THE UTILITY AND APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT IN SOCIAL

WORK JOURNALS: A COMPUTER-ASSISTED CONTENT ANALYSIS

by

MARY JOANNE KRAUS

(Under the Direction of Elizabeth Vonk)

ABSTRACT

There is some concern in the social work literature about the use of the concept of empowerment, and there is a long-standing debate about ecosystems theory. Both have meaning for social work research, practice, and education. Empowerment is codified into the profession's ethics and linked to our guiding perspective. Using content analysis, this exploratory study examined utility, meaning and application of the concept of empowerment in relation to ecosystems theory, in Social Work Abstracts between 1977 and 2004. A uniform and comprehensive utilization of the concept of empowerment was found in the social work literature. Yet, only 2 percent of the literature utilized the concept of empowerment as a keyword. The implications of these findings for social work practice and policy are discussed, along with recommendations for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Empowerment, Content Analysis, Ecosystems theory, Social Work

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MARY JOANNE KRAUS

B.A., University of North Florida, 1996

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MARY JOANNE KRAUS

Major Professor: Elizabeth Vonk

Committee: Stephanie Swann
               Nancy R. Williams

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: my parents, Albert F. Kraus and Joan M. Kraus, Thomas A. Kraus, Diane M. Nathanson, M. Eileen Kraus, Carol M. Malaney, M. Claire Kraus and Jeanne M. Stewart, my first teachers. And to my loving husband, George Casanave, who helped me keep perspective throughout the process. I love you all.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction

This research examined the utility, meaning, and application of the concept of empowerment, a key concept in social work theory and practice. Used increasingly over the past decades to cover a wide collection of conflicting ideas, plans, and goals, empowerment is a compelling concept; yet, it becomes meaningless when used indiscriminately.

Postmodern critiques of practice suggest that a consensus definition of empowerment cannot be assumed. Definitions of the concept range from counseling people, helping them build on their inner strengths, to challenging societal injustice. In this study empowerment was defined as "a process through which clients obtain resources – personal, organizational, and community – that enable them to gain greater control over their environment and to attain their aspirations" (Hasenfeld, 1987, pp. 478-479).

Social work practitioners are committed to serving those members of society who are oppressed, devalued and/or discriminated against. Such a commitment requires practitioners to believe that people can change and environments can be transformed (Simon, 1994). Further, empowerment is designed to aid clients to find meaning in and make sense of their lives, relationships, and challenges (Sarri & Sarri, 1992).

Several of the basic assumptions held by empowerment-based social work practitioners, such as the universal value of distributive justice and respect for human worth and dignity, can be linked to the accepted wisdom of the profession

(Simon, 1994). The pioneers in social work spoke of an allegiance to the principle

of client freedom (Richmond, 1922), and followed an empowering approach

requiring social workers to be responsible in principle and practice to both clients

and the community (Addams, 1930), and to the community that can exist between

client and worker (Burlingham, Marcus, Day, & Reynolds, 1935).

The profession of social work is unique in its guiding principles. Professions

codify standards of conduct in order to legitimize their authority and social position

in society. A code of ethics may be thought of as a social contract upon which

public trust is negotiated, built on the profession's beliefs and values (Stevens,

1998). In American society, social workers universally profess a belief in

egalitarian values. Social justice is defined in *The Social Work Dictionary* (Barker,

1999) as, "[a]n ideal condition in which all members of society have the same basic

rights, protection, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits" (p. 451). The

guiding principle that flows from a commitment to social justice in part states,

> Social workers challenge social injustice. Social workers pursue social
>
> change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed
>
> individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are
>
> focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and
>
> other forms of social injustice (Code of Ethics, 1999).

Moreover, the preamble of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

Code of Ethics promises, "empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed,

and living in poverty," while the profession's educational principles and standards

[EPAS] promote "creating policies and services to correct conditions that limit

human rights and quality of life" (CSWE, 2001, p. 6; NASW, 1999). Yet despite

ethical obligations, educational standards, and a historical pledge to social justice

and a person-in-environment perspective, most direct practice efforts remain limited

to the individual and/or family processes.

As noted above, this research examined the relationships of empowerment

to the foundational value of social justice and to an ecosystems perspective. The

ecosystems perspective was adopted by the profession in an effort to ground social

work practice in theory. Several factors influenced the profession's decision to

adopt an ecological perspective, among them the growing acceptance of a disease

metaphor in social casework and its lack of fit "in the face of changing human

needs and environments" (Germain & Gitterman, 1995, p. 488). The profession also

adopted an ecological metaphor in an effort to reduce the gap between social

work's perspective and practice methodologies. To symbolize the enormity of the

shift, ecosystems perspective substitutes a colon for a hyphen in the

person:environment equation, underscoring the transactional nature of the

perspective and rejoining the formerly discrete person-situation relationship.

The ecological perspective continues to be debated in the literature. Some

scholars have suggested that we focus on the practical areas of human development,

simplifying the difficult task of developing broader empowerment strategies (Frans,

1993)**;** others lament the loss of the special nature of the client in practice

(Wakefield, 1996a). Still others contend that ecosystems theory is not clearly

"rest[ing] on an evolutionary, adaptational base, is itself an evolving system of

ideas" (Germain & Gitterman, 1995, p. 496). Despite its broad conceptual appeal, it

is questionable whether the perspective can guide social work practice (Brower, 1988), and this has implications for the profession's knowledge base, development, growth and ultimate survival (Tucker, 1996).

Empowerment has been referred to as a paradigm (S. Rose, 1990b); a multi-level construct (L. Gutierrez, 1990a); a model (Ruffolo & Miller, 1994); an approach (Lee, 1994); a tradition (Simon, 1994); a theory (Richan, 1989); a multi-dimensional concept (Kurtz, 1997); a process, a goal and an outcome (Solomon, 1976); "the central emerging feature of social work" (Adams, 1996, p. 2); a philosophy and a theory of practice (Kondrat, 1995, 2002); a vague image with an *aura of moral superiority* (Callahan & Lumb, 1995) and "obscure[ing] the real power relations in society" (Langan, 1998, p. 214). Rappaport, a frequently quoted scholar, has summed up the concept of empowerment as "a little bit like obscenity; you have trouble defining it but you know it when you see it" (1985, p. 17).

The need for a consistent understanding of empowerment grows out of the profession's commitment to social justice and the paradoxical nature of a profession that is committed to client empowerment. Ecosystems theory is thought to allow a more detailed and substantive understanding of the concept of client empowerment, linking the strategies of empowerment conceptually to the person:environment. Such an understanding is essential for social work education and practice, particularly in light of the relationship between empowerment and social work values. Today the concept of the term empowerment is reflected in the writings of social scientists, policy makers, politicians and clinicians. In some writings, the use of the term empowerment appears to be consistent with social work values and an

ecosystem perspective; in others, however, it does not. It is important to clarify

what, as a profession, we are claiming empowerment to mean (Browne, 1995;

Ramcharan, 1997; Simon, 1990).

The Purpose of the Study

This research was designed to gain a better understanding of empowerment

from a theoretical and conceptual perspective and to clarify the definition of

empowerment based on its use in the social work literature. The goal was to reduce

conceptual ambiguity and illuminate the relationships between empowerment,

ecosystems perspective and the profession's commitment to social justice.

Overview of Presentation

A review of the literature that informed this study is presented in Chapter

Two. The concept of empowerment is examined first from a historical perspective,

then in relation to ecosystems theory and related theories; empowerment-based

practice and public policy; and finally, social work education and research. Chapter

Three outlines the study's research method, content analysis (Angelique & Culley,

2000; Grise-Owens, 2002; McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992; Potocky, 1993; Rogge &

Cox, 2001). This chapter includes an overview and rationale for content analysis

along with the study's sampling frame and coding scheme. The results of the

content analysis and statistical analysis are in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five

concludes the work with a discussion of the implications of the results for practice

and policy, recommendations for further research, and the strengths and limitations

of the study.

Chapter 2

A Review of the Literature

Review of the literature on the concept of empowerment is a daunting task.

Managing the sheer volume of the literature in a meaningful way is a challenge.

Barbara Solomon (1976), who coined the concept in her groundbreaking book

Black Empowerment, has traced the origins of the modern use of the concept to a

variety of cultural forces (Simon, 1994). More recently, empowerment has been

referred to as a theory that "transcends all dimensions of the human condition –

personal, social, political, and global – wherever there is a power imbalance" (van

Wormer, 2004, p. 126).

Empowerment is a dynamic concept, one that is defined contextually, and

one of only a few concepts (e.g., freedom and equality), which can have opposite

meaning for political and ideological rivals (Simon, 1994). For that reason, this

review of the social work literature relevant to empowerment-based practice begins

with a historical perspective; followed by concepts of ecosystems theory and related

theory; relevant practice methodologies; current social policy analysis; principles of

social work education; and research applicable to the conceptualization of

empowerment.

Empowerment: A Historical Perspective

Historically, the social work profession has been marked by alternating

periods of social reform and individualized treatment, and these have influenced

and fashioned the development of empowerment strategies. Social movements have

had a tremendous influence on social policy and on the social work profession,

leading to important paradigm shifts in practice; changes in educational institutions and professional organizations; and major changes in the profession's focus on social action and social change (Ehrenreich, 1985). In order to understand the concept of empowerment, it is necessary to understand the influence that social movements have had on the profession.

A social movement is defined as "a group venture extending beyond a local community or a single event and involving a systematic effort to inaugurate changes in thought, behavior and social relationships" (King, 1956, p. 27). All social movements begin as a collective response, as a collective identity to some problems that create a disturbance in the goodness of fit of the social system. The Progressive Era, the 1930's and the 1960's were critical for the tradition of empowerment in social work. The major contributions of these movements to empowerment-based practice are briefly reviewed in the following section.

The progressive movement in social work. In the Progressive Era, spanning the last quarter of the nineteenth century, technological, economic and social changes transformed American life and resulted in classic symptoms of social-capital deficit (Putnam, 2000). During the Progressive Era, Americans, with inspired grassroots activity and national leaders, "produced an extraordinary burst of social inventiveness and political reform " (Putnam, p. 368). Many of the challenges facing American society today parallel those experienced a century ago (e.g., a widening gap between rich and poor, inadequate education, the degradation of cities).

In terms of the social work profession, the economic depression of 1893 overwhelmed all avenues of charitable organizations and societies, public relief organizations, immigrants' mutual aid societies, and charitable efforts of churches and synagogues. In response to widespread poverty, many charity leaders and friendly visitors joined their settlement house contemporaries to distance themselves from moral explanations for poverty and embrace an environmental explanation (Katz, 1983). Richmond (1922) advocated for caseworkers to be democratic in their beliefs and behavior in order to facilitate connectedness and effectiveness within family, community, and society:

> It is not enough for social workers to speak the language of democracy; they must have in their hearts its spiritual conviction of the infinite work of our common humanity before they can be fit to do any form of social work whatsoever (p. 249).

This shared ideology has been called the defining moment of the Progressive Movement in social work (Spano, 1982), which left a legacy for future generations in terms of empowerment-based practice.

The Progressive Movement was influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey and others, who developed and refined their ideas about poverty's causes and cures as a result of their associations with the settlements and charitable organizations and societies (Spano, 1982). The settlement movement has a well documented history of active participation in the discovery of knowledge, rather than passive receipt of authoritative teachings. Dewey insisted that philosophy is nothing more than developed common sense and it requires the same test of the

practical experience of everyday activities. When philosophy is applied to politics and community, they are not separate; politics is viewed as a solution for social problems through group participation and action (Damico, 1978). This philosophy, known as pragmatism, is based on the unification of ideas, experience, knowledge and action.

In social work, the Progressive Era saw clients as active agents in their own lives working with the help of others on their behalf – also termed participatory democracy. The view that human beings are interdependent and their survival and success in supporting a meaningful life are contingent upon the health of their community has deep roots in American political philosophy. This ideal was an essential element of Lewinian field theory, systems theory and ecological approaches to empowerment-based practice.

There was however, a very different image of clients, which co-existed with the image of the active agent. This second view of clients was as victims of industrial capitalism, needing to be cared for. This image summons an alternative strategy to participatory democracy, known as paternalism, and it has been described as the polar opposite of empowerment (Swift, 1984). Paternalism is defined as "a system of relations, modeled on the parent-child template, in which those in authority act on behalf of other people without their permission to do so" (Simon, 1994, p. 80). There is a well documented history of such paternalism, as well as other forms, in the Progressive-Era child welfare agencies (Katz, 1990). The existence of these different images continues today, couched in terms of social control (Margolin, 1997; J. C. Wakefield, 1998).

The influential ideas of the Progressives in social work and society (e.g., participatory democracy, expanding notions of citizenship) remained after the crisis passed but were frequently challenged. Jane Addams, Grace Abbott and others were charged in speeches, editorials and public hearings as participants in a communist conspiracy. After a considerable period of conservatism in the 1920's, however, many of the welfare measures of progressive social workers were realized during the era of the New Deal (Spano, 1982).

Rank and File Movement. The Great Depression of the thirties, unique in the nation's history in several respects, had a profound impact on social work. The most notable event was mass unemployment, unprecedented in the millions of lives it touched. Officially, the unemployment rate rose from 3.2 % to 24.9 %; unofficially it was closer to one-third of the employable adult population (Katz, 1983). By 1933, the high unemployment resulted in broad public acceptance of immense expansion of the activities of the federal government, in both the economic and social life of the country. Liberal and radical social action persisted throughout the 1930's, as discussed in *The Response of Social Work to the Depression* (J. Fisher, 1980).

The Rank and File Movement came into being in order to reduce the domination and power of the "haves" and expand the power held by common people in day-to-day life (J. Fisher, 1980). Efforts, which began on a local level, were elevated to a national level to reorder the power relations among leaders of corporations and/or governments. The movement was critical in moving the social work profession toward an emphasis on social and environmental causation and

support for public services and unionization. In addition, the efforts of the Rank and Filers accelerated the social work profession's demands for social insurance and federal relief programs in 1934 and 1935.

Professionals involved in the 1930's as members of the Rank and File Movement (e.g., Jacob Fisher, Bertha Reynolds, and Harry Lurie) saw themselves more closely aligned with the movement than with the social work profession. In order to identify with disadvantaged and stigmatized people, they believed social workers should become organizers of trade unions, including a social work trade union(J. Fisher, 1980). However, this conceptualization of the client-social worker relationship had to compete with the growing influence of psychiatric theory and concern with the unconscious emotional life and early childhood experiences of the individual (Reynolds, 1934). After the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, the movement's membership and influence shrank; however, its unifying ideas have been integrated into the profession in empowerment-based practice.

Empowerment-based collaboration closely resembles the "alliance" between the social worker and client conceptualized by Bertha Reynolds (1951). According to Reynolds, an alliance is a relationship based on a shared sense of urgency; a shared commitment to problem solving in as democratic a manner as possible; and a shared emphasis on the common humanity of both members of the relationship, despite differences in social class, race, life opportunities, and education. Without this type of alliance, self-determination, a condition in which behavior is a result of personal wishes, choices and decisions, is in jeopardy due to power imbalances. Without a critical examination of the sources of power within our profession, self-

determination is an empty promise, a breach of integrity (Hartman, 1993; Pinderhughes, 1983).

The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement. Surprisingly little has been written about the influence of social movements on the profession of social work, particularly in the period of the 1960's and 1970's. As in the 1930's, the profession of social work was completely unprepared for the massive social disorder of the 1960's; dissent and reform had been driven underground and were regarded as dangerous. Social work, little by little, had withdrawn from its historical clientele, the poor, which may have accounted for the professional social apathy of the 1960's (Ehrenreich, 1985).

The social work profession was slow to respond to The War on Poverty. A few programs involving social workers, such as New York City Mobilization for Youth (MFY), began to provide a new approach to community action and, as the numbers grew, clients emerged as a force for the first time under the rubric of "maximum feasible participation". Welfare recipients were proposing a union of their own. The MFY challenged traditional agencies and local government officials, and it was viewed by many social workers as threatening to social work professionalism. In addition to paraprofessionals, the profession came under attack by social work students demanding substantial changes to curriculum, influenced by the student movement and the civil rights movement.

The ideas of Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator, informed the Black liberation activity of the period and have had a lasting effect on social work's conceptions of power, justice, self-determination, equity, and the normative

relationship between a worker and client (Simon, 1994). Freire spoke of

conscientization as a process "in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing

subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the sociological reality which shapes

their lives and capacity to transform that reality" (P. Freire, 1970, p.205). This

process refers to the ability to recognize oppression whether it is social, political or

economic and to the ability to take action against such elements of reality.

Clearly, problems, along with their social context, determine the type of

movement that emerges. When viewing a social problem through its historical

context, it is important to note whether it is simply a condition, or it is a social

problem connected to a value commitment opposing the condition. For example, in

the 1960's the concept of Black empowerment raised discrimination to the level of

a moral issue, and in combination with other minority groups and segments of white

society, a collective identity brought about change (Solomon, 1976).

The three social movements discussed here – the Progressive Movement,

the Rank and File Movement and the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights

Movement – contained similar patterns and dilemmas for the profession of social

work. Fisher (1980), Spano (1982), and Wagner (1989) have suggested

developmental stages in such movements, including an "incipient" or early stage, a

"highpoint" of radical professionalism, and a "drive to professionalization" in

which radicals are brought closer to mainstream professionals.

Historically, social work has been marked by critical periods of social

reform and alternating periods which focused on individual treatment, with a hint of

disdain for social action. The alternation between dominant perspectives contains

an element of conflict inherent in individual change and social realities. When basic

needs are not met, strategies are developed to meet those needs (e.g. child labor

laws, labor unions). This is the point at which empowerment practice strategies are

born; and the point where the individual meets society (Ehrenreich, 1985).

Ehrenreich summarizes the history of social work and social policy in this

statement,

> [W]e can explain its oscillations within a framework of a history of social
>
> work and social policy alone, but at the same time, we can explain them as
>
> nothing more than one reflection of a larger history. And still again, the
>
> larger history, in significant measure, was influenced by the development of
>
> social work and social policy (p. 13).

The literature continues to reflect the influence social movements have had on the

social work profession. The influence is believed to have manifested in a paradigm

shift in practice and a change in policy focus that consists of social action. The

review examines social work literature that reflects ecosystems theory (and related

theory) along with practice methodologies that support the conceptualization of

empowerment.

Empowerment: Ecosystems and Related Theory

An ecosystems approach takes a comprehensive, dynamic perspective that,

when coupled with the profession's code of ethics and standards of education,

offers an opportunity to improve transactions between people and their

environment. This approach is important as it is the aspect of the profession which

distinguishes it from other professions and on which training competent social

workers is based (CSWE, 1994; C. B. Germain & Gitterman, 1995). Moreover, a person:environment perspective is well accepted among postmodern theorists, allowing for the conceptualization of value-laden concepts such as empowerment.

There have been a wide range of ecological/systems frameworks, including William Gordon's (1969) and Harriet Bartlett's (1970) goodness-of-fit model, the general systems perspective of Hartman (1970), the situational approach of Max Siporin (1972), the ecosystem perspective of Carol Meyer (1970; 1976), and the ecological/life models of Germain and Gitterman (1980; 1973; 1977; 1978; 1981). Attempts to bridge the gap between new developments in general systems thinking and the emerging conception of the world in ecological terms are briefly reviewed below.

General systems theory. General systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1952, 1968) began influencing social work theory building and practice in the 1960's in an attempt to address massive social problems (i.e., structural poverty, racism). General systems thinkers were the first to define power as an element of the natural hierarchy, structure and function of a social system reflected in institutions, communities and families (Bateson, 1972; Jackson, 2000; Madanes & Haley, 1977). General systems thinker's influence on social work practice can be seen in the movement away from a simple "medical model" (Petr, 1988); the restoration of family systems thinking (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983); and a better understanding of how power is distributed in society (E. Pinderhughes, 1995).

As a systems thinker, Solomon (1976), in her groundbreaking book *Black Empowerment,* refined this perspective to include the experience of individuals

belonging to a socially stigmatized group. This ethnosystems perspective assumes

that individuals in some communities have been negatively valued by society to

such a degree that powerlessness has become a pervasive and crippling way of life.

That is, being negatively valued by society creates power blocks, which contribute

to a group's inability to develop self-esteem, acquire skills, and strengthen the

family. Overtime, the group maintains the state it has developed, denying

community participants the potential for strengthening themselves or their

community.

From this perspective, referred to as ethnosystems, empowerment is defined

as "a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category

throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise

of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles" (Solomon,

1976, p. 6). Using this definition, a new casework approach has emerged, which

assumes that inherent power differentials exist as a result of personal and positional

resources. These differentials are further influenced by gender, ethnicity/race and

socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, empowerment strategies require a dual

commitment, one that necessitates confronting the power of current political,

economic, and social forces and a commitment to empower socially stigmatized

individuals and groups (Greene, 1994).

Beginning with the mental hygiene movement of the twenties and the

psychoanalytic psychology of the thirties, the practice of social work changed. The

focus of the practitioner shifted to the individual. In its quest for certainty, the

medical model can conflict with value-laden concepts such as empowerment. Thus

it became necessary to look for something new in order to help people mobilize their own energies (Schwartz, 1959, 1976; Tropp, 1976). As a result, systems terminology grew in popularity, allowing for an active and reciprocal element not present in the traditional descriptions of the helping process.

While general systems theory is comprehensive and offers insight into power relationships; it cannot answer specific practice questions regarding when, where, and how to respond to the crippling social problems of the day. As a result, the profession, fragmented by methods and practice specializations, continued to struggle with the question of how to implement the dual commitment required to help people in a changing environment.

Ecosystems theory. In his pioneering work, Auerswald (1971) integrated ecology and general systems theory into social sciences, and introduced ecosystems theory as a way to allow for the dynamic conceptualization of terms such as empowerment. Ecosystems theory saved social work from incoherence (Wakefield, 1996b; 1996c).

The importance of ecosystems theory lies in its ability to explain the complex web of social interactions. The ecosystems perspective originated in social work as a way of bridging prevalent systems of thought, including ego psychology and general systems theory (C. Germain, 1979; Leiby, 1978). The concepts of ecosystem theory include functional systems and adaptation, as well as levels of practice.

Functional systems and adaptation. The organizing statement of the ecosystems approach comes from Kurt Lewin's (1951) equation of behavior [B = f

(P, E)], a function of the continuous interchange between person and environment, better known as Field Theory. According to this early systems theory, it is not possible to understand behavior solely from objective properties of the environment – an idea, incidentally, that dates back to the Progressive Era and the philosophy of John Dewey. Conceptualization of the environment extends beyond the behavior of individuals to include functional systems "designed for or adapted to a particular purpose" (Pickett, 2000, p. 285). Thus the concept of adaptation distinguishes ecosystems from other perspectives.

Adaptation is defined as a progressive mutual accommodation between the developing person and the immediate environment, each subject to the influence of the larger physical and social environment. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the most salient environmental events or relations affecting a person's development are those activities engaged in by significant others (parental employment, religious affiliations). When the balance of power in a developing person's environment is not functional, human potential and options can be severely limited, and serious consequences for learning to conceptualize and cope with power differentials develop.

According to ecosystems theory, positive and negative learning occurs as people develop over time. The developmental process is complex, not limited to a single, immediate setting; it includes interconnections as well as external influences from the larger surroundings. For that reason, the consequences for learning are compounded and in turn disturb other aspects of the developing person's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Siporin, 1980). If we are to use the concept of

empowerment in this context, it is essential to understand power as a dynamic process and its motivational characteristics in relationships (Pinderhughes, 1983).

Conceptualizing empowerment from an ecological perspective allows the social work professional to question the common properties of subsystems and common behavior principles. We understand more clearly, for example, how the reactionary behavior of one child influences the functioning of the whole family system. Alternatively, we understand how the functioning of the family system influences one child. Using critical theory, this understanding has been extended to the social structures (e.g., social class, ethnic, sexual, economic factors) and social institutions (e.g., school, work, family, welfare, legal systems) that operate at a powerful level in the lives of our clients. It follows that relationships between social workers, their clients and their clients' supports mirror those found in society (Greene, 1994).

In order to question common properties of subsystems, ecosystems theory is differentiated into three levels – microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem. According to Garbarino (1992), a microsystem refers to situations in which the developing person has face-to-face contact with influential others (e.g., family, school, peer group, church). A mesosystem refers to the relationships between microsystems, that is, the connections between situations (e.g., home-school; home-church; school-neighborhood), and situations in which the developing person does not participate but in which significant decisions are made affecting the developing person and/or adults who do interact directly with the developing person (e.g.,

parent's place of employment, school board, local government, parents' peer group).

Larger systems (e.g., organizations, communities, institutions, and societies) are referred to as macrosystems. A macrosystem has been described as a blueprint for defining and organizing the institutional life of society that incorporates ideology, social policy and shared assumptions about human nature and the social contract (Garbarino, 1992). There is considerable overlap among these three levels, which is to be expected in a systemic model of integration, a person:environment perspective.

Goodness of fit, power and niche. A goodness-of-fit metaphor suggests that nutritive environments offer the necessary resources, security, and support at appropriate times and in appropriate ways. Obviously, such an environment would be a source of empowerment for the developing person, and would result in positive feelings, a favorable level of self-esteem, and anticipation of mastery. However, this environmental relationship can be upside-down and the environment can act as a stressor and a source of oppression. This occurs when actual or perceived environmental norms and losses or conflicts exceed the developing person's capacity for dealing with them. A negative fit, not unlike the condition resulting from Solomon's (1976) power blocks, arouses feelings of anxiety, guilt, rage, helplessness, despair and lowered self-esteem, and results in powerlessness (Gitterman, 1996).

Empowerment is defined as a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power to improve the client's life situation (e.g., knowledge, skills, or

material resources). There has been concern, however, about the lack of conceptualization of the power differentials that exist in transactional processes (Ungar, 2002). In response to explicit criticism, additional concepts, relevant to empowerment were added to the ecological/life model. First, power was conceptualized as exploitive or coercive, acting as a stressor that afflicts society, particularly those in society who are vulnerable and powerless (e.g., people living in poverty). And second, the concept of niche was added and conceptualized as "the social position or status occupied in the existing social structure and in those social structures of a community by participating groups, relative to power and oppression" (Barker, 1999, p. 327).

Whether power is conceptualized as a stressor or a social position, it necessitates special adaptations or coping strategies. For example, social problems (e.g., poverty) and the management of negative feelings evoked by internal stress are mutually dependent. An empowerment strategy, therefore, would require both environmental and personal resources, without which internal stress could spiral downward and become harder and harder to interrupt (Gitterman, 1996; Solomon, 1976).

Related theory. Ecological/systems models have made a significant contribution toward drawing the social work profession's attention to the environment and the complexity of the interactions between individuals and the environment. There are continuing efforts to develop environmentally-focused frameworks such as the structural approach (Wood & Middleman, 1989), empowerment/social justice oriented models (L. Gutierrez, 1990a; Lorraine M.

Gutierrez, 1995; L. M. Gutierrez & Lewis, 1994; Lee, 1994; Swenson, 1998), and efforts to incorporate ecosystems theory based on deep ecology (Nμss, Rothenberg, & Naess, 1989) and social ecology (Bookchin, 1995).

At the same time, social work theorists have criticized conventional ecosystems theory on a number of grounds, including its conservative sociopolitical orientation, its ambiguous nature, and the theory's absence of a critical perspective (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002; Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 1998; Jerome C. Wakefield, 1996a). One of the major critiques is that ecosystems theory rests on the notion that stable system functioning requires individual adaptive processes. According to Saleebey (1990), the primary focus of most ecosystem perspectives is on how individuals adapt to their environment. Thus at a basic fundamental level, ecosystem theory fails to address the structure of power relationships in society.

There have been numerous postmodern critiques, many of which are entitled "rethinking empowerment" (Carr, 2003; Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002; Pease, 2002; Simon, 1990; Summerson, 2003). Perhaps in part, these critiques are a result of social movements' influence on social work. The Postmodern movement has been heralded as a paradigm shift for social sciences, the social work profession and social policy, that is, a shift in the beliefs, values, and techniques shared by the members of a professional community (Schriver, 1995). The movement also has been referred to as a "refiguration of social thought". According to Geertz (1983),

It has thus dawned on social scientists that they did not need to be mimic

physicists or closet humanists or to invent some new realm of being to serve

as the object of their investigations. Instead they could proceed with their

vocation, trying to discover order in collective life....(p. 21)

   If we are to discover order in collective life, we must include the subjectivity of

human endeavors. The Postmodern Movement has led the social work profession to

examine the capacity of its most fundamental modernist to meet our emancipatory

objectives. Without such examination, the language of empowerment can eclipse

oppressive relations, obscure class conflict, and result in inadvertent disempowering

effects (Pease, 2002).

     In summary, ecosystems theory draws attention to context, the structuralist

perspective draws attention to power and conflict, and the strengths perspective to

creativity and capacity. Feminist theorists have commented on the manner in which

social science empowers those it serves and demanded an accounting for those who

have been oppressed, in particular women scholars, families, and women of color

(Mimi Abramovitz, 1982; L. Gutierrez, 1991; Runyan & Peterson, 1991; Wood &

Roche, 2001). Critical theory combines postmodern approaches to empowerment,

narrative, and social constructionism and addresses questions of power and

knowledge in social work (Finn & Jacobson, 2003). Although not always popular,

some of these questions date back to the Progressive Era and thus are the very

questions that connect social policy and social work practice.

     As postmodern critiques deconstruct power, there are those who contend

that power is constructed in language; some note that those who experience its

effects have participated in bringing it forth; and then there are those who see power

everywhere and say it is exerted by some in order to oppress others. If we

conceptualize power as a commodity, identities are created (i.e., powerful, powerless) which leave out varied experiences and can contribute dominance despite good intentions. Postmodern, constructionist, and feminist theorists often agree in their critique of a positivist domineering attitude, which many times excludes those whom social work is committed to serving (Pease, 2002).

Social work theorists have proposed a number of practice frameworks ranging from the emancipatory use of ecological theory to anti-oppressive or social justice policy analysis (Finn & Jacobson, 2003; Reisch, 2002; Ungar, 2002; van Wormer, 2004); as well as ecofeminism (Besthorn & McMillen, 2002); empowerment as a meta-theory and a framework for training clinical practitioners (Dietz, 2000; Kondrat, 1995); and a synthesis of feminist thought and empowerment theory (Carr, 2003).

Empowerment: Social Work Practice

In spite of negligible attention given to social movements in the literature, they have had a revolutionary impact on the social work profession. This section reviews practice models that emerged directly from ecosystems theory and more recent social action and policy practices. The section highlights changes that have taken place in social work practice over the last 30 years, particularly those that pertain to empowerment-based practice strategies.

Practice models that emerged directly from the ecosystems perspective in social work include the life model approach (C. B. Germain & Gitterman, 1980), the competence approach (Maluccio, 1981), and the family-centered approach (A. Hartman, 1979). Practice models that have resulted from postmodern critiques,

include feminist, narrative and strengths perspectives (Saleebey, 1992), along with

practice models designed to confront the problems in the environment – a social

action and advocacy/empowerment model.

The life model. The life model reflects "a philosophical conception of

human beings as active, purposeful, and having the potential for growth,

development and learning throughout life" (C. Germain, 1979, p. 370). Contrary to

medical model concepts of disease, deviance, and the like, the life model approach

defines empowerment in terms of the client's strengths, potentials, authentic

partnership, and respect for the value of mutuality. In this way, self-direction is

linked to issues of power, opportunity, choice, and action in areas of life that are

important in a given culture.

According to the life model approach, empowerment must begin with the

establishment of the client-worker relationship. This relationship is a collaborative

search for, and creation of, opportunities for choice, decision-making, and taking

action. Therefore, empowerment is a joint effort to remove environmental obstacles

and increase the environment's responsiveness to the needs, rights, and goals of

clients, particularly marginalized or vulnerable groups. Potentially, the environment

can empower human beings and use their capacities to bring out environmental

possibilities; conversely, there is potential to deprive or oppress human beings of

the opportunity to make choices, ultimately restricting human development (C. B.

Germain & Gitterman, 1980).

Mancoske and Hunzeker (1989) define empowerment as "using

interventions which enable those with whom we interact to be more in control of

the interactions in exchanges…" (p.14). They point to the life model as an empowerment approach allowing for multilevel assessment and intervention while being almost a praxis model. This view of empowerment as a reflexive activity requiring self-determination is supported by documentation of the empowerment tradition in social work practice (Simon, 1994).

The ecological competence model. The ecological competence model uses competence as its organizing concept, at the same time viewing competence as the outcome. Empowerment defined as competence "refers to the repertoire of skills, knowledge, and qualities that enable people to interact effectively with their environment" (Maluccio, 1981, p. ix). The components of the model include motivational aspects, self-actualization (Maslow, 1954), capacities, skills, and environmental qualities.

The competence-oriented practice approach features a humanistic perspective, an assessment of competence, and establishment of an authentic, collaborative client-worker relationship that regularly employs client feedback. The competence approach sensitizes practitioners to the impact that environmental properties and demands can have on the personal, interpersonal or social competence of a human being. The model integrates the concepts of resilience, coping, and adaptation and is similar to the strengths perspective (Maluccio, 1979, 1981; Maluccio, Pine, & Tracy, 2002; Norman, 2000; Saleebey, 1992).

The family-centered approach. The family-centered approach (A. Hartman, 1979) emerged from ecological/systems theory, as did the life model and the competence model. In this approach, the family system is considered the center of

human development. This approach holds that human beings can only be understood in the context in which they exist, that is, human systems. Focusing on transactions among person, family, and the environment, ecosystems theory supports a family-centered approach and allows for its specific focus (i.e., the family). A family-centered approach is thought to be applicable to any field of practice; and for direct-service providers, the model is applicable to any social problem and compatible with empowerment principles (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983).

The concept of empowerment found in family systems literature is in many ways comparable to that in other areas, except for the concept of power. The family-centered practitioner, "whose goal is to enhance and enrich the quality of life for individuals and families, must understand not only complex family systems, but the equally complex interactions between the family and their ecological milieu" (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983, p. 5). Power as it relates to a family-centered approach is based on Haley's (1984) conception of a family hierarchy. As part of a family-centered assessment, subsystems are viewed in relation to the balance of power within the family. The object of family therapy is to restore the appropriate hierarchy (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983). In doing so, practitioners provide developmental and preventive services in the community; provide a variety of social services to strengthen or supplement family life; and finally, provide services that are rehabilitative when the individual's or family's adaptive capacities are weakened or lacking (e.g., through mental illness, sexual abuse, drug abuse).

Change may occur in individual or family functioning in the larger systems on which the family depends or in the transactions among these systems. Therefore, attention must be given to the social policy and organizational arrangements that underpin family-centered practice. For example, structural family therapy addresses the client's objectives in the context of the current organization of the client's relationships. According to Minuchin (1974), when the family structure is changed there are resulting changes in the individual family member's psychological processes and behavior.

A family-centered approach includes the notion of starting where the client is. In this way, the direction of the services rendered, beginning at the first moment of contact, is dependent on the questions asked by the worker. The worker uses her/his knowledge, skills, experiences, values, and worldview in the first session with a client (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983).

Each of the models discussed here – the life model, competence-based model, and family-centered model – emerged from either general systems theory or ecosystems theory and they each reflect collaborative efforts aimed at client empowerment. Although the life model addresses the environment's responsiveness to the needs of marginalized or vulnerable clients, and the competence model sensitizes a practitioner to environmental demands, for the most part the environment is not considered in these two practice models. The family-centered approach includes a broader conceptualization of power that goes beyond the client-worker collaboration to include other systems (i.e., family, society, environment). Several related practice models, which developed parallel to those discussed here,

reflect Postmodernistic thinking. They include the strengths perspective, feminist approach, narrative approach and community empowerment approaches.

A strengths perspective. According to Saleebey (2000), the strengths perspective is a "dramatic departure" from traditional social work practice (p. 1). This perspective has elements similar to those of the competence-based model; however, the elements are viewed as the individual's inherent strengths. Therefore, empowerment, from a strengths perspective, involves activating the client's strengths in order to increase the chances of improving her/his quality of life. The language of the strengths perspective, like that of the self-help literature, at first glance may appear simple; however, one only has to read on to realize that it requires a new way of thinking about clients and their environments (Rappaport, 1985; Saleebey, 1992).

A strengths perspective understands client empowerment as the central tenant of social work practice; strengths are embedded in the community of interest, and are renewable and expandable. In contrast to an ethnosystem perspective (Solomon, 1976), which examines society's negative valuations, the strengths perspective regards empowerment as dependent on an individual's choices and on individuals having choices available (Saleebey, 1992). It is similar to the competence-based model in that it calls for a client-practitioner collaborative effort. However, the nature of the developing person's strengths and the action strategies used by the strengths perspective, differentiate the two perspectives. The strengths perspective is part of a rapidly developing body of research and practice methodologies, which includes developmental resilience, solution-focused therapy,

assets-based community development, narrative therapy and social work education

(R. Chapin & Cox, 2001; R. K. Chapin, 1995; A. L. Cox, 2001a; D. R. Cox, 1995;

Saleebey, 1992; Stromwall & Stucker, 1997).

A feminist practice approach. Feminist social work attempts to reconcile

theoretical knowledge with practice and reflects the assumption that individual and

collective pain and living problems always have a political and/or cultural

dimension. Feminist social work practice is a means of addressing the problems of

powerless populations and mediating the role that powerlessness plays in creating

and perpetuating social problems. From this perspective, empowerment-based

practice focuses on increasing three kinds of power: personal power, interpersonal

power, and political power. Additionally, feminist practitioners are dedicated to

examining their performance against their principles, making this an effort in self-

examination (Bricker-Jenkins, Hooyman, & Gottlieb, 1991; E. O. Cox & Parsons,

1996; L. Gutierrez, 1991).

According to Weick (1983), an empowering professional relationship

includes a "belief in the client's strength and power…[that] is a crucial factor in

helping people gain full possession of what they have always possessed" (p. 471).

Therefore, empowerment from a feminist practice approach contains an assumption

about the nature of power in relationships, regardless of how it is conceptualized.

Bricker-Jenkins and Hooyman (1986) note that empowerment is a feminist

ideological theme and the essence of feminist social work practice.

Feminist empowerment-based interventions for social change include

identifying the connections between life issues and local organizing and national

politics (East, 2000; Faver, 1994). This is accomplished in part by nurturing

women's social networks as a context for empowerment and building coalitions

among women with different primary issues in an attempt to confront the universal

issues of racism, elitism, and homophobia. The integration of empowerment and

feminist perspectives includes recognition of the patriarchal structure underlying

women's subordination; the role of sexism, racism, and classism in the oppression

of women; the personal as political; consciousness-raising; and power and

empowerment as tools for change (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Bricker-

Jenkins et al., 1991).

A number of feminist perspectives conceptualize empowerment in a way

that guards against oppressive family structures or processes (Carter & McGoldrick,

1988). They are concerned with group processes that include a history of

oppression and they have a critical eye for structural inequity (L. M. Gutierrez &

Lewis, 1994; Lee, 1997). In practice, the inherent silencing and competitiveness

within a group are identified as rooted in society. The feminist perspective thus

expands interconnections and interdependencies and strengthens the ecosystems

approach to social work. According to Lee,

> The empowerment group is not a support or mutual-aid group, nor a
>
> therapeutic group, nor is it a consciousness-raising or critical-education
>
> group, or a political action group. It is all of the above and, by its unique
>
> combination of these, more (p. 24).

Some authors have found that a fundamental change of consciousness is

necessary in order to engage in empowerment, that is, the idea of social action built

on Freire's (1970) reflection of the self in society as necessary for societal change

(L. Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995; L. M. Gutierrez, 1994). Recently,

feminist notions of identity, consciousness, and agency have been utilized in

mapping the process of empowerment. Carr (2003) for example, contends that

previous efforts to describe the process of empowerment (e.g., developmental

psychology and social work theories) fail to capture the dynamic process of social

action and conscientization.

  A narrative practice approach. White and Epston (1990) are commonly

cited when discussing a narrative approach to family practice. The approach is

based on Bateson's (1972) interpretive method of studying the processes by which

we make sense out of the world. In his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind,* Bateson

challenged the linear model for understanding events in living systems. White and

Epston use an interpretive method in their work with families, rather than proposing

some underlying dysfunction or structure. The family members attribute meaning to

events, which then determine their behavior. According to Edward Bruner (1986),

using the notion of a map or a narrative incorporates a temporal dimension:

   [The] advantage over such related concepts as a metaphor or paradigm is

   that narrative emphasizes order and sequence, in a formal sense, and is more

   appropriate for the study of change, the life cycle, or any developmental

   process. Story as a model has a remarkable dual aspect – it is both linear and

   instantaneous (p. 153).

 The narrative approach is grounded in the philosophy of Michel Foucault, who

described himself as an "historian of system of thought" and sparked much debate

among theorists (Bertani & Fontana, 2003; Margolin, 1997; J. C. Wakefield, 1998). The approach builds on Foucault's idea of the "insurrection of subjugated knowledge…a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity " (Bertani & Fontana, 2003, p. 7).

These various knowledges are the basis of many postmodern critiques, which are aimed at unearthing local, regional, or differential knowledge that we are subject to as normalizing truths that shape our lives and relationships. These normalizing truths are powerful forces in our lives (e.g., religious affiliations, political ideologies). According to Foucault, cultural practices of the objectification of persons contain this subjugation and are intertwined with the operation of power in the modern state (Bertani & Fontana, 2003).

The narrative practice approach depends on knowing what can be empowering and/or where the power is located in one's life. Through a process of telling the story of our lives, the powerful forces are brought to the light of day. White and Epston (1990) propose that family members cooperate in creating their story, and this cooperation gives support to a problem's life system. And according to Foucault, a family's story contains subjugated knowledge that, when unearthed, can be liberating. It is therefore necessary to deconstruct the story of one's life. The feminist analysis of power refers to this subjugated knowledge; however, using a narrative approach allows one to go beyond the gender-based analysis of power, to

consider a more general spectrum of power and whether or not its aspects limit one's life.

Such an approach begins with "externalizing the problem," or in other words objectifying problems the family themselves have described as oppressive. In this way, as a separate entity, a problem is external to the person or relationship and less fixed or inherent in the person or relationship. The problem can be viewed more objectively and family members are free to create a restorying of their lives together and to appreciate facts that previously were unavailable because they contradicted the problem. This process has been found to decrease conflict (i.e., who is responsible for the problem); undermine the client's sense of failure (despite trying); and allow cooperation and new possibilities for action (White & Epston, 1990).

Community empowerment. Community practice is a conceptual umbrella used to cover a range of approaches, orientations and models of community organization. The term is meant to encompass the evolutionary nature of community organization including social planning, service integration, grassroots organizing and social action. There are a number of theories and models of community practice; they include classifications, comparisons, and typologies of community practice models (Rothman, 1970, 1995; Stall & Stoecker, 1998; Taylor & Roberts, 1985; Weil, 1996); organizational campaigns and social protest movements (R. Fisher, 1984; Piven & Cloward, 1977); and organizational skills derived from practice wisdom (Brager & Specht, 1973; H. Rubin & Rubin, 1986).

In addition, there are efforts to continue in the tradition of Alinsky (1971). However, while each assumes that community organizations are essential efforts of empowerment, the skill and action involved in such efforts vary in the degree to which they are linked to practice theory and/or fundamental conceptions of power (Mondros & Wilson, 1994). Early theories of social involvement or participation focused primarily on the political and/or formal role of participation within the community or neighborhood. Lee Staples (1984; 1990) talks about the steps necessary to build a new social action organization.

Si Kahn (1992; 2002) defines community organizing in terms of democracy, a redistribution of resources from the few to the many, and sees community organization "as a tool that is used in all cultures and societies to redress the classic imbalance between the powerless and the powerful" (p. 569). Much can be done in the way of non-traditional community organizing (e.g., storytelling, music, art, quilts) that shows a learning and appreciation of culture (Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001; Walsh, 2002). In this way, culture is more than an afterthought; it is a celebration, a collaborative way of empowering the group. The critical challenge to community organizers and social workers today is to "reach, teach, and organize people in ways that transform their understanding of power and their relationship to power – not just individually, but collectively" (Si Kahn, 2002, p. 576).

Gamble and Weil (1995) link models of community empowerment practice to early traditions in social work beginning with the Settlement Movement and the Charity Organization Societies; to rural development with its introduction of the discussion method for developing leadership; and to the mutual aid tradition of the

Black community (Weil, 1996). As a model for empowerment through citizen

participation, mutual aid offers potential beyond community organizing for national

institutional building and global social development (A. Kahn & Bender, 1985).

In addition to generic models of community practice, there are feminist models and

approaches (Hyde, 1986). The goal of women-centered organizing is

empowerment, defined as repetitive building of skills through action and reflection,

which in turn evoke new skills and understandings leading to action that is more

effective. This model of organizing puts emphasis on community building, a

collective identity, caring, mutual respect, and self-transformation (Barnett, 1995).

 An advocacy/empowerment model. The advocacy/empowerment model

grew directly out of the social movements of the 1960's, and was developed as an

alternative to the definitional level of theory used to meet the needs of the

community's chronically mentally ill. The model is based on Ryan's (1971)

Blaming the Victim, which,

> [So] distorts and disorients the thinking of the average concerned citizen
>
> that it becomes a primary barrier to effective social change…the injustices
>
> and inequalities in American life can never be understood (and, therefore,
>
> can never be eliminated) until that ideology is exposed and destroyed (p.
>
> xv).

Any practice built on an individual deficit philosophy, regardless of the special

interest or function, was considered to blame the victim and not validate the client,

and it rarely served to empower the client (Warren, 1963; Warren, Rose, &

Bergunder, 1974).

Rose and Black (1985) found that using an individual deficit approach in community-care programs provided residual services that were pejorative and shaming in nature. When individual behaviors or values (e.g., intellect, personality, or values of family structure or neighborhood) are assumed or defined as causal variables, it is important to understand the structural and ideological contradictions that exist in society, regardless of the plight of the client (e.g., chronic mental illness, poverty, oppression).

The advocacy/empowerment model seeks to reverse the objectified status of clients by validating them as actual or potential producers/participants in their own lives. In this context, empowerment is a process of connecting or reconnecting with the community those mental patients who have been displaced through institutionalization. This process of socialization requires an empowering, conscious strategy of action, contrary to the dictates of the agency (Stephen M. Rose & Black, 1985; Tobias, 1990).

A structural approach. As a slightly different approach to direct practice, a structural approach states that "the basic thrust of the social worker is to change oppressive situations instead of the people trapped in them" (Wood & Middleman, 1991, p. 53). According to Wood and Middleman, there comes a point at which the client and social worker join as partners and the aim of advocacy becomes universalistic. In this manner, advocacy reflects the values of social and economic justice and the worth and dignity of all human beings.

Social workers disseminate appropriate and sometimes empowering information and use consciousness-raising efforts to help clients understand that

their situation is not due to personal deficits but to the sociopolitical/economic system (e.g., battered women). Such an approach requires consciousness-raising efforts for social workers themselves, "especially with respect to exposing the subtle, victim blaming assumptions that underlie much staff training" (Wood & Middleman, 1991, p. 54). In addition, a structural approach cautions the worker against a self-less position, often common in the profession.

In order to carry out advocacy tasks, social workers must be self-full, defined as confident and with a developed sense of their own power (Wood & Middleman, 1991). Being self-full is important in carrying out advocacy tasks; workers are then able to influence colleagues, community influentials, and the profession itself when opportunities present themselves. According to a structural approach, advocacy and social action require courage and knowledge of power differentials based on class, race, gender, age, and ethnicity.

In summary, the advocacy/empowerment and structural approaches clarify the role of a defect causal analysis framework for the profession of social work. In so doing, these approaches highlight the structural and ideological contradictions embedded in practice in institutions with differing ideologies, and in the utilization of the concept of empowerment (Stephen Rose, 1990a). Community practice calls for social action, in order to provide a strategy for developing support within the community if their efforts are to survive.

Social action organizations. The social work literature provides typologies that describe a variety of organizations and practice texts with directions for the organizing practitioner. While the majority of these assume the concept of power,

Mondros and Wilson (1994) place power at the center of the analysis. They argue

that power, defined as "a process of accruing and maintaining influence" (p. 227) is

essential to the conceptualization of empowerment.

Social action is defined as "a collective endeavor to promote a cause or

make a progressive change in the face of oppression" (Hardcastle, Wenocur, &

Powers, 1996, p. 349). Thus it is both a practice and an activity committed to social

change, social justice and amassing power. The goal of amassing power may be

explicit or implicit; it may incite an organizing effort, or it may come because of

efforts to make a change. Either way, the organization realizes it must amass power

in order to realize its goal (Mondros & Wilson, 1994).

Theoretically, social action draws on several strands of thought including

those of Paulo Freire (1973; 1970), Black activists and writers, and the women's

movement. Social action organizations and/or groups use many different practice

methods (e.g., grassroots, lobbying, mobilizing approaches). According to Mondros

and Wilson (1994), it is the application of a particular practice method which

accounts for the differences among social action organizations.

However, there are also commonly accepted principles for social action,

which include: (1) a determination of goals by the group or community as a whole;

respect for each individual's abilities, resources, and limitations; effectiveness

through self-evaluation and attention to group dynamics; and step-by-step

successes; (2) a gradual increase in responsibility level; (3) appropriate assessment

and intervention procedures; and (4) integration of an evaluation into the project

design (Breton, 1995; Raber & Richter, 1999; Wood & Middleman, 1989).

According to Breton (1995), any group has the talent and/or capacity of influencing its members toward social action and empowerment producing activities. Social action is the taking of collective action with the intention of changing the group's environment. The conceptualization of social action as empowerment-based practice continues to expand and includes a model for mediation (Lombard, 1992); poetry and scholarly writing (Gring-Pemble, 1998; Kissman, 1989); building communities from the inside out (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993); and strategies for program evaluation within community-based programs (Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Secret, Ford, & Jordan, 1999).

Unfortunately, social action, involvement, and citizen participation are often unclear and controversial terms, and their use often leads to inconclusive debates about their real meaning and how to achieve them in practice. Social action is applicable to direct practice, group work, community organizing and policy. However, all the practice methods discussed thus far are subject to changes in the current social policy; therefore, an understanding of the social policy environment underlying our efforts toward empowerment is essential (Iatridis, 2002).

Empowerment: Social Policy

Policy is an all-inclusive word that refers to almost anything government does, making a few definitions necessary. According to Richan (1988),

Policies develop as a way of dealing with problems….Social welfare policy [as apposed to social policy, which is broader, and public policy, which is broader still] is concerned mainly with the transfer of goods and services to individuals and families, either through government agencies, voluntary

nonprofit organizations or profit making companies. The range of

services…included under social welfare is awesome (p. xi-xii).

Public social welfare, therefore, refers to the mechanisms that government uses to

distribute limited resources.

The social work profession's struggle to find a common meaning for the

term empowerment exists in a world where liberals and conservatives, religious

fundamentalists, and radical secularists all regard their causes as socially just and

use the concept of empowerment in meeting their goals (Reisch, 2002). Various

authors have linked social justice to empowerment without specifying the meaning

of either term (E. O. Cox, 2001b; Mondros & Wilson, 1994). Effective social policy

is built on an accurate definition of the problem (which often is not the case). It is

essential to understand what the people affected by the problem believe concerning

the events being defined as the problem. To understand a social problem is not quite

the same thing as understanding the truth of "how things really are" (Chambers,

1986; 1993, p. 8). The section below briefly reviews welfare reform; policy

analysis; and suggestions for policy development found in the social work

literature.

Welfare reform. As noted earlier, the concept of empowerment has its roots

in liberal power-sharing arrangements, made in the community in order to advocate

for the poor and those discriminated against (Ehrenreich, 1985; Horton, 1989). In

recent years, social policy has been limited due to budget constraints and a

taxpayer's revolt supporting further limitations. The reluctance of the American

people to embrace any comprehensive, politically supported public welfare system

is well documented. The United States is commonly referred to as the reluctant welfare state (Jansson, Dodd, & Smith, 2002; M. B. Katz, 1983; Trattner, 1999).

Before the 1980's, the primary means of ameliorating the impact of long-standing structural inequalities in society and the market was social welfare. A historic shift in social welfare policy, involving social program cuts, lower income taxes and higher military spending, began in the early 1980's. Social policy made a complete turn-about. Earlier, empowerment was defined within a relationship with the environment; now the concept is defined in terms of the individual, as it was in the 1950's. Welfare recipients are now perceived as having a personal weakness that hinders them from supporting themselves and their families. For that reason, in defining poverty, the current welfare-to-work policy, based on the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), is said to ignore the economic, political and social flaws that produce poverty, and it rests on the assumption of employment leading to self-sufficiency (Fellin, 1996; Grob, 1994; Rochefort, 1997).

As in the 1960's and early 1970's, since the passage of PRWORA and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in 1996, there has been a resurgence of efforts to organize low-income women and advocacy groups to work for welfare rights (Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Piven & Cloward, 1971). Feminist scholars have been writing about the welfare state since the 1980's, indicating the importance of recognizing the multiple oppressions that women on welfare and women of color face (L. Gutierrez, 1991) and the class dynamics that poor women of color face (East, 2000).

In 1983 an influential piece appeared in *Social Work,* titled "Everyone Is on Welfare" (M. Abramovitz, 1983). This analysis of U.S. social and fiscal welfare systems was based on Titmuss's (1965) three-tiered framework of social welfare. The analysis examined all the systems that provide benefits to affluent households and private enterprises as well as to poor people, and concluded that the systems generally favored middle- and upper- income groups over low-income groups. This analysis has since appeared frequently in course syllabi and in anthologies; has gained further support (Danziger & Gottschalk, 1995; Huff, 1992); and more recently has been revisited by Abramovitz (2001).

The updated analysis includes new data, a more in-depth examination, and an assessment of the corporate welfare system (not included in the first analysis). The analysis shows a social welfare system which favors the middle class, wealthy households, and large corporations. According to Abramovitz, most people, including social workers, have an inaccurate idea of who is "on welfare" (p. 297).

The social work literature suggests that empowerment, primarily in the form of social action, is again gaining status as a result of the conservative trend in social policy over the past few decades. For empowerment of the oppressed and those living in poverty, new research and policy agendas are required to offset conservative trends and family values rhetoric. Social workers have therefore become increasingly involved in policy analysis, policy recommendations, and implementation of policies and/or formulation of alternative policies, many of which focus on empowerment and oppression. Several criterion or value-based policy analysis models (Dobelstein, 2002) are found in the literature, including a

justice centered approach (Reisch, 2002); an anti-oppressive policy analysis (van Wormer, 2004); a historical perspective (Chambers, 2000); an approach rooted in society's way of life, an "ethics of care" approach (Cancian & Meyer, 2000; Caputo, 2002); and an integration of the strengths perspective into policy development (R. K. Chapin, 1995; Solarz, 2001). Examples of contemporary policy analysis found in the social work literature are discussed below.

Policy analysis. Policy analysis is a systematic process that consists of a series of steps referred to as a "stepping stone to policy practice" (van Wormer, 2004, p. 102). According to *The Social Work Dictionary* (Barker, 2003),

> Those who conduct such analyses consider whether the process and result were rational, clear, explicit, equitable, legal, politically feasible, compatible with social values, cost effective, and superior to all the alternatives in the short term and in the long term (p.330).

Conventional policy analysis, development, and advocacy tend to focus on *single* issues (e.g., hunger, homelessness, crime, domestic violence), often declaring the eradication of the particular issue as the primary goal. While such a goal is desirable and improvements are possible, eliminating a single problem out of context is unlikely (Gil, 1998). Most policies typically focus on short-term solutions, which ironically are then criticized as being failures (e.g., welfare reform).

An ecology-of-work perspective. A bottoms-up approach to social policy, the ecology-of-work perspective proposes to test the hypotheses on which current policy rests by examining the actual conditions and situations that people

experience. This approach aims to minimize the negative effects of current policy (i.e., socioeconomic norms) imposed on the poor by political and economic policy makers (Tickameyer, White, Tadlick, & Henderson, 2000).

The central feature of the ecology-of-work perspective is its recognition of the interrelatedness of policy decisions made at all levels of government. Current policy advocates are correct in asserting that the problems of poverty have been exacerbated by government policy; however, according to the ecology-of-work perspective, this assertion is incomplete when the focus is on welfare policy alone: the totality of government policy must be considered (M. Abramovitz, 1983; 2001; Daugherty & Barber, 2001).

The ecology-of-work perspective acknowledges self-sufficiency as the message sent by PRWORA to those receiving funds, through limits, lack of funding, and reduction of other services. The concept of self-sufficiency is oversimplified and misrepresented, however, it is linked exclusively to a free market economy (Daugherty & Barber, 2001). Indeed, self-sufficiency becomes a structural barrier when its meaning is based strictly on a market economy (Freeman, 1996). Redefining self-sufficiency, the ecology-of-work perspective shifts self-sufficiency to the point of view of the worker, rather than social policy makers. This requires a shift in frame of reference from that of the dominant political-economic discourse to the differential effects that the economy has on the various segments of society (Daugherty & Barber, 2001).

Anti-oppressive policy analysis. The anti-oppressive approach (van Wormer, 2004), or social justice perspective (Reisch, 2002) reflects the goals of

empowerment put forth originally by Solomon (1976) and developed over the past quarter century. This approach makes the claim that many policies institutionalize injustice and promote oppression. The analysis points out that power elites, the policy makers, need only offer relief enough to prevent the alienation of the poor and disenfranchised while maintaining credibility with the middle class (Piven & Cloward, 1993). This theory of policymaking requires knowledge of the present political climate and the implications for social work education (van Wormer, 2004).

In addition to knowledge of the political climate, knowledge of economic issues is necessary since anti-poverty analyses must address the issues and weaknesses of the economy as a whole. For example, the economy has shifted from a manufacturing base to a service and information base; information therefore equates to political empowerment. Van Wormer (2004) suggests public policy initiative that brings together economists, sociologists, lawyers, and political experts to discuss the current landscape and outlook with social workers. In this way, anti-oppressive policy analysis can serve as an empowering tool for social workers, and outsiders to the political system can begin to have influence on the system. Other authors have suggested education about political issues and processes, such as the minimum wage mythology (Chambers, 1986, 1993; Goss & Adam-Smith, 1996; Hoechstetter, 1996).

Anti-poverty analyses also consider international social work scholarship (Ping-kwong, 1997), which addresses both social and economic issues and emphasizes economic and social needs in equal measure with peace and security.

An index reflecting both economic and social indicators offers "a new yardstick of human progress…a measure of development much more comprehensive than GNP alone" (Miringoff, Miringoff, & Opdycke, 1999, p. 30).

Social policy practitioners are committed to social change and redistribution of goods and services to improve social justice, guided by "social justice, equality, democratic processes, and empowerment of disadvantaged and powerless people…"(Iatridis, 2002, p.1856). Interventions in social policy are usually at the macro-level; however, policy changes may take place at one or more administrative and geographic levels: local, state, regional, national, and international or global. For example, Gutierrez (1990b) recommended a power-equalizing role involving educating families and letting them teach others to broker power analysis.

One proposal reported in the literature is a comprehensive initiative addressing the complex economic needs faced by women who are victims of abuse. The needs of these women span many levels (e.g., public assistance, education, employment, income, assets, divorce, financial settlements and child custody), reflecting the ecology-of-work perspective. The initiative is an asset-based course of action aimed at empowering women to become economically self-sufficient. "Economically self-sufficient" is defined as not reliant on either a male breadwinner or the government for economic support. Such an economic policy for women may have both interventive and preventive effects on abuse of women (Christy-McMullin, 2002).

Social workers as policy analysts often find themselves actively involved in the political process through the generation and analysis of critical data (e.g.,

treatment and program effectiveness). As noted above, social policy analysis and

formulation have typically been problem focused and pathology oriented. The

policies are societal responses to social problems (Chambers, 1986, 1993).

However, the way the problem of poverty is viewed has tremendous implications

for the solutions tried and usually determines how the problem will be resolved

(Dobelstein, 1999). Social policies stemming from our market-economy are "based

on utilitarian individualism that denies the existence of community and defines the

social good as simply the sum of individual desires…." (P. Fisher, 1995, p. 47).

The current social work literature reflects a developing consciousness of

social good in terms of community (Caputo, 2002; Perez-Koenig & Rock, 2001)

and the expanded ecological model for social work reviewed below integrates many

sociocultural critiques of modern society (i.e., postmodern philosophy,

constructionist, and ecology).

Ecosystems developing perspective. The conceptualization of

empowerment-based practice continues to expand contextually. Simmons and

Parsons (1983) use group work as an empowerment intervention strategy for pre-

adolescent girls; Fox (1984) asserts that the social work profession has an ethical

responsibility to empower minors; and Parsons and Cox (1989) have introduced

family mediation as an empowerment strategy in elderly caregiving. In fact, several

authors suggest that empowerment strategies are the central aim of social work

(Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983).

Ungar (2002) has proposed eight practice principles as a guide for social

work practitioners who wish to operationalize ecological theory in democratic or

non-oppressive ways. These principles are based on a comprehensive review of ecosystems theory and its practice methodologies. Ungar's principles include intrinsic value, diversity and diverse solutions, structured alliances, management by stakeholders, divestment to community, public policy and community empowerment, enlightened development, and ethical obligations to foster change. According to Ungar,

> [S]ocial work practice based on these eight principles of a new ecology is an attempt to celebrate diversity in constructions of health and the deconstruction of the relative power of the competing discourses found among privileged professional service providers and the marginalized groups they serve (p. 493).

The principles incorporate critical, postmodern and narrative perspectives in an effort to include the client's voice, the worker's perspective, and the principles of community-based efforts in actualizing social policy. In doing so, the traditional chasm between individual and community levels of practice is reduced. Such a separation is in conflict with the original intents of the ecological perspective.

Empowerment-based practice requires two circumstances: a worker with a raised consciousness, relevant skills and knowledge, and a consumer seeking to be empowered. Empowerment-based practice makes the assumption that consumers seek to be empowered (Mancoske & Hunzeker, 1989; Simon, 1994). The question is whether we are raising the consciousness of social work students while teaching relevant skills and knowledge. Empowerment requires a collective identity contrary to the dominant individualistic identity in our society. The profession of social work

cannot assume that social work students possess such an identity; therefore, social work education's core curriculum needs to reflect a collective identity.

Empowerment: Social Work Education

The current Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2001) curriculum policy, *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* (EPAS), has mandated a strengthening of political social work skills and knowledge. While the current curriculum policy does not make direct reference to the concept of empowerment as does the Code of Ethics (NASW, 1999), the literature reflects interpretations of curriculum principles in terms of empowerment (Longres & Scanlon, 2001). Social work ethics and values, critical thinking skills, and a liberatory model of social work education are reviewed below to illustrate this type of interpretation.

Ethics and values education. The current curriculum policy states that social work,

> [E]ducational experience provides students with the opportunity to be aware of personal values; develop, demonstrate, and promote the values of the profession; and analyze ethical dilemmas and the ways in which these affect practice, services, and clients….integrate content about values and principles of ethical decision making as presented in the NASW Code of Ethics (CSWE, 2001, p. 9).

The study of ethics and values is becoming a central ingredient of social work education, as evidenced by the increased number of conference presentations and workshops, and the development of curriculum resources, case studies, and course

outlines in the area of ethics and values (Black, Congress, & Strom-Gottfried, 2002).

One university, as part of an ongoing effort to internationalize its social work curriculum, adopted a required course in the MSW program titled *Social and Ethical Issues and Social Work Commitment*. The course enables students to better define social issues, especially those dealing with human rights and social injustices, along with "develop[ing] an identification with the social work profession in the face of diversity, globalization, paradox, ambiguity and uncertainly" (Healy & Pine, 2002, p. 1). The course syllabus includes a comprehensive required reading list on such topics as enduring commitments, issues and tensions in social work, and ethical issues in practice (e.g., self-determination).

There has also been an increase in courses designed to teach social work students about ethics by linking them with fields of practice and at-risk populations (e.g., mental health and child welfare). For example, at one university there is a required health/mental health concentration course based on empowerment theory. The course emphasizes multicultural and diversity issues as applicable to ethics, while highlighting advocacy, empowerment, and social transformation in relation to disparities in the health and mental health of African Americans. The course's guiding philosophy is one of health as a right; poor health outcomes are viewed as a social justice issue with at-risk populations (Black et al., 2002).

Another example is found in a booklet titled, *Empowering people: Perspectives from the field* (Zastrow, 2004), which is designed to accompany an

introduction to social work textbook. Zastrow contends that much of what social workers do entails empowering people and therefore the booklet contains several empowering strategies, from a strengths perspective, in a variety of practice areas. Among the practice areas are poverty and public welfare, families, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, drug addiction, and criminal justice. The author uses case examples, in combination with the textbook, to promote interactive critical thinking for both students and instructors. The implication is that in order to confront denial and the structural elements of poverty and oppression, it is important to critically scrutinize existing social structures. Critical thinking is needed to uncover the power differentials that characterize the experiences of various groups. The section below describes how the use of critical thinking can help professionals examine society's values and economic policies.

Critical Thinking Skills. Without recognition of the social policies introduced under the guise of economic progress or social justice that are oppressive to large groups of people, challenges to such policies and practices cannot be effective. The difficulty lies in the fact that topics such as oppression and injustice are burdened with emotionalism and denial. These topics require a critical awareness or social consciousness in order to navigate the system with the goal of personal empowerment and/or social transformation (van Wormer, 2004).

Empowerment-based practice requires both social workers and their consumers to be socially consciousness and have an awareness of their prejudices, beliefs and attitudes, and the ways in which their worldview affects their attitudes and behavior (L. Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999). In fact, the literature indicates that the

worker's awareness of problems as social issues helps to raise the consciousness of clients and helps to reduce self-blame and advocate for social change (L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995; Simon, 1994; van Wormer, 2004).

Goldstein (2001) contends that as educators we must create opportunities for students to learn more advanced ways of thinking if as a profession we are committed to ameliorating poverty, oppression and discrimination. Critical reflection and analysis require consideration not only of the problem or condition (e.g., poverty, discrimination), but also of the philosophy and beliefs of the learner. Below a method of social work education designed to empower students is briefly described.

Liberatory education principles. The term "liberatory" was first used by hooks (1993) to denote a process of education that does not reinforce existing systems of oppression and domination. Liberatory education principles have been adapted to social work education in an effort to prepare students for both strands of the social work mission – individual and societal well-being, without differentiating between the two. This method of teaching and learning goes beyond the development of critical thinking and analytical skills:

> [I]t describes a co-constructed, critical and connected learning and teaching
> stance. This is a sense of reflectively, not knowing for certain how to make a
> liberatory difference in our own and other lives, while simultaneously
> insisting on learning how to do so anyway (S. E. Roche, 1999, p. xiii).

Underlying the principles of liberatory learning and teaching are three frameworks: social work's mission and values, international human rights and

social justice commitments, and a global feminist perspective. Five principles from these frameworks are applied in social work education: (a) focus on power and empowerment, (b) promote full participation, (c) develop collaborative structures, (d) respond to unfolding events, and (e) integrate field and classroom learning. These principles grow out of a philosophy of education built that views the human community as a global civilization with an abundance of resources and opportunities to meet all common needs. This is a view of "what is humanly inevitable" (S. Roche et al., 1999, p. 27).

Empowerment is also supported by various education methods, including an emancipatory/empowerment educational perspective for the new professional (Kondrat, 1995); and a curriculum designed to bring social action back into social work (Kondrat & Julia, 1998; Raber & Richter, 1999). A variety of programs are designed to teach adults about prevention, while empowering them to be positive role models. By this means, adults can teach children skills that will strengthen their resistance to alcohol and other drugs (Homonoff, Martin, Rimpas, & Henderson, 1994).

Beyond the mandate to strengthen social workers' political skills and knowledge, the current Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) outline specifications for research, which include these: "develop and use research, knowledge, and skills that advance social work practice" (CSWE, 2001, p. 6). Research relevant to the conceptualization of empowerment in social work is reviewed below, along with the efforts of practitioners and consumers to operationalize the concept of empowerment.

Empowerment: Research

Until recently, social theorists, not practitioners and consumers, developed most of the definitions of empowerment. In an effort to learn how practitioners in the field conceptualize empowerment and identify empowerment-based practice methods, Gutierrez, DeLois, and GlenMaye (1995) conducted interviews with practitioners in a number of organizations serving a variety of populations. They found that most practitioners, from individual to community levels of practice, thought of empowerment in terms of a psychological process of change. Furthermore, practitioners thought that this change rested on an awareness of the inherent power of the individual, family, group or community. Self-awareness alone, however, was not considered sufficient to bring about social change.

The empowerment-based themes identified by Gutierrez et al. (1995) echo those found in the literature to date; they include education, client participation and a strengths orientation. Their findings further suggest that similar themes are found across different levels of practice with different populations. The themes are interlocking, mutually reinforcing, and of equal importance in empowerment-based practice. The findings also suggest, however, that practitioners do not, as a matter of course, challenge the social structure or advocate for political action.

Rosenfield (1992) found that the quality of interactions and methods of service delivery were as important as the service itself when empowerment was sought. Linhorst, Hamilton, Young, and Eckert (2002) examined client participation in treatment planning, in an attempt to identify empowering conditions and barriers to empowerment. The study defined empowerment "as having decision-making

power, a range of options from which to choose, and access to information"
(p.427). The study found that decision-making skills increased as the potential for
empowerment increased, suggesting that empowering conditions extend beyond the
characteristics of the client alone to include organizational factors.

In an attempt to further clarify the concept of empowerment, four focus
groups consisting of consumers and their respective social workers were asked to
discuss three topics: the concept of empowerment in general, aspects of the process
and outcome of empowerment based practice, and the social worker's function in
empowerment activities. The study found important differences in how consumers
and social workers viewed empowerment and the role of social work professionals
in the process of empowerment (Boehm & Staples, 2002).

Consumers viewed empowerment in terms of process and outcome; and
they placed higher emphasis on tangible outcomes and concrete results than did
social workers. For example, elderly respondents defined empowerment in terms of
improvement in their state of health and living conditions. Similarly, single parents
defined empowerment in terms of progress toward economic independence. Only
the teenagers emphasized the process elements of empowerment over tangible
outcomes.

The social workers and consumer groups differed in their views of the
function of the social worker in the empowerment process. Social work
professionals frequently stressed the process of empowerment, without any
connection to outcome, while claiming empowerment as a function of the
professional intervention. This emphasis on process reinforces a more traditional

professional-client relationship. The findings of this study point to the importance of participant observations.

Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found a strong relationship between psychological empowerment and community participation and involvement. Participation is directly and indirectly related to increased empowerment, although the causal relationship between them is unclear (Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, & Chavis, 1990). A number of scholars argue that participation must come before empowerment, making it vital to explore the views of the client (Bond & Keys, 1993; Prestby et al., 1990; Saegert & Winkel, 1996). A study of the effectiveness of empowerment-based social work practice upheld the notion of empowerment as a complex phenomenon, finding empowerment to be a long-term process that required change activities at individual, family and community levels (Bartle, Couchonnal, Canda, & Staker, 2002).

Empowerment measurement development. Few efforts to evaluate empowerment are found in the social work literature. Scale construction is challenging and time consuming, particularly with a complex concept such as empowerment. The literature suggests that empowerment needs might be manifest at any level –individual, family, group or community. Empowerment is a continual developmental process, beginning at any and/or all ecological levels and involving growth and change (Torre, 1986). Thus the point at which an individual commences the process of empowerment is a matter of personal choice and need at the time.

Although the concept of empowerment is complex, several scales have been developed to capture the concept, including scales that measure the perceptions of

both social workers and consumers. Included among these are a structured

conceptualization of empowerment (Torre, 1986); a measure of social workers'

perceptions of personal and professional power (Frans, 1993); and a community-

organizing measure of empowerment at the individual level (Speer & Peterson,

2000). Although all these efforts have been found to be statistically sound and

robust, the discussion here focuses on the development of Parson's (1999) scale,

with its amplification of the consumer's voice.

The measurement discussed here was developed through a synthesis of the

current literature and methodologies thought to highlight the consumer's point of

view; principles of empowerment research were used as a guide (R. J. Parsons,

1998). The initial qualitative research in five empowerment-based programs used

group and individual interviews with participants to identify helping behaviors,

characteristics of the program, and client outcomes. The programs included a

community support program for survivors of domestic violence; an empowerment

project for elders; a residential program for adults with severe mental illness; and a

coalition for AFDC recipients aimed at policy changes. Although the programs

differed in client need, they shared the same outcome goal of empowerment and all

used a definition of empowerment congruent with social work practice (E. O. Cox

& Parsons, 1994).

The group and individual qualitative interviews focused on the program

definition of empowerment; the client's definition of empowerment; the manner in

which empowerment was facilitated; the client's experience of the program; what

brought the client to the program; the client's expectations in regard to the help he

or she would receive; the client's experience in the helping process; and what changes the client attributed to participating in the program. A tool to assess empowerment practice principles (EPP) and an empowerment outcomes assessment tool (EOA) were developed based on the interviews (E. O. Cox & Parsons, 1994).

Empowerment practice principles (EPP). The EPP is a survey tool used to assess program intervention strategies in four categories or dimensions, developed from analysis of the interview data and other studies and concepts relevant to empowerment practice principles (E. O. Cox & Parsons, 1994; L. Gutierrez, 1990b; L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995; Solomon, 1976).

The categorical dimensions are (1) environmental atmosphere, called "Creation of a cohesive collective", (2) relationships between professionals, clients, and other clients, (3) strength-based collaborative assessment, and (4) a focus on education. The first dimension or subscale includes items on safety, relationships/trust, interaction, networks, validation/being heard, mutual decision-making, mutual aid, interdependence, creation of hope, and collaborative action. The second focuses on shared power, while the third emphasizes clients' view of the problem and their ability to cope. The final dimension, which focuses on education, includes information on the socio-political climate and the development of new skills (e.g., advocacy). Access to resources also is included.

A 48-item instrument with these four dimensions was piloted several times using a Likert-type 1-5 response set (with 5 indicating the greatest presence of empowerment). The final version administered to 95 respondents, who were consumers of mental health services, in five different programs within the mental

health system (traditional mental health clinic, clubhouses, and consumer-run centers). No significant demographic differences were found between any of the groups. Overall reliability, tested using Cronbach's alpha, was well within the significant range, $A = .94$, after deleting items with correlations less than .25 (A. Rubin & Babbie, 2001).

Three of the four categorical dimensions performed as distinct domains using Cronbach's alpha: $A = .81, .85,$ and $.80$; questions in the relationship domain did not perform as a sub-scale. The associations between dimensions or sub-scales were tested using Pearson r correlation coefficients and were as follows: education and environment $r = .45$; education and relationship $r = .48$; education and strengths based assessment $r = .66$, relationship and environment $r = .54$; strengths based assessment and environment $r = .49$; relationship and strengths based assessment $r = .61$. These associations provide evidence for the overall validity of the scale; however, the evidence is not so strong as to suggest that the subscales are measuring the same domain.

The overall scale reliability coefficient was strong, although the authors noted that the possibility of social desirability required further testing. An advisory panel of consumers, mental health professionals, administrators, state mental health officers and members of family and consumer advocacy groups, along with a panel of six experts in the area of empowerment, gave feedback on problematic questions, wording and conceptual issues. The final version was a 33-item instrument that reflects the dropping of items with low inter-item correlation and word changes based on the pilot work and feedback (R. Parsons, 1999).

Empowerment outcomes assessment (EOA). The second instrument developed from the interviews and from other empowerment instruments was a 34-item client self-report instrument. The EOA has three categorical dimensions of empowerment outcomes, identified by those interviewed as personal, interpersonal and socio-political. They are similar to the outcome dimensions found in other research (E. O. Cox & Parsons, 1994).

The personal dimension includes increased self-awareness, self-acceptance, belief in self, self-esteem and a feeling of having rights. Items were developed like items in other sound scale development efforts (i.e., using structured conceptualization, Frans, 1993; Torre, 1986). The interpersonal dimension measures increased assertive behavior, which includes asking for help, learning new problem solving strategies, and critical thinking. Several of these items were selected from Paulson's (1991) client empowerment scale, developed for consumers of mental health. The final dimension, sociopolitical participation, includes outcomes such as giving back to peers and programs, joining community organizations, and taking a proactive stance on issues. Several of these items were drawn from an organizational empowerment scale for consumers of mental health services (Segal, Silverman, & Temkin, 1993).

The 40-item survey instrument comprising the items described above was assigned a Likert-type response set. The final draft of the EOA was administered to the same 95 consumers of mental health services described above. Again, no significant demographic differences were found between any of the groups, other than the length of time the client had been associated with the program.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha and found was, *A* = .87, after deleting items with correlations less than .25 (A. Rubin & Babbie, 2001). The final EOA is a 29-item scale, with three sub-scales, personal, interpersonal and political participation, with alphas of .84, .76, and .80, respectively. No item has a total inter-item correlation of less than .25. Pearson r was used to test the correlations between sub-scales, and the correlations were as follows: personal and interpersonal sub-scales had a Pearson *r* of .54 (p = .000); personal and political sub-scales yielded a Pearson *r* of .21, (p = .037); and the socio-political participation and interpersonal sub-scales had a Pearson *r* of .54, (p = .000). These correlations suggest that the domains of empowerment differ, but are sufficiently correlated to serve as a single construct. When associations of scores on the sub-scales with demographic variables were tested for significance, education was significantly correlated with the political participation sub-scale score, and the interpersonal sub-scale score.

The same categorical dimensions were identified by new focus groups and by individual mental health consumer interviews, serving as confirmation of the content validity of the scale. Face and content validity were also established through consistency with 15 attributes of empowerment developed by an advisory board of leaders of the self-help movement (Rogers, Chamberlin, Ellison, & Crean, 1997).

These two comprehensive measures of the concept of empowerment resulted from the initial grounded research. The empowerment practice principles (EPP) assesses strategies and helping behaviors in an empowerment-based program; and the empowerment outcomes assessment (EOA), assesses outcomes in

clients (R. Parsons, 1999). Scores on the EPP and the EOA were found to be significantly correlated among consumers who viewed the helping process as having empowerment type attributes and viewed themselves as being empowered by the program (R. Parsons, 1999).

Little research has been done on the empowerment of social workers, though Pinderhughes (1983) discussed worker self-empowerment, and others have discussed staff empowerment within social service organizations (Leslie, Holzhalb, & Holland, 1998). The research indicates that participation and empowerment are closely linked, and participation, education and a strengths perspective are of equal importance. From an ecological perspective, using the concept of goodness of fit, it should follow then that the dimensions applicable to consumers would apply in equal measure to the profession.

Summary

In social work practice and social policy, the concept of empowerment has been used in various ways, some more consistent with ecosystems theory and social work values than others. In reviews of the literature, three themes consistently emerge: a collective identity, collaborative strength-based assessment, and a focus on education. These themes, in one form or another, are applicable to personal (self-perception), interpersonal (knowledge and skills) and community/participation (action) outcomes of empowerment-based practice (R. Parsons, 1999).

Collective identity. The contemporary use of empowerment rests on an individualistic definition, based on the ideology of the dominant culture. In contrast, the social work literature reflects a developing collective identity or ideology in the

profession's commitment to social justice. At the theoretical level, this collective identity is evident in the evolution of ecosystems theory.

Many of the initial assumptions of general systems theory and ecosystems theory have been challenged by critical theory, social constructivism, and feminist theories. The result is a more mutualistic, nonhierarchical and emancipatory view of empowerment. Critical theory, for example, assumes that contemporary societies are oppressive and systematically encourage the development of certain societal groups at the expense of others. Further, a social work knowledge base dominated by an individualistic worldview cannot actualize values such as social justice, equality and empowerment (van Wormer, 2004).

An ecosystems perspective helps us to appreciate that no theory, concept, model or approach can take everything into consideration. The ecosystems perspective is increasingly interpreted in terms of the collective. The advocacy/empowerment method, narrative and feminist approaches, and a global perspective honor the collective identity. While not all to the same extent, these approaches also value interdependence, mutual decision-making, and an understanding of the dynamics of power in society.

The advocacy/empowerment model defines empowerment in terms of the community, and uses conscious action to socialize clients (Stephen M. Rose & Black, 1985). In feminist practice, the focus is on increasing three different kinds of power: personal power, interpersonal power, and political power. The literature also suggests that empowerment practice based on primary group association links individuals to larger institutions, resulting in a collective identity. The

empowerment-based group approach views the group's coping methods from an ecosystems and feminist perspective, while embracing the concept of unity (Lee, 1994).

A more collective ecological perspective has evolved with principles that support the determination of goals by the group or community while at the same time respecting each individual's abilities, resources, and limitations (Ungar, 2002). Policy analysts speak of the futility of individualism and claim that when social good is defined as the sum of individual desires, the existence of community is denied. In fact, the social action model represents an effort to move toward a collective consideration of the people whom social workers serve. Recent social work literature suggests that empowerment, primarily in the form of social action, is again gaining status.

A collective identity is seen in the broadest sense in international social work scholarship, which reflects a holistic approach to alleviating the underlying causes of a global poverty. This approach considers social problems as related to and rooted in a society's way of life. The approach takes a multidimensional view of poverty and mandates a broad-based national initiative, a bottoms-up developmental approach, and involvement of the poor. Collective identity includes indicators such as interactional relations, trust, networking, common purpose, strong identification with professionals, validation, mutual decision making, mutual aid, and interdependence (Frans, 1993; R. Parsons, 1999). As a result of the international efforts, a collective identity is being seen in recent curriculum movement toward diversity and globalization (Healy & Pine, 2002); the integration

of empowerment theory (Black et al., 2002); and promotion of full participation and a conscious vision of the human community as a global civilization (S. E. Roche, 1999).

Although research lags behind, a trend toward a collective identity is also reflected in social work research. Over the last decade, efforts to measure the concept of empowerment have viewed empowerment as a goal and an outcome, and have looked at it from the social worker's perspective, as well as the client's perspective. The reliability and validity of the scales have been tested using collective research strategies.

Collaborative strength-based assessments. The emerging empowerment-based practice models that have resulted from adoption of an ecological approach all stress the client/worker relationship as a collaborative search for and creation of opportunities for choice, decision-making, and action. The life model approach defines empowerment as a joint effort to remove environmental obstacles and increase the environment's responsiveness to the client's needs, rights, and goals (C. B. Germain & Gitterman, 1980). The competence model goes a step further and calls for regularly employing client feedback (Maluccio, 1981). Finally, the object of family therapy is to restore the appropriate family hierarchy, and this appropriateness extends to the client-worker relationship as well (Ann Hartman & Laird, 1983).

The literature suggests that an empowerment-based group can serve the same functions as a support, mutual-aid, or consciousness-raising group. Defining empowerment in this manner assumes collaboration between group members, with

a group facilitator acting as a source of strength. In much the same way, the feminist perspective values interconnections and interdependencies between practitioners, their peers and clients. The narrative approach goes beyond gender-based analyses of power to consider a more general spectrum of power and its repressive aspects (White & Epston, 1990). Through collaborative efforts, the practitioner and client share in a greater understanding of the power spectrum. Recent empowerment-based approaches based on ecosystems theory have focused on community empowerment, management by stakeholders, public policy and a deconstruction of professional discourses of the privileged. These approaches call for a gradual increase in responsibility and for collaborative relationships among professionals and peers (Ungar, 2002).

Unfortunately, most practitioners think of empowerment in terms of a psychological process of change, though they recognize that such change requires an awareness of the inherent power of the individual, family, group or community. Practitioners do not as a matter of course challenge the social structure or advocate for political action (L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995). Thus, there is a need for collaboration within the profession as well as with clients, agencies, organizations and communities.

Traditionally, theorists and scholars have defined empowerment; more recently, however, the literature reflects collaborative efforts between theorists and practitioners. A traditional top-down approach leaves out the voice of the client, supporting the practitioner as an expert, researchers' methods, however, increasingly reflect the amplification of clients' voices and honor their perceptions

in the process of conceptualizing empowerment. Differences have been found in the ways that consumers and social workers view empowerment and the social work professional's role in the process, suggesting the necessity of a collaborative effort (Boehm & Staples, 2002; L. Gutierrez, Glenmaye, & Delois, 1995; Linhorst et al., 2002; Rosenfield, 1992).

Focus on education. Early efforts toward empowerment-based practice called for increased skills (Solomon, 1976); ability to interact with the environment effectively (Maluccio, 1981); and solution-focused interventions (Stephen M. Rose & Black, 1985; Saleebey, 1992). Increasingly, empowerment-based practice calls for shared learning in the form of deconstructing one's story (White & Epston, 1990); self-examination (Bricker-Jenkins et al., 1991); and a critical eye that challenges structural inequities, using education and political action (Lee, 1994). All of these efforts have implications for education that goes beyond traditional methods – in other words, a "dramatic departure" for the profession of social work (Saleebey, 2000, p. 1).

The most recent social work educational policy and accreditation standards (EPAS) call for a strengthening of political social work skills and knowledge; and social work literature increasingly reflects the integration of ethics and values, critical thinking skills, and non-traditional education methods. Critical thinking goes beyond mere factual information on group characteristics and includes awareness of one's own prejudices and beliefs and the ways in which one's worldview affects one's attitude. Thus critical thinking involves the ability to

recognize oppression, whether it is social, political or economic, and the ability to take action against such elements of reality (L. Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999).

Recent literature suggests that empowerment is defined differently by social workers and consumers/clients (Boehm & Staples, 2002). Practitioners tend to think of empowerment in terms of a psychological process of change (Lorraine M. Gutierrez, 1995), while the people social workers serve place more emphasis on tangible outcomes and concrete results (Boehm & Staples, 2002). The literature also suggests that empowerment requires two circumstances: a worker with raised consciousness and a consumer seeking to be empowered (Mancoske & Hunzeker, 1989).

In summary, this review of the literature suggests that a consensus definition of empowerment is possible, but there is a need for more clarity, given the confusion in the profession regarding a concept such as empowerment (Frans, 1993; L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995; R. Parsons, 1999; Torre, 1986). The following specific questions were addressed by the study reported here:

With what frequency do scholars in social work journals reference empowerment?

What aspects or dimensions of empowerment do scholars address and emphasize in social work journals?

How comprehensive is the coverage of the practice dimensions of empowerment in social work literature?

How comprehensive is the coverage of the outcome dimensions of empowerment in social work literature?

In addition, the study hypothesized that the concept of empowerment, as operationalized by Parson (1999), would be proportionately distributed across identified practice dimensions (strength, collective identity, education) and outcome dimensions (personal, interpersonal and community/political) representative of ecological dimensions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Content analysis was the method used to answer the study questions on the topic of empowerment. Content analysis is designed to develop a conceptual representation that is reasonable, interpretable, and useful for further clarification (Weber, 1990). Content analysis is increasingly evident in the literature as a method of exploration of ill-defined concepts including sexism, racism, the breadth of an approach [i.e. person-in-environment], and the availability of services (Angelique & Culley, 2000; Grise-Owens, 2002; McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992; Potocky, 1993; Rogge & Cox, 2001). The following sections describe the major methodological aspects of content analysis including sampling, coding classifications, the coding procedure, and determination of reliability.

Sampling

The sample frame for this study consisted of abstracts in journals selected by *Social Work Abstracts (SWAB)* as "core" journals between the years 1977 and 2004. The unit of analysis for the study was the abstract. In the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* an abstract is defined as a description of the problem under investigation, the participants, experimental method, findings, conclusions and implications (APA, 2001). Traditionally, abstracts are brief, accurate, comprehensive and self-contained. All "core" journal abstracts are included in SWAB throughout the year, in contrast to "non-core" journals, from which only selected abstracts are published (Payne, 1996). The time span of the sampling frame (1977-2004) covered the period from

initiation of the use of the concept empowerment in social work literature to the present. The sample consisted of 41 journals, which included all journals whose abstracts were published in *SWAB* for three or more years. With few exceptions, this sample matches that used in Rogge and Cox's (2001) content analysis of the concept person-in-environment.

These "core" journals were also used in previous publication productivity studies (Corcoran & Kirk, 1990; Green, Baskind, & Conklin, 1995; Jayaratne, 1979; Ligon & Thyer, 1995; Thyer, Boynton, Bennis, & Levine, 1994). Further, several of the journals were considered "the core of the social work network" in a structural analysis of the profession's journal network (Baker, 1992, p.160). The journals are top-tier, prestigious, and representative of peer-reviewed publications read by social work practitioners, educators, students and researchers.

The entire sampling frame (1977-2004) of "core" journal abstracts was available through the Silverplatter database (Ovid Technologies). The database was searched using the keyword empowerment and the data were converted into a format usable for text analysis. Only the abstracts that used the word empowerment as a keyword were included.

Coding Classifications

Word lists were created for the dimensions of empowerment (collective identity, collaborative strength-based assessment, education, personal, interpersonal, community/participation) in order to answer the research questions. The definitions and coding methods used for each dimension are outlined below, along with the ways this information was used to answer the questions.

Empowerment. The social work literature offers the following conceptualization of empowerment, which was adopted for this study: The goal of empowerment is to increase personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, or communities can take action to improve their situations.

Empowerment is a process that can take place at individual, interpersonal, and community levels. It is thought to occur through intervention methods that include collaboration, trust, and shared power between client and worker; utilization of small groups; acceptance of the client's definition of the problem; identification and development of the client's strengths; consciousness raising related to issues of class and power; active involvement of the client in the change process; specific skill development; use of mutual-aid, self-help, or support groups; encouragement of a sense of personal power within the helping relationship; and mobilization of resources or advocacy for clients (L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995, p. 535).

A content analysis dictionary, similar to a thesaurus, was constructed based on this conceptualization of empowerment using Parson's scales (1999; 1998), *The Empowerment Practice Principles Scale (EPP)* and *The Empowerment Outcomes Assessment Scale (EOA).* These scales were chosen based on their reliability, validity, and respect for the voice of the consumer (see Chapter 2).

The content analysis dictionary contained six word lists, one for each categorical dimension of the empowerment scales. This method offered several advantages. First, single-concept coding schemes have high validity and reliability. Second, this method allowed articulation of an explicit rationale for what was included and excluded from the analysis, and made possible a detailed analysis of

the conceptualization of empowerment (Weber, 1990). Finally, the search terms were not duplicated in the lists, allowing for a richer understanding of the texts (Appendix A & B).

Procedure

After an exhaustive search of the literature and an examination of social work empowerment scales, Parson's scales (1999; 1998) were used to represent the dimensions of empowerment necessary to answer the research questions. Three dimensions corresponded to practice and another three corresponded to the levels-of-ecosystems perspective. Thus there were six word lists. The author took care to incorporate multiple forms of the words used (i.e., plural, possessive) and ensure that terms were not duplicated in the lists. The study used Diction 5.0, a Windows based software program, designed as a general-purpose instrument suitable for analyzing any sort of English-language text (Stanton & Cox, 2000).

The Diction software allows for the creation of customized word lists applicable to the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of a specified topic. Each separate wordlist is applied separately to the sample text. Therefore, after the sample abstracts were converted to a text format, they were downloaded directly from the Silverplatter database into a data file prepared within the Diction 5.0 software. Once the sampled journal abstracts were downloaded, the software analyzed them, sorting the content into one of the six wordlists. The numerical results were exported directly to an Excel (2000) program, which could then be imported directly into either the SAS or SPSS statistical analysis programs.

The use of Excel allowed for the different analyses necessary for the research questions. For example, for questions of frequency and the aspects or dimensions of empowerment emphasized in social work journals (Questions 1&2), with the Excel program, SPSS (10) easily calculated descriptive statistics. However, in order to evaluate the comprehensiveness of the practice and outcome dimensions using chi-square analysis, SAS statistical software compatible with Excel (2000) was used. The SAS software also allowed for input from a statistical consultant.

Coding and Reliability

The sampled empowerment abstracts were quantified using the customized wordlists, and the resulting numerical output included raw totals exported to an Excel (2000) spreadsheet, compatible with SAS Windows. Additionally, the data were written directly to SPSS 10 for statistical analysis. Graphing counts (percentage, proportions, and frequencies) were examined for aspects of empowerment that would not be apparent otherwise (Stanton & Cox, 2000).

The results of the computer-assisted coding for empowerment were examined in relation to the definitions adopted for the study using frequencies, percentages, and proportions of each categorical dimension of empowerment processes and outcomes. These descriptives were analyzed by journal, year, and categorical dimension. Further analysis included Chi-squares and t-tests calculated for comparison of the dimensions of empowerment practices and outcomes.

Both the reliability and the validity problems of content analysis grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings and category or variable definitions. In order to increase reliability, coding instructions within the software define the categories

and they are intended to be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Also, in this study,

only manifest content was coded, lending a high degree of specificity and

reliability.

Chapter 4

Results

The first aim of the study was to determine the frequency with which empowerment is referenced in social work journals. The 41 core journals in *SWAB* contain 21,845 abstracts published between the years 1977 and 2004. However, this large sampling frame generated a relatively small sample of abstracts on empowerment. Of the 21,845 abstracts, only 475 or 2 % referenced empowerment as a keyword. The number of abstracts per *SWAB* core journal ranged from 1 (*Children and Youth Services Review, Clinical Social Work Journal, Indian Journal of Social Work, Social Work Research and Abstracts*) to 62 (*Social Work*). *Social Work* was a clear outlier with 13.1% of all abstracts; it was followed by *Social Work with Groups* (7.6%); *Journal of Community Practice* and *Affilia* (6.5% each), and *Families in Society* (5.9%). The complete distribution is shown in Table 1, which gives the number and percentage of abstracts found in each *SWAB* core journal using the empowerment keyword search.

The study also examined the aspects or dimensions of empowerment addressed and emphasized in social work journals. Three of the six datasets constructed invoked the categorical practice dimensions of empowerment, as follows: 402 abstracts (84.6%) referenced a strengths dimension; 358 abstracts (75.4%) referenced the education dimension; and 335 abstracts (70.5%) referenced the collective identity dimension. The remaining three datasets constructed reflect the categorical outcome dimensions of empowerment: 215 abstracts (45.3%) referenced the personal dimension; 359 abstracts (75.6%) referenced the

interpersonal dimension; and 381 abstracts (80.2%) referenced the

community/political dimension. Thus, the largest percentages were in the strengths

dimension (a practice dimension) and the community/political dimension (an

outcome dimension). Table 2 shows the number and percentage of abstracts found

to contain words representative of the practice and outcome categorical dimensions

of empowerment.

Chi-square analyses were performed to examine the distribution of practice

and outcome categorical dimensions among the abstracts. Twenty-eight journals

(68%) showed equality across practice categorical dimensions. Thirteen journals

(32%) were found to have significant differences in the distribution of practice

categorical dimensions (at the .05 level or below). In 12 of the 13 journals (92%)

with significant differences, the strengths dimension was most common; the Journal

of Community Practice was the exception. In this journal, the collective identity

dimension was most common. In those journals in which the strengths category was

most common, collective identity and education were second. Table 3 lists the

journals in which there were significant differences in the defining aspects of

practice dimensions.

Chi-square analysis of the abstracts by journal showed that in 13 journals

(32%) the outcome dimensions were equally distributed, leaving 28 of the journals

(68%) in which there were significant differences among the outcome dimensions

(at the .05 level or below). In 23 journals or 82%, the community/political

dimension was most common and in 19 the interpersonal category ranked first.

Those in which the community/political dimension was not first included *Families*

in Society, Journal of Multicultural Social Work, Public Welfare, Social Work, and Social Work in Health Care. In these journal abstracts, the interpersonal dimension was most common. Table 4 lists the journals in which there were significant differences among the outcome dimensions.

Further analyses examine the comprehensiveness of the coverage of the practice dimensions of empowerment in the social work literature. The practice dimensions were referenced in the following combinations: 231 abstracts (48.6%) referenced all three dimensions; 83 abstracts (17.5 %) referenced the strengths and education dimensions; 56 abstracts (11.8%) referenced the strengths and collective identity dimensions; and 28 abstracts (5.9%) referenced the education and collective identity dimension. The remaining 14.3 % or 68 abstracts referenced one dimension. There were 9 abstracts (1.9%) which did not reference any of the three practice dimensions. Table 5 shows the number and percentage of combinations of individual categorical dimensions related to practice, by journal.

Finally, the study examined the comprehensiveness of coverage of the outcome dimensions of empowerment in social work literature. The outcome datasets (personal, interpersonal, community/political) were referenced in the following groupings: 131 abstracts (27.6%) referenced all three dimensions; 35 abstracts (7.4%) referenced the personal and interpersonal dimensions; 154 abstracts (32.4%) referenced the interpersonal and community/political dimensions; and 41 abstracts (8.6%) referenced the personal and community/political dimensions. The remaining 102 abstracts (21.5%) referenced one of the dimensions. There were 12 abstracts (2.5%) which did not reference any of the three outcome

dimensions. Table 6 shows the number and percentage of the combinations of categorical dimensions related to outcome dimensions, by journal.

The overall means of the empowerment practice and outcome dimensions were compared using a T-test. This analysis showed a significant difference in favor of the practice dimensions, Practice – Outcome = +0.4872, (.07, .90), N = 475, p = .02.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Empowerment Referenced Abstracts in *SWAB*

Core Journals (1977-2004)

Journal	#	%
Administration in Social Work	18	3.8%
Affilia	31	6.5%
Arete	6	1.3%
Australian Social Work	15	3.2%
British Journal of Social Work	12	2.5%
Child Abuse and Neglect	4	0.8%
Child and Family Social Work	6	1.3%
Child and Adolescent Social Work	6	1.3%
Child Welfare	11	2.3%
Children/Youth Services Review	1	0.2%
Clinical Social Work Journal	1	0.2%
Families in Society	28	5.9%
Health and Social Work	16	3.4%
Indian Journal of Social Work	1	0.2%
International Social Work	15	3.2%
Journal of Community Practice	31	6.5%
Journal of Family Social Work	8	1.7%
Journal Gay & Lesbian Social Services	3	0.6%
Journal of Marital & Family Therapy	5	1.1%

Table 1 (continued)

Journal of Multicultural Social Work	4	0.8%
Journal of Social Work Research & Eval	11	2.3%
Journal of Social Service Research	4	0.8%
Journal of Social Work Education	14	2.9%
Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare	15	3.2%
Journal of Teaching Social Work	12	2.5%
Public Welfare	3	0.6%
Research on Social Work Practice	6	1.3%
School Social Work Journal	2	0.4%
Smith College Studies Social Work	7	1.5%
Social Casework	16	3.4%
Social Service Review	7	1.5%
Social Work	**62**	**13.1%**
Social Work and Social Science Review	4	0.8%
Social Work Education	2	0.4%
Social Work in Education	14	2.9%
Social Work in Health Care	17	3.6%
Social Work Research	6	1.3%
Social Work Research & Abstracts	1	0.2%
Social Work with Groups	**36**	**7.6%**
The Social Worker (Le Travailleur)	4	0.8%
TOTALS	**475**	**100%**

Table 2

Number and Percentage of Abstracts Referencing Empowerment Practice and Outcome Dimensions

Dimension	Abstracts	%
Practice		
Strengths	402	84.6%
Education	358	74.5%
Collective ID	335	70.5%
Outcome		
Personal	215	45.3
Interpersonal	359	75.6
Community/Political	381	80.2

Table 3

Chi-Square values for Journals reflecting Significant Differences among the Three Practice Dimensions

Journal	χ^2	p-value
British Journal of Social Work[123]	(2, N=89) = 19.57	p=.00006
Child and Family Social Work[123]	(2, N=40) = 24.35	p=.00000
Families in Society[132]	(2, N=139) = 19.74	p=.00005
Journal of Community Practice[312]	(2, N=335) = 10.41	p=.005
Journal of Family Social Work[132]	(2, N=40) = 8.45	p=.01
Journal of Multicultural Social Work[132]	(2, N=21) = 12.29	p=.002
Journal of Social Work Education[321]	(2, N=101) = 6.79	p=.03
Research on Social Work Practice[123]	(2, N=43) = 7.30	p=.02
Social Work[123]	(2, N=371) = 46.32	p=.00000
Social Work in Education[123]	(2, N=78) = 7.69	p=.02
Social Work in Health Care[132]	(2, N=86) = 6.79	p=.03
Social Work Research[132]	(2, N=41) = 7.66	p=.02
Social Work and Social Science Review[132]	(2, N=30) = 18.6	p=.00009

Note. The order in which the categories were found is indicated using ([1]) for strength, ([2]) for education, and ([3]) for collective identity.

Table 4

Chi-Square values for Journals reflecting Significant Differences among the Three

Outcome Dimensions

Journal	χ^2	p-value
Administration in Social Work[321]	(2, N=141) = 36.55	p=.00000
Affilia[321]	(2, N=125) = 13.94	p=.0009
Arete[312]	(2, N=16) = 6.13	p=.05
Australian Social Work[321]	(2, N=87) = 20.97	p=.00003
Child Abuse and Neglect[312]	(2, N=19) = 10.53	p=.005
Child Welfare[321]	(2, N=47) = 8.98	p=.01
Families in Society[231]	(2, N=126) = 24.43	p=.00000
Health and Social Work[321]	(2, N=101) = 18.32	p=.0001
International Social Work[321]	(2, N=96) = 45.75	p=.00000
Journal of Community Practice[321]	(2, N=300) = 171.14	p=.00000
Journal of Family Social Work[321]	(2, N=66) = 15.64	p=.0004
Journal Gay & Lesbian Social Services[312]	(2, N=9) = 8.00	p=.01
Journal of Multicultural Social Work[231]	(2, N=24) = 10.75	p=.004
Journal of Social Work Research & Eval[321]	(2, N=71) = 15.75	p=.0003
Journal of Social Service Research[321]	(2, N=55) = 10.62	p=.005
Journal of Social Work Education[321]	(2, N=62) = 10.48	p=.005
Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare[321]	(2, N=80) = 19.23	p=.00007

Table 4 (continued)

Journal of Teaching Social Work[3,2,1]	(2, N=49) = 10.08	p=.006
Public Welfare[2,1,3]	(2, N=17) = 14.24	p=.0008
School Social Work Journal[3,2,1]	(2, N=16) = 12.88	p=.001
Social Casework[3,2,1]	(2, N=103) = 18.19	p=.0001
Social Work[2,3,1]	(2, N=372) = 34.18	p=.00000
Social Work and Social Science Review[3,2,1]	(2, N=20) = 7.90	p=.02
Social Work in Education[3,2,1]	(2, N=73) = 19.26	p=.00007
Social Work in Health Care[2,3,1]	(2, N=89) = 12.83	p=.002
Social Work Research[3,2,1]	(2, N=25) = 6.32	p=.04
Social Work with Groups[3,2,1]	(2, N=291) = 167.77	p=.00000
The Social Worker (Le Travailleur)[3,1]	(1, N=8) = 4.50	p=.03

Note. The order in which the categories were found is indicated using ([1]) for personal,

([2]) for interpersonal, and ([3]) for community/political.

Table 5

Distribution of Abstracts in Empowerment Practice and Outcome Dimensions

Practice Dimensions	# Abstracts	Percentage
All 3 Practice Dimensions	231	48.6%
Strengths/Education	83	17.5%
Education/Collective Identity	28	5.9%
Strengths/Collective Identity	56	11.8%
One Dimension	68	14.3%
None	9	1.9%

Outcome Dimensions	# Abstracts	Percentage
All 3 Outcome Dimensions	131	27.6%
Personal/Interpersonal	35	7.4%
Interpersonal/Community Political	154	32.4%
Personal/Community Political	41	8.6%
One Dimension	102	21.5%
None	12	2.5%

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study examined the utilization, meaning and implementation of the concept of empowerment in relation to ecosystems theory and the social work profession's commitment to social justice. This chapter summarizes the findings on the concept of empowerment and its dimensions; discusses the implications of the findings for social work practice and social policy; and outlines the strengths and limitations of the study, with recommendations for further research.

Just over 2% of the abstracts published in social work's core journals in over a 25-year period used the term empowerment as a keyword. *Social Work*, the profession's flagship journal, was the only exception to this low frequency, with 13% of its abstracts using empowerment as a keyword. Although the frequency of use of empowerment as a keyword was low, its use was consistent over the years in a variety of social work journals. The integrity of the empowerment definition used in this study does not appear to have been compromised, nor does the word seem to have been misused to justify positions representing varying ideological and political (Ward & Mullender, 1991). However, the low frequency of use of empowerment may suggest a lack of precision in the manner in which articles are distilled into abstracts and keywords.

Over 70 % of the abstracts that referenced empowerment in the 41 core social work journals referenced one or more of the practice categorical dimensions (strengths, education, and/or collective identity). This suggests that empowerment-based practice covers a wide range of issues in a variety of contexts. Each

publication sampled has a unique philosophy and targets a particular group of

practitioners, academics, and/or researchers. Comparing the three dimensions of

empowerment-based practice, a slightly greater emphasis on the strengths

dimension of empowerment was noted. This strengths perspective is part of a

rapidly developing body of literature, research, and practice methodologies (R.

Chapin & Cox, 2001; R. K. Chapin, 1995; A. L. Cox, 2001a; D. R. Cox, 1995;

Saleebey, 1992; Stromwall & Stucker, 1997).

The data on the outcome dimensions (personal, interpersonal, and

community/political) indicate that over 75 % of the empowerment abstracts

referenced the community/political and/or interpersonal dimensions of

empowerment, while less than 50 % of the abstracts referenced the personal

dimension. This emphasis on the community/political and interpersonal dimensions

can be viewed as an indication that the social work profession is dedicated to a

person:environment perspective, with a commitment to the "empowerment of

people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 1999).

Nearly half of the abstracts included all three empowerment practice

dimensions (strengths, education, and collective identity). Furthermore, a very

significant percentage of the abstracts (over 80%) included at least two of the three

practice dimensions. This finding suggests a broad use of the empowerment

practice dimensions.

A significant percentage of the abstracts (over 75%) considered at least two

of the empowerment outcome dimensions (personal, interpersonal, and

community/political), but over 50 % left out the personal dimension. Although the

outcome dimensions were not distributed as uniformly as the practice dimensions, from an ecological perspective, the findings are encouraging. Historically, the profession of social work has been marked by periods of social reform and alternating periods that focused on individual treatment. This finding can be viewed as a balance between social reform and individual treatment.

This study hypothesized that the concept of empowerment, as operationalized by Parson's scales (1999), would be proportionately distributed across identified practice dimensions (strength, collective identity, education) and outcome dimensions (personal, interpersonal and community/political), all of which represent ecological dimensions. Sixty-eight percent of the core journals contained abstracts that were proportionately distributed across the practice dimensions; the unequal distribution favored the strengths dimension. Only 32 % of the journals, however, contained abstracts that reflected proportionately distributed empowerment outcome dimensions; the disproportionate distribution overwhelmingly favored the community/political dimension. This emphasis on the community/political dimension may be seen as necessary after an era dominated by individual problem-focused interventions (Dobelstein, 2002; Reisch, 2002; van Wormer, 2004).

In sum, the study findings indicate a comprehensive and uniform utilization of the concept of empowerment in articles in core social work journals; the importance of this concept of empowerment has been increasing in the literature, particularly in terms of ecosystems theory and social justice (P. Freire, 1970; L. Gutierrez, DeLois et al., 1995).

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

Empowerment was defined as "a process through which clients obtain resources – personal, organizational, and community – that enable them to gain greater control over their environment and to attain their aspirations" (Hasenfeld, 1987, pp. 478-479). The process has been noted to consist of three dimensions – strengths, collective identity, and education – by Gutierrez et al., Parsons and others (1995; 1998). The current study found a comprehensive and uniform application of these themes across personal, interpersonal, and community/political levels of practice in the social work literature.

The strengths component of empowerment involves an activation of clients' inherent strengths in order to improve the condition of their lives. Social workers are concerned with the individual's strengths as well as collective strengths. Many have commented on strengths as renewable, expandable, and imbedded in the community (Weick & Saleebey, 1995). Although at first glance one might think this is common sense, such a departure from the deficit or problem-focused intervention requires a fundamental change in attitude. Indeed, this departure has been referred to as a paradigm shift.

The collective identity aspect of empowerment stresses the client/worker relationship as a collaborative search for and creation of opportunities for choice, decision-making, and action. This collaborative effort implies a balance of power and a democratic, shared commitment characteristic of the early traditions in social work beginning with the Settlement Movement and the Charity Organization Societies. A collective identify refers to the client/worker relationship, whether the

client is an individual, a group, or a community. This requires practitioners to have an awareness of the impact that environmental demands can have on the personal, interpersonal or social competence of a human being. Power imbalances within the profession can undermine efforts aimed at empowerment. An understanding of power dynamics in society allows for values such as social justice and equality to come alive in social work practice (S. M. Rose, 2000).

The final domain of empowerment, education, requires a change in consciousness, as suggested by Freire and others (1970; Gil, 1998; hooks, 1994). In the social work literature, this is referred to as conscientization, a process of recognizing social, political and economic oppression (P. Freire, 1970). This process might require understanding complex family systems and the equally complex interactions between the family and their ecological milieu. Yet another requirement might include critical examination of the sources of power in our profession. Education implies an analysis of the existing power structure, regardless of the locale. For example, in order to empower clients affected by issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice a critical analysis of the dominant political-economic discourse is essential.

Clearly, empowerment involves an active process of strengths, collective identity, and education across all levels of practice. Social work practice of this nature identifies power differentials across the levels of practice and recognizes oppression and the individual's ability to negotiate or take action against these elements of reality (P. Freire, 1970). The actions taken are limited only by our own imaginations.

This study found that the concept of empowerment was used both as a process and as an outcome across personal, interpersonal, and community/political domains. Just as ecosystems theory is differentiated into levels, so too is the conceptualization of empowerment. The wide-ranging empowerment outcome dimensions observed are similar to the dimensions of ecosystems theory – micro, meso and macrosystem. The importance of this lies in the centrality of an ecological perspective and its ability to reveal the complex web of social interactions which distinguish the social work profession from other professions (CSWE, 1994; C. B. Germain & Gitterman, 1995).

The profession of social work has been marked by periods of social reform and alternating periods that focused on individual treatment. This alternation between dominant perspectives suggests an element of conflict, which reflects individual and social realities. Empowerment practice strategies represent the point at which the individual meets society (Ehrenreich, 1985) and may be seen as reflecting an early stage of social reform (J. Fisher, 1980; Spano, 1982; Wagner, 1989). Further, the use of empowerment suggests a shift in the beliefs, values, and techniques of the members of the professional community.

In summary, the most compelling of the study's findings for practitioners are (1) the infrequency with which empowerment is utilized as a keyword and (2) the significant discrepancy between empowerment practice principles and empowerment outcomes. The low incidence of empowerment as a keyword is surprising when one thinks about how often as practitioners we use the term. As our friends within the self-help movement are fond of saying, we must 'walk the walk'.

The practice of empowerment is challenging, evidenced by the daunting task involved in the review of the literature on the concept of empowerment.

In terms of empowerment practice and empowerment outcomes, the literature suggests a discrepancy between the practitioner's perspective and the client's perspective. While most practitioners would agree we cannot empower clients, this task is their own, we do profess the "empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty," (NASW, 1999). Practically speaking there exist a number of barriers to the empowerment of marginalized populations in the community and society at large. As practitioners, it is necessary to examine those barriers that keep our clients from getting their basic needs met. We need to reclaim and reshape our position in institutions and organizations in order to bring out the best in social workers and in clients.

A social work knowledge base dominated by an individualistic worldview cannot actualize values such as social justice, equality and empowerment (van Wormer, 2004). Social movements begin as a collective response to disturbances in the goodness-of-fit of social systems, and empowerment has its roots in power sharing in the community. Unresolved tensions in the ideological, political, and practice-oriented concepts of the social work profession reflect social workers' contradictory position in democratic society. The study findings represents a movement away from a positivist authoritarian attitude which excludes those whom social workers are committed to serve toward a collective response (Pease, 2002).

Studies indicate that the majority of social workers define empowerment in terms of a psychological process of change, though a relationship between

psychological empowerment and community participation has also been found (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). If Freire and others are correct, those who are empowered empower others. As this study's findings show, as a profession we possess the wisdom for "empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" and for "creating policies and services to correct conditions that limit human rights and quality of life" (CSWE, 2001, p. 6; NASW, 1999).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

Strengths. One of the major advantages of content analysis is its economy in terms of time and money (A. Rubin & Babbie, 1997). Aided by technological advances, this study examined the literature utilizing computer-assisted content analysis. This study focused on codifying the data with a high degree of specificity and reliability.

The computer-assisted content analysis allowed for a comprehensive accounting of the scholarship related to the concept of empowerment since its inception. With the proliferation of the literature, computer-assisted content analysis procedures will become even more valuable, particularly in the area of value laden concepts such as empowerment (Allen-Meares, 1984; Rogge & Cox, 2001).

Both reliability and validity problems in content analysis grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings and category or variable definitions (Weber, 1990). Empowerment is a complex concept; however, using developed measures lent reliability and validity to the coding scheme. As an additional strength, Parson's

(1998) scale development included client participation, increasing the potential for empowerment (Linhorst et al., 2002; Rosenfield, 1992).

Limitations. Study limitations include the small sample; selection of abstracts relied on keywords, and was limited to the manifest content of the literature. Although the study's sample included all abstracts in core journal publications, the full-text articles, along with books, edited chapters, and unpublished dissertations, were not included. Furthermore, the sample was limited by the goodness-of-fit between article, abstract, and keyword, which has not been studied.

Social work scholars, students, and practitioners are increasingly reliant on computerized resources for information. However, while scholars rely on computerized literature, they are questioning the decision-making processes involved in publication selection, selection for computerized literature databases, and selection of articles to be condensed into abstracts and keywords (Rogge & Cox, 2001). According to the editor of SWAB, decisions on the classification of abstracts by keyword are arbitrarily made based on editorial requirements, and a different method is used for the computerized version (personal conversation, Payne, 2004).

A further limitation of this study was the lack of a classification scheme for ecosystems theory dimensions. An ecosystems perspective does not require empirical research per se. However, the lack of empirical research can be an obstacle to integrating studies and to conceptualizing value-laden concepts, as in

this study. In this study, empowerment outcome dimensions were used in the absence of a clear classification of ecosystems levels.

There are a few classifications for the person-in-environment perspective (Karls & Wandrei, 1994); however, no such classification exists for the ecosystem dimensions. Differences of opinion among scholars and practitioners regarding boundaries of the construct are a challenge. Further, while in this study efforts were made to use methods representative of the client's perspective, the data nevertheless consist primarily of social workers' scholarly efforts and manifest content. Therefore, there is a need for continued research using content analysis and other research methods.

Future research. Questions remain about the conceptualization of empowerment. Although this study found empowerment defined broadly and comprehensively, with an emphasis on community outcomes, further clarification is required.

Building on the current study, future research should use the empowerment-coding scheme on full text articles. Also, a new sample might be obtained using synonyms as keywords. Empowerment-based practice and outcomes may be more common in the literature than appears when empowerment is used as the keyword. For example, Mimi Abramovitz used the term "embolden" in a recent interview published in *Reflections* (Jimenez, 2004, p. 22).

The best content analyses use both qualitative and quantitative operations on texts (Weber, 1990); thus, there is a need for qualitative examination of the latent content of the abstracts and/or full text articles. Critical analysis of ecosystems

theory warns against the use of high-level abstractions making the conceptualization of empowerment essential (Jerome C. Wakefield, 1996a). Social action in the form of research is needed if we are to confirm the goodness of fit in the face of changing needs (Carel Germain & Gitterman, 1996).

The goodness-of-fit between articles, abstracts, and keywords is a concern for future researchers. With the creation of computerized databases, a comprehensive system of keyword assignment and abstract distillation becomes critical. Consistency will become increasingly important not only within the social work literature, but also between disciplines. Future research is recommended in the form of meta-analytic procedures applied to literature reviews of outcomes and content analysis procedures applied to core areas for comparative analysis (Rogge & Cox, 2001).

In summary, the results of this study indicate that a definition of empowerment is possible. However, the concept of empowerment has played only a small role in social work core journals over the past quarter of a century, as indicated by the small number of abstracts published. While the concept does not appear to have been used inappropriately, one would hope to find its use more widespread, given the commitment made in our code of ethics. Further examination may be needed to prevent unintended disempowering effects of empowerment-based practice and social policy.

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APPENDIX A

EMPOWERMENT PRACTICE PRINCIPLES (EPP)

COHESIVE COLLECTIVE	STRENGTHS-BASED ASSESSMENT	EDUCATIONAL FOCUS
ACCEPT (S)	ABILITY (S)	AGREE (S, ED)
ACCEPTED	ACCOMPLISH (S, ED)	AGREEMENT
ACKNOWLEDGE (S, ED)	ACTIVE	ANALYZE (S, ED)
ACTION (S)	ACTIVELY	ANALYSIS
AFFIRM (S, ED)	ADVOCATE (S, ED)	BLAME (S, ED)
COLLABORATE (S)	CHANGE (S, ED)	COMMIT (S, ED)
COLLABORATIVE	CHALLENGE (S, ED)	COMMITMENT
COMFORT	COMMON	CONFLICT (S)
COMFORTABLE	CONFRONT (S, ED)	CONSCIOUSNESS-
COMMUNITY (S)	CONFRONTATION (S)	RAISING
CREATE (S, ED)	DECIDE (S, ED)	CRITICAL
CREATION	DECISION	CRITICALLY
DIFFER (S)	EFFECT (S, ED)	DEVELOP (S, ED)
DIFFERENT	EFFECTIVE	DEVELOPMENT
EXPRESS (S, ED)	HELP (S, ED)	ENCOURAGE (S, ED)
FEEL (S)	HONOR (S, ED)	LEAD (S)
FELT	INVOLVE (S, ED)	LEADER
FEELING (S)	INVOLVING	LEADERSHIP
HOPE (S, ED)	MANAGE (S, ED)	LEARN (S, ED)
INTERACT (S, ED)	MISTAKE (S)	LEARNING
INTERACTION (S)	PERCEIVE (S, ED)	OPPORTUNITY (S)
INTERDEPEDENT	PUSH (S, ED)	POLITIC (S)
JUDGE (S, ED)	RECOGNIZE (S, ED)	POLITICAL
JUDGING	RESPECT (S, ED)	PROVIDE (S, ED)
LIFE (S)	RISK (S, ED)	PROVIDING
LISTEN (S, ED)	STRENGTH (S)	RESOURCE (S)
MUTUAL	STRENGTHEN (S)	SHARE (S, ED)
NARRATIVE (S)	SUPPORT (S, ED)	SHARING
NETWORK (S)	TOGETHER	SKILL (S, ED)
OUTCOME (S)	VOICE (S, ED)	SOLVE (S, ED)
RELATE (S, ED)	WORK (S, ED)	TEACH (S)
RELATIONSHIP		TAUGHT
SAFE		TEACHING
SAFETY		THINK (S)
STORY (S, ED)		THOUGHT
TRUST (S, ED)		THINKING
VALIDATE (S, ED)		
WILLING		

APPENDIX B

EMPOWERMENT OUTCOME ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS (EOA)

PERSONAL	INTERPERSONAL	COMMUNITY/POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
ACCEPTANCE	ACCESS (S, ED)	ACTION (S)
ACCOMPLISH	ADMINISTRATION (S)	ADVISORY
ACCOMPLISHMENT	AGENCY (S)	ATTEND (S, ED)
AWARE	ASSERT (S, ED)	ATTENDANCE
AWARENESS	ASSERTIVENESS	BOARD
CAPABLE	BASIC (S)	CITY
CHOICE (S)	BELIEVE (S, ED)	COMMUNITY
CHOOSE	CENTRE	CONGRESS
CONFIDENT	COMPLAINT (S, ED)	CONGRUENCE
CONTROL (S)	CONCERN (S, ED)	CONTACT
ESTEEM	FOOD	CONTRIBUTION (S)
FREE	GIVING	CONTROLING
FREEDOM (S)	GRIEVANCE (S)	DECIDING
GOAL (S)	HELP (S, ED)	DISCUSSION
HEARD	HOUSING	FUNDING
MEMBER (S)	IMPROVED	GOVERNMENT
OPINION (S)	INFLUENCE (S, ED)	GROUP
PERCEPTION	KNOW	IMPORTANT
RESPONSI BLITY	KNOWLEDGEABLE	JOIN (S, ED, ING)
RIGHT (S)	LAW	LED
SATIFIED	LEGISLATE (S)	LOCAL
SATISFACTION	LEGISLATURE	MEMBERSHIP
SELF	LIMIT (S, ED)	MONEY
SELF-PERCEPTION	LISTEN (S, ED)	NATIONAL
SELF-AWARENESS	OPINION (S)	ORGANIZATION (S)
SELF- ACCEPTANCE	OTHER (S)	PARTICIPATE (S)
SELF-ESTEEM	POOR	POLICY (S)
VALUE	PROBLEM (S)	PROJECT (S)
VALUED	RECEIVE (S, ED)	PROGRAM (S)
	RIGHT (S)	PUBLIC
	SERVICE (S)	RULE (S)
	SOLUTION (S)	SPEAKING
	SUGGEST (S, ED)	STATE
	WRITTEN	SUGGESTION (S)
		VOLUNTEER (S, ED)
		VOTING
		WORKED
		WRITING