A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORK

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORK

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Social Work

McMaster University

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MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (2007)

McMaster University Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE:

A Critical Analysis of the Regulation of Social Work

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NUMBER OF PAGES: 164

Abstract

In 1998, the Government of Ontario passed legislation requiring social workers and social service workers to become registered. As a result, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers was created, yet regulation was opposed by a number of social workers and related groups. Therefore it seems there remain proponents and opponents of regulation. As registration carries implications for all practicing Ontarian social workers, this research explored the views of non-registered and registered social workers, about regulation. Through a qualitative analysis of the information compiled from ten participant interviews, six themes emerged: When Regulation Met Practice; Accountability: To Whom?; The Reciprocal Relationship of Power; The Protection Factor; Developing the Regulated Social Work Identity and Future Knowledge Building. Demonstrating the complexity of regulation, many uncertainties, confusions, concerns and ideological differences arose. Calls by participants for amendments to the current regulatory body reflect the diversity of those regulated and served, and emphasize a need for regulation to remain true to the values and advocacy roots of the profession. It is proposed that the College expand its role to include advocacy and education functions, as well as providing a more supportive and informed relationship with members, potential members and the public. Achieving these expectations amounts to creating a reflexive and inclusive entity. Although breaking the regulatory body molds, these suggestions are not viewed as the result of weaknesses in the profession or of regulation. Instead, recommended changes emulate a fluid, distinct, and diverse profession, requiring an atypical regulatory body.



~ Acknowledgments ~



To McMaster Staff & Faculty:

I have had the privilege over this last year to learn from some of the greatest minds in social work. You have challenged me and as a result I have grown immensely since beginning this program, which I will always attribute to you!

I also want to specifically thank Darlene Savoy, Diane Allen and Lorna O'Connell for their constant presence this last year. You truly have contributed to a successful year at McMaster!

To my peers in the MSW program:

Thanks to the amazing graduate students in social work I have had the pleasure of meeting this past year. You each have contributed to my learning in one way or another, and have absolutely made the isolation of thesis research bearable. Thank you so much for the laughs and the wealth of knowledge and experience you have brought!

To the participants of this study:

Without you, there would be no research, and this would still be an idea. I thank you for sharing your time, views, knowledge and most importantly, your experiences.

To Sheila Sammon:

You have been, and continue to be, my mentor. Your sense of and drive for social justice is an inspiration to me. I can not thank you enough for your guidance, your knowledge and your constant encouragement throughout this thesis project.

To my friends:

Thanks to my friends who have dealt with my absence in your lives over the last year. I will always remember and have appreciated the support, pep talks and cheerleading!

To my family:

Thanks to my family of editors! Thanks for listening to my bursts of excitement and rants of frustration pertaining to my thesis. Your understanding of this all-consuming process has enabled me to complete this project, especially during difficult times as in Auntie Babs' passing. As she was always a champion of my efforts, you have continued her and Lena's memories through your support. Your assistance, understanding and encouragement has made all the difference. Nat, Mom, Dad & Doris, I will always be indebted!





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CHAPTER ONE Introduction

The current system of social work regulation in Ontario is relatively new, being fully implemented in the year 2000. In the present climate of neo-liberal ideology, social workers already work in a restructured and restricted welfare state. The initiation of regulation has created additional effects and has begun to change the organization of social work practice in Ontario.

Stemming from a personal journey with the issue of regulation and a curiosity about why some people are not registered, this issue emerged as a research topic.

Graduating from a Bachelor of Social Work program during the regulatory body's infancy, I remember being told I 'had' to register, never questioning or being taught about the intricacies of regulation. Once in the field, I was exposed to little dialogue on the issue, yet did hear critical voices.

As regulation has continued to enter the mainstream discourse, voices reflecting opposition have become less accessible. However, this in no way suggests critiques and critics do not exist. In fact, professionalization of social work has long been debated and, as a modern facet of professionalization, regulation has had its own contested campaign.

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A logical beginning to an inquiry into regulation starts with an exploration of the seepage of professionalization, intentionally or not, into social work practice.

CHAPTER TWO Literature Review

History of Professionalization in Social Work

In an overview of social work's roots, Brawley (1974) noted that the two forces which influenced the formation of social work were the charity organizations focused on helping individuals and the social reform movement which focused on causes such as poverty, suggesting that "The Profession of Social work has a dual and philosophically conflicting heritage" (Brawley, 1974: 183). Soon after social work's inception, the idea of professionalization arose. But, even early in its development, there were tensions. Our U.S. foremothers, Mary Richmond and Jane Addams represented conflicting opinions about the emerging practice of social work. Mary Richmond, often cited as one of the leading figures in social work individual and family practice, contributed to the early attempts at professionalization through her 1917 classic work, *Social Diagnosis* (Ferguson, 1965: 66). While Jane Addams, who worked with immigrants in the slums of Chicago, denounced the professionalization of social work through refraining to use this title and distancing herself from casework (Margolin, 1997: 4). In accounts of her career,

Lundblad (1995) and Klosterman & Stratton (2006) discussed Addams' reluctance to label herself a 'social worker', instead preferring 'settlement worker'.

Professionalism has been defined by Lawler & Hage (1973) as involving "... high professional training, high professional activity, high pro-change beliefs, and high idealism" (p. 93). Professionalization is the process of increasing professionalism and simply means to "give professional character or status to; make into or establish as a profession" (Lexico Publishing Group, 2007). It seems that a large push in this direction was the result of a question posed to Abraham Flexner at a 1915 National Conference of Charities and Corrections in the United States, where he was asked whether social work was a profession and he concluded it was not (Flexner, 2001; reproduced from Flexner's original essay of 1915). This determination was based on criteria "extracted" from what he felt were "universally" accepted professions such as "law, medicine and preaching" (Flexner, 2001: 154), and involved the following six criteria:

Professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educationally communicable technique; they tend to self-organization; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation (Flexner, 2001: 156).

Flexner (2001) felt social work was a "mediator" whereas individuals are referred to other professionals, as opposed to social work being an "original agency" in providing

outcomes or treatment for individuals. In his analysis, he argued the basis of social work did not reflect a profession, "Professions may not be cultivated for mere profit. Neither, let me add, can they develop on the basis of volunteer or underpaid work" (Flexner, 2001: 163). But Flexner (2001) concluded by discussing a concept of "professional spirit", which social work espouses in its dedicated work to others, that could potentially lift the profession to the criteria he utilized and become a profession (Flexner, 2001).

In Canada, professionalism through education had already begun with the establishment of the first school of social work at the University of Toronto in 1914 (Yelaja, 1985: 10). Over the roaring twenties, schools of social work solidified and social work was deemed "a unified profession with more similarities than differences among its specialties" (Sowers & Ellis, 2001: 246). Concerns surrounding professionalization were documented by the Director of the New York School of Social Work, Porter Lee, in 1928, "there seems to be fewer prophetic voices, less evidence of the quickened spirit, greater interest in social work as a career than as a cause" (Jennissen & Lundy, 2006: 3). Although rooted in social work's history, there was concern that social justice as a focus would dwindle as a result of professionalization.

The move to professionalization was the result of factors including an "increased demand" for social workers in society (Jennissen & Lundy, 2006: 2), and outsiders'

suggestions to professionalize. Early efforts to professionalize involved social work imitating professions that were established, such as medicine. "At the same 1915 conference [as Flexner's presentation] Felix Frankfurter, a lawyer, suggested that social work follow the example of the older, established professions by upgrading the educational requirements for entry" (Brawley, 1974: 185). However, similar to a critique of the professionalization of doctors, social work's attempts at professionalization may have created social workers who are authorities rather than activists or compassionate helpers. Haas & Shaffir (1991) critique the "cloak of competence" used by doctors:

The cloak allows patients to trust, without question, both the health professional and the prescribed treatment... Students recognize the importance of appearing authoritative in professional situations. In turn, as they perceive themselves to be successful, they become to believe in their competence in professional matters (p. 82).

Thus even professionalization within the established professions is critiqued, the very professions which Frankfurter & Flexner suggested as models for social work.

A gendered analysis adds to the critique of the relationship social work developed with such established professions. The critique put forward involves the female dominated social work profession being influenced by male dominated professions, which caused social work to move away from its roots. In practice, practitioners shifted from work with individuals as allies, to developing practices based on medical models. Haynes

(1998) questions, "What happened to Mary Richmond's and Jane Addams' influence on our profession? Well, might it in part be a women's issue again" (p. 506). Furthermore, Haynes (1998) linked these thoughts with Flexner's definition of a profession, "A theoretical base was not the only criteria that Flexner described - autonomous practice was another. Why did we allow a predominantly female profession to be so directed by male medical model of what that autonomous practice should look like?" (p. 506). One might conclude simply that the other groups of professionals had substantial influence as they had obtained more status, power and privilege than social work.

During the 1970s-1990s the idea of professionalization, including the growing accountability expected of social workers, dominated the social work discourse (Margolin, 1997). For some, this was at the expense of social work's social reform and social justice roots (Brawley, 1974). Social workers in 2001 were still debating Abraham Flexner's question about social work's identity as a profession. Eight authors' responses to a call for submissions were studied. Six authors, Glaser (2001); Rullo (2001); Wong (2001); Brill (2001); Franklin (2001) and Holosko & Leslie (2001), agreed that social work is a profession;

Two issues do tend to tip the balance toward identification of social work as a profession. The first is evidenced by the apparent universality or consistency of social work values, knowledge and approach ...Second, social work's continued existence, consistent process and continued commitment reflects the wisdom of

Flexner's overall conclusion [of] the spirit of [this] profession. (Holosko & Leslie, 2001: 207).

The other two authors' (Sowers & Ellis and Gambrill) agreed with Flexner's conclusion that social work was not a profession, based on social work's lack of knowledge base (Sowers & Ellis, 2001); and more specifically a lack of "unique knowledge and skills in social work that produce better results compared to paraprofessionals" (Gambrill, 2001:166). As recent as 2001 the debate continued, as does an ongoing analysis of professionalization through the use of theory.

Theoretical Foundation

This paper will explore the current status of the social work profession, by engaging in a postmodern exploration of the journey of professionalization in social work. To understand where the profession currently stands, it is important to review its history. However, such a review has found conflicting opinions about its development and divides in the profession regarding its role and status. Postmodernism signifies one must review discourse and an analysis of less popular views, or one risks maintaining the status quo through inquiry. Thus, there are various ways of viewing the profession's history, and development.

One of the most critical thinkers regarding social services, Michele Foucault, is often linked to postmodernism. Using a Foucaultian analysis, Chambon (1999) provides

a different outlook on social works' history, "Clients do not exist outside the historical activity of social work; they are the result of that activity. The starting point is not inside the client but inside the social work" (p. 52-53). Thus as the focus ('inside social work') was on professionalization, service users resulted from the creation of a social work role, therefore received secondary attention from the profession. In this sense, the service user and social worker maintain separate roles, and the relationship between social work's history as informer of social work practice speaks to a power differential between the two groups involved in the social work intervention. Coined as dividing practice by Foucault, and explained by Chambon (1999), this can relate to social work "practices [which] further divide those who are served from those who serve, the helpers, establishing a particular structure of relation...[are] imposed from the outside" (p. 67-68). Implicated in creating such divides is social work's history, its practice models, its organizations, its workers etcetera. McKnight (1995) agreed by purporting that professionalization is a way to create need (in clients, in society) to ensure social work jobs and services are created.

If using modernist theory, the development of professionalization would be viewed as a natural progression for social work (Irving, 1999). Interpreting Nietzshe's work in *Philosophy & Truth*, Irving (1999) felt such an acceptance does not take into consideration all peoples' experiences which are different and "it assumes that everyone

perceives the world in the same way" (p. 34). Using a postmodern or Foucaultian analysis, terms often used interchangeably, one can derive there is significant critique of professionalization, based on its focus on the profession rather than service users and the divides between the two as a result.

Although some documented their critiques of professionalization, and others their support, it has encroached on the profession. However dominant a force professionalization has been, it is important to seek answers and explore the different experiences, perceptions and views of its development, as Nietzshe suggests. Using a postmodern lens regulation will be deconstructed, or broken down to analyse (Lexico Publishing Group, 2007), through this literature review and supplementary research study in order to reconstruct a view of social work regulation, as a facet of professionalization.

Social Work Practice in the Current Context

Currently 'professional' social work practice is predominantly clinical-based, has become business-like (consumer focused) and scientific (measurable). Fabricant & Burghardt (1992) refer to these changes, beginning in the 1970s, as resulting in proletarianization: the deskilling of professionals, decreasing levels of control over one's own work and decreasing workers' stability in the labour market. The nature of organizations have and continue to change as a result, focusing on the 'business' of social

services (McKnight, 1995). These changes have been directly related to the neo-liberal ideology which reigns in Canada. McKeen (2004) outlines this shift, "a relatively broad social democratic outlook based on such principales as universality, horizontal equity, and social responsibility ...this gave way in the late 1990s to one more closely aligned with the human capital orientation of neo-liberal/third way thinking" (p. 89). Dominelli (2007) further adds neo-liberalism "favors market based welfare provisions" (p. 31). As a result, the welfare state has been restructured leading to standardization and managerialism, with increased accountability becoming commonplace in social work and impacting the way the profession is organized, including the onset of regulation.

As social work practice has evolved towards a business-like enterprise, the credibility of social work practice has been questioned. This doubt has been termed the crisis of confidence (Dominelli, 2004), and the profession has responded by implementing Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). As a result of desired measurable practice, EBP guides practice decisions based on research that has been constructed to ensure social workers are being effective, "...where good intentions and commitment are insufficient to maintain standards" (Plath, 2006: 59). Proponents for EBP, perhaps also for professionalization, feel that "increasing a commitment to evidence-based practice is required to justify services, establish professional credibility, and secure funding" (Bates, 2006: 1).

However, there are polar views regarding EBP's use, specifically the concern EBP lessens clients' self determination (Plath, 2006), and a deteriorated emphasis on professional social work judgement (Staller, 2006: 510). Even proponents highlight concerns "that evidence-based practice has been driven by an agenda of fiscal restraint rather than service excellence" (Antle, 2003: 3). Yet, EBP remains on the social work horizon.

Parallel to the move to increased accountability by many outside forces, there is an internal move in social work practice and education towards Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP). AOP in social work involves practice stemming from an awareness of power differentials with the goal of creating space for emancipation from oppression. "The concepts of race, gender, sexuality, ability, oppression and social identity that form the theoretical foundations of anti-oppressive, difference-centred analysis are defined in ways that emphasize their fluid and multiple nature, albeit within very stable and systemic social conditions of injustice" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 65). EBP and AOP as perspectives or approaches in social work, when compared appear conflicting, for instance EBP's step-by-step practical approach and AOP's way of interpreting the world or theoretical approach. This highlights the fragmentation of the profession, building upon the profession's first division of practice perspectives, begun by our foremothers Addams and

Richmond. Within this context of social work conflict and development, the move to regulation became the next stage of professionalization and most recent phase in Ontario.

Regulation In the Present

The Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work discusses regulation and professionalization within the heading of professional issues, again making the link to the current context of practice. "With increased recognition of the profession has come increased visibility and public scrutiny" (Turner, 2005: 301-302). This highlights a need for social work regulation in Canada and resembles the development in social work worldwide.

Around the World

Currently the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), an umbrella body, consists of association members from 84 countries including Canada (IFSW, 2006). Over the last decade there has been significant growth around the world in social work associations (IFSW, 2006), which are sometimes interchangeable with regulatory bodies. Similarities about social work were found in a cross national study of social work students

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in ten (10) countries¹, "Social workers in all countries have sought official recognition and legitimization for the profession" (Weiss, 2005: 103). More specifically, in 2004 both New Zealand (NZ) and the United Kingdom (UK) introduced regulation of social workers, however, each have significant differences. The UK's professional associations and UK academics advocated for regulation, now compulsory with re-registration occurring every 3 years and a code of ethics which has an "emphasis on balancing risks and standardizing behaviour or conduct" (Orme & Rennie, 2006: 340). Whereas, in NZ the Ministry of Commerce began to organize occupations thus created voluntary registration for social workers (Orme & Rennie, 2006). With their re-registration occurring every 5 years, NZ's code of ethics is unique as it takes into consideration research and knowledge production (Orme & Rennie, 2006). Although these countries' implementation of regulation is quite recent, another country, who has a more lengthy history with regulation, will be reviewed.

Regulation in the United States of America

With the advent of professional associations, social work had more organized efforts to professionalize. The first American social work organization, founded in 1918,

¹ Weiss (2005) studied 10 countries including: Australia, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong/China, Israel, US, and Zimbabwe.

was the American Association of Medical Social Workers (Rullo, 2001: 213). The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was developed in 1955, causing the amalgamation of seven (7) social work associations² (NASW, 2007).

Currently in the United States, regulation and legislation of social work is a responsibility of each state (Association of Social Work Boards [ASWB], 2006), with different states requiring social workers be either licenced, certified, or registered³ (NASW, Date Unpublished). Another layer of one's licensure, certification or registration, within each state, depends on one's level of education,

Jurisdictions may regulate as many as four broad areas of social work practice: baccalaureate social work degree upon graduation, master's degree in social work (MSW) upon graduation, MSW with two years of postgraduate supervised

² The seven associations amalgamated into NASW include: American Association of Social Workers, American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, American Association of Group Workers, Association for the Study of Community Organization, American Association of Medical Social Workers, National Association of School Social Workers, Social Work Research Group (NASW, 2007)

MacDonald & Adachi (2001) outline the differences between registration, certification and licensure: Registration involves the meeting of some criteria and receiving a certificate of registration, but one's competence is their own responsibility; Certification involves a governing body (public or private), the receiving of a certificate and competency which is sanctioned through the regulatory body; Licensure involves "issuance of a licence by a public mandated governing body granting right to engage in the activities of a given occupation", and oversees criteria for admission with competency sanctioned through the governing body (P. 2).

experience, and MSW with two years of post-master's direct clinical social work experience (ASWB, 2006).

The first legislative enactment for social work in the U.S. dates back to 1945 in California, and the last state to acquire regulation was Wisconsin in 1992 (ASWB, 2006). For a comparison chart of the years of social work legislation enactment in each state, see Appendix A. In addition to licensing, certification and registration, there are additional credentials⁴ offered through the country's association, NASW, which has the largest worldwide membership of 150,000 social workers (NASW, 2007b).

To add an additional layer of complexity, the ASWB implemented a Model State Social Work Act in 1998 (Biggerstaff, 2000), which has been consistently amended, most recently in 2006. As an attempt to unify state regulation (Biggerstaff, 2000),

The purpose of the ASWB Model Act is simple: to provide a resource to legislatures and social work boards when addressing issues related to the public protection mission or regulating the practice of social work. Informed by a national perspective, the Model Act establishes standards of minimal social work competence, methods of fairly and objectively addressing consumer complaints, and means of removing incompetent and/or unethical practitioners from practice (ASWB, 2006b: 2).

⁴ There are three additional credentials for which one may apply; Qualified Clinical Social Worker (QCSW), Diplomate in Clinical Social Work (DCSW) and Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW). QCSW entails one has a Master's degree, postgraduate experience; DCSW involves a Master's or Doctorate degree with five years postgraduate clinical experience ACSW entails one has a Master's, postgraduate experience and continuing education and is considered the most "respected" credential (NASW, 2007c).

Although Biggerstaff (2000) critiqued the Model Act, her concerns relate to issues such as dual codes of ethics and other general critiques of regulation.

Regulation in Canada

Early social work in Canada was influenced by both British and American social work (Jennissen & Lundy, 2006). As social work grew south of the border, growth in Canada paralleled and "the Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW] was founded in 1926" (Holosko & Leslie, 2001: 207). Thus it seems that Canadian social workers began to construct and carve out a place for professionalization in social work early in the 20th Century, along with their American counterparts.

Similar to the complexity of regulation in the U.S., each province in Canada is responsible for regulation and legislation of social workers (ASWB, 2005). MacDonald & Adachi (2001) explain the Canadian social work's regulatory system and surmise that each province's act has "more differences than similarities", however each refer to registration only (p. 1). Yet as registration is defined⁵, MacDonald & Adachi (2001) purport that no province "truly" follows this approach, instead utilizing a mixture of licencing and certification alike their American counterparts. Differences between the

⁵ For the definition of registration, please see footnote three.

provincial legislations include: mandatory versus voluntary registration; use of entrance examinations; contractual complaint investigators versus in-house investigators; four codes of ethics within the country; a range from no written professional guidelines to standards for different fields of social work practice (MacDonald & Adachi, 2001). The oldest enacted social work legislation is Alberta's which dates 1966, with Ontario's being the most recent (MacDonald & Adachi, 2001). For a comparison of provincial regulatory bodies and years of legislative enactment, see Appendix B.

Ontario: History of Regulation

In Ontario, there are conflicting accounts of regulation's history in social work, depending on the literature chosen for review. The current *Encyclopedia of Canadian Social Work* reports that the Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers (OAPSW⁶) created the voluntary, non-legislated, regulatory body, the Ontario College of Certified Social Workers in 1982 (Turner, 2005). OAPSW then led the campaign, in the 1980s and 1990s, to seek social work legislation and participated in a "long-standing multi-pronged initiative ... to vigorously seek social work legislation" (Turner, 2005:

⁶ The provincial social work association in Ontario was established in 1964 (Turner, 2005). Known as The Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers (OAPSW) until 1995 when the word 'professional' was dropped creating Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW) (Simonetta, 2007).

267). However, there was opposition to regulation legislation, causing the issue to be debated over 15 years, instead suggesting not everyone 'vigorously fought for regulation' (Lundy 2003).

During this time period, pockets of social workers organized in an effort to actively resist regulation in Ontario. A former member of S.W.E.A.T. (Social Work Education Action Team) recalled that the New Democratic Party (NDP) provincial government was "relatively opposed to privatization of professions, and ideologically positioned themselves as such", so the group was able to keep social work legislation at bay (Phillips, 2007). The NDP government remained in office from 1990 until 1995 (Government of Ontario, 2003). When a change of government saw the Progressive Conservative Party enter office, the issue of regulation, supported by the OAPSW, was brought before the house as a bill (Phillips, 2007). Working from either a feminist-structural or a postmodernist perspective, S.W.E.A.T. was successful in ensuring some of the issues appearing in the final bill accurately reflected their positions, however to achieve this they conceded debate on other social issues before the government (ie. subsidized housing, second stage housing, welfare cuts) (Phillips, 2007). Thus, the focus moved, similar to Porter Lee's concerns, from social work causes to careers.

Although there was opposition to regulation, a 1993 study found that seventy-seven percent (77 %) of social work respondents felt legislation should be a priority (Hansen & Repko, 1993). Of interest, those polled were OAPSW members and represented twenty-five percent (25%) of OAPSW full membership at the time (Hansen & Repko, 1993). Thus, it is difficult to determine accurate support levels for regulation during the regulation initiative.

OAPSW successfully advocated for regulation, indicating a certain level of support from the profession. "To a considerable extent past success is the result of unity, and past failure the result of disunity" (Gowanlock, 1990: 7). As head of Project Legislation at the time, an OAPSW committee to advocate for regulation, Dan Andrae was interviewed by Phillips about the necessity of regulation:

I am not sure that social workers fully appreciate the implications of not being regulated. The issue of regulation is difficult to grasp and may appear to be dry, not directly relevant to social work practice. Nothing could be further from the truth. The lack of regulation will mean a significant reduction in the autonomy for social workers in the system and will continue to affect the social worker's ability to influence policy, especially in health care delivery. The social service and health care systems in Ontario are being radically restructured and, unless social work is a regulated profession, it stands in danger of 'falling between the cracks' ... Social workers must be committed to the issue of regulation and to the fact that, with no regulation, the public is not protected and we are marginalized (Phillips, 1992: 3).

Perhaps another important piece of support for the movement was pressure based on the fact that Ontario was the last province/state in North America to regulate social work (OAPSW, 1994).

During the 1980s-1990s, when S.W.E.A.T. was resisting, there were many concerns raised regarding regulation. Lundy (2003) lists the specific concerns at the time: that there would be a reduction in the number of Canadian Association of Social Workers' (CASW) and Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW) members with the creation of Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW or the College); there was disagreement about the idea that malpractice was rampant and regulation was necessary to combat this problem; and that the conservative government was involved in creating and overseeing the regulatory body, which led to concerns that the government put forth its own agenda. Other academics voiced their concerns at the time, including Carniol & Kitchen (1990) who felt that the move to regulation, based on crises in social services, was misplaced. "We agree that there is a crisis in the social services but it is not a crisis from social work incompetence. Rather it is a crisis of under funding and of structures which perpetuate inequalities" (p. 62). Although these critiques were specific critiques to Ontario at that time, they may be linked with general critiques of regulation presented momentarily.

Ontario: Regulation in the Present

In Ontario, Bill 76 the Social Work and Social Service Work Act (SWSSWA) was passed in 1998 (OCSWSSW, 2003). This meant the profession had a self-regulating body, and membership approvals for applicants began in 2000 (OCSWSSW, 2003). To oversee the profession, the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers⁷ (OCSWSSW) was initiated, as the regulatory body, while OASW⁷ maintained its role as a social work association. Of importance, OCSWSSW, is one of only three non-association regulatory bodies in Canada (CASW, 2003), and is the only body which includes social service workers in the legislation and regulatory body (Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services, 2005).

In 2005, the SWSSWA had its five year review by the provincial government, and several stakeholder groups made submissions⁸ (McDonald, 2007). The Canadian Union

⁷ OCSWSSW states in its mission: "The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers protects the interest of the public by regulating the practice of social workers and social service workers and promoting excellence in practice" and its vision states that it will be "accountable and accessible to the community" (OCSWSSW, 2003b). On the other hand, OASW "speaks on behalf of the interests and concerns of social workers" (OASW, 2007).

⁸ Of the 97 submissions to the government review of SWSSWA (McDonald, 2007), these included CUPE, OASW, and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario voiced its opposition to social work regulation in its 2005 submission, indicating the public should not be led to believe they need protection from social workers or social service workers. Additional concerns were raised through other submissions, which generally reflect critiques of regulation as will be discussed next. After the review was complete, McDonald (2007) reported to the College's members that the government made no major amendments to the legislation, and that OCSWSSW "Council is pleased with the recommendations and provisions laid out in the report" (p. 2). It is important to note that none of the stakeholder concerns were implemented as changes.

Factors Involved in Regulation

Many benefits and criticisms about regulation have surfaced over the years.

During this research, a number of beliefs about the advantages and disadvantages will be deconstructed, in order to understand if and how they impact social workers' and their practice with clients. For every critique there are valid arguments to support regulation and vice versa, therefore, it becomes evident that regulation is complex. Yet it also requires an exploration to ensure that the profession is meeting its now legal obligations to the public, that it is meeting

social workers' needs and that regulation ensures social workers are able to practice with a social justice and anti-oppressive focus.

Benefits of Social Work Regulation

The regulation of social work has many benefits, including: (1) protection of clients; (2) higher credibility/status for the profession; (3) social work identity and cohesiveness; (4) a united profession being a powerful advocate for social justice; and (5) accountability for ethical behaviour.

(1) <u>Protection of Service Users</u>: Protection of clients is a central feature of proregulation discussions, however the incidence of malpractice within social work is minimal (Globerman, 1992). Jones & Alcabes (1989) found that social workers, in comparison with medical and legal professionals, have lower malpractice rates as a result of the models from which they work. Utilizing a 'service-ideal model', the service user is aware of the social work professional's "dedication and concern" for them (Jones & Alcabes, 1989: 415), thus service users would be less likely to complain about their hardworking social worker.

Berliner (1989) disputes this by saying reports of sexual misconduct are "consistently under reported because many complaints never surface" (p. 70), and raises

further concerns about individuals who upon dismissal or "who forfeited their NASW [National Association of Social Workers] affiliation because of sexual misbehaviour, continue to practice" (p. 70). Berliner (1989) reported that "One in 12 complaints concerned a social worker's sexual misbehaviour toward a client" (69-70). OCSWSSW (2006) reports having had 255 complaints since its inception. Yet, a breakdown of the types of complaints received by OCSWSSW has not been provided. Of concern, McDonald (2005) reported the College has been unable to investigate 28% of complaints due to the reported individual not being registered.

A current trend in the field is an increased focus on liability issues within social work. "As of October 31, 2003, there were approximately 6000 social workers across Canada in the [malpractice insurance] plan and approximately 1500 were OASW members" (OASW, 2004: 22). Members sought insurance to protect them from complaints made to the College or for legal action coverage (OASW, 2004: 22). Additional reasons may also influence one's choice to have insurance, such as work in private practice.

(2) <u>Status</u>: In the College's first issue of its newsletter to members social work's status was discussed:

A regulatory college lends credibility to the profession(s) it regulates by gaining the confidence of the public it protects. Social workers and social service workers now have the status of being regulated professions comparable to other regulated professions in Ontario such as physicians, nurses, lawyers and accountants (OCSWSSW, 2002: 3).

This quote resembles the early comparisons of social workers with medicine and law. And although social work is criticized for being elitist through attempts to gain status, many highlight the need for the public to understand the profession and for social work successes to be publicized (Antle, 2002).

(3) <u>Identity</u>: The College views itself as playing a role in the social work identity, thus regulation may be the link between vast fields of practice, "...membership in the college [is] a logical extension of the professional identity associated with obtaining a degree in social work or a diploma in social service work" (McDonald, 2006b: 1).

Although there has been difficulty identifying social work identity, a cross national study of ten countries found similarities, "With respect to the goals of social work, students in all 10 cohorts attributed high levels of importance to enhancing social justice and individual well-being and lower levels of social control. These similarities were found despite the different contexts of students' professional socialization" (Weiss, 2005: 108). This focus on social justice speaks to the values, ethics and roots of social work.

Essentialism suggests that all social workers would experience or create identity the same way (Yee & Dumbrill, 2003). "Professional identities take many forms - but have in common an encouragement to develop certain capacities in a workplace/organizational environment. These capacities then entitle a person to be identified, by him/herself and others, as 'professional' (Kelly & Colquhoun, 2005: 139). Although there may be an identity associated with or defined by one's organization, it can not be assumed that this creation of identity is generalizable to all employees.

Other countries are fraught with tensions among their social workers, mainly depending on their varied social locations. In a South African study, social workers were often found split along racial lines as a result of Apartheid,

Although a shared conception of professional values has the potential to promote a unifying bond among South African social workers, this article contends that commonality is only likely to be reached once attention has been paid to the social, historical and ideological contexts that precipitated fragmentation of the profession in the first place... To date the most vocal calls for professional unity have originated from this privileged, majority section of the profession who constitute a minority section of the general population (Drower, 1996: 139).

Aligned with the gendered critique of regulation, a similar racial critique could be theorized, that the groups advocating for regulation are representatives from the privileged population, in this case the White population. This also connects to Carniol &

Kitchen's (1990) emphasis on the groups who opposed regulation in Ontario,

...model[ing our college] roughly along the lines of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Law Society is opposed by a variety of practitioners, including community workers, agency directors, social work educators, union representatives, first nation representatives, multi-cultural organizations and community groups (p. 62).

Although one could argue it is the foundation or structure of the college they oppose, others may contend that the critique is much deeper, regarding oppressive structures.

Raising the concern that professionalization seeks essentialist identities, Haas & Shaffir (1991) analyzed medical students' shift in identity, "Professionalization thus requires symbolic-interactional and ideological control, legitimization and identification. Therein lies the crux of the process of professionalization which necessitates an alienation from the self and from others" (p. 111). One could argue that based on its modeling of such professions, the social work identity will need to continue its efforts to achieve an anti-essentialist identity.

(4) <u>Powerful Advocate for Social Justice</u>: Healy and Meagher (2004) argue that professionalization of social work may be necessary as "a deprofessionalized and deskilled workforce is not in a good position to defend the interests of social service users" (p. 250). This idea of advocacy in numbers has been, and continues to be, a part of

OASW's work. Such social justice work speaks to the heart of social work, and as just one example of their advocacy, OASW spoke in 2002, on behalf of service users with disabilities who were not being included in decision making regarding Bill 125, the Ontario Disabilities Act (OASW, 2002). Davies (2002) added that social workers must understand the importance of the public's opinion of their work, echoed by Antle (2004) who recognized the need for the public to understand social work and "the relationship between private troubles and public ills" (p. 3).

In the midst of this work, some feel social work can not advocate in the current neo-liberal climate;

Advocacy has long been understood as an integral part of social work. However, the onslaught of the neo-conservative agenda of privatization and downsizing, the increasing complexity of problems and issues and the perennial problem on bureaucratic rigidity make advocacy particularly pertinent for social workers today (Lee, 2001: 11).

Although such implications for advocacy remain, it is not documented how regulation impacts or influences social action, advocacy or social justice movements in practice.

(5) Ethical Accountability: In Ontario, OCSWSSW puts forth a code of ethics, as does the CASW. As part of regulation, members must adhere to these ethics for the protection of service users. Of concern, a U.S. study found regulation does not

necessarily equate with more ethical workers, "The Code of Ethics appears of little or no significance to many members of NASW who have not read or thought about it" (Berliner, 1989: 70). At this time no findings, to support or speak to the contrary, from Canada have been located.

Critique of Regulation

Critics of social work regulation often have the following concerns, which involve: (1) power imbalances; (2) exclusionary criteria; (3) surveillance of the profession; (4) scapegoating of social workers; and (5) no evidence regulation is successful.

(1) <u>Power Imbalances</u>: Thompson (2002) describes professionalism as ambiguous; that accountability can lead to emancipatory and social justice focused work, however, "it can also refer to elitism and relations of dominance and subordination" (717). Adams (2002) acknowledges the relation with elitism but instead focuses on its assistance in furthering this profession's knowledge base, "continuing education and research within the profession also speaks to the profile we are establishing both within the profession and among other professionals" (p. 3). Consistent with that, Thompson (2002) juxtaposes emancipatory work as assisting to buffer elitism, "In some respects, this user participation

movement has had the effect of challenging the complacency of a traditional model of professionalism based on the notion of 'we know best" (p. 717). With such a social justice framework in mind, perhaps its feasible to contain elitist notions within regulation.

(2) Exclusionary Criteria: From a Foucaultian perspective, social services "...originated in social practices of selection and exclusion" (Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999: 85). McKnight (1995) continues the discussion about exclusion and power, by providing examples such as social workers' use of codified language, which results in service users' inability to understand, creating the social worker 'expert'. Margolin (1997) asserted, which Orme & Rennie (2006) acknowledge, that the oppression of clients has increased as a result of social workers' power and control, which is observed in the monitoring of and social control practices that currently exist.

As social workers work with increasingly marginalized and oppressed clients, the onus of responsibility for the role social workers have, must be acknowledged. Healy (2000) reiterates Foucault's point that social workers and other helpers, by fulfilling their roles, enable the state to "manage and discipline its citizens" (p. 44). This concept is consistent with Donna Jeffrey's work surrounding the all knowing/expert subject and social work education;

I understand the dilemma in social work education to be two-fold: pedagogy that builds self-awareness does not, and cannot, meet social work practice needs as they are defined; and the pursuit of the 'new' subject is problematic in itself because the desired subject is simply a variation of the masterful, white, liberal, all-knowing, all-consuming subject (Jeffrey, 2005:424).

Although some would argue that social work education continues to teach from such a subject state, others may argue that this is simply reflective of the field's and regulation's expectations.

As discussed earlier, regulation creates a distinct difference/dividing practice between the status of service user and social worker, but dividing practices within the profession also exist. For example, some social workers and fields of social work are under-represented within the College. Currently the majority of OCSWSSW social work members, or sixty-eight percent (68%), are employed in direct service. Thirty percent (30%) of OCSWSSW social work members represent employment in various social work roles including management, policy planning/analysis, program design/evaluation, community organizing/development, research, and education/training (OCSWSSW, 2006). The remaining two percent (2%) of OCSWSSW social work membership were reported to be unemployed (OCSWSSW, 2006), yet no further explanation was provided.

Exclusion within the profession also extends to colleagues who work in social services and in a capacity similar to, if not the same as, that of social workers. The

College has provided the opportunity for these individuals who do not hold an academic degree in social work, to register, and in fact the College received "900 applications for a provisional certificate of registration received by the College, during the two-year period from grandparenting from those persons who had experience performing the role of a social worker or social service worker but who did not have the academic qualifications typically associated with the profession" (McDonald, 2005: 2). However, the argument could be that this was time limited and had strict criteria for acceptance⁹.

(3) <u>Surveillance</u>: Regulation in general, is related to surveillance of professionals, while the College becomes the enforcer of the rules and codes of the profession. Although OCSWSSW (2002) advised its members that the organization is not solely about discipline, they remain able to investigate allegations made against members. To date, the College has cautioned seven (7) members and has had nine (9) referrals to the discipline committee but zero (0) to the fitness to practice committee (OCSWSSW, 2006). In

⁹ The opportunity to be grandparented into OCSWSSW was offered until November 2002 (McDonald, 2006). The criteria for admission included: minimum of 2000 hours and a minimum of five (5) years of experience leading up to the application, training/education in similar course content, supporting workplace references, agreement to take additional training over the next three (3) years, social work supervision of at least 700 hours (McDonald, 2006). For more detail, refer to the College's 2006 (volume 5, number 1) edition of Perspective.

addition, OCSWSSW (2002) reported that any history of a member remains on their record, in case of 'future complaints' (p. 8), which could be interpreted as scrutinizing social workers or as a safeguard for the profession.

(4) <u>Scapegoating Social Workers</u>: Since the onset of the neo-liberal ideology and the restructured welfare state, social workers have needed to adjust their practices to adapt to more unpaid work (Baines, 2004), higher caseloads, and less funding. Yet, when complaints are fielded, the sole responsibility rests with the worker. OCSWSSW (2007) reported that they take into account the system which employs or mandates the work done by social workers, however, the College also clearly states:

Had the members identified their difficulties at an earlier stage and taken appropriate steps to address them, for example, discussing workload stress with a supervisor and engaging in a process to more effectively deal with their stresses, the best interests of their clients could have been maintained (p.7).

What is not captured is the difficulty employers or bureaucracies would have in providing changes even if they wanted, and even if the social worker had advocated for workplace changes or support.

(5) <u>No Evidence</u>: Lastly, concerns surround a lack of evidence to indicate regulation has any overall benefit or meets its mission of protection. Orme & Rennie (2006) contend that "there is not universal acceptance of the need for registration as a

response to these factors" (p. 334). Barth (2003) further explained that "The overall effectiveness of licensing in the job market is highly uncertain" (p. 13). In fact, an outspoken advocate Colleen Lundy stated in a 1989 newspaper article, "And we know that legislation doesn't stop extreme cases of sexual assault. We have, for example, priests, doctors and psychologists who are guilty of sexual assault" (Sweet, 1989). However, from a postmodern viewpoint, there is no absolute and therefore it would be impossible to determine for example that every client was protected.

The Pulse & Status of OCSWSSW

Social work's regulatory body, the College, now reports having over 11,000 members (OCSWSSW, 2006). The OCSWSSW's 2006 annual report indicates there are 10, 289 social workers registered (with 726 registering in 2006 alone). "The College believes that the number of College members is indicative of social workers' and social service workers' general support for professional self-regulation, and specific support for the college" (McDonald, 2005: 2).

Considering the most recent statistics from Ontario Universities, representing 2002 statistics, there were 1,101 students who graduated from social work programs (Council of Ontario Universities, 2006: 92). In view of these numbers of new graduates

(2002 = 1,101), and the most recent numbers from the College, there is a discrepancy between how many social workers register in a year (2006 = 726) and how many new eligible social workers are available. Lundy (2003) suggests that only 25% of social workers in Ontario become registered. It is difficult to ascertain what number of social workers exist in Ontario, and therefore it is almost impossible to obtain an accurate picture of the number of non-registered social workers.

Social workers who are trained/educated in social work yet do not register exist, and are termed "Holding Out" (OCSWSSW, 2003/2004). As a result of legislated title protection, the use of the title 'social worker' without being registered has a first offence price tag of \$5000 and second offence price tag of \$10,000 (OCSWSSW, 2003/2004). The importance of title protection has always been to ensure that those who hold themselves out to be social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice social work, to prevent potential misrepresentation of worker and unethical treatment of service users. As a way to educate the membership on people who 'hold out', The College took this stance:

Although such individuals may have earned their BSW or MSW, these individuals also must consider their responsibility to represent themselves, their knowledge and their skills and abilities in a clear, open and thorough manner and in keeping with Ontario law. In order to achieve transparency and to avoid misleading or misrepresenting information it is essential to consider the general knowledge and

expectation of the audience receiving the information (OCSWSSW, 2003/2004: 3).

Thus, the difficulty remains in understanding the reasons behind "holding out", leading one to ask: Why are some social workers avoiding registration and 'holding out'? Why aren't all social workers in Ontario registered? According to McDonald (2005), "many members of the profession continue to see the College as an 'option' rather than a professional obligation" (p. 2), which they state "remains a curiosity and a concern" (p. 3). As no literature exists to more fully understand this issue, one must speak to social workers to explore their views regarding regulation.

Though regulation is a complex topic, it has implications for all Ontarian social workers. There is vast literature which reflects the varied opinions about regulation from members of this profession, often academics. Yet, there is little research on the views and experiences of those being regulated. Considering this gap in the research literature, the many differing voices on this topic and Ontario's recent implementation of regulation, it seems timely, responsible and necessary to reflect on the impact of the regulation of social work on the people who practice social work in Ontario.

CHAPTER THREE:

Methodology

Goal of Study

The purpose of this research is to explore social workers' views about regulation, in order to better understand the impact of regulation in social work. The secondary purpose of this study is to provide a platform for social workers to share feedback, experiences and views of the regulatory system in place in Ontario.

Theory & Epistemology

Theory is seen as a framework or world view. Embedded within the way one thinks, learns and knows information is theory, and theory "is inextricable from methodology" (Kovach, 2005: 28). Thus, it is important to ensure the world view, theory, and way of studying topics, epistemology, reflect similar goals.

This study will utilize a postmodern theoretical approach incorporated with an Interpretive Social Science (ISS) epistemology. Postmodernism evolved after its predeceasor modernism, failed to explain the way societal factors influence events based on the notion that social phenomena does not occur in a vaccumn. Often related to postmodernism is the idea of social constructionism and Burr (1995) explains "we might

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loosely group as social constructionist any approach which has at its foundation one or more of the following key assumptions... a critical stance; historical and cultural specificity; knowledge is sustained by social processes and knowledge as social action" (2-5). From a modernist perspective, it seems professionalization has been accepted as a natural progression for social work (Irving, 1999). Two postmodern writers, Michel Foucault (in *Reading Foucault for Social Work, 1999*) and Leslie Margolin (1997), encourage readers to recognize the social construction and history of events. Using social constructionism, it is important to recognize how the profession of social work developed, what forces in society influenced it, and how this 'knowledge' about social work was transferred. Knowing the profession's journey will assist in understanding it's current existence, and the implementation of regulatory bodies.

Theory, epistemology and this research are linked in their emphasis on social constructionism, as each seek an understanding of how people construct and interpret their world (Neuman, 1997). From this theoretical perspective, postmodernists believe it is "possible and necessary for individuals to be the subjects of their own knowledge and to be able to examine their own knowledge base, how it came to be that they acquired the knowledge that they did" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 60). This idea, that individuals can

provide insightful information, informs this study as the social worker participants were expected to reflect on their understanding of the development of regulation and its current existence and impact. The ISS epistemology is based in part on Max Weber, a sociologist, who "...felt that we must learn the personal reasons or motives that shape a person's internal feelings and guide decisions to act in particular ways" (Neuman, 1997: 68). Thus, this study sought to include a range of perspectives from practicing social workers about regulation.

Methodology

Theory and epistemology are fused to create the lens from which this topic is studied. By utilizing such a foundation, a qualitative research methodology was chosen as it appears most congruent with this study's purpose. Seen as more exploratory, qualitative research seeks participants' understanding and meanings (Rubin & Babbie, 2005), and is open to alternative interpretations of research which may not be represented within rigid quantitative studies (Patton, 1990). Participants are viewed as having valuable knowledge to contribute and thus their views were sought. ISS research details that researchers have a role in learning what underpins the views that participants employ

within their lives (Neuman, 1997). Within this study participants were asked about their experiences of regulation and the context of those experiences, by exploring how they came to have these views, how this intersects with social work identity, and how this impacts their practice with service users.

Strauss & Corbin (1998) and Rubin & Babbie (2005) acknowledge that research hypotheses and questions do not always contain a causal statement. This study is based on the use of exploratory research questions: What are social workers experiences and views of the regulation of this profession? What variables contribute to social workers registering (or lack thereof)? How does this impact their field of practice and work with service users? And, how does this relate to their social work identity?

Locating the Researcher

Insider/Outsider Status

It was important for me as a researcher to reflect on my position within the research topic and to the information being shared, as well as in relation to the participants, "... researchers should reflect on, reexamine, and analyze personal points of view and my feelings as part of the process of studying others" (Neuman, 1997: 73).

Throughout this self-analysis, the insider/outsider debate often emerged, as did my

feelings of loyalty to the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW).

Lasala (2003) discussed the researcher as being 'the outside insider'. I am an insider in this research as I too am a social worker, thus I share with the participants common education, professional values and perhaps work/field experience. But I am an outsider because I am the researcher and in a separate role from my colleagues, the research participants. I am an outsider in other ways, including the fact that I am registered as a social worker in comparison with participants who are not registered, and I may own views that differ from the participants'. I may also be an outsider based on other factors, such as my education, gender, race, age, field, geographic location etcetera.

As an insider, there is a concern that affinity or closeness may limit the way I will analyze, view or understand the information which participants share (Lasala, 2003). Although referring to racial insider/outsider status, Boushel (2000) discussed experiential affinity, experiential interdependance and their relationship to power, concepts which have been applied to this study. 'Experiential affinity' or "shared powerfulness" (p. 77) can become 'experiential interdependence' if shared prestige or power, between the researcher and participants, is not acknowledged or probed, and could lead to oversights

of the differences which exist. I needed to recognize that as social work professionals, power is inherent and can not be overlooked or minimized. This complex issue remained at the fore of my consciousness, to identify the point where affinity can become or change into interdependence, where similarities end and differences begin. For example during the interviews I often asked participants to elaborate or explain what they had just said and the meanings behind what they said, to mitigate interdependence and provide room for difference, even when I thought I understood what they said.

Accountability to Stakeholders

More specific to my location was a sense of responsibility to stakeholders of this research. Beresford & Evans (1999) outlined the various entities to which the researcher is accountable, including organizations. This created dilemmas for this research as I tried to negotiate my role as a registered social worker and my accountability or obligation toward OCSWSSW. I also needed to remain accountable to the research participants, to their stories and experiences. These two groups, the College and the participants, may have conflicting or competing expectations or needs, and both hold different levels of power in relation to each other.

Herising (2005) suggests that "Responsibility to, and being accountable for, our research requires that we need to be as attentive to process as we are to content" (p. 139). Therefore, to ensure accountability was upheld to both parties within the research process, I engaged in two tasks. I contacted OCSWSSW to make them aware of the research being conducted and still remain open to discussing this research and findings with them. In remaining accountable to participants, I completed 'member checks' to ensure trustworthiness/validity of the participants' responses. In member checks, participants reviewed their interview transcripts to ensure their views were presented accurately. In addition to these direct stakeholders, other groups or individuals have a vested interest. I must remain accountable to social workers in general, other helpers in the field, and most importantly to service users. All of the identified stakeholders will be discussed throughout the remaining chapters, including how they are implicated or the implications for them.

Design

Complimenting the exploratory nature of this study, a grounded theory approach was implemented. When used, exploration is paramount and continuous, as grounded theory is woven through data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis (Rubin &

Babbie, 2005; Charmaz, 2002). Grounded theory's reflexivity allows the researcher to gather data and ask questions about information which the literature has determined pertinent (Rubin & Babbie, 2005; Charmaz, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Such permeable boundaries between the data gathering, recruitment and analysis stages of the research process ensure newly developed themes are continuously being incorporated into the research.

Sampling

Luborsky & Rubinstein (1995) and Grinnell & William (1990) explain that a purposive sample is one in which the participants were chosen based on some criteria that was defined by the researcher. Babbie (1999) included that purposive sampling is also referred to as judgemental sampling as the researcher selects the participants based on some knowledge about the area being researched.

Initially the only exclusionary criteria for this study was that participants were required to hold a B.S.W. and/or M.S.W. degree(s). Secondly, advertisement for this study (see Appendix C) asked that potential participants feel strongly about (as identified/determined by them) or express a critical opinion (pro-regulation, active resistance to regulation or other) about regulation. Both registered members of

OCSWSSW as well as non-registered social workers were sought for participation.

However, the researcher did not exclude participants based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, geographic location, social work field setting, or employer.

Recruitment

Using a snowball sampling technique, also known as word-of-mouth, potential participants were sought. An open call to participants was utilized and consisted of various types of contact with potential participants. Two posters (see Appendix C) advertising this study were displayed in the School of Social Work at McMaster University. Additionally, the researcher spoke to colleagues to promote this study, and three open calls for participants were sent, by the school of social work graduate secretary and the researcher, via group e-mail. Each e-mail contained the poster, information letter, and asked that potential participants contact the researcher directly if interested in volunteering. E-mail recipients and all research participants were also asked to forward the letter of information to other colleagues or potential participants. This recruitment strategy is congruent with the snowball sampling technique which "makes use of participants as referral sources" (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995: 104). The 'calls' for

participation were distributed intermittently, as grounded theory design involves this concurrent process, allowing for the recruitment process to continue during the period when interviews and analysis are taking place.

Due to the broad criteria for participation in this study, and rapid response from the field, it was necessary to begin a screening process during recruitment. "Sampling is a power-laden decision and seen as one of many political acts in research" (Potts & Brown, 2005: 269). At this point in the research, it was important for the researcher to be reflexive about decisions being made. Sheppard (1998) explains that reflexive social workers are: "... an active thinker, able to assess, respond and initiate action... is one who is aware of the socially situated relationship" (p. 767). Such reflection on the power involved in selecting participants was augmented by receiving feedback from and discussions about this process with the thesis supervisor.

As a result of the sample selection process, new criteria for participants emerged. In order to ensure an ethical study and participants' confidentiality, the researcher attempted to 'match' participants by field of practice for example. Based on the fact that this study relied on snowball sampling/referrals from participants' peers, it was important to ensure a participant could not be identified through their social work role/field. As a result of the overabundance of front-line workers' interest in this study, of the time & size

constraints of thesis research, and to ensure confidentiality, participants who were in roles such as supervisor, manager or professor were not sought to participate in this study. This 'matching' extended to include an addition in subsequent 'calls for participation' to include a request for persons who had experienced the regulatory body's compliant process. This decision was made after meeting with a person who had been involved in a complaints process, in order to have more than one person in the sample who experienced a complaint.

Instrumentation

An interview guide was utilized within this research, containing questions and probes to facilitate the interviews. Most importantly, the interview guide (see Appendix D) was chosen as it allows flexibility within the process of gathering data (Patton, 1990), as the questions can be amended or expanded upon. In addition, Rubin & Babbie (2005) explain that interview guides allow for the construction of open questions and an interview format which allow space for the participant to answer in their own way.

Using the grounded theory method, the researcher initiated each interview with preliminary questions but as the interviews proceeded, and information was obtained from research participants, the researcher could "further develop questions around those

concerns" (Charmaz, 2002: 312). Thus, "new questions arise as the researcher talks to more people and gains greater understanding of their situation" (Charmaz, 2002: 318), ensuring that the analysis is concurrent with the gathering of data.

Within this study, the researcher held semi-structured, conversational interviews with nine (9) of the ten (10) participants. In general, interviews lasted approximately one to one and a half (1-1 ½) hours in length. The literature indicates that highly structured interviews can be too inflexible (Rubin & Babbie, 2005), thus semi-structured interviews appeared more congruent with the flexibility necessary for a grounded theory approach. Prior to the scheduled interviews, in an attempt to enhance the upcoming conversation, participants were provided with the interview guide in order to prepare for the meeting. Unexpectedly, one participant was unable to attend their scheduled interview, so voluntarily answered the interview questions sent to them via-email instead of meeting for a face-to-face interview.

Data Collection

While completing the semi-structured interviews, and with the permission of the participants, interview/field notes were taken and the interviews were audio-taped. All interviews were completed in privacy and no identifying information was included in the

field notes or on the audio tape, unless the participant identified her/himself. At every phase of this research audio tapes and written transcripts were secured in a locked filing cabinet, to which only the researcher had access.

Ethics/Informed Consent

An information letter (see Appendix E) was distributed to potential participants. This letter outlined the research purpose, the expectations of participants, information such as confidentiality, where the research has been approved and how to withdraw from the study. A consent form (see Appendix F) was signed by each participant who was interviewed. The participant who provided responses via e-mail, sent a written agreement upon reviewing the consent form and information letter. Each participant was provided the opportunity to ask any questions both before and after consent was obtained.

As Kayser-Jones & Koenig (1994) and Patton (1990) identify, it is important to note the possibility that the participants in this study may encounter social risks as they speak about (perhaps speak against) the regulation of their profession. It can be presumed that if one provides a critical analysis of an institution, they may fear that this may impact their professional reputation. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw from this research, without consequence, at any point of the research process until the final

analysis and writing of this research, and this was made explicit on the information letter and consent form. Confidentiality within this study has also been viewed as a method to mitigate the potential social risks. As already discussed within the recruitment section, confidentiality was upheld through the writing of the research findings, in an effort to minimize identifiable statements being disseminated.

The Research Participants

This study's purposive sample had ten (10) participants in total. Seeking a balance in views toward regulation meant the study concluded with participants who support and oppose regulation. Although not initially anticipated, support for regulation was not necessarily linked with registration and vice versa. Some participants were registered because it was a requirement of employment but did not identify as proregulation, while others supported aspects of regulation but were not registered. In total, eight (8) participants were registered and two (2) were non-registered.

Participants' disclosed demographic information they felt comfortable sharing and anything they felt had impacted their views. Of particular interest is the diversity of various factors, including the broad range in participants' years of experience, that they received social work degrees in five (5) different Ontario universities and have different

geographic locales. For a complete outline of participants' demographics, see Table One (Appendix G).

Data Analysis

Luborsky & Rubinstein (1995) highlight that within qualitative research, one can reach saturation with a sample of 12-26 participants (p. 105). Due to the time constraints associated with a Thesis project, this size of sample was not feasible. Thus, it is likely that additional participants may have created additional themes that were not captured within this study. However, this does not in any way remove the importance of the experiences or views of the participants within this study.

Strauss & Corbin (1998) explain that "analysis is the interplay between researcher and data" (p. 13). Furthermore, qualitative analysis incorporates "science and art" to determine categories of information within the data, to observe patterns and to compare participants' responses which lead the researcher to an understanding and interpretation of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 13; Rubin & Babbie, 2005). Firstly, each participant's interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and excluded identifying information. To maintain validity, termed trustworthiness in qualitative research, triangulation techniques were incorporated. "When researchers seek corroboration

between two or more sources for their data and interpretations" (Rubin & Babbie, 2005: 464). Member checks were utilized, to allow participants to view the interview data (Rubin & Babbie, 2005), to ensure their voices/experiences have been appropriately represented. In this study, each participant was sent their transcription and six (6), of the nine (9) participants interviewed, reviewed and made changes and approved their interview manuscript. As part of another form of triangulation, auditing, a "paper-trail" was left by the researcher to demonstrate accountability for decisions made (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). Such documents, in this study, included field notes, meeting notes, audio tapes, interview transcripts and coding notes.

As part of the analysis, researchers complete coding, memoing and concept mapping by reading the text, highlighting and categorizing the concepts then comparing the concepts to other participants' responses to create themes which answer the initial research question (Rubin & Babbie, 2005). Next, Connolly (2003) outlines the major steps undertaken in analysis, from the generative phase, to the interpretive phase and ending in the theorizing phase. Once themes were developed, the analytical work continued as meanings were derived, links were made to other works, and tensions or gaps were highlighted. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this research and the accompanying analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Findings & Analysis

In this chapter, the themes which emerged from participant interviews will be described. Intertwined throughout each theme were discussions about the pulse, status and realities of participants' practices in social work, often contextualized by participants' use of case examples or stories of their experiences. Of particular interest, these often overlapped regardless of field and seemingly different roles within the profession and/or registration status. At times the similarities which emerged occurred when participants had uncertainties, spoke of unknowns or confusions regarding regulation and the regulatory body. As this study sought social work participants with varied views on regulation, not surprisingly, there were some significant differences too. An unanticipated finding, presented within all themes, occurred when registered social workers had a critique to provide and when the non-registered social workers had positive points to make about regulation or OCSWSSW. The themes and sub-themes will be presented next, and are organized so each theme builds upon and leads into the next, which generally reflects the progression of topics discussed within interviews with participants.

WHEN REGULATION MET PRACTICE

i. Creation of a Perfect Storm: Regulation's History & Development

Entering the field over a range of years from 1972 to 2005, participants spoke of learning about regulation in many different ways with universities playing a prominent role. Half of the participants first learned about regulation in school, while others recalled discussing the underpinning ideological debate. This debate is often implicated in discussions of professionalization, as outlined in the literature review and dates back to the early divides in the role of social worker between that of clinician focused on treatment or community activist working toward social change. Although this debate always existed, a perfect storm, or the perfect mixture of elements needed for regulation, had not always been present.

Most participants were unaware of regulation's origins, including the OASW's advocacy initiative, and none reported playing a role in that movement other than having opinions on the sidelines. Four of the participants were practicing social work during regulation's development, and two participants recalled the buzz, similarly referring to hearing "grumblings" or "rumblings" that regulation would occur. Another participant vaguely recalled the beginning of the advocacy campaign, yet noted the outcome had a significant impact: "I think I just became shocked at how the forces that were pro-

regulation seemed to gain such ground so quickly, because it always seemed like this debate would go on forever".

Adding to the perfect storm in Ontario, was the neo-liberal ideology, which Kingfisher (2002) explained as an approach to the world, where the state operates from a pro-market stance. Restructuring of the welfare state, which occurred in the '90s was seen as a result of this ideology, and Baines (2006) explained the restructuring is "in large part to remove barriers to corporate infiltration and domination of markets and regions" (p. 26). One participant nicely summarized these forces impacting the move to regulation during this period:

"The perfect storm in the '90s, what I thought was happening is that right during the period of the cuts from the early '90s and mid-nineties, when all of a sudden all these services were being de-funded and squeezed and having shrinking resources, I think that social workers began to panic... and increasing credentialism became a way of holding onto job protection in a shrinking market in which all of a sudden everything was quite precarious...I call that a bit of defensive credentialing...And the rationale behind that is we'll still be able to help people and serve communities"

Although this is somewhat of a critique of the move toward regulation, no alternative has been provided that would ensure social work jobs exist in the current neo-liberal market. In Ontario, cuts and under funding have continued well into the 21st Century and it would be difficult to predict social work's viability now, had regulation not occurred.

A range of strong feelings towards regulation emerged during interviews. Some participants discussed their anticipation of the move to regulation, "I was quite excited, I thought it was a big moment in social work history that the College was formed". On the other side of the spectrum, participants displayed concern, "It's a bit disappointing that that's the route they decided to go, at a time with cuts to funding that it was the move toward protecting ourselves rather than confronting and challenging the cuts". And although service user protection is at the fore of regulation discussions, how to protect them seems to be defined differently, via advocacy or regulation, as though the two do not overlap.

ii. Employer Support for and Participants' Registration Status

Eight (8) participants in this study are registered social workers, six (6) of whom reported this is a requisite of their employment. Although this rate of registration is not generalizeable to the profession at large, there is some question as to how many social workers remain unregistered. It seems that employer support of regulation varies significantly and mirrors the variance in social workers' registration. In support of regulation two participants discussed ongoing reviews of their registration by the employer, and one explained that they would be suspended without pay if unable to

provide up-to-date registration. Another participant remembered there was a period of uncertainty before and after their employer made registration mandatory, "there was this scramble to regulate everyone... I thought clearly this place won't come down if I'm not registered". Indicating incongruence in agency support, those who are not registered explained some employers would 'like' employees to be registered, while others do not encourage registration, "The union does not support being registered and in fact encourages everyone not to register, or at least advises against registering". Aside from mandatory registration due to employer requirement, there was little variance in reasons for registration. Participants spoke about their beliefs, values and sense of responsibility, "Early on I decided its something I want to do... morally I feel its right for me personally to be registered". Walsh (1990) supports this, explaining ethics is often viewed as "intricately related" to professionalization (p.14).

iii. Varied Views on Regulation: On the One Hand, On the Other Hand

Participants' views on regulation appeared fluid, changing over time. While a participant spoke about being "initially pretty resistant" and feeling regulation would "undermine individual social workers", this participant now labels themself as pro-

regulation. What may impact participants' pro-regulation views are their field of practice and close proximity with other regulated professionals. Other participants spoke of initially being for regulation and now question its benefits. Although the development of views could be a result of various factors such as length of time in the field, field setting, or contact with the College, they represent diverse views of the contestation of social work regulation, as laid out in the literature review.

Predicting participants views could not be deduced by simply associating one's registration with support for regulation. A few participants were ambivalent, having feelings for regulation on the one hand and opinions against on the other. One of the two participants not registered reported "I don't have a problem being a part of the College ... its also like a rebellion, I'm not doing this unless I have to do it". However this participant had some significant critiques of the College, which gave the impression registration would not be supported. A registered participant stated "Well if I didn't have to, I don't think I would [register]", but also felt there needed to be increased accountability in their field and did not provide an alternative accountability mechanism if they were not registered. These confusions seem to speak to a lack of dialogue, perhaps understanding of regulation which McDonald (2005) acknowledged as resulting in social workers' feelings of "ambivalence and anger towards the College" (p. 2).

Perhaps the least ambiguous, a non-registered participant reported not wanting to be registered. While another participant echoed this desire, they are registered but disagree with regulation from an ideological standpoint: "I never wanted to be a member... my views on regulation have always been that I'm opposed to it ... there's always been currents of wanting to regulate social work for decades and that's been a fairly conservative arm of the profession". In support of this participants' view, another participant stated "And if they don't believe in it, they shouldn't feel compelled. And thats what we try to do for people right, you don't have to necessarily tow the party line if the party line is a conflict of values for you or a conflict of interest, personally or professionally". So if one has a value or ideological base different than the College, is it beneficial to them, or service users, that they register? Does forcing one into registration, regardless of their point of view, distance the profession from the values of respect for the inherent dignity and worth of all persons (CASW, 2005)?

ACCOUNTABILITY: TO WHOM?

i. Accountability in Social Work Practice

Although accountability was discussed with each participant, one made a

distinction between what accountability means to them:

"I think accountability starts in the community, it starts at the grassroots, so social workers ...have to figure out ways that they can be working towards gains and goals of the communities that they're supposed to serve ...But also making sure, like I'm a big pusher of service user participation, you know that there are service users involved at having a voice at the table"

Such inclusion is reflected in the College's addition of public members on committees.

However, the involvement of service users and how committee members are recruited is not well known to the participants.

Accountability to service users was viewed as necessary in the field, and if a regulatory body was involved, participants felt it should be self regulation which is the current model in Ontario, as opposed to government regulated. The impact of regulatory accountability was varied, as described by participants, with some feeling regulation does not impact their work because ethical accountability and behaviour is inherent in being a social worker, "I think that's part of being professional, is you're accountable for these things, because you are that discipline, not because there's the College".

In support of accountability through regulation, participants spoke about the need to ensure practice is adhering to expected standards, "The grass roots or front line advocacy is very important but there needs to be a standard of ethics". Although there have always been codes of ethics for the practice of social work, including the

responsibility to advocate, regulation legally binds social workers to practice ethically, and complete roles such as advocacy regardless of the job description designed by the employer. As one participant pointed out, regulation may 'back up' a social worker's refusal to complete a task, if asked to do something by an employer that contradicts their ethics. Thus, although ethical standards have always been present, they can now be legally enforced and monitored.

ii. Panopticon Surveillance of Social Workers

Foucault's discussion of panopticon surveillance, initially related to a physical structure used to monitor inmates in prisons (Foucault, 1979), serves as a useful metaphor for the regulation of social work. As social workers continue to be regulated, one can assume they will (if not already) learn to self-discipline because they know they are accountable (being watched). "Yet are not social workers, by their own definitions, just as much the objects of analysis as the clients they assist?" (Margolin, 1997: 161). This is demonstrated in Michel Foucault's thoughts on Self, interpreted as "...the ways in which Others seek to govern us in relation to ideas about the particular characteristics that this Self should exhibit" (Kelly & Colquhoun, 2005: 139). After social workers have internalized the expectations of professional behaviour, one can assume this contributes to social workers' accountability in practice, and was reflected by some participants, "I think

regulation reminds us of our ethics and values as social workers to do anti-oppressive work... its that extra thought you know".

The majority of participants spoke of an understanding and appreciation of the surveillance role to ensure social workers were adhering to guidelines. "It's a watchdog of the profession to be blunt" said one participant while another interestingly used the same language, "there is nothing wrong with having a watchdog". And surveillance was viewed, by another participant, as better than no alternative. In this sense, the College has provided accountability to those who have a vast amount of autonomy in their work, including private practitioners. Many would argue this is a positive aspect of regulation, ensuring consistency in service for service users and provides clear guidelines for social workers.

Other participants discussed social workers' vulnerability as a result of surveillance, "In one sense the members do subject themselves to outside scrutiny...that is one of the things people do say 'I've signed up to have somebody else tear me apart". And while participants spoke of the surveillance of ethically compliant social workers, there were also concerns about the effectiveness of surveillance for those who are not. Participants questioned the regulatory body's ability to track people who have done something

unethical, and reported having seen "people move around", people who had not been held accountable to OCSWSSW.

Uncertainties emerged regarding the use of surveillance. Questions included the necessity to monitor social workers each year through annual registration and to be responsible to multi-accountability mechanisms, which fueled a participant to ask "why create big brother?" In addition, a participant spoke of their discomfort thinking about providing surveillance of their colleagues, "Are we supposed to watch each other? That would create immense distress and I would argue it would make a lot of people say 'well screw it I'm not going to do it'. [I'll] Switch jobs because I don't want that kind of relationship with my colleagues". For social workers, the impact of being accountable to OCSWSSW is in addition to accountability to the employer, other legislation and most importantly service users. Although these groups and entities may have congruent expectations of social worker behaviours, they may also have competing expectations or goals of the social work intervention or outcome. Thus this may enhance social workers feeling scrutinized and vulnerable.

iii. A Call for Agency & Government Accountability

One participant acknowledged the role of government accountability mechanisms, regarding inconsistent funding of social services and the resulting dispersal of resources.

A lack of accountability in systems was also related to accountability within participants' agencies. "[You] Don't have anybody auditing your notes in the same kind of way, record keeping standards, that type of thing [as social workers would]." Participants felt that agencies need to be held accountable for their decisions related to funding and for the environments to which social workers are exposed. Participants seemed to indicate there is a need for additional surveillance and auditing of the profession, which others would argue could be detrimental to any autonomy some agencies have left. In determining who's role this would be, a reciprocal relationship of accountability unfolded.

Participants felt that the OCSWSSW must take a lead role in ensuring agency and government accountability to the profession, which in turn ensures social workers are able to provide ethical services and remain accountable to the public, whom the College seeks to protect in the first place.

iv. OCSWSSW Accountability To Social Workers

As College members, or potential members, participants expected the OCSWSSW to be accountable to their membership and the profession at large. Transparency of the College seemed integral and included greater involvement by social workers, "Sometimes the regulations are removed from the reality of our jobs, so it might be a good idea for some of them to work with us for awhile before they make the regulations or revamp".

There was additional concern about OCSWSSW understanding the reasons social workers refrain from registering, and a participant felt the College should "schmooze" the social work population. McDonald (2005) acknowledged a need to communicate members and non-members, yet two years after making this statement, confusion remains.

More uncertainty related to the College's expenditures, "I think the difficulty is that as a social worker, I don't have the time to investigate that and I don't really have the desire but that is a concern for me. How are they legitimately spending our money, meeting the mandate?" Other participants spontaneously raised similar concerns about OCSWSSW's office being in a high real estate area and the College's surplus, which one participant felt could be better spent: "I just think in a time where service users are just reeling and there's cuts to everything, and some of the poorest of the poor that we're working with can't get by and that all this money is accumulating". This interesting comment relates to the profession's role of accountability to those being served, also intertwined with its value of advocacy, and perhaps relates indirectly, or directly, to the College's mandate of protecting the public.

Shifting the conversation of expected accountability of OCSWSSW, participants felt "[OCSWSSW] should monitor the profession and not just the professionals". Even

though, admittedly, the participants knew this was not the college's mandate, many felt the College should advocate on behalf of the profession. Participants understood the main role of OASW is advocacy for the profession but they called upon OCSWSSW to take a stronger part as well, citing the recent advocacy work surrounding the psychotherapy act¹⁰, and praised the College for their contribution. Feeling this was a positive move for the profession, and that it protected the work that so many social workers do, some participants even spoke proudly of their involvement.

Collectively, participants imagined the College playing a supplementary role to OASW's advocacy,

"Advocacy is the prime role that OASW has taken on and it really seems to work to bring attention to social issues – I think that having a regulatory body doing so would unite the profession, but also perhaps provide more legitimacy to the issue that is being advocated for"

⁻

While in its development Bill 171, which proposed changes to the Pscyhotherpay Act, did not include social workers as individuals qualified to offer psychotherapy (OASW, 2007c). OASW reported to its members that "social workers are the largest regulated profession in Ontario providing counselling and psychotherapy services" (OASW, 2007b). After organized advocacy efforts on the part of Ontarian social workers and groups of social workers, this amendment was granted (OASW, 2007c). In May 2007, the social work profession got word that they had been recognized as qualified "to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy" (OASW, 2007c).

So while participants felt that OASW is the "political force", they viewed OCSWSSW as a "powerful tool", and together the two could be more influential.

Impacting this request was participants' comparisons with other professions. They spoke of the ways in which the College of Nurses for example, has advocated for their members regarding health hazards in their work environment. Upon review though, the College of Nurses of Ontario has a similar mission of protection (CNO, 2007), as that of OCSWSSW. Thus the importance of the operation of other professions' Colleges depends on this profession's desire to model other professions regulatory systems or to stand as a unique force.

A practical way to incorporate participants' desire of advocacy and the College's mandate of the public's protection is through its standards for the profession,

"It loses our advocacy voice, because a lot of the standards that start to be put in place are actually mimicking the medical profession and more conservative arm of the nursing profession, so people start talking about things like evidence based practice model, they start talking about best practices and you don't hear things like advocacy, social change. Although certainly within all the preamble around the College, I think the equality word is in there somewhere"

This participant is alluding to the College having social justice, advocacy, activist, social action and change statements in its guidelines for practice, which would support any advocacy campaigns social workers or OASW initiate. The concern with not having such

strongly worded statements is that social workers will not be able to advocate as strongly as its been able to in previous decades. Within the current neo-liberal ideological environment, there is concern about the profession's ability to continue advocacy work, consistent with Lee (2001), and discussed by a participant;

"[this] scarce funding regime is making people fearful of speaking out even when they do speak out its done in the most liberal ways rather than radical ways. Making demands in ways that are seen as being very non-confrontational. And I don't want to paint the OASW with such a negative brush because they do come out with strong statements around budgets and strong statements around poverty and I think that's really important, I'd just like to see more of it".

Thus, this societal context suggests it will be increasingly difficult to advocate for social justice issues on the behalf of clients and it speaks to a need for additional collaboration with social work collective groups.

Although participants' recent involvement in the psychotherapist movement indicates that advocacy in social work is alive, it could be argued that social work continues to advocate on its own behalf rather than for more social justice issues.

Jennissen & Lundy (2006) suggest the profession has gone through phases of movements, such as social work's "narrow focus on profession-building at the expense of social activism" in the 1930s, when "workers were confronted with the economic and social fallout of the Great Depression" (p. 3). Advocating for regulation was a prominent

feature of its development yet it has had ripple effects on movements in this profession. It is clear that social work needs to distinguish social justice movements for service users from advocacy initiatives related to working conditions of social workers. Although linked with each other, as a strong profession can advocate for others, it is imperative that social justice and service users do not become the lesser priority.

A few hypotheses emerged about why participants requested OCSWSSW to take an advocacy role. From participants' perspectives, the request for a joint effort between OCSWSSW and OASW was related to their inability to afford membership in both organizations, but include their placing high importance on advocacy. In addition, other provinces have their association double as their regulatory body (CASW, 2003), which may be another factor influencing participants' expectations. Lastly, this expectation of the College could relate to the perceived power of and a belief that the College would be able to create such changes in its mandate.

THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF POWER

i. Belonging to the Status Club

The status of social work was discussed by participants, often in relation to other

professions and professionals, "Every relation is a relation of power" (Moffatt & Miehls, 1999: 69). A few participants felt that an increased status in social work would lead to being viewed as professional or legitimate, and one participant felt that this had a direct relationship with regulation, "If I want to be considered legitimate, I want to be registered". The benefits of status included being able to negotiate higher salaries and more recognition for work. Thus, there was an association of higher status with regulation and increased gain for workers.

Participants spoke of the low status of social workers in comparison to any colleagues and as a result of colleagues misunderstandings about social work,

"There are a lot of misconceptions about what social work does, what social work stands for and what our responsibilities are and our knowledge base...Being the least valued profession, you have to fight to get the simplest things done...Its not a very glamorous profession to begin with...some people don't even realize there is a degree in social work".

The gaining of status was discussed as involving the ability to resemble other professions, "I noticed that psychologists who don't have a lot of clinical experience...they have the language...but I thought, that's one of the reasons social workers aren't listened to. So I tried to sharpen up the language that I used". Although many participants could relate with being perceived or treated as the least valued, a critical question was posed;

"Do you really want to be in that company is always what I say? Do you really want to gain status and class power by aligning yourself with doctors, nurses...Do you want to align yourself, do you want to become more like them cause believe me you have to become more like them to belong to their club. And that's not good for service users"

Even while comparing social work with other professions, participants spoke in many ways of distancing themselves from other professions' strategies of working with people, such as the medical model. And though status seemed important, this was far removed from participants' reasons for entering the field, "Social workers have a tendency to work for the work, not the money. But it is still nice to be recognized because so much of what we do is invisible". Gowanlock (1990) raised concern with social work status, "social work in Canada has always tried to establish its professional status by emphasizing the purity of its motives" (p. 6). So, there remains this desire for recognition, raising the question, must recognition relate to status?

ii. Social Work Power & Service User Powerlessness

The relationship of power, or the impact of one group's power over another is related to Michele Foucault's work on dividing practices as outlined in the literature review. A dividing practice, is upheld in the social work relationship by the worker role as 'helper' and the service user role as 'benefactor', ensuring social workers maintain the power in relation to their client (Chambon, 1999). During the interviews, social worker

power was raised as a concern. One participant felt that the profession of social work is organized in a manner that perpetuates a power differential, "I think it's [an] elitist profession that engages in social control measures against clients rather than engaging in social change". Similarly, other participants spoke about the power social workers have in certain fields where they have the ability to take away service users rights, using examples from child welfare, corrections, and the health field where consent and capacity is removed. Under the current guidelines, social workers are employed in these environments yet separately must uphold the code of ethics, which may at times be conflicting, when rights are removed thereby refusing one's self determination.

Power was also seen as embedded within the social work models utilized in the field, in addition to organizational power:

"I think that under the current guidelines, people can be incredibly disrespectful to clients' rights and still be found well within the college guidelines... Clearly the college guidelines are starting to talk about familiarity and comfort and expertise around evidence based practice. And when you look at those models those aren't about changing communities and making them better for clients, those are about changing people and making them fit better with impoverished communities"

Although not arguing for stricter standards, guidelines and surveillance, this participant is focusing on a change of focus in the way social workers complete their work.

Acknowledging the authority inherent in social work, participants called for social workers to admit they hold a large amount of power,

"We're not equal and you have to understand that. [some people think] that you're not in an authority relationship with them...but you are, you always are...And don't pretend that you are [equal], I find that very disrespectful".

Utilizing an AOP approach, as opposed to other models, was seen as a mitigating factor to the unequal power distribution, "When I work with clients, I try to give them power with, instead of power over", which involved a shared decision making process.

As a whole, the participants used various descriptors in discussing the populations they serve, indicating service users are vulnerable, marginalized, historically oppressed, and often these individuals' rights are even more restricted in fields such as corrections. Not only do service users already enter into relationships with social workers from a place of powerlessness, the idea of further marginalization occurs when work places or individual social workers are not textually organized to recognize service users' identities on agency forms which may not inquire about social location such as one's sexuality; "We're organized in a way in which consumers of service, users of service, just have such little power and when they do experience a problem, there's just no way of them seeking justice". This speaks to the need for an avenue for them to seek justice which currently

exists in the field by way of OCSWSSW and its mandate to protect the public (OCSWSSW, 2003).

iii. Government Power & OCSWSSW Lack of Power

Although participants expect OCSWSSW to advocate for the profession, there were some concerns about their ability to do so. Barriers to OCSWSSW's ability to advocate, viewed by participants, is its close proximity, or being in the "back pocket" as described by a participant, of the government and the potential backlash that the profession would face after lobbying the government. "I suppose it could get ugly, this is the government, and if you were to embarrass someone, I think there would be consequences." In a cyclical relationship, low levels of advocacy aimed at the government may be impacted by and also create a perceived low status or vulnerability of the profession. Though these issues were recognized, the concerns did not outweigh participants' desire for advocacy. Ultimately, social workers must determine the importance of others', including government's, perceptions of the profession and its impact on initiating advocacy work.

iv. Social Work Powerlessness, Agency & Service User Power

At times throughout the interviews, scenarios were discussed whereby social workers felt they had little power. Some participants spoke of their lack of power in

seeking social justice for clients, "I do try to advocate for change where I can, however social work is a very small voice in an enormous political arena". Feelings of powerlessness appear to have developed over a number of years and since the onset of one participant's career:

"Especially in the last 5-10 years, I think there has been a growing sense of being...workers feel much more isolated, much more left out of decision making processes, and much more alienated from the planning that happens at their agencies. And whether it's real or not, it feeds into a paranoia, a certain hostility, lack of trust"

This issue of the powerful agency versus powerless social worker is a thread in which many participants voiced concern and relates to a lack of feeling secure and protected in work environments.

A discussion about complaints raised some participants' feelings of powerlessness in relation to service users who potentially could report their behaviour. One participant spoke of his own discomfort knowing service users could discriminate against him based on his social location as a gay man:

"But when you're working with certain populations, it might have an effect on how you're working with them...Because I'm conscious of who I am and how that would effect that helping relationship, if they're uncomfortable with me under the assumption that I am, of my sexual identity or my sexual preference, I can't be effective with that person".

It could be argued that service users having power over social workers is an illusion, but participants spoke of client power as related to misuses of complaint mechanisms and working in a "litigious society". All participants who spoke about their own vulnerability, when complaints are made, practice social work with mandated client populations.

Unfortunately the rates of or differences in rates of complaints from voluntary versus non-voluntary service users has not been made available by the College. Although these concerns about misuses of complaint mechanisms exist, there remained a consensus about social workers' power over service users, "In the power position I'm in, I can use anything and everything to make them feel like I'm right and they're wrong". The shift in participants' interviews of power back into their hands may really speak to an illusion that power ever left, but alludes to the fact that power is a result of perception as well as being contextual, relational and historically based.

v. OCSWSSW Power

Three areas of power were related to the college; power over the profession, power over individual social workers and the power of judgement. The first concern related to the direction the profession of social work has headed under the lead of the college.

"I think that under the guise of protecting the boundaries of the profession, putting in place standards, protecting vulnerable clients, what they have done is...I want to

say they've depoliticized social work and moved it away from activist types of activities, but its not a depolitization, its really a move to the right. And it's a bit of an elitist current that I think is happening in terms of trying to shore up service to look more like other professions, like medicine, psychiatry and psychology"

Although reminiscent of participants' comparisons with and then distancing from other professions, this speaks to a desire of moving away from modeling after other professions and may imply a perceived distinct profession of social work.

A second area of power regarded title protection, and a participant spoke against the college's power over their right to self-determination, "That college doesn't have the power taking away the right for me saying I can practice social work...I just can't practice social work in certain areas. But I'm practicing social work right now". Thirdly, other participants spoke of trepidation toward the college and their potential judgement of the participants' practice of social work,

"God forbid, I feel anyway, that they come in and ever see my work. Because social work looks so different – a nice little clinical practice or you're in with a multi-disciplinary team. It looks like a train wreck, social work here does, and it does in a lot of agencies I suspect"

Although directly related to power, this also consists of feelings of judgement in relation to complaints procedures. The issue of complaints and client protection was a major theme which emerged in this research and will now be discussed.

MSW Thesis - Danielle Ungara McMaster - School of Social Work

THE PROTECTION FACTOR

i. Title & Job protection

Many participants spoke of knowing or working with people who use the title 'social worker', who are not registered and may not have social work training. This was linked to a change in job titles (e.g. Child protection worker), professionals 'backfilling' ¹¹ social work positions, or a lack of recognition for social work as reflected in a participant's recount of their supervisor's view that social work is completed by everyone, even himself. Both non-registered participants were observed and admitted being careful not to refer to themselves as a social worker during their interviews, with one saying "I could black mark my name, I could be fined". Additionally, participants questioned who monitors title infringements and one participant indicated that the college had been contacted by their colleagues about this, and was dissatisfied with the results;

"They said you have to do that [complain] in house and we said we tried. And so they weren't willing to touch the issue, they weren't willing to call the institution, or send a letter or ask further for a report...You can't hold yourself out to be a social worker, we thought there was some protection around that".

¹¹ Backfilling, as used by this participant, refers to job vacancies at their workplace which were being filled by stand-in personnel who did not necessarily have the qualifications to complete the work but were providing the services on a temporary basis until permanent, qualified personnel was hired.

Although agency support for registration varied as set out in the first theme, McDonald (2005) posits that social workers are responsible for their registration and should not "delegate" responsibility to their employer or the requirements of their job.

Participants spoke at length about the composition of their workplaces, seemingly concerned about the protection of social work jobs. Interviews revealed many participants have direct supervisors outside of social work, including nurses or correctional officers, but even those with social work supervisors suggest a change in this role, involving no clinical supervision due to the manager's additional administrative demands. The type of supervision described, ranged from non-existent supervision to clinical supervision, to what one participant identified as, "Many of us feel we're being managed and not supervised" As a result of neo-liberalism, the move in social services to Managerialism has become common place. As a result of Managerialism, staff have experienced decreases in professional autonomy and decision making (Carniol, 2005).

Difficulties faced in the field, were at times, related to a clash in values between participants and their colleagues. The participants work in many trans-disciplinary teams

With participants advocating for more social work supervisors, the future of this trend is unknown but the issue is currently being researched by a PhD student at Wilfrid Laurier University, Heather J. Hair, who is also reviewing what social workers think about supervisors being able to assess their employees competence for the College (Hair, 2007).

which include: physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and correctional officers. It seems that the hope for implementation of regulation would have assisted in someway to highlight the role of social worker, yet in practice these participants have described being isolated, being under represented, and having few colleagues with shared values and approach to working with service users, which may have also impacted their desire for OCSWSSW advocacy.

ii. Protection In Theory

Akin to the acknowledgment of their power, participants agreed social workers could put clients at risk, "We have skills and because of those skills we can do damage". All participants acknowledged the vulnerability of clients and felt that it is important to provide service users the opportunity to seek justice, if mistreated, and having an accessible avenue for service users to voice their concerns. While some participants initially thought the college would be available to protect them, they have since come to understand that the college protects the public. A few participants still felt the College would protect a social worker's reputation if an unfounded complaint was made. While in theory participants agreed there is a need for protection of clients, such regulation in practice yielded significant complexities.

iii. Under the Guise of Protection in Practice

a) Deterrence of Harm

Participants believed that the protection mechanisms in place would not eliminate the possibility of social workers' causing harm to service users, because the type of individuals who harm others would always exist. Many interpretations about social work unfolded as a result of the 'need' for protection of service users, including that protective mechanisms hold a "paranoid flavor" about social workers; the belief that 'harm' of clients is rare in social work; and that the type of harm is less serious that can be caused elsewhere; "The likelihood of you harming somebody is not as high risk as you giving the wrong medication".

Participants were additionally concerned about the type of discipline social workers receive after having committed offenses against a service user. One participant cited the outcome of an investigation by the College, "There was a complaint regarding boundaries and sexual nature and he was not expunged from the college...I'm thinking, if that guy is not being expunged or kicked out, what do you have to do?" In this sense, the justice for the service user seems unclear to members, as was how this decision was reached. Still other participants were concerned about the few members who have actually been disciplined thus far by the College, in proportion to the membership at large.

However, is this outcome due to low prevalence of harm in social work or does this speak to flaws in the protection mechanism itself?

b) Feasibility of Complaints: Service Users Seeking Justice

Participants were concerned service users could or would not take the steps necessary to make a complaint to the College if they were being maltreated. In a study of home care recipients, many reasons were provided by service users to explain why they had not made formal complaints (Aronson, 2006). Findings by Aronson (2006) ranged from service users' "fear of sounding critical" (p. 540) of "offending workers and generating tension in their relationships" (p. 543) or that complaining would "reveal[ed] their neediness" (p. 541) or they did not believe an outcome would be in their favour.

Many participants spoke about their clientele facing difficulties such as mental illness, learning disabilities, literacy issues, English as a second language, not being able to advocate for themselves, not being able to access resources, that they are victims, they are marginalized and they are oppressed. Participants were worried these difficulties may hinder service users ability to make a complaint, and that there would be an emotional impact from being involved in a formal complaint:

"People roll their eyes, because people understand that that process is cumbersome, it puts a huge amount of weight and burden on the patient to actually go forward with the complaint. Its kind of similar to when women have to go through court after domestic violence or after a rape charge is filed and they come back and say I feel like I just got assaulted twice".

This impact on service users has other repercussions, especially in corrections as one participant explained, "In these environments, there's this code among inmates and staff, about inmates 'ratting each other out'. And because it's for fear of reprisals and it happens". So, while advocating to a regulatory body could in fact assist service users, there is concern from some participants about the accessibility and "unintended effects" on service users, in one participant's words. As a suggested solution, one participant spoke about a support system for clients, "I think the issue is needing to have an ally, somebody to walk them through that"- throughout making a complaint to the investigation. However, this participant further acknowledged the problematic nature of developing this system and determining who would be the ally.

c) Declaration of Designation:

Participants stated that their designation of Registered Social Worker (RSW) is clearly written on business cards, in correspondence letters, or service user file. Only one in the eight registered participants reported explaining to their clients that they have the designation of being registered or explaining what the short-form 'RSW' meant, including the college's complaint procedure. Once they realized they had not been explaining this,

there were many reasons provided, including that it had not been thought about, it was confusing to explain, they did not want to be perceived as having more status in relation to a non-registered supervisor, or explained that other registered colleagues do not discuss their designation with service users. This comparison to what other registered professionals do surrounding any type of explanation is interesting, as social work has always prided itself as having distinct values from other professions who create and maintain divides between themselves and service users.

The largest reason for a lack of declaration, was that service users would not understand or they might make malicious reports, and one spoke about how this implicates them in removing the opportunity for service users to seek justice,

"And there's reasons I suppose for that, knowing the population and holding myself accountable first of all and I do. But there is a tendency in these types of populations, some of them are very valid complaints and some of them are frivolous because there is the art of manipulation happening in these systems, with these people. If they don't get what they want, or I didn't get them something quick enough, or you caused me great harm...Now that you mention it, the words coming out of my mouth, and I'm thinking well that's oppressive in and of itself, and it happens all the time".

After discussing this with participants, their perhaps defensive reasons vanished and the focus of conversation became how to transform this practice. Participants asked for access to complaint brochures/documents in different languages, in order to assist service users

in understanding the college's role, and unanimously agreed they have a responsibility to explain their registration and the College's protection mechanism to service users.

iv. Complaints Against Social Workers

a) Reporting a Complaint to OCSWSSW

The issue of putting forward a complaint arose in different forms. One participant spoke of dissatisfaction in their attempt to make a complaint about a social worker who was in a role of assessing capacity and was the advocate on the service user's behalf to appeal the capacity decision they had made. This participant reported the College took 4-5 business days to get back to them and by that time the client had lost their capacity, "If somebody is practicing unethical social work, that's kind of a slap in the face ... They're there to protect the public and here I am presenting something". The College (2000) has included a separate guideline related to capacity decisions, in its Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, a "Standard of Practice for Social Work Communication Post Evaluation, A Finding of Incapacity with Respect to Admission to Care Facilities or Personal Assistance Services". However, such a dilemma is not discussed, nor do the guidelines allude to any type of conflict of interest which may be inherent in such a dual role (OCSWSSW, 2000).

Another area with serious implications was the 'unknowns' participants had about what designated making a complaint. There were questions about what unethical behaviour "looks like", what negligence is, and whether unethical or discriminatory behaviour toward a colleague would be considered simply a 'work issue' or would it considered "a sign of how they practice?" Another participant spoke from a position of advocacy, and from the point of view of the client, in stating that them making a report would depend a lot on how the client felt: "As long as I could protect a service user...If I could actually make sure that people wouldn't be dragged into a process they hadn't agreed to, then I would consider it". Participants spoke about behaviour they observe in the field which could be questionable, such as crossing boundaries, and related this to the type of behaviour they would report, "If I thought someone's conduct was repetitive and really problematic and wasn't being dealt with at the local level". But behaviour aside, there appeared to be a distinction between intent and outcome, "It's wonderful to think you don't ever do anything to steer anyone wrong. But that's not realistic. Because it speaks to intent right". Thus, it appears participants are using their 'judgement' when making decisions about reporting issues to the college. Although what constitutes a report seemed less clear, what constituted unnecessary complaints were not. The consensus was that participants either felt the college should not entertain "frivolous complaints' or

expected they would not, "I don't know at what stage our college weeds those kinds of things out".

There was additional uncertainly surrounding the employer making a complaint and one participant reflected this ambiguity, "I am sure the hospital would let the complainant know he/she can go to the college of social work to directly complain as well". And while agencies are expected to adhere to Mandatory reporting if social workers have been unethical or displayed incompetence (Zagdanski, 2002), it seems that participants are unaware of this expectation. Alarmingly such uncertainty continues throughout this theme, and leads one to believe if social workers have little understanding of the process, service users likely have even less information.

b) Internal Complaints Mechanisms

Similar to the power discussion, two participants felt their agency would not find their behaviour at fault, if a complaint was raised, as a response to increased liability of agencies. However both cited recent situations where their employers did not support another worker's actions. Many participants felt their employer would not protect them, perhaps signifying a greater shift in social services at large, "At some point in the '90s that changed, and front line workers were really left out [of decision making]... I think people

don't have a sense that people are feeling protected or that their interests are being served at the agency level".

The relationship between internal procedures and the College's process was not viewed as being distinct from one another and there were questions about how, not if, the college "weighs" internal investigation findings with one participant stating the College is not the "sole protector" of service users. Many felt the college should review the previous investigation completed by the employer, as part of their own process, to avoid having duplication and requiring the worker to defend themselves countless times. Some participants felt that complaints should first be dealt with at the employer level, "Of course your employer gets first crack at you, and many of the things the college espouses, I know the employer I work for, espouses. So behaviour the college would find objectionable, [employer] does as well". However, due to the fact that the agency and workers have different perspectives and interests, there remained a concern that internal procedures may overlook the worker, and service user, in a self-preserving way due to liability reasons which supports the need for external investigations. Adding another rebuttal, Dineen (2001) suggested regulatory bodies are also apt to make findings in favour of and protect members during complaints processes, thus the debate is ongoing.

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c) Scapegoat the Social Worker

A serious concern raised was use of social workers as scapegoats, in complaint proceedings, for larger systemic issues, "One person's negligence, or apparent negligence, it doesn't always reflect context". This was consistent with concerns put forward by Carniol & Kitchen (1990), about "the shift of responsibility" to social workers (p. 62). Thus, some felt that the employer should be held accountable for such problems:

"So often it individualizes a problem that is quite systemic. If I just think about child welfare, because those are the big cases that we see individual conduct that's really questionable, and so much of that individual conduct you can connect to the cuts, province wide policies and procedures in which workers are put in these double binds that are absolutely impossible. And I don't want to turn these workers all into victims because I think some workers really blow it, but the conditions people are having to do that job under are insane. And then the worker gets caught up in really horrible case, gets held accountable, and then the body who investigates is accountable to the government, how are they possibly going to say the real problem here is not the worker, or in addition to this one worker, the problem is systemic factors"

One participant suggested the college use the Ontario Ombudsman as a blue print for investigating systems, structures or whole disciplines such as child welfare after a complaint is made.

d) OCSWSSW Complaints Process

Most participants spoke with uncertainty about the process used by the college in reviewing complaints, but provided information which they would expect it to include. "I would hope part of the process would be doing a good investigation, and building that relationship, and finding out all the pieces of the pie, I mean you know 'how I do my work' piece is big". And while one participant felt having a complaint against them could be a learning process for their practice, they also identified how difficult that would be on them and wanted some support, "I don't think they [OCSWSSW] could support you through that process because they're the ones that are looking at you and they're investigating you, so it would be a conflict of interest, but have an external source that supports you". This participants' suggestion included that the college could refer the social worker to a support system when they become involved in a complaint. Perhaps such support would make one less defensive during an investigation, as described by the participant, and able to accept responsibility and change undesired behaviour.

Participants were unsure who would sit in judgement of them, and questioned whether the committee would understand or be representative of them in various ways.

One participant provided a personal concern, that the college would not understand their

social location which potentially is a factor in a client making a complaint:

"How do I know clients are not reporting me based on their assumption that I'm a gay, queer male and they're just not comfortable with that? And where's the college in that if I say that's why I think I'm being reported, how are they going to be supportive of me?"

Participants who may not have representation from their field, on the college committees, were concerned that they may not "understand the client base enough" nor would they understand the context in which the work is done. Echoing this idea that context is everything, another felt that it was unfair to be judged by individuals who are not qualified to work in their field, including the inclusion of social service workers on the committees. While this could be viewed as elitist exclusion, it was interpreted as being motivated by self-preservation and perhaps fear.

The majority of participants felt the committee members have extensive field experience and what seemed to matter more to some was the committee's specific ideology and view point: "I'd be more interested in what kinds of experience these people have in terms of a critical analysis, anti-racist, anti-sexism, anti-oppression analysis". While some participants may argue for subjective discretion in the reporting of or handling of complaints based on knowledge of the field, but there is a lot of arbitrary power involved in making such determinations. Being objective on the other hand, as in

the College's role as a 'neutral body', is a contested idea, with one participant stating nothing is neutral, meaning no process would be able to deflect the outside forces and powers that exist, such as relationship to government and the neo-liberal ideology. In utilizing participants concerns, it would be difficult to fashion a system which would appease all. However, ensuring critical thinkers and field experts are consulted seems integral in this process.

In fact, Zagdanski (2006) stated the College understood members did not understand the complaints procedures and felt this was because "relatively few members of the College have been involved in the College's complaint process" (p. 6). As a way to lessen this barrier, a letter from a member was printed and spoke to this person's favorable involvement with the College during a complaints process, yet shed no additional light on the process.

e) Impact on worker & Experiences with Complaints

Participants acknowledged service users are unhappy with their service from time to time, and they spoke candidly about these experiences, including two participants who had formal complaints made to the College. Participants spoke of a range of allegations against them, including concerns with personality traits/engagement level, case decisions, professionalism, timeliness, human rights/discrimination, breaching confidentiality, and

crossing of boundaries. Most of these complaints were dealt with internally within the work setting, however, similar feelings emerged as a result of the complaints that were made to the College's complaint structure. In general, participants identified a lack of support and loneliness associated with complaints, resulting in professionals failing to 'rally' around individuals who have complaints against them, because people naturally "distance themselves" from such situations and individuals.

For the two who have been through the College's process, neither were satisfied with the process, or the outcome. Both felt there was no recourse to appeal the College's findings and spoke of the lasting impacts of this event. One participant felt that they still were unsure what the process had been, even after its conclusion, and both spoke of the process taking years to complete, much longer than the 120 days typified by the college. Both participants felt that they were scapegoats for others' behaviours or decisions on cases and for the employer they worked for, even citing times they advocated to their employer for assistance in workload demands.

The two openly talked about how difficult this process was on them; "I received this letter, it was a Thursday. I was absolutely devastated. It's funny, I have a hard time talking about it now". And the other participant commented that "This whole thing has

been the most profound experience in my career". Speaking about their journey, both spoke of the difficulty others would have in understanding how this felt for them and one stated, "The only thing worse would be to have a [service user] die on your caseload and you're found at fault ... But this is right up there for undermining your sense of yourself as a competent worker". In addition to the responsibilities of advocacy, providing least intrusive interventions, and completing over time to get their work done, they spoke of the added stress this investigation caused, "It's unfair, this job is tough enough with the liability issue".

In addition, and perhaps unexpectedly, they felt the investigation threatened their professional roles, "This was my life, it was my livelihood, it was everything...for two years I lived in absolute horror, terror...It changed my life". Probably most profound are the lasting impacts of lessened credibility, lessened privacy and the concern new service users will learn of their previous investigation, "I'll spend the rest of my career looking over my shoulder". In addition, one participant felt they needed to protect their future career by adding letters supporting their work to their personnel file to offset the complaint outcome letter.

Professionally, the impact resulted in them being more cautious with service users, and one participant spoke about how it impacted the amount of advocacy they complete:

"They took a part of me away...I don't advocate like that, I don't advocate to that degree... I crossed lines that other people wouldn't because they were afraid, I did stuff like that and now I wouldn't. So thats what they've basically done, is made me like all the other sheeps...and I hope that comes back because I miss that about me"

These experiences also soured one participant's ability to celebrate successes, "I felt horrible. It overshadowed everything. It still does". Ultimately, and most concerning for the profession, they questioned their desire to remain practicing social work, "I think it really made me wonder if I wanted to continue in the field". Interestingly this mirrored another participant's imagined feelings, "If I came into conflict with the college, I might walk away from it [the profession]". And while both of the participants remain in the field, fear has also remained. One said they do not want to give the college any ammunition against them and the other stated, "I suffer from post traumatic stress from that. I don't know how to even, I don't even want to phone them, I'm afraid of them. Because I want to tell them please don't send me [packages in mail], every time I get them in the mail now, I'm sick to my stomach".

Their feelings were further compounded by the way they felt they were treated by the College's personnel. Both reported College staffs' lack of professionalism; their tone of voice and of the impersonal nature in which the process was handled, which was very personal for them:

"There was nothing nice about them. They never called me and said we're investigating this, we know its taking time...Be a social worker when you're dealing with complaints. I don't know who these people are but they certainly don't act like social workers, be compassionate"

In addition one of the participants was discouraged from disagreeing with the College's findings, "If thats how they see it, just one big [objection], they don't understand what it feels like". Thus, participants hoped the College could understand the difficult position social workers are in during this process, and ensure timely investigations. Timeliness, though, was an administrative issue raised by other participants as well. Although there was some acknowledgment by the participants of the College's infancy, participants feel this period is overdue, meaning expediency should occur when responding to reported complaints, completing investigations and approving membership applications.

DEVELOPING THE REGULATED SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY

i. The Personal is Professional

Participants first spoke about social work identity without regulation's impact and built towards wrapping their heads around the topic, as participants were often stumped about what a social work identity would be. A participant laughingly paralleled this quandary to asking what makes a Canadian. Some participants felt identity was related to

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their social location, including one participant's sexuality to others' personal experiences with poverty, family violence or being a previous service user. Another interesting finding was the journey to social work of many participants, five of whom spoke of entering the field as a second career, and one who spoke of entering social work as a second choice career. Without prompting, participants often spoke of their professional values such as being political, a structuralist, a feminist, an anti-oppressive approach, and social justice & advocacy work. Demonstrating that the personal is interconnected with the professional, one participant acknowledged the personal fulfillment associated with being in this profession, "It feels like a wonderful way to spend your life. And I can look back on all the people I have helped. You know, I would have been very unhappy [being] an advertising person who had to come up with the ideas for coca-cola".

ii. Collective Social Work Identity

Participants discussed the difficulty in defining a social work identity. They viewed a definition as "impossible" or "fragmented", based on the varied fields of practice, that other helpers are doing similar type of work, past problems in defining this and others' uncertainty of social work roles, "It seemed like my role was being defined all around me". Additionally a few participants explained that they do not have 'social worky jobs',

"I feel I inject social work into a job that's not intended to be social worky. And people don't like that I do that. And so we'll sit at a table and people will want to learn how to do cognitive behavioural therapy, they want to learn how to do psychiatric assessments and I want to talk about advocacy, I want to talk about anti-poverty, I want to talk about community stuff"

Reasons for having non-social worky jobs related to job requirements not involving social work duties, instead participants report providing case management and implement "band-aid" interventions. However, locating the ideal social work job continues to be a challenge and speaks to the difficulty in defining a scope of practice for social work.

Many participants spoke about the unique use of self in social work, and having an overall sense of connnectedness based on the shared values of rapport building, grassroots advocating, having a broad scope of practice, respect for individuals and intent to assist others, which again transcends the personal;

"While there is certainly a certain type of person that may go into social work, we're all different...Its not who I am, its what I do for a living. I think one could argue there is a certain shared value system amoung most...I like to be attached to a group of individuals that care about what's going on in the world, that are not ignorant of wider issues. And that aren't afraid in some circles to express these points of views cause its often contrary to perhaps capitalist point of views"

Related to this shared value system, another participant agreed but added that "its kind of a diverse thing and its fluid". This is supported by Moffatt & Miehls (1999) who state "identity transformation is a process which continues throughout one's lifetime" (p. 75).

Others talked of identity shifts, depending on the field one enters, "I think these have some overlap but at the same time see themselves as a 'distinct society". With social workers identifying with different 'distinct societies' or fields of practice and as social workers are usually not the dominant profession in workplace settings, this creates a complex professional identity. Perhaps similar to other professions who work in varying fields of practice such as the different types of law lawyers practice, it could be argued the uniqueness of social work is in its value base, as outlined by participants.

iii. The Complex Link with Regulation: Who's Included & Who's Excluded

While some participants indicated that they could see a link between social work identity and regulation, they felt it was a legal link. Others felt that regulation was unrelated to social work identity or did not want the two to be linked. However, as implied in its role to regulate all social workers, regulation has a link to ethics and values, which has been deemed a identity factor by participants. The issue becomes more complex when defining who then is included or accepted in this identity, and who is not. Next, various ways social workers or other helpers are included or excluded in the social work identity will be discussed.

iv. Suitability

Two participants spoke about the College's ability to determine suitability of membership, which is part of their mandate (MacDonald & Adachi, 2001). Both participants were concerned about this aspect of the regulatory role, based on questions asked of potential members on the application forms, such as questions about criminal offences. The first participant spoke about their own criminal record as a result of social work activism in which they were involved, and how the college "froze" their application for two years while they determined whether they would become a member. The second participant reported being so "bothered" by the question that they did not complete the application, nor have they since registered. This participant provided a hypothetical situation whereby a social worker had a drug offence years earlier or as a result of addictions, and questioned how suitability is determined, "Are you saying they're not suitable for it? And that's the message I think they're sending, when in turn some of these people are even more suitable if they've struggled with addiction, gone through the legal system and understand the complexity of that". In sum, participants were concerned social workers would be 'screened out' although both participants acknowledged that there may be times when a review of certain criminal offences, such as abuse, sexual abuse, assaults or any crime related to vulnerable populations, is necessary. Thus, the

underlying concern seems to be related to the College's power to exclude social workers and a lack of understanding surrounding how this is determined.

v. Exclusion of Fields of Social Work

Many participants spoke about the exclusion of social workers in fields other than direct service or clinical roles. In defense, a participant stated that the reality of social work is that jobs are more predominant in direct practice, but others empathized with social workers in fields of community organizing, research, policy and education, and their lack of representation in the College and its standards.

"And here's another gap in the regulatory body is that there was this focus on clinical. And social work is so much more than that...But why should they belong to a regulatory body that is not recognizing that? So I think it needs to be more all encompassing"

And although accountability of researchers may lie with ethics boards, one participant questioned how other social workers are accountable, for example in policy work.

This notion about inclusivity was further complicated by a deeper seated issue of inclusion and exclusion, "Your question prompts a really deep examination that goes to the heart of what social work is all about. I think what prompts an answer from me is about turning it inside out and in some ways starting from scratch all over again". The concern is that regulation has fragmented the social work identity, perhaps only

legitimizing direct practitioners. Perhaps if the College's standards were amended to reflect all social work roles, modeled after New Zealand's inclusion of research and other standards (Orme & Rennie, 2006), this would be viewed as more inclusive. In fact, the College has identified this need and reported, "Plans are underway to develop new standards that are appropriate for non-direct practice, such as community and advocacy work" (OCSWSSW, 2003/2004b: 13).

iv. Exclusionary Representation of Social Workers

Participants spoke of OCSWSSW representation as far as race, gender and sexuality, and felt these were not inclusive as of yet. Although participants felt the college representatives have a wealth of knowledge and experience, a few participants were concerned that there is an over representation of white or Caucasian individuals in the College, "When they send out their fancy booklet, I look at the faces and I look at some of the backgrounds of people who are representing me and again it seems like a really conservative, pretty straight, pretty white sample of social workers from the province".

The issue of race and culture was raised by another participant who works with Aboriginal social workers and stated, "Many Aboriginal workers have much disdain for anything that represents white - the College certainly does that". Brown (1975) discussed

the clash that individuals often feel between their racial and their professional identity;

Professional group identification also requires the adherence not only to the values of the profession, but also to the norms for achieving the values... If the Black professional is to remain identified with both the race and the profession, the person must choose means to achieving racial freedom that does not necessitate the abandonment of a profession to which the person has committed a major part of his/her life (Brown, 1975: 362).

However, it could be argued that a higher proportion of Caucasian representation reflects the greater workforce of social workers, "The representation of visible minorities in the social services field is somewhat lower than for the overall population" (Stephensen, Rondeau, Michaud & Fiddler, 2000).

Additionally, one participant spoke of the predominance of females in the college, which one could interpret as a result of the field's composition as well, with seventy one and a half percent (71.5%) being female (Stephensen, Rondeau, Michaud & Fiddler, 2000). However, this participant felt more men would be reflective of society at large and more representative for male service users.

Though the participants, as a collective, have had little contact with OCSWSSW their critique was based mainly on the College's annual report. Although those who represent the College were in fact elected into positions, one could argue this makes them representative. But as social workers we must recognize that even our systems reinforce

oppression which exists in the larger society. Thus its imperative that in the College's continued development, the body move away from being able to receive the typical systemic or bureaucratic critiques that institutions are exclusionary and oppressive, towards a position reflective of the profession's values of diversity.

vi. Hold Outs

Social workers termed "hold-outs", are individuals who have social work training but have not as of yet registered. A few participants spoke of the fact that ideologically, some social workers do not want to be regulated as it may be viewed as elitist.

Additional reasons provided for such distancing of oneself from regulation or the profession include that social workers or agencies were not asked for input in the development of the college, that individual social workers do not want to be associated with a low status profession, or they do not feel they utilize social work skills in non-social worky jobs.

Other than ideological differences or issues related to practice, a participant raised an administrative reason which impacted their decision to not register, "I've looked for a job, I've seen where I have to register and for me it was looking for a place where I didn't have to register because the registration process I heard is long...I know someone who waited six to eight months". Although legislated as mandatory registration, those who

choose to 'hold out' are supported by jobs at agencies which have used a loop hole in title protection by changing job roles or titles. While analyzing the agency's role in regards to the "hold outs", many participants felt that the employing agency was implicated.

Although the use of internal protection mechanisms was thought as a reason for agencies 'holding out' from requiring registration, another participant felt agencies may be forced to not "hold out" for social workers;

"I think the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies is saying there is a preference for social workers to do the work but you know when you come to a small agency like we have people with Bachelor of Arts in geography...those small, rural agencies you have to stretch to get qualified staff"

However, Mizrahi (1992) alleged that inability to recruit trained staff may be used as an excuse for not maintaining standards. The question returns to whether social work wants exclusionary rights to the services they complete.

Cited continually throughout interviews, participants provided concerns about the annual registration fee with the College, especially when they were comparing them with nurses' and teachers' fees that remain under two hundred dollars (Ontario College of Teachers, 1997 & The College of Nurses of Ontario, 2007b). While most participants understood that the lower number of members impacted the fees for members at large, they hypothesized that economics was a reason why some colleagues do not register.

Other fee related issues dealt with the timing of registration being in December to the absence of student rates. The College has made progress in these areas, recently lowering the annual fee (McDonald, 2006b). However, it is unclear where the part time social worker-student would benefit.

vii. Social Service Workers

A few participants spoke of working with social service workers (SSW) in their current role, but some participants could not understand the inclusion of SSW into the College, based on the different level of education, the associated knowledge base and its "depth of understanding". Karger & Hernandez (2004) cite this shift in social work, "the profession became exclusive as professional education and credentials superseded knowledge, competence and reputation" (p. 58).

As a result of this inclusion, one participant felt that there may not be a clear distinction between the two occupations and compared this to nursing, "I don't think anyone has a problem in nursing to understand the difference between an RPN and RN". Although both registered with the College of Nurses Ontario, each have their own advocacy and awareness raising associations, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario.

Beneath the critiques, participants seemed concerned about whether SSW are included in theory or in reality, based on the College's high annual fee with SSW lower salaries, and due to many employers' exclusions of SSW from the job market. On the other side of the inclusion-exclusion debate, a participant felt that it was elitist to exclude SSW based on their education, but commented (congruent with other participants' thoughts) that the differences between social work and social service work has changed drastically:

"Increasingly that discussion has taken on new dimensions, because social workers are reshaping themselves. I would think 10 years ago there wasn't a huge difference in the types of work we did...But increasingly because of the professionalization that's happening is that social workers are starting to shape themselves into this unique force...really shaping themselves into miniclinicians...People now think that's okay stuff for college grads to do, let them do the community work".

Does the inclusion of SSW in the college complicate the social work identity? SSW appear included in this identity, based on the shared value base which participants felt was inextricable with identity. Building on participants' definition of identity, SSW could be viewed as its own 'distinct society' within the larger regulated identity.

vii. Grandparenting & Non-BSW Members

Similarly, participants seemed divided on the issue of grandparenting. Known as the inclusion of persons without a social work degree into the College based on experience in the social work field (McDonald, 2005). Some participants spoke of these exemptions as undermining to the work social workers have done to promote itself:

"Social work was trying very hard in this [names employer] to say well an MA or psychology is not the same as social work. We can't be grandfathered into the regulatory body for psychology or engineering or law or nursing. So why is it that the regulatory body for social work is compelled to grandfather people in with a different degree, even though the work may look similar?"

One participant stated that addition of grandparented members further complicates the regulated identity. Yet, this participant highlighted this idea of an ever changing identity, "When you attach it to then something with a college diploma and you've grandfathered all these people in, its really not clear what its regulating, but its maybe just a evolution too, its not totally developed".

Although there may be unanswered questions, it seems regulation will continue to play a central role in identity, "I think the regulatory body, maybe its role is not principally to carve out the identity but to protect the work that we do and the clients". In its role to "protect the work" completed, it seems necessary that permeable boundaries

between the distinct societies exist. Such "carving out" of an identity is supported by Moffatt & Miehls (1999) who discuss the social construction of identity. Such an anti-essentialist identity would ensure differences are accepted and celebrated, providing yet another link with the value of respect. Perhaps, this is the unique identity of social work, this fluid, all-encompassing identity based on inclusion of shared value base.

FUTURE KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

At times participants spontaneously spoke of the future of regulation and what they envision. Their views and suggestions have important implications for the future of the College in its continued development. In this last theme, the College's successes as viewed by participants and their suggestions will be presented.

i. Dialogic Exchange

From a personal note, I wasn't sure how social workers would react to this research. The recruitment for this study was broad, meaning almost all social workers were eligible but I was not convinced social workers would be interested in being a part of this study. To my surprise, this was not the case. In support of this research's secondary purpose of providing a platform for social workers, it was found that

participants felt this was a topic in need of discussion. Participants reported having tried to speak with colleagues about regulation prior to this study, or had not given thought to aspects of regulation, or have since begun such dialogue as one participant returned to work and initiated a discussion at their team meeting. Participants commented specifically on this research, that this study "sounds really interesting", the "study is very timely", while another commented that, "This has been good for me to hear...working in isolation I forget there's a whole other world out there". Moving past interest, one participant spoke about the usefulness of this study, "Well it's such a big part of social work now in Ontario. All of us are having to grapple with this thing".

Another unexpected feeling which emerged was the desire for people's views to be heard, "I think they need to hear it [participants' experience]". Although participants seemed comfortable in contacting the College with questions, and many had already, participants also raised accessibility concerns;

"Its hard to talk to a person... I just think it's a really difficult body to speak to at this point because there aren't traveling road shows that go around to communities and say this is what we're doing, what do you think? Or this is how you reach up and talk to us, this is how you raise questions."

Not knowing how to share their views, a participant felt the avenue provided by this

research was useful, "I think that's maybe why your research interested me. Because I think it is a chance to sort of say people are...there's some dissatisfaction here with you".

Another area discussed by participants that is currently being developed by the College is the professional development and continuing education of social workers. As far as professional development or continuing education, there was general agreement that this should not be rigid, based on the many differences in social workers' roles, agencies, goals for education, "Every one individual would have different needs." In addition, participants felt it should not be dictated to workers what type of education they should be involved in, nor should there be a set standard per year as one participant reported having had some years where there was nothing offered that interested them or was relevant to their practice. Some participants spoke more specifically about the type of training they would want to see offered, such as practical information about private practice, to specialized training but others also wanted to ensure they were not 'forced' to be a specialist rather than a generalist practitioner. Supporting the College's ongoing effort, one participant felt a survey to members would assist in determining these needs. In fact, over the last few years, the College has developed a program based on a review of research, other regulatory bodies and receiving feedback from their pilot focus groups (OCSWSSW, 2005). Due to the fact that some participants' workplaces offer little

to no professional development opportunities, a suggestion was that OCSWSSW and OASW provide joint low cost training.

ii. Education of Social Work Students

Often without being asked, participants responded that they wished they had learned more about regulation in school, and offered advice for social work students.

Unfortunately, as a response of their personal experiences, the two participants who had complaints brought before them, both stated they would recommend students refrain from registering, "I wouldn't advocate for anybody to join the college. Honestly, that's the truth, I tell people don't join. If you were in my shoes, what would you see as a benefit to joining the college?"

The majority of participants felt the decision to register is a personal one, perhaps impacted by choice of social work field. Many responses were aligned with AOP and fit well with this study's use of postmodern reflection about hidden or non-dominant stories. As a follower of anti-oppressive practice, one participant felt uncomfortable telling others what choice to make, "Because I practice anti-oppressively and I don't tell, I can't tell anybody what to do. I can say these are the advantages or disadvantages". Explaining a balanced viewpoint was discussed by other participants who suggested that students do

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what this study sought; seek answers on both sides of the issues, which could be done by speaking with field placement supervisors. Congruent with the use of postmodernism in this study, some participants felt students must learn and apply critical thinking to understanding regulation,

"I'd teach them how to read through the rhetoric, to critically read through the document...I would just want BSW students to be able to look at that with a critical eye and also see the hidden stories behind that, the history of the development of the college and that it was contested ground. That there have been voices over the decades saying this is not the way to go, there are some real negatives. And then they're able to make some balanced arguments about what this means, the pros and the cons, the good things and the bad things. And then sort of figure out where they situate themselves in all of that"

Although being a critical thinker is important, another felt advocacy must also be a part of their regulated role, "Don't be afraid to be vocal. This is more important than just getting a title from the College. The legislation that governs our profession are important to study and learn. Policies guide our practice. We need to uphold and respect but also challenge when need be." On a whole it seems that participants, regardless of their personal views, want students to be informed about the benefits and drawbacks of regulation and its history. Of interest, few would tell students "its mandatory" to be registered, supporting McDonald (2005) view that social workers see registration as an option.

Interviews further revealed a desire to see a collaboration between OCSWSSW and the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW). Such collaboration was seen as a way to ensure students are prepared for the accountability expected of them in the field and that they meet the standards required of them. The other aspect of such collaboration spoke to including social work regulation as a topic in social work education, which could assist students in their transition to the field.

iii. College's Successes

While participants made suggestions for changes to the College, they also highlighted some areas in which they felt the College should be recognized for achieving, "They have recognized the importance of the profession ... And I'm pleased it increases the profile of the profession". Other participants spoke about the fact that they like receiving the annual reports to know what business the College has been conducting, they were happy with the educational day, some participants were satisfied with and report positive interactions with College staff in completing registration. Building on these positives and incorporating the critiques presented here, this entity will surely continue its successes.

Summation of Chapter Four

Although service users were discussed throughout the themes, as was social justice work, the discussion typically shifted away which may indicate a lack of connection for participants, between regulation and social justice for service users. It seems social workers walk a fine line between self-preservation and advocacy for service users' rights. Such a dichotomy in social work movements may be a concern, insofar as it may lead the discussion, focus, or struggle away from the service user and social justice issues.

In conclusion, all the benefits and critiques of regulation, as discussed in the literature review, arose during interviews with participants. At times the participants were critical of regulation and it was difficult to locate similarities among persons who own such varied views and subject positions. However, their strongest commonality was their investment in the profession and in the issue of regulation. Regardless of view points, they all wanted to be heard, were eager to share ideas, discuss regulation, and becoming involved in such research is an indicator that they are eager to see changes. Hartman (1990) stated;

Let us air and argue our differences in an atmosphere of respect and openmindedness, let us negotiate and collaborate around issues of power and turf, and let us share out limited resources. Most important, let us keep the welfare of our clients our most important priority (p. 100). It is imperative to listen to all voices, including involving service users, but to come to any conclusions will necessitate much collaboration. Adamson (2005) proposes differences play a critical role, "This can only be achieved through ongoing discussion and reflection about who we are, what we want to achieve, and about how the differences that do exist between us contribute to enrich our thinking and practice" (p. 8). This suggests that differences are what contributes to social work's greatness, perhaps another link with distinct identities and anti-essentialism.

Does this leave room for promise? Can one conclude that even in the midst of the concerns presented by participants, there is room for regulation to work in the interests of service users, to become more social justice focused? Is this a part of social work identity – to take something seemingly restrictive and with faults, want to make it better and turn it into something feasible? As a participant said earlier, is social work something we "inject", perhaps into regulation? It seems only time will tell.

CHAPTER FIVE: Implications & Concluding Discussion

"There is nothing simple about regulation.

It is often complicated, difficult and controversial"

(Gowanlock, 1990)

Considering that the issue of regulation has been alive and debated for decades, the lack of literature suggests social workers' views on regulation have not been explored.

Many of the topics discussed with participants reflected information outlined in the literature review, including the pros and cons of regulation. Similar to the debates about regulation discussed in the literature, there were vast differences in opinions across participants.

Sharing many ideas about what excellence in regulation could be, participants hinted at the importance of surveying current and potential members to participate in developing the College's direction. Administratively, participants raised concerns which would be fairly simple for the College to resolve. Recurring comments in interviews reflected a general concern about administrative issues, and it became apparent that participants experienced several problems related to communication with the College.

The suggestions ranged from lowering annual fees, to transparency in College expenditures, and increased professionalism of College staff, to timeliness of College responses. It seems participants utilized this research as a method to send direct messages to the College, implying that further dialogic exchange between OCSWSSW and members would be beneficial.

Practice implications from this research relate to how registered members incorporate regulation into their practice. As revealed in interviews, participants rarely, if ever, explained the College's role to service users and neglected to inform them of their right to register a complaint. As indicated by participants, the populations in which they serve are often people already from marginalized groups. Exercising the power to refrain from imparting information about the College to service users removes their rights, their voice and this limits the resources service users have at their disposal. As a result, this may further marginalize service users and merely create a guise of protection.

The idea of further marginalization arose often in interviews as participants spoke of the power social workers have in relation to that of service users. An unanticipated result of this exploratory research was that most registered participants' wanted to make changes to their social work practice, by increasing conversation with service users about their rights and about their own registration. Participants even asked for brochures, from

the College, in different languages to support this development in their practices. Thus, there needs to be ongoing discussion and reflection on how this profession will implement the reality of regulation.

Power, as a theme, was implicated in all relationship discussions by participants. from their own powerlessness in relation to agency/employer and OCSWSSW power. Often related to power, and discussed by participants, was the status of social work and social workers. Although there was significant variation in participant responses at times, no participant identified their gender as a factor in forming their opinions, even though some participants spoke of other aspects of their social location. Nevsmith (1995) discussed the use of gender in research as an analytic tool, suggesting that "In a world where gender is a powerful shaper of experience, identical responses from men and women can mean very different things" (p. 111). In analyzing how gender may have played a role, and comparing responses from each gender, those participants who discussed feelings of low status or reported value conflicts within their workplaces were female. The discussion with participants about status related to comparisons of this profession with other professions or professionals who are perceived to have higher status such as nurses, doctors, lawyers and engineers. Although a gendered analysis was discussed regarding the 'push' or move to professionalization, could the participants'

perceived, or real, low status be a result of being both female and practicing in a female dominated profession? Thus, participants' responses may be a reflection of the 'gendered society' and 'distinct professional society' in which they inhabit, and may speak to the internalization of wanting to 'belong to the club' of other professions.

The perceived low status of social work is often related to its female dominated workforce as the work is viewed as 'merely women's caring work'. Status is also lowered because social work aligns itself with and works alongside marginalized individuals or groups (Brawley, 1974). Thus, social work struggles to have some power and status to assist marginalized groups in seeking social justice, yet power is often replicated in social workers' relationships in ways the profession seeks to challenge. Some argue the College creates a strong voice for service users and social justice, yet others argue it reinforces power over and elitism.

Educational implications that arose could potentially help mitigate the power differential discussed above, as social workers are more informed about regulation and how to negotiate their position of power. Participants felt that more knowledge and understanding about the College and about how to represent their profession was necessary. They thought education must target both practitioners and social work students. Thus the development of a teaching framework about regulation, consistent with Canadian

Association of Schools of Social Work expectations for social work education, is recommended. The framework envisioned includes regulation's history, development, and a presentation of balanced viewpoints about regulation's benefits and drawbacks. This is suggested to be presented during a social work class or as part of practicum preparation, so all incoming Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students, and Master's of Social Work students who do not have a BSW degree, will have the opportunity to learn the information. Perhaps such a framework would be beneficial for social workers currently in the field, presented at "road shows" as one participant mentioned. OCSWSSW educational events could also create an opportunity for the College to seek feedback from members or potential members.

Other complex concerns were raised, and related to a lack of knowledge about the College's role, standards and complaints process. Further uncertainty and confusion were provided when discussing membership suitability. Questions surfaced about who is granted entrance to the College and who is excluded. Participants felt the College focuses on direct service practitioners, neglecting practitioners from community organization, research, policy, education and social activism. Thus, the research results have implications for OCSWSSW policy amendments. One policy initiative, which the

College has begun, is related to including and encouraging membership from all fields of social work (OCSWSSW, 2003/2004).

The policies which remain in need of adjustment relate to the language used. For example, under section 23 of the SWSSWA (1998) members are "suspended" when they choose to cease membership through not paying their dues, as opposed to receiving a membership status as "resigned". As a student now, I sought to pause my registration for a year, yet learned I would be listed as "suspended" with no further explanation provided for my status; and like the participants' uncertainty, I was unsure about what impact this would have on my 'good standing'. Currently the College reports having nine hundred and sixty (960) social work members suspended (OCSWSSW, 2006), yet no reasons for these suspensions have been provided. Such powerful language has serious implications for the practitioner who has not had disciplinary action brought against them, yet the vocabulary implies otherwise. The College recently discussed adding an inactive category to memberships, but the details have yet to be released, and it has not been decided who is eligible for such a category (McDonald, 2006b).

Additional concerning language includes 'soft' stances on equality. Detailed in the OCSWSSW Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (2000), as social workers "assist individuals, dyads, families, groups, organizations and communities to achieve

optimum psychosocial and social functioning and includes.... the development, promotion, implementation and evaluation of social policies aimed at improving social conditions and equality" (p. 1). This is in comparison to strong social justice statements such as McMaster University School of Social Work's philosophy,

As social workers, we operate in a society characterized by power imbalances that affect us all. These power imbalances are based on age, class, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, health, physical ability, race, sexual preference and income. We see personal troubles as inextricably linked to oppressive structures. We believe that social workers must be actively involved in the understanding and transformation of injustices in social institutions and in the struggles of people to maximize control over their own lives (School of Social Work, Date Not Posted).

Gregory & Holloway (2005) explain that language has the power "to shape and confirm social work's identity" (p. 37). Seen as an extension of social work values, the social work identity, as described by participants, is much more evident within the second description of social work and this link between the personal and the social. Thus, it seems vitol that the values of the profession be captured within policies.

The future of advocacy work within the profession was also discussed, with the participants requesting a collaborative arrangement between OASW and OCSWSSW to further the collective professional voice. A previous president of OASW, Antle (2003b), agreed with having "a permanent arms-length structure within CASW to support

excellence in regulation" (p. 4). Although arguably not the role of regulatory bodies, seven (7) Canadian provinces incorporate their association and regulatory body, with dual functions of advocacy and regulation (CASW, 2003). This dual function could be critiqued as serving to protect social workers as opposed to service users (ASWB, 2005). However, in an article by ASWB (2005) on these Canadian systems, the British Columbia Social Work Association Registrar Susan Irwin reported that this arrangement "tend[s] to be free of political influence, and can sometimes get things done more efficiently" (p., 1). The article further contends that no one way to provide regulation as the "single best approach" (p. 1). When contemplating unification of social work associations and regulatory bodies, it seems more study and analysis would be beneficial to determine how the two co-exist, and what the strengths and weaknesses are within that model.

A major theme that emerged was in regards to protection of service users and complaints against social workers. Two participants shared their personal experiences about complaints registered against them to the College. Although few concrete suggestions were brought forward, it seemed participants' message was that being involved in an investigation is a difficult experience for well intentioned social workers, and they want some understanding about that - from colleagues, management, the

employing agency and the College. One of the suggestions tabled was for a support system to be put in place which would be offered to individuals entering a complaints process, and that these individuals may be referred to an external support system, such as their local association.

Resembling critiques of regulation found in the literature, participants were concerned that individual social workers would be scapegoated for systemic shortcomings. One participant recommended the College utilize the Ombudsmans' investigatory blue print to explore system problems. Under the Ombudsman Act of 1975, the Ontario Ombudsman completes "systemic investigations on important issues about government services, which can affect large numbers of people" (Ontario Ombudsman, 2006). However, the investigatory rights of the Ombudsman do not extend to private agencies, nor hospitals, Children's Aid Societies and the list goes on (Ontario Ombudsman, 2006). It is proposed that the College investigate systemic barriers faced by service users or social workers, to locate the root cause of the problems put forth in a complaint. Although not suggested to be utilized in every instance where a complaint is fielded, it seems imperative that if making a transition to recognizing the impact of the wider social service system, it would be necessary to develop policy in this area to guide the process.

As with most research, this study raised implications for future research. As two participants were non-registered social workers, and other non-registered social workers are known to participants, understanding 'hold outs' becomes important. Based on the findings, it is hypothesized that social workers 'hold out' from registration, as the result of College fees being too high, little information or understanding about the College, employment in jobs which are not deemed 'social worky', or ideological differences related to distancing oneself from the profession or viewing regulation as elitist. Perhaps further research targeted at 'hold outs' would lead to additional insights about the rationales behind this decision.

As with all qualitative research, these findings are not generalizeable to the general population of social workers. Nor is this research representative of opinions of social workers who are racially diverse, people who work in human services who do not hold social work degrees, social service workers and service users. Of interest, social service workers make up only nine hundred and nine (909) members of the total College membership, which is over 11, 000 (OCSWSSW, 2006). Recruiting a sample of social service workers about their views of and the impact of regulation on their practice would be an interesting research study in itself. Thus, future research with these populations may

have an impact on the profession and on the continued development of social work's regulatory body.

While the social work identity was discussed, it was challenging to conclusively define. Difficulties emerged when determining the parameters of who practices social work, which seemed to be exacerbated for participants by the College's inclusion of other helpers in the grandfathering membership process. Another layer of complexity materialized as the result of the incorporation of social service workers in the College. In sum, participants emphasized values as a key determinant of social work identity, but also spoke of the importance of any definition remaining fluid. They further recognized that 'distinct societies' exist in social work, based on different fields of practice, social work roles (e.g. direct practice or policy work), other helpers doing similar work or social service workers.

As a result of this research, it is difficult to conclude regulation has significantly changed social work practice. Although legal parameters have been placed around the use of the title 'social worker' and social workers are legally accountable, participants discussed continued title infringements occurring in the field and an increased level of surveillance on them which, at times, has led to internalized fear. To what degree regulation has met its objectives or been helpful to the profession is left unanswered.

However, much thought has been given throughout this research to regulation's continued journey and development. Next, the vision of regulation for the future will be discussed.

Healy & Meagher (2004) discussed the idea of unique professionalism, termed reprofessionalization, "The new professionalism finds expression in forms of professional organization that recognizes the distinctive expertise of professionals, whilst also providing opportunities for collaboration with other groups of service providers or service users" (p. 253). Such collaboration, as discussed by Healy & Meagher (2004), extends to "cultural and industrial recognition of social services labour" (p. 253) and parallels participants' desire for inclusion based on race & culture, and the general concern for service users and other helpers' protection in the field of social services.

While participants often compared this profession with other professionals' higher status, they also spoke of distancing the profession from other professions' approaches that pathologize, such as the medical model. As the literature review explained, social work professionalization and regulation was highly influenced by other, more established professions. Recently MacLean's Magazine published an expose on the legal profession as the result of an interview with Philip Slayton, a former lawyer and law school dean (MacLean's, 2007). Slayton described a profession that has "gross deficiencies of the

regulation of lawyers" (MacLean's, 2007: 18). In a follow up editorial, MacLean's (2007b) states none of the critiques of the legal system's self regulation relate to them being "too vigilant" (p. 3). Thus, critiques of a profession which social work is modeled after suggest typical regulatory systems may not be the ideal.

The reprofessionalization of social work upholds the idea of distinct social work societies and supports the profession creating a unique regulatory system. The vision of such an atypical regulatory body involves offering transparency, accessibility, inclusiveness, advocacy and it would be responsive to the profession. Regulation, it is hoped, will be something social work is 'injected into', to ensure the profession's important values remain a central feature. The desired anti-essentialist social work regulatory body can only be achieved by inviting and creating space for ongoing debate about regulation. Although breaking the regulatory body molds, these suggestions are not viewed as the result of weaknesses in the profession or of regulation. Instead recommended changes emulate a fluid, distinct, and diverse profession, requiring an atypical regulatory body.

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APPENDIX A

Table One: Social Work Law Enactment - United States of America (Association of Social Work Boards, 2006)

Alabama	1977	Alaska	1988
Arizona	1986	Arkansas	1981
California	1945	Colorado	1975
Connecticut	1985	Delaware	1976
District of Columbia	1986	Florida	1982
Georgia	1984	Hawaii	1989
Idaho	1976	Illinois	1967
Indiana	1990	Iowa	1984
Kansas	1974	Kentucky	1974
Louisiana	1972	Maine	1985
Maryland	1975	Massachusetts	1977
Michigan	1972	Minnesota	1987
Mississippi	1987	Missouri	1989
Montana	1983	Nebraska	1986
Nevada	1987	New Hampshire	1984
New Jersey	1991	New Mexico	1989
New York	1965	North Carolina	1983
North Dakota	1983	Ohio	1984
Oklahoma	1965	Oregon	1979
Pennsylvania	1987	Rhode Island	1961
South Carolina	1968	South Dakota	1975
Tennessee	1980	Texas	1983
Utah	1972	Vermont	1986
Virginia	1966	Washington	1987
West Virginia	1984	Wisconsin	1992
Wyoming	1988		

APPENDIX B

Table Two: Social Work Law Enactment - Canada

Province	Year of Enactment	Regulatory Body
Alberta	The Social Workers Act; 1969 ¹	Alberta College of Social Workers
British Columbia	The Social Workers Act, 1969 ²	Board of Registration for Social Workers of British Columbia
Manitoba	1966³	The Manitoba Association of Social Workers & The Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers

¹ Alberta College of Social Workers. (2006). *History*. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from http://www.acsw.ab.ca

² Board of Registration for Social Workers of British Columbia. (2004). *Background*. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from http://www.brsw.bc.ca/about_us/history.htm

³ Association of Social Work Boards. (2006). *Social Work Laws & Regulations Online Comparison Guide*. Retrieved on July 4, 2007 from www.aswbdata.powerlynxhosting.net/

New Brunswick	The Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers, 1988 ⁴	New Brunswick Association of Social Workers.
Newfoundland & Labrador	The Social Workers Association Act, 1993 ⁵	Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers
Nova Scotia	1963 under a Nova Scotia statute for voluntary registration; Social Workers Act, 1993 ⁶	Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers
Ontario	The Social Worker and Social Service Worker Act, 1998 ⁷	Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers.

⁴ New Brunswick Association of Social Workers. (2007). *Who We Are, What We Do, How We Operate*. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from www.nbasw-atsnb.ca

⁵ Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers. (No Date Provided). Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Social Workers. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from www.nlasw.ca

⁶ Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers (No Date Posted). NSASW Background. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from www.nsasw.org

Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. (2003). About OCSWSSW. Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from www.ocswssw.org

Prince Edward Island	19688	Prince Edward Island Social Work Registration Board
Quebec	1974 ⁹	Ordre Professionnel des Travailleurs Sociaux du Quebec
Saskatchewan	First legislation1967; The Social Workers Act, 1995 ¹⁰	Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers.

⁸ Sweet, L. (June 18, 1989). Protecting Us From Helpers. Toronto Star.

⁹ Association of Social Work Boards. (2006). *Social Work Laws & Regulations Online Comparison Guide*. Retrieved on July 4, 2007 from www.aswbdata.powerlynxhosting.net/

¹⁰ Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. (2007). *About Us.* Retrieved on August 3, 2007 from www.sasw.ca

APPENDIX C

REGULATION OF SOCIAL WORK

Are you a social worker?

Are you willing to share your views of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers or other provincial regulatory bodies?

Want to Participate in a Research Study?

The purpose of the study is to explore registered and non-registered social workers' views and/or concerns about the regulation of their work and its impact on their practice and service to clients.

You are asked to participate in a 1-1 1/2 hour interview during the month of May 2007.

This research study is being conducted by a Master's student from the School of Social Work, McMaster University.

If you have any **questions** or are interested in **getting more information** about the research please contact:

Danielle Ungara

McMaster University

905-525-9140 (Leave message with School of Social Work)

ungaradc@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

1) Work setting/Demographics

Personal demographics

How is your agency organized?

How many people are employed there?

Are you required to be registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers?

If not, does your agency encourage membership? Is the College mentioned at your workplace?

2) Social Work Identity

How do you define social work identity?

3) Definition of Regulation

What does regulation mean to you?

What is your understanding of regulation's development?

What is your understanding of this legislation?

Is regulation related to or implicated in your view of social work identity?

4) Experiences with Regulation

What was your first experience with regulation?

How was regulation thought of then?

How is this different than now?

5) Impact of Regulation

What are the benefits of regulation?

What are your concerns about regulation?

Has anyone or any experience helped shape these views?

How does regulation impact services you provide, or services clients' receive?

6) Explore any suggestions/solutions

Any areas which you think need to be altered or further addressed in the regulation?

If against- how do we protect clients and increase our status?

If for - how do we make our work inclusive?

What advice/ information would you want to give social work students or new practitioners regarding regulation?
Is there anything you want the College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to consider?

7) Closing

Is there any additional experiences or information you think is relevant?



APPENDIX E

May 7, 2007

Letter of Information

Project Title: Critical Analysis of the Regulation of Social Workers

Student Investigator: Danielle Ungara

Master's Social Work Student McMaster University 905-525-9140

(Leave message with School of Social Work)

ungaradc@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Sheila Sammon

Professor of Social Work McMaster University 905-525-9140 Ext. 23780

sammon@mcmaster.ca

You are invited to participate in a research study that I am conducting as part of the requirements of my Master's of Social Work degree. If, after reading this letter, you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me directly.

If you know of any other colleague that you think would be interested in participating, I would appreciate your forwarding this letter on to them.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I want to explore views of non-registered social workers and those registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers about the regulation of their work and its impact on their practice and service to clients. My purpose is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what portions of regulation are supported by social workers and those which may cause concern.

Procedures involved in the Research

If you volunteer for this study, you will be asked a few questions to gather demographic information about your background. Next, you would meet with me and take part in a 1-1 ½ hour interview. During this interview, you would be asked to discuss your experiences and views about regulation of social work practice. With your permission, each interview will be audio recorded and I will take notes, to ensure I do not miss anything said. Interviews will take place at McMaster University or another pre-arranged and agreed upon location which ensures privacy. With your agreement, you may be contacted by phone after the interview, if clarification of any information is required.

The following are examples of questions that you may be asked:

- What does regulation mean to you?
- How and when did regulation develop/was it implemented?
- What are some of the benefits to regulation?
- What are some of your concerns about regulation?
- How is regulation of social work translated in practice? How does this impact clients? How does this impact you?

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

It is not likely that there will be any harm or discomforts associated with volunteering to participate in this study. You may worry how others might react to your views if they were generally known. I am lessening this risk by ensuring your confidentiality. Your identity will be protected and any information that would allow you to be identified, will not be included in the written report.

Potential Benefits:

Through completing an analysis of regulation in social work I hope to fill a current gap in social work dialogue/discourse by reintroducing a debate about regulation, which is still relevant today. With your assistance, by way of contributing information and insight, the information collected from this study may be able to impact the content of dialogue in social work about regulation. Potentially, this could occur in the education system as well as the field, to inform colleagues about the current state of social work regulation.

A possible benefit to you is that you will have the opportunity of having your views heard and documented and, that once the report is out, you will find that other social workers echo or share these views.

Confidentiality:

As a volunteer for this study, none of your personal/identifying information will be included in the written report. Any identifying information obtained will be kept locked in a filing cabinet and all documentation and audiotapes will be destroyed one year after completion of this study. The only persons who will have access to the interview data are the researcher and the faculty supervisor, Sheila Sammon of McMaster University School of Social Work.

Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate you have the right to not answer any questions posed and still remain in the study. You have the right to withdraw at any point in the research process, until the writing of my research report in mid July, 2007. There will be no consequences to withdrawal. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data you have provided will be destroyed, unless you indicate otherwise.

Information About the Study Results:

Upon completion of this study, a written summary of the research findings will be sent to you, if you wish. Please check the box on the consent form if you would like to receive a summary.

Rights of Research Participants:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

c/o Office of Research Services E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact Danielle Ungara



APPENDIX F

May 7, 2007

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Critical Analysis of the Regulation of Social Workers

Student Investigator: Danielle Ungara

Master's Social Work Student McMaster University

905-525-9140

Faculty Supervisor: Sheila Sammon

Professor of Social Work McMaster University 905-525-9140 Ext. 23780

(Leave message with School of Social Work)

ungaradc@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca

sammon@mcmaster.ca

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please contact Danielle Ungara or Professor Sheila Sammon.

I have read the information presented in the information letter. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study.

- I understand that I may withdraw at anytime prior to mid July 2007, when the researcher will be completing analysis and the writing of the report.
- I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and not be identified in the written report.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to volunteer to participate in this study.

Name of Participant	Signature of Participant

voluntarily, and understands the nature of the study and the consequences of participation it.	Signature of Researcher	
In my opinion, the person who has signed above is agreeing to participate in this study	voluntarily, and understands th	n in

APPENDIX G

Table Three: Participants' Demographics

DEMOGRAPHIC	PARTICIPANTS
Ability	No participant identified with anything other than ablebodied.
Age	Average age of nine participants is 44.4 years. One participant identified as "middle aged".
Gender	7 Female participants and 3 Male participants.
Sexuality	One participant identified their sexuality as lesbian, and another identified themself as gay.
Race	No participant identified as anything other than "white" or "Caucasian". One participant reported immigrating to Canada and currently has "non-citizen status".
Fields of Practice	Participants work in a variety of fields: Community Counseling (1), Child Welfare (2), Corrections (3) and the Health/Mental Health field (4).
Years of Experience	Ranges from 18 months to 30+ years in the field. The average years of service is 12.6 years and the total collective years of service 126.5 years.
Location of Employment	Participants are employed in a vast geographic area: Southwestern Ontario, Greater Toronto Area & Northern Ontario.
Registration Status	There are 8 registered participants and 2 non-registered participants who took part in this study.