



Research on Policy Practice in US Child Welfare

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- Research motivation
- Research agenda
- What are the bodies of knowledge that can be drawn upon in research in this field?
- What methodological tools can be employed to study policy practice?
- How can we organize and engage in the study of policy practice on different levels of policy making?



RESEARCH MOTIVATION



Research Agenda

- Research to increase effective involvement of social workers in policy making.
 - The Policymaking Process
 - Child Welfare Policy
 - Text Analysis



Child Welfare is Unique

- is too complex to compel voters to prompt their legislators for specific action (Gainsborough, 2006),
- does not have a powerful lobby,
- it does not contain polarized positions (i.e. for child abuse and against child abuse) (Edwards, Jones, & Pryce, forthcoming),
- cannot be avoided because of legislative reauthorization requirements and entitlement status (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, 2008),
- not inherently a partisan issue (Edwards, 2010), and
- addresses the needs of children who have the greatest positive regard and the least political power.



CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS A ROAD LESS TRAVELED



Qualitative & Quantitative Text Analysis

- Thematic coding
- Descriptive coding
- Resource-intensive
- Sample power issues



Hearings Profile

- Legislative Outcome
 - Most hearings were not related to a bill
 - Of the hearings that were, most did not result in a law
- Some congresses held more hearings
- The House held more hearings
- Ways & Means and Finance held most hearings

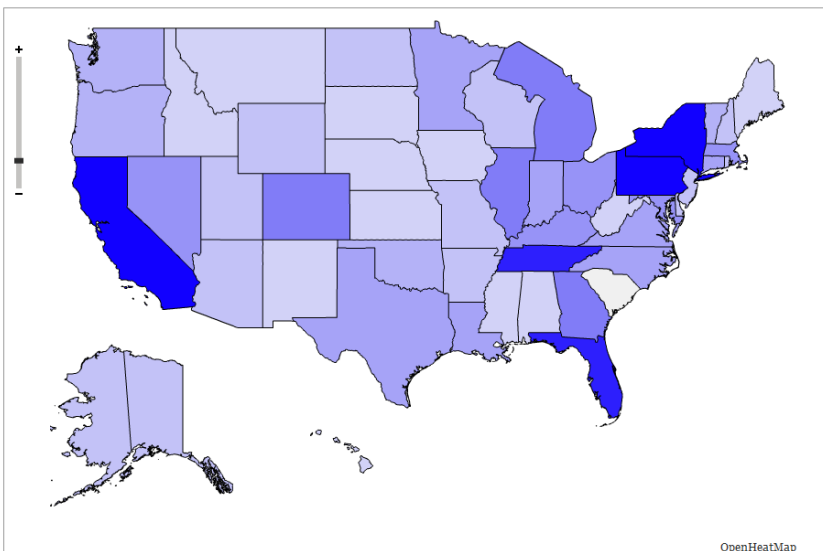


Members of Committees Holding Hearings

- Generally resemble the general population
 - Region, gender, race/ethnicity, education
 - Except career
 - Human services over-representative
- Most/least active representatives identified

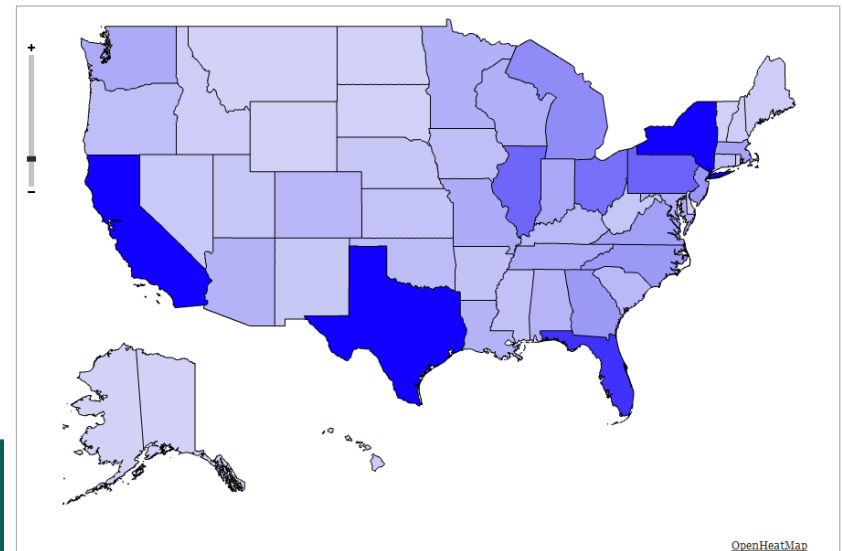
Representation in Child Welfare Hearings
in the 106th - 112th Congresses

OPENHEATMAP



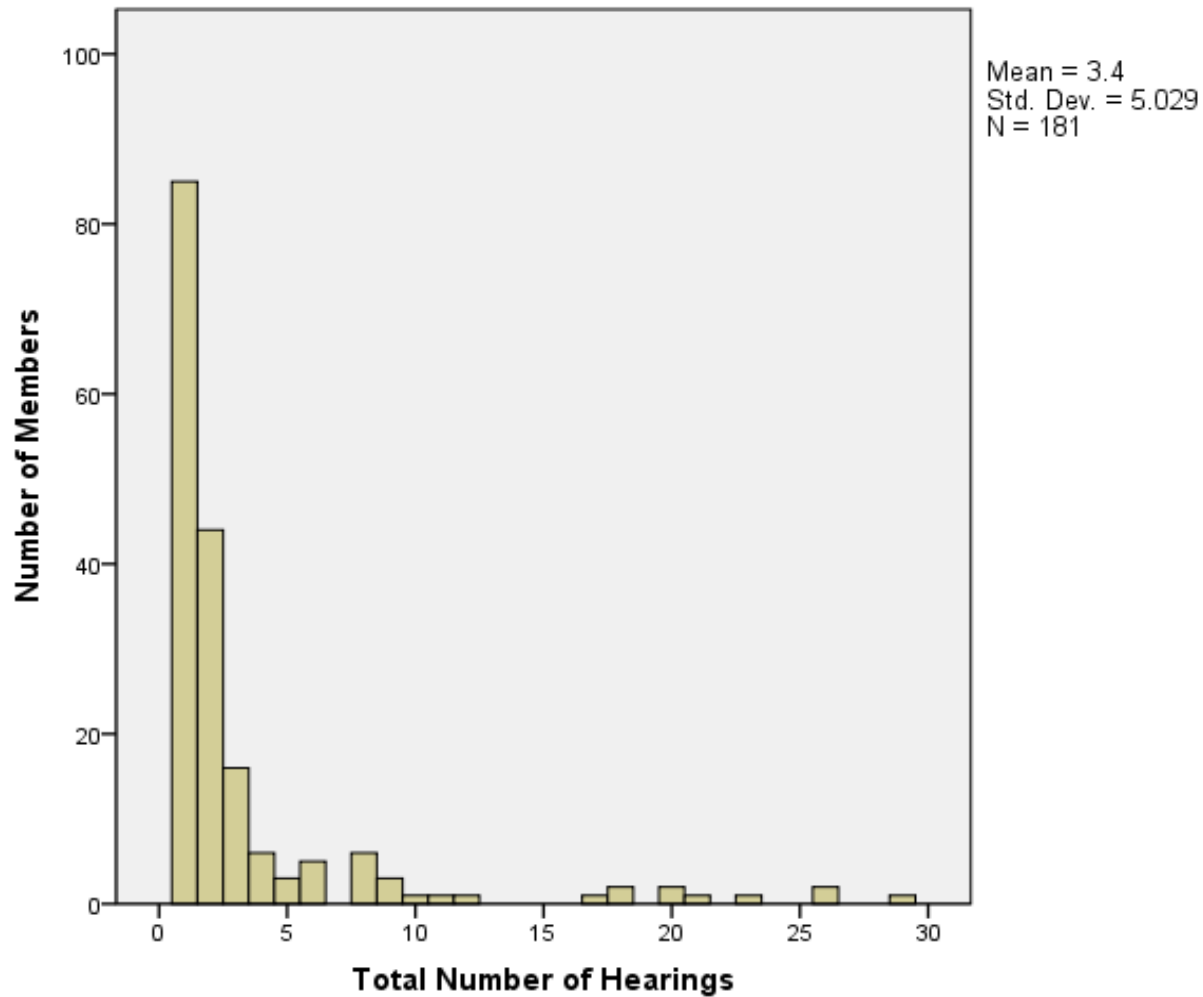
Representation in the 106th - 112th
Congresses

OPENHEATMAP





Members of Committees Holding Hearings *(continued)*





Computer-Aided Text Analysis – Rhetorical Analysis

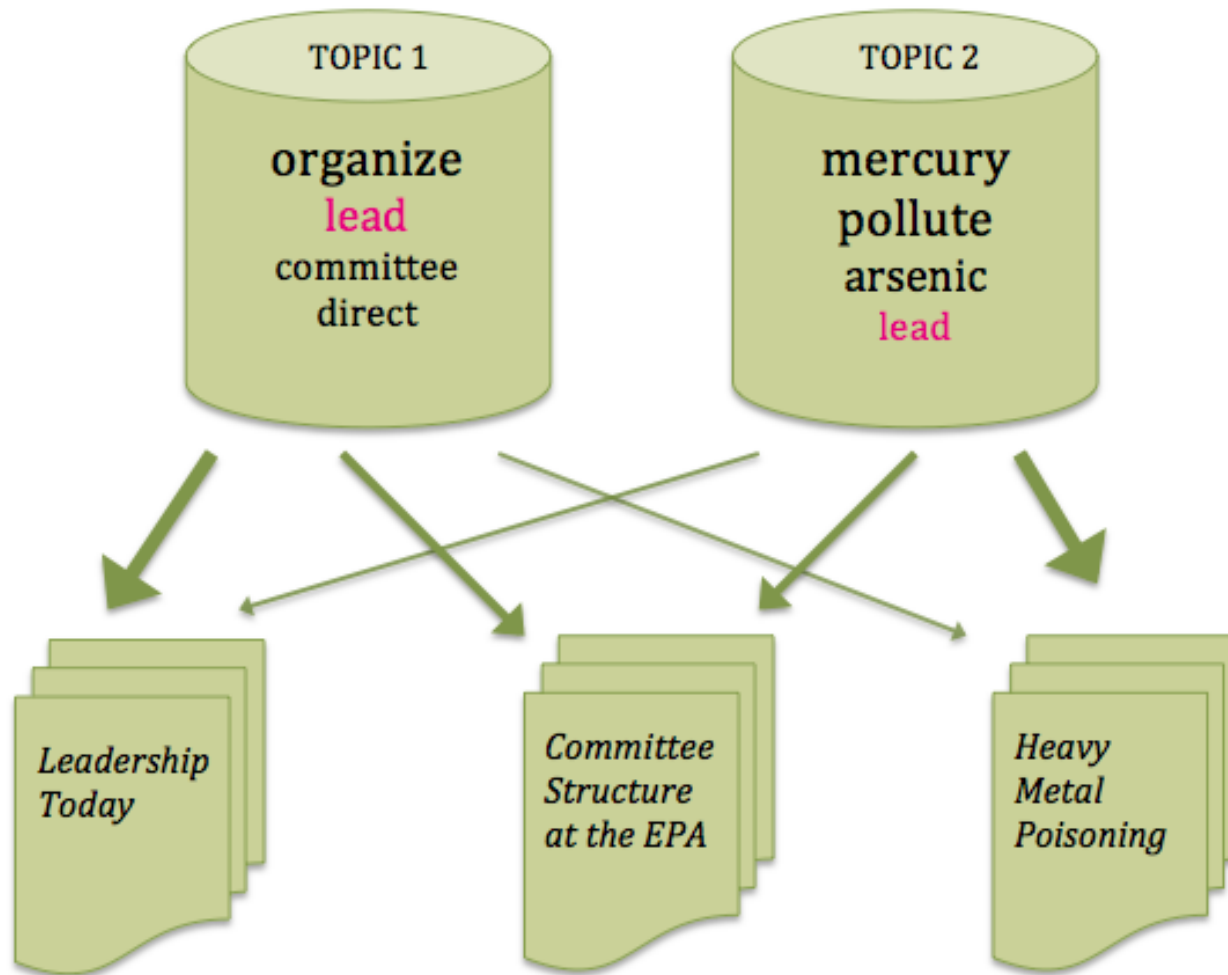
- Ethos
 - witnesses' professional affiliation,
 - level of influence (invited, non-invited), and
 - witness from the same state as a committee member
- Pathos
 - Diction words (use of affective words)
- Logos
 - Diction words (quantifiers, numbers, and cognitive processes)

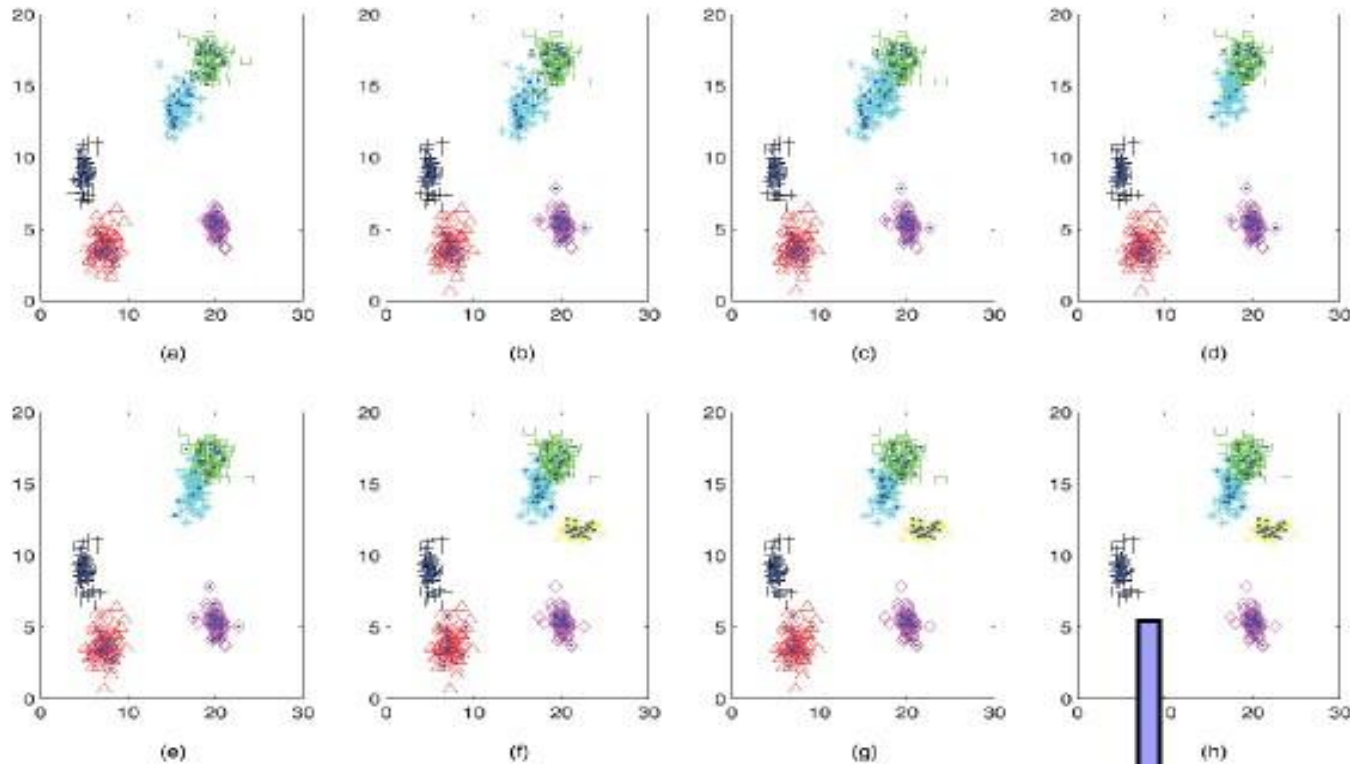
No significant relationship between rhetoric and



Computer-Aided Text Analysis – Topic Modeling

- Evolutionary Topic Models
- Latent Dirichelet Allocation
- Latent Semantic Analysis





NMF	No of docs	No of words	Top words
C1	219	66	'product', 'electrolysi', 'ammonia', 'enzym', 'sensor', 'hydrogenas', 'wast'
C2	231	353	'vehicl', 'electr', 'technolog', 'emiss', 'nature', 'cost', 'transport'
C3	265	80	'fuel', 'gener', 'applic', 'commerci', 'portabl', 'processor', 'recent'
C4	598	843	'us', 'catalyst', 'heat', 'oxygen', 'oxid', 'reaction', 'concentr'
C5	248	74	'hydrogen', 'atom', 'station', 'magnesium', 'discharg', 'titanium', 'govern'



**WHAT ARE THE BODIES OF
KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN BE
DRAWN UPON IN RESEARCH
IN THIS FIELD?**



Bodies of Knowledge

- Political Science
 - Theory
 - Methods
- Computer Science
 - Methods
- Linguistics
 - Theory
 - Methods



WHAT METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS CAN BE EMPLOYED TO STUDY POLICY PRACTICE?



- Qualitative Data Analysis
 - Nvivo and similar software
- Quantitative Text Analysis
 - Nvivo and similar software
 - CatScanner
 - LIWC
 - Diction
- Topic Models
 - Latent Dirichelet Analysis
 - Bayes
 - Custom-made software or computer code



- Common Space Scores
 - Political ideology
 - Voteview.com
- Biographical Directory of the United States Congress
 - Bioguide.gov
- Congress.gov
- Web Scrapers
 - OutWit Hub



**HOW CAN WE ORGANIZE
AND ENGAGE IN THE STUDY
OF POLICY PRACTICE ON
DIFFERENT LEVELS OF
POLICY MAKING?**



- Local
 - City Council, School Board, County Commission Meetings
- State
 - State legislatures
- National
 - Administrative Rulemaking
 - Congressional Hearings
 - Floor Debates



- Global
 - Comparative analyses of policies
 - E.g., Manifesto project



RELEVANCE FOR THE PROFESSION



School of Social Work

Challenging Minds, Leading Change, Transforming Lives

Questions & Comments



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