Politics for Social Workers. A practical guide to effecting change
Stephen Pimpare

Pimpare's book aims to provide a toolkit for social work students, instructors and practitioners to effect change in a very broad sense. The stated aim of the book is twofold: to provide 'a concise, accessible guide to how politics and policy making really work in America - and what social workers can do to help their clients and communities.'   Pimpare's broad focus on change relates not only to individual practice, but also to the wider political system. His key argument is that effecting change is not a problem of persuasion, as so many argue, but a problem of power, in terms of understanding where power lies and how power works in the US political system. This means that the book is premised on the basis that a greater understanding of the US political system will provide a greater understanding of how to effect change within it.

The book presents 23 relatively short analytical chapters, plus a Preface, Introduction and Conclusion. The Preface contextualises the book in terms of the significant impact that Covid 19 had on policy and politics, and lessons that could be drawn from this. The subsequent 23 chapters are either counterintuitively titled, such as *The US Constitution is Undemocratic* or *Look at What's Not Happening*, or a statement of fact, such as *You Will Not Change Anyone's Mind* or *Social Work is Conservative*. The chapter then proceeds to present the case for the chapter title. At the end of each of the analysis chapter, there is a Lesson for Practice Section, which details how what has been analysed could be used meaningfully in practice.

The book's Conclusion is the longest chapter, at 20 pages. This effectively summarised the lessons from the previous chapters under 5 headings: Build Knowledge, Build Strategy, Build Community, Build Power and Build Resilience.

This book is generally a clear and well written, tending to avoid jargon, and this will make it accessible to its target audience. It also provides a good evidence base for the points it makes, with 26 pages of references.   This is a key strength of the book, highlighting not just the importance of evidence when trying to effect change, but also the evidence that exist out there that can be used to effect change.

The structure of the book generally works, but at times the relative short chapters perhaps less so, such as Chapter 10 which could have been put in with Chapter 2. Additionally, some chapters would have worked better if they had been merged, such as Chapter 11 and 9 / 5 and 12. The effect of this is to make the analysis seem unbalanced at times and / or lacking. Similarly, the Lessons for Practice in some chapters seem too long, and would have benefitted from being shorter and more precise. Additionally, the book may have benefitted from subdividing the analysis chapters by headings, as this would have provided greater focus on some of the points made in the chapters and would have improved the structure of the book.

The focus of the book is wholly American, notwithstanding some refences to international social policy where relevant, and this may make the book seem less relevant to UK social work. It is the case that some chapters will not be relevant to the UK, such as chapters 1,2,15,17. However, there are clearly some chapters which breach the cultural divide and are highly relevant to UK social work, such as chapters 12,18 and 22. Additionally, there are also some points of interests, such as the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (the equivalent to BASW Code of Ethics) that 'obligates practitioners to engage in social and political action', and 'advocate for changes in policy that benefit vulnerable populations', both of which orient social work in the US as more politicised than might have been thought.

The key relevance of the book to social workers is the importance of understanding where power lies and how power works, as this is critical to effecting change. This links in very well to the book's focus on the importance of advocacy to social work practice and the point that advocacy is taken most seriously when advocates know what they are talking about. These are things that are often forgotten in practice, but this book makes it clear that the two go hand in hand with social work practice.

For this reason, the book has relevance not just to practising social workers and social work students, but also to social work educators as it highlights that teaching advocacy to social workers in a meaningful way is not only possible, but highly relevant in these challenging times.