

SOCIAL WORK VALUES: ARE WE EXPECTED TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE?

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By

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ABSTRACT

The social work profession is founded on a set of values that guide practice behaviours. These values are first adopted through social work education programs and are reinforced by the profession's cultural practices. However, many obstacles prevent social workers from adhering to social work values in practice. Personal, societal and organizational values that contradict social work values prevent social workers from being true to their mission. Unfortunately, many prevailing societal and organizational interests, such as patriarchal norms, capitalist business interests and managerial philosophies, are diametrically opposed to social work values. Thus, social workers are entrusted with an extremely difficult task; they are expected to manage numerous competing values, meet client needs, and work toward social change simultaneously. This study has attempted to accurately examine and depict the experiences of six female social workers, in order to gain a better understanding of social workers' struggles to manage competing principles. The participants have offered poignant examples of how social work values can be easily overridden by other value systems. This is particularly true in mainstream organizations, whose structures are less supportive of social work values. On the contrary community-based and feminist agencies appear to be more likely to support social work values, due to a variety of organizational factors. In addition, the findings highlight several implications for social work education, and raise questions about the need to change our current practice to be more inclusive of a variety of professionals, as well as clients. Furthermore, although the findings offer some hope in terms of the influence of social work values on ethical practice behaviours, they also highlight the fact that social work values and goals may simply be impossible to accomplish at all times.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
Social Work Values	5
Social Work Culture	7
Personal Values	9
Societal Values and Culture	11
Organizational Values	12
Organizational Culture	14
Three Types of Human Service Organizations	18
Mainstream Human Service Organizations	18
Community-Based Human Service Organizations	20
Feminist Human Service Organizations	21
Competing Value Systems	23
Chapter 3: Methodology	26
Design	26
Sampling	27
Data Collection	30
Data Analysis	31
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion	34
Personal Values	34
Societal Values	41
Organizational Factors that Influence Social Work Values	44
Organizational Values	45
Organizational Structure and Management Style	50
Organizational Size	58
Organizational History	60
Funding	62
Time Constraints and Workload	64
Organizational Culture	65
Are Social Work Values Unique?	69
Managing Competing Value Systems	70

Chapter 5:	Conclusion	73
	Implications for Social Work Education and Practice	74
	Limitations of this Study and Implications for Future Research	76
	Are Social Workers Expected to Do the Impossible?	80
Appendix A:	Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Code of Ethics	86
Appendix B:	Fragmentation of Social Work Ethics, Values, And Mission	87
Appendix C:	Letter of Information	88
Appendix D:	Consent Form	90
Appendix E:	Interview Guide	91
Appendix F:	Social Work Values	93
References:		94

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The social work profession is founded on a set of values that guide social work practice behaviours. However, social workers may find it difficult to adhere to social work values in their practice, due to the prevalence of competing value systems (Posey, 1978). The value systems that influence social work practice include personal values, societal values, organizational values, and professional values. In order to explore the interplay of these value systems, this study will examine the experiences of six female social workers in three types of practice settings, mainstream¹, community-based² and feminist³ human service organizations. The complexities of managing competing values will be explored using the following research question: How do personal, societal, and organizational values influence social workers' ability to adhere to social work values in practice?

The impetus for this study developed out of my concern about the factors that inhibit social workers from upholding social work values and goals. Firstly, I have detected some disparity between the personal and professional values of my social work colleagues, and the influence of this disparity on their ability to adhere to social work

¹ Traditional, publicly funded organizations that are embedded in and legitimated by the state (Aronson & Sammon, 2000)

² Non-traditional, participatory organizations established to address the needs of non-dominant groups and work toward social change (Barter, 2003)

³ Non-traditional, alternative organizations that focus on eliminating patriarchal inequalities in power and privilege, while addressing the unique needs of women (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988)

values. Of particular concern are my observations of social work colleagues that are complicit in reinforcing societal and organizational values that perpetuate oppression in their practice. Secondly, in my practice in mainstream human service agencies, I have experienced many frustrations with the organizational barriers that inhibit me from adhering to social work values. I have been especially aware of prevailing values in mainstream organizations that are directly opposed to social work values. For instance, neo-conservative and neo-liberal political agendas, business interests, managerial philosophies and patriarchal norms that shape organizational policies and practices are directly opposed to social work values such as client self-determination and social justice. This is particularly evident in my practice with female clients. Although women are entitled to equal rights and social justice, it is extremely difficult to encourage female clients to make decisions that are in their best interests, when societal and organizational structures do not afford them equal opportunities in terms of employment or personal relationships.

Considering the powerful impact of the different value systems that social workers are expected to manage, and the pressure to conform to dominant values and norms, it is no wonder that they struggle to balance competing principles and ideals in their work. Like other members of society, social workers are prone to conform to dominant social and organizational forces, despite professional values and goals. According to Posey (1978), the conflict of values that social workers face might lead to a deterioration of social work values or what Posey describes as "...the whittling down or distortion of professional ends under the dominance of organizational ends...." (p.42).

Therefore, social work students and practitioners need to be aware of the types of value conflicts that prevail in particular practice settings, in order to more effectively engage in social work practice in these settings. The fact that social workers will inevitably face value conflicts in practice suggests the need for increased support, in terms of managing conflicts, and challenging powerful forces that are contrary to social work values and goals.

The pressure to conform to prevailing values and norms, that are contrary to professional values, does not justify unethical practice behaviours or the misuse of power. However, the influence of competing values might explain social workers' inability to adhere to social work values in particular practice settings. A common perception is that social workers are more interested in their own privileged status than the needs and rights of clients. This explanation may be short-sighted. Therefore, this research study hopes to develop a more comprehensive interpretation of social work practice behaviours that takes into consideration the variety of pressures under which social work is practiced today. An analysis of the research findings will guide this interpretation, which raises yet another question: Is it possible to adhere to social work values and accomplish social work's mission within the societal and organizational confines in which social work is practiced?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature and research that is dedicated to the study of social work values. The literature in this area suggests that social workers are initially exposed to social work values during their social work education, and subsequently develop a sense of culture that is unique to the social work profession. The process of developing and integrating social work values is believed to have an impact on social work practice behaviours. However, this does not discount the impact of personal and societal values. In addition, social work practice behaviours are influenced by the human service organizations in which social services are provided.

In order to better understand the influence of a variety of organizational environments on social work practice, the dominant values of today's human service organizations will be examined. These dominant values will be explored in the context of organizational culture, as well as the impact of organizational ruling practices and relations, and managerial philosophies. Three types of human service organizations will be examined in this study, in terms of their dominant values and practices, including mainstream organizations, community-based organizations, and feminist organizations. As one might expect, social workers struggle to balance the complex set of relationships between divergent values systems in their work. Unfortunately, a social worker's inability to adequately balance conflicting value systems may result in a misuse of social work power, at the expense of the needs of service users.

Social Work Values

While values are an important feature of any profession, social work is considered unique due to its emphasis on the centrality of values to its professional identity (Horner & Whitbeck, 1991). Social work values are the basic and fundamental beliefs upon which the very existence of the profession rests (Neudecker, 1980). Although professional values do not guarantee that social workers will behave in acceptable ways, they provide guidance in terms of distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Abbott, 1988), otherwise known as ethics. In essence, ethical practice can be determined by whether a social worker is able to adhere to professional values. Social work values include social responsibility, respect for cultural diversity, human rights, social justice (Abbott, 1988), self-determination, confidentiality, and belief in the intrinsic worth and dignity of all individuals (See Appendix A – Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers Code of Ethics) (Ontario Association of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, Standards of Practice Handbook, 2000) These values are based on theoretical knowledge, which suggests that inequality in society is caused by social structures that create and reinforce negative social conditions for non-dominant groups. Social workers are therefore expected to attempt to transform social structures that perpetuate such inequalities (Mullaly, 1997), in accordance with the values of human rights and social justice. Social work values are believed to be the foundation for all social work practice, regardless of social workers' individual theoretical orientations. Furthermore, it is suggested that social work values are cross-

cultural, and that “in spite of cultural diversity, a common core of professional values exists among all social workers” (Abbott, 1999).

Beginning social workers are introduced to social work values and ethics during professional education, where they begin to develop and assimilate social work values as their own (Abbott, 1988). The ability to integrate professional social work values into one’s value system is believed to be essential to becoming a “professional” (Brandler, 1999, 80). However, this may occur at the expense of a social worker’s personal values. For instance, Varley’s (1968) study on the effect of education on the values of graduate students found that social work education seemed to impede the internalization of some values, which the social workers previously considered core personal values (Doekler, 1977). Furthermore, it is believed that social workers’ values and behaviours should differ from others because of the exposure to educational content that emphasizes respect for cultural diversity, individual rights, and a sense of social responsibility focused on ensuring a minimum standard of living for all (Abbott, 1988).

Although professional education appears to influence social workers’ values and behaviours, the literature in this area of study is inconclusive with respect to the acculturating power of education, and whether education enhances one’s ability to adhere to social work values in practice. Ruth Landau (1999) conducted a cross-sectional study, which collected data at three points of time in the course of social workers’ professional socialization. She found that social work education has an important role to play in fostering and reinforcing students’ commitment to social work values and affects practice

in terms of decision-making. This is true of students whose values resembled social work values prior to entering professional social work programs as well as students whose values differed. Horner and Whitbeck's (1991) study attempted to distinguish between social workers' personal values and their perceptions of social work values. Their review of the literature indicates that there are contradictions regarding the impact of social work education on social work values. For instance, Webb et al. (1976) found that students were less dogmatic and more open-minded after one year of professional social work education (Horner & Whitbeck, 1991). In contrast, a study by Brown (1970) suggests that social work education has relatively little impact on students' professional values and a study by Judah (1979) found that MSW students' values appeared practically unchanged throughout the course of their studies (Horner & Whitbeck, 1991).

Social Work Culture

According to Roland Meinert (1980), values and culture are inextricably linked. He suggests that values arise out of cultural experiences shared by a collective over time; these shared experiences and values organize general behaviour patterns in the group. Like other cultural groups, the social work culture consists of a unique set of operating principles, professional codes, knowledge, beliefs, and values that direct practice behaviours, which are reinforced by the existence of professional schools of social work as well as professional bodies that promote and monitor social work values and ethical standards (Jayartne, Croxton, & Mattison, 2002). A sense of shared values and culture is

believed to shape behaviours, create a sense of order, and enhance feelings of belonging and commitment to the group (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). Despite the unifying effects of professional culture, however, individual social workers have varying degrees of identification with and commitment to their professional values and culture (Jayaratne, Croxton, & Mattison, 2002).

Several studies suggest that social work values and culture differ from other groups. A study by Abbott (1988) found that social workers' values were significantly different from the values of other professionals (such as businesspeople, physicians, lawyers, educators and nurses). Abbott's report on the findings of other studies suggests that social workers surpass other professionals in their commitment to four values: basic rights, social responsibility, individual freedom, and self-determination. In addition, experienced social workers exhibit a stronger commitment to social work values than any of their peers from other professional degree programs. Douglas Posey (1978) found that social workers were unified with respect to their ranking of social work values, such as individual worth, personal liberty, group responsibility, diversity, and individualism (Neudecker, 1980). Horner and Whitbeck (1991) found that social workers' professional values were different from the general population in terms of the importance placed on equality, helpfulness, and broadmindedness. These studies suggest that social workers share a common value system that differs from other professionals, which reinforces the existence of a professional social work culture.

Despite the influence of a shared culture and value system, social workers are often faced with a variety of situational and contextual forces that challenge their ability

to adhere to professional values in practice (Meinert, 1980). According to Heimer and Stevens (1997), professions are deeply influenced by the environments in which they are embedded. Factors such as bureaucratic and organizational demands, an emphasis on individual needs rather than social action for the common good, competition for limited resources, and a focus on professional status may interfere with social work's overall mission (Abbott, 1988). Given these influences, social work practice may vary significantly, depending on the individual social worker's values and culture (ie: personal experiences, social location, and theoretical orientation to practice), the social context in which practice takes place, as well as the values and culture of the organization in which social work services are provided.

Personal Values

In addition to social work values, social work practice is influenced by workers' personal values. Therefore, social workers must be attentive to the impact of their personal values on their work, in order to mitigate the potentially negative influence of individual values that are contrary to social work values. Furthermore, social workers must be aware of how their social location influences their practice. For instance, social workers are often members of society's dominant class, in terms of employment status, level of education, race, class, and level of ability. In addition, social workers' institutional roles are inherently power-laden. Therefore, social workers must be attentive to how their privileged status impacts their professional values, and ultimately their work with service users. Although the literature suggests that professional social

work values differ from other professions and the general population, since most social workers are subject to the same socialization processes as all members of society, it is conceivable that social workers' personal values do not differ much from those of the general population.

Research on the influence of personal values on social work practice is inconclusive in terms of whether specific personal characteristics are directly related to one's ability to adhere to social work values. However, Abbott's (1988) review of the literature suggests that an individual's value system is influenced by personal demographics such as gender, race, social class, occupation, ethnicity, religion, culture, political philosophy, level of education, years of work experience and type of employment. For instance, one study she quoted suggested that social workers working with social welfare clients were more sympathetic and respectful towards clients. Another study suggested that social workers with more liberal values scored higher in terms of social work values. Younger social workers also tended to have higher value scores. The results of these studies were obtained using a professional opinion scale, which measured values on four major dimensions: basic rights, social responsibility, commitment to individual freedom, and self-determination. Horner and Whitbeck suggest that although personal values are thought to reflect who is attracted to the social work profession, personal values do not necessarily correlate with professional values. Although social workers may be drawn to the profession because they claim to support social work values, the correlation between personal and professional values is extremely difficult to calculate. One limitation of many of the studies focused on social work

values is that a social worker's perception of professional values may not correlate with their adherence to social work values in practice. Landau's (1999) study on social work values suggests that religion is the only personal variable that significantly affects a social worker's ethical judgement.

Societal Values and Culture

According to Compton and Gallaway (1984), "the social work profession exists within a larger cultural context; it identifies and operationalizes value premises already existing in society and not held exclusively by the profession" (p.68). Dominelli (1997) supports this view. She suggests that the definition of social work and how it is performed is strongly influenced by socio-political forces. Political processes are integral to the development of legislation that directly impacts social work practice. Social workers are expected to adhere to legislated mandates related to child protection, youth justice, mental health, education, public assistance and personal social services (Barter, 2003). Legislated policies and procedures not only influence direct practice, they may also reinforce dominant socio-political structures that perpetuate social inequality, and thus create value tensions for social workers (Mullaly, 1997). For instance, current child protection policies appear to be particularly punitive toward women with children who are not able to leave abusive relationships. The need to protect children from the damaging effects of woman abuse is undeniable. However, this type of policy highlights society's tendency to blame women for abuse and does not address the fact that women are often unable to leave abusive relationships due to their lack of financial security,

which is indicative of women's inferior status in society. As a result, many social workers end up supporting policies that hold women primarily responsible for the well-being of children (Swift, 2001), which are contrary to the values of social justice and equality.

Unfortunately, dominant societal values and culture often overpower social work's good intentions. Meyer (1976) supports this notion: "the political, social and economic context of social work practice is often more powerful in its effects upon clients than the explicit skill of the worker" (p.3). Examples of contemporary political, social and economic societal values that contradict social work values include a continued adherence to patriarchal principles, an increasing focus on globalization and the market economy, technological advancements, political upheaval and uncertainty, and government restructuring that increasingly supports a reduction in funding for the human services (Barter, 2003). These values have the potential to significantly alter social work service provision, as human service organizations may be inclined to provide services that are focused on financial gains and global trends that expand business interests, rather than social work values such as social justice, self-determination, and respect for cultural diversity.

Organizational Values

Professional values not only reflect dominant societal norms and values, they also mirror the values and goals of many human service organizations (Abbott, 1988). The structure of most human service organizations is similar to government bureaucracies and

business hierarchies, due to the perception that governments and businesses are more efficient. This rationale is widely known and accepted by the public, including some social workers, despite the fact that bureaucratic structures and business hierarchies perpetuate unequal social relations (Carniol, 2000). Unfortunately, the emphasis on efficiency and accountability supports organizational goals, which may obstruct social work values, rather than facilitate them (Barter, 2003). Furthermore, a focus on efficiency supports a neoliberal political agenda, which is concerned with reducing the scope and costs of the welfare state (Swift, 2001).

One example of the impact of government efficiency on social services is the extensive restructuring and dismantling of public funding to health and social services that has taken place over the last ten years. These transformations have changed the face of human service organizations, in terms of social service provision (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). For example, in restructured, more isolating organizational settings, and with less time available to provide services, social workers have less influence over professional practice and are less able to advocate on behalf of their clients (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). As a result, many social workers end up reproducing power relations that maintain the status quo, despite professional values and mandates (Carniol, 2000).

Managerial values have become an important influence in today's human service organizations. Managerialism is characterized by the development of management interests, as opposed to administrative or professional interests, and emphasizes organizational efficiency and effectiveness as opposed to the equitable management of resources. As a result of this trend, social workers are often expected to be managers in

today's organizational environments (Lawler, 2000). For instance, social workers are expected to be responsible for the use of resources without having a say in the allocation of resources (Dominelli, 1997). Furthermore, the social work role has been reduced to a series of administrative functions created outside of the profession, meant to reorganize professional activities, in order to meet organizational goals (Swift, 2001). An increasing focus on managerial practices makes adhering to social work values increasingly difficult because organizational needs (ie: profit-making and cost-savings) are often prioritized over the needs of service users.

The potential for social workers to adopt dominant organizational norms and discourses is facilitated by managerialism's constraint of professional autonomy. Social workers who experience less professional discretion and autonomy in decision making may be forced to adapt to organizational expectations in order to maintain their employment. Furthermore, the subsequent lack of professional autonomy has the potential to result in an inability to challenge oppressive practices carried out within human service organizations (Lawler, 2000), as managerial philosophies emphasize policy management and implementation rather than policy development and design. The inability to resist dominant organizational values that do not meet the needs of service users has the potential to further isolate social workers from their professional values and mission (Lawler, 2000).

Organizational Culture

Like professional cultures, organizational cultures shape the behaviours of its members, create a sense of order, and enhance feelings of belonging and commitment to the organization (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). Most organizations have a dominant culture, which is evident in the shared values and norms of the majority of its members. Bell (2004) refers to the process of adopting the dominant values and norms of an institution as “the collective programming of the mind” (p.1). It is suggested that highly successful organizations do not simply proclaim a set of values, they immerse their managers and employees in the organization’s ideology to ‘an obsessive degree’ (Bell, 2004, 2). This immersion is a process by which individual employee behaviours are reinforced repeatedly by institutional patterns, beliefs, and assumptions that are transmitted from one generation of workers to the next.

The dominant values and culture of an organization are particularly evident at the management level. Any discrepancy between the behaviour of senior managers and the values of the organization is believed to seriously undermine the commitment of other employees to the organization (Bell, 2004). However, despite the power inherent in dominant organizational cultures and values, non-dominant subcultures also exist within organizations (ie: professional subcultures), whose values and norms differ from dominant values and norms (Gibelman, 2000). Countercultures or subgroups that strongly reject and/or publicly oppose the organization’s dominant culture, values, and goals may also emerge (Bowditch & Buono, 2001).

An organization's cultural strength is based on the extent of shared values and beliefs among employees. The greater the degree of shared values and beliefs, the stronger the culture's influence on employee behaviours (Bowditch & Buono, 2001), and the greater the likelihood of organizational success in terms of meeting its objectives. The organization's management style is an indication of its value system. Organizational behaviour theories refer to managers as organizational heroes. Organizational heroes are role models that are selected by the organization, who personify and reinforce the organization's value system. These role models are typically part of upper management or those who have power in the organization (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). The personal demographics of organizational heroes may be indicative of who is valued within an organization. For instance, managers are typically members of society's dominant class. Unfortunately, organizational heroes may not be perceived as heroes by front-line staff or service users.

Organizational behaviour theories suggest that organizational myths and stories are also relevant when examining an organization's values and culture. Organizations often convey stories about "why things are done as they are" (Bowditch & Buono, 2001, 291). In the current socio-political climate organizational stories often focus on the unavailability of resources and the subsequent 'need' for fiscal restraints. Organizational stories also reinforce the perception that clients are responsible for their 'problems', thereby creating a situation where employees, including social workers, are expected to determine whether clients are 'deserving' of services. These myths and stories are spread

throughout the organization by organizational heroes, and are referred to as “corporate folklore” (Bowditch & Buono, 2001, 291).

Dorothy Smith refers to these dominant organizational practices as ‘ruling practices’. These practices are based on the organization’s values. She suggests that ruling practices are organized in ways that control and disempower people, and ultimately organize ‘social relations’ between members of the organization. These social relations are organized in terms of dominance and subordination (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, 21), and are referred to as ‘ruling relations’, where the interests of those who rule dominate the actions of others. Those with power (ie: supervisors and managers) are equivalent to the ‘heroes’ described by organizational behaviour theories. Organizational heroes or leaders dominate the actions of employees through practices and relations that become organizational norms and contribute to accomplishing organizational goals (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Furthermore, those in power secure their position by structuring organizational relationships and prioritizing organizational goals, over the goals of service users. This institutional power extends to social workers, who are able to exercise control over clients, either for their own interests, or in the interests of the organization. Institutions become instruments through which social workers can exert organizational power and influence service users (Dominelli, 1997).

Workers who are repeatedly exposed to organizational values, cultural practices, corporate folklore, and ruling practices and relations begin to behave in ‘socially acceptable’ ways within the agency. In other words, staff members are expected to learn the “rules of the game”, which are conveyed through the organization’s socialization

process. The inability to follow organizational norms and values may be considered “taboo”, and result in negative consequences for social workers (Bowditch & Buono, 2001, 292). This might explain social workers’ conformity to dominant organizational values and cultures. Sadly, social workers may begin to participate in the organization’s social relations unknowingly, without much conscious thought of the exercise of power inherent in such practices (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). This has obvious implications for service users, as social workers may compromise the needs of service users in order to meet organizational goals.

Three Types of Human Service Organizations

As noted above, the impact of organizational values and culture on social work practice can be significant. Dominant organizational values, organizational cultures, organizational ruling practices and ruling relations, and recent managerial trends have the potential to impede social work’s mission. In addition, an organization’s structure and management style are believed to affect organizational values and subsequently, social work service provision. Three types of human service organizations will be explored in this study, in terms of the impact of dominant organizational values and culture on social workers’ ability to adhere to professional values.

Mainstream Human Service Organizations

Social work practice in health care and child welfare is considered mainstream because this type of practice occurs in publicly funded organizations that are embedded

in and legitimated by the state (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). This institutionalized legitimacy is evident in the accessibility to consistent funding and government support, although the funding provided to some mainstream organizations may be considered inadequate. Because mainstream organizations are characterized by traditional hierarchical power structures and serve the business interests of the state, they are bound to cause value conflicts for social workers, as they have the potential to perpetuate structures that support inequality. Members of marginalized social groups have argued that traditional, mainstream social work practice does not reflect their interests or needs, and that it often perpetuates oppression (Barnoff, 2001). Despite these concerns, social workers may be compelled to work in mainstream organizations due to the employment stability offered by these types of agencies (Bowditch & Buono, 2001), as well as the status and power inherent in these positions.

Social workers who practice in mainstream organizations are expected to ensure that service users abide by the organization's norms, which may contradict social work's role in challenging oppression (Heimer & Stevens, 1997). For instance, social workers that work in organizations that cap the number of counselling sessions offered to clients are expected to encourage clients to accept this parameter, regardless of their individual needs. This has the potential to prevent social workers from adhering to the social work values of respect for client individuality, anti-oppression, and social justice.

Social workers in medical settings can no longer present themselves as professionals who advocate exclusively for service users, as they are also expected to advocate for the institution that employs them (Heimer & Stevens, 1997). The same can

be said of child welfare workers who are expected to adhere to child welfare policies that recreate class and gender divisions (Swift, 2001). Furthermore, these policies may be inconsistent with the individual needs of service users. Since women are held primarily responsible for childcare in our society, adhering to child protection policies that are punitive to mothers with inadequate resources may be contrary to feminist social work principles. Although child safety is paramount, social workers are often expected to protect children without addressing patriarchy's contribution to poverty and/or child abuse (Swift, 2001). In addition, it may be more difficult to adhere to social work values in a child welfare agency, as clients are typically involuntary, therefore client self-determination is inherently compromised.

Community-Based Human Service Organizations

According to Barter (2003), community-based human service organizations are usually established because traditional, mainstream social services tend to meet the needs of the dominant group, and often unintentionally contribute to the oppression of non-dominant groups. Community-based agencies not only attempt to address the needs of non-dominant groups, they also create a foundation from which larger social changes can occur. In addition, alternative services attempt “to institutionalize more egalitarian forms of social relationships by incorporating community control, mutual support, and shared decision-making as key features” and they “usually spring from the work of a specific oppressed community or movement such as people living in poverty, women, Native people, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, and social service users” (Mullaly, 2002, 194).

Organizational size is another important characteristic of community-based organizations. Smaller organizations are less likely to be hierarchical, or are at least characterized by fewer layers of power (Gibelman, 2000). Subsequently, smaller organizational structures are more able to reinforce a shared culture and value system due to the increased likelihood that employees share values (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). In addition, a smaller group of employees may be more able to hold one another (including managers) accountable to the organization's value system. Given these characteristics, social workers may find working in smaller and less hierarchical community-based settings more conducive to adhering to social work values.

However, there are some drawbacks to working in community-based human service organizations. For instance, these types of human service organizations struggle to access consistent funding from year to year. As a result, they have to be more considerate of their accountability to a variety of funders and stakeholders, including service users, unlike mainstream organizations (Lawler, 2000). The instability and lack of funding that is characteristic of community-based agencies has the potential to inhibit social workers from working in these environments.

Feminist Human Service Organizations

Feminist human service organizations are also considered non-traditional community-based organizations, and are characterized by an alternative organizational structure and management style (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman, & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988). However, in contrast to the majority of community-based agencies,

feminist agencies are specifically concerned with the elimination of the inequalities in power and privilege that are characteristic of patriarchal society (Rothman, 1995).

Feminist administrative theory contains several fundamental assumptions that are typical of feminist organizations, which include a non-hierarchical, participatory structure, and a mission that focuses on structural change as well as the provision of services that address the unique needs of women. Unfortunately, non-traditional organizations often do not survive, and many of those who do, become increasingly traditional in both their outlook and structure over time (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman, & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988).

Research and anecdotal evidence suggests that feminist organizations are more advanced in terms of implementing anti-oppressive practice, in comparison to mainstream organizations (Barnoff, 2001). Theoretically, feminist principles that address oppression based on gender, as well as race, class, disability and sexuality are consistent with social work values. Therefore, it would follow that social workers might be more likely to adhere to social work values in feminist organizations, than in mainstream organizations. However, feminist social workers often face dilemmas when attempting to integrate feminist principles with professional social work values because the two are not always compatible. This is evident in the inherent contradiction between the profession's value to respect cultural diversity and its value to challenge the oppression of women. Feminist social workers may also struggle between the values of respecting individuality and self-determination, and the process of consciousness-raising regarding the rights of women (Glassman, 1992). For example, respecting cultural diversity and self-

determination may require a social worker to support a female client's right to hold patriarchal values and accept that she does not wish to change her value system, regardless of the worker's knowledge of the oppressing effects of patriarchy. Another dilemma is that social workers may not truly be able to address the oppression of female service users without challenging patriarchy's dominance in the social work profession, as well as social workers' personal lives (Glassman, 1992).

Competing Value Systems

Gerald de Montigny (1995) acknowledges the inherent difficulty social workers face when attempting to manage both their professional work, and the organizations that employ them. Although it is unclear which value system or culture is most influential, any disparity in cultural values and practices could result in tension between cultures. When faced with this tension, social workers are required to make a choice between cultures and values (Jayaratne, Croxton, & Mattison, 2002). According to Posey (1978), values are arranged hierarchically within one's value system and value conflicts are resolved according to the priorities assigned to the conflicting values. Furthermore, although individuals may share values, it is the ordering of the importance of value systems that differs between individuals (Posey, 1978). In other words, when faced with a value tension, the value that is most prioritized by a social worker will tend to take precedence over other values. Although social workers share values, they will inevitably resolve value conflicts differently, depending on the priority they place on competing

value systems. These value priorities may change over time, and within different social and organizational contexts.

Although social workers are involved in resolving value conflicts on a regular basis, regrettably, social work values will often be overridden by a focus on organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Lawler, 2000). According to Ben Carniol (2000), day-to-day control over practice is not exercised by social work professionals, but rather by a group of agency and welfare state managers. The lack of control over direct social work practice may prevent social workers from adhering to social work values, and result in a sense of hopelessness and helplessness (Shera & Paige, 1995). For instance, social workers may feel unable to challenge oppressive organizational structures due to a sense of powerlessness within their organizational settings. Furthermore, a sense of hopelessness and loss of control may encourage social workers to subscribe to the organization's bureaucratic norms, in order to survive (Shera & Page, 1995). In other words, social workers may prioritize organizational values and norms, at the expense of professional values, in order to avoid being chastised by the organization (Carniol, 2000), or jeopardize their employment status. Another reason for prioritizing organizational goals is that social workers may come to value organizational values over professional and/or personal values. This may serve the social worker's personal interests, with respect to securing institutional power over clients, or improving their opportunity for professional advancement.

Barter (2003) provides a list of examples of how the social work profession has been fragmented in terms of its ethics, values, and mission. These examples include

social work's ambivalence in its response to poverty, the emphasis on specialist practice versus generalist practice, and the view of social workers as agents of social control as opposed to agents of social change (See Appendix B – Fragmentation of Social Work Ethics, Values, and Mission) (Barter, 2003). The social work role is one that is inherently power-laden, and unfortunately, social workers have been known to misuse this power for their own gains. However, I'd like to believe that in some instances, perhaps the majority of instances, this misuse of power is more indicative of the power inherent in societal and organizational structures, than of social workers' ill intent.

Although the research dedicated to the study of social work values is inconclusive in terms of the factors that most impact social work values, it offers valuable insight into the variety of value systems that influence social work practice. Keeping the existing literature and research in mind, this study will attempt to expand our knowledge of how different value systems affect social workers' ability to adhere to social work values in practice. Current societal values and the participants' personal values will be explored in relation to their impact on social work values. Furthermore, the dominant philosophies and values of mainstream, community-based and feminist organizations will be examined, with respect to their impact on social work values. Using a feminist approach, this research hopes to give voice to the experiences of six female social workers in terms of the obstacles that prevent them from adhering to social work values in practice, and their ability to overcome these obstacles, despite the pressures to conform to dominant societal and organizational values.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

In order to explore the research question, “How do personal, societal, and organizational values influence social workers’ ability to adhere to professional values in practice?” I chose to use a qualitative design based on feminist research methodology. To date, the majority of research related to social work values has been quantitative, focusing on the reporting of personal and professional values, and social workers’ perceptions of appropriate professional behaviour based on social work values. A great deal has also been written about the existence of value and ethical conflicts that social workers face in their work settings. However limited narrative information is available regarding the factors that make it difficult to adhere to social work values. Using a feminist approach will enable the research to make visible the experiences of female social workers and attempt to understand those experiences in their own terms (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

I am particularly interested in exploring the experiences of female social workers considering that the majority of social workers are women (Dominelli, 1997), and because women are bound by many relations of dominance on both a personal and professional level. Keeping this in mind, the research intends to analyze the causes of powerlessness experienced by the female research participants when practicing social work, by identifying societal and organizational structures that are not empowering to

social workers or their clients. The participants will also be encouraged to consider how societal and organizational structures influence their practice, in terms of social work values. It is hoped that the findings of this study will accurately reflect the experiences of female social workers in terms of the factors that influence social workers' ability to adhere to social work values in practice, and remind social workers of the need to continually review and attempt to change the social conditions in which we live and work (Lather, 1991).

Sampling

Participants for the study were recruited using a purposeful sample. Purposeful sampling is the strategic selection of respondents based on specific characteristics that guide the research and enhance the meaning of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Female social workers with at least four years of front-line social work experience and at least a social service worker diploma were sought for this study, from three types of human service organizations (ie: mainstream, community-based, and feminist). Two social workers from each type of setting were selected. For the purposes of this study, mainstream organizations are defined as traditional, publicly funded organizations that are embedded in and legitimated by the state (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). Examples of mainstream organizations include child welfare agencies, health care centres, and Ontario Works offices. The two mainstream organizations examined in this research study include a hospital and a Children's Aid Society. Community-based organizations are non-traditional, participatory organizations that are established to

address the needs of non-dominant groups and work toward social change (Barter, 2003). Examples of community-based organizations are tenants' groups, advocacy centres, housing agencies and drop-in centres. Feminist organizations are also considered non-traditional, alternative organizations, however, these agencies focus on the elimination of patriarchal inequalities in power and privilege, as well as addressing the unique needs of women (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman, & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988). Examples of feminist agencies include women's shelters, women's centres, sexual assault centres and second stage housing services.

In order to ensure confidentiality and expand my potential sample size, social workers were chosen from a number of agencies in a variety of mid-sized cities in South Western Ontario. This was necessary given the limited number of feminist and community-based agencies in any one city in South Western Ontario. In addition, participants unknown to the researcher were selected, in an attempt to increase confidentiality. It was assumed that selecting unknown participants might elicit more open responses, as participants known to the researcher might feel uncomfortable sharing examples of behaviours that are not consistent with social work values.

Using the selection criteria mentioned above, I contacted a number of agencies and spoke to social workers in each setting. I explained the purpose of this study to each social worker that I spoke to. Each social worker that was contacted, and met the selection criteria for the study, was provided with a letter of information and was asked to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study (See Appendix C – Letter of Information). The letter of information explained the purpose of the study and

identified any potential risks, discomforts, and benefits of the study (Royse, 1991). Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant was asked to sign a consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, potential implications of participating in the study, and described the importance of confidentiality (See Appendix D – Consent Form).

Three of the four participants from community-based and feminist organizations informed me that they were required to receive approval from their supervisor prior to participating in the study. This was somewhat concerning because the participants' confidentiality could be compromised if their supervisors were aware of their participation in the study. In addition, I wanted to ensure that individuals participated in this study voluntarily (Royse, 1991); it occurred to me that their supervisors might encourage or discourage them from participating in the study. These concerns were discussed directly with the participants, on the telephone and in person, before the interviews were conducted. In order to reinforce confidentiality each participant was reminded that only they would receive a copy of their transcribed interview. Furthermore, the participants were informed that all identifying information (ie: the names of the participants and their organizations) would be excluded from any of the reports resulting from the study. The participants were also informed that they could refrain from answering any of the questions asked or withdraw from the study at any time.

Six female social workers were selected from six different practice settings and were interviewed for this study. Three of the agencies examined in this study are faith-based institutions, described by the participants as 'Christian', 'interdenominational

outreach' and 'Roman Catholic'. All of the research participants are white, middle-class women. Although this is an unintentional outcome of the sampling, it is representative of the social work profession. All of the six research participants have completed formal social work and/or social service work education from academic institutions in Ontario. One participant has a social service worker diploma, four participants have a bachelor's degree in social work, and one participant has a master's degree in social work. Both of the research participants from community-based agencies and one participant from a feminist agency have front-line as well as administrative roles. The participants' years of work experience range from four to twenty, and their ages range from twenty-three to fifty.

Data Collection

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, lasting approximately one to two hours in a location chosen by the participants. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed within two weeks of the interview. An interview guide was used to explore the central research question: How do personal, societal, and organizational values influence social workers' ability to adhere to professional values in practice? (Appendix E – Interview Guide). The inquiry was open-ended and the participants were encouraged to freely express their experiences. The potential risks of sharing personal experiences were discussed, in order to ensure the participants that the goal of the study was to identify barriers to adhering to social work values in a variety of settings, rather than identifying unethical practice behaviours. I

consciously avoided using the terms “ethics” and “ethical behaviour” during the interviews, in order not to cause the participants discomfort. It was made clear that I was interested in what drives practice behaviours rather than the behaviours themselves. Furthermore, I offered the participants a list of social work values before the interviews took place (See Appendix F – Social Work Values), in order to operationalize the concept of ‘social work values’ and eliminate any possibility of misunderstanding (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

Data Analysis

Reflexivity is a key feature of feminist research, which was instrumental to this study. Reflexivity is the “need for feminist researchers to reflect upon and understand their own personal, political, and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and make explicit their location in relation to the research participants”. In order to be reflexive it is crucial to acknowledge the central role that researchers play in creating, interpreting, and theorizing the research data (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.121). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) suggest that, “the processes through which we transform respondents’ private lives into public theories are clearly critical to assessing the validity and status of these theories.” (p.119).

In order to accurately interpret and reflect the participants’ responses in this research study, data analysis began during the data collection stage. A great deal of clarification was sought during the interview, in order to ensure accuracy. Any doubt about the participants’ responses following the interview was reviewed with the research

participants in order to clarify their responses and encourage them to participate in interpreting the data. In addition, copies of the transcribed interviews were given to the participants to review and edit before the data was used in the study (Lather, 1991).

In keeping with feminist research, I was conscious of the power inherent in my role as a researcher and the need to make my social location explicit (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998), in order to build rapport, increase the participants' comfort level, and attempt to diminish the power imbalance in this relationship (Royse, 1991). My social location as a white middle-class heterosexual woman was shared with the majority of participants. However, there were some differences in terms of our personal demographics. One of the research participants identified herself as an Italian-Canadian woman, whereas I am of Portuguese descent; the other respondents referred to themselves as Caucasian. Another participant referred to her status as upper-class, and one participant identified herself as a lesbian.

The similarities in social location might have encouraged the participants to share their personal experiences with me. However, I noticed that the participants were more likely to share personal experiences of value tensions in practice, following my self-disclosure. I was cognizant of the fact that the power inherent in my role might have had an influence on the participants' responses. Social desirability bias is especially a concern in face-to-face interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 1993), which was evident in this study. All of the participants were concerned about offering me the correct information. Therefore, I attempted to normalize their experiences, while reminding them that value conflicts vary from person to person and setting to setting. In order to reduce the

possibility of the participants responding in socially desirable ways, I encouraged them to share their individual analyses of value tensions in practice, and attempted not to assume that their experiences would be similar to mine or to the other participants. Although it is difficult to be completely aware of our own biases as researchers, and to perfectly understand research participants' experiences, I believe that the use of reflexivity increases the likelihood of storying the respondents' experiences accurately and respectfully, which was certainly a primary goal of this study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide an overview of the research participants' responses to the questions used to guide this study, as well as an analysis of these findings. I will begin by reviewing the participants' comments regarding general social work values, and their perceptions of personal values in comparison to professional values. The impact of societal values on social work values will also be reviewed, as well as the effect of professional social work education on the participants' value systems. I will continue by discussing the participants' observations regarding whether their organizations' values are consistent with social work values. A summary of the organizational factors that support social work values, and the organizational barriers that make it difficult to adhere to social work values, will be provided. Finally, the participants' experiences of competing value systems and the strategies they use to manage value tensions in their practice will be explored.

Personal Values

Before the interviews took place, the participants were provided with a list of social work values in order to clarify the meaning of social work values (See Appendix F – Social Work Values). These values include social justice, human rights, self-determination, respect for the intrinsic worth and dignity of all individuals, confidentiality, boundaries, non-judgemental attitude, and empowerment. All of the

participants in this study admitted to feeling very committed to these values on both a personal and a professional level. They stated that their personal and professional values are extremely similar, and that they often have difficulty differentiating between the two. For instance, one participant stated: “Social work values connect well with my life”. Another participant’s thoughts were: “My personal values and professional values are in-line now”, comparing her current value system to her value system prior to participating in professional social work education. Another participant had this to say: “I think of my personal values as driving my work”. She referred to her personal values as “life values” rather than professional values. However, she was critical of social work practice that is not consistent with stated social work values:

My personal values are in line with many stated social work values...but I do often find myself feeling morally and ethically in conflict with social workers...because as you know the history of social work doesn’t always come from a place where it represents its values...those remnants (of social workers not adhering to social work values) still hold pretty strong in social work whether we acknowledge it or not.

One personal characteristic that appears to have an impact on many of the participants’ overall value system is their faith. A study by Landau (1999) suggests that religion is the only personal variable that has a significant impact on social work values and ethical judgement. Several of the participants suggested that their religious values may differ from professional values however, most of the participants stated that their religious beliefs do not interfere with social work values or practice. In other words, the participants did not believe that these differences result in value conflicts. In fact, several participants stated that when they’ve experienced discord between religious and social work values, they have chosen to adhere to social work values rather than the values of

their particular faith. One worker shared a value conflict related to her spiritual background, and discussed how she manages this type of conflict:

I'd like to become more involved and paternalistic and save people and that may come from my religious background as far as wanting to do things for people and to do things for people is a lot different from educating them. I really have to check my personal values at the door when I come in each day to make sure I'm adhering to my professional values.

Another participant had this to say about the impact of her faith on professional values, and how she prioritizes between different value systems:

There are many areas of Roman Catholicism that would conflict with my organizational and professional values. I do practice this religion...but I have chosen not to live by some Catholic principles. I would never encourage a woman not to get an abortion because my religion says so. I believe it is her choice and I would support her either way.

In contrast, one participant stated that she chooses to prioritize her religious values over the social work value of self-determination. However, she did not identify this as a value conflict because her organization supports this perspective. For instance, she does not feel comfortable providing condoms to young people, because she does not wish to encourage youth to become sexually active.

In addition to conflicts based on the participants' religious beliefs, some of the participants shared additional experiences with respect to personal value conflicts in their work. One participant had this to say about her privilege:

It doesn't feel right that I have a good life and somebody who has had a different set of challenges or has made different choices won't necessarily have that. Things should be more equal.

Another participant shared her struggle regarding contradictions between her politics and her privilege. She described herself as a feminist who is healthy, middle-class, and has

white-skin privilege. She struggles with her privileged role as a social worker and whether she does enough to create social change:

I don't know how to make my life completely compatible with my values or maybe I do but I'm just not prepared to and I struggle with how much is beyond what I can individually do and how much is me taking the easy way out and just being comfortable. While having contradictions, I think I do want change. I just get overwhelmed by the thought of making that happen.

She expressed some frustration with social workers that are not aware of how their social location and positional power affects clients. She feels that social workers should be more analytical and attempt to understand their social location and professional roles, as well as the impact of oppressive social structures on client services, in order to promote social justice and implement social change. She expanded by stating that social workers are at different levels along a “continuum of development”, in terms of their ability to analyze and critique the impact of their social position on their practice.

Some of the participants acknowledged the significance of family and personal experiences of unfairness and injustice, on the development of their value system. These participants felt that personal exposure to injustice and unfairness at an early age raised their awareness of the importance of social justice, and impacted their personal value system. One participant stated:

I always had...a sense of (what was) fair and unfair (as a young person). I had some experiences when I was a child that I would say were definitely unfair and unjust and...it created an environment...that I could later reflect on and think critically about (in terms of why the unfairness existed). What started my interest in social justice was when I got old enough...I thought life could be something other than it is right now.

Although each of the participants claimed to feel very personally connected and committed to social work values, they differed in terms of how they came to adapt these particular values. Most of the participants stated that they felt drawn to the profession because of their personal values, which resembled social work values. Three of the participants who have the least front-line experience suggested that social work education was perhaps the factor that was most influential in shaping their value system, more so than personal experiences or their faith. One of the least experienced participants stated:

My Christian background had different ideals than my professional values but I think that through education, through school, I learned that in my practice social work values need to overpower those personal values. I think my education reminds me of that.

Another participant expressed the importance of professional education on her value system:

I would have to say that I developed social work values as part of being in a professional social work program. I began to look at things in a different way, understand my personal and professional goals differently, as well as past life experiences as a result of some of the areas I studied in the program. Entering the program at such a young age could play a part in this as well.

The third participant felt that social work education gave her a better understanding of her value system:

I had those values before I came into the profession...but education has certainly expanded and given me a better understanding of how to use those values.

The more experienced participants had slightly different interpretations of the impact of social work education on the development of their value system. For instance, one of the most experienced participants explained that she was not indoctrinated into the profession through professional education. The most valuable aspect of her education was the

opportunity to meet other students with similar values, which provided her with the opportunity to explore social justice issues. In fact, she stated that her family and co-workers with similar values have had a greater influence on her value system than professional social work education.

It is worth noting that the respondents with more than five years of work experience were more critical of other social workers, and social work practice in general, in terms of the failure to adhere to social work values and goals. This may be explained by the opportunity that the more experienced participants have had to develop a deeper analysis of social work practice. On the other hand, the more experienced participants may be more cynical of practice due to burnout. Given that the most inexperienced participants have completed their formal education in the last four to five years, it is understandable that they identify their social work education as being significant to their value system at this time. Perhaps they identify more closely with social work values, due to their relatively recent exposure to these values. Two of these participants were quite young (early twenties) when they completed their education, which might also explain the significant impact of social work education on their value system. These participants did not identify any significant life experiences that sparked an interest in social justice or social work values at an early age, like the more experienced participants. In contrast, they were attracted to the profession due to the compatibility between personal and professional values. The fact that social work education appears to have a different impact on the participants might also be explained by a change in social work education over the last twenty years.

According to the respondents, religion, personal supports, an exposure to injustice at an early age, and education are the most influential determinants of their professional value systems. Considering the significant impact of these factors, I was somewhat surprised to discover that the participants face few value tensions between personal and professional values in their practice. This might be explained by the compatibility between the participants' personal and professional value systems; social workers whose personal and professional values are compatible may in fact face fewer conflicts between these value systems. The following statement made by one of the participants highlights the importance of the compatibility between personal and professional values in terms of a social worker's ability to adhere to social work values in practice:

I think if you live and breathe them (social work values) then you're more likely to espouse them in any setting.

The similarities between the participants, in terms of class, race, gender and social work training might also explain the consistency in some of the participants' responses.

Another explanation is that social workers have learned to rationalize value conflicts, in order to justify their work and survive in their chaotic organizational environments.

However, given the relatively small size of the sample, and the variability in other characteristics such as age, practice experiences, and levels of education, the participants' responses cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Societal Values

In addition to personal values, societal values are known to significantly impact social work practice (Barter, 2003). Cooper (1977) suggests that the political, social and

economic context in which social work takes place has an impact on social work values, and subsequent practice behaviours. Many of the participants expressed concerns about the impact of these factors on their work. One of the participants from a community-based agency expressed concerns about her difficulty adhering to the social work value of empowerment because of the limited availability of community resources. She referred to the fact that society's current social structure reinforces poverty among certain classes, which prevents social change from taking place. She suggested that this changes her agency's approach in terms of the level of involvement with clients, which has the potential to contradict social work values such as self-determination and empowerment:

We'll take people on...for a long time in order to provide support, as opposed to offering the (resource) information, because we know they can't change their situation. We want to respect the dignity of individuals and self-determination but if resources are unavailable, no matter what information you give clients, you know things won't change.

The other participant from a community-based setting expressed her thoughts about the impact of societal trends on social work values. She believes that the social work profession is extremely influenced by societal trends, which may impact negatively on social work practice. For instance, she suggested that social workers alter their practice with specific client populations, based on societal trends, without exploring the impact of these trends. She offered the following examples of societal trends that social workers might adopt in their practice:

We are supposed to be open-minded and educate clients about condom use but is that social work's role? Did I learn this in social work? Is this part of social work?...There's an assumption that we know how to do this, and do this well, that we've read the literature...Social workers are supposed to swear and support sex because society expects this of our client groups. I think they're (social workers) way too affected by societal trends.

She added:

You could walk around an organization and wear a sign that says “witches are good” and that would be totally cool in social work right now.

This participant’s comments are clearly influenced by her personal values, and appear to contrast the social work values of using a non-judgmental approach and respecting client choice. Although she implies that societal trends are not necessarily in the best interests of clients, the particular trends that she struggles with may actually be positive ones, in terms of our work with clients.

Society’s political climate was also identified as a barrier to adhering to social work values, given that neo-conservative and neo-liberal government agendas do not support social work values. One of the participants from a community-based agency was concerned about the impact of an upcoming election on her organization’s funding sources. Another participant from a feminist agency agreed with this sentiment and stated that her agency’s funders focus on a law and order agenda, which is “very right-wing”. The participants suggested that government agendas may contribute to a reduction in funding for community-based and feminist services that are non-traditional and politically motivated (ie: advocacy and social change work). The participants from mainstream agencies also identified concerns about the government’s influence over policy changes that influence organizational practices. The child welfare worker discussed the influence of societal norms and values on new child welfare reforms. The hospital social worker discussed the influence of a fiscally motivated approach to management on organizational practices, due to government restructuring and reduced funding. The impact of these societal values on organizational values and norms, and on

social workers' ability to adhere to social work values, will be discussed in more detail further on.

An additional concern raised by the participants was the impact of society's dominant social structures on social workers' values and subsequently on service provision. One of the participants from a feminist agency was distressed about the fact that social workers benefit from society's social structure. As a result, social workers often support the status quo. She stated that:

A lot of social workers live a pretty comfortable middle-class existence and benefit from the privilege they get because society is structured the way that it is. Not all would be prepared to give up what they would have to give up for these things (social change) to happen.

Barter (2003) acknowledges that social workers fall prey to accepting the status quo, particularly if they attempt to remain politically neutral in their social work role, which he feels is an impossibility. He suggests that social workers are not able to take a neutral stance in their work, because taking this stance conveys the value of accepting the status quo. The following statement made by the same participant supports this sentiment:

I don't think a lot of social workers struggle with being aware of how their position affects clients...If you do really care about (social) issues you're going to try to address and/or change them... You're going to be imperfect but you're going to try and be conscious and if you're less committed, the key difference to me is values... The pressure to change is self imposed because society and the profession are fairly uncritical and want the status quo.

This participant spoke to the importance of challenging the status quo, but realizes that many social workers do not take this stance. She suggested that many social workers want the status quo, which is supported by society at large.

It is interesting that the participants' comments are fairly critical of how other social workers are influenced by societal values. However, they provide little critique of their own practice. Perhaps this can be explained by the participants' need to be perceived positively, or the fact that we are less likely to be critical of our own practice than the practice of other social workers.

Organizational Factors That Influence Social Work Values

The impact of personal and societal values on social work values has been discussed above. However, in addition to these influences, the organizational culture and values of human service agencies also play an important role in social work service provision. It is important to keep in mind that organizational values are influenced by dominant societal values and norms (Barter, 2003). These dominant societal values strongly impact the provision of social services, in terms of a variety of organizational factors. The following factors were identified by the respondents as having an influence on their ability to adhere to social work values: organizational values, structure, management style, size, history, funding, time constraints, workload, and culture.

Organizational Values

The organizational values identified by the participants from mainstream agencies include compassion, empathy, justice, respect for the dignity and worth of individuals, responsiveness to the needs of the poor, and the provision of culturally sensitive care. Although these organizational values are consistent with social work values in principle,

both of the respondents acknowledged that these values are not always realized in practice. One of the participants stated that her organizations' religious values are not entirely consistent with social work values:

I think components of the Catholic faith would not probably be in line with social work values.

This worker provided an example of how her organization's religious focus prevents her from adhering to social work values. For instance, she is not able to support or discuss birth control or abortion with her clients, which is contrary to the social work values of self-determination and respecting client's individual choices. Because this organizational value primarily affects female clients, it has the potential to take away women's right to make informed choices, which is indicative of oppressive practice. This is certainly contrary to the social work values of equality and social justice.

In addition to the influence of organizational values based upon religious principles, these participants acknowledged that fairly recent legislative changes have altered their ability to adhere to social work values in their respective settings. These legislative changes, which are influenced by societal values, include recent child welfare reforms and a move to program management in hospital settings in the last ten years. The child protection worker suggested that although her organization's stated values appear consistent with social work values, child welfare reforms "don't fit with social work values". For instance, the new reforms legitimize managerial practices that emphasize accountability for management functions (ie: completing forms, checklists, and time constraints) rather than client needs (Swift, 2001). Adhering to the new reforms does not ensure client involvement in developing service plans, and focuses on values

such as efficiency, and fiscal accountability as opposed to social work values such as client self-determination and social justice. Workers are expected to develop service plans, and often exclude clients from the process. She expanded by stating:

The way it's set up (the reforms) is not conducive to social work values. I think previously... workers had time to have relationships with staff or with clients... You could actually resolve an issue at intake. But now you have thirty days to get that up to intake or you have to do a risk assessment which is quite a large assessment... So there's really no time to build a relationship with the client and you know social work values can't be exercised... I think the way the reforms are set up isn't in line with social work values currently.

This respondent has noticed that many front-line workers and managers fail to challenge these reforms; “workers just go along with the reforms” and do what's expected of them.

In other words, workers begin to participate in managerial tasks that serve the interests of the organization rather than professional goals (Lawler, 2000). This participant suggested that if workers were able to question the reforms, and challenge management's enforcement of the reforms, they might be able to adhere to social work values.

However, given workload expectations, the change in supervisory practices, the isolation of workers, and the inability to develop relationships with clients, workers are apt to go along with the reforms rather than question their effectiveness. Unfortunately, the inability to challenge oppressive organizational policies and the tendency to prioritize organizational goals over professional goals may occur without much conscious thought on behalf of social workers (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

The organizational values identified by the participants from community-based organizations include accessibility to services based on culture and gender, client self-

determination, maintaining boundaries with clients, volunteerism, anti-racism, inclusive, consensual and empowering decision-making based on the needs of clients, treating clients with dignity and respect, and participating in collective efforts to reduce social problems. Clearly, these values are consistent with social work values. In fact, both of the participants acknowledged that the congruence between their organizational and professional values supports their ability to adhere to social work values. One participant discussed the benefits of working in a community-based agency due to the congruence between organizational and social work values:

Our work is really close to our value statement. I think we're almost there ... (Our values) are very closely related to social work values. It is easier to work in this (type of) environment because they're open to social work values and there are not as many rules. You're sort of free to use your own professional values in your work. But in other agencies I've worked in (not community-based agencies), you're sort of told... what you have to do and you don't have as much flexibility.

An organizational value that might be considered inconsistent with social work values was identified by one of the participants from a community-based agency: the 'work to earn' principle. This organization offers publicly funded services, however, clients accessing these services are expected to participate in certain activities in order to earn specific privileges. The participant from this agency acknowledged that this organizational value is based on a Christian value system, however she also adheres to this value on a personal level. This is contrary to social work values such as respect, client self-determination, anti-oppression, and social justice. One could argue that expecting individuals from non-dominant groups to work for privileges that all members of society are entitled to, is oppressive. Based on the responses provided by these

participants, it is clear that an organization's religious values have the potential to conflict with professional values.

The organizational values that were identified by the participants in feminist organizations include the need to provide a safe environment for all women, to work toward the elimination of all violence, particularly focused on women and children, and to provide client-driven and strength-based services. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that in order to end oppression it is necessary to “work to eliminate racism, heterosexism, and classism”, and “work on human rights as a package deal”. The value of social justice, and the social work practices of advocacy and lobbying for social change were also identified as organizational values and goals. These responses support the literature, which suggests that feminist agency mission statements often focus on meeting women's unique needs, as well as structural change (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988).

The respondents from feminist agencies are clearly in support of their organizations' stated values. One of the respondents stated that she is behind her organization's “mission statement and value statement, in principle”, acknowledging however that these values do not always translate into practice. The other participant stated that, “there isn't much difference from what's written and what's practiced” in her agency, in terms of social work values. Both of the participants acknowledged the similarities between stated feminist organizational values and social work values, and suggested that for the most part they are able to adhere to social work values in their

respective settings. In fact, these participants did not provide many examples of value conflicts in their practice, aside from occasional disagreements with colleagues regarding how policies should be enacted. However, one participant admitted that she has not always been able to adhere to social work values in her practice in other feminist agencies. She suggested that organizational factors such as the type of management style, the history of the agency, and the values of other employees determine whether organizational values are consistent with social work values. The fact that many non-traditional organizations become increasingly traditional over time (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman & Davidson Perlmutter, 1998) might explain this participant's experience in other feminist agencies. Although all of the organizations' stated values are consistent with social work values, the participants from community-based and feminist agencies appear to face fewer conflicts between professional and organizational values, in comparison to the participants from mainstream settings.

Organizational Structure and Management Style

The research participants from mainstream agencies felt that their organizational structures and management styles were barriers to adhering to social work values. Both of the respondents described their organizations as traditionally hierarchical, with an elite group of organizational members having clearly more power than others. The hospital social worker stated that a definite hierarchy exists between different professional groups in her setting. For instance, directors, managers, and physicians have a great deal more power than other workers. The influence of the organization's hierarchical power over

social work practice is demonstrated by the respondents' reports of the negative consequences they experience in mainstream organizations when they adhere to social work values such as providing client-centred services, rather than meeting organizational goals. For instance, the participant from the child welfare agency reported the tendency for workers to be verbally reprimanded for not meeting documentation deadlines. The hospital social worker commented on being challenged by physicians on a regular basis when social work practice behaviours hold up discharges.

In addition to the organizations' hierarchical structure, the participants from mainstream settings expressed concerns regarding managers that do not adhere to social work values, or reinforce social work values. Both of the participants from mainstream agencies identified problematic management behaviours that contribute to their difficulty adhering to social work values. The hospital social worker spoke about the lack of support for social work values in her organization, because social workers are often under the supervision of non-social work managers. This is a result of the move to program management several years ago. She had this to say about the current management style in her workplace, and its impact on social work values:

My manager is a (non social worker) and she is mostly invisible... We're program managed but we used to be discipline managed... We had a social work department. We had an advocate for the social worker and we had an education budget... If something happened in the unit that went against social work values we had a department to back us up... Since there isn't great leadership, I've seen some slacking off on values, for instance social work assessments not being done.

This worker is concerned that client needs may be compromised due to the lack of accountability to social work values in this setting. The child welfare worker explained

the impact of greater management control over social work practice due to the enforcement of new child welfare reforms. She discussed the variation in management styles in her agency, which impact how the reforms are enforced:

Some managers experience a lot of frustration about the way the work is done now, under the reforms...Some managers try to enforce social work values... Some will challenge workers (to adhere to social work values, and do what's in the best interests of clients). There are supervisors who care. Others go through the motions and leave it (the caring) to front line workers. (Managers that support social work values may be considered) good managers to the grunts they supervise, but from the executive director down, they're probably not (considered) the best manager.

According to this respondent, although some managers continue to care about service provision and support social work values, this is not consistent throughout the organization and managers who do care are not necessarily supported by upper-management. She suggested that the policies related to the new child welfare reforms are often prioritized over client needs, in terms of when and how to intervene in child protection situations. This focus on managerialism reduces professional autonomy and control over direct practice (Lawler, 2000).

The increased loss of control over social work practice appears consistent with the experiences of the participants who work in mainstream human service organizations, and may be the result of recent program and policy changes experienced by both of these organizations. Extensive restructuring and reduced funding is responsible for many of the changes to Canada's social programs over the last ten years (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). As a result, social workers are expected to abide by agency policy, and encourage service users to do the same. The outcome is workers' inability to challenge oppressive organizational structures (Heimer & Stevens, 1997); this trend was supported by the

participants' responses. However, despite these challenges both participants shared experiences of their attempts to challenge organizational structures and colleagues that do not adhere to social work values. For instance, one participant shared an experience where she challenged a co-worker for adhering strongly to agency policies, at the expense of social work values:

The person accused me of having high moral judgement of her...I was accused of having high moral standards.

When attempting to adhere to social work values, this participant was accused of being judgemental of a co-worker, rather than being supported for adhering to social work values. The other participant shared an experience of challenging organizational structures:

I find it challenging to meet the needs of the clients. I find that I put the responsibility on myself to make sure the interpreter is there and to make sure (that people get the help they need). It makes my job worthwhile. The agency doesn't make it easy to live up to my professional responsibilities... so, I just bend the rules. (For example) the clients who are not supposed to get kleenex because they have money, I'll just go and get it for them. I also work with (a peer support group) in order to change the rules. I talk to the patient advocate about changing things, because she's separate from our organization.

Despite the difficulties that both of these workers face when attempting to adhere to professional values, in terms of organizational structure and management, they have acknowledged the importance of challenging the structures that prevent them from accomplishing social work's mission.

In contrast to the mainstream organizations studied, the research participants from community-based settings described their organizational structures as “pretty flat”,

“flexible”, and “constantly changing and developing and shifting based on client needs”.

These types of organizational structures are consistent with the literature’s description of community-based agencies as non-traditional, having been established to address the needs of non-dominant groups (Barter, 2003). Furthermore, the literature suggests that community-based agencies are continually changing because traditional, inflexible service provision does not necessarily meet client needs. One of the participants reiterated the benefits of providing flexible and non-traditional services:

We’re reaching out to a population that doesn’t trust traditional forms of social work... We want to reach out in the cultural language of (our clients).

The literature also suggests that community-based services provide a greater opportunity to work on social changes (Barter, 2003). This is supported by the participants’ reports of ongoing community work that is initiated by their respective organizations, aimed at addressing specific client needs and creating social change.

Both of the participants from community-based settings acknowledged the benefits of their agencies’ management style, in terms of adhering to the social work values of client self-determination, respect for the intrinsic worth of all individuals, empowerment, and social justice. One of the participants stated that managers are actively involved with clients in her agency, and often include front-line staff in decision-making and value conflict resolution. She went on to describe her own management style:

I love learning together, sharing together, and brain storming together. One of the staff I work with expected me to give him an answer to a dilemma he was facing. It really bugged him that I had this need to be collaborative, to get other people’s perspective and bring things together. That’s the way I work.

Another participant agreed with this sentiment and stated that managers in her agency are involved in direct service, use a collaborative management style, and participate actively in community development work. Organizational behaviour theories suggest that an organization's managers and leaders are often considered role models for the organization, as they personify and reinforce the organization's value system (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). According to the research participants from community-based settings, their organizational leaders do personify and reinforce organizational values, which are consistent with social work values.

As mentioned earlier, organizational behaviour theories refer to organizational leaders as 'heroes' (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). Unfortunately, organizational heroes are not typically clients. However, the participants from community-based settings acknowledged that their agency leaders actively encourage clients to be involved in committee work and agency initiatives that will impact clients' lives. This was evident in how the participants described front-line services: "responsive to the population it serves", "culturally relevant", and "client-centred". It appears that in both settings, front-line work is directed from clients and not from front-line workers or the organizations' leaders. This was reinforced in a statement made by one of the participants:

Work is directed from the clients and not from the top down. Clients inform workers' advocacy, research, policy development, administrative activities, and evaluation. We believe in a decision-making process that is inclusive, consensual and empowering and is informed by the needs of clients.

The research participants' descriptions of the feminist agencies studied resembled the community-based agencies, in terms of organizational structure and management style. One participant described her organization as having an "upside down" structure. She suggested that the board of directors and management are placed at the base of the decision-making hierarchy. The other organization was described as a "modified collective" and a "flat-top hierarchy". These findings are consistent with the literature, which suggests that feminist organizations are characterized by alternative, non-hierarchical organizational structures (Young Schwartz, Weiss Gottesman & Davidson Perlmutter, 1988).

Like the community-based agencies studied, the feminist agencies also support a participatory management style. For instance, both of the feminist organizations work from a consensus decision-making model. One of the participants had this to say about this type of management style:

We take a team approach to deal with issues... We have meetings every week so we sit down and make team decisions around people who are staying here... There is a lot of healthy debating... Our main struggle is to come to a consensus, which is really hard... As a feminist model, that's what we should do but we have to vote by majority sometimes because we can't always get consensus. We also have a... policy (in place to enact change) and we can make recommendations for change. It's a very open policy... If there is anything we don't agree with or anything that we don't feel reflects our social work values we could present that to our management team and they would look at it. We are given a voice to disagree with practices that we feel conflict with our values.

The other respondent from a feminist setting stated:

One thing I have found about modified collectives is that we spend a lot of time talking. I think there's real value in that... It's not something that gets valued generally in places of work... I wouldn't want to see it go.

Both of the participants stated that their managers support and reinforce social work values, for the most part, in both principle and practice. The literature acknowledges the importance of the role of organizational leaders in reinforcing organizational values and culture (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). In the feminist agencies studied, the role of female leaders is especially important because they are more representative of the organization's client group, than the leaders of the community-based and mainstream organizations. As a result, these leaders are more likely to identify with service users' experiences of patriarchal oppression, and potentially have a greater understanding of client needs.

Based on these findings, it is evident that community-based and feminist agencies share several commonalities in terms of organizational structure and management style. The participants from these organizational settings identified the importance of less hierarchical organizational structures and more participatory management styles in facilitating their ability to adhere to social work values. According to the literature, there are benefits to a participatory management style, which is more prevalent in non-traditional, less hierarchical organizational environments. These advantages include the development of new skills through participation in work teams, enhanced work relationships, increased interest in work, and increased staff satisfaction, performance, and productivity (Pine, Warsh & Maluccio, 1998). These benefits may explain why social workers continue to work in community-based and feminist agencies, despite fewer opportunities for advancement, lower pay, and a greater degree of instability in

terms of ongoing employment and full-time work. One of the participants from a feminist agency had this to say about the drawbacks of working in feminist agencies:

The burnout rate is higher. We don't get paid enough for our work and there's not room for growth within the agency. I think the majority of the staff enjoy the work that they do, so that helps.

Although this respondent did not discuss the causes of burnout in her feminist agency, inadequate pay, work instability, and the lack of opportunity for advancement are likely causes. Furthermore, working with women in crisis must take its toll. Despite these organizational obstacles, this participant felt that social workers continue to work in feminist agencies because of the consistency between professional and organizational values.

These findings are consistent with the literature regarding dominant organizational ruling practices and ruling relations. The literature focuses on ruling practices and relations that reinforce relationships of dominance and subordination, which become organizational norms and contribute to accomplishing organizational goals (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Rather than dominate the actions of others, the leaders in the community-based and feminist organizations studied tend to reinforce practices and relations that are less hierarchical and more collaborative, unlike the leaders in mainstream settings. Ruling practices and ruling relations that are characteristic of community-based and feminist organizations tend to be supported by the participants because they are consistent with social work values and goals. The congruence between organizational values and social work values in these settings, and the existence of a less

hierarchical management structure, appears to level relationships of dominance and subordination, in comparison to mainstream agencies.

Organizational Size

Several of the research participants discussed the impact of organizational size on their ability to adhere to social work values in practice. According to organizational behaviour theories, smaller organizational structures are more able to reinforce a shared value system and culture, as employees are more likely to share values (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). Therefore, adhering to social work values may be more difficult in larger organizational environments because employees are less likely to share a value system. Both of the research participants from mainstream settings acknowledged the difficulty social workers experience when attempting to adhere to social work values in organizations of larger size. They suggested that organizational size may be responsible for social workers' lack of accountability, in terms of adhering to social work values. The lack of accountability may also be influenced by organizational structure and recent policy changes, which reduce the opportunity for social workers to collaborate regarding practice issues. One of the participants from a mainstream work setting suggested that:

You can get lost in a larger agency and go off and do your own thing... without those things being noticed or acknowledged or monitored.

The other respondent agreed with this and stated that:

Ultimately, if a social worker is going to passively not do something (to help a client) no one may notice because we work very independently. Social workers don't work as a team.

The lack of professional accountability, in contrast to a focus on administrative accountability, appears to be characteristic of the larger organizations studied.

Although the lack of accountability presents as a potential barrier to adhering to social work values, social workers may be able to use this to their advantage. For instance, larger organizations may actually provide workers with a greater opportunity to adhere to social work values in subversive ways, since their behaviour is more likely to go unnoticed. The participants from mainstream settings acknowledged that workers in these settings have a greater level of professional autonomy. Therefore, if workers in these types of settings are made aware of the potential for greater autonomy in their work, they may be able to find ways to challenge the system and work towards social change. This may have to be done subversively, as mainstream agencies may not support actions that are aimed at creating societal or organizational change.

The respondents from community-based and feminist settings had a similar outlook on the importance of organizational size in terms of supporting social work values. They stated that the relatively small size of their respective agencies enables them to have regular contact with peers in order to discuss social work values and resolve potential value tensions in practice. This contributes to their ability to adhere to social work values and goals, such as client self-determination, social justice, and social change. One participant suggested that a smaller agency “makes it easier to stay in check with values”. Another participant commented that it is “easier to take direction from clients” in a smaller agency. Smaller agencies appear to encourage greater accountability

between co-workers and managers. In addition, more support is available from a variety of sources, in terms of adhering to social work values.

Organizational History

In addition to organizational structure, management style, and organizational size, one participant suggested that adhering to social work values is in part determined, “by the history of the agency”. Both of the participants from feminist organizations spoke of the importance of the origins of an organization, in terms of adhering to social work values. One participant stated:

I think our agency values were developed with our social work values. So, I feel like they’re really in together. Whenever there’s a decision to be made, we always come back to them...we have a strong focus on values.

The other participant agreed with this sentiment:

We really started with a political focus and we got funding when that was our focus. So it’s (political focus of the work) always been sort of operating in the background.

According to Salipante and Golden-Biddle (1996) organizational behaviours are determined more by its past than by rationality. Organizational practices, beliefs and structures often invoke a sense of heritage and organizational identity, which maintains the organization’s environment. This focus on tradition, results in the transmission of patterns of practice, as well as organizational values, across generations. It is believed that “successful” organizations have developed “time- and environment-tested” patterns that result in predictable behaviours (Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1996, 8). This theory might explain the success of the community-based and feminist organizations studied, in

terms of being true to their agency's historical roots, and adhering to fundamental social work values and goals. This theory might also explain the tendency of mainstream human service agencies to maintain organizational structures and cultures, based on tradition and organizational definitions of 'success', rather than actual client needs.

The findings suggest that the community-based and feminist agencies studied define organizational 'success' differently than the mainstream agencies studied. The mainstream organizations appear to define success in terms of the number of clients processed, as opposed to whether client needs are met. This is not consistent with the social work values of empowerment, human rights, and respect for the dignity and worth of individuals. The tendency toward organizational efficiency denies clients individual service provision. Both of the participants from mainstream organizations discussed their respective organizations' focus on speed and people processing. As a result, mainstream organizations may not be able to meet client needs due to their resistance to change traditional practices and beliefs that they feel contribute to the organization's success. In contrast, participants from feminist and community-based organizations clearly indicated that their respective organizations prioritize client needs, and are open to adjusting services in order to meet clients' changing needs, which again may be based on historical practice. Therefore, social work values such as client respect, self-determination, anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice, and social justice are more likely to be exercised in these types of environments.

Funding

All of the research participants agreed that organizational funding formulas negatively impact their ability to adhere to social work values. As expected, each of the participants who work in feminist and community-based agencies expressed concerns about inconsistent funding for social services in their respective agencies. In addition, these agencies are reliant on a number of funding contracts, which have changed frequently in the past. This is typical of community-based agencies (Lawler, 2000), and results in a sense of instability. In order to increase the chances of receiving continued funding over time, the respondents from feminist and community-based agencies stated that it is important to have good relationships with funders. One participant from a feminist setting identified a concern about the lack of funding for social work goals, such as advocacy and social change, in her organization. In order to accomplish these important tasks and adhere to social work values, she admitted that it is necessary to carefully construct funding proposals that de-emphasize these goals, in order not to jeopardize funding, while continuing to provide adequate social work services:

Largely what I think most organizations do when they look at funding is that based on the objectives of the funding you're applying for, you find a way to use that language and integrate it into the application for funding.

Furthermore, she spoke about her concerns regarding the lack of funding for macro work, and how this impacts her ability to adhere to social work values:

I think the nature of the work is that we do a lot of things after work and on our own time so I think in part that's how we get around it... The work I do is piecemeal and it's not connected to something (macro work) that is going to radically change the world, and again that's something that our organization doesn't get funded for... How do you empower someone (without) making real change and doing real social justice work?

The workers from mainstream organizations also expressed concerns about funding. The child welfare worker expressed concerns about current funding arrangements that might encourage child protection agencies to act unethically in order to increase funding. For instance, the new child welfare reforms reward Children's Aid Societies for processing a greater number of cases. She explained:

The way agencies are funded now it's kind of like piecework. The more you process, the more money you make. The way it's set up is not conducive to social work values.

Her concern is that this funding arrangement might encourage the agency to bring more children into care. Subsequently, front-line workers may be expected to carry out this task in order to increase funding. In addition, funding cuts have resulted in higher caseloads and fewer client programs in child welfare settings. In the hospital setting examined in this study, social work funding was lost with program management therefore social workers currently have limited control over social work service provision and resource allocation. This worker stated:

...It's also who's controlling the finances...Like if you need a bus ticket for somebody you have to ask for it. If social workers controlled funding, this wouldn't be an issue.

This worker expressed frustration about accessing basic resources that used to be under the control of social work, before the move to program management.

Time Constraints and Workload

Insufficient time to provide adequate social work services and heavy workloads were concerns expressed by all of the participants, which is well supported by the

literature (Aronson & Sammon, 2000; Fabricant and Berghardt, 1992). The fact that the majority of the participants from feminist and community-based settings have both front-line and administrative roles causes further tension in terms of balancing a variety of duties. One of the participants from a feminist agency was uneasy about the amount of time required to complete administrative tasks, which takes time away from direct practice:

The amount of time I spend doing statistics and micromanaging pieces of my work, to appease funders and give them numbers, takes away from time that I could be doing other things.

The participant from the child welfare setting suggested that time was a significant barrier to adhering to social work values in her organization:

Social workers go through the motions and don't even think about what they do or even sit and reflect because there's no time for that in child welfare today. People don't have a lot of time to think about what they've done, and the repercussions to someone down the road. Everything is compliance driven. The new legislation makes it harder to adhere to social work values.

The hospital social worker described her concerns about her difficulty adhering to the values of self-determination, being non-judgemental, and respecting cultural diversity in her agency, due to the agency's focus on processing clients in a speedy fashion:

Often plans are made for the patient rather than with the patient. Providing multicultural care is not always respected. It's hard to get interpreters; it's a big production when we try to access interpretive services. Due to the power in this system, abuse of patients is possible. If you're prejudiced against a client it's very easy not to give your 100% and judge the client.

The inability to achieve social work goals, due to time restraints and heavy workloads, serves the interests of managerial philosophies, as social workers may be expected to comply with agency deadlines and workload measures, in order to accomplish

organizational goals, rather than working on building relationships with clients and creating social change.

Organizational Culture

The experiences shared by the research participants, reinforce the influence of organizational cultures on employee behaviours. According to Bowditch and Buono (2001), an organization's cultural strength is based on the extent of shared values and beliefs that exist among employees. The greater the degree of shared values and beliefs, the stronger the culture's influence on employee behaviours. The impact of organizational culture on employee behaviours is especially worth noting in the mainstream organizations studied. Given the size of these organizations, it is difficult to ensure consistency between organizational and employee values. Thus, it is not surprising that employee values and behaviours are divergent. Furthermore, the organizational cultures of the mainstream organizations studied appear to perpetuate relationships of dominance and subordination between the agency and clients. Unfortunately, social work goals and values will often be overridden by a focus on organizational efficiency and effectiveness in mainstream settings (Lawler, 2000), which has the potential to result in job dissatisfaction among social workers, as well as a lack of commitment to the organization.

The participants from mainstream organizations expressed a decreased sense of commitment to their workplaces as a result of their respective organizational cultures. One of the participants stated that she is becoming frustrated with her workplace culture,

because of the difficulty she faces when attempting to adhere to social work values. As a result, she has contemplated leaving the organization. Participants from mainstream settings are less likely to be committed to their agencies, due to an increased sense of isolation from co-workers who share social work values, and a lack of control over their practice. Bowditch and Buono (2001) suggest that organizational cultures enhance feelings of belonging and commitment to the organization. However, according to the participants, the organizational cultures of these settings do not appear to foster a sense of belonging or commitment to the organization. This is likely due to the contrast between professional and organizational values in large, hierarchical organizational cultures focused on efficiency. This does not imply that mainstream organizational cultures are not influential. However, the mainstream cultures studied do not appear to have a positive influence on social workers due to its lack of support for social work values.

In contrast, the positive influence of the cultural strength of the community-based and feminist agencies studied is evident due to the congruence between organizational and employee values. The participants from community-based and feminist settings feel that employee values and behaviours are fairly consistent in their work settings. They also feel that the majority of employees support the organizational culture of their respective work settings. One of the participants from a community-based agency had this to say about the consequences faced by employees that have not supported social work and/or organizational values in the past:

We certainly in the past have had individual staff that worked here and definitely did not adhere to the same values, and actually (they) aren't employed here anymore. There is that culture here and if you don't adhere to that than definitely you won't last. There's that pressure but we don't

talk about it, it's just there. If you don't fit in, you stand out. It certainly keeps me in check.

One of the participants from a feminist agency discussed the consequences of working independently to resolve an issue, rather than using a team approach:

There are definitely consequences... Sometimes once you brainstorm with our management team and they give us ways to go about a situation in different ways and if a worker were to go out and use a different approach on her own and the woman (client) was upset by it, then yeah there would be consequences.

There is certainly an expectation that workers adhere to social work values in these settings. This is indicative of the strength of the community-based and feminist organizational cultures. On the other hand, it may also be indicative of greater organizational control over employees in community-based and feminist settings, as individual employee behaviours are more likely to be noticed in organizations of smaller size. The lack of conflict in an organization can be caused by greater organizational control and may result in groupthink, which has the potential to diminish the decision-making capability of the group. Groupthink may also result in an unwillingness to examine alternate views and ideas (Bowditch & Buono, 2001).

The participants have chosen to work in their respective settings, in spite of, or perhaps due to the organizational factors that influence their practice. Despite several organizational constraints, the social workers from mainstream organizations continue to work in these environments, perhaps due to the employment stability and status offered (Bowditch & Buono, 2001). In contrast, the respondents who work in community-based and feminist agencies report that their respective workplaces reinforce their personal and professional value systems. The fact that these participants' personal and professional

values are in line with organizational values might explain their choice to continue to work in these types of organizational settings, regardless of the greater likelihood of instability in their work.

Are Social Work Values Unique?

All of the participants agreed that social work values are not unique to the social work profession, and suggested that professional social work values are shared by many of their co-workers. This might account for the fact that many of the participants are able to adhere to social work values in organizations that employ workers with a variety of educational backgrounds. One participant made this comment about working with social work and non-social work colleagues:

There are some people with social work degrees that I don't see eye to eye with and there are people (that don't have a social work degree) that I do see eye to eye with. It depends on the individual. While professional background is important because I think the training around social work values is important, it doesn't always play out well in practice. If it plays out well it doesn't necessarily mean you have the training. It could mean that's just the type of person that you are. I would say I gravitate toward people in the agency with whom I feel I share similar values (regardless of professional background).

Furthermore, participants' primary personal supports tend not to be trained as social workers. Social workers might be encouraged to learn that their humanistic values are not unique to the profession. These findings might also encourage social workers to collaborate with a variety of co-workers, in order to accomplish social work goals, regardless of professional orientation.

Managing Competing Value Systems

Considering the variety of value systems and organizational factors that influence social work practice, including personal values, societal values, and organizational values, it is not surprising that social workers face value tensions in their work (de Montigny, 1995; Jayaratne, Croxton, & Mattison, 2002; and Meinert, 1980). Although the research participants experience different types of value tensions in their respective organizations, due to a variety of factors, they provided few examples of their experiences with value conflicts, particularly with respect to personal values. They were clear, however, that when faced with a conflict between competing values, social work values are prioritized over personal, societal and organizational values. One participant admitted to putting her job on the line, in the past, in support of social work values:

There are times for sure when I've laid my job on the line and knew that what I was doing...could be questioned. I think everyone does it. There's a point when...it feels like the right thing.

One worker from a mainstream agency stated that if the conflict between her personal, professional and organizational values became unbearable, she would have to leave the agency:

I think I have accepted it (the struggle to manage competing values) as part of the territory. If it ever got to be too much I would probably move on.

Another participant reinforced the importance of making effective decisions that impact clients' lives, and how the institutionalized power inherent in her social work role influences her on a personal level:

I try to put myself in (clients') shoes and...I check things out with them but I have to ultimately live with the decision too. I have to put my head on my pillow at night and reconcile the organization's values with my own and social work values.

Despite the differences in the participants' experiences with value tensions, all of the participants use similar strategies to manage these tensions. In some cases, participants use creative strategies to work in and around the system in order to support their clients. For instance, given that accessing funding is an ongoing challenge, participants with an administrative role are aware of the need to maintain positive relationships with funders. These participants have learned to request funding in a manner that will ensure continued support. The hospital social worker spoke about "bending the rules" when she feels that agency policies are blatantly contradictory to social work values.

All of the participants spoke of the importance of accessing support from co-workers in their organizational settings, as well as from personal relationships. They emphasized the importance of these individuals sharing similar values, regardless of their professional background. The participants from feminist and community-based agencies stated that they consult with their director, supervisor, or the entire work team when attempting to resolve a value tension. Most of the participants also spoke about the need to "check in" with themselves when feeling tension between two conflicting value perspectives. As a result, they acknowledged the importance of re-evaluating their institutional roles and reminding themselves of the importance of adhering to social work values and principles in practice. They also acknowledged the importance of being aware of their social position and privilege, in comparison to their clients, in order not to misuse

their institutionalized power. One participant spoke about the importance of using her privilege and power to benefit clients. She sees the role of a social worker as a “tool” to be used by clients when attempting to accomplish their goals:

A lot of clients will recognize (my power) and use me in a positive way... They'll use me as a tool. Sometimes they'll say, “you can get through this system, I can't” and they ask for my help. I can...help clients manoeuvre through the system. That's my job.

The participants in this study provided fewer examples than expected, of value tensions in their work. However, they all acknowledged the limitations of their social work role in terms of adhering to social work values. They also identified the need to challenge oppressive societal and organizational structures that prevent them from adhering to social work values. One participant acknowledged the importance of challenging the system whenever possible, despite her lack of control over powerful societal and organizational structures: “I don't always have control but I definitely have input”. Despite their identified lack of control over societal and organizational values and norms, most of the participants were clear that when attempting to resolve value tensions, social work values are prioritized over all others.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Given the inevitability of value tensions in social work practice, social workers must be attentive to the extremely complex set of relationships between and among personal, professional, socio-political and organizational values, and how these relationships impede social workers' ability to adhere to social work values. Furthermore, in today's climate, social workers must be conscientious of how business interests and managerial philosophies influence organizational cultures and perpetuate traditional, hierarchical organizational structures that are highly oppressive. According to the research findings, these trends are more characteristic of mainstream organizations, than community-based or feminist agencies. However, these trends can emerge in smaller, non-traditional agencies as well, to a lesser extent.

Although all of the participants reported having a relatively small number of value conflicts in practice, it is worth noting that the participants from community-based and feminist agencies reported having fewer difficulties adhering to social work values, than the participants from mainstream organizations. It appears that adhering to social work values is more apt to occur in feminist and community-based organizations, as long as these agencies are characterized by values that are compatible with social work values, in principle and in practice, a less hierarchical organizational structure that encourages greater participation from employees as well as clients, and an historical foundation of

alternative, client-centred services. These supportive organizational factors tend to be characteristic of agencies of smaller size. The literature reinforces the impact of these organizational factors on the ability to adhere to social work values (Barter, 2003; Bowditch & Buono, 2001; Heimer & Stevens, 1997; and Barnoff, 2001).

Regardless of the potential for increased value tensions in mainstream environments, all of the participants in this study utilized similar techniques to manage value tensions in their workplace. The fact that they all seek support from a variety of colleagues with similar values speaks to the importance of values in one's ability to perform the social work role. It also speaks to the importance of expanding our notions of the social work role, by acknowledging that achieving social work's mission cannot be accomplished in isolation.

Implications for Social Work Education and Practice

The findings of this study offer valuable insight to both beginning and experienced social workers, in terms of the personal, societal, and organizational obstacles that influence social work practice in different types of human service organizations. These findings have implications for social work education and practice. For instance, students and workers should be made aware of the impact of personal characteristics, such as religion, on their practice. In addition, they should be aware of the potential for greater value conflicts to occur in mainstream organizations and therefore be encouraged to build support networks, and be taught the skills required to mitigate the impact of value conflicts in these types of settings. Due to the barriers

caused by organizational structure, management style, and size, it may be helpful to consider alternate methods of providing mainstream services. Social workers could attempt to facilitate the development of smaller organizations or smaller units within mainstream settings, with a more participatory management style and a less hierarchical structure. Social workers in management positions could also benefit from these findings, by attempting to encourage organizational factors that support social work values (ie: participatory management style, less traditional structure).

Despite the barriers they face in practice, the research participants from mainstream settings have demonstrated a willingness to challenge oppressive organizational structures, by using their autonomy to work subversively in order to meet social work goals. This is encouraging for students and workers alike. Working with other social workers and professionals to challenge dominant organizational values is a strategy that can help to reduce the isolation and helplessness experienced by social workers in mainstream environments. In contrast, social workers in community-based and feminist agencies may need to be reminded of the benefits of their organizational settings, in terms of the greater potential for these agencies to support social work values. Social workers in these settings may be in a better position to take a leading role in professional activities such as advocacy and social action, as they are less likely to face negative consequences from their organizations for doing so.

Students and workers might also be encouraged to learn that social work values are not unique to the social work profession, and can be transferred to many practice settings. This knowledge is hopeful, in terms of accomplishing social work's

professional mission. Social work education could assist beginning social workers to adhere to professional values by reinforcing the importance of building networks with a variety of individuals who share social work values. The suggestion that our profession possesses a unique set of values has the potential to isolate social workers from other professionals and community members. This belief implies that our values are somehow superior, or unmatched. On the contrary, working with others and referring to social work values as humanistic values might increase support for our professional goals.

Expanding our understanding of social work values may also challenge social workers that attempt to achieve greater professional status and prestige, at the expense of social work values. In an effort to legitimize the social work profession, many social workers attempt to gain status in their professional role, which may result in social workers aligning themselves with the interests of the state. This has the potential to mask the political component of social work practice (Mullaly, 1997) and isolate social workers from their values and mission. On the other hand, social workers could use their status to support social work values. This is an issue that also deserves greater attention in professional education programs.

Limitations of this Study and Implications for Future Research

The study of social work values is extremely complex as social work practice is often under great scrutiny, and thus social workers may be hesitant to reflect their practice in a negative light. Additionally, social work values are difficult to accurately measure because stated values often differ from practice behaviours. For instance, social

workers may claim to value client self-determination and social justice, while not adhering to these values in their practice. Given the difficulties in accurately assessing social work values, this study's results must be carefully scrutinized. The research participants may have responded to the interview questions in socially desirable ways, in order to represent their practice in a positive manner. This is a particular concern with face-to-face interviews (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). In order to reduce socially desirability bias, and obtain more information regarding potential value tensions in practice, future studies could focus on the difficulties social workers face when attempting to adhere to one particular social work value, such as anti-oppressive practice, rather than social work values in general.

Future research may also produce different results if interviews are conducted with social workers who are known to the researcher. I selected social workers that I did not know to participate in this study, in order to increase the participants' comfort level. I believed that social workers I knew would be hesitant to share examples of their inability to adhere to social work values, because they might be concerned about my reaction. Despite my attempt to be cautious, upon meeting with one of the participants I realized that I had worked with her briefly in the past. This was not a concern for her, and she chose to continue with the interview. Another limitation of selecting participants who are unknown to the researcher is that the lack of relationship and trust between the researcher and the participants might deter participants from sharing their experiences openly. This appeared to be a concern for this study. Alternatively, interviewing colleagues and friends might increase the participants' level of trust in the researcher, and elicit more

data about social work value struggles, which were limited in this study. However, this approach also has its limitations. For example, the researcher may have preconceived ideas about the social worker's value system based on past knowledge of the participants' practice, which has the potential to alter the outcomes of the study. In addition, the researcher's perception of participants may change, following the interview, and subsequently, alter the nature of their personal and/or working relationship. The use of research assistants who have no professional contacts in the community where the interviews are taking place is an alternative approach that might minimize the negative consequences discussed above.

Another limitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population, due to the size of the sample. A larger sample size, including more participants from the three types of agencies studied, as well as participants from different cultural backgrounds, socio-economic classes, ages, and levels of work experience might increase the validity and generalizability of the study. A larger sample size might also generate more helpful data regarding the impact of personal characteristics and values on workers' ability to adhere to social work values in practice.

In addition, interviews with clients might provide valuable insight into their experiences with social work services in a variety of settings. It would be interesting to examine whether client assessments of social work services reflect social work values and whether they differ from one organizational environment to another. It would also be worth exploring whether social workers' accounts of their work in different organizations differ from clients' accounts. If we are to provide effective client-centred services we

must be prepared to ask for feedback from clients regarding the values we hold and the services we provide. Client accounts of the quality of service provision may provide a great deal of insight into social work practice, in terms of whether social workers' perceptions of their adherence to social work values are accurate.

To date, research on social work values has focused on attempting to measure social work values. Given the inevitability of value tensions and subsequent practice struggles, future research focused on developing strategies that can be used to manage these struggles may be more relevant. In order to enhance our understanding of the struggles experienced by fellow social workers, and develop effective strategies to manage practice struggles, social workers must be willing to work together in a variety of capacities. Firstly, in order to better understand practice struggles, social workers must feel comfortable sharing their value conflicts in a supportive context. Secondly, social workers must be open to analyzing their own practice, and be prepared to be accountable to clients and to the profession. This may require the profession to institute a better system of accountability for all social workers. For instance, effective social work practice would be heightened if social workers were expected to be formally accountable to one another, in addition to their workplace. This would require social workers to meet regularly, discuss practice barriers openly, and collaboratively resolve practice dilemmas. Developing this type of accountability mechanism should ideally begin during professional social work education, in order to prepare beginning social workers for the difficult work ahead.

One final area of study that may require further attention is our definition of professional values. Abbott (1999) suggests that social work values are cross-cultural and that a common core of professional values exists among all social workers. This is understandable, as these core values draw individuals to the profession and help to sustain a professional social work culture. However, the complexities of our current social context may require a re-examination of the relevance of our values for our clients. Future studies focused on whether social work values meet the needs of diverse populations, in terms of race, culture, class, sexual orientation, and level of ability could provide an opportunity to re-evaluate our value system and whether it meets the needs of clients.

Are Social Workers Expected to Do the Impossible?

When I started this research study I was disheartened by social workers' inability to adhere to social work values in practice. However, the research findings have renewed my hope in my social work colleagues, and in the profession in general. This is primarily due to the participants' ability to maintain a strong commitment to social work values, despite the societal and organizational parameters they face in day-to-day practice. It is especially surprising to me that social workers from mainstream organizations continue to maintain hope in social work's mission, considering the seemingly greater number of organizational barriers they face. In addition to the participants' commitment to social work values, their reports of shared values with co-workers from a variety of backgrounds also reinforced my sense of hope in social work's values and goals.

Despite the barriers social workers face in practice, it appears that they continue to fight for equality and social justice and attempt to reject dominant societal and organizational values that are contrary to social work values. According to Jamrozik (1995), social work must not allow “itself to become an instrument of the dominant order of economic rationalism” (p.3) and must guard “against becoming involved in the role of legitimating the current economic rationalist system which entrenches inequalities in society” (p.10). In order to guard against these risks and act as agents of change, social workers must be aware of their potential to challenge the institutions they work in, despite the multitude of obstacles they face in practice. The participants’ responses provide evidence of the power that individual social workers possess to challenge dominant societal and organizational values and norms.

Mullaly (1997) supports the need for social workers to continue to challenge dominant social systems that perpetuate inequality. He suggests that social workers should collaborate outside of the system, and perhaps against the system, in order to create change and reduce isolation (Aronson & Sammon, 2000). According to Barter (2003), social work’s theoretical, philosophical, and ethical underpinnings place the profession in an ideal position to take up the challenge of improving the quality of people’s lives. However, based on this study’s findings, social workers may do well to collaborate with a network of individuals in their workplace in order to accomplish professional goals. Working with a variety of individuals who share social work values and goals may alleviate some of the isolation and hopelessness that social workers experience when attempting to work toward social change. This is especially important

for social workers in mainstream organizations, who are perhaps more prone to become isolated from social work's mission.

Coalition development and alliance building is not limited to professionals and social service providers. Social workers must consider the importance of involving service users and communities in social reform; they are valuable resources and critical partners to this process. This requires social workers to cross traditional, professional and bureaucratic boundaries in order to meet the needs of service users, and address issues related to poverty, violence, diversity, health, justice, gender and community (Barter, 2003). This may be difficult for social workers in traditional organizational environments, who are less likely to receive organizational support for breaking with tradition. Therefore, community-based and feminist agencies are ideal organizational environments for progressive services to be developed and offered, as long as these agencies are true to their mission and principles. However, the literature acknowledges that although community-based and feminist organizations appear ideal on the surface, they may not be true to their values and mission in practice. Structural social work theory does not consider any level of social work practice as inherently oppressive or conservative, or any type of practice more progressive or liberating than another. For instance, community work and how it has been practiced in the past can be just as conservative as traditional casework. On the other hand, traditional casework and clinical work can be emancipatory (Mullaly, 1997). This suggests that there is hope to accomplish social work goals in a variety of organizational settings. The organizational

factors identified by the participants as being conducive to social work values, can provide insight into how social workers can work effectively in a variety of settings.

In order to successfully accomplish social work's mission and be true to social work values, we must continue to challenge social workers in terms of their commitment and adherence to social work values. However, we must also acknowledge the inherent difficulties in adhering to social work values. Therefore, we must ask ourselves whether the expectations placed on the social work profession are reasonable, considering the inability to measure values and appropriate practice behaviours accurately. Furthermore, the barriers to effective practice make our work nearly impossible. This begs the following questions: Is it possible to be true to social work's mission? If not, is our tendency to be critical of fellow social workers an attempt to gain control over our unattainable professional mission? Our inclination to criticize one another may be an unproductive use of our time and energy, considering that we are all vulnerable to similar practice barriers. I am not suggesting that we stop holding one another accountable to the profession's values and goals, however perhaps we expect the impossible of one another. One of the participants acknowledged that social work's mission is perhaps "beyond social work". Cooper (1977) supports this statement: "we who are in social work do not have the power alone to alter the political, social and economic context" (p.363).

Deconstructing social work practice may be most effective when using a supportive framework. Perhaps we need to learn to apply social work values such as respect and self-determination to our colleagues, and use a non-judgement approach in order to better understand our fellow social workers. Being overly critical of social work

practice, while ignoring the barriers that impede social workers' ability to adhere to social work values, serves only to isolate social workers from one another, and potentially from the profession's mission. In order to increase support for our joint mission, and reduce professional isolation, we may benefit from nurturing the positive aspects of our joint professional culture. One of the participants stated that social workers are at different levels of development along a continuum, in terms of their understanding of and ability to adhere to social work's mission. Perhaps we need to be more understanding of the variability among social workers and attempt to find commonalities that will encourage us to accomplish our professional mission in a more united fashion. This may increase our sense of control over practice, and renew our hope of creating social change.

We must bear in mind that adhering to social work values, such as creating social change, is a daunting task for many social workers. Although social workers may have great intentions, they do not have a great deal of control over the dominant social order and the effects of institutionalized patriarchy. Social workers are undeniably privileged in terms of their social positions and the institutionalized power inherent in their professional roles, however, many social workers struggle to exert control and make positive changes in their own lives (personally and professionally). This is bound to impact their ability to fight for larger social changes. This is a particular concern for female social workers who struggle with patriarchal oppression. As a result, it may be difficult to help clients challenge the oppressive structures in their lives if we are unable to challenge oppression in our own lives. This is an additional barrier that prevents social workers from adhering to social work values.

Calling attention to the barriers that prevent social workers from adhering to social work values may decrease the sense of hopelessness, helplessness and isolation experienced by female social workers. It may also increase our awareness of a variety of barriers to effective practice, and encourage social workers to work collectively to develop alternative approaches to accomplishing social work's mission, while taking these barriers into account. In addition, it may raise awareness of the limitations of our role, and enable us to increase support for our fellow social workers, rather than blaming individual social workers for failing to do the impossible.

Appendix A

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS CODE OF ETHICS

- 1) A social worker or social service worker shall maintain the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation;
- 2) A social worker or social service worker shall respect the intrinsic worth of the persons she or he serves in her or his professional relationships with them;
- 3) A social worker or social service worker shall carry out her or his professional duties and obligations with integrity and objectivity;
- 4) A social worker or social service worker shall have and maintain competence in the provision of a social work or social service work service to a client;
- 5) A social worker or social service worker shall not exploit the relationship with a client for personal benefit, gain or gratification;
- 6) A social worker or social service worker shall protect the confidentiality of all professionally acquired information. He or she shall disclose such information only when required or allowed by law to do so, or when clients have consented to disclosure;
- 7) A social worker or social service worker who engages in another profession, occupation, affiliation or calling shall not allow these outside interests to affect the social work or social service work relationship with the client;
- 8) A social worker or social service worker shall not provide social work or social service work services in a manner that discredits the profession of social work or social service work or diminishes the public's trust in either profession;
- 9) A social worker or social service worker shall advocate for workplace conditions and policies that are consistent with this Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service workers;
- 10) A social worker or social service worker shall promote excellence in his or her respective profession;
- 11) A social worker or social service worker shall advocate change in the best interest of the client, and for the overall benefit of society, the environment and the global community."

Appendix B

FRAGMENTATION OF SOCIAL WORK ETHICS, VALUES, AND MISSION

Social work research literature and research provides evidence of social work's fragmentation in terms of its ethics, values, and mission (Barter, 2003, p.207):

- “the profession’s ambivalence in its response to poverty (Parsloe, 1990; Riches & Ternowetsky, 1990; Rivera & Erlich, 1995)
- social workers’ reluctance to work with poor families (Hagen, 1992; Wharf, 1993)
- the diminishing influence of social work in public welfare (Barter, 1992; Gibelman & Schervish, 1996; Keys & Capaiuolo, 1987)
- the diminishing role of advocacy in social work (Herbert & Mould, 1992; Walz & Groze, 1991)
- the emphasis on specialist practice versus generalist practice (Parson, Hernandez, & Jorgensen, 1998)
- how social work has abandoned its mission in favour of psychotherapy (Specht, 1990; Specht & Courtney, 1994)
- how social workers are seen as being more in tune with being agents of social control as opposed to social change (Wharf, 1990)
- the crisis that exists for the social work profession given that social workers are in positions that deal with symptoms as opposed to root causes (Carniol, 1995)
- the profession’s reluctance to undertake social action within a macro context; individual interventions, on their own, are inadequate and damaging in the long run because they put a bandage on social problems (McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992)
- case, self-help, and class advocacy appear to be situational responses to unmet client needs rather than a regular social work activity directed at ongoing social structures and policies (Hardina, 1995)
- the history of the profession clearly reveals that its social change mission lost ground to the goal of adjustment; over the years, the commitment to cause and reform steadily gave way to preference for functional and technical proficiency (Abramovitz, 1992)
- research shows that social workers’ formulations and perceptions of client problems tend to emphasize more of a personal focus as opposed to an interpersonal and environmental focus (Rosen & Livne, 1992)
- social work specialization has caused us to lose sight of more unified approaches to responding to human needs and social problems (Caragata, 1997)
- how the profession is losing ground in community health and social services systems as governments shift responsibilities to community based systems of delivers (Barter, 2000)”

Appendix C

LETTER OF INFORMATION

(To be Printed on McMaster University Letterhead)

The purpose of this research study is to explore the difficulties that social workers experience when attempting to adhere to social work values in their practice and to better understand how social workers resolve these difficulties. Social work values are fundamental to the profession, and guide practice behaviours on many levels. However, social work values do not exist in isolation. There is a significant amount of literature that supports the fact that social workers' personal values often differ from their professional values. In contrast, there is limited research, regarding how the value systems of a variety of work settings impact social work practice. Therefore, this study will attempt to gather information directly from social work practitioners, who work in a variety of settings, regarding their experiences with managing value conflicts in their workplace.

This study is not intended to identify unethical values or behaviours. Rather, it is intended to identify value conflicts that are known to exist, on both personal and organizational levels. In addition, this study will attempt to identify the consequences that social workers face when attempting to resolve value conflicts. Learning more about how social workers manage value conflicts in their workplace could be extremely helpful to other practitioners who face similar conflicts. Ultimately, the outcomes of this study are expected to provide guidance for social work practitioners and students with respect to managing value conflicts, with the broader goal of improving social work practice.

Your participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential. Every care will be taken to respect your privacy, including the omission of any identifying information in reports generated from this study. In addition, all information obtained during the process of this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, to which only the interviewer has access. You will maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any time; in so doing, all information that you have provided will be destroyed.

In participating in this study, you will be asked to meet with the interviewer on one occasion, for one to two hours. You may select the meeting place of your choice. During this interview you will be asked to provide personal experiences regarding the influence of a range of values on your work. The information you provide will be tape recorded during the interview, and later transcribed. Upon the completion of the study, you will receive a written report of the outcomes of this research study. The interviewer will also provide a debriefing following the interview, during which any potential concerns or comments about the study can be discussed. Should you feel the need to access further

support regarding any matter discussed in the interview, the researcher will provide you with a list of available support services.

This project has been reviewed and has received clearance by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board. Should you have any questions about your participation in this study, please feel free to contact this Board at (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142. Any questions about the study can also be directed to the interviewer Natalia Antunes, at 905-645-1100 ext. 4 or natalia.antunes@sympatico.ca.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Natalia Antunes

Appendix D

CONSENT FORM

(To be Printed on McMaster University Letterhead)

The Impact of Personal, Societal, and Organizational Values on Social Workers' Ability to Adhere to Social Work Values in Practice

I agree to take part in this study regarding the difficulties social workers face when attempting to adhere to social work values in the work place. I understand that the purpose of the study is not to identify unethical practice behaviours or values. Rather, it is intended to gather the richest data possible regarding this area of practice; no judgement or critique is intended in any way. I understand that if I feel the need to access support regarding any matter discussed in the interview, the researcher will provide me with a list of available support services. In addition, a debriefing will be provided following the interview; at this time I will be able to discuss any concerns that I may have about the study, or my participation in the study, with the researcher.

I have been fully informed about what is involved in this study, and I understand its purpose. I understand that Natalia Antunes is the principle investigator of this study, and that her actions, in this capacity are being supervised by Sheila Sammon (faculty member of the McMaster University School of Social Work).

I am willing to take part in one interview that will last between one to two hours and I am agreeable to having this interview audio taped and transcribed. I understand that I may decline to answer any particular question posed by the investigator during the interview. I also understand that I may access any of the information that I have provided during the interview, at any time. In addition, I can choose to withdraw from this study at any time, with no consequence to me. If I do so, all information that I have provided to the investigator will be destroyed.

My participation in this study will be kept strictly confidential; all identifying information will be removed from any written reports generated from this study.

Research Participant - Printed Name

Research Participant - Signature

Date

Investigator - Signature

Date

Appendix E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(To be Printed on McMaster University Letterhead)

Research Question: How do personal, societal and organizational values influence social workers' ability to adhere to social work values in practice?

Major themes to be explored:

1. Please identify your organization's values.
2. Are your organization's consistent with social work values?
3. Is there an organizational culture in your work setting? Is this culture consistent with social work values?
4. What is your organizational structure? Hierarchy of decision making? Management Style/Values? Funding Arrangements?
5. Have you ever faced a conflict between your professional values and your organization's values? Could you please describe the conflict and how you resolved and/or managed it?
6. Have you ever faced negative consequences in your workplace for adhering to social work values?
7. What strategies do you use to manage the dissonance (conflict) between your organization's values and your profession's values?
8. Do you feel that there are certain organizational characteristics that make it easier/more difficult to adhere to social work values?
9. Do you feel that your personal values and professional values conflict at times? If so, how?
10. Do you feel that personal characteristics such as your age, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status influence your ability to adhere to social work values? If so, please explain.
11. What strategies do you use to manage the dissonance (conflict) between your personal values and your profession's values?

12. Do societal values influence your personal or professional values?
13. Are there other influences that make it difficult to adhere to social work values in practice, besides your personal and organizational values?
14. Do you have different values than other professionals (social workers and non-social workers) in your workplace?
15. How has your social work education influenced the development of your value system? Professional or otherwise?

Appendix F

SOCIAL WORK VALUES

1. Boundaries
2. Confidentiality
3. Empowerment
4. Equality
5. Human rights
6. Non-judgemental attitude
7. Respect for cultural diversity
8. Respect for the intrinsic worth and dignity of all individuals
9. Self-determination
10. Social justice
11. Social responsibility

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