The Future of Social Work Research: An Analysis on the Improvement of Social Work Research Literature for the Betterment of the Discipline

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Social work has a significant role in our society, helping to support those that might not be able to support themselves. Social workers are valuable as they help individuals gain access to services that improve their quality of life. The populations social workers serve include children in the foster care system, individuals suffering drug and alcohol addiction, the elderly, LGBTQ+ individuals, survivors of domestic violence, and many others. In order to provide the best services possible for their clients, social workers must consider how well they are performing their work-related functions. One of the most beneficial ways to improve social work, or any discipline for that matter, is to ensure that research is being done to supply social workers with new knowledge and strategies. Social work research has been a hot topic of debate in the social work community. Many have criticized the present methods of social work research, but unfortunately, there are not many solutions for the multitude of problems that have been suggested. A high majority of social work professionals in the community agree that research in the field needs improvement. Research in social work is very relevant in our society because social work itself plays a major role in our culture. In order for social workers to meet the needs of their clients, issues surrounding research methods need to be resolved so that all members in the social work community can be on the same page. A conversation of sorts has emerged around this topic, where multiple professionals have given their insight. These professionals discuss different areas of focus on social work research, such as the obstacles that social workers face in the research field, the importance of social work research in general, and the ideas for improving research.

The field of social work has received much scrutiny for "its inability to articulate [a] sound knowledge base for its actions" (Beddoe; Barner et al.; Holosko). Social work professionals do not deny that there is a lack of knowledge dissemination within the community, and, consequently, the social work profession has not received as much stature as its cognate discipline, psychology (Barner at al.; Beddoe; Holosko). Barner et al. describes a study in which top-ranked programs in psychology and social work were observed, and it was found that psychology had more research done than social work. Barner et al.'s question aligns with a number of ideas circulating in social work related research. Beddoe's study compiled the opinions of social workers who agreed that

research was lacking, but did not know how to begin to assimilate it into the social work field. There are multiple obstacles that social workers would face if they decided to implement more research into the practice, including budget cuts for social work agencies, eligibility criteria for clients, and increased policies and procedures social workers could follow (Barner et al.; Beddoe; Holosko). Debatably, the most discouraging factor for social workers engaged in research is simply the lack of time due to huge amounts of caseloads. Social work organizations greatly stress the service aspect of social work, and with so many clients, there just is no time for research. One of the concerns that social workers have with the implementation of research is that they do not want their methods to be routinized (Beddoe). They work with real people—

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people that have diverse characteristics and unique cases. Often social work practices cannot be "measured" by a researcher, so there is a divide between social work practitioners and social work researchers (Barner et al.; Beddoe; Holosko et al.).

Although there are many issues social workers face in the research process, most still agree that there is indeed a need for research (Holosko; Seipel; Shaw; Boddy, Daly, and Munch). Research is needed in social work to promote the field's goal to increase the welfare of society (Holosko, "The History"). Holosko contends that it is "not as important to understand what R&E [Research and Evaluation] designs we are using in social work, but more so how we are using those designs" ("What Types" 672). He also notes that researchers must not lose sight of why research is necessary, and that practitioners should not forget that greater knowledge and understanding of methods will lead to improved practices within the social work field. Research focused specifically on social work will set the discipline apart from the rest while substantiating its role in the society at-large (Holosko; Seipel; Shaw). Alongside this, publishing research can increase stature for social work authors (Seipel), and also for the entire field that the author represents. Other professionals— whether inside or outside of the community—will encounter the knowledge being transmitted through written publications, they may then cite the publications, and the publications may spread throughout all academia, gaining reputation for the entire field of social work. Shaw stresses the certain characteristics make social work research "distinctively good" (659) and set it apart from other disciplines. Because social work aims to bring social justice and welfare to the people, its research is given a new and explicit meaning (Shaw). Social work research must move beyond simply testing a theory to see if it works, and instead should focus on how a particular methodology might impact someone's life for the better by finding which practices best suit the individual clients' needs. This research is also important to the field because social workers need justification for the practices that they implement (Holosko). Social workers can use research to justify their practice, and thus make the practice more credible through evidence (Holosko, "What Types").

Some professionals write specifically about how social work research can be improved using proactive methods, such as, for example, multiple authors mutually composing a research publication (Boddy, Daly, and Munch; Gelman and Gibelman; Padgett and Begun; Epstein; Beddoe et al.). Boddy, Daly, and Munch, Gelman and Gibelman, and Padgett and Begun have similar ideas about social worker collaborations, but each present slightly different ways of doing so. Boddy, Daly, and Munch propose the Writing Series Project, a series of workshops that social workers could attend to learn how to write publications and how to develop methods for instructing others in their own writing processes. The workshops would be designed to give social workers more confidence in their writing, and the opportunity to share their visions for research objectives to improve the field (Boddy, Daly, and Munch). Padgett and Begun also describe a similar concept: the

Writer's Guild, a writer's "coalition" that the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Social Work formed to support professors writing for publication.

The Writer's Guild is different from the Writing Series Project in that the Writer's Guild was formed at a university for the more "qualified" writers within the faculty, while the Writing Series Project would be for all social work practitioners. The Writing Series Project is also not as exclusive as The Writer's Guild. Gelman and Gibelman propose writer collaboration and discusses the trend toward co-authorship in research publications. More and more, research articles have multiple authors instead of just one author, which used to be the custom (Gelman and Gibelman). Multiple authorship can aid social work research because writers can get together and provide numerous or varying viewpoints on a topic, thus strengthening the article. Epstein presents a different approach to research than the other authors. He notes that research should be based on the practice of social work "[employing] available clinical information" (Epstein 18) to produce new ideas in research publications. This approach, Practice-Based Research, relies on information that has already been found in practice to incorporate into new research inquiries (Epstein).

It is not only the content of social work research that is important, but also the way it is written (Hyland). Scientific writing (writing in academic journals) is persuasive, as writers must show analytic proof of how they reached conclusions, and they must also utilize certain rhetorical choices to demonstrate their article's legitimacy. An authoritative voice is very important when communicating ideas as well as an ability to anticipate possible objections. Hyland states that writers in the soft disciplines take a more personal position in their writing in that they refer to themselves much more than those in the hard disciplines. Since social work is considered a soft discipline, social work research is written with personal positions acting as an important function of building credibility. Soft discipline writers do not use cognitive progression, but instead rely on this personal credibility to prove their arguments. Soft academic journals are meant to be open to interpretation, and thus there can be more diverse outcomes. Writers rely on the argument itself instead of "relative unmediated real-world phenomena" (Hyland 205). Soft discipline texts do not use graphs but instead pose questions. There is no "standardized code" that soft discipline writers conform to, and the writing is not succinct, but more elaborate.

As stated above, many social work professionals in the community agree that there is a lack of quality social work research. These individuals have each expressed specific problems with the research, and some have even come up with ways to foster interest to improve social work research. Unfortunately, the solutions they have created do not come without pitfalls. Barner et al. acknowledge that there is a divide between social work researchers and practitioners. The authors state that "[o]ften a small number of faculty within any social work program… are viewed as 'those research types'" (8). Social workers agree that research helps the practice and that it is needed to promote social work, but the problem with social work research may be that researchers are not collaborating with the everyday social worker to put out the research that the social worker uses in their daily work tasks and interactions with clients.

There also needs to be collaboration between the researcher and the practitioner so that they can produce the best possible research literature. There is a need for more "scientific" methods of research and research writing. Social work needs to branch away from the categorization of a soft discipline and become a field set apart from the rest (Shaw 667). Social work researchers need to conduct research by testing on clients that the practitioners work with. By testing new approaches for treating clients, researchers can see whether the approach will really produce positive outcomes or not. The researchers can conduct their work by using the framework of the scientific method, and then produce academic articles that resemble more closely the writing styles of the hard disciplines. Writing in this way will increase credibility and recognition for the entire social work field, and increase the field's public value. In order to write this way, however, social work researchers and practitioners *must* work together to produce the proper information for dissemination.

What I sought to find in my own research was whether there really is a disconnection between the academic world of social work and the practice of social work. I propose that a solution to the problem would be for social work researchers and social workers to work together to put forth new and innovative ideas. Social worker practitioners have the first-hand experience as they work in the midst of client interactions, but they might not have the means to voice their concerns. On the other hand, social work researchers *have* the knowledge, theoretical foundations, and writing competencies necessary to disseminate the social workers' experiences and can offer expert opinions and solutions. If these two parties can work together and use their strengths to put forth publications, the social work community might experience a new revolution in social work research, and thus gain a better reputation for the field.

Methods

The first method I used to conduct my research was a survey of professionals in the academic community, which sought their input on the current state of social work research. To receive as much information as possible from their answers, I sought to uncover the "why" behind their answers, instead of just the answer itself.

I e-mailed the link to my survey to approximately twenty professors and faculty from a social work institution at an American research university , but only three completed my survey. Getting responses from the professors was one limitation of my research. Fortunately, the three responses that I did receive proved to be very beneficial. All respondents were over the age of eighteen. Although their positions are slightly different, all are connected to the field, as each works within the School of Social Work. One of the respondents is a researcher who has also been employed as a clinical social worker in the past. Another respondent creates curriculum for the school, and they devise new social work approaches. The last respondent has more of an administrative job, overseeing different day-to-day operations within the school.

Once presented with the data from the survey, I read through it to get a general understanding of the information each respondent had provided, and if (at all) the responses were similar. I then read each of the responses in several more passes, but each time I read, I looked for different features or structures. I underlined important phrases or words, and after understanding each response as a whole, I made generalizations about the response. I then took those generalizations from each response and I made a summary of all the responses for each individual question. This process involved connecting the responses from the surveys to the topic of research within the field of social work, where generalizations from the responses might lead to greater insight of problems within the field and its research methodologies. Generalizations were put into categories in order to find recurring themes within the data. These themes led to specific assumptions about social work research (see survey questions and answers in Appendix B).

The second method of research was an interview of a retired social worker who had worked in the field for a majority of their life. I met this individual at a library, and the interview lasted approximately thirty-five minutes. Once presented with the data from the interview, it was analyzed in a similar way to how the survey was analyzed. I isolated main points that the participant said, used these points to find a recurring theme, and synthesized this theme with research data from the surveys.
The interview confirmed many of the assumptions I had already made from my secondary research, and also from the survey. The interview provided the perspective of an actual social work practitioner, as opposed to the other methods of research, which relied on scholars' viewpoints. Although the participant was very willing to share their experiences and opinions on the topic at hand, they did not have much knowledge on the implications that research has on the social work field.

Results

The information provided through the surveys and interview suggest and highlight several issues relevant to current social work research. It has been confirmed that social work research needs "more use of evidence-based interventions in service delivery" (Appendix B, Question 10) . Social workers do not advocate for themselves as much as they should, and because of the government system in place, there are social work agencies that have a lack of funding (Appendix B, Question 5), large caseloads, and not enough time to conduct research (Question 5). Research is important for the entire field because it demonstrates to the government (which funds social work agencies) that social work is valuable for the society that it serves and that it is advancing (Appendix A). There is a divide between social work researchers and practitioners and a bridge between the two is necessary to produce high-quality research.

Discussion

The results of my research have given me many different leads on the way that social work research should be conducted. Throughout the process of data analysis, I found correlations with each piece of data that show what improvements need to be done to the genre of social work research. These improvements would impact the entire field of social work. What I found from my secondary research suggests there are obstacles social workers face when doing research—which is vital to the growth of the field—and that solutions that have been proposed would work to further social work research. Social work researchers need to take a more scientific approach to how they write their publications. In order to produce the most accurate material, researchers must collaborate with social work practitioners, using the practitioners' prior experiences in the field to develop new, tried-and-tested strategies to meet the needs of their clients.

As research writing in the soft discipline of social work is up for interpretation by the reader, social work research is not recognized with as much stature as other, related fields.

It has been found that social workers are "historically not good at advocating for [them]selves for appropriate pay for the work that [they] do" (see Appendix B). Consequently, social work pay is low when measured against their workload, and social work agencies also must contend with a lack of funding. Because there is not enough "funding for agencies to meet the needs of clients" (See Appendix B), social workers themselves cannot be adequately compensated, and the burden of numerous clients is placed upon their shoulders. This is, in part, due to the government not recognizing the value in funding social work agencies. Perhaps the public sector would recognize the field if it saw a huge advancement in social work research. \ Seipel argues that "publishing journal articles and books… [in] one's career would better facilitate the attainment of tenure" (83) for the writer, and, consequently, published research demonstrates that progress is being made while also garnering recognition for the field. If social work programs in academia began to emphasize an initiative to produce more and higher quality scholarly research, the government might perceive this new "public awareness of the value of social work and the types of work that [the workers] do" (See Appendix B), and thus be more inclined to increase funding for the field. Another challenge within social work research is the production of the written work itself. Social work research writings are often not "scientific" enough to gain the recognition that is necessary to promote the entire field. Though social work is classified as a soft discipline, the field might be more related to the hard disciplines than one might think. The discipline of social work should be "informed and developed

from the results of scientifically conducted research" (Beddoe 558), and in order for social work research to be done this way, its written work must be changed.

As research writing in the soft discipline of social work is up for interpretation by the reader, social work research is not recognized with as much stature as other, related fields. The soft disciplines are known for ambiguous writing, but ambiguity in a field like social work does little to forward the nature of a profession that requires proven results. Social work is a discipline where approaches are needed to treat clients, and methods for helping clients must be tested in order for conclusive outcomes to be measured, where findings could then be written into research literature. Scholarly journals of science include research studies that utilize the scientific method, and follow conventions of genre- and field-specific styles of writing, furthering the credibility of both the written work and its field. Unfortunately, social work research, excluding the clinical social work field in some instances, is not done this way. As a soft discipline, social work research is instead written as "typically more interpretative and less abstract than the hard sciences and their forms of argument rely more on a dialogic engagement" (Hyland 205). This, however, raises questions of authoritativeness, as interpretation by individual readers may lead to a lack of concreteness for theories and/or not produce best practices based on proven methods.

In order for social work researchers to publish high-quality research, they need to write in a way that is more succinct and more cut and dry. They should not write like researchers in other soft disciplines, such as the humanities and the arts, as social work writing tests and analyzes approaches for client outcomes and findings. Shaw affirms social work researchers "need better ethnography, better attention to the best ways of tackling outcomes research, a disavowal of narrative research that is simply given a narrative 'tag' without accompanying substance" (664).

To write research in a way that relies more on the evidence and less on argument itself, social work research must be centered on client outcomes and client needs. There is a need for collaboration between the practitioner who works with the client and the researcher who writes about the client. Research requires willing participants who know that a study is being conducted for learning purposes, and the practitioners need to be able to assess different methods on the clients. Once the practitioner finds which method works best, they can report their findings to the researcher who can then form conclusions based off of multiple datasets from a large sample population of clients.

Of course, there is a concern over the divide between the practitioner and the researcher, but in some instances, "it is a necessary divide" (See Appendix A). Practitioners and researchers have different job descriptions, and although their opinions on some subject matters may differ, if "more extensive collaboration between... academic and agency establishments...occurs" (Holosko 671), the quality of research and client outcomes will improve. The practitioners supply information from the case management files on clients, and the researchers collect and analyze this data to disseminate the new knowledge in research publications. New knowledge can also be disseminated in "a variety of ways to promote [this] knowledge more meaningfully to researchers and practitioners alike, for example...conferences, agency annual reports, in supervisory sessions at the agency to clients and various stakeholders in nonscientific language, in an agency's treatment manual, and so on" (Holosko 671). Once the knowledge is disseminated effectively, more efficient treatment plans can be developed, and public funding entities may then recognize the value in the work of social work practitioners and researchers.

While collaboration between researchers and practitioners will help advance social work as a vital component of American society, there is still much work to be done in social work research. Because it is such a broad field with many different areas of focus, all facets must be studied to gain an extensive scope of the issues faced within social work research and practice. Research should also consider how the research process affects the client's experience with the social worker and social work system. Although further research on this topic is necessary, even the proposal of change in social work research will only begin the discussion of reform toward dramatic changes in

the future. This constant circulation of new ideas will lead to the production of better methods within social work. Social work is the vehicle through which those in need are supported. Improving the quality of social work research will improve these services, and the entire society will benefit.

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Chelsea Wooten

Chelsea Wooten is a sophomore majoring in Social Work and minoring in Legal Studies. After graduating from the undergraduate program at UCF, she plans to pursue a master's degree of social work and potentially a doctorate degree. Her dream is to change the lives of people through her career in the social work field. She is primarily interested in reforming the health system for older adults and people with a mental illness, and she intends to use her background in Social Work and Legal Studies to help these populations receive better care. Not only does she have a passion for social work, but she is also a member of Theta Alpha Christian Sorority and is heavily involved in her church. She enjoys singing, reading, exercising, and spending time with friends and family.

Appendix A

I = Interviewer, P = Participant (Interviewee)

I: Are you 18 and older?

P: Yes.

I: Ok, what kinds of tasks did you work on in your job on a daily basis?

P: Basically what I did, most often, was interview people, sometimes to find out whether they would be eligible for government services, sometimes to know what would be the best appointments for them to have. Sometimes to survey what their needs were so that I could make referrals, so basically, what I've done most is make assessments of people who had some kind of specific need. That's what I've done most of my life.

I: So what kind of social worker would you (did you) classify yourself as?

P: For the most part I would say an eligibility worker, just trying to determine what the needs of the individual were and what community services they would be eligible for. Some of them, I would certify the individual for myself if it was in my capacity to do that, others I would refer them to other agencies. So I would say, pretty much eligibility.

I: Alright, what do you believe is the ultimate goal of social work?

P: Well, actually I think the ultimate goal is to first of all be able to determine where certain problems lie within the community that are having adverse effects on the population in some way, and then to find a way of solving the problem. I guess then, you know, on the ground level, just to me where I spent most of my time, being able to find a way to get a solution to the actual individuals who would benefit from, you know, whatever the solution may happen to be. I thought of two things that I've done that impacted the United States of America, well actually, well the state of Florida and the whole world. Number one, I was an employee of the Orange County Health Department when AIDS was discovered. So I was in the whole investigative process of discovering what it was and what it was not, how the disease was transmitted, who was affected, treatment, just financing for people who couldn't afford treatment, all of that. And how it just escalated and became really huge and exposed us to other sexually transmitted diseases which were running rampant at that time. In fact, the disease of syphilis was on an uprise at that time, but the social workers who were responsible for going out into the community to notify people that they were a contact of another person who test positive was just, they just weren't aware of the fact that it was right here in our little area of Orlando. It was growing really fast. That was one. I was really thankful to be a part of that, even though how scary it was at the time. 'Cause I did the initial interviews for the contacts who came in for treatment, so I had never been exposed to a setting like that before in my life, but I'm thankful for that exposure. Also, another area of exposure in social work that I found was, I thought, was really significant here in the state of Florida is that the infant mortality rate had risen to over 20% and so that's how the Healthy Start Program was initiated, because they found that a lot of babies were dying in utero and shortly after birth because of inadequate prenatal care. It just wasn't considered important for a lot of people. And then, in a lot of areas, it just wasn't available. And so, I was available in helping with the Healthy Start social workers contact individuals to determine their eligibility for state-funded health insurance, monitoring their follow-up treatment, and then, well the fun part was after the babies came. I got to help the babies become eligible and to make sure they got all their shots. Then the program started, so we started giving them formula, and baby-food to the babies so that they could be healthy. That was kind of a fun job. The first one was scary, it was like a horror story but the second one was really fun. Those are two instances of employment that I've had that were directly involved with social work that I feel like had a really broad scope in the effect it had on the population.

I: Okay. Do you think that what you did in your job contributed to the ultimate goal of social work? And why or why not?

P: I would talk specifically to the social workers who had Master's degrees and Ph.D.'s in certain areas of discipline to ask them if working on my level, which was kind of, not necessarily non-professional, because I have a Bachelor's degree but it wasn't to the level that they were. It was really beneficial and they said it was because what I did was what you would call the "leg-work". I did all the documentation and a lot of times set up forms and everything for them so that the social workers could really review all of the data that I had gathered about individuals and then predetermine what their interview time would be like, which would save them a lot of time, so that they could focus specifically on the client needs, already have a treatment plan to follow, so they say it saved them a lot of time. So I believe them.

I: Alright, that's good. What are the constraints that you felt in your job?

P: Oh, government. They were always all in our business. I mean I know that we have to have laws, we have to have controls, and we have to have funding, but there were so many times when we would just be on the precipice of a breakthrough of some kind over the years and the government would pull our funding. You know, they would just close the door, and said, "We've run out of money" or, "we don't need this anymore; we don't need for you to do this anymore". I mean, it wasn't just the idea that people would get laid off or shifted around or things like that. It would just be, "well, what's gonna' happen to our clients?" You know we've invested time into our clients, sometimes we'd been tracking them for a couple of years or so, even a couple of months. So, lack of funding was one, government regulations was another, and then the divide that you mentioned **the interviewee is referring to a divide between researchers and practitioners**. That was huge, because sometimes we would be in a staff meeting and the researchers would come up with this information- "well, we have the opinion that this and this should be incorporated in the plan because it would help us to achieve thus and so." And we could see that, but because we had direct contact with the people, we were like, "You get out here and do this." Like when I was working for the sexually transmitted disease office, I mean, you can imagine some of the ideas that were coming up to try to get to come up and be tested to admit that they had the disease or to tell their contacts that they had the disease. So, in that particular instance, research and practical application were like this far apart, because it was scary, you know. And it was transmitted, well initially we didn't know if you could just touch a person and get it or not. It was like down the line when we found out it was transmitted through bodily fluids. We didn't even know it at that point. So you can imagine, you know, on a social worker's salary, you know, they're telling us to walk through the mouth of a whale. I mean, it was like, it was sometimes it could be pretty risky, pretty scary. So, those are some of the constraints, anyway. There are probably others that I'm not aware of, but it's been awhile since I've actually worked on that level.

I: Alright. You've kinda already answered this, but do you believe there is a disconnect between social work researchers and social work practitioners?

P: I do, and I just wanna kinda like qualify that statement just because I am a Christian, and I know that God has different designs for different people, and so I have been around researchers who are just, they're just numbers. They're just statisticians, they would not be good with people. So they're right where they need to be. I mean, they are not a people-person at all. I mean, I'm not saying they're not friendly or anything like that at all. They're just… that's just what they do; they're numbers-people, and so, yeah, there is a divide, but I think in some regards it's necessary. I don't know how you can find a happy medium between the two without developing some other area of social work, which in some regards, is part of what I did, you know, since I was on an undergraduate level. Some of what I did was sometimes build a bridge between what researchers did and then what the social workers did to carry out what their responsibilities were, and it was really good, but those positions had to be eliminated because the economy and our nation is so poor now. They can't really afford to pay the intermediary person to save the social worker from having to do a lot of the kind of mundane, ground-work kind of stuff, but if somehow they could implement like a para-professional type of social worker and find the funds to pay someone who did that. I find

in those instances when I worked in those two programs, the Healthy Start and the sexually transmitted disease clinic, that having that middle person was really helpful because a lot of times we were dealing with large numbers of people. You know, once the research had been validated and the program was implemented because of the serious of the problem. You know, we had huge numbers of people responding to the new information. So it's important to have someone kind of in the middle so a social worker doesn't have to do all of that. So there's a divide, but I think it's necessary. Yea, I think it's a necessary divide.

I: Okay. Do you that social work research could improve the field of social work?

P: I don't think social work has existed without the research, because how would you… what tool would you use to measure the need? There has to be some way to measure the need in order to get the funding. First of all, you can't do anything without any money. That's just basic. So when a researcher, you know, over a period of time can prove to the government, or the wealthy or whoever the resources may be that people are actually dying from this, because we're overlooking this or, you know, "the elderly could be so much better if we did this", or whatever the case may be. Our government is like a "show me" government. You know, they're willing to help the citizens of our nation if you can show that there is a valid need, but you can't just go up to them and ask them for money and expect them to give it to you.

I: How do you think that you could show them that there is a need for that— for more funding?

P: You mean aside from the research or…?

I: Like, you said that in order to get more funding, the government needs to see that there is a need. How do you show them that there is a need?

P: Well, unfortunately, the studies that are required… well, okay, let's go back to the colleges and the universities, I mean, because I think a big part of it starts there in research projects and where the interests lie. Right now, I don't think there's a big interest in people, so I don't think social workers are being properly funded. For example, disabled veterans. I know social workers have to work with disabled veterans and their families. I'm just kind of tossing something out. There's a certain amount of money that's allocated to help them and to help their families. Recently, we've become aware of the fact that their needs are sorely neglected. So a lot of things that disabled veterans' families need, they're having to live without because there's not funding. Okay, who's gonna stand at the gate when they're discharged from the military and follow them and their families for five years or ten years and see what actually happens for them to get back with their families and rebuild their lives and getting some sort of normalcy? Social workers do that, but you know what, when they go, and I hate to say this, but when they go to Iraq or Korea or Vietnam or wherever it is they go, they are so far away from us. Unless, it's someone in an individual's family, they're really not concerned. My pastor says this all the time, in the West, we have become so non-communal and so detached and so individualized as a people as a culture, as a nation, that the tool of social work is not working well because it doesn't have the support. It doesn't have the support because people are not communal. They're not concerned. They're just not concerned. It's like, "did you hear about so and so?", "yeah, wasn't it horrible?", "Yeah", and then they turn the page. So the needs are there, but I think they've left it to individuals like Bill Gates and his wife. They invest a lot of their money in research that's been validated to help end hunger or some other things that are social-minded. So, now I think the world is looking to the people who are wealthy more than our governments to try to fund personal projects like Habitat for Humanity, building houses for people who benefit from it without very little government funding. So what social work used to do when I was involved in it, it's changed faces somehow, and I don't see it working the same. I saw social work almost completely dismantle in this state about ten, fifteen years ago. You know, we got a new governor, and he just, he closed everything. He just literally… if it wasn't absolutely, positively essential, he closed it down. He put a lot of social workers out of business. He closed a lot of offices and put a lot of people out of business. So the mindset of individual citizens is going to have to become more communal, number one. Then number two, social work. It seems like somehow the

focus of social work needs to be different somehow, but I couldn't tell you from my own experience how it could be different. Every social work agency I've ever been with has provided a very necessary function and is still doing that work today. Every area, domestic violence – I've worked with domestic violence, mental health; every area I've worked in is more critical now than it's ever been before, but every time I pick up the paper I find that there's a lack of funding. You know, most of the people who are homeless are mentally ill. There's no place for them to go, and unless they kill somebody, they'll be homeless. Think about it. So how do we fix something like that? That's your job, and you need to figure this out! I'm sorry that's not a good answer. I mean, that's my heart. I'm just being honest with you because we're friends. I mean really, it's like totally messed up. It's like… it's hard for me because I spent my life doing this, and people in my family have, and it's just toast. Really. I can't believe it. It's like I have a hard time, and when you told me about the interview I was like, "oh no, don't ask me" because I don't know anything, but really there's nothing to know. There's just a different priority now. I don't know what direction we're headed. A lot of people don't. Things are changing faster than we can really keep up with, but I think there will always be some basic things that we will always have to be addressed, whether or not we will always be in a position to pay statisticians to do the research to provide the data that is required to get the funding. I don't think so. Okay, personally, one of the things that I really hate about abortion, is once you dehumanize humans by legalizing abortion, and legalizing euthanasia, then humans have no value. Without people, there is no social work, what are you gonna do? Social work for a dog? I mean, let's be serious. If the whole mindset of the nation is, "well, if we don't really want them, let's just put them to sleep or kill them." I mean, that's what we're looking at here. Social work is rescuing people, and that's the exact opposite. I was involved in social work when the morning-after pill was developed and they told me, "you have to tell people where the abortion clinics are, and that they can get this pill here". So that's what happens when you work with people, and the government is involved, which they give you the money and they pass the law, and you can do the work that you want to do. Sometimes, they'll put you in a hard place, especially if you're a Christian. So, I don't know the answer. It's pretty scary. I don't like the way it looks. I pray about it all the time. I don't know how we can change aside from Jesus coming back. I know that you can't put that in your paper, but the hearts of people have got to change, or I don't think it's going to get any better. I mean, we know what the end of the story is. We all know that that's where we are now. It's a hard topic to talk about. I mean, I've seen a lot. I'm seventy years old and I've seen a lot. I've seen some really good times when all this nation cared about was the good of the people. So maybe it'll come back. I'm not saying it doesn't exist but maybe you're in a better position to know what the priorities are than I am. If there has to be a place that has to step up, I'd say it would be for the children and the elderly. More the young people, because for the old people the government will say, "well, they're old, they're just going to die anyway". I can't see a lot of funding going to help them. However, because my generation does have a lot of money, and does have a lot of power, they might want to keep that on the backburner of your mind, because our generation can get pretty rowdy. So they may start putting demands on the government to do something to make life continue comfortable before they die. If it was up to me, I'd be going the other way. I'd be going for the kids.

I: Alright, I wanna get back to the research part.

P: Oh, I'm sorry.

I: No, it's okay. It's kind of just something that I made up in my head, but how do you think research can improve so that it can better social work? What do you think should be done? I mean, I know it's a hard question since you're not a researcher, but is there any things that you can think of, from your perspective that researchers can develop better methods.

P: I know that they're different. Their heart is different, their mindset is different, and so to me, it's kind of like asking a person to wear a different coat for a while.

I: Do you think that practitioners collaborating with researchers would help at all? Or just practitioners giving them the experiences that they've had, and researchers working with that?

P: Well, as far as I know, the practitioners have to give them the reports, because the reports either corroborate the data that's given by the researchers or it dispels it. However, in the reporting, if they don't somehow don't document the methodology, and what some of the difficulties are, then the researchers wouldn't have any idea to support the practitioners in what they have to do, but in every area I have served, it was either allowed or not allowed, depending on again, I would guess the funding where the interests lie. In some instances, they wanted to know the practitioner's personal challenges or difficulties were. In some other instances, it was like, "we don't want to hear it, just get the job done. So I think that's already in place. I just don't think that there's a lot of flexibility between the practitioners and the researchers in the way the methods are being documented to give information that would be helpful to bridge that gap, because there are controls. There have to be controls, and a lot of times controls are determined by individual personalities more than really what the needs are in trying to accomplish the goal. So that's just going back to people. So I guess, if somehow it can be mandated that a certain amount, a certain quantity of practitioner reporting to document barriers that they felt were created specifically by the task the researchers are giving them, I don't think there would be any other way of doing it. It would have to be built into the reporting system. You have to think, who has the time to sit down and talk about things? Unless they had the time, they're not going to do that. I mean, yeah, if you're working, it's like you don't have time. When I was working, I hated it when we had to have a meeting because I always had so much work to do. I mean I couldn't get my work done going to these meetings. You'd go to these meetings, and that's what it would be about. It would be about trying to build a bridge between what the researchers say they're seeing what needs to be accomplished, and what the practitioners felt needs to be accomplished. Sometimes, there would be a big divide between the two. You'd also go to the meeting and you'd find there's new mandates, which would mean there's more paper work or more writing or more work. So I think there are ways for it to be implemented, and I think that management does that. Not always in a timely way, but to be honest, when you're working with just general population, when you're working with people, I have found that it's very difficult to have those kinds of constraints when doing social work, just because those people are so unpredictable. I mean, you're trying to document things, and you're trying to do things in a timely manner, and your clients just… they want to have what you're having to offer them, but sometimes they don't have the time. So there are other dynamics that come into play besides what the researchers have to consider. So again, it's numbers versus people. So you're asking me a very difficult question and I probably can't answer it.

I: Well thank you for attempting to. Alright that's the last question I have.

Appendix B

1. **Are you 18 or older?**
   - Yes
   - Yes
   - Yes

2. **What kinds of tasks do you work on in your job everyday?**
   - Although I have been a clinician in the past in both hospital and outpatient settings, I currently am a social work faculty member. I am not seeing clients directly while I work to change my licensure to the state of FL. I work on research, including collecting data, writing grants and peer-reviewed papers, and analyzing data, among other things.
   - oversee all the operations of the school, scheduling, budgeting faculty hiring and evaluation, reports to the administration, accreditation.
   - Writing, reviewing, revising curriculum in social work. Designing and evaluating new social work interventions, policies, and teaching approaches.

3. **What do you believe is the ultimate goal of the field of social work?**
   - To empower individual and families who have been marginalized or disempowered, so that they can take control of their own choices and life.
   - to improve the lives of individuals and communities.
   - To promote human well being, social and economic justice.

4. **Do you think that what you're doing in your job is contributing to the ultimate goal of social work? Why or Why not?**
   - I hope so! I am educating and training the next generation of social workers.
   - Yes, because we are preparing the next generation of social workers who will be professional practitioners.
   - Absolutely! I am training the next generation of social workers.

5. **What are the constraints that you feel in your job? Explain.**
   - As with any job, I think it seems like sometimes I never have enough time to get everything done that I would like to do. I also miss working on policy issues and miss seeing clients in the hospital, but I don't consider that a constraint of my job, but rather a choice that I have made about what I will do at this point in my life.
   - Not enough time to do everything that needs to be done.
   - Too much administrative busy work that takes time away from doing my research.

6. **Do you believe that research being done in the academic field of social work is impacting social work as a whole? Why or why not?**
   - Yes, definitely. Social work researchers are working to identify new ways of intervening with communities, families, individuals, and organizations to support and empower their needs; some of us work on social justice issues, while some of us work on health and wellness issues, among the range of topics that social work researchers are involved in. I personally am working on designing a rapid early screener for identification of high-risk behaviors in individuals with dementia, so that families can be referred for training before they find themselves facing a crisis. With our person-in-environment focus, social work researchers are applied scientists, and we focus on directly impacting the field of practice.

- Yes in some areas more than others.
- Very much so---our work is used as the foundation for advocacy as well as directly to impact individuals, families, and communities.

7. **Do you think that research being done in the academic field of social work is impacting your job and what you do in your job? Why or why not.**
    - I am a social work researcher primarily, so yes. See above answer.
    - Not particularly.
    - Sometimes---particularly as it relates to competency-based education in social work.

8. **There is a common phrase that states, "social workers are over-worked and under-paid". Do you believe this phrase is true? Why or why not?**
    - It depends. We are historically not good at advocating for ourselves for appropriate pay for the work that we do; there are a number of reasons why this is likely to be so, including our history as "friendly charity visitors", and our tendency to feel called to do the work, as well as a general sense of undervaluing of the profession by healthcare professionals. All of these things are changing and payscales are rising across the profession, although it is a slow process. As for the overworked part, yes, I think that is true, but this is a perpetual problem in the type of work that we do. Usually people are thinking of child welfare work when they say this. That is only one of many fields that social workers can be found in, and it is also one of the more difficult- both in terms of the actual work and in terms of the public perception of what we do. The need for help by clients often outpaces the number of social workers in an agency, leading to high case loads. Despite efforts to correct this, it is hard to say to someone that you cannot help to save their life because you are too busy already. Often in child welfare, the situation really may be life and death, so cases are opened whether or not there are adequate staff to support the need. This is a situation related to policy, since state legislatures must provide adequate funding to support both decent salaries and benefits and large enough staff in child protective and elder protective services.
    - I think that beginning social workers are underpaid. I never heard this phrase myself, so I don't know how common it is.
    - I think this phrase is an example of internalized oppression that harms the profession.

9. **Do you believe that more research in social work could make it so that social workers are NOT over-worked and under-paid? Why or why not?**
    - I believe that more research by social work researchers can help other professions that we work with see the value in our profession, which will help to fix the problem. The profession of social work is one in which much of what we do (probably about 90% of what we do in the field) is confidential, so the public and other professionals are usually not aware of how much we do, why we do what we do, and how we approach the work. I often tell students that they may save the lives of 100 children, but no one will ever know. By producing research publications and evidence of effectiveness of social work interventions, we will be able to help shed some light on our profession and the work that we do and help others understand the value of our contributions.
    - Not particularly. To be a healthy social worker one has to learn to take of oneself and not burnout.
    - Not sure.

10. What do you think should be done to improve the field of social work?

- I think there are several things that should be done: -increase public awareness of the value of social work and the types of work that we do, as well as the ethical code that we work under; -ensure that all social work students receive training about compassion fatigue and burnout; -increase opportunities for health professionals (such as social work, psychology, medicine, nursing, PT, pharmacy, etc.) to train together when they are students, so that they graduate with an appreciation of how to work with the other professions and how we view things very differently even when we have the same goal of helping someone.
- Don't know what this means. Probably more funding for agencies to meet the need of clients.
- Promote more use of evidence-based interventions in service delivery.