Figure 1

Income ranges of participants



Note: This figure shows a breakdown of the income ranges of participants.

Additionally, while all participants were UTA students, there was only a single BSW respondent, and close to half of the participants were early program MSW students. 45% of respondents had only completed one or two semesters in the program, but this survey did not consider if any of the MSW were advanced standing students with a BSW undergraduate degree, which would be considered as possessing more social work education (see Table 2). However, the majority (72.73%) stated that they had been exposed to political advocacy or civic engagement during their course work.

Table 2

Program Status of Participants at Pre-test

Program Status	n	%
Social Work Students	11	100%
BSW	1	9%
MSW	10	91%
Semesters Completed		
1-2	5	45%
3-4	2	18%
5-6	3	27%

7-8

1

9%

Note: N=11. On average participants had completed 3.64 semesters (SD=2.25).

The sample also appears to be civically engaged in voting, with 100% often or always voting, and 91% regularly encouraging others to vote. However, beyond voting, participants were not regularly involved in most of the civic activities. Surprisingly, it was rare for participants to follow their elected officials online (27%) and even rarer for participants to make political posts online (18%). There were also actions, such as testifying at government hearings or organizing political marches where no participant often or always engaged (see Table 3). Only one participant sometimes testified at hearings.

Table 3

Civic Actions Participants Often or Always Performed

Civic Actions	Often	Always	Often + Always
	n	n	%
I vote in elections	4	7	100%
I encourage others to vote in elections	6	4	91%
I read, listen to, or watch the news	2	5	64%
I follow the progress of legislation that interests me	1	5	55%
I take an active role in relation to issues that affect me personally	4	2	55%
I keep track of how my legislators vote on issues that interest me	4	1	45%
I participate in community groups unrelated to policy making	2	3	45%
I discuss current policy issues with others	2	2	36%
I follow my elected officials on social media	2	1	27%
I share my political opinions with others	2	0	18%

Civic Actions	Often	Always	Often + Always
	n	n	%
I contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues	2	0	18%
I participate in community groups that seek to influence policy	1	1	18%
I voice my opinions on policy issues using social media	1	1	18%
I participate in political rallies, marches, etc.	0	1	9%
I encourage others to participate in political rallies, marches, etc.	0	1	9%
I voice my opinions on policy issues to media outlets	0	1	9%
I actively campaign for candidates of my choice	0	0	0%
I attend public hearings on issues that interest me	0	0	0%
I help organize political rallies, marches, etc.	0	0	0%
I testify at federal, state, or local hearings	0	0	0%

Notes: N=11. Not shown in this table is never, rarely, or sometimes engaging in an activity.

The top reason selected for nonengagement was a lack of time, followed by a lack of confidence, and finally knowledge (see Table 4). Close to half, 45%, of the reasons for nonengagement was a lack of time. While a lack of confidence and knowledge were much closer, 23% and 20% respectively (see figure 2). Furthermore, poor health and a disability were also reasons for nonengagement provided in a free-response section. Finally, a reason for not engaging on social media was considering their social media as private and only for family.

Table 4

Participant Reasons for Nonengagement

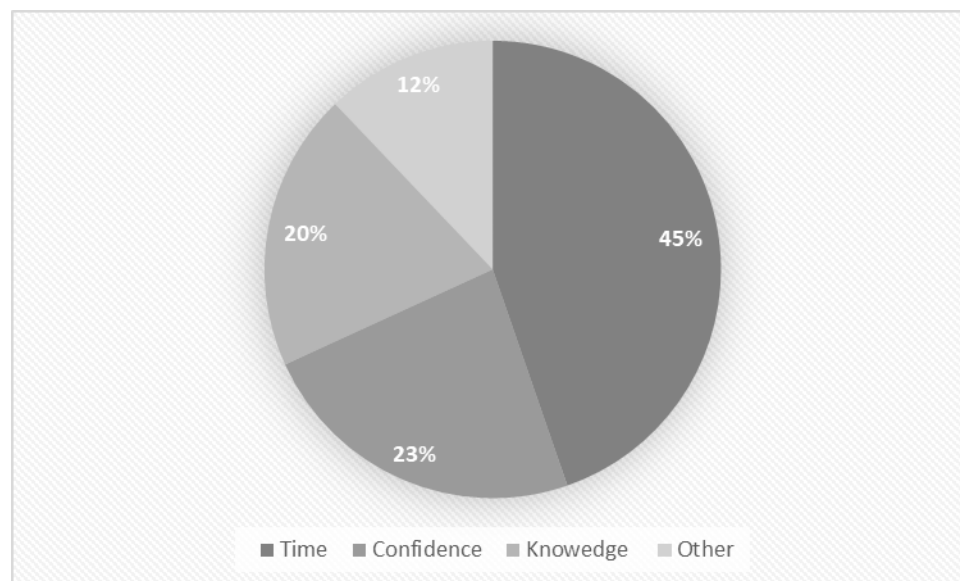
Lack of	Time	Confidence	Knowledge	Other
	n	n	n	n
I encourage others to vote in elections	0	0	1	2
I share my political opinions with others	1	3	1	1
I actively campaign for candidates of my choice	6	3	2	1
I read, listen to, or watch the news	2	0	0	0
I follow the progress of legislation that interests me	3	0	1	0
I discuss current policy issues with others	2	4	1	0
I attend public hearings on issues that interest me	5	2	1	2
I contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues	3	0	2	1
I keep track of how my legislators vote on issues that interest me	3	0	3	0
I participate in political rallies, marches, etc.	4	2	2	2
I help organize political rallies, marches, etc.	7	3	2	1
I encourage others to participate in political rallies, marches, etc.	3	7	2	1
I testify at federal, state, or local hearings	6	2	3	1
I participate in community groups that seek to influence policy	5	0	2	1
I participate in community groups unrelated to policy making	4	2	1	1

Lack of	Time	Confidence	Knowledge	Other
	n	n	n	n
I voice my opinions on policy issues to media outlets	3	3	0	1
I take an active role in relation to issues that affect me personally	2	0	2	1

Note: N=11. This table shows the primary reason for nonengagement when participants selected “sometimes” “rarely” or “never” engaging in an activity. If participants selected sometimes, often, or always engaged in the action, they skipped the reason for not engaging.

Figure 2

Participant Reasons for Nonengagement.



Note: This figure shows the collected reasons for participant nonengagement when they selected “sometimes” “rarely” or “never” engaging in a civic activity.

The subcomponents of psychological engagement were measured using Likert scales rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Answers to these questions were given numerical

values from one-to-four. Because this was a pilot study, the sample was too small to determine statistical significance. However, descriptive statistics were used to present the results (see Table 5).

Table 5

Psychological Engagement Descriptive Statistics

	Pre-test			Post-test			Follow-up		
	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD	Mean	Median	SD
Political interest	3.32	3	0.7	3.38	3.5	0.7	3.75	4	0.46
Internal political efficacy	2.55	3	1.25	2.81	3	1.24	2.71	3	1.26
External political efficacy	1.64	1	0.98	2.5	2.5	1.32	3.25	3.5	0.96
Political knowledge	2.64	3	1.12	2.58	3	1.15	2.92	3	1.16
Partisanship	2.5	3	1.18	2.42	3	1.38	1.92	2	1.16

Note: N=11. Answers to Likert scale questions were assigned a value from 0-4. The arrays were then used to perform t-tests.

Although the sample cannot provide statistical significance, a chi-square test was performed to present the data on future intended involvement because the data was binary, either “yes” or “no” for the suggested civic action. The test compared the pre-test and the post-test and then again compared the post-test and follow-up test (see Table 6). The test did not pass the critical value.

Table 6

Chi-square Goodness of Fit Results for Intended Future Involvement

	Pre-Test – Post-Test	Post-Test - Follow-up
Calculated value	1.49	2.36
Degrees of freedom	1	1
Critical value	3.84	3.84
Chi-Test (p)value	0.22	0.12

Note: Two chi-test results comparing the pre-test and post-test and comparing the post-test and follow-up. The critical value for both tests was $p \leq 0.05$.

Summary

For data analysis, this study used descriptive statistics for elements of the CVM and a chi-square test for intended future involvement. This study's sample was not representative of the UTA student body. It was older, whiter, and contained no male participants. The participants indicated a higher rate of civic involvement in activities requiring a small investment in time when compared to more time-intensive civic activities. Participants also listed a lack of time as the top reason for not engaging in an activity followed by a lack of political efficacy and a lack of knowledge. However, participants also listed poor health and disabilities as other reasons for nonengagement. Because this was a pilot study with a small, the results could not be used to determine statistical significance. However, the results of this study might inform future research that could determine statistical significance.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study was a pilot study to determine if a brief training in online civic engagement could increase the political knowledge and efficacy of social work students. The sample was too small to determine statistical significance, but it did reveal trends that future research might examine when conducting a more robust survey. Furthermore, a lack of time as the top reason for nonengagement and the role of disability in civic engagement are findings to consider.

Discussion

This survey had a low response rate potentially because of the time it was available. The survey opened near finals and because the population was all students many were possibly busy studying for exams, writing papers, and completing projects. Furthermore, the summer break began after finals further diminishing the pool of potential participants. Opening the survey during finals and running it through summer break limited the number of respondents. Better timing, such as scheduling the survey to open at the beginning of the fall or spring semester and running through the end of the semester could have potentially increased the responses rate. Additionally, offering a better incentive, such as a monetary reward for all participants, could have increased the response rate. Using a \$20 gift-card raffle was only a minor incentive and might not have acted as a strong motivator to participate. Additionally, working with professors teaching policy courses to offer extra credit for taking the survey could have acted as a better incentive to draw in more participants. More incentives could have lowered the rate of attrition as well.

This study was particularly interested in internal political efficacy and knowledge. While the sample was too small to determine any statistically significant changes, examining the descriptive statistics could reveal some trends. The mean for internal political efficacy did show some increase between pre-test and post-test and only a slight decrease for the follow-up. A larger sample might find statistically significant results for this variable. On the other hand, the mean between the pre-test and post-test actually decreased for political knowledge but increased again for the follow-up. Possibly this was caused by the low response rate and attrition. Nevertheless, the lack of a trend is concerning but it is difficult to postulate what results in future studies might find for the variable. Perhaps with a larger sample, significant changes might emerge. Or perhaps more intensive or longer education is required to adequately increase internal efficacy. The variable with the largest increase in mean was external political efficacy, but this is difficult to determine because of the single question for this variable in the survey. Future studies might consider adding more questions about external political efficacy.

Despite the small sample, there were still some results in line with previous research. The sample was very engaged when it came to voting (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kwon Ilan et al., 2020; Ritter, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Weiss-Gal, 2017). However, the rate of voting was much higher in this study's sample. 100% of participants often or always vote and 91% often or always encourage others to vote, which is much higher than previous research has found. Ostrander et al. (2018) found that 76% of first-year MSW students often or always voted and 67% often or always encouraged others to vote. It is possible those that chose to participate in this study were more likely to be civically engaged than the typical social work student. Furthermore, the sample, while being engaged in voting, was not very engaged in political activities requiring larger investments of time. Previous findings also

found social workers and social work students tended to engage more in activities requiring a small investment of time (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015; Ostrander et al., 2017, 2018; J. A. Ritter, 2007; Swank, 2012; Weiss-Gal, 2017). Moreover, a lack of time being the top reason for nonengagement is similar to the findings of previous work with the same survey (Hoefler, 2022).

The qualitative data gathered from the survey also contains information to consider. The listings of health issues and disabilities as reasons for nonengagement are important to consider because they are not elements of the CVM and could reflect a group that is often left out of research on civic involvement. Further research might examine how the involvement of those with a disability might be similar or different from abled individuals. Perhaps digital engagement becomes more meaningful for those with a disability or illness that prevent them from easily leaving their homes. Furthermore, the listing of not engaging in social media advocacy because they consider their social media private and personal is something to consider. It might explain why so few of the participants followed their elected officials on social media. Perhaps recommending these individuals create an advocacy social media separate from their personal might help boost their online engagement.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample was a convenience sample which could have introduced a sampling bias, this is demonstrated by the final sample not being representative of the UTA School of Social Work student body. Additionally, there could be differences in the political involvement of those who chose to participate in the survey. For example, those interested in participating in the study might be more civically engaged than the general social work student, this is likely because 100% of the sample often or always voted. A second

limitation is that the sample consisted of social work students from a single large metropolitan university which limits the generalizability for other schools of social work. The survey also experienced a high rate of attrition with a third of participants not completing the post-test after the training. Those who chose to continue the survey might be politically different than those who dropped out. Finally, there was no follow-up with students over an extended period to determine if there was a change in the involvement or engagement over time. However, due to the limited amount of time available, extended follow-ups with participants were not possible.

Recommendations

The literature supports the possibility of digital civic engagement being a starting point for students to practice civic involvement and build a sense of political efficacy (Ostrander et al., 2017). This study being a pilot study sought to inform future research into this topic. Two critical pieces learned from this study are the importance of timing a recruitment plan with the academic calendar and incentives. Additionally, the finding of a lack of time as the top reason for nonengagement is in line with previous research (Hoefler, 2022). Unfortunately, time is finite and cannot be increased without removing other responsibilities. With the high caseloads and understaffing of social workers, particularly exacerbated by COVID-19, it might be difficult for professional social workers to engage in time-intensive political activities. (Senek et al., 2022). While teaching time management is one method to address this issue, decreasing caseloads could increase the time social workers have to engage politically. Unfortunately, this is out of the control of most social work academics. Therefore, future research might consider how to teach time management strategies to increase political involvement. Future research might also consider ability affects civic engagement and methods to support those with a disability in engagement.

If future research with a larger sample finds an increase in political knowledge and efficacy, then it would lend evidence to the use of short pieces of training on digital advocacy to help boost the political involvement of social work students. The CVM suggests that an increase in knowledge and efficacy would lead to an increase in intended political involvement (Verba et al., 1995). Furthermore, empirical support for training in digital advocacy could inform others seeking to develop training to educate social work students on digital civic engagement. It might also reveal more about the relationship between online civic engagement and offline involvement. The profession must understand digital civic involvement as more political activities begin to take place in online environments (Smith, 2013).

Conclusions

Social workers have an ethical obligation to engage in the public realm established in the Code of Ethics and educational policies (Council on Social Work Education, 2015; National Association of Social Workers, 2021). Furthermore, the issues central to the profession are public issues and require civic engagement to address. If social workers do not engage, the profession's values and experience will not be represented in policy; potentially leading to policies that negatively affect the populations social workers serve.

Many in the profession take this calling seriously indicated by the higher rate of engagement compared to the general population (Felderhoff et al., 2016; Hylton, 2015; Kwon Ilan et al., 2020; Ritter, 2008; Ritter, 2007; Rome & Hoechstetter, 2010; Weiss-Gal, 2017). However, much of this involvement is limited to activities requiring a limited investment of time. Whereas, activities requiring a larger commitment of time, like testifying before a congressional committee, are infrequently performed (Hamilton & Fauri, 2001; Hylton, 2015; Ostrander et al., 2017, 2018; J. A. Ritter, 2007; Swank, 2012; Weiss-Gal, 2017).

One method to examine the civic engagement of social workers is the CVM. The CVM is comprised of three components: resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment networks. Resources are comprised of money, time, and skills. Psychological engagement is comprised of political interest, political efficacy, political knowledge, and partisanship. Finally, recruitment networks can be any network that connects an individual to a political movement or can impart civic skills (Verba et al., 1995). While all elements of the CVM model are important, previous research has found that political efficacy is central to engagement and digital spaces could provide an environment to build it (Bowen et al., 2017; McClendon et al., 2020; Ostrander et al., 2017).

This study was a pilot study to determine if a short training in digital advocacy could lead to an increase in political knowledge and internal efficacy in social work students. This study used a survey design and brief online training in the digital civic engagement areas identified by Cho et al. (2020): reading and sharing news, emailing elected officials, social media advocacy, and belonging to online advocacy groups. A small sample of social work students was gathered from a large metropolitan tier-one research university. While the sample was too small to determine statistical significance, the result could inform future research with a larger sample. Future research might seek to repeat this study with a better recruitment plan better timed with the academic year, better incentives, and more questions for external political efficacy. Finally, future research might consider the role of ability in civic engagement and how best to support those with disabilities in engagement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

What is your age?	Numerical Input
Are you a student at the University of Texas at Arlington?	Yes No
What is your degree type?	BSW MSW Social Work Intended Other
Number of semesters completed in your program	Numerical Input
Have you been exposed to political advocacy or civic engagement in any of your college level classes?	Yes No Not Sure
Have you taken a course in political advocacy or civic engagement?	Yes No Not Sure
If possible, please explain further	Free Response
Would describe your (yourself) family as:	Low-Income Lower-Middle Income Middle-Income Upper-Middle Income High-Income Prefer not to answer
Financial Position	Under \$25,000 \$25,000 - \$34,999 \$35,000 - \$49,999 \$50,000 - \$74,999 \$75,000 - \$99,999 \$100,000 - \$124,999 \$125,000 or over
Which categories describe you?	American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White Other Race
What is your gender identity?	Woman Man Transgender Nonbinary/ Nonconforming Other Prefer not to answer

<p>In the Future I Plan to :</p> <p>Participate in politics</p> <p>Run for office (local, state or federal)</p> <p>Volunteer for a political campaign</p> <p>Donate to a political campaign or party</p> <p>Contact a local political official</p> <p>Contact a federal political official</p> <p>Use social media to engage around issues I care about</p> <p>Share news articles for causes I care about</p> <p>Follow legislation that I care about</p> <p>Write and/or deliver testimony I care about</p> <p>Join interest groups, civic org., or a political party I care about</p> <p>Participate in political rallies, marches, and/or protests I care about</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>
<p>Currently I:</p> <p>I vote in elections.</p> <p>I encourage others to vote in elections.</p> <p>I share my political opinions with others.</p> <p>I actively campaign for candidates of my choice.</p> <p>I read, listen to, or watch the news.</p> <p>I know who represents me in the state capital.</p> <p>I know who represents me in Congress.</p> <p>I follow the progress of legislation that interests me.</p> <p>I discuss current policy issues with others.</p> <p>I attend public hearings on issues that interest me.</p> <p>I contact my legislators to share my opinion on policy issues.</p> <p>I keep track of how my legislators vote on issues that interest me.</p> <p>I follow my elected officials on social media.</p> <p>I participate in political rallies, marches, etc.</p> <p>I help organize political rallies, marches, etc.</p> <p>I encourage others to participate in political rallies, marches, etc.</p> <p>I testify at federal, state, or local hearings.</p> <p>I participate in community groups that seek to influence policy.</p> <p>I participate in community groups unrelated to policy making (Ex- religious organizations, social clubs, etc.).</p>	<p>Never</p> <p>Rarely</p> <p>Sometimes</p> <p>Often Always</p>

<p>I voice my opinions on policy issues to media outlets.</p> <p>I voice my opinions on policy issues using social media.</p> <p>I take an active role in relation to issues that affect me personally.</p>	
<p>If I Rarely or Never _____, It Is Because (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY):</p>	<p>I don't have time</p> <p>I don't feel comfortable</p> <p>I don't know where to start</p> <p>Other</p> <p>N/A I Sometimes, Often, or Always Do</p>
<p>Other Reasons for Not Engaging</p>	<p>Free response</p>
<p>Please Rate the Following Statements:</p> <p>I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.</p> <p>I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.</p> <p>I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.</p> <p>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.</p> <p>People like me don't have any say about what the government does.</p> <p>I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.</p> <p>I wish I had more time to focus on Political engagement.</p> <p>If I had a better understanding of politics, I would be more involved.</p> <p>I grew up in a family that regularly discussed politics</p> <p>Currently, my family regularly discusses politics.</p> <p>At this point in my post-high school education, I feel adequately prepared to effectively engage in the political system.</p> <p>I am interested in local political affairs.</p> <p>I am interested in national political affairs.</p> <p>I believe careers in my major hold a professional responsibility to engage in the</p>	<p>Disagree Strongly</p> <p>Disagree Somewhat</p> <p>Neither Disagree or Agree</p> <p>Agree Somewhat</p> <p>Agree Strongly</p>

<p>political system.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to maintain society as it is.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to promote social progress.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to promote individual liberty.</p>	
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Appendix B

<p>IN THE FUTURE I PLAN TO:</p> <p>Participate in politics</p> <p>Run for office (local, state or federal)</p> <p>Volunteer for a political campaign</p> <p>Donate to a political campaign or party</p> <p>Contact a local political official</p> <p>Contact a federal political official</p> <p>Use social media to engage around issues I care about</p> <p>Share news articles for causes I care about</p> <p>Follow legislation that I care about</p> <p>Write and/or deliver testimony I care about</p> <p>Join interest groups, civic org., or a political party I care about</p> <p>Participate in political rallies, marches, and/or protests I care about</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>
<p>Please Rate the Following Statements:</p> <p>I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.</p> <p>I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.</p> <p>I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.</p> <p>Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.</p> <p>People like me don't have any say about what the government does.</p> <p>I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.</p> <p>I wish I had more time to focus on Political engagement.</p> <p>If I had a better understanding of politics, I would be more involved.</p> <p>I grew up in a family that regularly discussed politics</p> <p>Currently, my family regularly discusses politics.</p> <p>At this point in my post-high school education, I feel adequately prepared to effectively engage in the political system.</p>	<p>Disagree Strongly</p> <p>Disagree Somewhat</p> <p>Neither Disagree or Agree</p> <p>Agree Somewhat</p> <p>Agree Strongly</p>

<p>I am interested in local political affairs.</p> <p>I am interested in national political affairs.</p> <p>I believe careers in my major hold a professional responsibility to engage in the political system.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to maintain society as it is.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to promote social progress.</p> <p>I believe the major purpose of government is to promote individual liberty.</p>	
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Appendix C

The University of Texas at Arlington (UTA)

Informed Consent for Minimal Risk Studies with Adults

My name is Christian Mason, and I am asking you to participate in a UT Arlington research study titled, “The effects of digital civic engagement training on the political knowledge and efficacy of social work students.” This research study is about whether a short training in digital advocacy can help social work students learn more about and feel more confident engaging in digital advocacy. You can choose to participate in this research study if you are at least 18 years old and a social work student.

Reasons why you might want to participate in this study include learning the following: how to identify a social cause you are passionate about, how to identify and email elected officials, social media advocacy, and online advocacy groups, but you might not want to participate if you are uncomfortable sharing information about your political activity or if you are not able to commit to taking a survey and training requiring one hour in one sitting. Your decision about whether to participate is entirely up to you. If you decide not to be in the study, there won't be any punishment or penalty; whatever your choice, there will be no impact on any benefits or services that you would normally receive. Even if you choose to begin the study, you can also change your mind and quit at any time without any consequences.

If you decide to participate in this research study, the list of activities that I will ask you to complete for the research is answering the following: demographic questions, intended future political involvement questions, current political involvement questions, reasons for not engaging, and questions about political beliefs. I will also ask you to watch videos on digital advocacy and answer questions about your beliefs and intended future political involvement after finishing the videos. At end of the survey, you will be asked to provide your email. If you do so, I will send you a short survey one week later asking questions about your beliefs and intended future political involvement. Your email will not be connected with your answers to questions, nor will your email be shared with anyone. It should take about one hour to complete the survey and training, and 10 minutes to complete the follow-up survey. Although you probably won't experience any personal benefits from participating if you complete the survey and training and provide your email address, you will receive a digital advocacy certificate. Furthermore, if you complete the follow-up survey you will be entered into a \$20 Amazon gift card raffle. The gift card raffle will be conducted on June 7, 2022, and the winner will receive the card through email. The study activities are not expected to pose any additional risks beyond those that you would normally experience in your regular everyday life.

You will not be paid for completing this study. There are no alternative options to this research project

The research team is committed to protecting your rights and privacy as a research subject. We may publish or present the results, but your name and email will not be used. While absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the research team will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your records as described here and to the extent permitted by law. If you have questions about the study, you can contact me at christian.mason@mavs.uta.edu. For questions about your rights or to report complaints, contact the UTA Research Office at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

You are indicating your voluntary agreement to participate by clicking on the “Accept” button below.

Appendix D

Are you a social work student interested in advocacy? Want to learn more?

Research Participants wanted.



This research study is about whether a short training in digital advocacy can help social work students learn more about and feel more confident engaging in digital advocacy. It will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

- We are looking at whether a short training in digital advocacy can help social work students learn more about and feel more confident engaging in digital advocacy.
- This study is online, self-paced, and will take 60 minutes to complete.
- Participants will receive a free digital advocacy certificate and be entered into a \$20 gift card raffle.
- To participate, go to <https://utaedu.questionpro.com/digitaladvocacy>

Christian Mason, a Master of Social Work student, is conducting this study. If you are interested in participating or have more questions, please contact them at christian.mason@mavs.uta.edu

This study has been approved by The University of Texas at Arlington Institutional Review Board, UTA IRB Protocol #2022-0342