REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SOCIAL WORK BLOGS
AND THE PARADOXES OF BRIDGING THEORY IN PRACTICE

by

C. Lee Anne Deegan

B.S.W., University of the Fraser Valley, 1999

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Abstract

In this thesis I use feminist content analyses methods to explore thirty-two English speaking social work practitioner blogs for their affinity with social justice aims in social work. Using a poststructural feminist lens, I looked at the potentials and limitations for social work blogs to act as a means to bridge theory and practice in social work for the sake of social justice. I also looked for common understandings in the literature about critical practice to evaluate these commitments within these texts. The findings revealed that many of these bloggers demonstrated their commitment to the principle of social justice throughout their blogs. Further, much of the talk in blogs mirrors concerns found in the literature about the current contexts of social work practice.
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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my two sons Julian and Ira. You are amazing young men and have always and continue to be my inspiration to carry on and do better in spite of obstacles.
Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis grew partly out of the frustrations I experienced as a sole social work practitioner in mental health in Northern British Columbia trying to balance upholding commitments to social justice while mediating a labyrinth of competing institutional discourses and demands. I had access to the Web at that time and was amazed by the resources I found there for medical professionals, but disappointed that there were not similar resources to help social workers. Returning to school to complete my MSW, I began to re-examine the literature about social workers and social justice. Around that time I also returned to the Web, and I discovered an entirely different set of resources for social workers, many similar to those I had discovered for medical practitioners in my early days of practice. The seed for this research sprouted, so to speak, when I discovered social work blogs.

We social workers are obligated to think critically about our practice and to "promote social justice, in relation to society generally and in relation to the people..." we work with (IFSW, 2012). These tenets are central to our profession, but there is much concern in the literature that we have lost our focus, especially those of us practicing in the institutions of health, child protection and welfare. Studies suggest we remain on the receiving end of policy, and may be having difficulty translating social work theory and our ethics in our practice. It is troubling that, though social workers are natural storytellers whether it is our 'reinterpretations' and our 'retelling' of our daily work and/or our interactions with clients and our peers, there has been very little coverage of our accounts of practice in the literature (Wilks, 2005).
There have been only fragmented studies in the literature regarding social work and its adoption of information technology, but there have been compelling arguments for social workers to use the freely available and user friendly technologies (Web 2.0) on the Web as a means of advancing social work causes and to bridge an ever widening chasm created by globalism and neoliberal economic policies (Dunlop & Fawcett, 2008; Hick & McNutt, 2002; Ife, 2001; Rosenthal Gelman & Tosone, 2010). Ife (2001), for instance, suggests social workers with computer skills can use Web technology to bridge the distance between marginalized populations around the world. Others contend that emergence of free social software on the Web "... marries the seemingly disparate worlds of social work and information technology" (Dunlop & Fawcett, 2008, p. 153), and some think information technology could play an important role in assisting social workers with the challenges in rural practice (Brownlee, Graham, Doucette, Hotson, & Halverson, 2010). Rosenthal Gelman and Tosone (2010) recently called on social workers to "...become competent in using media, not just in order to harness their power for intervention with and on behalf of clients, but also to positively and actively shape the way clients and our profession are portrayed and viewed in the larger world" (p. 228).

Blogs exemplify the kind of technology Dunlop and Fawcett (2008) are referring to. They require very little technical knowledge to contribute content online when people have the means and/or opportunity to use computer technology. These technologies are also believed to empower people, "...to some degree push against the impersonal nature of technology" (Dickey, 2004, p. 288). Blogs have been shown to have democratized access to information and to encourage exchanges of knowledge between diverse groups
(Blackman, et al., 2010; Maynor, 2009). Social workers are increasingly participating in the blogosphere (Zgoda, 2009), and while there is a growing volume of research about blogging activities on the Web (Herring, Kouper, & Wright, 2006; Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004; Scheidt, 2009; Scheidt & Wright, 2004) there does not appear to be any research that explores how social work practitioners are using these online technologies (Rosenthal Gilman and Tosone, 2010) to talk about their practice.

This project explores social work practitioners' blogs seeking content that reflects current critical understandings in the literature about bridging theory and practice as they are intended for pursuing the profession's commonly held aims for social justice, and whether these themes satisfactorily appraise these commitments in blogs. The research also explores the potential in social work blogs to aid us in understanding practitioners' efforts to bridge theory and practice in the pursuit of social justice. This research does not seek to judge individual social worker's commitments to social justice. As discussed above, my interest for this research grew from the challenges I experienced practicing social work in rural and Northern BC, and the wish to learn more about the potential in information technology to enhance practice in these environments. My discovery of social worker's uses of new social media on the Web led me to appreciate the potentials in these activities for the profession of social work generally. The increasing visibility of practitioners' blogs on the Web has provided an opportunity to explore how these texts are representing social work practices, and particularly, as is the focus of the research, whether these blogging technologies are being used by social work practitioners to
advance the profession's commonly held aims for bridging theory and practice for social justice purposes.

Organization of thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters. In the remainder of chapter one I will provide definitions, my personal place in this research and my theoretical framework. In chapter two the literature about technology in social work, and blogging are discussed. Further on in chapter two I examine the literature from social work history, the practice/theory divide, radical/critical social work, language in social work and social justice frameworks. Methodology and design of the research are discussed in chapter three. Chapter four discusses the research results, and in chapter five I discuss the findings. Finally, in chapter six I talk about the limitations, future directions and my final thoughts.

Definitions

Aggregate websites or Webrings provide a space, usually organized by topic of interest, to a set of interrelated web pages or blogs owned by separate individuals. Webrings list hyperlinks which connect automatically to these individual pages. Contributions to the Webring are usually moderated to ensure all web pages/blogs adhere to the same subject (Baym & Markham, 2009; Morton Robinson, 2001).

Blogs or weblogs are websites where content, from text to pictures and sound files, is frequently updated. Blog content is kept in reverse chronological order. Blogs often give readers the option of commenting on the content of each individual blog post.
(Schmidt, 2007). Hyperlinks are often interspersed within the content of blog entries. Blog owners also often keep visible lists of blogs and web content to share with their readers via hyperlinks connecting to these pages on the web. Content in blogs ranges from opinion and commentary and news to personal online diaries (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). According to Herring et al., (2004) blogs fall into four categories: a filter blog has links to events that are external to the weblogger’s personal life; diary or personal blogs include the writer’s personal thoughts and feelings; a K-log is a blog created as a repository for knowledge sharing; and mixed purpose blogs that combine the characteristics of two or more the above categories.

**Blogosphere** is the term often used to describe the universe containing blog sites within the Web (Agarwal & Liu, 2008).

**Hyperlinks** are fixed urls (web addresses) that make it possible to connect directly with microcontent on the web (Agarwal & Liu, 2008).

**Reflexivity/reflectivity,** within this research, refers to the process whereby a social worker engages in critical reflection. Social workers who are reflective/reflexive understand and vocalize their assumptions. According to Fook (1999) social workers show reflexivity when they give embodied accounts of their work where they are able to "...locate oneself in a situation through the recognition of how actions and interpretations, social and cultural background and personal history, emotional aspects of experience, and personally held assumptions and values influence the situation" (p. 199).
Web 2.0 refers to emerging technologies on the Web that have embraced collectivity and, more recently, migrated their uses from computer platforms to handheld mobile devices (O'Reilly, 2012). Blogs are one of the more popular forms of Web 2.0. O'Reilly sees the blogosphere as a kind of "global brain" that is increasingly influential.

My place

I recognize that my writing is a result of both my experiences and material conditions. I am white, female, Canadian, a sole parent, politically aware and concerned about issues, and a registered social worker. I have been very poor, a country girl, working class, urban dweller and middle income at different periods in my life. I currently live in a small home, a fixer upper. I have lived here for more than five years and just recently came to recognize that my home reflects my state of mind. I recognize place matters (Kemp, 2010) in both my social work practices and personal life and have been conscious of consumerist culture and its deleterious effects on our communities and environment, and have sought to minimize my footprint on the planet in many ways. I am also a work in progress, a fixer upper so to speak. In other words I am always tinkering on my place out of necessity and hope and I recognize that theory has played a central role in my development.

From as early as I can remember I had a mission to read anything I could find. In my younger days a counsellor called me an iconoclast, but I think I am just a critical thinker. This found expression during my childhood and adolescence where it was common in my environments to hear racial slurs flung around about newcomers to our
country taking our jobs and/or getting special treatment, children were to be seen and not heard, and heterosexism and sexism were the norm. I did not realize it at the time, but I was seeking social justice when I would dare to "talk back" to people about their racism or sexism, and I dreamed of running away from the working class suburb in the interior of BC. In my late adolescence and early adult years I was very politically active, and I credit these experiences with giving me the courage to enter university at a difficult time in my life.

I was a sole parent on welfare when I returned to school. I borrowed money and took an introductory course in sociology to test the waters, did well and I loved it. My instructor told me I had a gift for it and should study sociology. I was encouraged, but after a great deal of struggle mediating the welfare system to get permission and some funding to attend university, I finally chose to study social work because it seemed a practical choice based on my past work experiences. Over the next four years my appreciation of the importance of theory grew, especially how it organizes and determines correct action and it can even give "...space to plan, to strategize to take greater control over our resistances" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 38).

Though I yearned to work in community development, I took the conservative path into practice because it was pragmatic, I had a family to support, student loans to repay, and there were no other viable options available to me. I was fully aware that I was entering the profession of social work at a harrowing time, an age coined by Giddens (1995) of 'manufactured uncertainty'. Neoliberal economic policies were gaining authority around the globe and even former political allies to the poor in West began
surrendering to this monster's demand for structural adjustments imposing cutbacks and reforms that reduced the breadth of services and/or increased the residual nature within social programs in these countries. Fueled by critical attention to the failures in social welfare programs, new public management discourse was heightening the regulation of processes within social work institutions.

I performed, to the best of my abilities, like White and Epston's (1990) therapist, and Swenson's (1998) undercover advocate in my practice. I also regularly revisited texts from social work ethics, along with those on strengths, and feminist perspectives, and I embraced working with the oppressed and oppressors as clients doing the best I could to implement critical, feminist and narrative approaches. My rural work place in mental health was somewhat interdisciplinary, there was me, and for a short stint, one feminist with an MA in psychology, but the rest of my co-workers were psychiatrists and nurses.

I missed the connection and feedback about my practice I had received in my undergraduate training. I had access to the Web, but there were few online resources for social workers at that time. There were, however, as discussed above, plentiful resources for medical professionals including regular education, some of it free, through telehealth and sites like Medscape (www.medscape.com) which were very helpful in my practice. There were government policy sites which were useful including mental health, child protection and welfare acts, but little accessible literature on current social work theory and developments. I found a listserv for social work academics and practitioners, and these discussion threads were fantastic, but very intermittent and primarily focused on
rural issues in Australia. I tried posting a discussion on a British Columbia Association of Social Workers site, but there was no real process for feedback and discussion in place on the site. It was frustrating and eventually I gave up trying to access social work resources via the Web.

When I returned to do my MSW I found myself revisiting the Web and recalled those early days. A seed of thought germinated into revisiting the possibilities on the Web for social workers. I had no idea how to create a website at that time, but times change, and today there are far more resources that require very little effort to engage online. I also discovered that there are many more social work sites, including many social work bloggers. I decided to join their ranks in March 2010 by starting my own blog. I was stunned by how accessible and user friendly these technologies were and how quickly I found myself connected with other social workers on the Web.

*Theoretical framework*

Though I embraced social construction ideas in psychology, I have been hesitant about postmodernism's benefits for social work and feminism generally. My experiences, however, have helped me to understand that theory is complex and bridging theory and practice is challenging. "A rigid, or even loose commitment to one type of perspective, be it positivist, qualitative or deconstructive, does not seem to provide the flexibility of thinking needed to work in changing circumstances" (Fook, 2002, p. 83). As a result of my exploration of the literature, I have come to agree that modernist theories are too limiting, and informed by these new understandings I recognize
poststructuralism, within feminism and social work, is best suited to this exploration of blogs and social work theory.

Though postmodernism took root in the humanities in the 1960s and 1970s, like many I was informed about this thinking after it had saturated the social sciences in the 1990s. “The basic concept is that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations” (Creswell, 1998, p. 79). A crisis was created within modernity (Mumby, 1993) as meta-narratives, truth seeking discourses, contradictions were exposed, particularly how these discourses maintained emphasis “...upon the other, the marginal, the outsider..” (Bloland, 1995, p. 552). Poststructuralism keeps a sustained gaze on modernist categories that “…fail to account for – that is, to explain and make predictable – the conditions we all face in the world today” resulting in an unresolved ‘tension’ within institutions (Bloland, p. 551). Postmodern theorists assume that knowing is located in the doing, and do not accept that a separation between ontology and epistemology exists in reality (Lather, 1991). They exposed cracks in seemingly impermeable truths, "...as well as the constant tendency of these truths to break down and reveal their internal inconsistencies and aporias" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 114).

In the 1980s and 1990s feminism began to be transformed by its' assessment of poststructuralism (Brooks, 1997). The influential work of Fraser and Nicolson challenged feminists to "...abandon their own versions of modernist meta-narratives which have inspired the great theories of modernity" (p. 14). In social work, Brown (1994) called on feminist social workers to embrace the epistemological shift represented
by postmodernism in order to challenge practice and pedagogy. Feminist postmodernism, she explains, recognizes a plurality of perspectives by exposing ways in which modernist epistemology excludes and totalizes women’s experiences. Feminist postmodernism reveals multiple truths and makes connections between social reality, social power and knowledge. A multiplicity of identities explored in a feminist postmodernism also seeks to “...reveal how social relations of power are obscured, and alternative or competing frames are rendered invisible within traditional thought” (Brown, p. 36).

Where structuralists seek fixed meanings in underlying structures, poststructuralists assume that language is constituted within specific social, and historical contexts (Weedon, 1987). Weedon informs us that poststructuralism built on "...Saussure's theory of the 'sign' (emphasis hers)..." where language is an abstract system containing "chains of signs" where each sign is made of a signifier (sound or image) and a signified (meaning) (p. 23). "For feminist poststructuralism, it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it" (Weedon, p. 32). Poststructural theorists approach identity issues by demonstrating the multifariousness of personal and collective being. “They have shown how complex is the relationships between identity, social demands, and personal responsibilities” (Calhoun, 1995, p. 199).

Poststructural feminists, by acknowledging historical and cultural specificity of their subjectivity, open up to "...the wide range of discursive fields that constitute them" (Weedon, 1987, p. 33). Weedon places it concretely within the consciousness raising
that can occur where we start to give meaning, as we acquire language, to our experiences and the more we have experiences outside of our indigenous systems of meanings and values the more possibilities we have to rewrite our experiences.

Poststructural feminists commonly wield deconstruction of broader 'essentialist' categories to claim, legitimate, and value ‘...identities commonly suppressed or devalued by mainstream culture...’ (Calhoun, 1995). This has taken the form of criticism of logocentrism (the belief there is a fixed logical objective order that can be found), the nature of difference, deconstruction, multiple discourses, and the nature of subjectivity (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). From this perspective it becomes possible to unfix social work identities and practices within the competing discourses about what constitutes a social worker, and good social work practice and place it within the diversity of contexts in the field as will be represented in the texts of social work blogs about individual practice. It also becomes possible to unearth silences in all these texts. An example of this approach can be found in Healy's (1999) uses of poststructuralism to interrogate representations of practice in activist social theories in social work where she found dualisms of the power/powerless in these discourses "...exaggerate the power of the worker, thus making them vulnerable to blame for the failure of activist ideals" (p. 130).

There are fears that this form of analysis will result in inertia in social work, or immobilization of action, because poststructuralists hesitate to position their subjects in 'essentialized categories' (Alcoff, 1988). Gedalof (1999) points out that poststructural models over commitment in giving "...primacy to the linguistic and social gesture of exclusion, they can overstate the degree to which women are, in fact, erased from view"
(p. 56). This overlooks "...the need to situate women's agency in a field of specific power" (Calhoun). Poststructural feminist researchers, however, do not give up the political dimension for taking action, they are in fact "...located in the tensions between..." Harder’s standpoint theory and postmodernism (Berg & Lie cite Harder, 1995, p. 343). Importantly, "...poststructuralism both incorporates and transforms structuralism" (Sands & Nuccio, 1992, p. 490). "This means a location where our knowledge can be stable and on the move" (Berg & Lie, 1995, p. 343).

Poststructural perspectives are accused of creating a distraction that will result in the neglect of social justice in social work (Healy, 1999; Pease & Fook, 1999). Sand and Nuccio (1992), however, believe that social workers can balance the demands of poststructuralism by avoiding polarization in their practice and assuming ideological positions when it is called for in politics. Citing Benabib, Foster, Giroux and Rosenau, Pease and Fook (1999) explain there are weak and strong approaches to poststructural thinking ranging from resistance to reactionary forms. Somewhat similar to feminist poststructuralism, they promote an expression of this thinking that does not abandon higher aims for social justice. Social work postmodernism does "...not totally abandon the values of modernity and the Enlightenment project of human emancipation. Only 'strong' or 'extreme' (emphasis theirs) forms of postmodernism theory reject normative criticism and the usefulness of any forms of commonality underlying diversity" (p. 12).

Healy (1999) argues that the reliance on oppositional categories in critical social work theory needs to be questioned, "...especially the extent to which these discourses privilege rationality, mastery and unity and, in so doing, suppress nonrationality, bodily
ways of knowing and sexual and racial differences" (p. 117). Healy gives examples supporting her argument that the 'truth' status of critical theories must be questioned including the seeming impotence of these perspectives to aid practitioners in complex situations in their practice, the "politics of resentment" (p. 117) that can be fostered by its reliance on oppositional categories, and the tendency in its focus on structure to suppress knowledge about the multiple operations of power. Fook (2002) reports on similar findings in her research where critical theories failed to account for complexities in the field. Both these researchers recognize critical theory has made and continues to make useful contributions and poststructural theories in social work do not need to "...abandon the critical sciences assumptions entirely" (Healy, p. 131).

This research is located within a "less ambitious" (Ife, 1999) poststructural framework where social work and its practices were viewed from a plurality of perspectives believed to be constituted within its local practice contexts, but held together by its shared project for social justice. Importantly, local should not be read here "...as a limited concept where all within some defined 'boundary' are assumed to have common interests, but as diverse, constantly changing networks of people who may negotiate common meanings in particular times and places..." (Lane, 1999, p. 139).

Everything is open to questioning, even the profession's common affiliation through its commitment to the pursuit of social justice can be the subject of its inquiries. For instance, though social work shares in common the commitment to social justice, it is suggested that expressions of this commitment may vary dependent on the contexts where it is practiced (Briskman & Noble, 1999). Camilleri (1999) agreeing with Fook
that "social work is about social justice," makes the point that this concept is not "universal, timeless and absolute" (p. 27).

From a poststructural perspective it becomes possible to recognize the oppressive nature of essentialist categories and dualistic modes of thinking about social work, particularly social work practice versus theory and view social work as an evolving process of constructions (Payne, 1991) where new perspectives and sites for resistance may be opened up. My research approach will necessarily be impenitently situated as a cross-cultural and gendered subject, as I am a woman and social work practitioners are mainly women (Camilleri, 1999), as well social work blog texts are situated in multicultural global contexts. The poststructural approach also anchors research practice historically, maintaining a 'here and now' account of subjectivities making all "...conclusions contingent and revisable" (Alcoff, 1988, p. 431).
Chapter Two: Literature

In this section I examine research and literature on social work and technology, and blogging. Following that I give a brief overview of the history of the social work profession, and the diverging identities of social workers. Critical/radical and traditional casework traditions and how these are related to these divisions in social work is discussed. Finally, I look at frameworks for social justice in practice, social work as discursive practice, and the literature on what social justice should look like in practice.

Social work and technology

Though social work has been hesitant about the impact of technology on practice, it is acknowledged that practice and education are being transformed by it (Whitaker, Torrico Meruvia, and Jones, 2010). As far back as 1999 social work bodies were encouraging social workers to engage with cyber resources to improve their practice (Meier, 2004). Today it is recognized that information technology is so much a part of the social fabric that social worker's must factor it in when working with their clients (Ley & Seelmeyer, 2008). Social workers are now expected to not only encourage their clients to engage with IT (information technology) options that may be of benefit to them (Parrott & Madoc-Jones, 2008), but also to monitor their client's use of the technology and intervene if they are at risk in their use of it (Meier, 2004). Meier argues, “[s]ocial workers need to see the internet as part of their clients' social environments and consider how clients can benefit by establishing relationships and participating in communities in cyberspace” (p. 160). Social work educators, recognizing that the world is increasingly
reliant on technology, have called on schools to expose students to both the benefits and challenges technology offers; as well offering technology based options in their training in order to prepare for practice (Ahmendani, Harold, Fitton, & Shifflet Gibson, 2011; Meier, 2004; Sandell & Hayes, 2002). In the UK, for instance, credentials for social work practice now require certification in computer literacy (Dunworth & Scantlebury, 2006-07). Some educators are readying their students to use it in diverse ways, for instance, social work research has been done on using Web technology to create reciprocal e-mentoring between schools in disparate locations (Plummer & Omwenga Nyang'au, 2009). Web technology has also been used to provide shared learning experiences for social work students also separated by great distances (Hick S., 2003; Leibowitz, Bozalek, Rohleder, Carolissen, & Swartz, 2011), and for reflective journalling (Dunworth & Scantlebury, 2006-07). Social workers have also used technology to bridge the distances in northern and rural communities (Hemingway & McIennan, 2005).

Though social work has had limited input in the development of technology (Sapey, 1997), there is clearly hope for the profession to increase its role in IT developments as is evidenced in the growing number of social workers on the Web (McNutt J. G., 2000; Meier, 2004; Steyaert & Gould, 2009). Social work uses of the Web for community practice are still emerging, but these have already gone through several evolutions based on the experiences of early adopters. In particular, the lessons learned have been that community practice on the Web in no way mitigates “...the need for traditional skills and the building of strong communities and relationships” (Hick, 2003, p. 320). Citing Websites such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
Hick believes the Web, when leveraged properly, can aid groups and organizations to coordinate their activities, share resources, and to influence public opinion. Websites such as these, he argues, also can provide a forum for people “to speak up and stand up for their rights” (Hick, 2003, p. 321).

Blogging

The emergence of social work bloggers on the web should be no surprise given there are now over two billion Web users world-wide representing approximately 30 percent of the global population (Blackman, et al., 2010). Blogs first became noticeable on the Web in the 1990s, but were exclusively authored by people who had the technical knowledge necessary to build a website (Blood, 2000). With the arrival of freely accessible and user-friendly technologies known as Web 2.0, people could not only view, but contribute content on the web. Today's blogs provide a simplified platform where anyone can publish content on the web. Blog contributors don't need computer programming knowledge to get started (Agarwal & Liu, 2008). Today, as a result of the emergence of user friendly applications for “newbies” blogging is a common place activity for communicating on the Web (Lomberg, 2009).

According to Statistics Canada, by 2007, 20 percent of home Web users in Canada were contributing content online (Veenhof, Wellman, Quell, & Hogan, 2008). There are bewildering arrays of bloggers on the web and in spite of doomsayers; the blogosphere appears to expanding not collapsing (Deuze, 2008). By the spring of 2007 worldwide there were more than 70 million blogs, and a new weblog was being created.
each second every day (Deuze, 2008). “79 percent of bloggers self-identify as personal bloggers” (Lomberg, 2009, p. para 3).

*Technorati’s State of the Blogosphere 2010* survey of 7200 bloggers reported blog authors are more highly educated and affluent than the general population (Sobel, 2010). They are also reportedly primarily male, between the ages of 18-44 and have been blogging more than two years. Blogging is the primary source of income for 11 percent of these bloggers. The highest numbers of bloggers reporting to the survey were from the US, followed by EU and then Arab countries. Technorati research shows the blogosphere is overwhelmingly populated by sites in the USA with 49 percent of all blogs being based there. Bloggers in the EU are steadily gaining at 29 percent.

Converse to Technorati’s reports, research has shown that since the 1990s women and youth are increasingly going online; in some studies they predominate as blog authors, and they blog differently than their popular adult male counterparts (Johnston, Friedman, & Peach, 2011). Researchers argue that the reason behind this seeming contradiction resides with the media focusing attention on a certain type of blog called a “filter” and “k” logs which tend to privilege blogs owned by adult males (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004). In research focusing on political blogs, the authors noted that it may just be women tend to use their own personal experience and use a journal format whereas men’s blogs tend to be opinion based and it may be that these types of blogs ‘shout’ louder to media (Johnston, Friedman, & Peach, 2011).
Research on blogs has proliferated on the uses and impacts of the occupation, and the socio-demographics of bloggers and their motivations and habits (Schmidt, 2007). Researchers have been interested in the impact of special interest blogs in areas of journalism, politics (Farrell & Drezner, 2008), and academia (Kjellberg, 2009). Researchers are beginning to employ genre analysis and to develop typologies of the practice in order to better answer questions about bloggers themselves, their readers and the recognizable and functional elements of this type of communicative action (Lomberg, 2009; Miller & Shepard, 2004). Clinical research suggests that blogs, when compared with interviews, can provide a useful adjunct to other forms of analysis, and as an exploratory first step to further research (Acaster & Wild, 2009). As noted above, there are sites such as Technorati and seemingly endless specialized search engines and crawlers that are dedicated to the blogosphere and aiding researchers in their pursuit of understanding this phenomenon (Fernback, 1999; Kahn and Kellner, 2005).

While blogging is precipitated most often by a single blogger, blogging necessitates involvement of others including readers, and other bloggers which the writer may to link to within their own blog or by commenting on another’s (Schmidt, 2007). The Web has virtually "reduced the distance between any two points on earth to zero" and bloggers can simultaneously participate in discussions about regional and international issues with people "...exactly on the other side of the globe..." (Agarwal & Liu, 2008, p. 18-19). For Agarwal and Liu, the sheer volume of information within electronic communities such as blogs on the Web is overwhelming and this can create a credibility gap leaving readers uncertain about who to believe, thus leading researchers to
attempt to rank blogs based on their link structure. "In social networks it is important not only to detect the influential members or experts in case of knowledge sharing in communities but also to assess to what extent some of the members are recognized as experts by their colleagues in the community. This leads to the estimation of trust and reputation of these experts" (Agarwal & Liu, p. 22).

JonKatz (1999) on Slashdot states blogs represent a perfect evolution in electronic community: “They seem to almost all be ideologically opposed to hostility, including essayish commentary and observations. Because the site creator limits and approves membership, they don't need to be defended as intensely as bigger sites, nor do they attract - or permit - posters who abuse others. One obvious payoff is that the flow of ideas is strong, uninterrupted and impressive” (para 17). Maynor (2009) argues that it is a realistic to claim that blogging can "...be a form of deliberative democracy" (p. 463). For Maynor the blogosphere will remain a kind of "supplemental deliberative community" so long as these networks remain open and develop their own codes of conduct true to main tenets of deliberative democracy (p. 464).

Blogs, as freely accessible collaborative technologies, are increasingly being taken up for pedagogical purposes. Dickey’s (2004) research on an online learning environment found that blogs helped to mitigate isolation in distance learning. Blogs are also more and more viewed as opportunities to “...enhance the frequency and intensity of knowledge conceptualization, foster reflective learning and knowledge generation through social interaction and meaning making...” and blogs provide a space that is easily organized to share content, and to develop critical voices (Sun, 2010, p. 370).
Blogs and wikis involved students in the construction of their own learning (Boulos, Inocencio, & Wheeler, 2006). Though there are concerns about students posting inappropriate content and how institutions should respond (Chretien, Greysen, Chretien, & Kind, 2009), these technologies are seen by educators to close gaps that were previously unbridgeable such as professionals located in rural and isolated locations needing to stay current for their licensing, and the rise in numbers of students needing to balance work and school (Boulos, Inocencio, & Wheeler, 2006; McElvaney & Berge, 2009). Perhaps unsurprising, Brownlee, Graham, Doucette, Hotson, and Halverson (2010) recently called on social work educators to take the possibilities for information technology to benefit rural practitioners seriously.

Blogs are viewed to have pedagogical benefits beyond educational institutions by encouraging lifelong learning (McElvaney & Berge, 2009) and transforming citizenship globally. "...[B] loggers have reinvigorated journalism and politics through the manifestation of an efficient grass-roots media force and, in their hands, computing technology appears to be a vehicle for citizens to (at least on occasion) demonstrate directly both meaningful voice and agency in society" (Kahn & Kellner, 2007, p. 434).

Professional and academic groups/communities are also becoming more visible through their blogs, Web hubs and services where their publications can be viewed and this has developed into a special area of interest for some researchers. Efimova (2009) believes that the blogging practices of workers can provide a window into 'invisible aspects' of the work. "With its low threshold for online publishing, blogging brings into public spaces ideas and stories previously hidden in private collections" (Efimova, 2009,
Dunworth and Scantlebury (2006-07) see much potential for social work to "debate and share and publish knowledge for practitioners" (p. 18).

There has been a lot of grandiose speculation about the impact of the Web on our lives, and cultural critics have wondered if the Web will be fodder for social alienation or inspiration for revolution (Deuze, 2008). According to boyd (2009), Web 2.0 technologies for social networking have changed the dynamic for forming community online. In the past online relationships were formed around ideas and activities, but Boyd sees today's online communities being formed around "...an egocentric notion where individuals construct their social world through links and attention" (p. 27).

Jones (1999) cautions, it is important we do not transfer pre-existing meaning, language and epistemology onto the sphere of the Web. It is important to note that the very idea of community is elusive and often idealized in Western cultures (Deuze, 2008; Femback, 1999), and there should be no expectation that forms of community on the net are one and the same with these earlier social constructs of community (Femback, 1999). Jones (1999) forecasts that research will lead us to confronting our understandings of community. In the same edition, Femback (1999) defines cybercommunity "...as an entity and a process that emerges from our repository of cultural knowledge about the concept of community and from our observation of its manifestation in cyberspace. It is an arena where passions are inflamed, problems are solved, social bonds are formed, tyranny is exercised, love and death are braved, legacies are born, factions are splintered, and alliances dissolved. It is a rich area for study by scholars, cybercommunitarians, and the curious" (p. 217). The idea of connecting communities forming on the internet has
been contentious with concerns about whether it is even possible to have "real community" on the net and whether these online communities can meet the same needs as those offline (Hick, 2003).

Kjellberg (2009) thinks bloggers can form communities, with their own etiquette and ethics, that are well suited for interdisciplinary communication. This also serves the purpose of making their knowledge accessible to a wider audience. Research on professional medical blogs, for instance, has recently concluded that "...medical blogs are now part of the literature and media of medicine" (Lagu, Kaufman, Asch, & Armstrong, 2008, p. 1644).

Social Work

Social work roots

Social work grew out of "...the political and economic transformations that took place from mid-nineteenth century onwards, in response to a number of interrelated social changes and anxieties about family and community" (Parton cited in Parton, 2008, p. 254). Social work is in "...an ambiguous professional position, straddling the public and the private..." (Wilks, 2005, p. 1251), and it is also "...'political soup'-- mixed out of Christianity, reformist socialism, snatches of Marxism, visionary utopianism nostalgic references to pre-urban living, 'commonsense' reasoning, and a heart that beats in the right place most of the time" (Pearson, 1975, p. 37). Though social work's roots are in Christian charity and social housing movements, the prevailing social work ideal in the early 20th Century was "...a person with thorough knowledge of the social sciences who
is skilled in the specialised business of the influencing of, by scientific methods, individuals who constitute society, the organisations or institutions that enter into the constitution of society...so as to cause them to function in accordance with human welfare with greater efficiency" (Timms cites Halbert, 1968, p. 59).

In spite of its origins as a moral reformist occupation which sought to repair the "wayward" poor by the early twentieth century, this focus gave way to concerns for reforming larger societal inequities in areas of housing, health, education, and employment (Reamer, 1994a). Much credit is given to early settlement workers who broke from the ranks of reformers, and adopted a political approach and aligned themselves with early labour organizations (Trainor, 1996). There were, however, earlier signs of dissent about whether the social worker needed scientific or moral skills. One example is Urwick in 1912, as cited in Timms (1968), who argued that there was no science that could achieve social work's aims. "In social life there are no definite, limited, clearly definable ends for all ends or aims, even those which seem most obvious and certain, are relative to the indefinable and ever-changing general ideals by which we are animated" (p. 65).

McLaughlin (2002) places these modern day divisions of the conventional social worker versus radical social work or casework versus critical social work in these beginnings of the social work profession. According to McLaughlin it all started with Mary Richmond and Jane Addams where Richmond advanced casework and Addams advanced the settlement movement. Richmond focused on "individual betterment" and Addams "...approached social work from a community action paradigm" (McLaughlin, p.
Today it is argued in the literature that case workers perpetuate social problems by continuing to help clients to adjust to scarce resources and to adapt within institutional frameworks, whereas radical practitioners aim to critically assess and transform the structures that uphold systemic inequities (Mullaly, 2007). The 1930s rank and file movement within social work is, nonetheless, credited with championing the important idea of making broad structural changes and allying with social movements as a means to ameliorating social ills and the precursor to today's radical social worker (Trainor, 1996).

**A diversity of identities and frameworks for practice**

According to Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2009), "...social work is an improvisation, like jazz, built up during the moments of the performance, in the style of the performer, around a theme" (p. 9). Likened to the jazz musician, a social worker brings a set of general knowledge, skills and experience to "...different kinds of themes and varying contexts" (p. 9). The modern day social worker designation encompasses a diverse group of workers in areas from counselling and case management in mental health to enforcement work in child protection and probation to community development and teaching. “[A] social worker may identify themselves as a social worker generally, as a professional, a semi-professional or worker, working with mental health difficulties, with older people, as a man, a woman, as lesbian, gay, a black person, a Catholic, a Muslim, middle-class, working-class, and so on” (Collins, 2009, p. 337). Collins goes on to say that though it is interesting to “...speculate about the primary identifications of any particular social worker”. In sum, there are many collective and individual expressions of a social work identity.
The earliest broad definition I could find belongs to Smalley cited in Timms (1968):

The underlying purpose of all social work effort is to release human power in the individual for personal fulfillment and social good, and to release social power for the creation of the kinds of society, social institutions, and social policy which makes self-realization most possible for all men (p. 41).

Perhaps the most cited definition in the literature is provided by Bartlett (1950s) where social work is defined as facilitating change within an individual, and in the social environment that adversely impacts on the individual (Ramsay, 2003; Risler, Lowe, & Nackerud, 2003). Similar to Bartlett, Stepney (2000) argues that the broad purposes and applications of social work necessitates that it draws from a broad knowledge base within many academic disciplines and adapts this knowledge for practice (Stepney, 2000). McBeath and Webb (2002) give an updated version that identifies social workers as moral agents acting within Gadamer’s “reflexive-interpretive process of self and other “(p. 1016) within “...a world subject to frequent revision” (p. 1018).

Though social workers have only instituted their codes of ethics and guidelines for practice in the last 50 years, values for social justice are at the core our professional identity where it is bound by its code of ethics not just to helping individuals, but also to bring social justice to the community (Rhodes, 1989). Rhodes (1989) argues that ethical awareness is essential, because everything social workers do involves their political assumptions. Today, the thread that holds social work together across the globe are its
ethical standards where at an international level it is agreed that the practice of social work must be embedded in its core values and ethical awareness (IFSW, 2012).

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW, 2012).

Citing Specht and Courtenay, Harrison (2006/2007) joins their questioning of the centrality of social justice in social work identity. These authors wonder if social justice in social work is not more folklore than reality, and if it is not "...time to assess fearlessly and openly the myths to see whether they carry essential truths that are applicable today, or whether they are out of touch with the world we live in to the degree that they should be filed away for history" (Sec 2, para 5). Healy (1999) also questions the activist social work ideal, but does not deny the central importance of social justice to the profession. She is concerned with the 'truth' status of theory over practice and how this renders theory"... impervious to the complexities that exist within activist practice and to many of the 'conventional' (emphasis hers) practice settings where the vast majority of human service workers practise" (p. 131).

Gambrill (2003), similarly, sees the ambiguity about social work identities as a result of unclear and idealized definitions of the work. Gambrill thinks there are many potential harms in being vague about social work identity including "...misleading
clients, funding bodies, and social workers by encouraging them to believe social
workers have powers they do not possess, and distracting them from the pursuit of
attainable goals such as decreasing avoidable miseries and arranging a just distribution of
scarce resources by fully funding services known to be effective with money saved by
not funding services found to be ineffective or harmful" (p. 313). She also worries these
'grandiose promises' without concrete frameworks for practice may only yield burnout.
Gil (1998) sees these ambiguities are resulting in confusion for social work practitioners
leading them to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes of oppressions and
injustices.

Abbott argued that social work frameworks were necessarily constantly under
construction due to the changing contexts of practice, and thus necessarily broad (cited in
McLaughlin, 2006). Similarly, Fargion (2008), suggests "...one of the elements that
characterizes social work across countries and cultures might be the tensions
between...representations of professional roles and the attempts to reconcile them" (p.
207). Rossiter and Heron (2011) make the case, similar to Urwick in 1912, that
"...foundations of social work--thinking, reflecting, and making complex judgements
cannot be represented in the form of competencies" (p. 306).

Lack of a clearly defined framework (Gray, Plath, & Webb, 2009) has made
social work quarry to market force expectations for competency profiling that Rossiter
and Heron (2011) claim reduces social workers to technicians. Additionally, the
problems of frameworks for practice are not easily resolved, as Aronson and Hemingway
(2011) point out, competency frameworks developed so far in social work in the UK,
Australia and New Zealand have been weighted in favor of efficiency models of service eliminating professional discretion and automating social worker's practices. Referencing the recent project of the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR) to develop a list of competencies for social workers they claim it draws a picture of "...a job ready employee trained to work in compliance with current constraints and agency procedures..." (p. 281) versus "...a critical professional educated to exercise judgement and skill and to question constraints in the service of clients and community" (p. 282).

Woodcock and Dixon (2005) anchor this debate, reminding us that though social workers in academic and practice settings continue to grapple with what "...constitutes and characterizes the social work profession in terms of its goals, tasks, desired methods for intervention, major client groups and predominant sectors of employment," (p. 954) students are still choosing to practice with individuals within the welfare state. These unresolved issues, then, leave social workers little choice but to rely heavily on psychological/psychiatric methods and instruments in their practice, and this in turn impacts on how social workers view their clients, perhaps causing social workers to neglect positional factors and social contexts (Herz & Johansson, 2011).

_A radical/critical tradition_

Although radical/critical social work originated in the 1930s, it did not resurface in the literature until the 1960s and regain prominence until the 1970s when it was applied to study social problems (Fook, 1993; 2002). Andrews and Reisch (2002) rightly
acknowledge the importance of the contributions of early radical/critical social worker practitioners. They note that early practitioners seldom left records of their work behind resulting in their contributions being mainly overlooked by the profession, and sadly most of today's practitioners are only distantly aware of their important role in the development of early social work. The consequences of these omissions cannot be tallied at this point, but one cannot help but wonder what powerful lessons could have been learned from these early efforts had we records of their work.

Radical social workers traditionally employed a class-based examination of the inequities they recognized, however, this evolved when theorists began to incorporate critical perspectives led by the heightening of identity politics emerging within feminism in the 60s and 70s (Trainor, 1996). Significantly, before radical/critical social work came on to the scene there was “no discussion of the creation of social reality by hegemony” (Bailey & Brake, 1975, p. 9) in the halls of social work. In the early 1970s casework was still being reified uncritically and only lip service was being paid to the perspective of the clients of social work. “There are no real explorations of class struggles and the way in which oppression reflects ruling-class ideology. There was also no investigation of the impact of social work on different groups being impacted by racism, sexism or heterosexism. Social worker and client relations were never explored in power terms, nor in terms of mystification or the negotiation of reality” (Bailey & Brake, 1975, p. 9).

The radical social work that emerged in the 1970s works of Bailey and Brake, Corrigan and Leonard (Britain), and Galper (USA), focused its platform on the structural determinants of problems. These theorists also exposed the tendency in traditional social
to be victim blaming (Pease & Fook, 1999). Radical social workers sought to transform
dominate political and economic orders believed to contribute to social problems (Finn &
Jacobson, 2003). In Canada these developments were championed by Carniol and
Moreau (Mullaly & Keating, 1991). Community action, Marxist social work, feminist
social work, and anti-racist social work became the radical/critical contingent openly
criticizing managerialist agendas and offering up grassroots empowerment, collective
forms of working, and consumer-oriented perspectives (Dominelli 1996). Though there
was agreement among these theorists that "...capitalism engenders inequality..." and
some sort of socialism should replace it, there was less harmony about "...how society
should be transformed and re-organized" (Mullaly & Keating, 1991, p. 50).

As noted earlier, by the 1980s feminist social work introduced new critical
perspectives to social problems including the need for social workers to bring reflexivity
into practice and to empower less powerful groups (Pease & Fook, 1999). The feminist
and post-modern critical efforts in social work opened up the discussion in social work to
diverse realities, multiple identities and differences. The powerful post-modern critique
raised the alarm, though, amongst progressive theorists who were concerned about the
potential in poststructural theories to heighten conservatism and nihilism, and for
rationalizing away structural oppression (Healy, 1999). It is argued that neither
poststructural feminism nor postmodern critical social work dismiss redistributive forms
of justice making or pursuing human enlightenment, rather these theories embrace
multiple subjectivities, and, in the case of social work, this allows it to "...sit easily with
other causal theories, since it does not seek to replace other explanations, but rather to
make observations about our process of deriving explanations" (Fook & Pease, 1999, p. 228).

In 1998, Prichard opened issue 2 of volume 9 of the Journal of Progressive Human Services asking: "Where have all the radicals gone?" Specht and Courtenay (1994) tell us radical social workers represent only a "...small proportion of the profession who have had no significant impact on social welfare policy in recent years" (p. 166). Sheldon's (1978) predictions that radical theories would continue to be marginalized in social work education have come true, as evidenced by the poor coverage of these theories in introductory social work texts in the USA (Wachholz & Mullaly, 2001).

According to some, radical/critical social work continues to lose ground due to its plurality of approaches (Pease & Fook, 1999). Gil (1998) thinks though social workers are bound by their codes to challenge injustices, these terms are presented so vaguely, as though their meanings were obvious, and the ensuing confusion about what can be claimed as injustices leaves social workers attacking the symptoms of oppressions, rather than the causes. It is also believed these ill-defined perimeters are linked with leading social workers down the path of "guerrilla welfare" (Pearson, 1971, p. 31). Perhaps less well understood are its implications in individual burnout in social work (Arches, 1997). Rhodes (1989) argues that the "...harmful effects of bureaucracies are obscured" (p. 143) by the overreliance in these approaches on the individual social worker's discretion and professional judgement to ensure just outcomes for their clients.
Radical/critical theory in practice: still evolving

Peter Leonard (1975) appears to have made the first attempt to bridge radical theories to traditional practice in his paradigm for critical practice which he coined a "...radical social-systems theory: a unified approach to work with individuals, families, groups, communities, residential institutions and organizations; and an approach to the development of critical consciousness" (p. 47). Leonard's critically conscious practitioner works at the centre of "...the contradictions arising from the dehumanizing consequences of capitalist economic production" by "...increasing peoples control over their economic and political structures" (p. 55) and enhances "...the creative, determining, and potential of people" (p. 56).

Heavily influenced by Friere, Leonard's radical practitioners not only link people with supportive systems, but educate their clients about the oppressions located in their environments. His worker builds dialogical relationships and doesn't abide top-down methods which mimic oppressive systems. Leonard's critical social worker has a range of organizational, administrative and planning skills which are employed to build and maintain counter-systems within and against oppressive systems. Leonard has since described this effort as an "...awkward mixture of Marxist theory, Freire's ideas, systems theory, and US 'model making' quite contrary to British and European traditions, both empirical and theoretical" (Leonard, 1995, p. 159).

Structural social work emerged in the 1970s in Canada from critical social conflict based perspectives in social work, particularly Moreau (Carniol, 1995; Mullaly,
2001). The most recent evolution of structural theory is that social work adapts its critical gaze in response to new understandings of oppression (Mullaly, 2007; Murray & Hick, 2010), however, this approach, along with most contemporary thinking in the profession, has been mainly concerned with assisting practitioners in redressing the inequitable distribution of resources in their practice with clients in the tradition of John Rawls concept of distributive justice (Reamer, 1993; Solas, 2008). This perspective is anchored in rights based versus organized charitable approach to ameliorating inequities produced by capitalism (Reamer, 1993). Importantly, structural social work always seeks to rehabilitate social workers from being the gatekeepers for the status quo to being the "conscience of society", advocating for social work to begin to initiate, not merely respond to change (Goldberg & Middleman, 1989, p. 11). This approach distinguishes between traditional and radical approaches seeing traditional case work as locating problems in the individual and radical practices as placing the causes for problems within systems (Fook, 1993).

Structural analysis including the ongoing interrogation of social control functions of social work practices, critique of social, political, and economic institutions/systems, a commitment to anti-oppressive practice, and individual liberation and social transformation are the main qualities of this approach (Fook, 1993). As noted, this perspective has evolved to incorporate new information from developments in critical theories, but continues to be criticized for its focus on 'historical materialism' and negligible attention to creativity and human agency (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Feminist
social work is similar to radical perspectives, and it has been added in to radical/structural approaches that incorporate a gendered perspective (Fook, 1993).

Strengths and empowerment based approaches have also been popular frameworks, but these approaches face the opposite criticism for their lack of attention to structural effects. It is also claimed these approaches have been co-opted to impose time limits and to support an over-reliance on self-help which masks the need for more multifaceted approaches and structural change (Dean, 2004; Margolin, 1997). Other more recent frameworks have been proposed including those for just, emancipatory, anti-oppressive and social construction approaches to practice incorporate more nuanced approaches benefiting from post-modern scrutiny of power (Parton, 2000).

Reflexivity has emerged as a central approach in efforts for anti-oppressive practice in social work (Ellermann, 1998). Donald Schön is credited with first putting forward the idea that "...knowledge is primarily acquired through practice and the systematic analysis of experience" (Ellerman, p. 40). Although still emerging it is worthy to note several writers supporting this approach in social work have encouraged adopting a poststructural framework. Ellerman, for instance, wonders if "...the development of critical and analytical skills by social work students" (p. 41) may aid against the threat mechanization presents in the form of competency based frameworks (Ellerman, p. 41). Social workers in developing "...a stance of non-defensiveness" (p. 41) may be best able to face the challenges in their normative practice contexts. Ellerman encourages preparation for and acceptance of ambiguity in practice, where
social workers learn to avoid making reality fit preconceived ideas and seeking absolute
truths.

Payne (1999), also taking this approach, appears to be among the first to attempt
to ply the social construction perspective to social work practice, informed by Sibeon,
into theory where all aspects of social work from academia to practice are placed in
context within cyclical processes where micro and macro factors interact as “…a model
of and a theory for practice in social work” (p. 38). Similar to the postmodern and
poststructural approaches discussed earlier, his social construction frame views social
work as being influenced by multiple contexts and realities from varying viewpoints of
workers, clients, agencies, as well as political, social and ideological cycles. He thinks
social work is ready for social construction as a unitary framework as a result of the
increasing focus on reflexivity, dialogic and participative practice, as well as the
recognition "...that Western models of positivist knowledge do not fit well with
alternative models of knowledge that we find in Eastern societies. Western knowledge is
particularly individualistic" (Payne, p. 56 ). He also believes social construction is a
good fit for the professions commitment to social change because it empowers people by
viewing them as capable of influencing their environment whilst being its products. This
approach anchors worker's analysis by keeping the constructed nature of reality ever
present while allowing for the discovery of new narratives.

Citing Craib, Payne (1999) concedes there are limitations in the social
construction approach which are located where the methods are akin to intellectual
silliness, because after all, social workers "....must act, not merely analyse" (p. 37). Ife
(1999) would also argue that an overarching postmodern framework of practice is untenable. He sees neither a purely critical nor postmodern approach can aid social work as it goes forward arguing instead for "...emphasizing the importance of context and difference, seeking ways to inform action" along with the shared rejection of positivism make postmodernism and critical theory compatible.

The fact that social work theories have given only marginal attention to the natural environment and nonhuman species is a concern given the increasing evidence of global environmental degradation and consequences (Besthorn, 2003; Coates, 2003; Kemp, 2010; Lysack, 2010). According to Coates, this oversight is rooted in modernist assumptions, and the predominance of focus on psychological approaches in social work. Even critical theories in social work have failed to question "...the growth oriented, acquisitive, human-centred, deterministic and dualistic bias of modernism" (Sec 5, para 1).

Besthorn believes incorporating theoretical insights from ecofeminism and deep ecology could aid social work in responding to escalating environmental concerns. Kemp (2010) states there is an increasing body of work within the phenomenological tradition in cultural anthropology, cultural geography, and environmental psychology where environment and person are not separated (as they are in Western approaches), but considered to be mutually constitutive, that can aid social workers in developing and incorporating this perspective into their practice. All these authors agree that social workers will need to redefine their conceptions of social justice to a renewed understanding that incorporates global consciousness, and action in their own lives, and
in their local contexts in order to be seen as relevant, let alone an important
contributor/helper, in the course of these unfolding developments.

*On the divides between practice and theory*

As has been shown above, and as Fargion (2007), Fook (2002) and Stepney
(2000) all agree, there is a good deal of history behind the division between academia
and practice in social work. Timms (1968) saw the split in the profession between those
who define social work as an art and those who seek professionalization and to legitimize
the social work as a science. The best characterization I found of this divide is in
Sheldon’s (1978) examination of state of theory and practice where he places the debate
in social work as being between two entrenched antithetical camps. Midgely (2001),
similarly, sees activists on one side and therapists on the other. Barter (2003) discusses
what he describes as a fragmentation in the field today between those in micro and macro
spheres where one side is clinical and the other is for social justice.

There are protracted debates in the literature between proponents of critical
theory who envision a transformative agenda and those who are inclined toward
perfecting an applied profession (Healy, 1999; Reamer, 1994b). This is personified in
more recent times by the diverging arguments of Gambrill (2003) who calls for a more
empirically driven profession opposed to van Wormer’s (2002) appeal for social workers
return to their “spiritual sense of beingness and relatedness” (p. 35).

An example of this oppositional discussion about the divide between practice and
theory can also be found in Specht and Courtenay’s (1994) ‘Unfaithful Angels: How
Social Work has Abandoned its Mission" where it is argued that "...most social workers who opt for private practice remove themselves from the problems, settings, and populations that social work was created to deal with" (p. 172). Mullaly (2007) joins these ranks by devoting several paragraphs in the introduction to his chapter on a reconstructed social work to chastising social workers who "...elevate theoretical ignorance to a professional virtue..." (p. 205). There is, however, a growing body of research that appears to support these theorists contentions about practitioners.

Baines (2001) research revealed even progressive social workers have "...difficulty operationalizing existing critical theories of race, class and gender" (p. 25). McLaughlin (2009) cites several studies where participant social workers ranked advocacy for social justice at the bottom of a range of activities they perform within their regular employment. In her own research McLaughlin (2006) found that clinical social workers "...were often hesitant and tentative in discussing the concept..." (p. 104) of social justice. Fargion (2008) noted that though the Italian social workers in her research ranked working with systems and patterns of relationships high, there was scant mention the structural nature of problems in their interviews. "Focusing on the social aspects, then, is rather linked to technical and methodological choices about the nature of social work intervention..." and not "...issues of power and oppression..." (Fargion, p. 212),

There is also concern about a distance between the profession's ethics and their actual practical application. Holland and Kilpatrick (1991), for instance, found that "...not a single respondent offered the professions' code of ethics as a resource for helping to deal with complex issues" (p. 140). Johns and Crockwell (2009) noted that
though several of the social workers they studied reported they had referred to the code of ethics in the last year, many believed there were several barriers to using the code including that it was too vague, they did not have enough time to apply it due to the nature and pace of change in their workplace, the code conflicted with agency policies/laws (greater access to client records for example), and the challenges they face working in small communities.

Wilks (2005) sees this divide as conceptual between Kantian/Utilitarian ethics and emerging identity politics. Fook (2002) shares the view that postmodern criticisms have highlighted "...a widening gap between theory and practice" by shedding light on "...the taken-for-granted authority of academic, non-practitioner researchers" (p. 82) questioning how social work knowledge and theory are produced and who is best qualified to generate it. The postmodern critiques found in Rossiter (2005) and Baines (2006) place the debates about the divide between practice and theory within the contexts of practice and the academy where answers are not so easily found. Earlier examples are Smid and Van Krieken (1984) who argue that the dualing "...monolithic units—theory vs. practice..." are "...a very unproductive trap; it actually refers to the institutional tension between the university and field and because it so crudely refuses to make distinctions within either of these contexts, it becomes very difficult to see what the real problems are" (p. 11-12). Also Stenson (1993) who, after researching discourse in social work interviews finds that "...[d]espite the lofty commitments to the growth of self in social work theories, the constraints and pressures on practitioners prioritize monitoring" (p. 73).
Payne's (1991) pragmatic perspective places the blame for the divide between theory and practice in what he terms a dependence on a 'catalytic model' where the disconnect between theory and practice may be more about the expectations that social workers apply expertise bubbled up from theory, and within the power struggles that characterize this debate between applied and academic institutions for control over the profession of social work. Citing Rojek, Payne tells us new knowledge and theory in social work is not grounded in the lived experiences of clients and workers, but a result of a complex interplay of political, community, academic and management imperatives that are cast upon practice by these collective forces.

Fargion (2007) tells us that this debate has been further complicated by the fact that no one seems to agree on "...how to define the matter itself. Scholars who have engaged with this theme have always extensively discussed competing definitions of 'theory' and 'practice', the relationship between the two concepts, and the best ways to study it empirically" (Fargion, p. 62). Acknowledging that "...attempts to specify the meanings of these terms have failed...", using Wittgenstein's language games approach she suggests we eschew "...studying practices and their connection to theory" and focus instead on reflecting on "...languages, words, their meanings, and their connections to communities and the world" (Fargion, p. 63).

The language of social work

Defining social work as a discursive practice was first encouraged in Philp (1979) who positioned social work in “…the space between the respectable and the deviant;
between those with access to political and speaking rights and those excluded; and between those who are represented through organized labor and those who are excluded, who remind us of mob fear 'traces of which are cemented in our conception of deviance”’ (p. 96). Philp argued that the social worker’s involvement in the production of words and the translation of their clients’ words placed them firmly in charge of a discourse. Hawkins et al., (2001) affirm that “...the way in which we talk about our practice is actually part of our practice, since language is our main vehicle for communicating about what we do and for doing much of it in social work, as well as for making meaning of it interpersonally and socially” (p. 2).

Reamer (1993) also addressed the importance of language in social work stressing that understanding its uses are central to social work functioning, however, he is mainly concerned that the language social workers use is based on logic to ensure social workers sound credible. According to McBeath and Webb (1991), “[s]ocial work is built on its proliferation of discourses and techniques, not on the specific needs of people” (p. 750). Timms (1968) states, “social workers are preoccupied with feeling, their own or those of their clients” and “…experience language as a external force which distorts social work activity...” and citing Bistek’s ideas that the nature of social work is life itself and this is so challenging that it is difficult to find words that can do “…justice to a living thing” (p. 3).

More recently Parton (2008) and Howe (1994) claim social worker’s language is no longer about treatment, but is increasingly technical, rational and legal. Social workers are increasingly subjected to quality controls that regulate their competencies
and erase their professional discretion (Howe, 1994). "The language becomes that of the assembly plant and in this world the human subject, her social experience and welfare condition are 'commodified' (emphasis his)" (Howe, p. 529). According to Rojek, Peacock, and Collins (1988):

The apparatus and language of the agency apparently innocuously but insidiously infiltrate the thinking and language of newcomers to social work...All these linguistic devices distance workers from clients while the evidence is that generally the closer workers are to their training, the less they are steeped in the office culture, the less set they are in their attitudes. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the labelling of client/worker interactions...carries with it the dangers of reification, of treating people in nonhuman terms (p. 37-38).

Vojak (2009) states that “…traditional social service language is embedded in an ideological framework that views individuals as the primary source of their predicaments and the solution to their problems, ignoring racism, poverty and other structural inequities” (p. 936). Though she was writing about the social welfare system in Britain she stated her themes also applied to the USA, because the two “…countries have common linguistic and cultural roots, and share a history shaped by Protestantism, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution” (p. 937). She called all social service workers in these countries to make every effort to ‘de-stigmatize’ and ‘normalize’ their language.

Words denoting hierarchy or moral superiority may be abandoned in favour of more neutral terms; for example, the words ‘person’ ‘or individual’ could be used
instead of ‘client’, ‘patient’ and ‘recipient’. Better yet, the actual names of people may be used instead of assigning categories and labels (Vojak, 2009, p. 945).

Employing a poststructural perspective Bagshaw (2006) argues that social workers need be careful that their language does not reproduce power relations through essentialism where people's identities are set into contexts and times. For instance, a person's age, caregiving status, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, gender should not be immediately seen as relevant to a person at any particular point in time. Bagshaw argues social workers must be self-reflexive where they view identities as social constructions and understand that "...knowledge is embedded in the constructing process" (p. 7). Citing Gergen and Shotter, Adams et al., (2009) remind social workers that critical theories place importance in how language is used and that operating reflexively is the only way to be free of the "ideas that mould and control us and our clients as part of the ideas that mould and control the social worlds in which we all move" (p. 14).

Social work language, then, is thought to be a vital component of social worker’s practices and to embody their beliefs about how things are ordered in the world, including social change. This has lead researchers to believe that social workers use of language is part of their practice and worthy of study (Hawkins, Fook, & Ryan, 2001). Studies have been able to show differences in the language of beginning social workers versus experienced practitioners (Fook, Ryan, & Hawkins, 1996). Gregory and Holloway (2005) reviewed social work discourse over five decades, specifically, how the social work recipient, the social worker and the social task have been constructed through
these time periods. Citing Cowen they suggest that social work language has evolved from a primarily moral mode through a period of optimistic clinical to today’s managerialism which has followed the collapse of optimism under pressure from criticism from both the left and right.

Whatever the case there appears to be a concern that there is a significant gap between what social workers say and what academics think they should say (Paley, 1987). Even qualified and experienced social workers' reports on their use of language ranges from claims they use it unconsciously to guilt about their "...subjective judgements which they can offer no theoretical justification" (Paley cites Ernsthbrunner, 1987, p. 170). Part of the problem might be that social work has relied too heavily on psychoanalytic notions where meaning lies “...beyond rather than in words” (Timms, 1968, p. 3). Ultimately for Timms, the idea that social work is indescribable is indefensible, because it ignores “...the essential part played by language in structuring our experience” (1968, p. 3). Timms argues that by uncritically adopting language from other disciplines the profession ignores the problems in the “...realms of discourse to which they refer...”. “They borrow terms without trying to understand the full and special meaning they possess in another linguistic context” (p. 8). The lack of careful consideration of language in social work also undermines the diverse activities that “...constitute social work” (Timms, 1968, p. 6).

In the 1970s and 1980s social work researchers began to seriously consider the use of language in their interactions with clients (Parton, 2000). According to Parton these writings clearly distinguished social work within the organizational frameworks
where it is practised, but social work has rarely taken language in hand to this degree since. Now the language that dominates, as noted above, particularly in child protection where a majority of social workers are employed, is legalized, premised on assessment of ‘risk’ and ‘dangerousness’ (Parton, 2008). Rhodes (1989) explains that social workers can get caught up in a moral conundrum between the dual demands of professional and workplace moral codes. "On many levels...our use of language in bureaucracies serves to reinforce acceptance of bureaucratic standards as the sole arbiters of organizational morality. Working in a bureaucracy may create a kind of “moral schizophrenia” or “double life;” (italics hers) where we compartmentalize our decisions and let the organizational standards take over..." (p. 139). Gregory and Holloway (2005) make the troubling claim that "...we no longer have a profession confidently constructing its professional image through a language aimed at it members, but a profession paying attention to its language to reconstruct its identity and defend against attack from all sides" (p. 45-46). Sakamoto and Pitner (2005), on the other hand, claim that social workers simply are not being prepared to respond constructively given there is no clear framework or agreement about terminology.

Fargion argues that uncertainty in social work terminology is something it has in common with many other disciplines. There may be no best way to classify a common language given it belongs to communities where there can be no "...talk of mistakes in absolute terms..." (Fargion, 2007, p. 67). She goes further, informed by Wittgenstein’s method of language games, to make the intriguing claim that social workers' language is an ‘in game’ that belongs to an individual social worker's community of practice. “If an
entire community uses a concept in a certain way, the only think that can be said is that this is the way things stand within that community; to talk of mistakes in absolute terms is impossible” (Fargion, p. 68). More simply put, academics coming from outside social worker’s communities of practice may fail to recognize the meanings of terms and concepts that are being used by practitioners, and because practitioners are not often members of the community of the academy they may not use the terms the academic expects.

Where is the love?

According to Leonard:

The key task of radical practice is an educational one. This role aims at contributing to the development in people—especially those suffering most profoundly, such as the clients of social welfare systems—of a critical consciousness of their oppression (cited in Prichard, 1998, p. 4).

Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) contend that "...social work's mission includes empowerment and liberation of both service users and social workers" (p. 447), and Freire’s ideas fit these purposes. Freire is cited/credited frequently in critical theories so I think he is deserving of mention within the critical/radical tradition of social work. Leonard, for instance, argues that Freire’s work has “...implications for a wide range of critical practices within the social welfare field generally (Leonard cites Leonard, 1995, p. 11). Importantly, a central feature of Freire’s work is that his call to action is “...against a left determinism” (Leonard, 1995, p. 160).
According to Leonard (1995), Freire and Foucault share agreement on the effects of "...banking systems of practice..." which "...are based upon modernist conceptions of exclusive forms of knowledge wedded to professional and scientific power" (p. 11). McLaren (1994) argues that Freire's pedagogical theory borders the modern and postmodern managing to avoid falling prey to postmodern criticism and thus can help to reinvigorate a politics of liberation and "...produce the constitution of possibility as a precondition for new forms of historical agency" (p. 211). Freire's "...dialectics of the concrete and his concern with human suffering and social practices have helped to avoid succumbing to an overwhelming anti-subjectivism" (McLaren, 1994, p. 201). McLaren sees Freire's affinity with critical postmodernism rooted in his steadfast commitment to his "political project" and the "language of possibility" (p. 210).

Importantly, Freire has been criticized for his oversight of identity issues including gender. He began to address these issues in his later works. hooks (1992), for one, credits feminist thinking for empowering her to "...engage in a constructive critique..." of Friere's work and with helping her to "...think deeply about the construction of an identity of resistance" (p. 147).

In talking with academic feminists (usually white women) who feel they must either dismiss or devalue the work of Freire because of sexism, I see clearly how our different responses are shaped by the standpoint that we bring to the work. I came to Freire thirsty, dying of thirst (in that way that the colonized, marginalized subject who is still unsure of how to break the hold of the status quo, who longs for change, is needy—is thirsty), and I found in his work (and the
work of Malcolm X, Fanon, etc.) a way to quench that thirst. To have work that
promotes one’s liberation is such a powerful gift—that it does not matter so much
if the gift is flawed (hooks, 1992, p. 147).

Freire has remained relevant by keeping pragmatic about his concepts of
liberation and human freedom and “employing a pedagogy that is self-critical and that is
meant to be reinvented by those groups who choose to practice it, so that the act of
knowing is always situated in the context of the life-world concerns of those people who
could most benefit from it” (McLaren, 1994, p. 211). It is unfortunate, however, that
though Freire “…invokes ethical claims and links them to the practice of critical
pedagogy, he has largely avoided any effort to justify his value priorities in a more
systematic, philosophical way” (Morrow & Torres, 2002, p. 149).

Though Freire was practice focused in his writings, he is credited with putting the
heart into critical theory (Morrow & Torres, 2002). Freire nonetheless contributes to the
critical project such that he informs Habermas’ theory of communicative action through
the focus on dialogical relations, that is concrete relations versus ideal speech (Mclaren,
1994). "Freire frames liberatory change as a systematic process of critical dialogue to
unmask relations of power, examine roots of oppression and inequality, reduce self-
blame, and sparks critical consciousness to inform the praxis of action and reflection"
(Finn, 2010, p. 192).

Freire reciprocated the interest in his work from social workers and left behind
significant messages and guidance for the profession including ideas for mediating the
dizzying pace of change imposed by technological advances and neoliberal politics. Freire moves us "...away from the pseudo-equality of liberal pluralism..." and deepens our understanding of how individuals and groups "...can gain greater purchase on social agency through a critical narrativization of their desire, through the naming of their own histories, and through claiming the necessary power to resist their imposed subalternity and the deforming effects of social power" (McLaren & da Silva, 1992, p. 52). Freire’s message to social workers was that they cannot be neutral in the face of dehumanization and humanization, “...nor toward the stability of a situation which no longer represents the human way” (Carroll & Minkler, 2000).

Social work has a history of social activism and according to Freire this naturally lends to the profession engaging in pedagogy. “Social work practice, whether casework, group work, or community organization, is inherently and substantively educational-pedagogical. There is a particular pedagogy natural to social work where the social worker is in the forefront in the search for a clearer understanding in coming to know certain subject matter. The social worker is conditioned by the structure of the society she or he is in, in which she or he is formed. The social worker uncovers and makes explicit a certain dream about social relations, which is a political dream” (Moch, 2009, pp. 93-94).

In *A Critical Understanding of Social Work*, Friere tells us that social work cannot remain progressive so long as it acts conservative or reactionary. Similar to its value to educators, Friere’s critical pedagogy instructs social workers to “...turn their critical gaze toward themselves and their...practices” (Herie, 2005, p. 37). Social
workers must stimulate critical curiosity in themselves and those with whom they work, and a progressive social worker is permanently searching for her/his competence and to understand the phenomena of the society where she/he works. Freire also informs us that language "...works to reproduce dominant forms of power relationships, but it also carries with it the resources for immanent critique, for dismantling the oppressive power structures of social order, and liberating vision of the future" (McLaren & da Silva, 1992, p. 53).

Finn (2010) gives due to Freire for profoundly influencing her own work and her work with Jacobsen in their development of a Just Practice Framework. Freire she tells us, was unwavering in his commitment to a horizontal, humble and loving dialogue within communities as the only way to bridge the chasm created by decades of "...paternalism and rampant subjugation of the knowledge and the wisdom of the oppressed" (p. 194). She credits Saleeby for his efforts within the strengths perspective, drawing from Freire "...his beliefs about dialogue and collaboration..." (p. 194). Finn states that though social workers have "...readily committed to Freire's concepts of critical consciousness and dialogical practice", they have "...largely bracketed out his grounding of critical dialogue in a discourse of love" (p. 192). Noting it is "...both intriguing and troubling..." that there has been an absence of Friere's approach in the dialogue about integrating social work and social justice. Finn (2010) asks "...how is it that a discourse of love is so readily silenced and erased" (p. 193)?
What does the literature say about what social justice looks like in practice?

Present day frameworks for social justice in practice range from virtue-based, critical, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, structural, deconstructionist and poststructural perspectives. Rhodes' (1989) virtue ethics based practitioner is charged with questioning ethical issues in their agencies. Social workers must also question their understandings, and assumptions. In self-appraisals social workers must acknowledge their history and how this impacts on their judgments, their personal and professional goals, and how they perceive clients. Social workers must also recognize they are not ethical experts.

Healy's (2001) framework for critical practice is developed from the ideas shared by a range of critical theories. Healy's critical social worker recognizes that "...large scale social processes, particularly those associated with class, race and gender, contribute fundamentally to the personal and social issues social workers encounter in their practice". They adopt "...a self-reflexive and critical stance to the often contradictory effects of social work practice and social policies". They show "...a commitment to co-participatory rather than authoritarian practice relations. This involves workers and service users, as a well as academic, practitioners and service users as co-participants engaged with, but still distinct from, one another" and to "...working with and for oppressed populations to achieve social transformation" (Sec. 2, para 1).

Fin and Jacobsen (2003) identify five key themes in their framework for just practice including meaning, context, power, history and possibility:
Meaning is “...our capacity for interpretation is always a capacity for misinterpretation”, thus practice is a process that requires “self-reference and examination”. “It is through dialogue and difference that we can begin to explore possible patterns that connect and disparate perspectives and concerns” (p. 70).

Context acknowledges the larger framework where “...circumstances and conditions that influence particular events and situations”. “Attention to context entails an appreciation of the emotional, cultural, and physical surroundings of our work” (p. 70).

Fin and Jacobsen’s understanding of power incorporates critical and poststructural perspectives where “…the power of language and rhetoric, the power of emotion, and the power of collective memory as sources for resistance and motivations for action by those people in less powerful positions” (p. 70). Social workers in this framework must have awareness of the power of institutions and persons over others, as well as the power within ourselves, within others and our abilities to take individual and collective action.

History refers to paying attention to the contexts and narratives. “Attention to history moves us beyond here-and-now pragmatism and creates spaces for the examination of the structures, practices, and assumptions that have shaped our present circumstances” (p. 71). Fin and Jacobsen also acknowledge the capacity of people to act as history makers.
Possibility expresses the “…capacity to act in the world as an intentional, creative, mean-making being, whose actions are shaped and constrained but never fully determined by life circumstances” (p. 71).

As shared above, in Payne's (1999) social construction approach social workers must acknowledge they are influenced by multiple contexts and realities. Their clients, agencies, as well as political, social and ideological cycles all have influence on their practice. For Payne, a just practice framework is united by reflexive, dialogic and participatory practices. He also believes social construction is a good fit for the profession's commitment to social change because they "...present people as both a product of and as capable of creating their environment. Moreover, they provide a mode of analysis for seeing how established understandings of the world were created and for uncovering points of intervention and leverage to change those understandings” (Payne, p. 55-56). Bagshaw (2006) builds on Payne's work calling for a critical self-reflexive social worker who understands how power is both produced and reproduced in relationships and in discourses. Social workers must have communication skills that help them to provide the "...the interpretive framework that is necessary for determining appropriate interventions" and be committed to valuing "...the transformative power of the process, not just the outcome of intervention" (p. 8).

Mullaly's recently evolved radical humanist perspective of structural social work demands from its social workers:

Awareness that present day social systems are unsatisfactory.
A vision of society where “...human need is the central value” (p. 289).

Awareness that social problems are the result of structures.

A commitment to critical social analysis.

Commit to structural social work as a “way of life” (p. 289).

Structural social work in encounters with services users aims to “…counteract the damaging effects of oppression” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 292). Structural social workers seek to build strengths in individuals toward encouraging the development of communities of “...solidarity with others and for taking individual and/or collective action against oppression” (Mullaly, p. 292). People are “agents of their own change” and social workers are “critically reflective” of themselves (Mullaly, p. 292). “A key concept of structural social work is ‘empowerment’(emphasis his)” (Mullaly, p. 298). Mullaly sees empowerment as a dialectical process. A central tenet of empowerment is for social workers to partner with people seeking their service in order to ensure clients “...have direct and ongoing involvement and decision-making power in the interactions between themselves and the social worker” (Peters, 2010, p. 48). These radical social workers openly critique the system and acknowledge its unfairness to their clients (Wharf, 1994). It can be primarily economic and/or political, but this process also liberates via psychological, pedagogical, cultural and spiritual dimensions. In sum, in order to be socially just, social workers must be reflexive, dialogical, and politically active within their workplaces and communities (Mullaly, 2007).
I utilized feminist content analysis methods (Reinharz, 1992) and poststructural theoretical perspectives within feminism to explore the texts in blogs attributed to social work practitioners for talk about social justice. Feminist researchers are collaborative, view their subjectivity as an asset, bring together their own realities with their subject, recognize emotion has significance for the research process, and are attentive both to authority and power (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Reinharz, 1992).

As I have done above, Sandra Harding and Patricia Leavy "...concur that feminist researchers have an obligation to disclose a brief personal 'biography' including why they have chosen the given topic, the vantage point from which they will begin the inquiry and the way in which they will gather, analyze and report the knowledge they have produced" (Leavy, 2000, Sec 3, para 8). Like Leavy states, by recognizing my place in the research I am not "...claiming universal truths..." (Leavy, Sec 3, para 8). I also recognize that locating myself in different social categories does not in itself authorize my arguments. Using critical reflexivity means I understand my role as central to the research (Patton, 2002), and I must maintain my reflexivity by openly acknowledging my assumptions, beliefs and actions in this research (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Feminist researchers also demand 'action' oriented research (Lather, 2004), and although I am not embracing a collaborative co-constructed version of these findings with bloggers, I believe my insider status as a blogger, my focus on the texts as the source of action, my determination to provide a reflexive account, my focus on historical and cultural
specificity of my claims, my confidence in my advisor and committee, and including my interrogation and disclosure of these limitations are all important in assuring rigor.

_Feminist content analysis_

Krippendorf (1980) defines content analysis as a technique that allows researchers to make meaningful inferences from texts that are both replicable and valid. The research questions define the framework or a preset of categories that the researcher develops from other means, and then searches these out in the data breaking down data into manageable bits, generally words or themes (Fook, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Uses for content analysis have included detecting revealing biases and propaganda in media from books to television. "Conceptual and operational codes, like conservative or radical, and economic or cultural help to give latent meaning to analysis of manifest content" (Petrina, 1998, p. 30). Feminist content analysis views cultural artifacts as embodying, reflecting and mediating the views of the society from which they emerge (Leavy, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). Cultural artifacts as things have the benefit of being non-interactive and naturalistic (Reinharz, 1992).

This is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the researcher has not taken part in the construction of the products being analyzed. In this way the data itself has an implicit dimension of validity. Secondly, the themes extracted from the data represent the discourse of those who created the products (including the social context in which that discourse lives) versus the personal/political discourse of the individual researcher (Leavy, 2000, Sec 3, para 7).
Researchers 'extract' already present independent themes from the cultural products they study "...through a careful process of selection and analysis..." (Leavy, 2000, Sec 3, para 4). Feminist approaches to qualitative content analysis utilize manifest analysis which involves counting occurrences of units within texts and latent analysis allows the researcher to treat the data inductively allowing new understandings to become visible through a deconstructive analysis of the texts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Reinharz, 1992). This approach starts by searching out the frequency of the occurrences of data/words and in order to identify patterns, and the researchers then search out the context and interpret it in relation to the data and literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Relevant themes, frameworks and word lists (see Appendices A through D) pertaining to the pursuit of social justice in social work were developed from the academic literature, and applied within social work practitioner blogs in order to yield word and theme frequencies within these blogs. Latent analysis was also a part of the process leading to new insights and directions in the research.

Feminist poststructuralism "...uses poststructural theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change" (Weedon, 1987, p. 41). Discourse is the central concept, "...which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity..." (Weedon, p. 41). As Prior (2004) explains in Following in Foucault's Footsteps this approach chooses not to focus on individual personal subjective meanings about things, but rather to analyze the "...rules concerning how such statements are related" (p. 320). Feminist
poststructuralism seeks to provide socially and historically specific explanations of power and possibilities for change.

Poststructuralism is often criticized as anti-humanist, or more specifically as devaluing people, however I have chosen this approach because it is concerned with the "...broader discursive construction of subjectivity, with the role that institutions and the heterogenous forms of power governing social relations is motivated by a primary concern with understanding..." how people "...are both governed by and resist specific forms of power" (Weedon, 1987, p. 74). The purpose of this approach is not to devalue bloggers' experiences but to reconstitute their texts within a broader field of strategies and relations in social work (Weedon, 1987). Postmodern perspectives have also been criticized for being individualizing and being dividing rather than uniting, these approaches do reject the totalizing claims in humanist approaches (Lloyd, 1998). These methods of language critique, however, have aided new voices to emerge including those justifying anti-oppressive claims, and this in turn, as a result of acknowledging there is no "common language" has built new understandings which bring people together in the present to listen (hooks, 2004). It is increasingly recognized that postmodern approaches, contrary to being a threat in social work, are essential tools for correcting, informing, and revitalizing modernist approaches particularly in the pursuit of social justice (Fook, 2002; Leonard, 1995; Mullaly, 2007; Payne, 1999).
**Qualitative research on the Web**

Morton Robinson (2001) tells us that textual material has a long history as a data source in qualitative research and "...unsolicited first-person accounts on the Web can be extremely valuable sources of rich, authentic data" (p. 714). Blogs are fertile spaces "...for qualitative researchers to study because they can afford investigators a public conduit to back stage thoughts and feelings of others" (Chenail, 2011, p. 252). The global status of blogs, and their archived nature "...makes them amenable to examining social processes over time" (Hookway, 2008, p. 93). Blogs can be visually striking with complex layout of text, hyperlinks and images. As noted above, blogs have diverse content from personal musing to dreams to work, and to political commentary.

Researchers have found that participants on the Web appear willing to reveal a greater level of detail about their experience, that they might not in other contexts. Further, though the anonymity of the Web affords the opportunity to post frivolous or misleading information online, these researchers established that people are also capable of discussing issues and experiences that are in the "...here and now and that matter to them" (Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane, & MacPherson, 2010, p. 604). Online data also allows researchers to include participants who are socially isolated and/or geographically dispersed (Mann & Stewart, 2004; Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane, & MacPherson, 2010). Researchers are able to access very large amounts of data in a relatively short space of time. A further benefit can be that the presence of the researcher is not as much of a factor in the data collection process, and the problem of reactivity is resolved, that is "...the reactions of participants to the presence of the researcher are
largely removed from Internet-based research” (Seale, Charteris-Black, MacFarlane, & MacPherson, 2010, p. 596).

Using blogs to explore morality

When the focus of study is everyday life research questions must be about "what happens in reality" (Hookway cites Johnson & Bytheway, 2011, p. 94) and this "raises the question of how to capture empirically the moral reality of everyday life" (p. 94). Citing Philips and Harding, Hookway tells us that examining moral beliefs and actions raises the problem of validity in several ways. There is the additional concern that interviewing participants about their experiences of moral decision making results in a "...gap between informants' social situated subjectivities and their actual practice. There also the problem of how to contextualize the topic in meaningful and morally neutral ways" (Hookway, p. 94-5). He names other common techniques, including the practice of using vignettes to elicit these understandings. "The difficulty with this technique is first, is that it denies the lived and situated experience of moral decision making and second, it leaves open the potential for impression management" (Hookway, p. 95). This problem is compounded by methodologies that rely on memory and are therefore susceptible to memory impairment and retrospective reconstruction. While there undoubtedly is a place for such methods, techniques that capture situated action unadulterated by the scrutiny of the researcher are advantageous. One data source that overcomes these problems is the diary (Hookway).
Diaries have a substantial history in social research in studies ranging from health research to history, "...as the 'classic articulation of dailiness' (emphasis his)' (Hookway cites Juhasz, 2011, p. 95). In the case of the solicited diaries, difficulties reside with identifying participants, matching the content to the researcher's aims, and convincing participants to "...record their moral decision making over a set period of time, especially without monetary compensation" (Hookway, 2011, p. 95-6). Weblogs ameliorate these problems because they are "naturally occurring" texts which are "...not contaminated by the predating interest of the researcher" (Hookway, p. 96).

Blogs are, however, written for public viewing and a limitation in this research is that "...discursive display or performance..." may be a factor in these activities (Hookway, 2011, p. 96). Citing Goffman, Hookway states "...bloggers may strategically select and write into existence convincing life-episodes that frame themselves as having desired qualities, such as 'good', 'moral' and 'virtuous' (emphasis his)" (Hookway, p. 96). "There seems to be a paradox built into blogging: bloggers are writing for an audience and therefore potentially engaged in a type of 'face-work' (emphasis his) but at the same time they are anonymous, or relatively unidentifiable. This tension between visibility and invisibility gives blogging a confessional quality, where less polished and even uglier self can be verbalized" (Hookway, p. 96-7).
Ethics

The benefit of content analysis of documents in the public domain is that it is an unobtrusive method (Kellehear, 1993). According to Morton Robinson (2001), content on the web is eligible for exempt status with regard to ethics status if it is publicly available (does not require a password for access to the materials). Hookway (2008) agrees with this position:

There is a strong case for blog researchers to adopt the 'fair game–public domain' position. Blogs are firmly located in the public domain and for this reason it can be argued that the necessity of consent should be waived (p. 105).

Only blogs which were publicly accessible and did not require a subscription and subsequent permissions to access them were included in the study. Following Morton Robinson (2001) recommendation that researchers apply common sense she encourages researchers to listen to their doubts about the appropriateness of including the data in the research report and to "...err on the side of justice, beneficence, respect for persons, and autonomy" (Morton Robinson, 2001, p. 712). Taking my cue from Morton Robinson, I had doubts about using direct quotes from the research, so I inputted some of the quotations I was considering using into a search engine. I discovered these quotes were immediately linked (on the first page of the search results) to the original blog content. Importantly, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, this exploration of blogs is not focused on the individual bloggers' subjectivities, but on the content of social work practitioner blogs in the context of current theories and environments for practice, as it is
related to the pursuit of social justice in social work. Thus, I decided to paraphrase or exclude material, including direct textual quotations, that could be linked to a specific blog. Any quotations used in the research were found on more than one blog or were tested in a search engine and found not to directly link back to the original source.

I am also aware of copyright laws (Bassett & O’Riordan, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2004). According to Hookway (2008), Web content is automatically copyrighted in Australia, the UK, and the USA. Hookway notes though that researchers are likely protected under fair-use protections in that their work is not commercial, the content of blogs is considered low-skill, not available commercially and so on.

Design

Sampling and data collection

As is typical in qualitative studies with a goal of discovery I used non-probability sampling methods (Denscombe, 1998). I combined purposive and snowball sampling methods (Rubin & Babbie, 2005) where selection started with aggregate sites with lists of social work blogs. I selected two aggregate websites to begin my search: Social Work Blogs and Social Work Webring and followed the links on listed sites to other social work blogs. From there I reviewed links on blog sites in order to find other social work blogs that were not listed on the aggregate sites.

Obtaining a dataset was challenging. The nature of blog posts was intermittent and some stretched out over prolonged periods. In order to meet criteria for the research,
blogs needed to have a minimum of six posts within the study period between April 15, 2011 and April 15, 2012.

For the purposes of the research the units of analysis were blogs and data for content analysis was the text and hyperlinks within posts, blogrolls, graphics, other text found on the individual blog site and texts found via hyperlinks and blogrolls. My starting point was aggregate websites also known as webrings, hubs, and filter blogs where lists of public facing social work blogs are available. I discovered more social work blogs through links on these blog and within blog entries and other content such as hyperlinks in blog rolls.

I read the first three entries/posts and the face pages of each blog to determine if the blog contained materials that were reflective of social work practice. As the focus of the research is on social work practitioners, academics and student social worker blogs were excluded. I also disqualified blogs/websites and filter blogs that aggregate information about social work such as those belonging to organizations, sites that simply re-blog from other blogs and/or multiple bloggers for three reasons: first, it is often difficult to differentiate between different bloggers on these sites; second, these sites are often primarily filtering news from other sites; and; finally the sheer volume of information in these websites is unmanageable for one person.

**Instruments and analysis:**

First and foremost my experience as a social worker, my reflexivity and theoretical framework provided a primary instrument in this research (Patton 2002). I
relied on the literature to guide and verify my understandings of what constitutes a social worker and social justice in social work. Blogs were to be archived in Zotero (Connors & Dominesey, 2007), however computer/software issues prevented this and blogs were archived instead in Microsoft Word and formatted to PDF to be imported into Nvivo 9 for content analysis.

I collected and stored links to 104 blogs in Microsoft Excel. As noted above, I reviewed their face pages and three posts to determine their possible eligibility for the inclusion in the research. This basic descriptive information was stored in Excel. After several cycles of reviewing the materials on these blogs the initial group of 104 blogs were reduced to thirty-six that met the criteria of a practitioner blogging about their practice. Further review of the number of posts between the study period of April 15, 2011 to April 15, 2012 reduced the number of blogs eligible to thirty-three. Of the initial blogs that were excluded, 16 did not meet criteria because the authors reported they were students, and seven were excluded because they were academics. The remainder of excluded blogs were not focused on social work practice, and did not have the needed minimum of six blog entries published within the study period from April 15, 2011 to April 15 2012.

Once blogs met the criteria for the research, each blog selected was assigned a number and copied from html format into word and saved in PDF format. In the process of archiving blogs simple statistical information was gathered manually from each blog including the volume of entries, the blog's length of existence, any visible demographics including gender, type of social work, reported social work qualifications, and stored in
excel to be imported into Nvivo 9. For the purposes of content analysis where data were grouped together by a shared quality formed into thematic units (Krippendorf, 1980), blog data in PDF format was imported into Nvivo 9. Occurrences of words and themes developed from Domanski (1999) and Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001) terminologies for social justice were then coded. Coded references to social justice were grouped and compared in order to discover patterns and themes. As themes emerged new queries were applied to determine the prevalence of these ideas in all blogs. I then began to sort these ideas into McLauglin's (2009) framework and compare them back to the IFSW definition, the literature on social justice and the divide between practice and theory. In this process of reading and re-reading the blogs it was discovered that one blog did not meet the criteria due to the blog author stating they were not in fact a social worker. This reduced the total blogs in the study to thirty-two.
Chapter Four: Research results

I used two frameworks/typologies, the IFSW principles (Appendix C) for social justice in social work practice and Hawkins, Fook, and Ryan's (2001) social justice terminology (Appendix B) to explore social justice talk and activities in 32 blogs. The most cited framework in the literature was developed by Domanski (1998) who developed it from the political science and social work literature in order to study social worker's political participation in the USA (Appendix A).

Domanski's framework encompasses 44 conventional and nonconventional activities. Dudziak and Coates (2004) used her framework in their study of Canadian social workers commitments to social justice. More recently McLaughlin developed a framework of advocacy strategies and dimensions (Appendix D) she hopes will enable to educators and practitioners to increase awareness and skills related to advocacy/social justice in social work and thereby better meet their social justice aims. Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001) generated a list of social justice terms “...which espoused social justice principles, in that the actual term social justice was used in some 'privileged way'...” (emphasis theirs) (p. 6) that they developed from the literature. Finally, Section 4.2 from the International Federation of Social Workers Ethics in Social Work Practice provides an outline for social justice in practice.

The 32 social work blogs were a rich source of information. I limited data collection to a maximum of 26 posts per blog, but altogether combined the blog content for the period of study comprised over 590,000 thousand words. The results of analysis
provide some preliminary understandings about social work blogs as well as leading to other terms that may aid future researchers in their efforts to understand social workers talk about social justice. McLaughlin's (2009) strategies and dimensions proved very useful for determining the extent of social justice activities reported in these blogs. Domanski's framework produced the fewest results demonstrating that bloggers described few political activities.

As discussed in methods, I have chosen to aggregate results and to paraphrase most of texts found within blogs in order to protect the identities of bloggers. Items I quote directly from blog entries were found in more than one blog.

Demographics for blogs:

Though women continue to predominate in the profession of social work (Harlow, 2004), according to statistics males predominate in the blogosphere (Sobel, 2010). Amongst this group of social work practitioner bloggers, twenty-one (65.6%) of the thirty-two bloggers were female. Only nine bloggers discussed their age in this data. Seven of these bloggers reported their age as being mid to late twenties, and two bloggers reported they were in the fifty-five plus category. It was not surprising to find that the majority of blogs were located in the USA (68.7%), given Technorati researchers have consistently reported that bloggers from the USA dominate the blogosphere (Sobel, 2010). Twenty-two blogs designated the USA as their country of origin. Five reported they were in the UK, two Canada, two Singapore, and one Australia (Table 1, p. 71). Twenty blogs (62.5%) used anonymous identities. The average number of posts per
blog within the study period was 20. These blogs started up on the Web from 2002 to 2012 with the overall average blog being three years old. All but seven blogs identified their professional qualifications, with twenty-five (78%) stating the blogger was a BSW, MSW, MAASW, LCSW, LICSW, or PhD (Table 2, p. 72). For bloggers located in the USA, one identified as a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and five as LCSW which can mean either licensed clinical or licensed certified, dependent on the state. Ten bloggers reported their highest educational attainment as MSW and seven as BSW. Nine (28.1%) bloggers identified their area of practice as child welfare, 15 (46.8%) bloggers identified their work as being clinical/mental health and four of these reported being in private practice in the USA. The remaining eight reported working in geriatric care, community, a homeless shelter, schools and forensics. Three bloggers reported that they were living with a disability. Two bloggers were published authors of books and one blogger linked to two articles he had published via a major news outlet. Just over fifteen linked to other social work blogs either in their blog rolls and/or within their posts. Eleven blogs had links to each other. Three blogs provided policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
links. A total of 23 blogs had comments, on 10 blogs there were comments from social work students, and three of the blogs had comments on their posts from academics. One blog had a comment from a representative of their professional association.

Table 2. Qualifications of bloggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Number of blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCSW</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LICSW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAASW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional association

Nine blogs (28.1%) referred to their social work association on their blog either as a link or within posts. Seven discussed their association in a blog post, and two blogs provided a static link on the main page of their blog to their association. Four blogs referred to their association as a source for knowledge about the profession including as a resource about ethics and practice standards. One blogger, a therapist in private practice, described facilitating a workshop for his association.

Two blogs discussed concerns with their association and one of these discussed quitting their membership mainly due to the perception their association was moving in a direction that they couldn't support. One reason given for concern about their social
work association was that the organization was not doing enough about institutional oppression and in some ways recreating some of these conditions by not being inclusive enough about inviting service users to contribute to professional development and policy discussions.

The blog with the majority of references to their association shares these concerns, she wrote that her association is too focused on professionalizing to care about the ethical obligations of social workers for social justice and the everyday challenges facing social workers in her country. This blogger argued for her association to focus on advocacy, research on marginalized populations and on encouraging social workers toward higher ethical conduct versus professionalization and unionization. Similarly, another blogger argued that their association needed to reflect on its' role in supporting social workers in keeping their commitment to social justice within their workplaces. One blogger thought the national association could act as a filter for social work blogs in order to ensure quality control for the representation of social work on the Web.

Analysis of blog content

Domanski's (1998) framework encompasses 44 conventional and nonconventional activities (Appendix A) in four main categories that are associated with social worker's political activities. I found this framework the most challenging to apply to the blogs. By Domanski's definition it was possible to place many of the blogs expressing their opinions about policy and politics online as being activists or advocates, as the act of writing in public about their practice does have the potential to influence
others and/or express protest against or for a policy. I chose to place the majority of blogs that addressed any kind of policy or political discussion in the communicator category. To be deemed an activist or advocate I decided that a blog must portray an explicit effort to influence political opinions or discuss some kind of visible action taken by the blogger either to make change in their community, and/or to persuade or influence public opinion. One blogger in this group is a full-time lobbyist/activist in their daily work activities. The remaining five described some kind of activity such as letter writing to a politician or public policy figure, participating in a demonstration, having their political/policy opinions published in mainstream media, describing themselves as being a political persuader or organizer in their community, or distinctly attempted to persuade political opinion in their blog posts.

Only two bloggers met all four of Domanski's (1998) categories for lobbyist, advocate, activist and communicator (Appendix A). As noted earlier, one of these bloggers is a full-time lobbyist for her cause to change laws in her country to improve children's wellbeing. She also reported participating in lobbying activities with other public interest organizations. She used her blog to keep her readers informed about developments in her area of advocacy for children's safety, as well as associated developments in policy change at a government level. The other blog belongs to a professional who described a long history as a child protection social worker, but is now in private practice. This blogger reported he supervises in a free counselling service he helped to found for vulnerable individuals in his community. He also wrote about his lobbying efforts with policy makers.
As can be seen in Table 3 (below), the majority of bloggers met Domanski's (1998) criteria for communicator meaning there was some discussion about politics or policy issues on these blogs. Six bloggers met criteria for the two categories of activist and communicator. As discussed above, the six who met the criteria of an activist described some kind of overt activity for policy/political change. Four bloggers described their involvement in activities for causes, the remaining two met the criteria for this category due to their efforts to influence opinion against government policy via their blogs. Only nine described engaging in advocacy activities that met Domanski's criteria. The main advocacy activity bloggers reported was "being a voice" in their agencies, communities and on their blogs for change. Bloggers dialogue about advocacy included sharing opinions about policies on their blogs, describing their efforts to improve services within their agencies, and their experiences volunteering for causes. Two bloggers discussed their involvement in agitating for policy reform at a government level. One of these two bloggers reported speaking to thousands over her many years as an advocate and the other displayed examples of his letters to policy makers on his blog. Thirteen blogs did not have any policy or political talk on their blogs. One was Canadian, and the remainder were located in the USA.

Table 3. Political activities on blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Activity</th>
<th>Lobbyist</th>
<th>Advocate</th>
<th>Activist</th>
<th>Communicator</th>
<th>Did not fit criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Blogs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social justice/rights

Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001) argue that social justice is a founding code in social work and how we talk about our practice should reflect this principle. These researchers developed a list of terminology from the literature that was allied with social justice in a "privileged way" to study the participant social workers discussions of practice vignettes (Appendix B). The frequency of these terms were counted in the 32 blogs. The results can be viewed below in Table 4 (p. 77). Though Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001) found that only two of their 30 study participants used their social justice terms more than twice, over two-thirds of blogs (25) in this study used their terminology. However, as will be discussed further on, only 21 blogs discussed social justice and rights in substantive ways.

Social justice was used as a specific term by eight blogs, however, I included six others in this category that used the term justice or injustice to discuss and/or to call for social justice. Seven blogs discussed how social justice or justice is a core activity and value in social work. One blogger plainly explained that a social worker cannot be successful if they do not understand their role is to seek social justice for people. On another blog social workers were told to get social justice for themselves with regard to pay equity, gender equity and professional standing. The talk in another blogs was concerning the need for social justice and justice for specific groups. Poverty, violence, child abuse, government policy, and neoliberal politics were also focuses of social justice
Table 4. Social justice content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social justice terminology</th>
<th>Number of blogs using terms</th>
<th>Number of references to terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice/Justice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity/equality</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social change</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism/Advocacy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One blogger gave the social justice focus as the reason he chose to enter a Bachelor of Social Work. This blogger writes prolifically and sensitively about non-violence, racial equality, and women's rights. He has also had the highest overall aggregated number of (129) coding references for social justice discussions in his blog. With regard to technology three bloggers encouraged social work to become literate in IT as a social justice issue so the profession can play a role in advocating for marginalized
populations. Two focused on the need to ensure marginalized populations have access to IT as a social justice issue. Only one blog addressed the natural environment as a social justice issue. This blogger described being inspired write a blog entry about environmental issues after hearing a speaker she admired talk about these concerns.

Rights received the most attention in blogs overall with fully 20 of the blogs specifically referring to rights in a privileged way (Table 4, p. 77). These blogs discussed child and parental rights, civil rights, parenting rights, children's rights, the right to getting basic needs met, housing, self-determination, education, women's rights, equal rights for adoption, aboriginal rights, the right to information, the right to understand expectations and how programs and services work, freedom of choice, job security, and mental health rights were topics throughout blogs. Further exploration of blogs uncovered discussions related to rights that did not use the term "rights" specifically, and these findings brought the number of blogs discussing rights in a privileged way to 21.

Table 5 (p. 80) breaks down more popular topics by number blogs engaged in discussion of rights. Self-determination was also referred to as independence, autonomy and agency. Cooperative activities with clients/groups and between agencies were referred to in five blogs as collaboration. See Table 7 (p. 85) for a detailed view of these results. It was noticeable in the discussions of rights on blogs that this talk was often related back to the populations the blogger worked with. For instance, writing about feminism and equal rights was more frequent on a blog where the owner reported she often worked with teen girls, and the rights of the homeless were discussed more
frequently on blogs where the blogger reported they worked with people who are homeless. This was also true where social workers reported they worked in mental health, and child protection.

Only one blog referred to social justice as an obligation. The remainder of blogs referring to obligation and duty were about competencies and moral obligations to mental health clients and children. Of the blogs discussing equity, three referred to racism, one to equity for sex workers, another wrote about opportunity and health care, and one defended anti-oppressive practice against risk management. In addressing oppression blogs discussed related impacts for women, race, poverty, networks of privilege, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual communities. Two bloggers identified oppression as a systemic issue, and oppression was also discussed as a result of trauma and as a risk factor for suicide in blogs. Two bloggers argued that social workers are tasked with fighting it, but are not doing enough to end institutional oppressions. One blogger discussed the concern that new social workers she encountered did not seem to understand their power.

Only two blog discussions about oppression talked about a social worker's obligation to anti-oppressive practice. Policy discussions in blogs criticized residual programs and service models, predatory lending, housing policies, inflexible program policies, professional association policy, and public policy. As noted above, when references for rights and justice were aggregated, a total of 25 blogs had references that could be attributed to a discussion of social justice or rights. Closer reading of the discussions surrounding these terms revealed that three blogs did not meet the criteria for
significant discourse about social justice reducing the number to 21 blogs engaged in substantive talk in their blogs about social justice and/or rights.

Table 5. Discussion of rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Number of Blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's rights</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT rights</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's rights</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educating

Blogs also discussed educating clients about policy. As will be discussed in more detail below, based on McLaughlin's (2009) dimensions of advocacy (see Appendix D), the majority of these discussions fit into the category of educating individuals, families, colleagues and society generally. Two blogs described rights in the context of work they themselves do with clients. One blogger described their job as being to educate about rights in the community. Though the rate of usage of terms was much higher than found in Hawkins, Fook and Ryan's (2001) research, discussions of social justice and rights in blogs were primarily individual focused. Very few blogs about these topics gave detailed accounts of actual work with marginalized groups or the work of being either advocates
or activists. In fact, as noted above, only two bloggers described their actions in change activities related to the pursuit of social justice in social work at a policy/political level.

Advocacy

Within blogs sixteen mentioned advocacy at least once, and six of these described advocacy as a core value, duty, or obligation in social work. Four blogs devoted considerable space in their writing to advocacy causes and discussions. One of the four bloggers described her political activities in detail. As discussed above, this blog was primarily dedicated to reporting on her lobbying efforts to change legislation in favor of child safety. The blogger who is a community social worker with youth had the most posts devoted social justice topics from racism to women's rights. This blog also frequently discussed social justice as a core value and obligation. Three of these bloggers reported speaking to groups across their country and one reported an upcoming international speaking engagement.

Two other bloggers described their role in developing programming for vulnerable populations. One described herself as a manager in a clinical setting that offers advocacy. One of these bloggers described his work developing and providing ongoing support for a community program that offers free support services for vulnerable members of his community. This blogger also talked about editing a book that will feature the voices/stories of marginalized people in his community in one of his blog entries. Both of these bloggers reported being involved in their communities promoting
awareness with groups and through their own social networks. Three bloggers in this category engaged in public speaking about their causes.

On two other blogs advocacy was discussed as problematic, in one of these descriptions the blogger's advocacy efforts resulted in other staff feeling threatened by her efforts on behalf of clients. Another blogger explained her efforts advocating within their own agency to get around another a staff member with a poor attitude toward clients.

Structural issues on blogs

Structural social work places the emphasis on the sharing of resources rather than laying blame on an individual or group who are affected by adverse circumstances. Though only six blogs specifically used the term structural, many more blogs addressed macro-level issues in the spirit of this understanding of structural social work. Their topics were how structural problems were exacerbated by private for profit social services' allocation of resources, poverty impacts on parenting children with disabilities, the world economy worsening and its impact on vulnerable populations, crime legislation and it impacts on children with convicted parents, meagre budgets for programs, predatory lending, homelessness amongst veterans and others, violence against women and children, and racism. The importance for social workers to have an appropriate education in economics and policy to be able to understand structural issues was emphasized on one blog.
As discussed, bloggers did not often use the term structural when they talked about structural issues. Eleven blogs used the term barrier/s, and though three referred to client's personal development issues in therapy, one focused on barriers to the professional development of social workers and one to barriers social workers experience with technology. Six discussed barriers in terms of structural causes. These causes ranged from the stigma of poverty to the cost of healthcare and the barriers to housing clients.

Table 6. Macro/Structural Issues in blogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Issues Sub-categories</th>
<th>Number blogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget cuts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucracy/government policy</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Resources</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once all results coded for structural issues were factored in, over two-thirds of blogs, a total of twenty-one, discussed structural issues. By far the most discussed structural issues were lack of resources for clients and/or marginalized groups (12), difficulties with bureaucracy/policy (10) and funding for programming (10). Oppression, poverty and lack of access to health care were also frequently discussed on
blogs in terms of structural problems. One of the two activist bloggers discussed the very personal challenge of relying on goodwill/charity to cover her health care costs, as all private insurance companies had denied her coverage. Another blogger discussed the challenge of loss of personal space in her workplace, that was a result of increased staffing and decreasing square footage due to funding scarcity.

Several blogs discussed how institutions contribute to the structural problems of poverty, homeless, violence against children and women and lack of access to health care. Bureaucracies were described as inflexible. Lack of coordination of information between agencies that hampered effective decision making was also discussed in blogs. The residual nature of programs and services were argued to be perpetuating stigma. Lack of access to resources, budget cuts and agency/government policies were the most mentioned structural problems on blogs (Table 6, p. 83). Talk about structural issues in blogs, then, was often associated with funding shortfalls and the tightening of eligibility requirements in programs and services. Funding issues were reported as threatening programs including health care services for vulnerable populations.

More than one blog used the phrase "drilling" in relation to it being requisite in their job to explain requirements and scarcity of services to clients. On two blogs it was argued that charity too often served the interests of the upper middle class, or as one blogger stated, to paraphrase, every worker making under 25,000 annually wants to show up on their day off to entertain charity donors. On another blog it was discussed, in several different lengthy posts, that social workers' had been duped by neoliberal politicians who co-opted ostensibly beneficial policies and empowerment language to
mask further reductions to services and choices for vulnerable populations. Perhaps the most compelling post in this category to address poverty was by a blogger whose client, a child, had been shot while playing in his neighborhood. She grieves the reality that this boy will have to go to play where poverty and lack of opportunity converge to make his playground a war zone in one of her blog entries.

Table 7. Discussion rights using different terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights Sub-category</th>
<th>Number using Hawkins, Fook &amp; Ryan's terms</th>
<th>Number of blogs using different term</th>
<th>Aggregated results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy/independence/agency vs self-determination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration vs cooperation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination vs stigma/prejudice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrimination/stigma/prejudice

There were fifteen references in eight blogs that discussed discrimination including a blogger's personal experience of being discriminated against to discrimination based on race, income, and disabilities. Stigma was more frequently used than discrimination to describe prejudice. Fifteen blogs use the term stigma in discussions about LGBT communities, poverty, homelessness, and disabilities such as mental illness, and how these affected well-being and accessing services and resources. One blog described the stigma of being a social worker amidst the medical professions. Six blogs discussed prejudice toward foster children, mental illness, LGBT persons, race,
poverty or homelessness. Two other references to prejudice were about the age of the social worker and heightened racism against Muslims post 9/11 respectively. When discrimination, stigma and prejudice were aggregated there were 19 blogs (see Table 7, p. 85) that discussed prejudice, stigma and/or discrimination in at least one post during the study period.

Little or no social justice content

There were eleven blogs with very little or no social justice content. The focus in seven of these blogs was psychotherapy and counselling. Child welfare was the focus of two others and one blog focused on elder care. Two of the bloggers with little or no social justice content described themselves as being in first year of practice. These writers gave detailed accounts of their progress in their first jobs, and had multiple comments on their blogs from social work students and practitioners. One blogger in this group appeared to be in their first two or three years of practice focused frequently on burnout and lack of respect from other disciplines in her work environments.
Educating Freire (Moch, 2009), Domanski (1998) and McLaughlin (2009) see education as a means for social workers to engage in social justice. Fourteen blogs specifically discussed educating and education. Their topics ranged from ethics, mental health, social workers' self-care and professional development to policies affecting their clients and vulnerable populations within agencies and at a government levels. In three blogs the entries were about social worker's educating clients. Educating about the rights of individuals and the social construction of identity were among these. Many blogs sought to educate their readers and the public about mental health, and government policies having harmful effects on their clients, programs and vulnerable populations generally. Five blogs discussed these harms against people with disabilities, LGBT persons, sexual abuse survivors and sex workers in their posts associated with education.

Awareness and raising awareness were frequently associated with educating activities on blogs with fourteen blogs using this term when sharing their knowledge about services, rights, discrimination, indicators of abuse and violence, animal rights, inequality and lack of opportunity and stigmas associated with identities. One blogger discussed the importance of raising awareness in terms of social construction and identity. Increasing client's awareness of the system and areas they can help themselves was also discussed in blogs as an important social work practice.

Awareness was also associated with "drilling" information at clients. In one blog post associated with creating awareness in clients, homeless clients are described as
creating their own problems, while in several others posts on the same blog benefits and resources are described as being doled out slowly to those who are in desperate need. Client's budgeting problems are attributed to eating out in restaurants without giving other background information which may have included limited availability for shopping, lack of access to refrigeration and/or proper cooking facilities in a post on this same blog. In another post on this blog a client reportedly questioned the social worker about why thresholds are so low for income assistance and the bloggers answer is that this client needs to learn to budget. Clients were also placed in the category of unjustly entitled on blogs where funding shortfalls and resource scarcity were discussed as a significant concern, and again, in spite of rich critical content in other entries on these same blogs.

The promotion of awareness was also often referred to on blogs of social workers who worked as therapists. A search of terms from psychiatry and psychology revealed that all blogs referred to mental health at least once with a total of 615 references to these terms in the 32 blogs. A further search for the terms resistance, defense mechanisms, projection, repression, counter transference found these terms in 27 blogs in informative/educational ways.

There were few examples, in the context of the social work blogger offering education to a client, that described their collaborations creating mutual understandings with clients. Though it was not the purpose of this research to review reflexivity in blogs or to examine the individual subjectivities of bloggers, in the context of educating about their work, I noted that bloggers rarely gave accounts of their encounters with clients that
included details of their own actions, interpretations, emotional aspects, assumptions, values and social and cultural background (Fook, 1999).

Much of the discussion on social work blogs in relation to educating clients appeared to be similar to what Friere referred to as banking education (Freire, 2011). The social worker depositing information onto the client in the described scenarios, and the self-determining capacity of the client, the environmental causes of problems, and the social worker's role in the interaction are minimized if not entirely absent. So, when it came to educating, clients were in some cases placed in broader essentialist categories reifying the social work blogger as expert educator and very few bloggers displayed the collaborative and interpretive relations that Fook (1999) or Finn and Jacobsen (2003) would recommend. Importantly and ironically, within some of these same blogs there were analyses of structural issues, rights, and/or social worker's obligations to act for social changes.

There were examples of social work bloggers performing an important educational function for their peers. This was established by the numbers of comments and interactions with other social workers and students of social work. Comments similar to "I just love your blog" and "I'm thinking about becoming a social worker" and technical questions about purposes, duties, and government policies are some examples of these exchanges found on blogs. Bloggers shared their knowledge about policies and research in ways that clearly benefited other social workers in their jurisdictions and beyond. Two of the bloggers in this category were evidently very experienced in their
areas of practice. There were many more with an avid following who appeared to be in their first 5 years of practice.

Discussion of contemporary social, political and economic issues

Bloggers frequently referred to contemporary media news. There were several references to popular media figures, especially as topics surrounding these celebrities were related to social work. Pop stars Chris Brown and Rihanna were discussed on two blogs in relation to domestic violence. Whitney Houston's death was discussed on one blog in the context of addictions/suicide. The Gabrielle Giffords shooting incident was discussed in relation to mental illness and the lack of appropriate services for this population. The blogger associated this tragedy with a recent publicized incident where a social worker in mental health had been killed by her client. The blogger discussed safety for professionals in the field doing home visits. The Occupy Wall Street Movement was discussed on three blogs. These bloggers seemed to be in agreement with the cause, but did not discuss their participation in the cause. Two blogs devoted significant space in their blogs to discussing the political situation in their countries and the detrimental effects of neoliberal agendas on their clients.

Spirituality and conservative politics in social work blogs

In one social work blog post, 9/11 terrorists were placed on equal footing with pro-choice and euthanasia supporters. This wasn't the only blog that shared a prolife perspective. Trickle-down economics were also described as good economic policy by a blogger claiming to be Republican. Six bloggers reported they were Christian, five were
located in the USA and one was Canadian, and two of these reported their politics as conservative. Two bloggers defended their ability to be Christian and to practice ethical social work, one of these referred to the fact that social work's roots were in Christianity. One of these bloggers described her religion as coming under unfair scrutiny when she applied for jobs in social work.

Initially, I was surprised by the language, and had these posts not been data for the research I likely wouldn't have read further. As I read on in these blogs, however, I discovered a nuanced discussion that challenged my initial impressions. The bloggers discussed violence, terrorism, media, consumerism and the priorities we have whether it is animal rights over human rights, or the relations between so-called developing and developed democracies. One blogger shared her perspectives that social work's roots are in Christianity and some real social justice has come about as a result of the activism of Christians. She discussed that she resented the judgment against her faith in social work, that she is capable of being both a Christian and a great social worker. Another Christian social work blogger talked about her commitment to being pro-life, but pro-life for her meant more than just saving the fetus. She called on her fellow pro-life supporters to value life outside of the womb. Another blogger talked about the Western centric focus of the media in relation to the coverage of the 9/11 anniversary.

Influence of blogs

If there is any doubt about social work bloggers' ability to influence public opinion, as discussed above, three of the blogs are maintained by published writers. Two
blogs displayed their author’s published books on their sites and one blogger proudly announced he was published twice during the study period in a major news outlet under his anonymous identity. One blogger was regularly involved in petitioning government bodies for changes to laws. This same blogger wrote about being involved in speaking engagements across her country, as well as having a small guest spot on Oprah. Two other bloggers reported they were often guest speakers in areas of their specialties, one for child protection and the other in community work. One of these bloggers is regularly involved in public speaking and in video blogging. Comments on his site suggest that he is becoming very influential in his community, if not, as another blogger predicts, an important voice for social work in his country. These three bloggers wrote about speaking to groups at a national and/or international level.

Though I only performed a manual link analysis on blogs it was clear, as discussed earlier, that some were more respected/popular than others amongst bloggers based on the prevalence of bloggers within the study to link to these blogs. As noted above, three bloggers had comments on posts from academics. On one blog, a representative from a national social work association commented on a post. Several blogs seemed to have an enthusiastic following of other social workers and students. One blogger frequently linked to academics’ blogs in her posts.

Managerialism, monetization, and the policy/practice divide

The policy practice divide was also discussed on six blogs. One blog acknowledged that frontline practitioners are too quick to discount the efforts of policy
makers. The discussion on another blog was about the impact of neoliberalism on practitioners and feeling attacked by academics. This blogger wished academics would focus on critiquing government policies to aid in the battle against cutbacks and unhelpful policies. This blogger also wrote about being deceived by their local organization, and that good policy, such as offering more choices and individualizing services, was being co-opted to disguise cutbacks. From her perspective the policy practice divide was a one way relationship that excluded practitioners' inputs. As discussed above, this was one of two blogs expressing disappointments with their social work association.

Managerialism surfaced in blogs in discussions about stress, mountains of paperwork, increasing case loads, bureaucracy, cutbacks, technology, high turnover, increased risks and demands, fears of job losses, lack of respect from other disciplines on multi-disciplinary teams, and burnout. I ran a query of terms associated with managerialism including costs, efficiency, budgeting, regulate and there were 31 blogs with 451 references to these sorts of terms. Importantly, at least four of these bloggers reported they were self-employed and appeared to be marketing their psychotherapy practices on their blogs.

Risk aversion as a detriment to social justice was discussed on two blogs, but risk was discussed in over two-thirds of the blogs. Needs were, in some blogs, framed in terms of their cost/benefit to society and the "price" vulnerable populations pay. The limitations of resources were belaboured frequently in blogs. "Minimizing costs", and "cost benefits" are some examples of the language used to talk about resources. Some
social work bloggers seemed to display humour/satire in their writing describing vulnerable populations as worthy of investment or "bail out", or the need for resources in order to facilitate their "economic recovery". Outcomes and performance measures, tick box indicators and resource allocation systems were also referred to in blogs somewhat sarcastically. Bloggers discussed increased demands for documentation associated with technology in their jobs. Inefficiencies in contracting services and/or policies designed to "stigmatize" and prevent clients from accessing programs and resources were also talked about in blogs.

One solution offered was for upper management in social services to participate in a television program called Undercover Boss. The blogger speculated working on the frontlines with staff, experiencing the paradoxes of social work practice with many responsibilities and powers to balance while being powerless and often times without even a permanent place to organize themselves within the hierarchical structures where they work, would help them develop better policy.

Eleven blogs used the terms "jaded", "discouraged", "frustrated", "burned out", and/or "exhausted" to characterize their feelings about work. Social workers also questioned whether they made a difference, described being tired of serving an unjust system, and not having any energy left over to try to change the system. One blogger proclaimed she did not question anymore and she was not sure how ethical this silence was. Another blogger pronounced, again to paraphrase, they were now an opponent to a system they once supported. Social worker bloggers wrote about being deceived, and giving everything they have to the system. Two bloggers discussed strategies to beat
burnout that included frequent job changes. Most of the bloggers talking about being "jaded", "exhausted" or "burned out" appeared to be within their first 10 years of their practice and all were female.

Power, language, ethics, and culture on blogs

Power was talked about on eight blogs. The power of social workers was addressed on several blogs in terms of statutory powers in child welfare and mental health, between supervisors and teams and social workers power in the language they use. Power was also referred to in terms of social justice on two blogs. One referred to the power of social work as a profession to be a voice for the vulnerable. The other reference to power debated the fact that people do not have much power to move between classes, that the American dream is unattainable for many.

Three bloggers talked about social work language. On one blog the power of social work language in the performance of their statutory obligations was addressed. A different blogger asserted that social work language had been stolen, as noted above, co-opted to disguise agendas for cutbacks and service reductions. In another example the blogger defends "isms" in social work language explaining that "political correctness" acknowledges power and privilege in our relations with each other.

There were some visible differences on blogs in the different countries. All the blogs in this study were located in countries known as democracies, although how democratic they are is beyond the scope of this thesis. The descriptions of the availability services were notably different between countries. Discussion of the
expression of rights and familial relations were also very different on some blogs, as were terms like personalisation which is a policy for adult social care in the UK\(^1\).

Nonetheless, the social work language used to address social justice issues were very similar. Three blogs gave significant space in their blogs to describing culture in their country in areas of local practices, cultural awareness, and differences in the expression of democracy.

Ethics were discussed on 16 blogs. These discussions included self-questioning/doubts about behaviour being ethical, confidentiality requirements, and the ethics of using technology at work. Ethics in mental health and therapy were also discussed including topics such as countertransference, and dual relationships. One blogger questioned the ethics of her agency. As noted above, one blogger wrote about social justice as an ethic. Ethics agreements in workplaces, the ethic to aid the poor, and the ethic to be competent were other notable discussions about ethics in blogs.

Why they blog

Reasons for blogging given on eight blogs included a love of writing, raising awareness about social work, personal validation, and inspiring others. Two bloggers claimed that to blog is a liberating experience. Other benefits to blogging were identified

\(^1\) Personalization is a social care policy for adults who are living with disabilities in the UK. http://www.dh.gov.uk/dr_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_081119.pdf
as learning about technology, opening up the lines of communication with other social
workers, and information sharing. Blogging was also described as helping them to push
past their fears, develop pride in their writing skills, and reclaim their imagination. Other
benefits of blogging included are that it gives space for thinking and reflecting, is there
when personal networks fail to fill a need, and creates a legacy for future social workers.
As mentioned previously, one blogger thought that the next important voice in social
work in her country was among these bloggers.

Summary

The frameworks used in this project were very useful in identifying talk about
social justice in blogs. Very few of these bloggers described political activities on their
blogs, but over two-thirds had meaningful discussions about social justice issues in at
least one post during the study period. Four main themes surfaced in this research:
advocacy, educating, and language associated with psychology/psychiatry and
managerialism/monetization.

Over half the blogs referred to advocacy, and many described advocacy as a work
role. Many of the bloggers sought to educate their readers about social work, and also
saw education as a part of their duties with clients, particularly in mental health.
Language associated with psychology and psychiatry was used often, and mainly
uncritically. Managerial/monetization terminology surrounded talk of structural issues in
their workplaces and communities on many blogs, and again, all but one blog had some
references to terms associated with this theme. Social justice talk in blogs appeared to be
mainly linked to the populations where the social work blogger worked. Though there was little evidence on blogs of efforts to bridge the policy/practice divide in social work, there were some hopeful signs in the interchanges on blogs.
Chapter Five: Discussion of findings

Introduction

The purpose of the research was to explore whether social work practitioners' blogs demonstrated affinity with social justice principles in social work. The results show that many of these writers talked about social justice issues in a meaningful way demonstrating their affiliation with these principles in social work. Though only two bloggers openly identified as being committed to social action, just over two-thirds of bloggers demonstrated commitment to rights and/or advocacy in their talk about practice.

Another focus of the research was on frameworks that had been previously developed to aid in measuring social justice in social work practice and whether these would aid in discovering these commitments within these texts. Domanski's (1998) framework (Appendix A) yielded the fewest results due to there being few examples in these blogs of the writers' descriptions of their involvement in political activities. Similar to McLaughlin's (2006) findings in her research about social justice in clinical social work, these social work bloggers expressions of social justice mainly focused on interventions with individuals and groups in their practice. Using McLaughlin's framework (Appendix D), all but six bloggers talking about social justice solely focused their discussions about justice, rights and advocacy on individuals and marginalized groups.

In the remainder of this chapter I place the results of this exploration of blogs into further context with similar research on social workers' talk about social justice. Then I
place the findings in relation to the policy practice/theory divide in social work as it is related to pursuit of social justice in social work.

Domanski (1989), Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001), Baines (2001), Dudziak and Coates (2004) and McLaughlin (2006) all studied social worker's commitments to social justice. Both Domanski and Dudziak and Coates focused on social worker's political participation as a measure of their commitments to social justice. Dudziak and Coates findings that social workers in their study were mainly policy takers not policy makers was supported by the findings of this project. Only two bloggers in this study reported on substantive efforts to change policies that met Domanski's criteria. As previously noted, Hawkins, Fook and Ryan's (2001) social justice terminology yielded the most results, and also aided in the discovery of other terms these bloggers used to discuss their concerns about rights in a privileged way. In these blogs autonomy, independence and agency were frequently used to describe the power to make decisions for self in place of self-determination. Collaboration was often used in place of cooperation to describe cooperative activities with clients and between agencies. Stigma received almost double the results of discrimination in the discussion of rights.

What emerged from these writings is that many bloggers described a distribution of goods based liberal interpretation of the meaning of social justice in social work. In other words, they talked about rights and justice in terms of equitable distribution of resources, and opportunities. Many also appeared to have an uncritical acceptance of terminology associated with individualism (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2007). Though there was some critical examination of these terminologies and how social work language is
being interpreted and co-opted by wider powers, similar to Hawkins, Fook and Ryan’s (2001) findings in their research on social worker’s talk about social justice, many of these writers used language that was individual focused, and terms particularly associated with psychology and managerialism. Citing Bistiek, Rojek, Peacock, and Collins (1988) wonder if the reliance on categories, characteristics, and patterns, or rather on borrowed ideas from medical/psychiatry/psychology, can provide a "...loophole to prevent the worker from producing" (p. 33) unique and meaningful relations with clients. Representing people in diagnostic or symptom categories was frequent in blogs, particularly with regard to a person’s mental health, and/or socioeconomic status. In some blogs, however, special effort was made to represent clients in ways that revealed the complexity of their personalities, circumstances and their relationships with the blogger and programs. One blogger comes to mind who consistently made the effort to show her disadvantaged clients as having the same wants and needs as the rest of us. In another example, by a different blogger, the challenges of a homelessness family were placed in context with the social worker’s relations with these clients. Their story is told over time in an unfolding process that exposes the deterioration of this family’s circumstances that can be the result when appropriate resources and choices are not offered in a timely way.

More nuanced understandings of social justice commitments are sought by Healy (2001), Fin and Jacobsen (2003), Baines (2001) and McLaughlin’s (2006). Healy’s framework incorporates macro and micro levels of change into a framework that is implemented by a critical-reflexive practitioner who seeks co-participatory relations with
individuals and groups. Fin and Jacobsen's framework for just practice also incorporates these elements, however, they include attention to historical contexts and the creative capacity of social workers and individuals and groups to transcend their circumstances.

Baines' (2001) research sought progressive social worker's stories about their practice and analyzed these for critical reflexive content. She discovered that many of the progressive social workers were engaged in liberal not critical practices. Mclaughlin (2006) found in her study of clinical social workers talk about social justice that many were unsure about the meaning of social justice. These social workers, Mclaughlin concluded, did not share in the taken for granted universal understanding of social justice presumed in codes of ethics and accreditation standards. Those in her study who viewed social justice at a structural level found it difficult to find relevance for social justice principles in their daily work. Social workers in McLaughlin's study who had a transformational social relations perspective of social justice, however, readily affiliated their practice activities with social justice pursuits.

Much of the writing in this study of social work blogs did not reveal the kinds of complex understandings of race, gender and class that Healy (2001) and Finn and Jacobsen (2003) describe, or that Baines (2001) sought in her research with social workers. As noted earlier, social work bloggers often placed rights and structural issues into a cost-benefit type of analysis or what McBeath and Webb (2002) call quantitative social work, and McLaren and da Silva (1992) call pseudo-equality and liberal pluralism. Importantly, many of the bloggers described working in profit driven organizations and non-profits or government organizations that were facing cutbacks, which may explain to
some degree their tendency to focus on costs and benefits. As aforementioned, mental health concerns or psychological terms were used throughout all blogs.

Many of the bloggers wrote about their commitments to promoting self-determination and to equality/equity in their relations with clients in mental health and child welfare. In her research with clinical social workers, McLaughlin (2006) described this as a commitment to *transformative respect* which is a comprehensive understanding of the worth of the individual in the spirit of social work values for social justice. Many of these writers gave similar descriptions to McLaughlin's participants in their talk about their practice. Empowerment was central in their helping work with clients. They sought to build supportive relationships, to show compassion, respect, and encourage their client's to understand their own capacities and strengths.

Advocacy has received short shrift in social work literature and schools of social work (McLaughlin, 2009). McLaughlin (2009) found in her review of the literature that frontline social workers were reported to rank advocacy lower than their other functions. However, in her own research she found social workers in mental health frequently refer to their advocacy efforts "with and on behalf of clients--as strategies for social justice" (McLaughlin, 2009, p. 51). Importantly, McLaughlin's definition of social justice advocacy practices and activities differs significantly from Domanski (1999). Domanski's version demands political activities such as writing letters to politicians and pushing for policy change within an agency, whereas McLaughlin (2006) makes room for advocacy activities in the relations between social workers and their clients.
Advocacy, in McLaughlin's view, can be found in these social work practices that are focused on individuals and marginalized groups.

As noted in results, 16 blogs discussed advocacy, and several bloggers also gave practice examples of their advocacy work within and between systems for clients that met McLaughlin's criteria. There were four great examples in this category that also met Domanski's criteria. One blogger who wrote about her full-time work as an advocate for children, and another who described volunteering to develop programming for vulnerable populations. Another two in this category include a blogger who wrote that he regularly consults with agencies to aid them in developing their policies, and finally, a blogger who devoted the most of his blog to talking about social justice and rights. All four of these bloggers wrote about how they advocated publicly to change opinions and/or directly engaged with public officials to lobby for change. Three of these bloggers reported they spoke to groups at a national and/or international level for their causes.

Education was a very popular activity on social work blogs and when placed in McLaughlin's framework (Appendix D), the majority of the blogs focused their education-related discussions on individuals, and marginalized groups in their practice. Many blog entries were devoted to sharing knowledge about mental health, social work, policy impacting on social work, and stigma/discrimination. As noted earlier, stigma received almost twice the results of discrimination. Goffman (1963) legitimized the use of the term stigma in the social sciences to describe behaviours, attributes, traits, and conditions that are used to exclude individuals and groups. The use of stigma in blog
entries was often associated with educating readers about the rights of marginalized groups.

There were several examples of writing in blogs that could be considered reflexive, but one blogger stood out for his consistent focus on social justice in his writing. In one blog entry, for example, he talked about being humbled by his experience teaching a community group. He described developing awareness of processes within himself that he had not previously understood. He described how the shared experience with this group had increased his understanding of the interdependence of humanity.

In several blogs, though, social workers came across as experts, with few examples or descriptions of their client's knowledge or learning that was co-constructed in the context of their talk about their practice. These displays of expertise are what Leonard (1995) tells us Friere and Foucault called "banking systems of practice" (p. 11). Some of this talk about educating also placed clients in essentialist categories where their contexts, knowledge and agency were not visible in the texts. I share Rossiter's (1997) concern that social workers "[c]ommunicative responsibility requires us to become intentional about our social presence in intersubjective relations". "It means social workers are responsible for developing themselves as communicators who recognize their use of self is already/always political" (p. 38)).

Both Rhodes (1989) and Baines (2004) discuss the concern that changes within social services in recent decades are eroding worker's abilities to uphold their obligations to social justice. As noted above in Chapter Two, Rhodes (1989) believes that social
workers can get caught up in a kind of moral split or “double life” as they are wedged between the dual demands of professional and workplace moral codes. Parton (2008) is concerned that technical/procedural processes within the institutions where social work is practiced are fundamentally altering social work knowledge. Rojek, Peacock and Collins (1988) argue that social worker's are under "intense pressure to conform to agency norms" (p. 37) and this leads to categorizing and distancing from clients.

Confusion between the demands and language in bureaucracies, the political perspective of the social worker, and the imperatives for social justice seemed to be at play in some blog entries where the social worker bloggers described being tasked with causing awareness, or as mentioned above, "drilling" information into clients. In one example, despite rich coverage of the obligation to social justice in several other blog entries, inability to budget and other skill deficits were associated as the causes for homelessness without any contextual explanations that may have revealed the systemic issues which are often implicated in homelessness. Some people seeking services were also characterized as being unjustly entitled in blogs where it was evident the blogger was also feeling pressured by scarcity of resources, and again, often in spite of rich critical content in other entries on these same blogs. From a social justice perspective, the concern with these public discussions in blogs is that they potentially reinforce stereotypes about clients of social work and do not challenge discrimination (Appendix C) (IFSW, 2012).

The policy/practice divide emerged on blogs primarily in talk about shrinking resources, and problematic government policies. Terminology associated with
managerialism was interspersed throughout most blogs, and this shouldn't be surprising, given so many of the bloggers reported they worked in agencies/programs where budget constraints and/or cutbacks were a factor. Some of these bloggers were in private practice and undoubtedly concerned with business management, but many were working for private services, non-profits, health services and government agencies. Though the results of this research cannot be generalized beyond these contexts, the findings in many of these blogs support Bisman's argument that our current values are inadequate in face of the increasing bureaucratization and breakdown of our professional boundaries in interdisciplinary environments (cited in Wilks, 2005).

Aronson and Hemingway (2011) tell us that recent efforts to standardize social work practices in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand have been driven by neoliberal market based pressures. The fact that 31 bloggers had some kind of reference on their blogs to efficiencies, competencies, and cost imperatives supports these concerns. As noted, these references were frequently associated with a lack of resources for their clients and impending cutbacks in their agencies. Similar to Baines' (2006) findings, many of these bloggers lamented the mean-spiritedness and plain lack of good sense behind excessive rationing of resources for vulnerable populations. One blogger pled the case for welfare to work programs to make training and skill development a serious part of their mandate. On another blog it was argued that giving direct services would likely be more cost effective in comparison with the extensive efforts to prevent people from accessing these same services. Paperwork surfaced frequently in blogs, and in some blogs this was associated with discussions about the need for more and more
documentation facilitated by technology. Parton (2008) wrote that work processes focused on risk management are transforming social work practice. Risk aversion as a detriment to good practice was a significant concern on two blogs in this study, however the term risk was used on 23 blogs.

On three blogs professional associations and academics were discussed as being unhelpful in the face of these challenges. Many of the bloggers, all of them female, discussed their frustrations with their jobs and three practitioners reported struggling with burnout. Harlow (2004) reported deskilling and low pay were the cause for women choosing to leave the profession of social work in the UK. Baines (2006) has also written on the impacts of neoliberal policies in social work workplaces and these bloggers had similar complaints as her research participants had about their work processes.

On three blogs there were comments from academics and another blog had comments from a representative of a professional association. As discussed in Chapter Two, the policy/practice divide in social work has a long histor-standing. Healy (2001), for instance, recently expressed concern about "continuing separation" between academics and practitioners premised on the "...failure of social workers to practice critically..." (Sec 2 para 3). Also Fargion (2008) wonders if the distance between academics and practitioners is contributing to the lack of understanding of practices. In this environment, then, preliminary signs of interchanges between practitioners and academics on blogs may be a hopeful sign.
Summary

According to the literature, social work has been set back on its heels in defensive mode for nearly three decades. Language in these blogs was inexorably linked with practice contexts where terminology associated with psychology/psychiatry, protective services and risk management, efficiency and cost cutting imperatives were located. Though discussion of social justice covered a wide range of rights issues in the blogs reviewed for this study, this talk was very often linked with resource scarcity. Many of the bloggers were occupied with the lack of resources in their practice, talking like auditors both earnestly and sarcastically, framing their arguments for clients and programs in terms of cost versus benefit and other quantity measures. There was also talk about the mean-spirited nature of recent policy changes and the imposed scarcity of resources for vulnerable populations.

The fact that so many apparently young social workers expressed their troubles with work in terms of frustration and, in three blogs, burnout is also troubling. These discussions in blogs imply that social justice may not be the only casualty on the frontlines of social work practice. Arches (1997) likely did not have Web technologies in mind when she wrote about strategies for social workers to take action against burnout. Blogs, however, are well suited to her recommendation that social workers publish their writing about successes and torments so others can be validated and networks of people working on similar issues can form.
There were several bloggers in this small virtual community already engaging in these activities through commenting back and forth on each other's blogs commiserating, supporting each others' concerns and offering helpful suggestions. It was also very encouraging to find that many blogs in the USA, Canada and UK had links to each other in their blog rolls. This implies the formation of a highly visible network, one that crosses borders, engaged in talking about social work. From my own experiences as a blogger and social work blog reader, it is validating to view social work from the perspective of other practitioners. It was also very encouraging to find comments from academics and one professional association representative on these blogs and suggests the possibility to use these technologies to bridge some of the divides in social work. Blogging, then, has benefits for social workers in practice in that it offers another outlet and potential source for support and knowledge, or as one blogger said, it is simply there when other social networks fail.

According to Friere (Moch, 2009), social workers are well placed to engage in pedagogy in their practices, and to share a political dream about social relations. Some of these bloggers are doing just that. They are using their blogs to share their ideas, beliefs and dreams about social relations with great passion. Many of these bloggers sought to increase understanding about social work on a range of topics including the professions' commitment to social justice.
Chapter Six: Limitations, future directions, and implications

Methodological limitations

Given that this research was small scale, primarily qualitative and focuses on exploring and describing a particular phenomenon, this research did not determine cause and effect (Creswell, 1998). Importantly, as the focus of this research is on social work practitioners' blogs, these results cannot be generalized beyond these contexts. This research is also retrospective and focused solely on practitioner blogging between April 15 2011 to April 15 2012, and thus only captures one snapshot of a segment of social work activities on the Web. Any discussion about implications of this research is tempered by these limitations.

I was the sole researcher involved in identifying blogs that met criteria and coding their content and identifying themes from the data. Although I did a comprehensive search for blogs in aggregate sites, within blogs and using search engines, I may have missed some practitioner blogs.

Morton Robinson (2001) citing Lincoln and Denzin suggests researchers judge the authenticity of texts based on whether the data is faithful to both the context and the individuals it is supposed to represent. Blogs as documentary sources represent several challenges including verifying their representativeness (Denscombe, 1998), obtaining representative sampling (Schafer, 2002), and their transitory nature (Mitra & Cohen, 1999; Morton Robinson, 2001). It is argued that documents are a secondary source of data and this means the research is relying on information that has been produced for
other contexts (Denscombe, 1998). To mitigate these limitations, I verified the authenticity of the content and authorship of blogs by comparing it with my own knowledge of social workers as an insider blogger and experienced social worker, along with definitions of what constitutes a social worker as found in the literature.

Though I relied on frameworks from the literature to make an initial selection of codes, there is no doubt that this research would have benefited from several coders and interrater reliability measures. It is also a significant limitation, given the criticism that documentary research owes more to the interpretation that it does objective reality (Denscombe, 1998), that I did not seek interviews with bloggers and/or key informants to verify my interpretations of the data, and code categories, and the research would have enriched by these perspectives. Again, to overcome this limitation I relied on my insider status as a blogger and my experience as a social worker, along with the literature to guide me in my interpretations.

Another limitation, as Prior (2008) argues that content analysis methods often overlook that "...documents do more than serve as informants and can, more properly, be considered as actors in their own right". Documents fulfill a dual role as "receptacles of content, and as active agents in networks of action" (Prior, p. 822). She notes that social research has primarily focused on "documents as evidence" (Prior, p. 833). She sees content or thematic analysis frequently primarily treats text as an object, that is "...something to be read and understood" (Prior, p. 833) missing out on the practices that create these texts. Web research often employs link analysis to overcome this limitation (Prior). I did not pursue these methods of analyzing networks by building maps of links.
due to time constraints, and the fact that the technical knowledge would take some time to acquire. I did input blog data into NodeXL (Hansen, Schneiderman, & Smth, 2011) just to verify the number of blogs that linked to each, but this was a very small number of blogs and further analysis would not have contributed to the research.

Post-structural feminist methods have been criticized for being de-humanizing due to the nature of its process of decentering its subjects. Importantly, this research does not contribute to understandings about the personal subjectivities of social work bloggers, rather it explores how the content of these documents represent the social work profession to readers, and particularly, whether the texts within these blogs expressed social work's long held in common aims for social justice. Poststructural methods are also criticized as being relativist and individualizing, however, this method recognizes that realities are multiple, socially constructed, locally based, and specific in nature, but that individuals and groups can have shared elements across cultures (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). In this research the shared element is the profession's aims for upholding human rights and pursuing social justice as declared by the International Federation of Social Work (2012).

Future directions for research

In spite of the limitations this research makes an important contribution to understanding social worker practitioners' uses of blogs on the Web. Many researchers have pointed out that online and offline activities cannot be readily compared, however, preliminary studies have shown that groups of blogs with suitable focuses can provide
information that is very similar to interviews and this suggests that blogs can be useful for exploration and/or as an adjunct to other methods (Acaster & Wild, 2009). These blogs make social work practitioners' voices visible and this may be useful to researchers in their efforts to study social work practices and language.

The hope is that this thesis will contribute to understandings about the possibilities of using free technology on the Web for social work praxis, particularly with regard to bridging the distance between theory and practice and the pursuit of social justice in social work. It is also hoped the research will lead to further exploration of these possibilities.

Social work blogs are international and these texts are visible to the public and thus contribute to awareness of and knowledge about the profession around the world. At the very least, further study will be needed to understand how this is impacting on social work generally. Importantly, many blogs can be locked for private use for networking or educational purposes within smaller communities. Some research has been done on the use of blogs within educational settings, but it will be important for researchers to explore these private communities for further understanding of the uses of blogs among social workers.

All the frameworks in this research proved useful in extracting and framing discussions about social justice in the blog texts. It would be very useful for research to explore the validity in these frameworks in cross-comparison studies of social workers' commitments to social justice in multiple settings.
Finally, as discussed below, social work is cultural production and I hope there will be future qualitative studies exploring the meanings in these activities on Web for social workers and social work as a profession from this perspective.

**Final thoughts and implications for social work**

Research has proliferated on blogging practices, but until now there has been limited research that looks at how social work practitioners are using these media to talk about their practice. This research contributes to filling this gap in coverage by exploring social worker practitioners' blogs from the viewpoint of our professional obligations to social justice. It was encouraging to read these bloggers hoped to raise awareness about social work, to inspire others, and to share their knowledge. Though, as noted, the research was about practitioner blogs, of the initial 104 blogs I reviewed I caught a glimpse of a broad cross-section of social work. As well as these practitioner blogs there are also blogs of students and academics that may represent an emerging deliberative discussion about social work that can be freely and openly accessed by any social worker with computer equipment and an internet connection anywhere in the world. All the blogs I reviewed for this project were English speaking, however, with the advent of technology such as Google Translate, there is less of a barrier than ever before between cultures on the Web.

It is my hope that the uses of blogs in this study illustrate the pedagogical potential social media has for social work. Many of these bloggers appeared to be in their first decade of practice, and if these blogging practices are encouraged there are
many opportunities for these emerging communities to engage and support social workers around the world. Similar to other professional communities (Boulos, Inocencio, & Wheeler, 2006) social workers could readily leverage social media for pedagogical purposes either to draw together and collaboratively construct knowledge broadly or within local practice communities. Importantly, blogs do not need to be publicly visible, blog owners can and do choose to lock their blogs and limit viewing to a smaller community.

Though the findings in this research support the concerns I found in the literature about the policy/practice divide in social work I remain hopeful. I agree with Fargion (2008) who contends there is the chance that social work's identity can be located within the tensions "...between social and psychological dimensions, between rigor and immediacy/spontaneity, between the idea of a relationship with knowledge as use of ready-made theories and as generating theory from practice" (p. 216). In a paper he presented in Denmark, Payne (2002) argued there is considerable evidence that many enter into social work with resistance in mind. "Unlike some other professions, social work practice is inherently about change, at both individual and collective levels" (p. 9). Rather than allowing ourselves to be carried along by sociopolitical changes, Payne calls on social workers to enter into an identity project in order to "actively redesign" (p. 12) social work.

As the present study shows, there are social workers talking about some of these issues in their blogs. Web 2.0 could be harnessed to support this identity project, at least in part, by using these accessible technologies to engage social workers in the dialogue.
Based on my own experiences, there are some preliminary efforts underway using these Web 2.0 technologies to engage social workers in meaningful discussions about practice issues.

I recently discovered another hopeful sign in Maschi, Baer, and Turner's (2011) content analysis of clinical social work and social justice. According to these researchers, though it is still very complex and practitioners' voices are mainly absent in this discussion, there is already substantive conceptual integration of social justice at the level of theory, ethics and practical application. "Except for the cases with very narrow conceptual definitions, the content results showed that most authors made at least one link between an aspect of clinical social work and social justice" (p. 246). This, along with the preliminary signs of interaction on blogs between academics and practitioner bloggers in this project, helps me to anticipate that social work can move beyond the dualist theories that place social workers on a continuum from radical to practical and/or academic to practitioner.

Besthorn's (2003) idea that the views of social workers should be "much richer and more complex...than that provided by traditional, neo-liberal, social welfare based economism" (p. 33) was ever present in my thoughts as I read and reread these blogs. I am of the same mind, that social workers should be engaged in the "...difficult dialogue of appraising the ethics of a globalized consumer culture and the uncritical linkage of it with human well-being and core tenets of social work practice" (Besthorn, p. 33). On the final leg of this journey reflecting on the volumes of writing in these blogs, and my own experiences of blogging, I am more aware than ever of the reality of social work as
cultural production. Rossiter (1997) contends that in order for social work practice to be "justice centred" social workers must recognize that they are "...subjects (producers) of culture and not merely subjected to it" (Rossiter, 1997, p. 31). From this perspective it is vitally important that the profession of social work seek to address new social media in assorted ways to ensure that social workers are confident in their uses of these technologies and their use of them represents social work in ways that acknowledges their role in the production of the culture of social work.

Arguing from a post-structural perspective, Rossiter states we social workers are "freer than we feel" (Rossiter, 1997, p. 32).

We can use that freedom to make a culture that is oriented to justice when we engage with others and help others engage, in intersubjectively coordinated action that holds democratic participation through discourse ethics as an ideal (p. 32).

Professional associations must be encouraged to leverage social media for these purposes. We as social workers must recognize that our obligation to social justice can only be upheld if we join together and support each other in this project. Social workers, at the very least, must support their professional associations in adapting these collaborative technologies to encourage ongoing professional development in social work, especially in areas of social justice. These networks could potentially be of great benefit to all social workers. There are many intriguing possibilities when you consider that geography is no longer the obstacle it once was (Stehr, 2002). The next great project
in social work, then, must be to form clearer, and perhaps less complex understandings of our obligations to social justice, and the Web may provide the platform necessary to invite all social workers to share in the creation of these new understandings thereby ensuring practitioners' voices are visible in this debate.

Finally, reading Freire's works, and the discussions in social work literature about Freire, not only enabled me to conceptualize this project, it aided me in the analysis of the findings. I agree with Freire's (1998) arguments that theoretical discourse is necessary for critical reflection, but also this discourse must "...be concrete enough to be clearly identifiable with practice. Its epistemological "distance" (emphasis his) from practice as an object of analysis ought to be compensated for by an even greater proximity to the object of analysis, in terms of lived experience"(p. 44). Freire goes on to say this demands a "disposition for change" and willingness to acknowledge our own processes and attitudes. I think most social workers, whether radical, clinical, in academia or practice, share these traits. In the process of this research I have come to embrace the ambiguities in both the discourse about social justice and my experiences in the practice of social work. I have a renewed appreciation for the complexities of the dream of social justice in social work. I am also optimistic that the distance between theory and practice can be bridged and we will one day be united, not only by our dreams, but our practical realities.
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Appendix A

Domanski’s (1998) Framework for Political Participation Activities of Social Workers

Activities

Lobbyist:

- Contacted government officials by telephone, letter, or fax on a national government policy problem
- Contacted government officials by telephone, letter, or fax on a local government policy problem
- Responded to professional association alert.
- Lobbyed individual policymakers or legislators

Voter

- Voted in federal, provincial municipal elections
- Campaigner
- Collaborator
- Organized a professional or community group to work on a government policy problem
- Organized a professional or community group to work on an agency or organizational problem
- Organized or maintained a social action coalition
- Participated in the lobbying activities of a professional public interest association or organization
- Worked with others on resolution of a government policy problem

Campaigner

Collaborator

- Organized a professional or community group to work on a government policy problem
- Organized a professional or community group to work on an agency or organizational problem
- Organized or maintained a social action coalition
- Participated in the lobbying activities of a professional public interest association or organization
- Worked with others on resolution of a government policy problem

Advocate

- Provided services to a community agency or group involved in social action or policy reform
- Advocated for change within my organization to improve services
Made efforts in a professional capacity to influence opinion among coworkers about an agency policy problem
Worked to influence media coverage of an issue
Advocated with a government agency on behalf of a client

Individualist

Contacted government officials by telephone, letter, or fax on a local government problem of personal concern
Contacted government officials by telephone, letter, or fax on a national government problem of personal concern
Contacted government officials by attending or testifying at a public hearing on a local government problem of personal concern

Witness

Contacted government officials by attending or testifying at a public hearing on a local government problem of personal concern
Contacted government officials by attending or testifying at a public hearing on a national government issue of personal concern

Activist

 Participated in an organized demonstration supporting a government policy
 Participated in an organized demonstration protesting a government policy
 Persuader
 Attempted to persuade others how to vote
 Made efforts in a professional capacity to influence opinion among the general public about a government policy problem
 Communicator
 Keep informed about political and social policy issues
 Engaged in electoral or political discussions with family, friends, and colleagues

Persuader

 Attempted to persuade others how to vote
 Made efforts in a professional capacity to influence opinion among the general public about a government policy problem

Communicator

 Keep informed about political and social policy issues
 Engaged in electoral or political discussions with family, friends, and colleagues
Appendix B

Social Justice Terms from Hawkins, Fook and Ryan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Justice Terms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rights/duties/obligations</td>
<td>Community/social development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity/equality</td>
<td>Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social change/activism</td>
<td>Co-operation/co-ordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Feminist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Action-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>Critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social critique/critical consciousness</td>
<td>Discriminatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C


International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

4.2. Social Justice

Social workers have a responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work. This means:

1. Challenging negative discrimination* – Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.*In some countries the term “discrimination” would be used instead of “negative discrimination”. The word negative is used here because in some countries the term “positive discrimination” is also used. Positive discrimination is also known as “affirmative action”. Positive discrimination or affirmative action means positive steps taken to redress the effects of historical discrimination against the groups named in clause 4.2.1 above.

2. Recognising diversity – Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking account of individual, family, group and community differences.

3. Distributing resources equitably – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.

4. Challenging unjust policies and practices – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.

5. Working in solidarity – Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and to work towards an inclusive society.
Appendix D

McLaughlin's advocacy strategies and dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Marginalized Groups</th>
<th>Just Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lobby on behalf of</td>
<td>letter writing</td>
<td>campaign for social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuring accountability</td>
<td>demonstrations</td>
<td>issues e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liaison</td>
<td>marches</td>
<td>living wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between services</td>
<td>program</td>
<td>professional association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating individuals about rights,</td>
<td>committee work</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>options or choices, the system</td>
<td>anti-poverty groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educating others about need/rights</td>
<td>school systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stigma</td>
<td>multidisciplinary teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>public education initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>volunteer work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assist with filling out forms</td>
<td>for food bank, HIV network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accompany to appeals or interviews</td>
<td>volunteer on crisis line</td>
<td></td>
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