Philosophical foundations, social power and social work practice

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PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS, SOCIAL POWER AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

by

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ABSTRACT

**Philosophical Foundations, Social Power and Social Work Practice**

by

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The contemporary philosophical landscape, which affects the fields of philosophical endeavor and the ways power is framed, is described. The covert manner these influences effect social work practice is made more visible through the use of ethically oriented decision making patterns.

Ways that authority and discretion are used and abused, and abusive decision-making, are described making them easier to recognize and mitigate. Knowledge of current and potential ways that social power operates provides social workers tools in promoting the goals of empowerment and uncovering and enhancing clients' strengths.

Finally, a public sphere within which a reflective social work practice could operate, using concepts generated by other members of a social science public, addressing the interplay of power and ethics, is delineated.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social power is abused in every conceivable sphere of activity within which individual human beings take part. From the home to workplace, from small business to corporate empire, from educational to religious settings, power is abused between people. These abuses are not always blatant and visible: if they were they would be much easier to identify and mitigate. Often these abuses are covert; hidden in presuppositions and patterns of tradition and socialization not generally open to questioning. Religious systems, ethical systems and penal systems have been devised to reduce the frequency of occurrence but still abuses occur. This project undertakes to identify and clarify where and how these abuses occur in ways that effect social work practice. It seeks to describe how even the ways communication occurs within and between individuals and groups of individuals facilitates these abuses. The project attempts to survey a wide enough scope to encompass a majority of the spheres of activity social workers are concerned with while limiting the scope to social work practice. It proposes a framework of self-reflexivity from which to approach these arenas. This investigation begins with the basic groundwork of any profession: it's knowledge base.
Knowledge generation in social work, as in any other social science discipline, has a "philosophical groundwork". This groundwork is usually implicit; buried in the philosophical assumptions of the authors' works used to generate social work/social science knowledge. In order to more adequately understand social science's current philosophical foundations, the general groundwork of contemporary philosophy must be familiar to the researcher. This general groundwork includes the three "pillars" of philosophy; epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, and the contemporary arguments that buffet these fields of endeavor. These arguments are set in yet another underlying groundwork which is the modernity/postmodernity debate. Within this groundwork, social influences operate to effect how this groundwork is perceived, or not perceived, as structuring concerns which derive from the philosophical issues the groundwork itself reflects. These influences operate in primarily indirect ways through sometimes indiscernible middle-grounds or marginal spaces. More directly, these influences operate through discretionary decision making within the fields of endeavor social work draws upon for information from which to make its own decisions.

These academic fields are those areas of the "communication community" within the "public sphere" that are drawn on by social work, as a discipline, and used for its construction of research and practice wisdom and application to the fields of service social work approaches. The social construction of meaning-systems partakes of many influences. Social construction of meaning is not unfamiliar to anyone; power relations are not unfamiliar to anyone; "reflexive practice," that activity that social workers will be called upon to be more attendant to, is not unfamiliar to anyone. Even
the modernity / postmodernity debate is not new to the field of social work. What may be a potentially new consideration is that social workers could attend more closely to what power/ethical currents are embedded in the sources of information taken as authorities (in the issues considered as relevant to social work practice) as well as attending to what has been set aside in favor of power considerations in the generation of information utilized to generate practice information.

Power and ethics are almost interdependent terms. The power issues that occur in all of our everyday interactions from interpersonal relationships, employment in agencies, to public government, though on different scales, are expressed through similar dynamic structures. Where do power and ethics begin to effect the tenets of each of the academic disciplines that social work draws on to do it's work? Where is the middle ground (the margin) where power meets ethics; where do they interface?

This middle ground is important to talk about; to make visible through bringing it into focus in the public sphere. What operates within this middle ground; this "marginal" area, that delineates what becomes even admitted to the public sphere for consideration as knowledge? What operates within this marginal territory that allows power to hold sway here and ethics to hold sway there? What operates in this margin to marginalize some voices and to privilege others? Within the field that is the social work "communication community" in the public sphere, what determines what is acceptable as Knowledge? Currently it is what is privileged by those who perpetuate the current paradigm of "scientific" procedure as knowledge. The questions being asked are about how the scientific, or any other, methodology was privileged over
some other mode of approach to knowledge development. This is not about the debate between positivism and it's opponents, nor about the debate between externally replicable knowledge and introspection; it's about the process that occurs when one side of any dichotomy, or one option among a range of choices for that matter, gets chosen over the other. It is about what is used as and called knowledge when information is sought after for policy decision making, research, and practice materials.

Finally this paper asks of individual social workers what ranges of considerations are looked at when choosing materials to use in generating practice research. Whose information is privileged in the moment of the decision about which knowledge to use and act on as information. How does any individual voice attempt to be recognized by the public sphere? Is it by utilizing (as is tradition) those materials whose author's "names" have been privileged; regardless of the positions they have philosophically in terms of their power usage?

Thus, the main foci of this project will include the following. Outlining some of the major themes that surface in the contemporary currents of what is being called the modernity/postmodernity debate will set the basic groundwork. Some of the ways this debate effects the issues under exploration here, metaphysics, ethics, epistemology and social power, are clarified. Then each major "pillar" of philosophical influence, metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, is explored in terms of how each contributes to the construction of social work practice wisdom. Through this process the currents of modernist/postmodernist themes are highlighted.
After outlining themes of philosophy applicable to a social work perspective, the focus moves to an exploration of the ways in which knowledge is generated or constructed. The different views about what has been, and what currently is, seen as knowledge construction are delineated as well as how even these views are effected by modern/postmodern thinking. How the final pillar of philosophy, ethics, is influenced by the modern/postmodern currents and how these currents affect social work issues is clarified.

At this point, the project shifts focus to delineate some of the frameworks through which power has been described in recent literature. In addition, the theme of social power is critically "deconstructed" to make visible it's workings within and behind the scheme of things. The media, authority, and activities, discretion and decision making, are also here critically deconstructed in order to make more clear for social workers how these workings function and some of the milieu within which these workings can be expected to be present. Then, the spaces within which social power operates and the "systematicity" that allows such pervasive activity are explored. Here the means of exploration, deconstruction, is also clarified. Having described some of the workings of social power, current conceptualizations of social power are more easily understandable. Though not the paper's focus, following current conceptualizations, alternatives are offered.

Finally, the themes highlighted in previous section are brought to bear on social work practice. The areas of the public sphere that social work practice occurs within, and is expected to have the most effect in, is described with regard to how activities are
affected by the philosophical and power themes mentioned above. As a member among other members within this public sphere, social work's communication community characteristics are outlined. Then, themes with which other members of the public sphere are concerned, themes of importance to social work, are outlined. This outline attempts to take into consideration how the philosophical and power issues described above affect these themes. Then a reflective practitioner framework of approach focused on ethical answers to power abuses is presented as a potential strategy to apply to effect the goal of reflective practitioners engaged in balancing power abuses in social work research and practice.

**Philosophical Groundwork in Social Sciences**

In this section the major themes involved in the Modernity/Postmodernity debate as well as those addressed within the fields of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics will be outlined briefly. Here only the contours of the modernity-postmodernity debate will be drawn. Characterizations, first of modernity and then of postmodernity, will outline the intellectual space each current animates. Then variations on the differentiation within these two frames of reference will be delineated. Finally the general themes that are the focus of the debate will be outlined briefly. The sections below will select from the extant literature specific areas of modernity/postmodernity debate which will be most pertinent to a social worker's focus as s/he utilizes issues of a philosophical groundwork engaging in a practice that would seek to balance power.
Modernity/Postmodernity Debate

The Modernity/Postmodernity debates in philosophy affect the dialogues going on about the questions regarding philosophical themes in the academic disciplines making up the three basic elements of philosophy (Habermas, 1997; p.39); metaphysics, epistemology and ethics (Honderich, 1995). These three elements are all concerned with rational thinking about "the general nature of the world (metaphysics), justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value) (Honderich, 1995; p.666). The debate is centrally focused on two issues of utmost interest to social work research and practice; power and limitations of power (Kondrat, 1995; Laird, 1995; Pardeck, Murphy & Choi 1994; Pozatek, 1994).

The discussion is initiated by outlining the specific issues within this debate relevant to social work concerns. What is known as dialogue or research in modernity's perspective is, in postmodernity, now "discourse." Rosenau (1992) defines "discourse" as "all that is written or spoken that invites dialogue or conversation" (p.xi). Discourses, which can be modern or postmodern, act to go past the activity of dialogue in that they also take part in the activity of "social construction" of the reality they delineate (Humphries, 1997; p.644). "Social construction," another important issue in the debate is defined by Kenneth Gergen (1985) as

principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live. It attempts to articulate common forms of understanding as they now exist, as they have existed in prior historical periods, and as they might exist should creative attention become so directed. (p.266)
The social construction issue will be treated more completely below. What is important about the social construction issue at this time is the idea in the modernity/postmodernity debate that dialogues of modernity are said to have expressed structural power abuses based on objectivity of information (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Giroux, 1991; Humphries, 1997; Wilson, 1997) and discourses of postmodernity challenge these dialogues (Rosenau, 1992; Best & Kellner, 1991) partly through the social construction perspective.

**Metaphysics**

Metaphysics has been defined as “speculations on the nature of being, truth, and knowledge” (Fowler & Fowler, 1949). It concerns itself with the nature of ultimate reality, what is there, what things exist, and how it is that this could be the case (Grayling, 1995). Categories of concern include monism/pluralism, ontology, identity, causation, space and time, and appearance and reality (Honderich, 1995). Contemporary problems are approached through a “trilemma whose terms are illusion, well founded appearance, and fundamental reality” (Honderich, 1995; p.559). These problems include questions of (1) minds and mental phenomena and are concerned with the foundations, primacy and location of the origins of experiential reality; (2) values and “the normative” and look to the significance of how these frameworks are applied to elements of cognitive and physical experience; and (3) free will and to what extent the concepts of “freedom” and “free will” apply within a context where physical laws have some sort of ultimate influence over our actions or decisions (Honderich, 1995).
These issues give rise to debates in areas such as “universals” in the distinctions between identity and predication, “substance” in the sense of distinguishing what is a substance from what is perceived and “causation” in issues such as what aspects of reality have external causes and what can be controlled by one’s efforts (Grayling, 1995).

**Epistemology**

Epistemology has been defined as “a branch of philosophy which investigates the origins, structure, methods and validity of knowledge” (Runes, 1960; p.94). This project will be narrowed to that topic matter which concerns the social services communication community. We must scan, briefly, a tapestry of the field. The weft is woven of the ideas about knowledge generated by philosophers from Plato to the present worked into the warp of internal and external reality as experienced by these philosophers and their contemporaries.

Plato’s project was oriented toward shifting the focus of his contemporaries, the elite of Greece, away from the senses toward refinement of the intellect. Descartes tried to exercise this intellect to differentiate the vague inner representations from those which were more distinct. Locke shifted the focus away from the inner representations toward the objects of sense whose appearances could also be taken as presentations of knowledge. Hume looked to the “impressions” these presentations made to derive knowledge which compelled one’s interest. Kant took clarified, distinct ideas and joined them with the compelling impressions by “synthesis” through a system of rules.
which were set up by the mind itself. "Before Kant, an inquiry into "the nature and origin of knowledge" had been a search for privileged inner representations" (Rorty, 1979; p. 158-161). In twentieth century philosophy, the "Anglo-Saxon" tradition dating to Russell focused on logic and separated epistemology from psychology to focus on propositions. The "Germanic" tradition moved toward a "defense of freedom and spirituality" (Rorty, 1979). The logical-positivist tradition that social work currently grounds itself in was viewed by contemporaries of Comte as more of a philosophy of science (Reamer, 1993).

Ethics

Ethics has been defined as "that study or discipline which concerns itself with judgments of approval or disapproval, judgments as to the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness, virtue or vice, desirability or wisdom of actions, dispositions, ends, objects, of states of affairs" (Runes, 1960; p.98). It can be subdivided into a number of frames of reference. Greek ethics, began with the Sophists and continued through Plato’s dialogues and Aristotle’s ethical works. Christian ethics is tied to a religious reality. Ethical Naturalism looks to nature as a template, dissociated from any religious view, for how to relate to other humans and to one's own emotions. Utilitarianism would look to a sort of mathematical calculation of happinesses minus sadnesses for the greatest number of individuals. Kantian and Post-Kantian ethics maintained that it was one's duty to do what was right for it's own sake in adherence to a universally recognized "categorical imperative." Twentieth-Century ethics, which
is more analytical than other approaches in its exploration of the "good," "virtue," and what is currently construed as "valuable" (Honderich, 1995). It concerns itself with the values decided upon as motivating thought and action in the present and future for individuals. The ethical is differentiated from the moral in terms of ethicists differences over which is more broad in scope or more focused on rules and/or obligations on actions (Bauman, 1993; Grayling, 1995; Williams, 1995).

The debate between modernity and postmodernity effects how the themes current within each of the above academic fields are expressed. It has been necessary to set forth an historical groundwork of the three pillars of philosophy in order to portray the scope of each of these fields. It is also intended as an overview, for a social worker generating practice information, of some of the areas within each of these fields where potential discretionary misuses could occur. What may have been previously accepted as "traditional" perspectives are now brought into question in terms of power abuses occurring.

Social Power

Just as it has been necessary to set forth the groundwork of philosophy above to clarify possible locations of potential abuses, here it is necessary to set forth some of the basic aspects of "social power" we will be concerned with below. Power is understood in a number of ways and the specific dimensions to be explored will be outlined to separate them from dimensions not of concern. Social workers will be faced with direct abuses of social power with clients, co-workers and with
representatives of employer auspices. Immediately, in differentiating social power from power in general, the discussion of the concept of power, as it affects at least two individuals, becomes necessary. Power can be said to operate within at least three human interactive contexts; “practical, moral and evaluative” (Morriss, 1987). The “practical” context concerns things like recognizing that a bus going 50 mph has the power to take the life of a pedestrian. The “moral” context concerns, among other things, having the wherewithal to affect some kind of change and failing to act to do so resulting in a detrimental state of affairs occurring, or acting to effect some detrimental state. The “evaluative” context concerns not an individual responsibility but a “set of social arrangements” (Morriss, 1987; p.40). Here concern will primarily be focused on the “moral” context, secondarily with the “evaluative” context and not at all with the “practical” context. Following is a look at how authority and discretion have the potential to be used or abused (Handler, 1991) and how these potentialities could be addressed.

Authority and Discretion

Social work hasn’t concerned itself much with the specific concepts of authority or discretion in the recent past. This is exemplified in the absence of the two topics from the current edition of the Encyclopedia of Social Work. The Social Work Dictionary also contains similar lacunae. “Authority” is defined in three words: “expertise or power” (Barker, 1995). “Power” is defined simply as “the possession of resources that enables individuals to do something independently or to exercise
influence and control over others” (Barker, 1995). Discretion is not defined. These lacunae seem unusual given the recent focus on empowerment (Pinderhughes, 1983) in the social work literature of the last decades.

Authority and discretion are interactive concepts and operate in the spaces between rules or norms in many facets of social work practice. The role of authority that operates to privilege (Furr, 1995) in some cases and to marginalize (Mohan, 1996) in others will be investigated. For instance, governmental policy-making involves the use of power through the authority invested in it to make decisions based on the available information at the time the decision was required and on sanction by the voting population (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993). Similarly the social worker who would carry out policy in decisions made in the moment in interventions with clients exercises discretionary power (March, 1987). Tropman & Erlich, (1987) describe three modes of approach to use of discretion in an authority position as force, inducement, or value consensus. Force is generally seen to generate resentment and has been identified as a “conflict strategy”. Inducement occupies a middle ground between value consensus and force and requires the ability to manipulate the goods used to induce. Value consensus frequently occurs through agreement about a course of action based on some sort of socialization (Tropman & Erlich, 1987; p.265). The process of “investment” with authority requires that there be an investing entity who “holds” the power it invests. This holding conveys value on the holder. The investee then becomes the mediator for the expression of social power to it’s object. As
mediator, the social actor takes on some characteristics of a marginal quality. This leads to a discussion of marginal terms.

Marginal Terms

A discussion about "marginal terms" is necessary because social power frequently operates in the margins between prescribed rules and those who are obligated to constrain themselves by those rules (Hawkins, 1992). Before exploring this idea, a look at what constitutes a "margin" and the ways in which this term will be used here will be required. A description taken from Jacques Derrida (1982) will serve to outline the intellectual space requiring recognition. The "margin," for Derrida, is the place at which the limit is drawn between two texts, it is that which constrains one discourse from becoming another, that which limits one thing from becoming that in relation to which it is defined (Derrida, 1982). Next, the use of the term "boundaries" (Barker, 1995) in social work applications, and how it functions there in a way similar to the Derridean concept, is discussed. Then the process through which a person might become "marginal" (Marger, 1997) or "marginalized" (Ferguson, Gever, Minh-ha, & West, 1990) will be explored. Most importantly, it must be remembered that "power" operates within these marginal spaces. Marginalization, for the individual who has become a "marginal man" [sic], is to be "living within one culture while belonging to another culture; and being torn by the demands that this state of affairs puts upon him" (Marger, 1997; p.114).
The concept of the boundaries in social work is similar in nature to that of the margin. It is defined as "the regions separating two psychological or social systems. Analogous to the membranes of living cells [functioning] to differentiate systems and to permit the development of identity..." (Barker, 1995; p.40). As with the marginal man, the culture or idea which has been marginalized (Tucker, 1990) has some aspect of it's identity set aside by a "hidden center" (Ferguson, 1990) of social power or privilege. Often, this marginalizing activity has been "authorized" by indirect (and sometimes direct) consent from agents whose duty is to be an advocate for the very population it marginalizes.

Conceptualizing Social Power

How is social power conceptualized? Is it action on actions of another (Foucault, 1983)? Is it aligning oneself with an individual or collective known to be effective in getting it's wishes realized (Rae, 1988)? Is it only a matter of the context that it's activity is situated in (Wartenberg, 1992)? Here some elements of the general understanding of social power will be selected and applied to the specific contexts social workers will be interested in. What is the relationship between social power and authority? Power is usually spoken of within the context of political activity (Raz, 1990; Wartenberg, 1992) but it is being recognized more frequently that the "personal is political" (Van Den Burgh & Cooper, 1995) and that power affects interpersonal relations in more than just the political realm (Wartenberg, 1992). Authority can be said to enable one to exercise "power to require action" (Raz, 1990, p.115). How does
one act when one is “invested” with “authority”? One of the aspects of this question is
that authority is a mediate term. This aspect will be treated in detail below. Another
aspect is that authority can be “legitimate” or “illegitimate”. If one’s power is
legitimate, how does one use this legitimacy (Lane, 1988)? Whose interests are in the
forefront when one claims authority to be obeyed in some state of affairs (Wolff,
1990)? How does one make good decisions when faced with situations like “ethical
dilemmas” (Reamer, 1990)? How does one choose when one’s own interests vie with
those of the client; especially when there are “alternate possibilities” of outcome one
sees given the different choices available (Frankfurt, 1988; p.6)? The individual has the
responsibility to mediate how these questions will be answered through “gaining
knowledge, reflecting on motives, predicting outcomes...” (Wolff, 1990; p.25) in order
to make a good decision. How is this mediate aspect of the term “authority”
important?

Social Work Practice

Having presented the philosophical and social power groundwork through and
within which power abuses could occur, a look will be taken at how these affect social
work practice. In this section, three questions will be addressed; (1) what could an
enhanced focus on power and ethics interactions entail in social work research in the
public sphere and how could it be promulgated?; (2) how do the influences of
philosophical currents in contemporary society emerge in (a) the currents’ expressions
in the fields social work draws upon to build it’s research bases, and (b) the ideas social
work research generates; and (3) how are these currents affected by forms of power and where are these forms of power limited by ethical considerations in decisions made by the individual practitioner? Also addressed will be the philosophical and social power groundworks which come together in the activity of social work practice outlined below.

Social Work in the Public Sphere

Social work carries on its activity at all times through some form of communication in some form of public sphere (Edwards, 1995). It is necessary to set down specific comportments to communicative action from Habermas (1984) and Derrida (1981) in order to clearly establish (1) the kind of activity which we will propose within (2) the "public" space wherein this activity will take place. This public space has been designated by Habermas (1989) as the "public sphere" and further differentiated by what Karl-Otto Apel (1980) describes as the "communication community." The "public sphere" is a discursive space separate from the "private domain" on one hand and the "public authority" on the other (Calhoun, 1992). It is primarily a political field of discourse among "private citizens" focused on the activity of the public authority and the value and validity of this authority's actions. This discourse is taken up by an "unlimited communication community" which, through intersubjective agreement about what constitutes the procedures argumentation will take among themselves, mutually define the topics of immediate, critical interest (Apel, 1980). This relatively broad field of interest can be further narrowed and localized by
Maarten Hajer’s (1993) concept of “discourse coalition” which “is basically a group of social actors who share a social construct” which “requires that the analysis go beyond the investigations of differences of opinion” to analysis of “social practices from which social constructs emerge” (Hajer, 1993; p.45). For the purposes of this study, this sphere of communicative activity will be identified as consisting of those consumers of the literature generated within the social services professions as well as that information publicly discussed in a range of academic and debate forums of research and practical application. The actors who would join in the communicative action of this social work “discourse coalition” would be those who look to implement an intensive focus on reflective techniques which question the interaction of social power, ethics and epistemology as they apply to practical formulations of “practice wisdom” (DeRoos, 1990) through a forum of “rational-critical” discourse (Rosenau, 1992; p.14). Social workers acting in this public sphere utilize language incorporating philosophical and power frameworks that are not always explicit in the course of interactions. Making these frameworks explicit through a general description of the public sphere and a specific description of social work’s public sphere will enhance the individual social worker’s ability to make decisions based on non-abusive criteria.

Social Work and Epistemology

“Decisionmakers seem to know, or at least sense, that most information is tainted by the process by which it is generated” (March, 1987; p.295). How do social workers avoid generating “tainted” information? The focus taken here will primarily be
on how it is that we know what it is that we know. Given that rationality is, in a number of ways, “bounded” (March & Simons, 1958) understanding must be developed about the processes of decision-making in everyday practice (DeRoos, 1990). Social workers must take more closely into consideration how the things taken as knowledge are founded on presuppositions of those individuals who generated that knowledge. Do these presuppositions still obtain in current society; the society we must think and act within? Perhaps these presuppositions are still valid… but what if they are not?

Steven Stich (1990) provides a framework within which the strand of epistemology most associated with the focal point of these concerns will be situated. Stich delineates three “traditional” epistemological projects undertaken by philosophers. The first project involves evaluation of the methods of reasoning used to construct existing knowledge; how reason is used to arrive at the conclusions. The second project is focused on determining what knowledge is; what states of affairs can be called knowledge. A third project concerns itself with answering those skeptics that argue against the possibility that knowledge can be had.

This study limits itself to explorations of the first of these projects; an evaluation of methodologies of reasoning relative to social work practice. Three different approaches to the methodology of reasoning in the construction of knowledge will be examined. These will correspond to the three “traditional” frames of reference that have been accepted as valid in knowledge construction; justification, truth, and belief. The delineation and contribution of each to the construction of knowledge will
be considered. The above outlined traditional structures of knowledge construction that have been the accepted paradigm in knowledge construction are open to questions posed by the "social construction" perspective. It is necessary to delineate these structures to find invisible tendencies to traditional privileging habitus. With these invisible structures more clarified, discretionary decision making may be facilitated taking into consideration utilizations of social power.

Social Work and Social Power

Above a general circumscription of idea of social power is outlined, but where does social work's "social power" derive from? As with other professional disciplines, part of it's power lies in it's ability to define what social work is as a profession (Leiby, 1978). What is not always so visible is the ways social work aligns itself with certain "preference centers" (March, 1988). These preference centers can be political policy-making centers, academic discipline research inputs, or even client demands (Compton & Galaway, 1979). That professionals be "self reflective" (Schon, 1983) applies even more stringently to professional social workers (Rubin & Babbie, 1997, Sheafor, Horesji & Horesji, 1994; Zastrow, 1995). This social worker self reflectiveness must include an element of ethical awareness (Gillespie, 1995; Reamer, 1990; 1993) that makes provision for deciding closely about "the importance of what we care about" (Frankfurt, 1988; p.90) as individual social workers engaged in professional work in the public sphere.
Social science institutions, such as social work, base professional philosophies on bodies of knowledge generated by disciplines that legitimate their activity (Compton & Galaway, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Reamer, 1993). The structures of power and ethics built into the philosophies these source disciplines used then become passed on through the language used to convey ideas (Bourdieu, 1991) into social work research.

One of the ways balancing “what we care about” as social workers against invisible value structures can be accomplished is through social work practitioners attending to the ways that their decisions can be affected by the philosophical bases the research they use to make these decisions were based on (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Reamer 1993) and in attending to the ways these ethical decisions affect everyday practice. Knowing the layout of the modernity/postmodernity debate can widen the understanding of the philosophical landscape to include the considerations prominent within the social construction of practice wisdom. To enhance a social workers ability to make ethical decisions within situations social power may be a factor will promote the balancing function of these practice decisions.

The Adopted Perspectives

The critical approach of the modernity/postmodernity debate encompasses every field of expression academic or aesthetic. It generally expresses it’s views in forums utilizing philosophical terms. It offers meta-critical and meta-philosophical views of the contemporary landscape of social thought and so must be considered in
any project seeking to discover unchallenged presumptions about normative uses of social power. The influences that the three pillars of philosophy outlined above, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics are subjected to, are made explicit through the rational-critical process of exploration. In addition, academic fields, which are themselves affected by the above influences, make up the framework of the social sciences drawn upon by social workers.

Social work draws from a wide array of disciplines in formulating its strategies for providing service to populations of clientele. In the history of the field, this service provision has been of a “cognitive” sort. Social workers from Mary Richmond to the present have tried to “reason” with clientele in order to change some course of action taken by clientele that was causing problems to those individuals. They have tried to reason with community agents to provide for services where services were needed (Leiby, 1988, Trattner, 1994). Reasoning processes were called into play on the part of social workers in order to call the same processes into play in the “object individuals” (Leiby, 1988). What guiding factors were in place for individual social workers who had to deal with populations whose ranges of experience were vastly different from their own? The value systems in place in those early eras of social work were products of their contemporary social context (Reamer, 1995). They derived from the values in place in disciplines drawn upon for practice strategies. These values predominantly expressed the logical positivist perspective present in the formative years of the social sciences (Habermas, 1993; Giddens & Turner, 1989).
Cognitive science identifies a research framework (Von Eckardt, 1993) that includes six fields of endeavor. These six fields, for the purposes of this study, will be: 1) anthropology, 2) communications, 3) law, 4) politics, 5) psychology, and 6) sociology. In this study, two of the more mathematically oriented fields are exchanged for two fields which more closely align with social work and from which social work is more likely to draw in future activity. Each of these disciplines approaches the concepts of power and ethics differently. Each of these disciplines have influence on how individual social workers in the field formulate and discharge their activities as social workers. Contemporary work in these fields will be reviewed focusing on how these disciplines orient themselves to issues affecting social work practice. It is necessary to categorize these disciplines into socially oriented, corresponding to the macrosystemic, and personally oriented, or microsystemic, foci for our purposes. Socially oriented influences structure how individuals orient perceptions of interactions between client and society. Personally oriented influences structure understanding of intrapersonal psychology and how individuals understand the psychologies of other minds.

There will not be a single answer to questions of ethical power usage. What must occur then is for a methodology or comportment toward power usage to integrate the diversity of perspectives, even as small as that represented in our sampling, to be designated as feasible. This methodology must be amenable to a number of “plural” (Rescher, 1993) interests to be addressed in such a way that communicative action could occur (Habermas, 1984). The view here aims at being pragmatic; that is it must
practically applicable (Honderich, 1995; p. 709) within the multilevel contexts of social work practice.

The perspectives utilized by this project include the view that the resource framework that social work draws from is structured in a sort of nested form. There are a series of "levels" of critical perspectives that frame the discourse occurring in academia that affect social workers efforts to generate practice wisdom. The first level is that of the critical activity in such areas as the modernity/postmodernity debate. Research generation requires communicative activity (i.e. a forum, individual participants, etc.) and therefore requires language which in turn requires reasoned cognitive practices. Cognitive practices presuppose the ability to learn from new information. The modernity/postmodernity debate has proponents and antagonist within each of the specific fields of the next level; the contemporary expressions of research in the three pillars of philosophy described above. Their views are expressed in their theoretical formulations within their respective fields. These theoretical underpinnings are not always made manifest in their stated assumptions. These fields are then utilized by researchers in the next level, the six fields also described above in making their field specific formulations. Finally, social workers utilize information from these latter fields, whose knowledge generators do not always specify their philosophical positions, to generate practice knowledge. The following will describe in as concise a manner possible the specific presuppositions this project is based on.
The Methodology

The framework for the methodology of this study derives from B. Von Eckardt’s (1993) *What is Cognitive Science*. This paper will follow her description of a “research framework” though within a narrower scope and different goal than what she takes. Von Eckardt describes cognitive science as encompassing a number of “disciplines” including philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, and computer science. For the purposes of this project focus will be on a narrower range of this field of human sciences, as outlined above, avoiding areas where “determination” or “causality” can be said to have clearly probable influence. After outlining Von Eckardt’s framework, applications of it’s specific attributes which will to this project will be delineated. This research framework

consists of four basic sets of elements: a set of assumptions that provide a pre-theoretic specification of the domain under study...; a set of basic empirical research questions, formulated pre-theoretically...; a set of substantive assumptions that embody the approach being taken in answering the basic questions...; and a set of methodological questions....(Eckardt, 1993; p.18)

Within the set of elements designated as “domain specifying assumptions” are included an “identification” assumption, “property” assumptions, and “grouping” assumptions. The “basic questions” will focus inquiry more narrowly the intent of the project. The “substantive assumptions” will be oriented to the content within each “discipline” that will be presented. The “methodological assumptions” further delineate the types of answers that will be valid to the intent of the project.
The domain assumptions are as follows:

1. There are spheres of activity of a cognitive sort (i.e., academic disciplines, communication communities) wherein systems of interactive influence can be said to operate (i.e. social power);

2. Within the above spheres of activity, certain self-regulative frameworks are established called ethics;

3. There is a certain space of discourse that provides a forum for the above to operate within;

4. This cognitive field of action is not structured by “determinism” or “causation” (i.e., mathematical logic or biological necessity).

The following will be the basic research questions:

1. What are power and ethics?

2. How do power and ethics limit each other?

3. What characterizes the contexts of the interaction of power and ethics?

4. How are power and ethics interactive in the spheres of discourse that effect social work?

5. How may individual social workers utilize knowledge of the above interactions in developing “practice wisdom”?

The following will be the “substantive” or working assumptions:

1. The availability and conceptualization of “power” influences choices of actions taken
2. An individual's recognition of ethics potentially limits the uses of power; ethics itself has "power" that it is able to meet "power" with;

3. Power and ethics are socially constructed concepts;

4. Power can be "used" constructively and destructively;

5. Within each academic discipline there are differences in the social constructions of power and ethics;

6. The academic activity occurring in disciplines social work draws information from affects social work.

Finally, the methodological assumptions are as follows:

1. The boundaries between power and ethics are determinable;

2. These boundaries can be delineated by studying the ways that conceptual descriptions of constructs, relevant to social work, within a given academic discipline are expressed;

3. There are linguistic components (i.e. speech acts; things done with words etc.) of the theoretical descriptions which display the power/ethical structures;

4. These linguistic components (i.e. phrases, metaphors, terms, etc.) can be explored "deconstructively" / "critically" to analyze their assumptions and applications to informational resources utilized by social workers.

While this project only uses a portion of the above described research framework, it does so for reasons consistent with the project's goals. The framework provides some specificity through which to analyze the specific intents of culling out presuppositions from the texts to be utilized as informational resources. Also, this
framework was designed by Von Ekardt with the scientific research paradigm in mind. That paradigm is not amenable to the idea of social constructions of realities and would seek “objectivity” which the social construction perspective views as inadequate to social interaction and, for the purposes of this project, is inadequate for the intent of clarifying hidden discretionary power misuses.
CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDWORK

IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Outlined above are the contours of the philosophical groundwork upon which lie the themes of interest to social work drawn from the particular fields to be explored. In this section an attempt will be made to narrow the philosophical topic matter under scrutiny to those philosophical themes arising in a review of the social work literature and from a review of the literature in disciplines social work draws upon. The field of metaphysics will not be explored to the depth that ethics and epistemology will be. Metaphysics provides the ground from which some themes derive but social work is not engaged in generating metaphysical materials as a matter of general practice. Social work is, however, pragmatically concerned with epistemology and ethics so these two topic areas will be delved into in more detail.

Modernity/Postmodernity

This section begins with a characterization of modernity as a philosophical trend in public discourse; in part so that each of the elements of the debate postmodernity poses as a philosophical trend in public discourse will be more clearly
articulable. This characterization begins with four elemental shifts in the intellectual
landscape "modernity" took from "premodernity." "Modernity" signified shifts in (a)
the predominance of the secular over the ecclesiastical in forms and conceptions of
political power, sovereignty and legitimacy within the structured boundaries required
by the complexity of modern nation-states; (b) the type of commodities exchange from
a barter system to a money based system able to service market demand for extensive
personal ownership of mass produced goods; (c) the traditional interpersonal/political
ties generated and maintained by social hierarchies as well as redefinition of gender-
role designations and practicalities to be defined by patriarchal forms, and, finally: (d)
the characterization of the general world view from religious to materialist (Hall.
1996; p.8). Lash and Friedman (1992) hold that "modernity is a matter of movement.
of flux. of change of unpredictability" (p.1). It reportedly was engendered as a force
for social change and progress from "ignorance and irrationality" into the new modes
of industrialization, bureaucracy, and the rational / objective. procedures and rules, and
humanist individual orientations (Rosenau, 1992). It is self-reflexive (d'Entreves &
Benhabib. 1996), serious. and possessed of visions of a comprehensive truth (Best &
Kellner. 1991: Rosenau, 1992). Modernity is "high." for example, when. as with
Jurgen Habermas (1987), it is "utopian in it's hope for a communicative paradise"
expressed in ethical discourse (Lash & Friedman. 1992: p.3) and "low" when. with
Marshall Berman (1992), it is pragmatic and focused on a ""modernism in the
streets:'" expressed with a concern for an "ethics without blueprints" (Berman. 1992;
Lash & Friedman. 1992; p.3).
Postmodernity, on the other hand, has been designated as a "discourse" vying with the "totalizing" discourse of modernity in a playful, "insouciant" eclectic fashion (Rosenau, 1992). It challenges (a) "all-encompassing world views, be they political, religious or social" (Rosenau, 1992; p. 6); (b) modernity's view that capitalism has done anything to alleviate the suffering of the downtrodden or oppressed; (c) "hierarchical, bureaucratic decision-making" (p. 7) frameworks that privilege experts over "everyman"; (d) the setting aside of things emotional, metaphysical, mystical in favor of the rational, (Best & Kellner, 1991; Rosenau, 1992). Postmodernity is said to be bringing in a new "social formation" ushered in by innovative new technologies, all requiring new conceptualizations to cope with the new modes of experience intersubjectivity and culture (Best & Kellner, 1991). Postmodernity centers around a responsibility to otherness vs. modernism's responsibility to act (d'Entreves, 1996). Postmodernity can be either "skeptical," offering a dark, gloomy nihilist visions of endings and disintegration, or "affirmative" offering a somewhat more optimistic view about movement toward a newer configuration of non-ideological value positions (Rosenau, 1992; p. 15). It generates new conceptions of meaning construction locating this meaning primarily in the local, immediate usages of language (Giroux, 1991; Lyotard, 1984; Rosenau, 1992) rather than in a meta-narrative.

Pauline Rosenau (1992) has outlined the issues of contention in the modernity-postmodernity debate as they specifically apply to the social sciences and we will follow her lead. First, there is question of what is a "text" and how a reader relates to what s/he reads. Modernity sees the text as written by an author, the property of that author.
and as such privileging the author over the text. Postmodernity would eliminate the presence of the author from an ownership association to her text. The reader of the text is then the primary meaning-maker with regard to the text. Second, modernity put forward a sense of identity granted to an individual “subject.” This sense of identity granted some freedoms to the subject relative to its subject status. Postmodernity would, in some cases, eliminate the idea “subject” and all the presuppositions that come with this idea. Other views call for a completely revised “postmodern subject.” Third, modernity holds to the position that history was important, that “time” and “space” have specific locations that they identify and bound. Postmodernity would dissolve these boundaries and would remove these constraints and limits to understanding reality in different ways. Temporal juxtaposition of events comes into question. Fourth, modernity holds that “theory” and “truth” have a place in the scheme of thing regarding an orientation to experience. Objectivity is possible if enough of the facts are in place. Postmodernity holds that there is no “objective” truth and therefore no groundwork on which to set any totalizing theoretical structures. Relative viewpoints are valid. Fifth, modernity allowed for representation of the knowable and to some extent the unknowable in experience. Postmodernity would disallow the ability to “represent” as a measure to confine and restrain that which is attempted to be represented. Sixth, modernity set forth certain rules for methods of accumulating and generating knowledge. Objective, replicable causality was desired in order to determine certainty. Postmodernity denies causality within the social sciences and
resists rule structures that would privilege one form of knowledge generation over another. Realty is understood to be socially constructed at each given point in time (Rosenau, 1992). Social workers are faced with variability in practice situations that some of the structures of modernity do not allow for. Much of the knowledge base of social work was generated within the framework of modern social science and so took for granted the sometimes dogmatic impositions of structure and perspective on situations where fluidity of purpose and approach would have better served the client. Postmodernity perhaps takes too far the attempted deconstruction of existing social structures in the attempt to expose social power abuses in their many forms but is necessary to get at unquestioned presuppositions. The contemporary view of knowledge as “local” and “socially constructed” does more justice to the needs of the client populations served by social work practitioners. In the case of a battered woman, for example, socialization may have played a part in her staying in a situation which was emotionally and physically abusive to her. Patterns of socialized role requirements may have left her without the perceived options to consider in deciding whether or not to stay with her particular abusive partner. Her identity as wife and mother may have left her without the idea that she is an individual woman and she need not accept someone else’s social constriction of her reality. By proceeding with this client in a direction that would take a less socially determined and a more immediately determined perspective on her reality, she may be able to identify options for herself that would serve to free her from the oppressive sort of structure imposed by received
views of the female role within a family structure. In this way the existing male-
dominated structure supported in many places by modernity is questioned and
presuppositions that supported a situation of interpersonal power abuse are eliminated.

Metaphysical, Epistemological, Ethical,

Social Power Issue Grounding

Metaphysical concerns are reflected in debates about the postmodern “subject”
(Lyotard, 1984; Mohan, 1996, 1997) whether this is in questions about “identity” in
general (Smith & White, 1997) or the “self” in particular (Mohan, 1996). The issue
focuses on how the identity of the individual “client” is constructed socially (Kondrat,
1995; Laird, 1995) and how this could affect the client (Mohan, 1996; Smith & White,
1997). How does social work view the “development” of a self (Berry, 1995; Germain,
1994) or “pathologies” of the self (Cutler, 1991; Goldstein, 1990)? How do social
workers proceed in assessing these pathologies? Whose reality has authority? Do we
let the client’s story determine the outcome of this assessment (Raffoul & Holmes,
1986; Franklin & Jordan, 1995)? How do we proceed in treatment (Dean & Fenby,
1989; Laird, 1995)?

One of the epistemological issues surfacing within the debate for the social
work field currently is the issue of “grand narratives” (Humphries, 1997; Leonard,
1996; Krueger, 1997) or “metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984; Rosenau, 1992). The
“metanarrative” according to Lyotard (1984) presumes a (modern) “metasubject” who
sees the issues, about which s/he is speaking, from outside and is therefore able to form
the most appropriate response from this objective perspective (p.34). The question here becomes an issue of decision between theory (Bisno & Cox, 1997; Polansky, 1986) or “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983) and which is to be privileged over the other (Laird, 1995; Pardeck et al., 1994). This issue surfaces in determinations of who is published (Kondrat, 1995; Tucker, 1996), who decides what educational curricula to mandate (Humphries, 1997), and which philosophical values are reflected in social work activities (Dean & Fenby, 1989).

Ethics, in social work, has taken for it’s subject matter, among other topics, research processes (Gillespie, 1995), liability issues (Gelman, Pollack & Auerbach, 1996), assessment issues (Goldstein, 1990), educational curricula issues (Kayser, Rothstein & Stevenson, 1997), and ethical, reflective practice issues (Abramson, 1996; Reamer 1995). Ethical foci have been both other and self oriented illustrating the different relative levels of “moral self-development” (Kegan, 1982) among the individual social worker decisions prompting the specific ethics research. Ethics in social work, as in any field, is concerned with the resolution of value conflicts between personal and professional interests (Gillespie, 1995; Manning, 1997; Reamer, 1995).

Proponents of the modernity / postmodernity debate in ethics include, (1) an overview of the field by Bauman (1993), (2) a modernist perspective from Habermas, (1990, 1993) and, (3) for postmodernity, Derrida, (1978). Somewhere between these two positions is Foucault (1983). We will look more closely at these positions below.

Social power concerns in social work can be delineated through the themes of “client self determination” (Ewalt, & Mokuau, 1995; Pinderhughes, 1983),
“empowerment perspective” (Gutierrez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995; Kondrat, 1995; Zippay, 1995), “strengths perspective” (Chapin, 1995; Goldstein, 1990; Weik & Saleeby, 1995) and “social constructionist perspective” (Berlin, 1996; Goldstein, 1995) with regard to our clients. With regard to ourselves as workers, issues of social power take the form of differentiation of our field of work (Abbott, 1995; Barber, 1995; Tucker, 1996) and the privileging of our research bases (Furr, 1995).

Philosophical Bases of Social

Construction of Knowledge

Social construction as a perspective is more than a technique of approach to practice (Neimeyer, 1993); it approaches the status of a paradigm or in Masterson's (1970) terms a “metaparadigm” in that it provides “a new way of seeing”, or “an organizing principle governing perception itself” (Masterson, 1970; p 65). To some extent, whenever we argue for a particular viewpoint, we are engaged in the process of social construction. While a number of sources for social construction are utilized by various social workers in different applications (Granvold, 1996; Hoffman, 1990; Imbrogno, 1996; Franklin & Jordan, 1995), Kenneth Gergen, (1985) following Berger & Luckmann (1966), delineated a framework for “social construction” that can be effectively utilized by contemporary social work researchers and practitioners in understanding this perspective. Gergen (1985) makes the following points:

1. social reality can not be limited to the “maps” of reality, constructed with concepts expressed in the words used to describe that reality, without taking into
consideration the linguistic contexts operated within. These include, but are not limited to, intention, sense data, and motivation;

2. words used are “social artifacts” dependent on the participation of the two (or more) individuals between which the words occurred, and the reference bases of these individuals (i.e. cultural, geographic, philosophical, political, symbolic etc.);

3. the degree to which a given understanding remains valid across time and contexts “evolves” as do the ways structures determining what obtains as socially acceptable categories defining that which is included in various concepts;

4. the negotiated forms of social interactivity have significance for maintaining patterns of interaction which may become identified as “culture” or “norms” and which can be applied to actions and persons. (Gergen, 1985)

Gergen (1985) identifies social construction as “exogenic” or deriving from “events in the world” or “endogenic” when derived from processes seated in the organism (p.269). As we will show social construction of concepts influences every category of experiences we are concerned with in this study including communication (Lakoff, 1980), ethics (Richardson, 1995), social power (Goldman, 1972), and social work research and practice (Fisher, 1995; Furr, 1995; Granvold, 1996; Imbrogno, 1996).

**Metaphysics**

Of the constructs identified above as metaphysical (Honderich, 1995) we will limit our treatment to three of most concern to social work: identity, appearance/reality, and causation. The questions addressed here will be concerned
with how contemporary metaphysical issues find their way into social work discourses and will be traced through the paths social work takes to define its positions relative to these issues. As with other disciplines, social work derives its philosophical positions from sources it views as reflecting its clientele's interests in its efforts to "broaden its knowledge base" (Reamer, 1993). Frequently these sources are contemporary and so are affected by the contemporary debates moving through the field drawn upon. Sometimes outmoded sources are used because of their status as "authorities" within a field of endeavor. While it may seem to many social workers that metaphysical questions are far removed from the daily actions social workers must take in their work, many of these everyday decisions are based on uninspected metaphysical positions. These positions may have been present with the social worker when s/he entered the field, they may have been conveyed by a favorite mentor or they may have been consciously instilled by the educational curricula mandated by contemporary Council on Social Work Education [CSWE] accreditation standards. If the individual social worker makes decisions based on unrecognized precedents it can be harmful to the client population dealt with. For example, with the abuser of the battered woman mentioned earlier, many of the social role expectations that "allow" him not to question his physically abusive behavior are accepted as traditional ways for men to act in their environments. To not be adept at management of emotional conflict, to physically address perceived threats to his emotional well being, and to consider it the "place" of
the woman to act in certain ways regarding him may be part of his received role as a man in society.

Some social workers come into the field knowing their own minds regarding their personal philosophies regarding issues that they care about deeply. Some social workers only discover these values through the course of their work. Values surrounding the social power generally come into question for any individual having to get along in contemporary society. What will be attempted here will be to clarify the currents of power and ethics as they are expressed in the modern/postmodern context of contemporary society. This is intended to provide social workers with a more adequate knowledge of this philosophical groundwork as it affects even the most familiar and cherished beliefs systems as well as providing a key to understanding (and better serving) populations of individuals with differing philosophical positions.

First delineated will be three metaphysical issues that are currently considered relevant in social work literature. Then follows a look at how academic fields social work derives material for knowledge production from frame these themes in their literature. Then how the modernity/postmodernity debates reflect the meeting places between power and ethics issues relative to these issues is discussed.

What Questions are Viable

Viable questions in the social construction of categories pertinent to social work practice relative to identity concern “minds and the mental” and in social work are expressed in the question of what constitutes “self” (Spencer & Adams, 1990). The
questions of appearance/reality may be related to "norms and values" about what, for
social work, constitutes "illness" (Gorenstein, 1984). Finally, questions about
causation bring up issues of "free will" and, for social work, concern about what
constitutes "power" (Pinderhughes, 1993).

Among the other issues in the debate about "self" is the issue of making
meaning. What are the dimensions of "meaning"? Two main streams of thought within
theories of meaning to be explored here are the linguistic and the existential
(Honderich, 1995). The explication of this issue will encompass tributaries to both
streams. Is meaning objectively determined or does it belong exclusively to the
individual (Barwise, 1988)? Do I let someone else's view of me determine who I am or
is this a decision I must come to on my own internal information alone (Nagel, 1986)?
Who decides the answer to these questions? Modernity wanted the "subject" to be
able to define herself at any given juncture based on objective criteria. The subject as
"self" had the power to define his own world and who s/he was in it. Postmodernity
would, alternatively, take away this freedom of self-definition in favor of the view that
merely linguistic convention determines the self, and give the individuality back to the
individual without the "subject-ivity" (Rosenau, 1992). For the former to obtain means
that the person's sense of self is still tied to the demands of the collective whatever
form that takes. For the latter to hold, the person is able to completely define
themselves regardless of external norms.

A specific aspect of the "illness" construct is what constructs the health issue.
What is "illness" and what is "wellness"? This brings up the question of what the thing

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referred to as “health” is. A “substance” is said to be a semi-permanent referent that can be recognized as existing in reality (Wiggins, 1995; p.214). Are the properties that “health” has consistent and incontrovertible? Even within the framework of mental health, the properties of the thing health change from discovery to discovery. Illness is sometimes said to be “little more than a descriptive label for behavior most of us find unusual, unpleasant or annoying. (Lilienfeld, 1995; p.3). What “norm” or measuring stick is this “health” issue compared to? Thomas Szasz (1960) maintains that illness is simply a deviation from a norm that is psychosocially, ethically and legally determined (Lilienfeld, 1995; p.6). Who decides who fits the measurement and who doesn’t?

This issue is inevitably a question of dual focus; what is good for the individual balanced against what is good for society (Nagel, 1986; p.187). While norms are established by the modern perspective in order to give a sense of place in the overall scheme of things, the postmodern would eliminate normative positions that are seen to be ideologically designated (Rosenau, 1992).

With the issue of “power” comes questions about how it causes effects in the individual in her/his immediate environment. What does power do? Concerns frequently about whether it is “held” and “used” by individuals or by collectives, intentionally or unintentionally, whether this done so legitimately or illegitimately and whether this action effects the actions of others (Lukes, 1991; p.83). How does it effect it’s goals? Individuals try to answer questions like this in terms of ‘if that hadn’t happened this would not have happened.’ These decisions are said to pose a potential other set of circumstances or a “counterfactual” situation (Bennett, 1993) that, having
not occurred, a given situation would not be what it is. Does this mean that we think the potential event would have happened if we (or someone else) had not done something to change it? This leads to question of whether our action actually could have been different or if it was “determined” in some way. “Do we have free will?” The answer one gives oneself to this question significantly alters how one makes decisions and how one views the world (Dennett, 1984). While modernity assures individuals that the will is in fact free, there is still much dispute over the idea as a metaphysical postulation (Nagel, 1986). Postmodern skeptics “dispute...the assumptions ensuring this free will” (Rosenau, 1992; p.21) and delineate constraints placed on it by the mechanisms of society. Affirmative postmodernists explore “postmetaphysical” directions.

The questions social workers ask themselves and their clientele about specific issues are structured by many influences in the environment. This environment includes the knowledge constructions available at the time the questions are being asked and the restrictions the individual social worker is under from the employing auspices. For social workers to frame their questions in terms that take into consideration social power influences requires a knowledge of how these influences can affect the questions asked as well as the philosophical concepts and currents represented in the terms used to ask the questions.
Post-Metaphysical Thinking

This perspective is followed for a number of reasons. This section is named for a text written by Jurgen Habermas (1993) and will follow his argument for the types of issues the social sciences are most concerned with. The modernity/postmodernity debate brings into question the viability of the category “metaphysical” and yet some of the debate’s issues are still centered on classical metaphysical themes.

Habermas’ (1993) modern position, in contrast to the themes of (a) “totalizing thinking that aims at the one and the whole,” (b) “objectivistic self-understanding of science and technology,” (c) “an unsituated reason that had been idealistically apotheosized,” and a tendency to posit the (d) “precedence of theory over practice,” set forth a new “procedural rationality,” a “detranscendentalization of inherited basic concepts,” and a shift to a “linguistic turn” in philosophy which occurred within the context of a “lifeworld background” (Habermas, 1993; pp.33-53). His procedural rationality looks to dealing with immediate reality in interactive ways not based on some precedent of contextual unity. The detranscendentalization would leave reason situated in the space between individual thinkers bounded only by their mutual abilities to generate and utilize rule systems for communication for their mutual benefits rather than based on a priori guidelines. A linguistic turn would situate language as the tool and structural edifice by which meaning is generated between individual “subjects” without depriving them of their differences. The lifeworld background will set the “horizon” within which the interactiveness of all disciplines with philosophy can be facilitated to accord pragmatic concerns a validity equaling that accorded to theory.
Habermas here sets the parameters for the social constructionist perspective from his socio-critical frame.

Postmodernity maintains a need to get away from all “meta-narratives”, from the need for a “we” that is all inclusive. Richard Rorty (1992) maintains that this “we” position ethnocentrically constrains difference and looks for a “true self” of all men instead of recognizing individual contingent historical reality. I. M. Young (1992) parallels this position with her focus on the need to recognize that difference has as much value as unity or consensus. She maintains that the call to universal agreement privileges unity over differences. Rorty holds that this creates a situation that stifles the voices of difference, that it deprives them of a voice to speak their differences into (p.85). Baudrillard (1984) would cast aside all attempt to generate a structure from which to generate meaning claiming that it conceals through depth and that what is needed is visible transparency of textuality. He would allow “infinite proliferation” of potential meanings in such a way as to deprive the subject the ability to instill sovereignty over the object. He would end the ability of the subject to subject the object to it’s whim and instead take the position of the object itself. He would take everything to it’s logical absurdity in order to generate new unseen meanings (Best & Kellner, 1991; pp.126-133). These meanings and the ways they would be constructed would ‘always already” be only “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983) and would eschew the standard ways of epistemological procedure.

Social workers willing to take on the burden of a new framework for argument in developing practice knowledge will be benefited by knowing the frameworks that the
pervious modes of argumentation were founded on as well as what potential new frameworks could look like. Arguments based on precedents from one side or the other of the modernity/postmodernity debate present the individual social worker with different kinds of premises from which to build arguments. These expanded sets of possible structures provide aid in making the most potentially power-balanced decisions within the given moment of argument or knowledge construction.

**Epistemology**

Historically, epistemology has been concerned with the nature of knowledge and truth; is associated with metaphysics, logic and truth; and investigates questions such as: a) is knowledge possible?, b) what are it’s limits?, c) what are it’s origins?, d) how is it obtained?, e) what is the proper method to use in obtaining it?, f) how is it constituted?, g) what is it’s structure?, and h) what is the relation between knowledge and truth (Runes, 1960)? Contemporaneously, these questions are approached through the framework of a number of specific problem areas; (1) justification looks at the kinds of things we hold as beliefs and the various type of beliefs we can have; (2) structure of justification determines what evidence is used to come to the point that we call a belief justified; (3) knowledge must be defined by where we find it and who has determined what it is; (4) skepticism is concerned with the reasoning process going into knowledge construction and even the mere possibility of knowledge; (5) naturalistic epistemology evaluates the strategies utilized in the processes of justification and belief in all systems of knowledge (Honderich, 1995). Here concern will be focused on that
“naturalistic epistemology” (Kornblith, 1994) which encourages interdisciplinary input to knowledge formulation.

Social work is more directly focused on issues of knowledge construction than with the metaphysical issues which are part of this knowledge construction. This is exemplified, historically, in social work’s primarily “logical positivist” approach to research methodology (Reamer, 1993; Reid, 1995; L. Williams, 1995; Wodarski, Feit, & Green, 1995). This is due primarily to an emphasis on the need in social work to justify research results through “objective verification” (Reamer, 1993; p. 122). Herein lies a main point in the modernity/postmodernity debate in social work epistemology; the connection point between values and knowledge and between observer objectivity and subjectivity. This debate is expressed by the modern view that an objective, value free, scientific position is possible while the postmodern perspective maintains that all knowledge is subjective, value laden and socially constructed (Rosenau, 1992; p. 110).

In this section we will address the issue of how knowledge is constructed in general ways and how the modern/postmodern debate is reflected in the process.

**Building Blocks of Knowledge Construction**

Contemporary issues in epistemology span a number of dimensions including; subjective vs. objective knowledge (Wright, 1993), local vs. universal knowledge (Geertz, 1983), is there truth? (Cooper, 1993), the “mind/body problem” (Nagel, 1994), and the functioning of reason (Nozick, 1993; Stich, 1990).
At this point it is possible to pose another question; "whose perspective on answering these questions will be admitted to the discourse on the questions epistemology recognizes as valid?" Further, who determines what is a valid question for epistemology to be concerned with? Each of the thinkers in the "genealogy" of epistemology outlined above shifted the way their field of interest was viewed by their contemporaries. Each time a new thinker comes to prominence, s/he reconstructs or redefines the way that history, and the thinkers s/he privileges, are viewed (Collins, 1985). This, in it’s essence, promotes the “paradigm shift” that Kuhn (1970) describes.

And yet Masterson (1970) found that Kuhn (1970) characterized “paradigm shift” in 21 different ways. She has grouped these characterizations into three categories; those detailing philosophical areas are “metaphysical paradigms,” those generating social recognition are “sociological paradigms,” and those instrumentally oriented are “construct paradigms” (Masterson, 1970; p.65). Though it shares elements of the construct paradigm in it’s linguistic elements, social construction of knowledge is primarily a metapardigm. Before we turn to social constructionist perspectives, we will review briefly the current generally accepted modes of generating knowledge.

According to Kim (1994), justification is a “normative,” (that is a regulative) notion. For a belief to be “justified” is for it to be acceptable generally; it is an ideal. Justification is the action of accepting the belief. Certain conditions must be “analyzed and identified” as being in evidence for the action of justification to take place. One part of these conditions includes there being “foundational” sets of “beliefs” or “truths” that our currently-in-process belief (x) is being compared to. Then, the current belief
will be decided to be “justified” just to the extent it follows from or is coherent with the other already established beliefs or truths. The previous belief/truth is the “evidence” for the justification of the current belief \( x \) (Kim, 1994). Throughout these and other arguments on justification, the previously established set of truths or beliefs was established by someone before us.

Next, follows a look at what constitutes a “belief” and how creation knowledge occurs by revising beliefs. Gilbert Harman (1994), in setting out a theory of belief revision, delineates some of what he sees as basic types of beliefs. He divides belief-revision theories into “foundations” and “coherence” types. Basic beliefs within the foundational theory are those beliefs which are intrinsically justified; that is, they do not rely on other beliefs for their justification. Other beliefs are grounded in reference to these basic beliefs. Beliefs are either “explicit” or “implicit”; frequently, explicit beliefs are founded on implicit beliefs. Within the foundational framework these beliefs cannot be infinitely circular; that is, they cannot rely on other beliefs ad infinitum.

Within the coherence theory, if all the beliefs that one holds fit together and do not contradict one another, then one is justified in retaining these beliefs. In contrast to the foundations theory, the justifications can be circular and infinite. If one finds that one’s justification for holding a belief is removed, (usually by a gain of information from an outside source) then one simply adjusts that belief to accommodate the new information. One of the main goals of Harman’s belief revision is to explore why people hold onto beliefs when their justification has been revised. His view is that
while the foundations view is more appealing to our intuitions (and our sense of logic) the coherence theory is the one we actually use to revise our beliefs (Harman, 1994).

The final element to be explored will be that of truth. There are a number of ways of understanding “truth” as a term. Truth is a “value” as related to utterances of language (Quine, 1980), or to relations of propositions to each other. In these cases it is a “logical” term. Truth is related to the “nature of being” in metaphysical texts (Collingwood, 1940) but for our purposes, Michael Friedman’s (1994) account will align theories of truth with building of knowledge. Friedman establishes a connection between truth and confirmation; knowledge that has been confirmed is “true” knowledge. He maintains that “theories are confirmed” if their “observational consequences are true” (Friedman, 1994; p. 168). Another way to say this is that theories are true if they correspond to the facts observed (Popper, 1979). And yet, as Friedman points out, the “facts” then must be proven to be true. In addition, he points out that knowledge contains “non-observational statements” which must be sorted out. He proposes that statements that make up a theory must be set within a notion of “limits.” When the collected set of observations are as complete as they can be at the specific point in time when the knowledge is formulated (Friedman, 1994). So how do social workers use these building blocks in social construction of knowledge bases? All of the above epistemological constructs proceed from the modernist perspective that requires and supports a privileging of metanarratives and universal views.

It has been necessary to go into some depth with the explication of the generally accepted view of knowledge construction for two reasons; (a) to represent all the
potential areas where structures of the traditional modern perspective come into play with received views of epistemology and (b) to represent how other philosophical themes are present but not explicit within the framework of traditional epistemology.

Even within the above described structure exist adherents to either side of the modernity/postmodernity debate. Their usage of specific philosophical terms and concepts within the context of their epistemological endeavor expresses their particular perspectives and prejudices as well as with whom they align their assignment of authority and thus social power.

Building Blocks of Social Construction of Knowledge

A shift to a look at a more postmodern epistemological form expressed in the social constructionist scholarship follows. The focus here is limited to the four aspects of social construction we have derived from Gergen (1985) above. Beginning with conceptual and linguistic contexts a look is taken at what affects these elements used in generating social work knowledge and how the modernity/postmodernity debate affects these elements. One frequently overlooked aspect of everyday thinking is how the metaphors of vernacular speech can structure the concepts social workers use with clients and in social work research. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) describe how the concepts used to describe that which is not common in terms of that which is common (in whatever context) structures how things are framed and how things are done in everyday life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 p.454). Everyday thinking is reflected in
communications with others and can display many things about how individuals act in the world and what values are important. It also can display intersubjective incongruities of thought relative to other minds (p.455).

The linguistic contexts within which these concepts are expressed take into closer consideration how the terms we use contribute to the issue. Here the questions become, (a) what was the intended meaning of the linguistic expression uttered (Habermas, 1992; p.58)? and, (b) from within whose frame of reference does the desired meaning derive (p.44)? The very frame of “social construction” itself presumes a context which includes an agent and some “construction materials” (i.e. materials of knowledge) and yet says nothing about a plan for the construction that takes place. This area of knowledge construction becomes a marginal space. And yet it places the locus of knowledge generation, which determines the existence of things, in the possession of the human individual (van Dijk, 1994; p.108); not in some reality that we ‘see through but darkly’. The view that the words we use in sentences are “social artifacts” is underlined by Austin (1979) in the argument he delineates about whether or not there is a “single thing called the meaning” of a word or even of a sentence (Austin, 1979; p.60). Austin further talks about the denotative and connotative meaning of words having referents located in the objects themselves vs. referents located in the communicative activity between the perceivers (Austin, 1979; p.57).

The understandings of the meanings of terms, contexts and the sentences in which they used, as well as the contexts within which they occur between even the same two individuals at different times, are continually evolving or “updated and
changed by various types of mental operations such as...interpretation, inference, categorization and evaluation..." (van Dijk, 1994; p.112). The meanings of the same information can be understood in different ways by groups separated by ideological, power, or other marginalizing differences such as race, gender, religious background (van Dijk, 1994; p.117). These same meanings are revised through a process of "recursive communication" Krippendorf (1994) through which one's communications, one's understanding of these communications, one's practices, and one's view of these practices, are adjusted through recursive communication loops encountering the same components functioning in a second agent with whom one is in contact (Krippendorf, 1994; p.85). This describes the communication view of social construction.

Giddens (1987) relates that the "linguistic turn"...explores the intersection between language and the constitution of social practices" (Giddens, 1987; p.199). It enables individuals to know what these practices are and how to maneuver among exigencies of everyday life to make functional decisions. "Contexts form settings of action whose qualities agents routinely draw upon in the course of orientating what they do and what they say to one another" (Giddens, 1987; p.215). The "things" drawn upon are "cultural artifacts" and require a "medium of transmission across contexts", "a means of storage" and "a means of retrieval" (p.216) in order to be put to use. All these items are functions of the communicative activity of the individual with other individuals or his/her environment.

Postmodernity's position towards epistemology is most adequately reflected in the social construction perspective (Rosenau, 1992). According to this view, there are
no objective perspectives that enable the observer to disentangle her/his value positions even when s/he knows what they are and expresses them up front. These value positions crop up in the metaphors of everyday speech that individuals engaged in conversation do not stop to consider in each moment of the conversation. Modernity’s perspective would be more adequately reflected in the view that privileges “foundationalist” (Benhabib, 1996; Fairlamb, 1994) frames of reference that would provide normative information through consensually accepted elements of an externally verifiable reality. These pieces of information would be value free and would reflect no ideological or research standpoint. But is this realistic? Does this view hide from itself the privileging of sameness over difference (Benhabib, 1996). It is just here that ethical considerations come into play in answering these questions.

Ethics

Twentieth century ethics spans a vast array of philosophical work. Most widely stated, the concern of ethics and moral philosophy is with “right and wrong action” (Honderich, 1995; p.591). Before briefly outlining the field and narrowing the focus to what will be considered here, the difference between “ethics” and “morality” must be delineated. For the moment we will simply define this difference. Below more detail about their distinctions and their similarities will be related. In delineating the difference between ethics and morality, Williams (1995a) states that “...the terms ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ do have slightly different resonances. ‘Ethical’ (derived from a Greek word for personal character) carries a broader conception, including a concern
with the value of different kinds of life and activity; 'moral' (derived from a Latin word for social custom) tends to narrow it's interests to rules and obligations, and to the experiences and considerations most closely related to those...” (Williams, 1995a; p.546). Williams further states that confidence is a “desirable state” for one to be in with regard to one’s ethical precepts; not having confidence (note that certainty is not required) can give rise to a “general doubt” (Williams, 1995b; p.203). This general doubt can lead to ethical quandaries (Bauman, 1993; p.21) and errors of decision making and may set the stage for akratic action. Bauman (1993), while agreeing on this latter point, generally views “morality” as more encompassing in it’s ability to express the completeness of a self and “ethics” as more restricted to sets of rules “wishing to be the moral code” (Bauman, 1993; p.21). Bauman’s perspectives will generally be followed in treating moral/ethical questions.

It must be stated at the outset that what is sought here is not just one more ethical perspective that would presume to set itself alongside other extant ethical positions. The ethical position of this study will be more aligned with a reflexive “moral judgment” (Honderich, 1995; Thomas, 1993) technique that would, among other issues, be addressing, in social work specifically, the problem of “akrasia” (Broadie, 1994; Honderich, 1995; McIntyre, 1990), or akratic decisions based on unexamined philosophical positions coming into play at crucial times within the decision making process. In Broadie’s (1994) succinct terms, “how can a person knowingly and freely engage in an action that s/he regards as inferior to some other action understood by him/her to be, at the time, an available option (Broadie, 1994;
Going into the philosophical minutiae of this question would take us out of the scope of his project but the practical course of reflexive moral judgment will be framed with this question in mind. Elements of this question will resurface with regard to the meeting places, the "margins", of power and ethics discussed below.

In the following sections then, discussion covers the scope of the topics “ethics” and “morality” and the differences between these two frames of reference as described above. The contours of the modernity/postmodernity debate in these areas will be outlined. Finally we will focus on the elements of that middle ground that a social worker must delineate for him/herself in order to make good decisions in everyday practice and research decisions.

Ethics/Morality Distinctions

Ethics in it’s widest sense includes theoretical and applied branches. The applied branch will be immediately eliminated as it looks at questions more narrowly focused which will be delineated later. Theoretical ethics includes “metaethics” and “normative ethics.” Metaethics subsumes questions of the nature of morality, moral psychology, and moral epistemology. Normative ethics includes issues of duty and issues of value. Some of the most significant ethical positions include “Divine-command” views, Rationalism, Intuitionism, Consequentialism, Justice, Prescriptivism, and Emotivism (Honderich, 1995, p.940). Within the scope of this project, which does not purport to be review of ethical theories, we will not be proceeding systematically through delineations of each theory’s positions and then supporting one that fits our
value preferences. Reamer (1993) has already provided an overview of these theories and it is unnecessary to duplicate his work here. Having done so, he sets the stage for the next section of our project. Where he outlined the whole field of philosophical input to ethical theory, here focus will be on specific philosophical elements of ethics relevant to the social work issues highlighted above.

Bauman (1993) characterizes modern moral/ethical thinking as making certain presumptions about the moral character of humanity in general. Modern ethicists saw human "evil" as a sort of inborn trait that individuals could not overcome by themselves (Ricoeur, 1974). According to this view, people needed ethical systems of rule to provide for an ideal to follow in order to approach morality. Individuals were told that individuals could not possibly know what their own best interests were since they don’t have the discernment of the authorities who have determined what these interests were for them. In order for individual’s best interests to be met appropriately, resources must be restricted to what the “wise” thought best. According to this view, these wise men based their decisions on emotion-free reason and this type of thinking is not available to the common man (Bauman, 1993).

Bauman’s (1993) view of postmodern morality sees the individual as the moral actor responsible for all his/her decisions and as capable of coming to these decisions unencumbered by the constraints of an ethical system imposed from outside him/herself. Where modern ethics constructed ethical systems to combat irrationality, ambiguity and emotion, these efforts were part of the illusion that to do so (construction of systems) would eliminate these non-rational elements from the
everyday activities of individuals. The focus in postmodernity is shifting from being ethical for the requirements of a law-like set of rules prescribing behavior, to self-determined morality that must be constructed in the moment of decision making between two individuals. Moral judgement becomes here the province of the individual rather than the collective (Bauman, 1993).

What are the characteristics of moral judgement that social workers may reflexively develop? Thomas (1993) designates five problems he considers pertinent to the functioning of moral judgement. The first of these is the “specification of moral judgement” which includes an aspect of characterization such as universality, a designation of “objects” of moral focus such as actions of individual agents or collectivities, and, finally, the “elucidation of moral concepts”; a specific array or “range” of moral concepts including but not limited to types or linguistic analyses of concepts such as ‘good’ or ‘treacherous’. The second is “moral judgement and the moral standard” which includes, on the one hand, the “moral criterion”, a type of reference point such as “monism”, “pluralism” or “particularity”, and on the other hand a “moral ideal” which looks more to a kind of person “I ought to be”. The third problem is that of “justification of moral judgement” and includes the means by which judgements justify themselves such as truth claims, rational procedures or “natural” moral qualities. The fourth problem is the connection between “logic, reasoning, and moral judgement” and concerns itself with the questions of structural validity of moral arguments like the “is-ought gap” which attempts to derive an evaluation from descriptions, the “ought implies can” or the “naturalistic fallacy” in which a moral
description is taken as a real property. The fifth problem concerns “moral judgement and moral responsibility” and incorporates excuses from culpability, free will vs. determinism, and punishment and forgiveness (Thomas 1993; pp. 1-24). Although much of Thomas’ argument is structured from modern perspective, these faculties must be attended to and developed as elements of ethical grounding used by the postmodern reflective moral agent in search of answers to the questions concerning expressions of power involved in practice decisions and research generation in social work practice.

Modernity/Postmodernity and Ethics in Practice

The modernity/postmodernity debate in the problems of ethics and moral philosophy follows the contours of the linguistic turn in philosophy in general (Honderich, 1995). The effects that the modernity/postmodernity debate have on contemporary ethics issue will be of foremost interest and practical significance to social workers. To some extent professional codes of ethics would not be necessary if there were not abuses of power in some form or another (Reamer, 1993; p.41), but ethics itself addresses wider concerns than those dealing only with issues of power. These elements may draw upon different aspects of different theoretical positions at different times. With regard to this study, these will include those issues within which power meets ethics in practical questions.

The constructs “self”, “illness” and “free will” become topics of ethical as well as metaphysical and epistemological concern. With “authority” comes the questions
about how the worker orients to the client self; client morality as perceived by a social worker; “victim” or “perpetrator” status as perceived by client and worker; and client need for information. All are foci of how we might exercise authority unwittingly or consciously in our roles as social workers (Reamer, 1993; pp.62-63). Do social workers take a “paternalistic” view of the client; claiming that the client needs help and we are the expert who knows what help it is that they need regardless of what the client’s view is of this help?

Decisions about “illness” of a client are closely associated to the view, or perspective, that we as social workers know what “mental illness” is, that a decision by a client to commit suicide is the product of a ‘sick’ mind and needs our intervention to stop the client from making this decision (Reamer, 1993 p.52) yet by other views, this decision is not the province of anyone outside the individual who is making the decision about him/herself (Hillman, 1964; Szasz, 1986). What kind of problems social workers see the client to have (regardless, sometimes, of the client’s own perspectives) determine what treatment provisions are made or whether assistance is given (Gitterman, 1991; Reamer, 1993; pp. 59, 63).

What kind of free will do social workers allow to clients? Do clients see themselves as having free will or do they see their lives as determined by some fate (Reamer, 1993; p.60)? How do workers contribute to a client’s sense of helplessness through our accommodating “their needs” through our (rather than their) perspective of what those needs are? There is, in social work currently, a focus in client self-determination or “empowerment” (Gutierrez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995;
Pinderhughes, 1983; Reamer, 1993) but do social workers facilitate empowerment or are they seen by the client as a further cause of their ill fate? Do we tell ourselves that our clients misfortune was due to his drug use and he couldn’t help it or do we allow that he could have made different choices? And what decisions do we make about him at this choice point relative to services rendered?

What perspective do social workers have on our own system of ethics/morality? Do social workers have illusions that we must shed about our clients and ourselves? Do we take the modern view that the client is trying to rip the system off for all s/he can (Bauman, 1993; p.30; Handler, 1993) or do we take the postmodern view that the client is only taking what is needed to survive (Handler, 1993; p.48). Do social workers make decisions based on our perceptions of what the clients best interests are in our perspective, modeling a modern view (Bauman, 1993; p.27), or, taking the postmodern view, allow that the clients decisions are the best they can make at the time (ibid, p.47)? Do we take the modern view that the poverty stricken are unable to be different (Bauman, 1993; Mincy, 1994; Heclo, 1994) or do we take the postmodern view of self-creating selves (Bauman, 1993, p.72) able, with access to resources, to make good decisions based on these resources? What are our views as social workers about how and who has the power of distributing the available resources?

The elements of the philosophical groundwork described above become part of a project aimed at the fullest understanding of the underlying cognitive elements within a theoretical knowledge structure that supports abuses of social power whether knowingly or unknowingly. The debate of postmodernity with modernity in the rational-
critical forum of communicative interaction brings forward for inspection many of the presupposed and therefore sometimes hidden abuses of social power built into the very frameworks designed to question these abuses. Elements of knowledge derived from existing knowledge bases utilized in the construction of new knowledge bases, such as in social work and related fields, may be questioned by the individual social worker interested in generating knowledge free from social power abuses. Part of how this occurs is through the acknowledgment by the social worker that the knowledge relevant to a given client/social worker dyad must be developed within that dyad with supplements coming from outside to compliment that local knowledge base. Decisions made require that the best interests of the client served must be placed, ethically, ahead of the interests of the social worker's comfort or the auspices' financial concerns.

These are not simple situations to make decisions within and the impetus to take the easy, less personally conflicted way may be alluring. For example, when a client is encountered in practice whose personal hygiene is non-existent and the consequent is having to spend an unpleasant hour with this client, it may be more pleasant to shorten service contact time for that client and perhaps neglect to provide some vitally needed resource to that client. The social power exercised in that instance may be less visible and overt than in the case of the domestic violence situation but it exists nonetheless.
CHAPTER III

SOCIAL POWER

Social power was once thought to be mainly the province of the field of politics but is now being seen as more pervasive than that (Van Den Bergh & Cooper, 1995). There are representative theories about how power operates within each field of endeavor that social work commonly draws upon for information in knowledge construction including anthropology (Wilson, 1988), communication (Krippendorf, 1991; 1994), law (Hawkins, 1991), philosophy (Foucault, 1972, 1977), politics (Benhabib, 1996), psychology (Flanagan & Rorty, 1990) and sociology (Lukes, 1990).

Here each of these variations on theories of power is surveyed to delineate effects on constructs of interest within each field covered by the scope of the current project. In a later section specific aspects of theories of power from within each of these fields will be highlighted as discussion centers on how (1) these theories meet with ethical restraints within each of the individual fields, (2) how these theories are affected by the modernity / postmodernity debate, and (3) how these theories might be reflected in social work “practice wisdom”. Here primary concern will be with general theories of power. In addition, the concept of “authority” will be explored with regard to how it functions as a middle or “marginal” term between power and individual
"agents" affected by power. Also explored will be the concept of the "margin" and the "marginal" and how the mediating process take place through these spaces. It is through this mediating process that power can privilege some and "marginalize" others.

Authority, Discretion and Decision Making

Authority is defined by R.B. Friedman (1990) as "power that is legitimimized" (p.60). As such the "authority" has assumed the license to act based on a set structure for distribution of the licensure it holds (Friedman, 1990). Authority is that middle term that mediates between the holder of power and the agent whose actions are influenced by that power (Wolff, 1990). "Discretion" is the authority that acts as a middle term for the individual in his decisions to act in a certain way given a situation that has no rule to cover it (Hawkins, 1992). Decision making is integrally involved in the areas of both authority and discretion. This section will describe the relations between these three aspects of social power.

Authority can be said to function through two main categories of media; organizational and individual. In the organizational category would be included bureaucratic (Hummel, 1994) and organizational (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). While most bureaucracies are also organizations, not all organizations function bureaucratically. The forms decision making takes and the ways discretion is used set some of the distinctions between these two aspects of this level. In the individual category, "norms" of a community (Rae, 1988) or what Bordieu (1990) calls "habitus" or collective practices of small groups of people who share a community connection.
(Bordieu, 1990) exert influence over individuals. The final type is one of those varied modes of authority that one individual seeks to gain over another either granted by sovereignty of some sort (Finnis, 1990) or coercive force (Airaksinen, 1992). Individuals in all categories use or abuse discretion in some form or fashion.

Discretion is identified by Hawkins (1991), writing in the legal field, as the "space, as it were, between legal rules in which legal actors may exercise choice" and he goes on to say that this capacity may be "formally granted or it may be assumed" (Hawkins, 1991, p. 11). The latter usage of authority is frequently seen to abuse its discretionary ability to meet its own needs (Lane, 1988). Discretion, or the "space" that is called discretion, is on or between the margins of rule frameworks. "Those who can no more rely on discretion need rules badly" (Bauman, 1993, p. 116). Authority, (to be described below) also resident in this space between, acts sometimes to "institutionalize experience" through discretion about when to apply rules because lives and activities function more effectively when so structured (Feldman, 1991). Schneider (1991) has identified four modes through which decision makers use discretion. "Khadi discretion" which he notes is not a Western form, takes cases individually including "legal, ethical, emotional, and political considerations" (p. 61). "Rule-failure" discretion is given to an authority when a situation exists which is seen as so complex rules cannot be imagined. "Rule-building" discretion applies to situations when authorities are seen to be capable of constructing better rules than those which currently exist in the situation approached. Finally, "rule-compromise" discretion passes decision making authority on to an individual when the decision making body is
unable to come to agreement on the rules (Schneider, 1991; p.61-65). Throughout our discussion, we will be focusing on how authority, discretion and decision making occur within fields of unequal power relations. Though these dynamics take form and are expressed through descriptions of legal discourse, they are present and be applied to everyday professional activities, including social work, and not limited to the legal sphere.

Faces of Authority

Here, the different forms of authority and how the problems authority may be of concern to social workers interested in becoming aware of the functioning of social power in social work research and practice will be discussed. A description of the bureaucratic mode of authority which many social workers work both under and through in everyday tasks is given. Hummel (1994) relates that bureaucracy imposes it's structure on the individuals involved with it in six ways; "socially, culturally, psychologically, linguistically, cognitively and politically (Hummel, 1994; p. 5).

Socially and culturally, bureaucracy attunes itself only to those aspects of reality that have been given recognition as being parts of policy. Purportedly, this is the way that organizational social action is organized in ways so that it can be measured responsibly. Individuals go through "socialization" to internalize organizational "norms, values, and attitudes" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; p.14-15). Psychologically and cognitively, bureaucrats may seem to their clients (and even to themselves) to be "headless and soulless" (Hummel, 1994, p.5) and frequently may be confused as to where their
bureaucratic and real selves differ. Patterns of "values" are rationally decided upon and become part of an indoctrination to a bureaucratic milieu (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; p17). Linguistically, the terms used within the organization seem to outsiders to be imbued with a secret mode of meaning inaccessible to them. "Their discussion is punctuated with multiple and diverse examples of potential sources of rationalized myths: public opinion, educational systems, laws, courts, professions, ideologies, technologies..." (Scott, 1991, p.167) and the list goes on. "Bureaucratic language is power language..." (Hummel, 1994; p.16) and bureaucratic users assume that clientele must listen to them as if their voice was law.

Regardless of the field or academic discipline, there is an organization which maintains the interests of the field; whether this is in the practical application of the field's knowledge to it's topic matter or as a progenitor of theoretical discourse. There are organizational structures that are not bureaucratic in their approach to those who they interact with. The new literature describes how organizations are now looking in different directions to promote change that benefits not only themselves but asks questions like "if organizations structure so closely how individuals think and act, how does institutional change occur?" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; p.28)? Rather than the slow moving ways we are used to seeing bureaucracies' actions take, the new organizations may have to implement "big bang" decisions where everything about the previous structure the organization carried is changed in record time in response to an external event (Manning, 1991). Policy decision making, previously inextricably linked to values generated by the bureaucracy, may become associated with the more personal
values (Dunn, 1993) of a specific visionary CEO. Regardless of the type, organizations express influence through some measure of authority.

The first of two relatively individual levels of authoritative influence we will highlight will involve that structured by what Bordieu (1993) calls “habitus.”


“First, it provides an alternative account to role theory of the differentiation of cognitive understandings and behavioral norms along social-structural lines. Second, it moves beyond the Freudian imagery of “internalization” to posit a generative grammar of strategic behavior, rooted in but not fully determined by the past. Third it is multidimensional in two senses: pointing to a substantive theory of practical evaluation rooted in differences in the habitus of class factions; and providing an account of “rational” strategies of action as themselves institutionalized. Fourth, it offers an alternative solution to the Parsonian problem of the allocations o persons to social positions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; p.26).”

Bordieu (1990) says that the “habitus” produces and reproduces schemes and practical activities based on the history of the ways the constituents of these schemes and activities have been evaluated and understood in the past. He maintains that it inscribes an “active presence of past experiences” in order to insure that the ways thing were done in the past as the ways things are done now (Bordieu, 1991; p.54). This pattern parallels Eliade’s (1965) idea of an “eternal return” where the original pattern of action for a culture is set down in it’s mythology and every subsequent generation must do the thing, usually some ritual activities, the ways they were done in the past in order to participate with the divinity in the act of creation (Eliade, 1965).

The final individual mode of authority occurs when an individual is given a right to do something by a “power-holder,” an individual in possession of a position that
allow her the ability to grant such rights to others, as when one is in the position of “expert” or “specialist” who, through some special knowledge, has been privileged to act, or ratify actions of others. As mentioned before, this authority can be legitimate or it can be illegitimate yet claimed to be legitimate (Raz, 1990; p.2). It lies within the purview of the decisionmaker how this discretion affects legitimacy.

Faces of Discretion

Discretion is inevitably tied up with matters of decisionmaking (Manning, 1991), it is an “act of choice” (Feldman, 1991; p.167). We follow Feldman (1991) in defining discretion “as the legitimate right to make choices based on one’s authoritative assessment of a situation. As such, discretion is an exercise of authority” (Feldman, 1991; p.164). Decisionmaking theories span the range of fields of endeavor we survey in this project including social work (Rooney, 1992), anthropology (Bordieu, 1990), communication (vanDijk 1994), law (Hawkins, 1991), philosophy (Broadie, 1994), politics (Kymlicka, 1990), psychology (Fischoff, 1988) and sociology (Homans, 1987). Two orientations can be delineated within decision theories; utilitarian or behavioral modes (Fischoff, 1988) and what, for lack of a better term, could be described as evaluative modes (Frankfurt, 1988; Taylor, 1985). The behavioral/utilitarian modes focus on things such as level of certainty, “subjective expected utility,” and rationality (Fischoff, 1988; p.154). Evaluative frames of reference take into consideration more than the value of the outcome to individual interests, our certainty about having considered all the options and whether or not our decisions were rational. This mode
looks at the reality of uncertainty, emotionality, and the locality and specificity of need for the kinds of evaluations that are made whether these are "strong" or "weak" (Taylor, 1985; v. 1, p. 33). These two strands of decision theories may inscribe the modern and postmodern discourses respectively in this aspect of these issues.

The use of discretion in decision making is as structured by rules as it is functional between the delineations of those rules (Baumgartner, 1991). Discretion comes into play in the interpretation of rules as well as in their exercise and this is the location of their arbitrariness. Discretion has been identified as an open area encircled by a set of restrictions (Schneider, 1991). Discretion is "subjective" justice where rules are "formal." Justice can be arbitrary, such as when not related to formal ends, and power can be exercised illegitimately, even by legitimated decisionmakers, resulting in potentially intrusive behavior by institutional authority (Baumgartner, 1991; Hawkins, 1991b). Discretion can operate in the choices between "courses of action and inaction" (Hawkins, 1991b). Much of the policy making in bureaucratic structures is focused on how decisionmakers structure future decisionmaking policy. Policy, in this sense, is the set of rules structuring the activity of discretion itself (Hawkins, 1991b; p 28). What happens to those who fall between the rules; the "hard cases" (Dworkin, 1985)? What happens when individuals fall into the marginal areas?

Decision making by social workers is a critical part of social work practice. Authority and discretion in decision making can easily be taken for granted by those individuals endowed with their usages. A clear image of what processes are at play with these concepts can provide for a social worker taking into account the perspective
of the client population affected by the result of the decisions made. Sometime the bureaucracy constrains the social worker to being able to make only one kind of decision in a given set of circumstances. What reality is possibly missed by that bureaucratic structure with regard to the effects of it's policy enforcements by a social worker, which, if recognized by the social worker, can be questioned and even changed to eliminate an abusive type of decision making policy? Can the social worker in the situation advocate for the client population to help the bureaucracy change a policy dictate that marginalizes an individual client or client population?

**Margins/Marginalizations**

Authority is a term occupying the “margin” between epistemology, ethics and social power. It’s activity resides in the “intellectual space” (Bauman, 1993; p.146) that occupies the “between” of these concepts. Another term occupying a “marginal” location is “discretion” which operates in the “space between legal rules” (Hawkins, 1992; p.11). It functions in the way of Heidegger’s “clearing” (Shatzki, 1992; p.81) for assisting in understanding the workings of authority and discretion. We use the term “marginal” in Derrida’s (1982) sense because it conveys minutiae of meaning not available prior to it’s appearance. We use Derrida’s term marginal also because it begets another of his terms; “differance” which also applies to the relation that “authority” has to epistemology and social power. “Differance” implies, for Derrida, both a differentiation from and a deference for the closely associated other terms (Derrida, 1982; p.8). We also use differance in it’s connection to margin in it’s
activities of "movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation,\n...referral, detour, postponement..." (Derrida, 1981; p. 8) because this kind of movement describes the ways power "marginalizes" (Ferguson, 1990) as well as privileging (Furr, 1995) certain individuals and groups. This marginal area where power operates via authority or discretion through differance has remained mostly unlocated and undescribed, though the activities of power and the ways power marginalizes have been well described (Ferguson, Gever, Minh-ha & West, 1990). By use of this term we most accurately associate all three terms as they interact with each other in our usage of them in language.

So what is the point of delineating this marginal space? According to Ferguson (1990), if power continues to work from this "hidden place" (Ferguson, 1990; p.9) then it continues to operate as it currently does in it's activities of marginalization and oppression. Yet, it could become open to exposure and exploration if those structural dynamics which keep it hidden are no longer in place (Bordieu, 1991). The concept of the margin and the movement that takes place therein called differance also suggest for Derrida a questioning of the "authority of presence" and of the "limits which constrain us" (Derrida, 1982; p. 10). Although Derrida is speaking of language as Being this questioning can also be applied to the language that conveys power. Bourdieu (1991) holds that the domination language holds over us though it's constructive capacity will cease to do so only when this capacity is brought "to light" and "the intellectulist philosophy which treats language as an object of contemplation rather than an instrument of power...." acknowledges this (Bordieu, 1991; p.37). As long as power
can operate invisibly, it can continue to operate indefinitely. When it can be questioned at that choice point of a discretionary decision, especially by a dynamic of self-questioning, where it operates in the margin as discretion or authority, then it begins to become visible and amenable to change. The affects of shifting from a pattern of relatively unreflective or akratic decision making, to a more reflective one can have an impact on the whole system, whether intellectual or social, that this pattern operates within.

Deconstruction and Marginal Terms

We will try to establish elements of the “general system” (Gasche, 1987) that will help establish the mobile contours or “ordered clusters of traits of possibilities which in one and the same movement constitute and reconstitute systems” (Gasche, 1987; p.7). Here, at the “margins” of the interaction between social power and it’s expressions in such outlets as social work practice or epistemology, exist the media for use and misuse of social power. At this juncture it is necessary to expand on Gasche’s notion of the ‘general system’ and extend it to it’s potential parallel in social systems by means of the social theorist Niklas Luhmann. While Gashe’s analysis pertains primarily to intellectual systems, the structure and dynamics described fit closely enough to Luhmann’s social systems description to be functionally applicable. The social system can be conceived of as an “iteration that is not a reiteration” (Bauman, 1993; p.103); a habitus repeated on a macrosystemic scale. Luhmann’s (1995) Social Systems delineates a postmodern idea of systematicity that retains the modern characteristic of

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universality. He describes a system concept which might provide a pattern for a non-abusive postmodern social power to operate through. It is a network of separate but interconnected relations that reflect postmodern "localist" views of society. His system exemplifies the notion of systematicity and could be complimentary to a social work frame of reference. It combines the views of micro, meso and macrosystemic perspectives into one simultaneously interactive view. Knodt's (1995) succinct description delineates his idea:

"Luhmann lays out a theoretical groundwork which subsequently provides for a description of modern society as a complex system of communications that has differentiated itself horizontally into a network of interconnected social subsystems. Each of these subsystems reproduces itself recursively on the basis of its own, system specific operations. Each of them observes itself and its environment, but whatever they observe is marked by their unique perspective, by the selectivity of the particular distinctions they use for observations. There is no Archimedean point from which this network could be contained in an all-embracing vision. And yet—and this is perhaps Luhmann's most controversial proposition—the theory of social systems, like any "supertheory," insists on the universality of its claims. This is not to say that the theory claims an exclusive right to some ultimate, non-contingent truth, but that it must account for the self-implicative nature of its own observations: a general theory of social systems must deal with everything social, including itself as a contingent part of the reality it describes. (Knodt, 1995; p.xii)

This concept of the "margin," then, becomes most important to this endeavor as we seek to establish that there are these points of meeting between what is called "social power" and what is called "epistemology" within and between these subsystems as well as what is inside and outside of these margins. In addition, it is important to the project of finding the location and characteristics of the limitations social power and ethics impose on each other. Derrida poses the issue: what "compels us to count in its [the topic] margin more or less than one believes is said or read"? (Derrida, 1982; p.xxiv).
What parts of our social power come from the knowledge base we have? What parts of the construction of that initial knowledge base were founded on some individual's or group's social power? It is at this point that the technique of "deconstruction" comes into play. The intent of deconstruction is to bring 'to light' that which is hidden in the presuppositions (hidden in the margins); for Derrida, the presuppositions of literature and philosophy, for us the presuppositions of knowledge and what it enables power to utilize. Our definition of deconstruction derives from Rodolphe Gasche (1987)

Deconstruction must be understood, we contend, as the attempt to "account," in a certain manner, for a heterogeneous variety or manifold of non-logical contradictions and discursive inequalities of all sorts that continues to haunt and fissure even the most successful development of philosophical arguments and their systematic exposition.... These dissimilarities are to be located, first, in concept-formation; second, on the level of strategies of philosophical argumentation; and third, on the level of the textual arrangement and disposition of the different parts of a philosophical work. (Gasche, 1987; p. 4)

Our usage of the technical aspects of deconstruction will focus primarily on the first, to a small extent on the second and not at all on the third modality described by Gasche.

Deconstruction takes up it's task with the following premises: (1) philosophic concepts, while being separate necessarily from other concepts, embody values that are in opposition of sorts to other concepts with which they may be inextricably linked; (2) different levels or modalities of concepts can self contradict as when a philosopher argues in writing that writing is futile and speech is all (Gasche, 1987; p.4). Finally, deconstruction is concerned with generation of "minimal syntheses that regulate the non-canonical and non-philosophical problems of philosophical discourse..." (Gasche, 1987; pp.5-6). How frequently do we look for the logical inconsistencies in statements

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or practice decisions we make? How often do we make a different choice about the statement or the decision once we notice the inconsistency when it means we will have to do so in front of our client or boss? How will it look for our authority if we do so? How is it looked upon by our clients or our boss if we do so? In taking it to Luhmann's scale, how do the parts of the system claim they work together and yet refuse to monitor their activity? How is this refusal expressed? How does it act to marginalize?

Reifying Terms?

"Reification" is, in philosophy, the "fallacy of taking abstractions and regarding them as actually existing entities that are causally efficacious and ontologically prior and superior to their referents" (Angeles, 1981; p.243). Reification is also known as the fallacy of "misplaced concreteness" (ibid., p.243). Are the words we use to talk about the things we talk about equivalent to the things themselves? Is the individual in the culture different from our own a "savage" with only "prelogical mentality" (Levy-Bruhl, 1985)? Is Saddam Hussein the "monster" the news media depicts him as or is this only an "intentional characterization" (Livingston, 1996)? Is the "criminal" really "culpable" for his crime or is his future now dimmed only by someone's misguided legal construction of his reality (Dworkin, 1985; p. 72; Simester & Smith, 1996; p.8). Am "I" who I say I am or does my understanding of myself so differ from your understanding of who I am that it creates a problem in some interpersonal setting (Hyppolite, 1997)? Is an issue like the practice of "hazing" or sexual harassment in the
military really against military code or does it only become so when it becomes politically public (Zizek, 1997)? Is the new “chronic fatigue syndrome” a discovery or is it the social construction of a psychological entity that has plagued overworked individuals from time immemorial (Jordan et al., 1997)? Do “classes” in society actually have structures or are these structures only in the minds of the observers doing the research on them (Giddens, 1982)? In each case above, the label as referent is applied to the individual and decisions are made based on the meaning of the referent. How do social policies marginalize through social construction, those populations that are “margianlized” (Ferguson, 1990)? How is it that society can deny the generation of patterns of dominance on the one hand and supply justifications for them on the other hand (Hartsock, 1983)? These questions range from the extreme to the more subtle and represent more the cross section of the diversity of the fields they come from than any claim to complete representativness. They represent only a small sampling of the ways in which the objects of our study come under the influence of individual social constructions of reality. They also may be taken to show how far social science professionals have come in regards to self awareness of our own epistemic ethnocentricity. We return to the question, how do our policies marginalize their intended recipients? Does this occur through the process of treating individuals as equivalent to the labels they have accumulated?

Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993) relates that “people want policy to be informed and well analyzed, perhaps correct or scientific, yet they also want policy making to be democratic and hence necessarily an exercise of power” (Lindblom & Woodhouse,
Throughout the process of this activity, values come into focus. Which labels come to have value? Whose values hold the upper hand in any given decision is always a matter of what might be called a “discourse coalition” or some collective body of decision makers that hold to the same idea or “construct” (Hajer, 1993). As long as an administrative bureaucratic body, such as our agency “auspices, holds a given construct as primary (such as the medical model of client “pathology”) and hold the keys to “manipulating the political power bases of the organization in imposing that knowledge...” (Hummel, 1994) the value structures will be slow to change. Until organizations can implement within their structures ways to “constrain the inclination and the capacity of actors to optimize as well as privilege some groups whose interests are secured by prevailing rewards and sanctions....” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) those groups who are currently being marginalized through this reification process will continue to be marginalized through this mode of social power exercise.

Postmodern thinkers have been significant in creating new lenses through which to see old structures of interaction in which social power is functioning. The dichotomies of thinking established and maintained by some modern philosophical categories kept the workings of social power “hidden” from view of those not participating in this power usage. It is necessary to utilize these new lenses to locate the ways in which misuses of authority and discretion occur in order to have access to challenge these misuses through the critical communicative approach. Social workers are familiar with client populations of individuals who have been “marginalized” through race, gender or creed and will be able to utilize some of the postmodern lenses
to enable themselves to “deconstruct” social power abuses and assist clients in returning to self determining status.

**Conceptualizing Social Power**

So how is it that one individual or group of individuals become marginalized? What necessarily must be the state of affairs within which this occurs? We have stated above that social power acts in a covert manner through discretionary authority to enforce this marginalizing tendency. Here, the arena of social power we will be concerned with is outlined concisely by A.I. Goldman (1972), “the domain of power is not confined to the political realm, narrowly conceived: employers have power over employees, and teachers have power over students” (Goldman, 1972; p.221) as well.

While Goldman has outlined the broad contours of the field, or portion thereof, we will focus on, we will look to A. Kernohan (1989) for a description of some of the forms expressions of social power takes. Following J. K. Galbraith, (1983) he classifies power as:

condign power which includes physical force and negative sanction, compensatory power, which includes inducement and incentive, and conditioned power,...which not only affects the final outcome of a person’s choices, but also the process of choosing itself, the site of human agency. (Kernohan, 1989; p. 712)

These forms of expression of social power are interwoven through the of theories of social power we will overview. The survey we undertake will determine where each theory grounds authority in some reference to knowledge.
Thomas Wartenberg (1992) outlines a "situated concept of power" which includes a model of a social field of interaction within which a social dyad functions. His concept includes the peripheral social agents and their responses to the dyadic agents as well as their power relation to each other. An example of this would be the teacher-student dyadic structure which involves the teachers power to evaluate a student and a peripheral social other’s use of the teacher’s evaluation of the student to empower or disempower the student as a result of that evaluation. The focal point is a "differential structure of orientation" that the peripheral social agents use to empower by alignment of themselves with one or another of the dyadic members. But whose preferences are met by the student/teacher interaction? Is the teacher constrained by social policy to act in the student’s favor or on his own?

One answer to this question can be clarified by an analysis of the field both individuals are situated in. J.G. March (1988) claims there is a need to develop a measurement of comparison of a field of personal preferences which involves an assessment of the "value distances" between alternative outcomes of differential interests of given individuals being satisfied. There is an "intertemporal" element built into consideration of the interests of "future citizens" while considering those of present citizens. These interests would constitute a field of interests wherein political action could be said to align with some interests while ignoring others. March calls this "preference pooling" and goes on to say this locates "a preference center of society where those individuals with preferences close to the center would be said to have
power while those individuals whose preferences are further from the center are marginalized and disempowered (March, 1988; p.65).

These preference centers are located, recognized and developed through participation in “social processes of identity, learning and discussion” (ibid, p. 66). Society, in the above example, privileges the student on the basis of the teacher’s evaluation of the student’s knowledge. But how does the individual utilize his own sense of identity in ways that accommodate both her own needs and those of society? Does the person develop this identity in a way that would take both views into perspective (Nagel, 1986) or does she only take her own perspective?

R. Lane (1988) delineates an “experiential” analysis of power that provides a subjective framework for the understanding of power. In his theory, the “power holder” seeks some “good” in society. This good becomes in some way “addictive” for him. When decisional conflicts over “goods” come to the fore, say, through the information that what is considered as an individual “good” is not viewed by society in the same light, a dynamic called “post decisional dissonance reduction” occurs enabling the individual to allay conflict by rationalizing previous choices. If control of one’s subordinates is a good to an employer, control can become addictive. Rather than adjusting these expressions of control upon information from other sources that use of this control is excessive, the authority may simply justify future controlling behavior in order to maximize his own sense of good and reduce his dissonance.

In each of these theories of the dynamics of social power, authority was associated with a reference to some authoritative position, whether this was an
employment/educator position, a collective decision making body, or simply a
hedonistic preference, and the knowledge implied to be associated with that position.
Whose knowledge is privileged over that knowledge with which it competes? Whose
social power does one person think it politically feasible to align with over another
person? What level of personal awareness does an individual actor make decisions
from?

Social Power and Authority

Above we have elaborated how decisional discretion could be associated with
and used either legitimately or illegitimately though authority in ambiguous or marginal
situations. Here the focus is narrows to treat authority more exclusively. At this point
we must attend to the caution of Lukes (1977) position that power is an “essentially
contested concept” and merely draw some of the contours of social power. Power is
attributed to individual actors in their interactions with other individual actors. Power
is attributed expression though direct and indirect modalities. Power affects cognitive
and behavioral capacities of individuals. Power may be expressed intentionally and
unintentionally. Power is not limited to expression through interpersonal modes; it may
be embedded in infrastructures (Lukes, 1977).

Authority is associated with social power through a number of different
perspectives Lukes (1990) calls (1) the “official” perspective, which includes State
distributed relations, (2) an “unofficial” perspective, which is associated with the day to
day administration of organizational or auspices policies, (3) a position which is
described as being between the aforementioned two perspectives which can be seen by
what is done rather than what is said will be done (Lukes, 1990; p.205). Those persons
in the positions viewed consensually to be associated with authority are accorded social
power.

R. B. Friedman (1990) describes the relationship between knowledge and
authority as expressed by one person who defers to another person because s/he “is
thought to have special knowledge” (Friedman, 1990; p.80) which is somehow not
available to others. He points out that the essential component of this view is the
construance of differential availability of knowledge within a group of persons of
otherwise equal status. Something is construed by one individual (m) as being available
to this privileged other person (t) due to some characteristic of his/her personality that
potentiates to receipt of knowledge. It is the combination of this mysterious other
thing in the personality of t with knowledge that requires that t be deferred to.

Lukes (1990) following Friedman, talks about consensus in this attribution of
authority to another. Consensus is found because the shared ground is in regard to
what constitutes authority as well as what constitutes knowledge; the knowledge and
authority privileged by a given discourse coalition. Also, through consensus in
maintenance of the existing status quo, those whose interests are aligned with existing
preference pool stand to gain more by support rather than resistance of such activity.
These frameworks are the dominant ideologies seen to be modern in character and
which are challenged by postmodern discourse.
Postmodern Power?

We have modern and postmodern versions of metaphysics, ethics and epistemology but do we have a postmodern theory of power? Both modernity and postmodernity refer, usually in derogatory terms, to power and its effects, but they both refer primarily to the same activities and usages of power. While both perspectives offer alternatives to how what is currently understood as power is utilized, neither offers a viable alternative to the power abuser for realizing his/her needs. Is there an alternative existing? What would a postmodern theory of power look like? What would be required of the power abuser to shift from “abuse” in it’s definition of misuse of discretionary authority for personal gain to activities that meet his/her needs in non-abusive activities? Michel Foucault (1980) has made some suggestions; Mahatma Gandhi (1950, 1957) and Paolo Freire (1970, 1994) embody the kind of distributory framework that could be articulated into theory and practice. Although Foucault’s theories are present in the public sphere as generators of attention and controversy, Foucault operated within French intellectual spheres and was not as immediately faced by the realities of the kinds of power Gandhi was and Freire were faced with. How could there be a synthesis of these modes of power that would be accepted by one who currently abuses power? Is this even possible? Is it possible that if this proposed synthesis were available (i.e. articulated to and within the public sphere) that potential power abuses may be mitigated and detoured? Is it possible to marginalize, in some distant future, even the abuse of power itself? Perhaps not, but to move in that direction is necessary.
Foucault's (1982) conclusion is that "the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our day is not to try and liberate the individual from the state, and from the states institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state" (p. 216). Foucault (1982) differentiates between "power relations", "relationships of communication" and "objective capacities". Yet, he maintains, there are "blocks in which the adjustment of abilities, the resources of communication and power relations constitute regulated and concerted systems" (p. 218). Power is manifest differently through these three aspects of interaction and is not preventative of consent between aspects. More directly, it is "action upon actions of others" (p.220). As such, it maintains the cognizance of freedom as accounted to these acting agents. A situation where activity by one agent is "determined" by another is not seen as a power relations. Foucault points the way to balancing such relations. He outlines four aspects that must be considered, 1) "The system of differentiation" which facilitates action of one agent on another including class, economic, cultural and knowledge privileging distinctions; 2) "Types of objectives", those exercising power engage intentionally; 3) "The means of bringing power relations into being", which are modes of knowledge, military forces, informal political systems; 4) "Forms of institutionalization..." such as societal structures of law and observation and, 5) The degrees of rationalization..." it is elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation" (p. 223-224). Using the frameworks Foucault has elaborated is it possible to establish whether a specific context is imbalanced in one direction or another.
Ideological constraints can be superseded, socialization can be restructured and interpersonal activities modified.

Gandhi believed in the ability of men as individuals to see a set of options once they were made available and choose from among them the one which followed most closely to a path of Truth. Gandhi's work as a Barrister in England led to his standing up for the rights of individuals and collective bodies of persons in India and Africa in an effort to balance unequal power relations between individuals and between individuals and governments. Gandhi (1957) described events he was involved in as well as circumstances surrounding them for the individuals that were affected by these events including those institutions responsible for the situations coming about and in order to make his actions within those situations intelligible to those he opposed. His final effect was to balance power relations between two groups of individuals in an oppressive relationship. Michel Foucault's (1972) view of power relationships is embodied in and by a distribution of knowledge through discourse in a network structure and presents us with an engaged mode of power relations; discourse requires that there be an exchange between at least two persons, each view being accorded equal validity, not a disengaging, distancing mode as that which operates in oppressive as well as other relationships. Gandhi worked for just such mode of balancing power through the activity of education; both of individuals and groups.

The method Freire (1970) describes, that he uses in South American communities, parallels Gandhi's activity in India. Freire begins his educative process by exploring the worldviews of his students directly.
The investigation of what I have termed the people's thematic universe" - the complex of their "generative themes"- inaugurates the dialogue of education ... the methodology of that investigation must likewise be dialogical, affording the opportunity both to discover generative themes and to stimulate people's awareness in regard to these themes...the object of the investigation is not persons...but rather the thought language with which men and women refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality, and their view of the world within which their generative themes are found. (p.78)

This paragraph sums up all the basic attributes which I think can be applied to social work settings to ensure power abuses do not occur. When these settings are approached through an understanding of Foucault's revision of power relations, and Gandhi's example of activist conflict resolution we may find increased effectiveness in dealing with power abuses. By bringing these three perspectives together we move in the direction of integration of theory and practice so necessary to social work (Tucker, Garvin & Sarri, 1997) that could be considered in formulation of a model for individual praxis which prioritizes balancing power relations.

Social power is a major factor in the person-environment equation affecting the practice of contemporary social workers. Social power, as a resource, is a factor of existence many of the individuals, with which social workers meet daily, find lacking in their lives. Frequently, these individuals have only experienced the negative outcomes of social power. Knowing the functioning of existing conceptualizations of systems of social power, as well as potential alternatives, can aid social workers in recognizing and correcting abuses through creative restructuring of conceptualization which may later become functional systems themselves.
To revisit the abused woman above; consider the possibility that she has just left the abusive situation with her children due to the abuse she was receiving. She then files for divorces and requests compensation, say, child support, that is legally hers, but she has no job skills because her abuser has not allowed her to work. The abuser, being the wage earner, has access to an attorney and through this attorney, convinces the court that she is an unfit mother and that he should have the children. This is not because he wants them but because it is another way to attack her. The court does not see the latter (it is not a "visible" power abuse) but grants the abuser his petition on the "facts."

It is necessary to in some way describe the different potential manifestations of the uses and abuses of social power to work toward making the specifics of the dynamics described above open to question. When these dynamics can be opened to question they can then provide a "clearing" or social workers to advocate in new ways to assist clients in managing the potential negative experiences of social power abuses. Seeing how authority and discretion come together in a technically just but practically destructive (in this case for the mother and her children) manner provide the impetus to move toward advocacy that would provide information to the legitimate authority and end the potential for occurrence of the sort of abuse described above.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This final section weaves together (hopefully) the strands developed in part above. It begins by delineating a notion of the “public sphere” derived primarily from Jurgen Habermas (1984, 1987, 1989, 1993) and commentators on his work on the public sphere (Benhabib. 1992; Calhoun. 1992) supplemented by other perspectives (Bauman. 1993; LeFebvre. 1991). A notion of social work’s public sphere will be differentiated from the notions about the general public sphere through descriptions of the relative activities (Calhoun. 1992; Benhabib. 1992; Warnke. 1995) that social work is concerned with in a public sphere. Then follows a description of activities more closely associated with a “communication community” (Apel. 1980) and the kinds of “discourse analysis” that could take place there (Bordieu. 1991: Calhoun. 1995: Dunn. 1993: Fraser. 1992 McCarthy. 1992). How the themes described above from metaphysics and ethics combine to produce epistemological discourse within a social work communication community will be discussed.

Next, in the section on epistemology, will follow a description of the characteristics of that communication community. Above a communication community has been designated that consists of representatives of the fields of anthropology, communication, law, philosophy, politics, psychology, and sociology.
As the philosophical themes of modernity/postmodernity have been discussed above, no further analysis of this field will occur here. Those perspectives will continue to provide critical frameworks of the other fields. The issue of “pluralism” (Rescher, 1993) and how it would affect consideration of input from other fields will be discussed. A limited selection of the literature from each of these fields will be surveyed to determine the ways these fields express the themes of power and ethics. The meeting places of these two perspectives will be explored with regard to constructs of immediate interest to social work. An attempt will be made to delineate which types of discourses are privileged within these fields in order to clarify what kinds of themes affect social work practice.

Finally, in the last section on social work and social power we will pursue a course of social work “discourse ethics” and attempt to describe this course from a number of different perspectives including but not limited to Habermas (1990, 1993), Apel (1980), Honneth (1995). We will attempt to integrate this discourse ethics with Schon’s (1983) framework of a “reflective practitioner” and Nielson’s (1996) “politics of ethics” as they apply within organizational structures such as those encountered in social work relationships. We will use the work of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994) to delineate the issues associated with the evolution of moral judgement of a reflective practitioner as s/he generates knowledge for social work practice. Different levels of the issues which social workers and their clientele are affected by and which they affect with everyday decisions will be explored.
Social Work In the Public Sphere

Lefebvre (1991) points to the necessity to define the notions of space we seek to put into use. Above we have delineated that space called the “margin” by Derrida (1982) in order to put it to use in our descriptions of the location of the meeting of power and ethics. That space above had the nature of the Heidegerean “clearing” or that “space or realm of illumination in whose light things can show or manifest themselves to people....” (Schatzki, 1992; p.81). And yet even when things become clear, decisions must be made in the moment by a decision maker. This idea of the “public sphere” we will develop will function in a similar way to allow a location of “clarity” to arise. Lefebvre designates a “social space” that “is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity” and yet it “permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge” (Lefebvre, 1991; p.73). Bauman (1993) says this social space encompasses “a complex interaction of three interwoven, yet distinct, processes - those of cognitive, aesthetic and moral spacings - and their respective products” (p.145). Each of these spaces is “constructed” differently; the cognitive through “acquisition and distribution of knowledge;” the aesthetic through “affective” considerations; and the moral through a “distribution of felt/assumed responsibility” (p.146). The public space to be designated here will not be so wide in scope as that described by LeFebvre but will certainly include the diversity of knowledge he mentions and some of those elements outlined by Bauman. Calhoun’s
(1992) synopsis of Habermas (1989) The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere will be utilized in the description that follows unless otherwise noted. This public sphere was originally a masculine gendered, primarily political space wherein individuals from the "educated, propertied" population carried on "discourse" which excluded less fortunate others as well as their interests. This sphere gradually expanded to include both a wider range of interests and non-elite classes of individuals into the discourse. Habermas saw the main importance of this public sphere in its ability to provide a location for social integration of "rational-critical discourse" which was separate from the "state" interests as well as from the "private realm" of the family. It became the location to bring into recognition the interests of "organizations created for sustaining life" as matters for "public discussion" (Calhoun, 1992; pp. 1-16). At its height, it included four significant elements: (1) that members not only not worry about equality of status but "disregarded status altogether...." (2) the discussion included the "problematization" of issues that had remained previously unquestioned, (3) it included among its ranks any of those individuals who had access to reading materials, could formulate and express opinions on the specific topics of interest and (4) it established itself as "accessible" to potentially all of the public individuals (Habermas, 1989: p. 36-38). Benhabib (1992) outlines elements of two other models of the public sphere which she contrasts with Habermas' model and which will be of interest to our project. She maintains that all of these spaces "become sites of power, of common action coordinated through speech and persuasion" (Benhabib, 1992; p 78). She notes that
even the topics included in the discourse are matters decided by power. Lyotard, 
(1988) has pointed out that discourse of some communication communities can be seen 
even to structure the topics in terms such that dissenting views have no way to argue 
about the differences (Lyotard, 1988; pxii). The ways to define or “predefine” 
(Benhabib, 1992) differences are eliminated by the linguistic rule structures generated 
and perpetuated by the “habitus” (Bordieu, 1980, 1991) dominant in power. She 
maintains that the content of the discourse in not as important as the means to go about 
the arguing. What is necessary is “reflexive questioning of issues by all those affected 
by their foreseeable consequences and the recognition of their right to do so (Benhabib. 
1992; p 81). Fraser (1992) relates that this public sphere was conceptualized as one 
mode of bringing the state to account for its actions before the citizenry. She relates 
that though this was the ideal, the reality was that the public sphere described by 
Habermas was gendered in its self formulations and much more exclusive than the 
ideal. Fraser would seek to redefine what was considered “public” as inscribing 
marginalizing tendencies built into the ideology of a “bourgeois, masculinist 
conception” of the public (Fraser, 1992). Fraser acknowledges that while the ideal 
openness has not occurred thus far, it remains a potential for a pluralized community of 
“subaltern counterpublics” including “discursive arenas where members of subordinated 
social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional 
interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser, 1992, p.123). Bordieu 
(1991) describes how the power of domination is inscribed within the language used to
carry on discursive relations and that the only way to make these dominating practicing visible is by “bringing to light the operations of object construction” that are perpetuated linguistically (Bordieu, 1991; p.38). Social workers engaged in generation of practice wisdom for inclusion in the public sphere can establish a sort of self reflexive communication community to work towards this.

Social Work’s Communication Community

How could a public sphere composed of a social work “communication community” contribute to this endeavor? How can social workers act as advocates of “subaltern” publics in the process of our generation of knowledge and practice wisdom that become a recognized part of an argument or discourse in the public sphere? Karl-Otto Apel (1980) holds that there is a “transcendental” groundwork for the very form defined as “argument” that presupposes a “communication community” that understands it’s premises. He further holds that argumentative actions as such are not discernible outside of the possibility that their teleological ends could not be evaluated by those who observed them. His “transcendental” groundwork would frame the activity of argumentation or discourse, but not the constructs argued. Therefore, that action of evaluation, or the inscription of “values” into the “subjective-intersubjective” space between individuals is, in Derrida’s terms “always already” (Spivak 1976) present in the action of argumentation (Apel, 1980; pp.142-144). What kind of values can we recognize in the discourse of the communication community? Apel (1980) argues for a “universal ethics” on which to ground this discourse for needs that inevitably face
mankind. McCarthy (1992) relates that even these needs themselves are structured by the contemporary values of given cultures. Ideally, he says, discourse in the public sphere will accord different interests similar accord in discussion and he goes on to designate the requirement to differentiate what constitutes general need from "subcultural" needs relative to definitions of the "good life" or what M. Nussbaum (1993) calls the "quality of life". Discourse will allow questions of general needs (values) to remain open to discussion and the language these issues are discussed in open to revision. The result will be that individuals "adopt a reflective attitude toward their own expressive manifestations" (McCarthy, 1992; p.56) in order to become clearer about what their own values are and what decisions are made deriving from these values. McCarthy describes a "web of informal communication" (p.59) that organizes itself around mutual interests in order to address the problem of dissemination of values relevant to society into the public sphere for further decision making to take place. This formulation parallels Hajer's (1993) idea of a "discourse coalition" which is "basically a group of actors who share a social construct" (p.45) which they further bring to a wider populace through a number of means including "debate and persuasion" (Hajer, 1993; p.48). These constructs arise within specific contexts and are comprised of "ideas, concepts and categories" through which they organize their discourse. These are the ways that social artifacts of whatever formulation are socially constructed whether this be through knowledge dissemination in educational curricula, published books and periodicals, or reference materials used.
for projects such as this thesis. These social constructs or artifacts are embedded in the unspecified positions that the researchers assume when generating their research. Of primary importance to social workers is to recognize that when making our daily practice or research decisions, we must be aware what presuppositions are present and make these explicit minimally to ourselves, maximally to the populations we serve. In order to do this we must identify these presuppositions in social work research resources and recognize what forms they may take.

Sources of Social Work Knowledge

Social work literature calls for an examination of research practices and the inputs to these research practices (Laird, 1995), as well as for an examination of privileging procedures for the inputs to these practices (Furr, 1995; Tucker, 1996). A renewed attention is called to “boundaries;” sometimes to reassert the boundaries between social work and other disciplines (Abbott, 1995) and sometimes to relax those boundaries (Imbrogno, 1996; Laird, 1995; Tucker, Garvin and Sarri, 1997). We are reminded, as social workers, to be aware of how we are affected by power (Pinderhughes, 1983, 1996) and to “reflect on knowing oneself ethically” (Abramson, 1996; p.195). The “epistemological subsystem” (comprised of all the inputs to “practice wisdom”) of social work practice knowledge inputs interrelates with the “ideological subsystem” (which includes values, beliefs and attitudes) to affect decision making about specific practice decisions (Souflee, 1993; pp.317-330). One way of beginning to address these concerns is to determine first some of the fields that are
drawn upon to influence social work's values, beliefs and attitudes. The section begins with a review of the social work literature drawn from different social work specializations to determine the range of issues social work literature drawing on each of the separate fields explores. Very few articles were found to be exclusively dedicated to any one field of endeavor outside of social work. A review of some of the themes articles drawing on specific fields outside of social work speak about follows.

The scope of this project does not allow for more than a representative sampling of social work periodical literature from which to draw for the purposes of this study. Here focus is on the themes described above as relevant to social work endeavors.

Among the many issues that social workers draw upon anthropological scholarship for is the aspect of cultural input into "meaning-making" (Pozatek, 1994). Though Western culture has its sources of non-analytical meaning making, much of the current academic research in meaning making takes an analytical tone (Stich & Warfield, 1994). Social workers must be aware that other systems of meaning-making have greater value in cultures dissimilar to our own. Another issue of import is the issue of "ethnic sensitivity" (Schlesinger, & Devore, 1995) which calls on social workers to be aware, through knowledge of a given culture, (Drower, 1996; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990) what kinds of values exist as values in that culture. Finally, while we look outside of our own culture when we think of anthropological studies, we have certain segments of the population, such as the gang culture (Molidor, 1996; Jankowski, 1991) or the homeless (Blau, 1992; Marin & Vacha, 1994) within our culture that represent separate cultures.
Communication theory offers social work a wealth of theoretical knowledge to build on and make daily practice interventions (Nelson, 1984). Bateson (1972) from whom so many family therapy systems are derived, focused primarily on communications. Strategies for interacting with various client populations (Rooney, 1992) rely on basic communication styles seeking to promote rapport, rather than curtail it, in the face of values differences between clients and social workers. Decision making at community organizing meeting utilize communication strategies in order to get their information out and attain the highest level of integration of this information (Tropman & Morningstar, 1995).

Legal issues involving social workers include a recognized need to integrate “legal issues” into the education curricula for social work graduate programs (Kopels & Gustavsson, 1996) so that social workers will understand the processes of legal reasoning. This addition will benefit not only social work practitioners but their clientele. Additionally, social workers would be well advised to have a greater understanding of their potential liabilities relative to practice decisions (Gelman, Pollack & Auerbach, 1996; Reamer, 1994). These practice issues range from confidentiality issues (Alexander, 1997) of clients involving agency, court system or private practice to misconduct issues (Jayarante, Croxton & Mattison 1997).

Currently, philosophy’s primary input into social work processes come in the form of the aspects of the modernity/postmodernity debate (Humphries, 1997; Smith & White, 1997) delineated above. Issues of power use and abuse, also delineated above, are matters of concern (Hartman 1992; Pinderhughes, 1997). Critical theory, in the
form of Habermas' ideas, also are represented in social work arenas (Dean & Fenby, 1989; Kondrat, 1995).

Politics (the general category is used rather than "political philosophy," "political science," or "political theory" for simplicity's sake) offers a number of different dimensions that are important. Some of the issues generated in the political arena are more encompassing in their effects on social workers and their client populations than all the other potential inputs mentioned above (Fisher, 1995). The movements of social policy within the houses of government are determiners of where social workers can or cannot be enabled to provide for the welfare individual members of populations they serve (Barber, 1995; Gibson, 1997; LeGrand, 1997). Issues of public opinion frequently run congressional / senatorial policy making procedures (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993) and result in shifts of attitude with widespread political effect. Designations of "race," "welfare" or "federal responsibility" are social constructions affected by research, public opinion, and power issues (Ewalt, 1996; Latting, 1990; Morris, 1993).

Psychology has by far the most voluminous input to social work literature. As psychotherapy in some form or another comprises a substantial part of social work practice, much information is drawn from this field to apply to human behavioral understanding from the intersubjective (Chescheir, 1995; Saari, 1995) to the interpersonal (Germain, 1994). Concerns are present about how practitioners and families construct their interpretations of the pathologies of those they interact with (Cutler, 1991; Mattiani & Kirk 1991; Raffoul & Holmes, 1986; Saari 1992). As

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psychology is as young a "science" as social work and new formulations of "pathology" and "causes" of illness incessantly change with new discoveries this is problematic area.

Sociology is the last main input to social work research that will be treated here. It is the primary source of the views about social construction (Goldstein, 1990) though many of these "constructivist" social workers look to the secondary sources for their ideas of social construction (Berlin, 1996; Franklin & Jordan, 1995; Granvold, 1996). These constructivist perspectives are concerned with the issues of assessment (Franklin & Jordan, 1995) meaning (Berlin, 1996), psychotherapy (Granvold, 1996), and designations of strength or pathology (Goldstein, 1990). In addition, concerns about what constitutes a family (Berlin, 1996; Weik & Saleeby, 1995) are addressed. Analyses of the development of "practice wisdom" (DeRoos, 1990; Klein & Blom, 1995) and knowledge construction process are also in the forefront.

Descriptions have been given above about how general social power dynamics interact with discretionary use of sanctioned and unsanctioned authority in spheres outside of social work. Organizational dynamics obtain within milieu including academic, corporate, social scientific and non-social scientific settings. While separation between academic and organizational interests are maintained almost as religiously as the separation of church and state, influences still exist. The focus here is for social workers to keep all of these dynamics in view along with their affective costs, while making decisions about knowledge generation. Social workers can be part of a new forging of power relations through their modes of knowledge generation in the public sphere.
Social work and Epistemology

One of the characteristics of power abuse is that it would seek to draw things to itself and distribute nothing. Therefore, one of the ways to immediately shift this imbalancing will be to focus on redistributing that resource which is abused most by power; information (Bordieu, 1991; Mohan, 1996). One of the ways this may be done is to adopt a more “pluralistic” position with regard to what is acknowledged as valid input within a public sphere or communication community (Rescher, 1993). Social workers can allow for differences (Fraser, 1990; Lyotard, 1988; Fraser, 1990; Lyotard, 1988, Young, 1990) to be recognized and accommodated instead of marginalizing. The position taken here is that as social work tends to draw on a number of fields for input to research/ knowledge construction (Mohan, 1996; Tucker, Garvin & Sarri, 1997), it will be beneficial for social workers to know how the groundwork of philosophy outlined above as the modernity/ postmodernity debate, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics interact with conditions of power use or abuse. While Habermas (1990) looks to consensus within the communication community in order for there to be “rational” discourse, Rescher (1993) describes some of what he sees to be the problems with the practicality of this view. He maintains that rational consensus requires of the collective of individuals that they all think about the same things in the same way given the evidence at their current disposal. The consensual view, he says, also requires an intersubjective objectivity that would be difficult to attain (Rescher, 1993; p.51). He holds that individual’s decision making strategies are based on their integration of incoming information and aligning their views to accommodate this
incoming information with preexisting experience. He maintains that the results are not based on "intersubjectively invariant factors, but emerge from the reactions of individual agents proceeding on the basis of their personalized... backgrounds of experience" (Rescher, 1993; p.66). Rescher relates the idea that just as it is unreasonable to require a universal frame of reference for all individuals to ground a "discourse ethics" neither is it reasonable to expect a universal frame of reference for cross-disciplinary values and attitudes even (or especially) with regard to issues like power and ethics. Though Rescher's cautions are valuable to heed, regarding content of information, it is Habermas' and Apel's positions on the framework for argumentative form consensus that will be aligned with here.

Authority and Values in Social Work Practice

A survey of brief selections from the literatures of the separate fields used as inputs to social work knowledge bases serves to convey a sense of the relative directions themes take regarding topics of interest to social work. These will be the issues of power and ethics as they affect metaphysical (such as "minds & the mental", "norms and values" or "free will") or epistemological issues (such as "justification," "beliefs" or "truth") outlined above.

Among other issues, anthropology addresses that of "viewpoint" (Shokeid, 1997) including views of "self" as it touches both field researcher (Wilson, 1988) and "the native's point of view" (Geertz, 1984; Jones, 1970). Whose viewpoint must be the one taken with regard to what is "published" about the particular "culture" in
question (Shokeid, 1997; Schweder, 1984; Wilson, 1988), the interviewer’s or the interviewee’s? Questions arise concerning how one justifies one’s own “belief” about what is “true” for human beings across cultures (Bordieu, 1977, Mitchell, 1988; Schweder, 1984) relative to that of the individual within the culture one is studying. Interviews and the use the confidentiality extended to one (by individuals who were non-attendant to a “participant-observer” status of their interviewer) within the course of the interviews one does to get information for ones research purposes (Mitchell, 1988; Jones, 1970; Wilson, 1988) become a concern.

Communication spans a number of applicable media relative to how power and ethics interact. Similar, and in connection to, the issue of perspective in anthropology, one theme centers on the issue of “whose voice gets heard” (Ellsworth, 1989; Hubbach, 1989; Krippendorf, 1995; Tannen, 1995)? Tannen describes the ways that “linguistic style” privileges masculine self-referential communication styles over feminine associate-inclusive communication styles as the norm for organizational discourse (Tannen, 1995). Ellsworth relates that even the “pedagogy of empowerment” can still marginalize for race and gender (Ellsworth, 1989). Whose voices are represented in the “mass media” (Ferre, 1990; Self & Self, 1994; Thompson, 1994) and whose are silenced? Self & Self (1994) describe how computer software in multicultural settings privilege the perspectives of one culture (ours, where the software was designed) over others in such things as “default language,” iconic referents, and computer keyboard labeling (Self & Self, 1994).
Legal theory, among other issues, is concerned with aspects of norms (Fegan, 1996; Salter, 1997), justifications of norms & values (Priban, 1997), abuses of discretion (Nelken, & Levi, 1996), and social constructions of the "criminal" (Collier, 1997; Simester & Smith, 1996), the family (Diduck, 1995), communities (Abel, 1995; Collier, 1997), and discourse about the justice of theses issues (Chesterman, 1997; Priban, 1997; Salter, 1997). Norms here are designated in the guise of the "external conduct of individuals" (Salter, 1997) and therefore can be utilized by administrative bodies to marginalize individuals and communities who do not match some template (Abel, 1995). This justification of norms come through the "legislative process" (Salter, 1997) which assigns a value of "true" (Priban, 1997) to the position backing it. This power position must be questioned through an "interrogation of justice" (Chesterman, 1997) about it's validity (Duff, 1996) and about it’s labeling "criminals" as "culpable" or not (Dworkin, 1985; Simester & Smith, 1996).

Political concerns focus on arguments about "notions of the common good" (Blitz, 1996; Palaver, 1995), "civic consciousness" and "free will" (Sandoz, 1996), ideologies and power (Weiss, 1997; Zizek, 1997) uses of authority (Durrheim, 1997; Winant, 1997). In addition political foci are global (Kaarbo, 1997; Weiss, 1997) national (Hanus, 1996; Rosati & Creed, 1997) or more individual (Zizek, 1997) in focus. Notions of "the common good" are tied up with facets of, again, perspective (Palaver, 1995); whether it be an individual perspective or that of the collective in communities (Blitz, 1996; Dirrheim, 1997; Nagel, 1991) or with superpowers (Rosati...
& Creed, 1997; Weiss, 1997). By whose authority does some “good” become “common” and how is this “truth” (Durrheim, 1997 determined?

Psychology addresses a manifold of issues including values (Schwartz, 1990), and pathology as a “value” (Wakefield, 1992). Social constructivist viewpoints are reflected in “constructivist psychotherapies” (Neimeyer, 1993), family “realities” (Hoffman, 1990), and “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to name just a few. The construction of selves, from psychology’s perspective, has to integrate experimental vs. experiential perspectives (Jennings, 1986), temporal locations (i.e. memories, immediate statuses, projected futures) and shifts across these locations (Markus & Nurse, 1986). Included are “postmodern” identities (Smith, 1994) as well as what is of value to these selves (Schwartz, 1986). Is the pathology attributed to a loved one (or to oneself) the function of a societal “value” about “stigmatize[d] socially undesirable behavior that is not really disordered” (Wakefield, 1992; p.373)? Persons (1986) notes the necessity to study the actually occurring process “rather than the psychiatric diagnosis” (Persons, 1986; p.1252).

Sociological concerns include issues of revisioning self concepts (Mohan, 1996; Van Kreiken, 1997), ethnocentric privileging of one cultural form of norms over another (Mohan, 1996, 1997; Ramakrishnan & Balgopal, 1994). Challenges to state authority include those of postmodernist research (Banks & Mangan, 1995; Leonard, 1996),and class and race (Fegan & Vera, 1994; Marshall & Swift, 1993; Mohan, 1997). Revisioning the self, for Mohan (1996), means looking at alternatives to the Freudian frames of reference that have come to obfuscate the senses meaning of the

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new self (Mohan, 1996) and, for Van Kreiken (1997), taking a longer temporal view relative to self-construction (Van Kreiken, 1997). Ideas about class and racism include exploding the “melting pot” myth of American government as well as “racist rituals” (Fegan & Vera, 1994). In addition, the discussions of the view of class as the “unequal distribution of power and advantage” (Marshall & Swift, 1993; p.190).

Each of the fields surveyed above have their own sets of “values” and theses values are expressed in the themes and concepts utilized by the individual authors of their generation of field specific knowledge bases. Many of the values present in the frameworks of these fields overlap with or are equivalent to social work values. Some, however, may not be. Some “traditional” values in theses other fields may not be questioned by those individuals who generate research. Social workers are called upon to engage in this critical questioning process themselves when utilizing this research for social work purposes. It is positive for the field of social work for there to be input from other social science fields (Tucker, Garvin & Sari, 1997). Yet close attention must be paid to which values are seen as “authoritative” in these other fields.

Authority, Discretion, Privileging and

Social Construction of Knowledge

Each of the above descriptions contributes to the intellectual diversity of social work practice wisdom through their slightly different perspectives on each of the topics of interest explored. As with a “treatment team” or “enhanced collaborative approach” (Gutierrez, GlenMaye, & DeLois, 1995; p.254), to social work practice
activity, the combinations of perspectives allows a fuller picture of the construct discussed. The theme we pursue next concentrates on how an imbalance can begin to occur structurally. Social workers are familiar with components of "traditional" knowledge construction, including references to the previous individuals that have formulated the "facts," statements, and propositions that have gone into this theory building. This is a requirement of contemporary research; backing up one's statements with references to "authorities." This brings us to the question "what privileges the knowledge of the references that these authors use to validate their statements (Furr, 1995)? (What privileges the references I use to validate or provide evidence for my statements? Where do my references or their references get their authority?)

Hopefully, social workers can create for themselves the ability to look at the issue under scrutiny from enough different perspectives to see the myriad of values that attach to that issue from the different perspectives. From this wider view then the individual social worker can determine which values s/he can identify as being aligned with individual and social work values.

Do authors get authority or value simply from having published within a field already (Tucker, 1996) or from publishing within their own field or "turf" (Abbott, 1995)? Do they get this authority simply by being an author (Derrida, 1982)? Do authors get their authority from the number of other authors that refer to them in other texts (Merton, 1988)? There is an element of consensuality here, a sort of "communicative rationality," that frequently is identified as "instrumental rationality" (Chriss, 1995; p.548) but which can be taken as consensuality of a communication.
community active in the public sphere. The public sphere generates, through consensuality, authority that acts within the margin between social power and knowledge (Bordieu, 1991; p.5). Authority, as described above, is inextricably bound up between the notions of epistemology and social power (Friedman, 1990). Merton (1988) talks about the "Matthew effect" wherein the first author of a multiply authored work, or sometimes simply the previously published author, is remembered and quoted while the subsequent authors are forgotten (Merton, 1988; p.319-320). This effect shows a selective inattention to detail which can in some instances act to marginalize. The call for reflexive activity regarding issues such as attribution of authority comes from within each field surveyed here: social work (Abramson, 1996; White, 1997), anthropology (Wilson, 1988), communication (Ellsworth, 1989; Ferre, 1990), law (Fegan, 1996), politics (Winant, 1997), psychology (Hoffman, 1990; Kraus & Fussell, 1990) and sociology (Bordieu, 1990).

So what would a "discourse ethics" that took into consideration the plurality and diversity of the above range of fields and perspectives acting in the public sphere look like? To begin to sketch an outline of this process, Habermas' (1990) formulation is instructive. Habermas begins his account with a consideration of resentment as an individual's emotional response to a wrong done as an example of a moral consciousness. The point Habermas makes is that the shift in appraisal by the individual of his/her emotional state from second person experiencing to third person evaluating results in a shift in perspective widening the perception of moral/ethical constituents of the interaction. According to McCarthy (1978) norms, "rationality
and...maxims of action cannot be decided upon monologically—within the horizon of the solitary, reflecting moral consciousness....” (McCarthy, 1978; p. 326). The shift in perspective allows one to move to an interactive position within the situation.

Habermas then moves on to explain how this scenario is applied in communicative action by showing that the “web of moral feelings that [are] embedded in everyday life” (Habermas, 1990; p.50) serve as an anchoring point that highlight the validity of the sense of communicative ethical action between individuals. He holds that normative claims to communicative action are based on what K.-O. Apel (1980) called the recognition of a transcendent form of argumentation legitimated universally by language users. The attempt to resolve conflict morally involves “an intersubjective process of reaching understanding that can produce an agreement that is reflexive in nature; only it can give participants the knowledge that they have collectively become convinced of something” (Habermas, 1990; p.67). Habermas maintains that needs and values are socially, culturally constructed and revision must come through consensuality within a “horizon provided by the lifeworld of a specific social group [with] real conflicts in a concrete situation which the actors consider it incumbent upon them to reach a consensual means of regulating some controversial social matter” (Habermas, 1990; p.103). Expanding on Habermas’ ideas, Honneth (1995) relates that ethics cannot prescribe values in contemporary society “but can only provide a specific procedure for conflict resolution; and in order for it in turn to be able to satisfy moral
claims, this procedure must give expression to the substantive conviction that all human beings have to respect one another as free and equal persons" (Honneth, 1995 p. 295).

When generating a piece of research for publication in the field, the social worker enters this communication community with her/his ideas and can then hope to elicit commentary on the position presented. When this occurs in a communicative, interactive field where critical perspectives can be exchanged, participants benefit, ideas are clarified and the best possible resolution of conflicts can potentially occur. During the process of selection of materials for inclusion in the research generated, a similar dynamic can potentially occur. Through the activity of taking different value perspectives on the subject, a dialogue of sorts occurs and can provide the individual social worker with more information about personal values and where these values align with client well being and social work value positions. It is in this place that the social worker begins the reflexive process of social work in eliminating social power abuses.

Social Work and Social Power

The question contemporary social workers face is how to move into practice and research activities given these changing conditions of social discourse from a position of politicy (in it's definition of "prudential or not impulsive" (Oxford English Dictionary [O.E.D.], 1924) oriented interactivity with the social environment which moves towards social work's long term goals of self- and other-empowerment and balancing power. Here we will outline one approach which may address this concern.
Donald Schon (1983) sets out a framework for reflective practice and this framework will be woven into the fabrics of the discussion here. Next, we will delineate, from Richard Neilson’s (1996) work on “the politics of ethics” the meeting places, or the forms of the meeting places between power usage/abuse and ethical programs. We will begin by lining out the frameworks of typical ethics/power management prototypes or “archetypes” he describes. Decision making patterns used by the specific prototypical ethical actors’ approaches to ethical dilemmas are described. Then Robert Kegan’s (1982) ideas about “evolving moral development” are drawn upon and parallels between the specific ethical actors discretionary decisions and the frameworks of ethical decision making he describes are underlined. A method of application of these frames of reference within the “reflective practitioner” structure of Donald Schon (1983) will be described in order to enable social workers to recognize what kind of processes may be occurring within themselves, their clients or their auspices when decision making takes place in practice and research.

The decisions following on the recognition of the types of potential ethical decisionmaking, along with the elements of the social influences outlined above, will serve to help social workers make choices that are more informed and less “akratic” in nature. Ideally, social workers decisions will come from reflective/reflexive position that seeks to make choice to balance power in very possible situation. It may allow social workers a better understanding of the level of ethical decision making the client may feel stuck with as well as allowing for appropriate decision making when dealing with auspices bureaucracy. We will then look to Kegan (1982, 1994) for some of the
contexts that social workers and their clients are dealing with relative to the types of decisions that must be made.

Reflexive Practitioners

The focus for reflective practice is rooted in the "deeper questioning of the professionals' claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of human importance" (Schon, 1983; p.5). Do social workers represent themselves as individuals who have grappled with the types of conflicts over problems that populations served encounter? Do we misuse this authority we claim to have through our professional position by the kinds of ethical decisions we make regarding personal conduct, service availability, or resource distribution? "Practitioners are frequently embroiled in conflicts of values" or even over what constitutes a value (Schon, 1983; p.17). Different perspectives on values generate differing frameworks for generating meaning and these meaning systems differences can result in specific communication problems; between parents and children, partners and work peers (Kegan, 1993). These meaning systems differences can result in differing perspectives about what constitutes moral/ethical decision making (Bauman, 1993; Kegan, 1982, 1993; Nielson, 1996; Schon, 1983). Here we begin with a look at Nielson's description of a typology of different perspectives on ethical decision making with a view toward social worker recognition and reflection in the moment about the most effective way to meet each perspective without compromising one's own moral/ethical position.
Nielson (1996) delineates several “archetypes” of ethical decision making processes. Nielson’s work provides a format for recognizing and overcoming obstacles to ethical decision making within an organizational context which can be applied productively to contexts social workers find themselves faced with. Regardless of the discipline, from anthropology to zoology, there is an organizational structure that operates to ensure the viability of the discipline. Organizational dynamics, while not alike within and between disciplines, are still populated by individual with agendas that are expressed through differing levels of moral meaning making capacity. This capacity is described by Kegan and Neilson’s framework serves to explicate the effects of the relative levels described.

Before looking further at Nielson’s work, we will explicate the development of Kegan’s (1994) four orders of consciousness that help us to set into context the ethical frames of reference to be developed below. Kegan, expanding on Jean Piaget’s work, begins by describing the principle of “elements” which become the foci of conscious interest in first order consciousness. These elements are constrained to having qualities contingent on the perceiving individual, usually a child psyche. He goes on to describe the “durable category” which includes the “ability to construct a concrete world, independent points of view and a property bearing self” (Kegan, 1994; p.23). This ability allows it’s holder to differentiate one’s self from the selves of others and allow that these other selves to have certain “properties” that belong to them. The elements from the first order of consciousness become the objects of the consciousness of the second order. Kegan then describes the movement to the third order wherein durable
categories "become an element of [a] principle of knowing rather than the principle of knowing itself" (p.26). This "cross-categorical" knowing takes a "reflective" view of those things or individuals or thoughts that were previously durable categories. Each successive category is a "new way of making sense" (p.28) of one's environment; a new way of "organizing experience" (p.29). Finally the fourth order of consciousness takes into consideration that at the third order, individuals have developed structures of values from and through which they live and interact with the world. As individuals, we have developed certain ways of being within our relationships whatever their nature (i.e. parent, partner or employee) and we are consistent in maintaining these aspects of our identity. This fourth order of consciousness would "take values and ideals as the object rather than the subject of our knowing" (p.91); we develop "values about values" (p.90). Kegan delineates four main points about these orders of conscious meaning making.

First, they are not merely principles for how one thinks but for how one constructs experience more generally, including one's think, feeling and social relating.... Second, they are principles for the organization (the form or complexity) of one's thinking, feeling or social relating not the content [of the latter]... Third, a principle of mental organization has an inner logic, an "epistemologic." The root or "deep structure" of any principle of mental organization is the subject-object relationship.... Fourth, the different principles of mental organization are intimately related to each other....the relation is transformative, qualitative, and incorporative....Each successive principle subsumes or encompasses the prior principle. (Kegan, 1994; pp. 33-34)

It has been necessary to go into more detail with Kegan's work as it is the fundamental structure within which the other frameworks must be integrated.
A return now to Neilson's "archetypes" or "evocative representational models" (Neilson, 1996; p. 10) is required. These archetypes set out the characteristics of unethical actors in the decision making interaction to be represented. Within Neilson's descriptions, the main archetypes are delineated and then several examples of parallels from historical corporate decision making follow. For the purposes of this study, discussion will be limited to brief descriptions of the archetypes alone. The "Eichmann" archetype represents an "upper-middle level" manager who facilitated the "administrative massacre" of millions of individuals through obedience to authority that was expected and valued within the organization (the Nazi party) he was a part of. "He obeyed orders without thinking of ethical implications" (Neilson, 1996, p. 10). As an ethical archetype his focus is narrowly constrained to what his job and needs are and he does not even consider ethical implications. The "Richard III" archetype is said to recognize the difference between right and wrong relative to an ethical frame of reference but to act on the impulses for "personal gain" sloughing off the ethical dimension. The next archetype is "Socrates' Jailer" and his actions are taken with some sense of the ethical ramifications of the act but while sidetracking the responsibility the conflict onto the higher power who will punish him if he does not do it's bidding. This decision maker has a sense of the ethical dimension but also considers other obligations (wife, family etc.) that would preclude his not being obedient. The next is the "Phaedo" archetype who is consciously concerned with the ethical dimensions of things but does not seem to have a knack for ethical thinking or
decisions except when his teacher Socrates is around (which cannot be constantly). There is a tendency of the individual actor actualizing this archetype to allow unethical behavior of usually ethical others go unquestioned. Here, the issue of conflict about actions of an otherwise likable person we e come into play. The “Faust” archetype represents that actor who would make a decision which s/he knew was wrong because the ends would be far better than the immediate harm that the decision would cause. Another form of this is making policy decisions that are the “lesser of two evils”. The big picture or goal obscures the reality of the immediate negative affects of the decision made. The “Dr. Saguro” represents the next archetype. The actor here knows and understands the ethical ramifications of the proposed actions, is not under any coercive pressure to act but decides that not to cooperate would be “impractical” given the “corrupt” nature of his environment and the need to please the government to whom his decisions are subordinate (Nielson, 1996, p.11-23). Each of these archetypes parallels in some ways qualities described by Kegan (1982) as representative of specific stages of moral meaning making evolution. Each also represents specific organizational decision making strategies as well as a specific “masks” the actor has donned in dealing with his/her ethical reality (Bauman, 1993: P.115).

How do social workers go about deciding in the moment which is the best course of action to adopt in dealing with situations involving variations on the above described actors? Could we describe our own process to another (Schon, 1983; p.49)? Neilson (1996) delineates the types of decision-making techniques by which each of these archetypal actors may be potentially addressed. He describes six types of
discourse or dialog methods which are used by actors in decision making: (1) "single-loop, win-lose forcing methods," which entail an actor forcing accommodation to some "ethical" program by threat of punishment of the individual not concurring; (2) "single-loop, win-win" strategies, in which both parties to a negotiation come away with something they see as desirable for themselves without conceding much ethically; (3) "double-loop dialog methods," which "retain much of the win-win method while encouraging mutual ethical learning, mutual ethical belief conversion and mutual ethical development" (Nielsen, 1996; p.73); (4) "triple-loop dialog I," otherwise known as "friendly disentangling," seeks, through one actor, to connect that actor with another actor or group of actors by identifying a common belief system or structure and help in addressing a specific aspect of that belief structure thought to be unethical; (5) "triple-loop dialog II," a mode of "upbuilding" process that seeks to adapt an extant "ethical internal tradition in the context of a problematical environment" (Nielsen, 1996; p.123); and (6) "triple-loop dialog III" which integrates postmodern thinking, such as deconstruction, into a situation where participants are seen to be from very different or even antithetical positions regarding ethics (Nielsen, 1996; p.8). Each of these methods can reflect ways by which to understand a new "repertoire of expectations [or] images" (Schon, 1983; p.60) of these dynamics, adoptable by social workers. The result can be widened practice wisdom with regard to how both clients and auspices orient themselves to individual social workers and how we as social workers orient ourselves to them.
Whose Benefit? Evolving Moral Development

So what does a decision-making strategy which includes an awareness of an evolving moral development look like? Here an outline of one decisional process that could associate a moral/ethical framework with the decision making structure outlined above is described and discussed. It can provide for social workers a method of “integrating or choosing among the values at stake in the situation” (Schon, 1983; p.63). How these matrices are exercised (relative to some of the major life contexts these decisions will have to be made within) by social workers and their clients is then explored.

Kegan’s (1982) structure consists of six stages of consistently expanding frames of reference relative to what constitutes the field of ethical choice making of a given individual. Beginning with the “incorporative self,” the self goes through a process of “growth and loss” of, successively, the “impulsive,” the “imperial,” the “interpersonal,” the “institutional,” and finally the “interindividual” selves. Each of these successively wider “selves” represents a completely new frame of reference, a new order of consciousness which encompasses the previous one, about what constitutes “self” for the given individual and what constitutes the “other” to which this self is associated. Each can represent a new or expanded sense of ethical awareness with the previous frame of ethical awareness as an object of reflection. Each “pulls scattered bits of information together” (Schon, 1983; p.121) to reframe the previous stage of awareness. The “incorporative self” is a “psychologic” based on an individuals sense of need for holding by the environment; a need for the environment to take care of felt
entitlement. This would correspond loosely to the "single-loop, win-lose forcing structure described above in the sense that one individual forcing others to see the issue his/her way and generally regarded as a last ditch effort to force ethical behavior. The "impulsive" self has recognized the "other"-ness of environmental objects, including people and recognizes an other as other and valid in that otherness but still subordinate to my needs. This would correspond roughly to the "single-loop, win-win structure. Ethical decisions are relativized within a structure that still looks to satisfy some unrerelective or often akratic need. The "imperial" self now recognizes the need to deny the validity of only focusing only on one's own needs and demand that others 'treat me as I know I should treat them'. Here, the Other becomes valid in their own right and their perspective becomes commensurate with one's own. This might be adequately represented in the "double-loop" dialog method of ethical choice. The "interpersonal" self will now resist the kind of fusion with others in one's environment in the form of expectations about how these Others should act regarding one's own interests while still remaining in association with those Others. This perspective attempts to find mutual location for consensuality while still arguing from a different perspective. The "triple-loop I" methodology is the closest example of this resolutions strategy. The "institutional" self acknowledges the capacity for self definition with regard to a valid external environment seeking definition through valuing some personal idea of an environmental good. The "triple-loop II" method would incorporate the mutuality considerations of the dialog process. The "interindividual"
self has defined oneself and is engaged on the course of continuous redefinition of the self s/he has evolved in the previous stages (Kegan, 1984). The “triple-loop III” dialog method will be a loose approximation of this category of ethical decision strategy.

Integrated as a strategy, these frameworks of approach to a reflective process of moral meaning making, or social construction, of responses to ethical decisionmaking can aid the social worker who takes it as their task to move in the direction of balancing social power imbalances that come about through discretionary abuses of authority in generating research and practice knowledge. The integration of these three frameworks can provide a possible method for social workers to apply for their own process of practice whether it be in applied or research oriented activity. The provision of more detail for these methods was required for the macro-and micro-level applications to be more readily visible.

Social worker practitioners are involved in work that spans every level of the ecological system in implication if not in applied practice activity. It is necessary to have a sense of the elements of the inter- and intrapersonal makeup of this multi-tiered system within which this practice activity takes place in order to make the very best possible decisions. A knowledge of the public sphere and of the members of this public sphere can provide for a fuller intrapersonal grasp of the scope within which power balancing in social work practice takes place. Having grasped this lager context, potential ramifications of practice decisions may be more fully appreciated. The necessity to hold oneself accountable, and, as a social worker, to evolve through a reflective, reflexive process, becomes clearer within this recognition of scope.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Social power and knowledge construction are inextricably linked especially in this contemporary historical period where the economic welfare of increasing numbers of individuals is dependent on handling of information in some form or fashion (Nussbaum & Sen. 1993). The ways that knowledge and social power are viewed are in constant change (Walzer. 1993). In the field of social power, the previously overt displays of individual whim manifested in power expression have given way slightly to more covert operations of power abuse: at least to some extent in Western society. This counts as a move in awareness no matter how slight. Traditional sources previously counted as "unquestionable knowledge" are now in question as are the ways that these traditions were perpetuated. The words used, as well as other aspects of the construction of knowledge, are now under scrutiny to better understand how they function within their contexts (Bordieu. 1991).

Social power has been abused since the beginning of recorded history. The very first available social histories are documents detailing wars between disagreeing factions of individuals. History, from some perspectives, is the documentation of humanity's learning and evolving from this learning. And yet the sometimes akratic resistance to this learning is just as strong in some spheres as is the impetus towards it.
The ethical systems of thought, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, (who, it seems, are still the beginning point for most contemporary ethical systems) attempted to answer the justifications for abuses of power with reasoned "discourse" in the communities of public hearing.

This project has endeavored to continue this "answering" process vis-à-vis the abuses of power, however subtle, within the narrower sphere of social work practice. This answering process has taken the form of a critical exploration of a particular social artifact, knowledge, from a number of different areas of academic interest. The primary reasoning behind doing this is that there is, inscribed within the language of these academic social artifacts, insight that would be helpful to the clientele of social work if they had access to it. To go into the reasons for this inaccessibility would require a more complete history of social power abuse in general and would be outside of the scope of this project but has been addressed in previous work (Hamilton & Sharma, 1997). It is hoped that some of these insights have been culled and translated into a form that may be more accessible to use by clientele served by social workers.

Persons using and abusing social power take their precedents for their actions from the information and other social artifacts available in the environment. Their justifying rationale are frequently based on what is seen as "normal" in this environment. Whether this framework is drawn from popular media, such as movies, news, or popular novels, or academic discourse within any field, there are tendencies of thought that are being expressed which have become part of the normative zeitgeist. It
is therefore necessary to look into the aspects of the zeitgeist in order to bring to clarity, or answer, all of the sources of possible justification.

Analyses of the zeitgeist currently take the form of the modernity/postmodernity debate. It has been necessary to survey the themes generated in this debate in order to convey an understanding of how these themes underlie, at the most basic level, themes of interest in the other areas of contemporary thinking. It is not possible to generate a brief summary of the multitudinous variety of themes characterizing this debate within the space of this conclusion that would do the debate justice. Primarily, postmodernity has been concerned with correcting, what are, from it’s perspective, injustices imposed by modernity. Modernity, in it’s own perspective, had the same agenda regarding the period now identified as pre-modernity. Given that the debate is still current, thinkers in other fields of thought, expressed in any of the media outlined above, may be couching their expressions in the language of those themes.

Social workers are affected by this level of the debate sometimes directly, when the professedly modern or postmodern view is brought to bear on a given social issue, but social workers are also affected when research or practice requires utilization of information to be drawn from other academic fields. These fields have knowledge bases generated by individuals who may be adherents of either (or both, or neither) side of this modernity/postmodernity debate. When the social worker can become familiar with the currents of this debate as it expresses the zeitgeist, more informed choices can be made with regard to issues of power abuse as they may surface in practice decisions.
While the modernity/postmodernity debate and the effects it has on other academic disciplines have expressed the macroeconomic level of concern to social workers, the meso- and microeconomic levels are more in focus when attention shifts to social power and the workings of social power. Since social power functions through frequently invisible forms and media, it has been necessary to make these forms and media more visible. This has entailed going into an extended discussion about forms that the abuse of power operate through, the authority and discretion, and about the media abuses of power operate through, the margin and marginality. A number of ways that social workers come to be faced with power abuses are delineated with the intent of providing individual social workers with the knowledge to answer these abuses when encountered.

Social construction is discussed as one of those modes through which power abuses become manifest in sources of information used by social workers in practice. Social construction, first described in the early 60’s, is now recognized as a more accurate perspective on knowledge construction than the paradigm of the “objective” scientific observer. From this perspective it becomes clear that the previously idealized objectivity of the positivist research paradigm has been partially a self-deception and when carried to the extreme of dogmatic ideological positioning, an abuse of power in and of itself. Social constructions of a narrow range of themes are traced through the specific disciplines chosen to represent social works communication community to underline how these constructions might affect social workers utilizing materials from these disciplines to generate social work practice knowledge.
The activity of taking a critical step back from the subject of interest enables postmodernity now (and modernity previously) to see and analyze the workings of thought as it is expressed in the media society uses to represent the zeitgeist. In seeking to provide an answer to the activity of power abuse a similar stepping back can be productive for social workers. This process is identified in this project as the reflexive practitioner perspective and combines the methodology of reflective action from a small group of theorists to propose an integrated framework of reflexive practice for use by the social worker in everyday practice situations. Drawn from organizational, developmental and ethical frameworks, this model can be utilized to assist the individual social worker in making decisions that answer power abuses in the immediate practice situation.
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