The Artistry of Social Work Understanding and Practice

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Statement of Candidate Contribution

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the artistry of professional social work and its meaning for practice and knowledge. The art of social work practice and understanding currently holds a certain mystery. The purpose of the research was to contribute to the development of a ‘social work as art’ approach as a theory for practice.

As traditionally understood, art is the binary opposite of science. A critical postmodern reading of social work provides a framework for the interpretation of the place of art in social work, and its relationship to rational science. I consider strategies for a reconceptualisation of this relationship.

I used a multi-method research design, within a qualitative methodological framework. I interviewed twelve practitioners about the role of science and art in their social work practice. I conducted a content analysis of fourteen first-year textbooks from Australian social work courses as one public reading of the representation of science and art in social work. The international and Australian social work literature around the primary research concepts was critically analysed.

Parallels between social work and art, including humanism, social roles, use of knowledge, relationship, and form are developed. Artistic qualities such as intuition, use of self, imagination, and creativity and their role in practice and links to knowledge are outlined.

The meaning of a social work as art approach for practice, knowledge, ethics and relationship is discussed. Art was found to have a role in problem-solving, relationship building and the application of knowledge. The analysis proposes a path for social work as an art into the public sphere of practice where it may be available for scrutiny and development. Identified also are the barriers and opportunities along this path.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the past every step of human progress has been directed by art and science. These two are inseparable, and cannot exist in their pure sense, the one without the other.

Henri 1930, p.158

1.1. INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH(ER)
In the final year of my undergraduate social work studies I was routinely assigned a presentation topic for a unit I was doing on alternative conceptualisations of social work. The topic: ‘Is social work an intuitive art or a rational science?’ In preparing for this assignment I became increasingly intrigued. Here was an understanding of social work that spoke to me (intuitively?) about how I had imagined social work to be. The art of social work seemed to me to be about the humanism and creativity that had attracted me to the profession in the beginning. The very form of the question also introduced me to how art has traditionally been understood as one half of the most ‘elemental of conceptual dichotomies’ (McNiff 1998, p.49).

Long after the presentation, as a beginning practitioner, I attempted to further explore this area. I found little in the contemporary literature of the time to guide me as to how it could inform my practice in valid and knowledgeable ways. It therefore did not provide me with a language with which to discuss it with my peers and supervisors either. Yet, what did appear in the literature seemed to say that this was how practitioners understood their practice. If this was so, then why was it not able to provide practice principles and models of analysis? And if the art was so central, then why was it not more a part of these public accounts of social work? Further, the literature also continued to juxtapose the art and the science. Did this mean I had to choose between them?

1.2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM
The art/science duality has a long history in social work. The relative place and status of both conceptualisations have been debated and reframed throughout the decades. Consistently however, art has been associated with the private realm of practice as
belonging to the individual practitioner. Science on the other hand has been aligned with theory and the public generalisations available from research (Powell 2003a; Kirk & Reid 2002; Nystul 1993; Imre 1982; Hudson 1997; Schon 1983; Siegel 1984; Siporin 1988; Chalmers 1982; Eaton 1958; Palmer 2002).

The debate raises fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of social work as a profession (Reamer 1992; Witkin 1991b; Payne 1991; Camilleri 1996; Hartman 1994). The passion that has characterised this debate suggests that high stakes may be involved in defining the profession’s philosophical bases (Fraser et al 1991; Vass 1996; Dybicz 2004; Azzarto 2001). What I will argue here is that the science of social work has already been well developed and presented within the professional literature and practice and it is now a balancing concept of social work as an art that must be acknowledged, developed and appraised.

The private nature of the art of social work can be evidenced in several areas. It has been neglected in the literature, while in the clinical arena practitioners understand and make continuing progress in developing the creative art of social work (England 1986a; Siporin 1988; Peile 1993). Such understandings are often excluded from the public realm, as they are considered non-scientific and lacking objectivity (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001; Palmer 2002). One view is that the artistry of practice cannot be written out as formal theories as many social workers find it hard to describe their style of work or give reasons for their choices, bounding art to the realm of the personal and private (Munro 1998). Historically there was seen to be a lack of adequate terms and concepts to represent the important facets and components of the profession’s artistic practice (England 1986a; Bartlett 1970; Schon 1983). While postmodern and critical theories might provide some guidance as to developing the language required, such an analysis is yet to occur.

The art of social work therefore is often seen as wrapped in an air of mysticism, drawing on intuition and personal discoveries and ideas by practitioners who possess ‘special’ or ‘unique’ attributes. It is therefore unavailable and essentially useless to other practitioners, disciplines and clients (Eaton 1958; Siegel 1984). Currently, social workers operating from a social work as art approach struggle to relate their developing theory to practice (Ife 1997).
The argument for an artistic theory of social work has been critiqued as inadequate, with few developmental themes, unfocused, not translated into practice principles, and lacking an alternative methodology. In this way the primacy and tenacity of empiricism itself is emphasised and reinforced (Karger 1983; Chalmers 1982; Gammack 1982; Rapoport 1968). The contemporary social work literature from an initial survey does not appear to address these issues. The literature on social work as an art appears to have two further deficits; it is partial in that it examines particular aspects or issues rather than developing the art as a comprehensive theory for practice. Secondly, a recurring theme in the literature is that the art of practice should be developed, enhanced and scrutinised, however very few go further to say how. Addressing this will require an examination of the internal and external barriers to change for social work including sanctions, organisational pressures, internal states as well as the impact of the modernist scientific paradigm and its dualistic representations (Barber 1991; Hawkins 1996).

1.3. RESEARCH AIMS

The primary research question is:

Is it possible to locate the art of social work within the public sphere of practice?

This primary question encompasses related questions:

(i) Can the art of social work be developed as a model of practice and analysis?
(ii) What is the place of art and science in social work?
(iii) What are the conceptualisations of the art/science relationship in social work?

As reflected in the research question, the central aim of the research is essentially a theoretical one: to explore the feasibility and development of the social work as an art approach as a theory for practice. I conceptualise this as examining any place for this perspective within the private and public realms of social work theory, practice and identity.
The secondary aims are to:

(i) explore the place of an art approach in social work, including any parallels between social work and art;
(ii) explore the place of the rational, scientific perspective within social work;
(iii) explore and develop the social work as an art approach as a theory, philosophy and model of practice, including its relationship with science;
(iv) identify barriers and needs internal and external to the profession that contribute to the current status of the social work as an art approach, including dominant concepts and beliefs underlying social work.

1.4. THE RESEARCH PLAN

The concepts of art and science and their relationship will be explored through a qualitative research framework. Three primary methods of literature critique, content analysis of social work texts, and interviews with practitioners will be utilised.

As noted above, the art and science of social work appear to have been persistent themes throughout social work’s formation and development. Therefore, an extensive review of the literature provides form to the possible conceptualisations of their relationship, as well as their meaning for practice and analysis across a variety of contexts. Important to this will be an understanding of how contemporary social science theories inform and alter the analysis of dualisms, as well as art and science in themselves.

Interviews will be conducted with practitioners to explore any meaning of art and science for their social work practice and understandings. These may provide some insight into how practitioners manage the duality in their daily work as well as the place and practice meaning of both conceptualisations of social work.

A content analysis of texts used by Australian Schools of Social Work will examine the (re)presentation of concepts of art and science. In this way a picture of where, how and indeed if they are placed in one public reading of social work may be developed.
1.5. THEMES INFORMING THE RESEARCH

This topic was initially presented to me in the form a dualism. Viewing them as a dichotomy, each ‘side’ has different characteristics ascribed to it: science objective and based on sound empirical work, art by definition the negative of those – subjective and based on personal intuitions and hunches. Art is spoken of as quite distinct from the discipline, rigour, and accessibility of science. Applying the dichotomisation to social work, a social work as art approach emphasises the use of qualities such as insight, imagination, creativity and use of self. This is juxtaposed with the concept of social work as a rational science of objective knowledge, scientific formulae and skills.

Klein and Bloom (1994) see that part of the reason the ‘debate’ about whether social work is a science or an art is no closer to resolution is because it has been supported by strategies that seem to maintain extreme positions. Such polarisation I suggest tends to obscure the issues rather than engage them. What needs exploring in terms of this debate is the nature of their place and relationship, rather than excluding or reducing one or the other (Klein & Bloom 1995; McNiff 1998). One theme, and aim, therefore is exploring the place of science and art in social work, and it would appear that this necessarily means exploring the nature and construction of dualisms.

The following diagram represents the organising principles for this research. It represents one way of conceptualising the place of science and art in social work – across the private and/or public spheres of practice. This conceptualisation informed the research aims and questions as well as the methodology, as data collection methods became a way of exploring these relationships and data was analysed in terms of where it ‘sat’ within the conceptualisation represented. The diagram is a simple representation of the major concepts and its essential function is to provide a tool with which to examine and analyse the place of the art and science in social work across the private-public link. This framework provides an opportunity to explore the relationships between these two dimensions of social work.
Diagram 1.1. The Conceptual Tool

Separating out the two relationships presented above, the horizontal one of art-science reflects a process, relationship or balance that in social work has formed a significant part of its identity. This debate is not exclusive to social work; Collingwood (1977, p.157) for example states that

…of all the features which our experience presents….none is more familiar than the contrast between thinking [science] and feeling [art]…

Social work, it will be argued, does however have a particular relationship with these conceptualisations of professional practice and theory.

The vertical relationship represents a fundamental association in social work, and how it is conceptualised plays a part in informing the functions and nature of social work theory, practice and ethics. It has long been argued that social work is distinct in that it spans the private-public divide and seeks to bring them together in theory and practice (Smith 1986; Younghusband 1964; Bartlett 1970; Brandon 1976; Clark & Asquith 1985; Barber 1991; Fook 1996; Ife 1997).

According to some analysts, social work has not made this link in looking at its own identity; it has rather considered its own practice in the private arena, giving it a ‘hidden’ or ‘invisible’ nature, providing for a mystique of social work practice (Camilleri 1996, p.146). Others see that an important shift has occurred from these internal, professional considerations to the political and structural determinations of social work practice with the consequence that the private nature of social work practice has been increasingly challenged (Munro 1998; Clarke 1979).
As part of a ‘conceptual tool’ the private and public link informs this study by highlighting the political aspects of the debate around science and art in social work as well as providing a conceptualisation of their place in the profession. From my initial reading, it is evident that the intersection of these two continuums has been largely ignored in the social work literature and research. However their junction provides a useful tool of analysis for exploring in what sphere social work as a science and as an art are practiced and conceptualised and any meaning of that for their development and use in social work theory and practice.

1.6. SUMMARY
Art and science are fundamental aspects of professional social work practice, knowledge and identity. Yet, their integration, and how the amalgamation of thinking, feeling and imagining makes possible a disciplined practice, has eluded social work. In part it has been hampered by debates that maintain them as separate (Imre 1990b). The effect of this is to limit and undermine attempts to explore the nature of social work, which further limits the scope to promote good practice and to challenge the constraints upon it (England 1986a).

Debates about the appropriate direction and emphasis for the profession will continue; such dialogue though helps to foster knowledge, and critical, reflective practice among social workers (Gibelman 1999). Therefore, rather than offering conclusive formulations it is hoped that this study will contribute to an understanding of this highly complex endeavour and become an impetus to discussion and reflection. It does not attempt to resolve the debate, but rather aims to air it within the context of contemporary social science theories, and to provide examples of thinking and practice which stimulate a recognition and incorporation of an informed, creative and critical approach to social work as an art.

1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS
The following three chapters provide a framework for the research; Chapter Two outlines the methods utilised in completing the research and identifies its strengths and limitations while Chapter Three outlines three bodies of theory – postmodernism, critical theory, and feminism – and their construction and interpretation of major concepts related to the
research. Given that art and science have traditionally been understood as binary opposites it particularly explores the nature of dualisms and constructions of knowledge. Chapter Four “Issues of Identity” outlines significant debates and dimensions related to social work identity and how these inform the place of art and science in social work as well as the opportunities and barriers for developing a model based in art. In charting the history of social work, it explores the art and science of the profession and essentially provides there a map of the research problem. The status of art is explored in depth however in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Chapters Five and Six present the data and data analysis from the content analysis of first year textbooks, providing for a public reading of the art and science of social work and then the interviews with practitioners, giving space to their stories of the art and science of their social work. In the remaining chapters, this data is linked to themes and concepts from the literature. Chapter Seven is a chapter drawn primarily from the social work literature, and explores the parallels between art and social work, including qualities of the artist practitioner.

Chapters Eight and Nine present the integration of data from the content analysis, interviews and the social work literature. Chapter Eight is a discussion of the relationship between science and art in social work practice. Chapter Nine addresses some of the research aims related to a public place for art. The meaning of art for social work knowledge, practice, education and ethics are discussed also. Chapter Ten, the final chapter, outlines a summary of the research, conclusions drawn and implications for further social work research and theorising.
CHAPTER TWO
METHODOLOGY

If I didn’t think that what I was doing had something to do with enlarging the boundaries of art I wouldn’t go on doing it.
Chipp 1968, p.586

2.1. INTRODUCTION
This research takes the form of an exploratory study using qualitative research principles to explore and analyse the concept of social work as an art. The purpose of the research is to contribute to the development of a theory for practice of social work as an art, by exploring the place of science and art and parallels between social work and art, and analysing these within the context of contemporary social science theories. Presented here is an overview of the methods used and their context of qualitative, artistic inquiry. Three primary methods are outlined – (i) a literature review including a utilisation of the art literature demonstrating its parallels with social work; (ii) interviews with social workers about the art and science of their practice; and (iii) a content analysis of commonly used introductory social work texts.

2.2. METHODOLOGY
The social sciences have moved beyond seeing qualitative and quantitative research as mutually exclusive, and the merits, continuities and utility of both approaches have been acknowledged. These methods are now viewed as complementary rather than contradictory modalities from which researchers must passively choose (Brewer & Hunter 1989; Alston & Bowles 1998; Healy 1996). A multi-method approach within a qualitative framework was taken, as it was compatible with the aims of the research. The research process involved exploration, interpretation and analysis of concepts and themes rather than a measured, experimental methodology of quantitative design.

2.2.1. Qualitative Frameworks
Qualitative research, which draws on a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological techniques, has a number of core attributes. It is primarily concerned with exploration, discovering relationships, establishing integrated constructions, classifications
and typologies, and the development of understanding through grounded concepts (Minichello et al 1990; Sherman & Reid 1994; Lamnek 1988; Strauss 1987; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Camilleri 1996). Qualitative research is based on principles of openness, flexibility, transferability, confirmability and to undertake it one requires creativity, rigour, consistency and integrity (Sarantakos 1993; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Robson & Foster 1989). Scholars of qualitative methodology argue that reality is socially constructed, dynamic and negotiated. Rowles and Reinharz (1988) for example argue that unit of study is experienced reality and how people attach and construct meaning. It is concerned also to contextualise the nature of experience and action so to capture experience in its ‘lived’ form (Torbet 1981a; Rowles & Reinharz 1988; Rice & Ezzy 1999). Theory is always plural and multi-centred, directing attention to different aspects of a phenomenon (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Rowles & Reinharz 1988).

Concepts of qualitative methodology that are particularly relevant to this research include

- **Centrality of the researcher in the research process**, rejecting notions of objectivity and being value free and exploring instead the reflexive nature of the research process (Krueger 1994; Rowles & Reinharz 1988). Qualitative research recognises that both researcher and participant are actively involved in and change the research process, learning from one another and the very situation of which they are a part (Heron 1981a; Torbet 1981b; Jones 1985). This is a shift from more traditional notions of the researcher and researched as two different parties, the researcher an objective outsider who at the same time has unilateral control of the process (Camilleri 1996; Heron 1981b). The researcher is not provided a privileged place in the research and the knowledge it produces however as the process is at once personal and collaborative (Tagg 1985). Collaboration is seen as occurring here with the social workers who provided their thoughtful insights on social work as an art as well as authors who not only provided background but also stimulated and provoked my own critical thinking.

- **Emergent nature**: design is a reflexive process, interactive and interconnected (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Rowles & Reinharz 1988). Morgan and Ramirez (1983) outline the principle of minimum critical specification in which they argue it is important there be no more predesign than necessary in order to allow learning to occur, ensure competing frames of reference are brought into the open and to allow
for self-organisation according to the insights which emerge through the research process. In line with this, the inquiry process for this research developed as the research progressed and enabled me to obtain a better understanding and increased insight into the concepts underlying the research topic. This meant I could redirect and focus the research effort at a number of stages in the data gathering process.

- **Rigour**: there are two primary concerns; one for theoretical rigour in that the research is the product of soundly constructed arguments and analysis, and secondly methodological or procedural rigour demonstrated through an audit trail of methodological decision-making (Rice & Ezzy 1999). These are discussed below in ‘Strengths and Limitations’.

### 2.3. LOCATING MYSELF AS RESEARCHER

Important has been placing myself as the researcher in ensuring valid interpretation, ensuring I was aware and critical of my own frameworks and meaning, and understanding the perspective of those being studied and the meanings they create and attach. In recognising this, and that research and practice are inseparable (Peile 1988) I utilised my own reflections on my experience and learning in social work. This reflection and knowing is informed by my personal and practice experience to date, the clients I have worked with and learnt from, colleagues’ shared experience and learning as well as this research process. In that way, it is the basis for the story that I am able to tell (Maxwell 1996, p.28). This is reclamation of critical and reflective self-awareness as a source of insight and further, that the research process itself is a way of enhancing the capacities it is seeking to explore (Pease 1990; Wolff 1981; Jick 1979; Brewer & Hunter 1989; Heron 1981b).

This subjectivity needs however to be a critical subjectivity, raised to consciousness, analysed and used as part of the inquiry process continuously and creatively (Maxwell 1996). I used the specific strategies of memoing and concept mapping to reflect on my own position and to make the process more transparent and public. It also allows the reader to judge my argument and narratives in the light of this knowledge. I have focused on any possible sources of bias also, explaining and exploring its possible sources and how I dealt with them, and in doing so demonstrating integrity and a measure of impartiality in the research process (Maxwell 1996; Kirk & Miller 1986). Examples of a concept map and a
memo structure completed at two different stages of the research are located in Appendices F, G and H.

I have worked in three tertiary hospitals in Western Australia – a general medical, an obstetric and a paediatric hospital – as well as in child protection, counselling with women experiencing domestic violence, and education of social work students. I have worked with what is traditionally one of the most scientific of all professions, medicine, and our work is designed very much around and located within that in those settings. This has highlighted for me some of the issues, tensions and challenges around the place of science and art in social work. It has been my experience that other professions, including medicine, value us for our artistic qualities – our caring, our compassion, our ability to work with the grey, to confront and be immersed in situations which they would not wish to enter, our imagination and our creativity in finding solutions in complex and entrenched situations. Theory and intervention is mediated through the qualities of creativity and imagination – what we do with our knowledge is meaningful.

My initial and ongoing premise is that both art and science have a crucial part to play in good social work and that either on its own is inadequate. However I see and experience that the science has been given more credibility and legitimacy as the ‘public face’ of social work. When I inform other social workers of my research topic, I am met with the response that art is not as sophisticated, generalisable nor makes the same use of knowledge or intelligence or rigour that science does – or with empathic agreement that indeed it is! The concerns I have about art being a private practice is that it is allowed to operate uncritically and is unavailable and inaccessible to transfer, learning and development; this needs to happen so that clarity and confidence can come in using it. I also wish to respond to critiques of the art of social work being atheoretical, as the latter is clearly an unethical practice and I have frustrations with social workers who cannot or will not articulate the theoretical understandings which surely inform their practice.

The place of science and art in social work needs to be evaluated in terms of a philosophical framework appropriate to what is essentially a human-to-human activity (Imre 1982), hence the exploration of social work identity undertaken in Chapter Four.
2.3.1. Insider research

Most academic discussion of research interviewing implicitly assumes that the researcher and participant are unknown to one another, engaged in a relationship with no past and no future, their research roles segregated from all others. However, there are particular and different issues for the interview relationship and process when interviewing populations of which one is also a member. This has variously been called ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ or ‘insider’ research (Kanuha 2000, p.439). The researcher, while having an insider role with specialised knowledge, shared norms of interaction, language, subcultural meanings, membership of groups, also has an outsider role as researcher. One is ‘no longer just another native when endowed with the credentials to study natives’ (Kanuha 2000, p.444). The parties may not necessarily be unknown to one another including assumptions and perceptions that go with that, potential role-relationships may already be established, while the roles of researcher and participant may not be the only ones present (Platt 1981).

The benefits of insider research then are in relation to insight and acquaintance however the limitations are the other side of that namely around bias, familiarity and assumptions. It requires being wary and critical of assumptions that being an insider necessarily means knowledge of the experiences and knowledge of all members of the group and a critical awareness of the researcher’s place in the research; meaning for the participants is what needs to be explored and established.

2.4. METHODS

The three primary methods utilised – an analytic synthesis of the literature, interviews with social workers, and a content analysis of first year social work text books – are outlined here, including a theoretical and methodological justification for each, strengths and weaknesses of each approach and the role of the researcher as relevant.

2.4.1. Triangulation

Utilising a combination or multiplicity of methods, researchers, data sources and/or theories in the study of the same phenomenon allows for triangulation (Denzin 1978; Sarantakos 1993; Jick 1979; Rice & Ezzy 1999). Triangulation contributes to a higher degree of reliability and validity by not relying on one method only, allowing the strengths of each
method to counter deficiencies of the other, allowing for greater accuracy, thoroughness and for contrast, conflict and alternative explanations. In this way, it assists to enrich the research through obtaining different dimensions on the same issues, developing a more complex and complete picture and enrichment of explanations. It also serves as a critical test for competing theories, allowing for double-checking of findings by examining them from a variety of standpoints. Triangulation can contribute much then to the quality of the theory produced (Rowles & Reinhartz 1988; Reinhartz 1992; Shipman 1988; Brewer & Hunter 1989; Burgess 1984).

In this research, the analytical comparison of the art and social work literature and the parallels of social work and art have emerged from the analytical synthesis of the literature as a separate part of the methodology. This exploration and comparison of the written, academic and researched theory of art and social work therefore provides one method; the interviews by comparison provide insight into social workers practice and conceptualising of science and art in their social work and is highly contextualised and ‘lived’. The content analysis provides an example of the place of science and art in public definitions of social work, as presented to beginning social workers in their initial education.

2.4.2. Analytical Synthesis of the Literature

A literature review provides stimulus for thinking, justification, context and background to the study including an understanding of the history, origins, gaps and scope of the problem (Minichello et al 1990; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991). As an analytical synthesis it requires a high level of conceptual linking within and across theories (Hart 1998, p.15). In this way it is also a source of data around the subject’s process, structure and relationships and can contribute to the aims of the study in this way by assessing emerging theories to see if they are supported or challenged by previous studies (Maxwell 1996; Sarantakos 1993; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991). Most importantly, it provides a conceptual context – the system of theories, findings, assumptions, beliefs, information and conceptual frameworks that will inform or guide the study (Maxwell 1996). The purpose then is not only descriptive but also critical and is constructed not found; it is both a review and a deconstruction (Maxwell 1996; McCracken 1988). The literature review can also inform the methodology and in
particular provides an inventory for questionnaire/interview schedule construction and development (Maxwell 1996).

As Camilleri (1996, p.6) points out, the literature in which social work can be found is not just an aspect of the research but is an essential part of the construction of social work. The literature analysis therefore was a central, pivotal and influential method in continuously informing and enhancing the development of the conceptual framework. Given that one of the criticisms of the social work as art approach has been that it lacks a coherent, comprehensive argument, the literature review was an essential part of the process in drawing together and analysing existing theory and practice in this perspective. Crucial to this therefore has been tracking the history of the science and art of social work as well as its representation in the contemporary literature. It was not only what was presented and analysed in the literature that was important but also what was ignored or unformulated that provided a key part of the analysis.

Social work literature, as well as that of art theory was explored, looking at the primary concepts of science, art, the private and political and their inter-relationships. References were located by a method of ‘snowballing’, taking references from texts already used, and through social science data base searches. The latter included PCI full text, ProQuest, Social Services Abstracts and Ovid. Keyword searches were used, including terms such as art, artist, science, scientific, creativity, intuition and so forth, and matching them with social work. No date limits were set. I also regularly reviewed current editions of primary social work journals, notably *Australian Social Work*, *British Journal of Social Work*, and *Social Work* (NASW, United States). Similarly, as with other processes of data collection, reading and literature searches were conducted and pursued to a point of ‘saturation’ (Sarantakos 1993). At various stages of the research, the conceptual framework would be written up as ‘preliminary chapters’, so as to check for saturation, ensuring all arguments, challenges and different theoretical points of view were being reported and accessed.

2.4.3. Interviews
Theories and insights are not simply handed down to practitioners, but are rather developed and legitimised by them through a critical reflection on their own experience and practice
The most effective way to gain insight into how practitioners conceive the art and science of their practice, and for practitioners to have a direct input into a developing theory for practice of social work as an art, was if they reflected on and researched their own practice. While the research is grounded in the everydayness and experience of social workers’ practice and understanding it is not necessarily a survey of practice. Rather, it is an analysis of their thinking about their practice for the content of accounts about the nature of practice experience (Bartlett 1970). In qualitative research generalisability is concerned with extension to other cases within the particular context, rather than on a sample of some defined population to which the results can be broadly extended (Maxwell 1996).

Interviews can serve both descriptive and analytic purposes, providing access to private perceptions and insights, to generate interpretative work on the part of participants, to map out organising ideas, to gather data on areas where little is known or understood, to probe and clarify and ask complex and sensitive questions (Potter & Mulkay 1985; McCracken 1988; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991; Royse 1991; Williams, Tutty & Grinnell 1995). Features of interviews in qualitative research include semi-standardised and open structures, primacy of the respondent, reflexivity and an acknowledgement of the active involvement of the researcher and researched, based on a system of discussion, investigation and analysis (Elden 1981; Heron 1981b; Fook 1990; Fisher & Karger 1997). As the aims of the research were theoretical in nature, in-depth interviews were utilised as they allow exploration, new understandings and theories to be developed during the process and work well therefore with an inductive theoretical approach (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Minichello et al 1990; Massarik 1981; Jones 1985).

Interviews enable participants to reflect on their situation and become then a record of their views and perspectives; these are made public through the research process, symbolically recognising the legitimacy and validity of participants’ point of view (Stringer 1996; Minichello et al 1990). Participants are seen as experts who define, explain, interpret and construct reality (Sarantakos 1993; Elden 1981) while the researcher utilises their experience and personal qualities, capitalising on the subjective and social nature of and qualities of the interview situation (Dijkstra, Van der Veen & Van der Souwen 1985; Robson & Foster 1989; Rowles & Reinharz 1988). The interviewer must balance this with
the need to allow participants the freedom to express their own views and not be biased by the interviewer’s perceptions (Brenner 1985; Tagg 1985).

As one of the primary aims of the research is to bring social work as an art into the ‘public’ or ‘political’ arena, I considered it essential that participants be able to develop their own concepts and ideas and confidence in expressing those, therefore facilitating the articulation, expression and language of that perspective. It is important to point out however that there remains a missing voice here, that of the client: this remains beyond the scope of this study.

2.4.3.1. Interview Processes

The interview schedule (Appendix C) was designed as a frame of reference for the process, a focus to guide, co-ordinate and structure the material produced without unduly constraining the interview. Extensive use was made of open-ended or what Stringer (1996) calls ‘grand-tour’ questions; at this exploratory level they provide beginning data and ideas (Royse 1991). Further, they provide focus without giving direction or anticipating results, providing the opportunity to clarify, probe and prompt, and allowing for surprise, creativity, self-expression and initiative and thereby increasing the scope of the questions (Alston & Bowles 1998; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991; Heron 1981a; Williams, Tutty & Grinnell 1995; Canter, Brown & Groat 1985).

The schedule was developed according to the aims of the research and the concepts that emerged from the literature. It was then subject to multiple reviews, including expert review by my supervisor and pilot-testing with a social worker who would not be part of the final sample. This allowed an insight into the interpretation of questions, clarity, redundancy, relevance and structure. The language of the schedule was altered somewhat after this, as it sounded ‘academic’ or was not in a language I would use; issues of flow, relevance and order also became evident and alterations were made accordingly. It was assumed that the interview guide could not anticipate all the questions areas or precise questions in advance (Robson & Foster 1989; Torbet 1981a) and as such the structure altered through dialogue, although key questions were always presented (see Appendix C). Data analysis and collection occur simultaneously in qualitative research: while listening, the interviewer is also processing the data given, and checking and clarifying with the
participant emergent ideas and concepts (Robson & Foster 1989). The primary themes were explored according to the way it became structured so that participants had a genuine involvement in the issues being explored and the design was revised therefore as participants provided further information.

Sampling is a function of the research process itself and is dependent on the analysis of incoming data (Sarantakos 1993; Minichello et al 1990). Congruent with qualitative research’s emergent nature, the course of seeking participants is guided by the search for contrasts that are needed both to clarify the analysis and achieve saturation (Rowles & Reinharz 1988; Sarantakos 1993). Sampling in qualitative research is purposive; rather than being concerned with generalising to the whole population the aim is to describe, explore and interpret processes in a phenomenon, rather than its distribution (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Maxwell 1996). A method of purposive snowball sampling was used, beginning the process with respondents I had access to, and asking them to recommend other persons who met the criteria of the research and might be willing to participate (Royse 1991; Sarantakos 1993; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991; Alston & Bowles 1998; see below).

On making initial phone contact with a potential participant, I explained that I was a Ph.D. student at the University of Western Australia, how I had obtained their name and contact details, and that I was doing research on the science and art of social work. This conversation was then followed up by a letter (Appendix A) outlining the research topic and broad objectives, institution, confidentiality and permission to withdraw as well as confirming any interview arrangements (Sarantakos 1993; Alston & Bowles 1998). Participants were also provided with a summary paper to give a background to the study, and introducing for many the ‘formal’ aspects of the art/science debate of social work. The paper was meant as a background discussion to serve purposes similar to that of a literature review; provide and stimulate critical analysis and thinking, a trigger for reflection and research on their own practice, a review and deconstruction, and to place the study in context (McCracken 1988; Grinnell 1993; Heron 1981a; see Pease (1990) as an example of where a background discussion paper was also utilised). The summary paper was drawn from the research proposal, and was seen in this way as opening the process to participants, by providing a background to the development and purposes of the study. It was made explicit that the purpose was for background and questions arising from the summary paper.
Interviews were conducted with twelve social workers from Western Australia. The criteria for eligibility was that each interviewee was a qualified social worker (eligible for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers) with at least two years postgraduate experience. This is the minimum experience specified by the Australian Association of Social Workers for practitioners to be student supervisors, and so was also chosen here to allow for there to be some practice experience for participants to reflect on. Given that participants were asked to confirm with potential candidates their willingness to participate, actual response rates (or more particularly refusals) are difficult to quantify; I was made aware of three people who were not interested in participating. Twenty-five interviews had initially been planned, however it took twelve interviews before saturation of the emergent categories began; data was rich enough and covered the relevant dimensions of the project. Saturation occurs when no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, while category development itself is dense accounting for all elements of the phenomena and their relationship (Krueger 1994). This occurred in relation to the emerging theory, in that data was concurrently collected, coded and analysed, thus allowing decisions about further data on an ongoing basis (Minichello et al 1990).

According to Grinnell (1993, p.272), somewhat smaller sample sizes may be accepted in intensive interviewing on the premise that the quality of data gathered will balance the increased likelihood of incorrectly inferring population characteristics due to smaller sample size. Similarly, Tagg (1985) argues that concepts of saturation should be considered as more relevant than sample size per se. He also argues that diversity and contrast of respondents are more important than achieving a particular sample number.

Interviews were conducted as a dialogue and what I asked of participants was to share with me a reflective account of their own practice, theorising and experience. It was important also to reassure participants that there were no correct answers, but rather different viewpoints and experiences (Krueger 1994; Pease 1990; Canter, Brown & Groat 1985; see
Appendix C for the introduction to the interview). Interviews were taped, with explicit consent from participants, to ensure I could participate more easily in the dialogue and to provide a full and comprehensive record (McCracken 1988, Minichello et al 1990, Sadique 1996). No one declined to be taped. Tape recording can inhibit participants; however the experience was that the presence of the tape recorder was soon forgotten. After completion of the interview, a third party transcribed the tapes after which I listened to and read them in conjunction, allowing me to immerse myself in the data and do first-order analysis, noting significant comments, themes, and concepts. A detailed summary of the main themes and concepts discussed in each interview was then compiled, which were then used to organise data into written text (see Data Analysis below).

2.4.4. Focus Groups

Part of the original proposal was to conduct focus groups the membership of which would be drawn from interview participants. However, the decision was made following the interviews not to conduct these due to potential data overload as the interviews provided the required depth and breadth of information. Triangulation was another initial reason for focus groups; however the analytical comparison of the art and social work literature provided for this as a separate element of the methodology and again provided a rich source of data. These parallels were also discussed in interviews thus allowing for further comparison.

2.4.5. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a documentary method for making inferences about aspects of human communication such as content, sender, audience, style and so forth by identifying specified characteristics within a text (Sarantakos 1993; Hedges 1985; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991; Brewer & Hunter 1989; Krippendorff 1980). The aim of content analysis is to make inferences about individual or group values, attitudes, motives, intentions or ideologies, trace the development of scholarship, detect cultural patterns of groups, institutions or societies, reveal the focus of attention of those bodies, describe trends and make inferences as to the effects of communication (Sarantakos 1993; Hedges 1985; Krippendorff 1980). Manifest content analysis generally assesses the degree of attention or coverage devoted to
particular categories while latent content analysis allows for a deconstructive reading of the texts including what is absent (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001).

Textbooks play a significant role in Western education, being a major conveyor of the curriculum and a dominant mode for student learning. Textbooks may be the student’s initial and only exposure to reading in their profession, teachers may use them to structure subjects and lessons, while the public regards textbooks as authoritative, accurate and necessary (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Mullaly & Wachholz 2001). Introductory textbooks are particularly significant as it may be the first contact the student has with social work and will likely play a role in determining first (and often lasting) impressions of their chosen profession (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001). However, textbooks are not simply a delivery system of facts and knowledge but are a reflection and result of economic, political and cultural activities and discursive dynamics (Klein & Bloom 1994). They embody certain interests and ideologies that in turn mean some knowledge will be given this public space while others will be rendered invisible. Texts participate in creating notions of what is truthful, legitimate, credible and are a major reference point for what counts as knowledge (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001; Apple & Christian-Smith 1991). Texts of social work then provide an insight into how social work has been constructed including its history, theories, models of practice and the nature of the profession itself; as such they are a powerful part of the discourse in which practitioners locate themselves and their practice (Camilleri 1996; Klein & Bloom 1994).

The aim was to explore the presentation of the key concepts from the art-science, private-political intersection, including coverage and positive or negative connotations with those concepts. This is not to assume that students accessed or necessarily read the works nor can any inference be made about their construction and deconstruction of the texts; rather it points to decisions made by mainstream and significant institutions in social work to direct students to particular works.

2.4.5.1. Content Analysis Process

The co-ordinators of the first year of social work courses accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) were written to requesting reading lists from introductory units (Appendix D). Fourteen of twenty-two schools provided reading lists. On reflection it is clear that I should have been more explicit in my letter regarding the
application of the information, as many sought reassurance that I would not use their outlines and reading lists for my own teaching work: such clarification initially may have improved the response rate.

A list of all references used was initially compiled before elimination on the following grounds. Individual articles were noted; however no one article appeared in the list as often as any textbook. Journals or newspapers that students were directed to for their own exploration were not noted, as they could not be located as specific references as such. Books were only listed once for each school, however multiple use across different units was noted. The sampling unit therefore became social work textbooks most commonly used by schools of social work in the first year of their social work program.

Discriminant analysis means focusing on a particular entity or idea and attempting to find out how it is depicted or conceptualised (Krippendorff 1980; Sarantakos 1993): of particular concern here therefore was how the science and art of social work are portrayed, including if they are discussed at all. Categories were selected to make data analysis possible; these were parallel to the coding units developed for interview and theoretical data, which were developed according to the conceptual tool (see Chapter One). Books were critically read, noting if terms in the categories were mentioned and if so whether it was favourably, unfavourably or ‘neutrally’ (see Appendix E).

2.5. DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

2.5.1. Sources of Data
Writing memos is a method of regularly and systematically reviewing and understanding the research – ‘the state of my problems and plans’ (C.Wright-Mills quoted in Maxwell 1996, p.11). In a memo format suggested by Krueger (1994), with the aim of ‘determining your purpose’, I reflected on the following questions (this complete memo is in Appendices G and H).
What types of information are of particular importance?

i) people’s experiences – these make the qualities real and acknowledge their existence and use. This is my ‘proof’ if you like. It is these that may also provide the inspiration, ideas, stimulation and examples to other practitioners. This kind of information also represents a ‘gap’ in current research as it may also demonstrate and provide examples of art in practice.

ii) the theoretical data – will provide a strong foundation for the study and my analysis. Synthesising of the theory and literature is central and crucial to the argument, and also to the position of social work as an art that is credible, legitimate, and grounded in both experience from (i) and theoretical research.

What kinds of information will be produced?

The kind of information that will be produced will be qualitative – the product of reflective and critical conversations and dialogue. It will be rich, based in experience and ‘reality’ and therefore complex and subtle also. The data will be layered – it will represent further multiple layers also.

From this I constructed the following data source map (Diagram 2.1) built on one of my original concept maps. The concept map was drawn as a way of analysing connections between different concepts emerging from the literature review initially. The following concept map shows which data collection methods would be concerned with which categories of knowledge required, and where appropriate, what level of analysis it might provide.
Diagram 2.1. Data Sources Map

Note: numbers are not to denote order of importance, but rather are a presentation strategy

1. Interviews (experience and conceptualisations of)
2. Literature Review – comparisons

1. Interviews (experienced)
2. Literature (absences and critiques)

1. Literature review – art and social work literature
2. Interviews – experience and conceptualisations of
3. Content Analysis – conceptualised?

1. Content Analysis – present or absent?
2. Interviews – where practitioners place
3. Literature review – nature of relationship

Parallels with Art

Functions

Processes

Qualities

Social Work as an Art

Relationship to Science

Barriers to

Public and Private

Place

Informing Theories

Literature Review

Bringing it all together – point of analysis
2.5.2. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining, categorising, organising or otherwise reorganising the data to address the initial propositions of the study and as discussed above occur simultaneously and continuously in qualitative research (Krueger 1994; Sarantakos 1993; Alston & Bowles 1998; Robson & Foster 1989). A key feature of qualitative data analysis is that it is emerging out of, created though and grounded in the data (Sarantakos 1993; Maxwell 1996). Theories are consequently initially developed, with major concepts and constructs formed, their main features and categories identified and developed, including competing frames of reference, and then further refined and tested in a continuous process (Strauss 1987; Sarantakos 1993; Patton 1990; Rice & Ezzy 1999).

Wolcott (1990, pp.16-18) suggests constructing an expanded table of contents as a means of identifying major organising themes, and matters that must be addressed. For this research these chapter titles as generated though continuous memoing formed the primary codes: themes or important messages in the material were looked for, those emerging themes becoming the major categories of analysis (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Tagg 1985). Primary codes are identified in Table 2.1

Table 2.1: Table of Contents as Coding Strategy: Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT TITLE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Framing (eg Introduction, Conclusion)</td>
<td>FRAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity (of Social Work)</td>
<td>SWID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private-Political</td>
<td>PP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing Theories</td>
<td>INFTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Art (Relationship)</td>
<td>S&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work as Science</td>
<td>SWAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work as Art – Parallels</td>
<td>SWAAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work as Art – Qualities</td>
<td>QUALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Professionalism</td>
<td>MFPROF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Knowledge</td>
<td>MFKNOWL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Practice</td>
<td>MFPRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Relationship</td>
<td>MFREL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Client</td>
<td>MFCLI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for Functions</td>
<td>MFFUN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each unit of text – from the literature review, interview and content analysis data – was coded using one of the primary codes and then a secondary code according to what it said or specifics related to that code. For example, some of the secondary codes for the primary one of ‘Qualities’ included creativity, imagination and use of self. The secondary code list
was expanded and contracted to reflect what the data was saying. A process of triangulation then starts to emerge as each passage is compared in relation to the particular topic and to other passages (Potter & Mulkay 1985).

2.5.2.1. Strategies of Analysis

In order to ensure rigour in the data analysis process the researcher must leave a clear audit trail of analysis, to monitor and report their own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible, so that they are transparent and open to scrutiny (Patton 1990). The following diagram, from Crabtree and Miller (1992, p.18) represents the data analysis process used here and the researcher’s role as ‘editor’ of the text and the comparative process as outlined above.

*Diagram 2.2: Data Analysis Style*

Coding necessarily involves questions about categories and their relationships (Sarantakos 1993): extensive use of concept maps was made to represent and determine to some extent the relationships between the various categories. Concept maps are a way of presenting
and making visible thoughts and results through the form of topologies, continuums, diagrams and metaphors. They provide a tool for developing the conceptual context of the research, generating theory and seeing its implications (Maxwell 1996). They are a way of ensuring rigorous reflexivity by regularly subjecting the researcher’s actions, thoughts and developing concepts to critical scrutiny (Maxwell 1996; see Appendix F for an example). Memos were written to accompany concept maps, as well as regularly throughout the research through a research journal chronicling theoretical ideas, analytical insights, diagrams of relationships, problems, my place as researcher and as a starting point of analysis and interpretation (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Maxwell 1996; Rowles & Reinharz 1998). These grew more sophisticated as the research progressed, and further themes came to light (see Appendices G and H for examples of the same memo format, written four years apart).

Krueger (1994) provides a number of memo structures that I found useful at various stages throughout the process. As an example, one entitled ‘Determine the Purpose’ asked the researcher to reflect on why such a study should be conducted, what kinds of information would be produced, how it would be used and so forth (Appendix G and H). It assisted me in re-visiting my research aims at various points throughout the research, deliberating on data sources and sampling issues and re-focusing my efforts. Maxwell (1996) asks the researcher to think of the different I’s that might come into play in the study and what the values and goals of these are including the potential impact they may have on the research process. I did this on an ongoing basis through concept mapping, which helped me to clarify potential sources of bias in terms of the kinds of questions I was looking at and the sample I was selecting. Again, this assisted me to redirect my efforts where required. Some of the corresponding reflections are included throughout the thesis where relevant.

2.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Both research and professional ethics shape ethical issues in social work research (Yegidis & Weinbach 1991). Similarly to the relationship between social worker and client, the interviewer tries to create a climate in which the participant feels able to give complete and honest information, their dignity and sense of worth is upheld, confidentiality protected and the person’s self-determination, including the right to refuse to answer any item respected (Williams, Tutty & Grinnell 1995). It is vitally important therefore the participant know
who the researcher is, why s/he is there and what the interview will be about with explicit opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback (Williams, Tutty & Grinnell 1995). Informed consent is important, and prior to agreeing to participate interviewees were provided with details about the research project itself in the form of the summary paper, what their participation would entail and its limits. A written consent form, conforming to university guidelines, was completed by all participants prior to the interview (Appendix B). Ensuring no identifying information was on the interview tape or transcript, and no identifying details are presented in any other documentation safeguarded participant confidentiality. Participants were told where the tapes would be located; all were offered an alternative form of recording i.e. note taking, however no one declined to be taped. Many respondents were anxious that their place of work not be identified; broad categories of organisation, such as hospital or community agency are used for all participants. Other ethical considerations related to the containment of bias; this was addressed through strategies outlined above ensuring therefore that competing ideas and explanations were actively sought and included.

2.7. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

There were several difficulties presented when conducting the literature analysis, including a lack of contemporary literature, and a difficulty in locating Australian material; these are discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine. While it was difficult to locate much contemporary literature it is important to remember that to understand social work reaching back to its past can aid an understanding of its present and possibilities for the future:

The collective historical memory of the social work profession…Such a realisation (that we stand on the broad shoulders of the progressive social workers who preceded us) can empower contemporary efforts…It also offers connection, legitimacy and support to current social workers involved in social change. (Fisher & Karger 1997, p.182)

It was a particular challenge reading the art theory literature as it was neither in my professional language nor an area I had any particular pre-existing knowledge of. The literature review met the aims of providing a context for the research, evidence for the reader of its relevance and appropriateness and its original contribution to an understanding of social work as an art.
Strengths of the interview process include allowing for extensive qualitative data collection, both parties being able to explore the meaning of questions and answers involved and enabling a shared or negotiated understanding (Brenner, Brown & Canter 1985). Interviews are subject to the uncertainty of all self-reported data; participants may provide inaccurate or distorted data because of an expectancy effect, giving socially desirable responses or because they cannot remember or do not know (Williams, Tutty & Grinnell 1995; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991). The introductory spiel to participants was designed to reduce this possibility, by giving explicit permission to reflect on their own experiences and as such being ‘unable’ to provide ‘incorrect’ answers. Other authors list ‘interviewer bias and influence’ as a disadvantage, however as discussed above, the interviewer cannot be removed from the process and this presence may be used critically and reflectively to engage in a process of dialogue with participants. However, in terms of insider research, I did leave out of my sample a few potential respondents of whom I was intimidated by their status or assumptions about their willingness to engage in a project of this nature. However, the sample I arrived at provided for comparison and contrast in terms of the data they provided. Some interview participants were friends or previous colleagues; the roles of researcher and participant had to be established in the process of dialogue therefore.

One of the difficulties in content analysis lies in potential assumptions about how communication is accessed; there is no way of knowing that what is in the text is taught or learnt while postmodernism tells us there are multiple and contradictory readings of texts (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991). As Freire (1972) argues students are not empty vessels, but selectively accept, reject and reinterpret what is presented to them. However, textbooks remain important in representing particular constructions of reality, of organising and presenting particular knowledge and in presenting models of social work practice. Many of the strengths of content analysis are methodological in that it provides ready access to data and does not require respondents (Sarantakos 1993). In this study, the content analysis has provided what might be considered a more ‘objective’ account of the science and art of social work, represented as it is in professional and public documentation.

Part of the rigour in qualitative research is in providing a complete account of the phenomenon being researched. Important therefore to this research was comparison between what practitioners, the literature and the content analysis said and how they can
inform one another. Presenting a full story of social work as an art – including the critique of this position – is one way of also of providing a complete account of practice in this way (Maxwell 1996). An evaluation of the research process in achieving the aims and objectives is given in the concluding chapter.

2.8. SUMMARY

Research constitutes creative advance, surmounting and transcending the predictable, dependant on the generation of new ideas, new insights, fresh hypotheses and innovative theoretical formulations. As in artistry a combination of discipline and creativity are required (Maxwell 1996). Qualitative research allows for exploration, discovery of relationships and establishing integrated concepts (Sarantakos 1993; Pease 1990; Yegidis & Weinbach 1991): such a framework suited the aims and nature of the study. This research was an exploratory study using multi-methods, within a research framework of qualitative research principles and methods, exploring the intersection of the science and art, private and public dimensions in social work. The methods used, their methodological and theoretical justification, and the processes undertaken have been outlined here. This chapter therefore provides the methodological context of this research; the following chapter provides a theoretical context. Chapter Three outlines the meaning of postmodern, critical and feminist theories and thinking for some of the primary concepts of this research, namely paradigms and ways of knowing, dualisms, science, art, and their meanings for and interpretations of social work.
CHAPTER THREE
INFORMING THEORIES

A mind that is stretched to a new idea never returns to its original dimension.
Oliver W Holmes (in Flyvbjerg 2001, p.vi)

3.1. INTRODUCTION
The social sciences have played a central part in the formation of modern, liberal democratic societies, their institutions, knowledge and practices including social work (Morrow & Brown 1994). The literature examined here represents three bodies of rich and diversified knowledge that challenges the hegemony of many traditional, mainstream theories and practices. In that sense they have all made important contributions to progressive forms of social work knowledge and practice (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001). The three bodies of thought considered here are postmodernism, critical theory and feminist thought. These three particularly facilitate the search for the meaning and conceptualisations of the relationship between science and art. An exploration of their connections to the concepts that are the subject of this research is provided in the individual summaries below.

This chapter originally included ‘radical social work’ as an example of an alternative model of social work; however, upon review it was determined that this was not a particularly useful analysis for a number of reasons. It is difficult to consider what is ‘radical’ while there are radical elements in all three positions considered. Further, it provided little analysis as to the relationship of science and art, or indeed either on its own.

The chapter serves several purposes:
(i) Introducing the three bodies of thought.
(ii) Outlining their position on significant concepts for the research including dualisms, knowledge, social change, and the private-political link.
(iii) Applying these theoretical lenses to social work in ‘Meaning for Social Work’.
(iv) Locating myself within this.
(v) Considering their meaning for the research question and in particular how the discussion on the conceptualisation of the relationship between science and art can
be constructed by these bodies of thought. This is the discussion section of the chapter.

3.2. INTRODUCING THE THEORIES

I provide a summary of the three perspectives here. Following that is a further examination of their interpretation of major concepts related to the research. More detailed consideration will emerge throughout the thesis. In particular, their interpretation of art and science are considered in later chapters and the management of the dualism of art and science in Chapter Eight ‘Conceptualising a Relationship’.

3.2.1. Modernity and Postmodernity

Modernity describes a particular historical period related to the Enlightenment and the work of eighteenth-century philosophers, including a set of artistic, musical, literary and other aesthetic movements that emerged in Europe in the 1880s. Modernism refers to the theories or paradigms that emerged from that period; it posited a belief in human and social progress and emancipation through science and politico-economic rationality that would deliver security and freedom, and create universal social and economic well-being (Irving 1999; Parton 1998; Parton & Marshall 1998; Hudson 1997; Gibbons 2001). It relied on totalising, universal belief systems or meta-narratives involving integral concepts of certainty, objectivity, reason and the human capacity for rationality. It saw the desirability and possibility of control over the natural and social worlds through science and reason, the authority of text, a universal essential subject, a deterministic view of human nature with science the privileged method and way of knowing (Pardeck, Murphy & Choi 1994; Leonard 1997; Di Stefano 1990). As is discussed below, modernism posited strict guidelines as to what constituted science and knowledge, including a belief that social science could be scientific in the same way as the physical sciences (Held 1980; Rice & Ezzy 1999; see below). It is difficult to periodise either modernity or postmodernity, as they are qualitative rather than chronological categories (Leonard 1997).

Modernism’s meta-narratives have been weakened and discredited, have failed to engender progress and are seen as increasingly irrelevant in a context marked by uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity and diversity (Taylor 1987; Ife 1997; Leonard 1997). The espoused
connection between science and universal freedom proved a ‘bitter and ironic illusion’ according to sociologist Weber while German philosopher Nietzsche called attention to the forces of disorder and alienation below the surface of modern life (Irving 1991, p.24). The possibility and desirability of attempts to attain absolute control over the natural and social worlds have been questioned while the certainty of reason has been described as a tyranny (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995). The creation of ‘other’ through oppression and exclusion of difference has been critiqued also; Horkheimer and Adorno, philosophers of the Frankfurt School, for example argued that the real logic behind modern rationality was in fact a logic of domination and oppression rather than progress and emancipation (Irving 1991; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Leonard 1997; Fook 2000; Martinez-Brawley 1999).

The term ‘postmodern’ was first used in the 1930s, but was more generally used from the 1960s onwards in the area of literature, architecture, philosophy and the arts (John 1991). Postmodernity is seen by many as a fitting description of developments and transformations that have been taking place since the early 1960s and how contemporary society functions (Parton 1998; Leonard 1997; Taylor 1987; Irving 1991; Epstein 1991). Again, it is necessary to distinguish between postmodernity and postmodernism; the former is descriptive and characterises an emerging social, political and cultural configuration of which postmodernism is a part (Parton & Marshall 1998, p.242). Postmodernism draws on the critical side of and resistance to modernism, and Lyotard, a significant postmodern theorist, argues it can be seen as an interval between modernity and a range of new ideas that revise what has been taken as definitive and progressive (Leonard 1997; Taylor 1987; Irving 1991; Fook 1996). Some authors differentiate between sceptical and affirmative postmodernism (see Leonard 1997 or Lane 1999 for example) the former a postmodernism of fragmentation, disintegration, meaninglessness, where the status quo of eclecticism and so forth is affirmed. Affirmative postmodernism or a postmodernism of resistance (Smart 1990 discussed in Lane 1999) is about resisting the current status quo as well as being open to positive political action, struggle and resistance.

It is difficult to discuss what postmodernism is as one of its core assumptions is a critique of comprehensive or universal theories. It is possible to illustrate some of its central assumptions; however these must be treated critically and as one representation (Epstein 1991; Ife 1999; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Leonard 1997). Lyotard defines postmodernism as a
scepticism towards or refutation of meta-narratives and the universal or absolute truths that form foundational interpretative schemes (Irving 1991; John 1991; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Taylor 1987; Martinez-Brawley 1999). Modernity has largely legitimised itself through appeals to grand narratives, which postmodernists claim a search for is unhelpful, futile and meaningless (Ife 1995a; McBeath & Webb 1991; Di Stefano 1990; Gorman 1993). Postmodernism instead calls attention to pluralities, provisional truths, fragmented meanings, ambiguity, uncertainty, relativism and the contextual grounding of knowledge. It acknowledges and celebrates difference, diversity, and a variety of positions and perspectives that opens up the possibility of alternative and diverse constructions and practices (Leonard 1997; Delamont 1996; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Irving 1999; Parton 1988; Martinez-Brawley 1999; Applegate 2000). Of particular relevance here is postmodernism’s challenge to modern hierarchical divisions of Western science and attention to the narratives of those excluded from dominant discourse (Ife 1997; Leonard 1997; Irving 1991).

The writings and theorising of postmodernism are perceived as being inaccessible in that they are obtuse, highly exclusive, esoteric and complex and therefore distanced and privileged (Munro 1998; Wood 1997; Leonard 1997). There are claims that we are ‘just in’ postmodernity as it does not necessarily explain or provide suggestions for how things might be improved with ambiguous implications therefore for politics, policy and practice; it is not necessarily in that sense a consciously directed movement of ideas and principles (Irving 1991; Parton 1998; Parton & Marshall 1998). Postmodernism provides no vision of a better society, and further its relativism can lead to paralysis with an inability to evaluate effort and a denial therefore of any possibility of measured progress (Munro 1998; Wood 1997; Parton & Marshall 1998; Ife 1999). However, it can be seen to be normative in that it is a useful way to view the world and advocates an alternative worldview and therefore paradigmatic change (Ife 1999, p.214).

Reference to a concept of universal human rights and a collective experience of forms of oppression has been made by feminists, anti-racists, human rights activists and so forth. There are concerns that postmodernism’s attention to diversity and deconstruction of grand narratives weakens or ignores key issues of inequality and power. Further, it undermines the legitimacy of a broad-based, organised movement concerned to address such issues
(Wood 1997; Leonard 1997; Carter & Delamont 1996; Ife 1999; Parton & Marshall 1998; Di Stefano 1990). Feminists in particular have highlighted that efforts to emphasise difference provide a space to perpetuate existing dualisms by, for example, attempting to valorise the feminine as essentially different (Di Stefano 1990). Does postmodernism require us to abandon moral judgements or is it possible and desirable to identify universal and transcultural human needs and wants (Leonard 1997)?

The relevance of modernity and postmodernity are that the former represents an influential paradigm of science which social work has historically modelled its search for a knowledge base on. Postmodernism deconstructs the meta-narrative of rational science and allows a space for alternative voices and multiple meanings as it challenges status quo notions of theory, knowledge and culture. They both hold therefore possible models for a relationship between science and art (see Chapter Eight). They may provide an alternative explanation for the art-science debate – what are the parallels between the modern-postmodern continuum and the science-art one?

3.2.2. Critical Theory

Critical theory has its origins in the work of scholars in the 1920s at the Frankfurt School, developed at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, and includes the work of theorists such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Morrow & Brown 1994; Healy 2000). A number of approaches to social theory could be considered ‘critical’ in some sense – indeed Marx is commonly credited with founding the critical theory tradition and the term was used initially to describe a specific approach to interpreting Marxist theory (Healy 2000, p.15). Developments in critical theory since means it can be exclusively identified neither with the Marxist tradition nor with the Frankfurt School (Morrow & Brown 1994, p.6). Whether critical theory is a philosophical, political or sociological school of thought has been debated. It is both an intellectual and practical effort that entails an historical, a normative, and a self-reflective critical component, related to the real world as a practical guide for action (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Hoffman 1987).
Critical theorists are concerned with the possibilities for liberatory social transformation, to not just understand the world but to change it, placing theorists and practitioners within struggles for political change (Healy 2000; Fook 2000). Through the process of understanding and reflection it provides a critique of the existing social order and with its emphasis on the relationship between theory and practice points to the capacity for change and the realisation of human potential (Healy 2000; Hoffman 1987). Critical theory seeks to form a specifically structural analysis namely in identifying sources of oppression, domination and resistance and how personal problems are frequently internalised public issues of power (Held 1980; Morrow & Brown 1994; Ife 1997). Critical theory is concerned to analyse and expose through deconstruction the constraints of historical processes and the power relations that have created the current order (Hoffman 1987; Held 1980). Critical theory provides a critique of the privileged position of rational scientific ways of knowing, seeing it rather as one of many possibilities (Held 1980; DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999). The essential element of the critical approach is that it should lead to action; beyond understanding and interpretation, it must promote social change and result in people being able to take action (Ife 1997; DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Held 1980). Given its normative element and orientation to action, it contains specific aims, namely to liberate and emancipate, expose hidden coercion and empower people by equipping them with tools to analyse their own experience and thus take action, be part of what it is understanding and to improve communication and understanding between people (Hartman 1991; Ife 1997; Held 1980).

The critique of critical theory is similar to that of postmodernity in that it is seen as being inaccessible, elitist in its use of pretentious philosophical language, theoretically dense and therefore failing in its aim of a democratisation of knowledge (Healy 2000; Morrow & Brown 1994; Curry Jansen 1983). Respondents to this critique however point out that a more fundamental problem is that of communicating certain types of ideas in a culture whose fundamental categories tend to exclude philosophical and theoretical reflection (Morrow & Brown 1994).

Critical theory is relevant to this research in that it deconstructs notions of discourse to alert us to how knowledge is constructed and the relationship of this to relations of power. It deconstructs therefore the privileged position of rational science, without (as
postmodernism does) providing a totalising critique of science per se. Critical theory also contains a normative element similar to social work that seeks social transformation within principles of social justice, equity and human progress. Critical theory therefore is relevant to social work, science and art – and possibly a relationship between the three.

3.2.2.1. Critical Theory, Modernity and Postmodernity

Morrow and Brown (1994) claim it is possible to identify a postmodern and modernist strain of critical theory. The latter is an acknowledgment that critical theory was founded in Enlightenment ideals of human progress and freedom, with a revised concept of reason and science from its limited conceptualisation within positivism (Healy 2000). Habermas, a key figure in critical theory, defends the project of the Enlightenment as an unfinished rather than an unrealisable ideal (Healy 2000). Critical theory deconstructs other aspects of modernity, in particular the notion of a unitary truth that can only come to be known through empirical or positivist methods and highlighting the dialectical relationship between thought and reality (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999). A postmodernist perspective however critiques critical theory as being too rational and scientific in its theoretical aspirations (Morrow & Brown 1994). Postmodernism and critical theory are complementary in some respects in that both critique the status quo, argue for the potential of language as the basis for critique and action, and promote the possibility of pursuing social justice (Lane 1999). A postmodern critical theory engages with a critique of grand narratives, a concern with deconstruction and legitimation, however does not want to disregard completely any basis for a critique of power and domination (Morrow & Brown 1994; Pease & Fook 1999). While critical theory offers a normative element from which to develop alternatives, postmodernism does not offer alternative conceptualisations of the social world and ways of achieving social change; this is a source of critique of postmodernism by critical theorists (Brown 1991).

3.2.3. Feminist Thought

Feminism is not a unified analytic or ideological package; there are different interpretations, definitions and variations – including postmodern and critical ones – on the theme of feminism. Each provides a different interpretation of the social world, and therefore different assumptions, observations and strategies regarding gender relations.
Themes however on which such variations occur include deconstructing gender, critiquing the social institutions which perpetuate women’s subordination, the pursuit of equality for women, an analysis of the private and political, and a promotion of the need for individual and social change (FitzRoy 1999; Pease 1999). Similarly to postmodernity, feminism allows for and encourages the celebration of difference and the legitimation of different voices or constructions – its focus however is on those excluded from patriarchal hierarchies and constructions of a counter-patriarchal position (Ife 1997; Dominelli 1997). Feminist social work, argue Pease and Fook (1999), has extended earlier radical analysis to include the more personalised side of experience, as shown in the emphasis feminist social work gives to women’s narratives or stories. Feminism argues for a politics of representation and of diversity to allow the other, the marginalised, to have their stories heard (Camilleri 1999; Gorman 1993).

Feminist analysis is relevant to a profession that is dominated by women in both practitioner and client groups. The qualities of art, particularly intuition and use of self, are traditionally seen as feminine ones, whereas rational science is associated with masculine qualities of reason, logic and rationality (Palmer 2002; Freedberg 1993; Christie 1998; Chambers 1986; Gorman 1993). A feminist analysis therefore may provide some explanation as to the relative status of science and art in social work. It also provides some analysis for transcending dualisms, and managing the relationship between seeming opposites (see below; see Chapter Eight).

3.3. THEORETICAL POSITIONS ON…

3.3.1. Understanding Knowledge

3.3.1.1. Paradigms

Khun in an oft-cited definition describes a paradigm as the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and theories shared by members of a scientific community (Dawson et al. 1991 p.72). Paradigms are sets of propositions that tell researchers and scientists what is important, legitimate and reasonable. They include explicit laws, theoretical assumptions, a view of the nature of natural and social phenomena, methodological prescriptions and general principles that guide work within the science it governs (Ife 1995a; Howe 1987; Sarantakos 1993; Chalmers 1982; Leonard 1975; Payne 1991; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson &
Flyvbjerg (2001) refers to paradigms as providing practice prototypes of good scientific work, operating as a metaphor and focal point for the founding of schools of thought. Importantly, they determine what is to count as relevant knowledge, setting the framework within which theory is developed and the criteria by which it is evaluated (Ife 1981; Chipp 1968).

Paradigms also function to ensure that research will not raise serious questions about the validity of the superordinate model (Fischer 1981; McNiff 1998; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman-Pieper 2002; Chalmers 1982). It is through practical (behavioural and methodological), theoretical (rationalisations, conceptualisations and explanations) and institutional processes and practices (such as frameworks of communication, socialisation of new scientists) that paradigms are maintained and dominance is managed (Imre 1982; Fook 1993; Leonard 1975; Chalmers 1982). Domination however is not permanent; alternative ideologies exist such that no ideology remains without challenge, nor is any ideology monolithic or totally pervasive.

Postmodernism and critical theory point to how several paradigms operate at any one time; there remain however issues of power and legitimacy, with one reality, the one with the power, operating as the dominant viewpoint (Ife 1981). The dominant ideas in society are often those held by dominant groups and are therefore necessarily only partial (DeMaria 1981; Wolff 1981). Rational science remained a dominant paradigm in social, political and intellectual life throughout Modernity and beyond; while concepts such as rationality, empiricism, and reason have been critiqued and deconstructed, they remain pervasive in terms of definitions of legitimate knowledge (Peile 1993; Henderson 1991; Ife 1981; Webb 2001; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman-Pieper 2002). It also remains a dominant standard by which new alternatives are judged leading to diminished understanding, limited application and negation (Peile 1993; Weick 1983). For example, it is difficult to act in ways consistent with a creative paradigm as its truth and value are not respected within a dominant paradigm of rational science (McNiff 1998; Wasow 1992).

### 3.3.1.2. Discourse

Paradigm and discourse are similar concepts and are at times used interchangeably; the concept of discourse however pays more attention to the structure and influences of power
in knowledge and how knowledge is constructed and perpetuated. This is important for understanding the place of art and science as sources of knowledge for social work. Further, paradigm relates specifically to scientific communities, although it has been used in broader ways.

Discourses are structures and systems of knowledge through which we understand, explain and decide things, constituting knowledge, communication and practice (Chambon, Irving & Epstein 1999; O’Brien 1999; John 1991; Parton & Marshall 1998). They comprise all the discursive rules and categories, providing the parameters of what can be known, said and thought such that meaning must be located in the totality of the discursive context (John 1991; Healy 2000; Irving 1999). Processes of exclusion and marginalisation operate by restricting what counts as truth, defining the conditions of possibility of thought, normalisation and limiting the number of people who have access to certain truths (Irving 1999; Wang 1999; Healy 2000). Discourses then are a site of analysis and struggle (Healy 1999).

The idea of discourse comes from the work of Michel Foucault who conceptualised them as media of power relations through which power is defined and redefined, including how discourses transfer, reinforce, subvert, conceal and produce power (Wang 1999; Payne 1996; Ife 1997; Flyvbjerg 2001). The formation of particular discourses creates centres of power, which define areas of knowledge and truth claims (Parton & Marshall 1998). Foucault argued that power and knowledge fundamentally depend on one another. Knowledge is legitimated through social institutions and relations, pushing people to see things relative to that knowledge rather than in some alternative way, providing and producing truth for people (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995). The truth status of modern social sciences for example, has enabled human service professionals to exercise disciplinary power in relation to marginalised populations (Healy 2000). Foucault spoke of the transformative potential of his work; that change could come from the uncovering of the precarious nature of established ways and by inviting the development of alternatives (Chambon 1999).

The nature of the social sciences shapes theories and practices of therapeutic institutions (such as social work), the development of therapeutic ideas, the definition and explanation
of social problems, and in turn the specific range of ‘viable’ options professionals contemplate (Chambon 1991; Howe 1987; Epstein 1991). Discourses make certain kinds of identities, social relationships and social practices possible while excluding others; they construct the boundaries of practice, including what counts as good practice, construct social categories and positions as social actors (such as client and practitioner), and define and legitimise the relationship of power between actors (Healy 1999; Fook 1999; Hough 1999; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995). Social work uses the language of rationality and the scientific approach, which in turn prescribes the nature of the relationship, role and source of knowledge and so forth, but also obscures the effects of this and limits the exploration of alternatives (Chambon 1999; Payne 1991; see Chapter Eight). Knowledge of the world and what it means is an area of intense debate. The notion of discourse allows us to see how rational science has come to dominate what social work can know and how it can come to be known, and the meaning of that for the profession and its clients (Irving 1991; Imre 1984b; Witkin 1991b; Swigonski 1994; Munro 1998; Goldstein 1990).

3.3.1.3. Deconstruction

Postmodernism and critical theory are concerned with deconstruction, a process of uncovering and making visible the construction of a phenomenon. Deconstruction as a process recognises that while multiple discourses are available, only a few are heard, these being related to the dominant power and knowledges (Parton & Marshall 1998). Critical theory in particular is concerned with the power relations underlying discourses and how the latter are maintained as received wisdom, unquestioned, self-evident truths or common sense (Fook 2000; Chambon, Irving & Epstein 1999; Curry Jansen 1983). Deconstruction then is concerned to uncover hidden or multiple perspectives; the processes of domination and legitimisation in the sanctioning of knowledge claims and practices; the meanings people attach to practices, assumptions and myths; as well as the power relations they support (Ife 1997; DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Leonard 1997; Parton 1999; Brown 1991; Pease & Fook 1999).

Influential postmodernist Jacques Derrida viewed deconstruction as a method of grasping the unwritten of texts, their absences and silences, and to dismantle the assumptions and biases of dominant Western ways of thinking and the power relations this represents (John 1991; Hough 1999; Parton 1998). In particular, he was concerned to deconstruct Western
traditions of rationalist thought, targeting the central assumptions of reason and pursuit of certainty (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995). There is a concern to uncover the binary oppositions (see below) through which social reality is understood, and through which particular identities and processes are privileged while others are marginalised, so that a full spectrum of positions can be identified (Healy 2000). In 1967 Roland Barthes declared the ‘death of the author’ meaning that regardless of the author’s intentions, readers create their own meanings and interpretations of the text leading to ever-shifting and unstable yet legitimate readings of a text (Appignanesi & Garrett 1995; Pardeck, Murphy & Choi 1994; Ife 1997). Critical theorists question traditional top-down approaches to theory building where control over this process resides with scientists and researchers who are seen to have a higher authority than practitioners or clients for example (Fook 2000). The power of professionals to construct meanings through the imposition of a particular truth is therefore deconstructed and reoriented and meaningful participation by those concerned is valued (Chambon, Irving & Epstein 1999; Fook 2000). Texts and knowledge then are politicised and pluralised, placing meaning and identity in a continual state of (re)interpretation and discrediting any notion of objective reality (Wood 1997; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995).

It is important in this research to consider and identify the processes and practices involved in constructing a knowledge base and identity for a profession (see Chapter Four), and the meaning of that for alternative versions of those in terms of barriers and opportunities (see Chapter Nine). Deconstruction emphasises the emancipatory potential of analysis, by constructing positions of resistance in the possibilities for challenging and changing dominant structures, codes and rules uncovered by deconstruction (Fook 1999; Pease & Fook 1999).

3.3.1.4. Models of Knowledge

Modernity is linked to the rise of science, and particular models of science based in the traditions of positivism and empiricism; it is these models of science that social work has historically aspired to (Taylor 1987; see Chapter Four). There was a faith in science as the way to discover reality and ensure progress. Definitions of knowledge, human nature and culture were informed by the rational scientific paradigm also and other ways of knowing were discredited as unscientific and irrational (John 1991; Irving 1991).
Positivism privileged evidence, hard data and quantification, a method of discrete and distinct steps on the path to knowledge with a methodology that is standardised and repeatable. It was concerned with the elimination of subjectivity, an emphasis on explanation, prediction and control, and the discovery of facts, truth and generalised laws (Ife 1997; Swigonski 1994; Leonard 1997; Peile 1993; Minichello et al 1990; Rice & Ezzy 1999; Taylor & White 2001; Heineman 1981; Powell 1996; Falck 1970; Gorman 1993). Positivism informed generally accepted definitions of knowledge as being that which is precise, explicit, objective, testable and subject to quantification, ascertained by sense experiences and utilising the techniques of scientific logic (Imre 1984b; Gibbs 1991; Ruckdeschel & Farris 1982; Goldstein 1990). Positivism as a model of science has been greatly contested both from within and outside of science. Empiricism recognised that all reports involve some assumptions, although it remains grounded in the ‘real world’ in which things can be measured, experienced, generalised and known through a distinct methodology (Camilleri 1996; Leonard 1997; Klein & Bloom 1994; Munro 1998).

There has been a strong belief – within positivist models particularly – in the researchability of social phenomena using natural science techniques and the use of reason and rational analysis to discover the rules and causal relationships which govern human behaviour and therefore bring about both social control and moral progress (Howe 1987, 1994; Ife 1995; DeMaria 1981). This would address concerns of anti-rationalism and relativism in social science (Flyvbjerg 2001). If social and natural science have a basic logical unity then people, culture and society have characteristics in common, discoverable by research with a kinship of methods (Flyvbjerg 2001; Zolberg 1990; Payne 1991; Saleeby 1979; Waldegrave 1997; Smith & Noble-Spruell 1986; Howe 1987, 1994; Ife 1995b; DeMaria 1981). A social science, built on the analogy of traditional physical sciences, has been shown to be both logically inconsistent and inadequate in dealing with the complex interactions of social phenomena (Ife 1995; Henderson 1991; Flyvbjerg 2001; Hudson 1997; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991). Yet there remain issues of validity, status and power with natural science remaining the ideal (Flyvbjerg 2001; Seidman & Wagner 1992). Flyvbjerg (2001, p.48) argues however that social science set itself an impossible task when it attempted to emulate the natural sciences with significant evidence that the ideal has not been and probably cannot be achieved while the continued pursuit diverts attention and resources away from those areas where social science could make an impact. This
relationship highlights some of the issues when considering knowledge for social work (see Chapter Four).

The theories presented here critique both the models of modernist science and their domination – or the consequences of that. Postmodernists critique the search for universal truths arguing instead for understandings that are complex, competing, contradictory and multi-dimensional (Rice & Ezzy 1999; Pease & Fook 1999; Ife 1997). Ambiguity and uncertainty are therefore seen as natural and inevitable as meaning and identity are in a constant state of definition and redefinition rather than coming from a meta-narrative constructed on a linear perspective (Martínez-Brawley 1999; Brown 1991; Leonard 1997; Parton 1998; Lishman 1998). Nietzsche argues that it is not possible to claim that one framework is true and another false; he argued, as did Foucault, that science and empiricism offer no more an objective explanation of the world than for example, ancient myths or imagination (Irving 1999). Postmodernists argue therefore that no one way of knowing or system for understanding holds pre-eminence over others (Martínez-Brawley 1999).

Critical theory rejects notions such as objectivity, empirical measurement and the quest for universal laws, starting instead with a position that values interpretive, subjective and multiple understandings (Ife 1997). Critical theory is concerned with the relationship between knowledge and social context where both are seen as dynamic and changing. Knowledge seeks to not only describe society but to understand and change it. The distinction between theory and practice is also false therefore, when rather they are part of the same process; feminist theory in particular critiques this split as being based on a gendered division of labour between research and practice (Healy 2000; Ife 1997; Karger 1983). Critical theorists are concerned with the increasing control over what we hear and know as social analysis is further removed from people (Fisher & Karger 1997; Ife 1981). Similarly postmodernists see that knowledge is becoming increasingly commodified, produced in order to be sold and consumed, and assuming a producer-consumer dynamic that involves economy and power (Appignanesi & Garratt 1995).

Feminism critiques the modernist model of truth and knowledge that has excluded and falsely universalised women and is concerned instead to recognise and come to terms with
the plurality of ways of knowing (Brown 1991; Azzarto 2001; Fee 1986). Feminists also point to the resulting gendered construction of knowledge that occurs, and that social work for example bases and justifies its practices in this knowledge (Marchant & Wearing 1986; Brown 1991). Feminism in particular holds to the validity of subjective experience as a basis for interpretation and knowing; what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward but is contested and therefore political (Brown 1991). The validity of theorising from the personal is a particular emphasis of feminist thought from which social work can and does draw (Hudson 1985; Ife 1997). It is important also in conceptualising social work as an art, and the personal experiences and practice wisdom that contribute to the profession’s knowledge base and ways of knowing. It further validates interviews as a source of insight about practice.

While post-positivist philosophies of science differ, they portray science as a more creative, conjectural and fallible process, as socially constructed, and with empirical research and practice being conceptualised more broadly and flexibly (Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; Munro 1998; Peile 1993; Witkin 1991a; Ramsay 2003; Narhi 2002; Parton 2002). Postmodernists, critical theorists and feminists extol forms of social inquiry that incorporate an explicitly practical and moral intent, that are contextual, non-linear and narratively structured (Ramsay 2003; Seidman & Wagner 1992; Narhi 2002). For feminist and critical theory knowledge is both an intellectual and a social act (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Hoffman 1987; Held 1980; Ife 1997). New models of science encourage and demand the critical scrutiny of assumptions, values, policies, practices and the researcher-researched relationship rather than hiding them in the guise of scientific objectivity (Everitt 1998; Heineman 1981; Payne 1991; Leonard 1975; Imre 1984b; Flyvbjerg 2001; Munro 1998; Ramsay 2003). Any pretence of research as value-free or neutral is highly political; an ‘objective’ approach depoliticises the research process by making it seem rational and disguising therefore the presence and exercise of power (Everitt 1998; Jordan 1984; see Chapter Five). Science then has become increasingly concerned with questions and concepts of value, power and interests, and paying greater attention to the research process as active, self-correcting and systematic (Goldstein 1990; Shils 1964; Brook 1992; Flyvbjerg 2001; Jones 1982; Gibbs 1991; Sheppard 1995). Social workers are already familiar with these concepts as well as the experience of contested, complex and ambiguous
understandings, and are well-positioned therefore to contribute to contemporary social science (Parton 2000).

Different forms of knowledge are therefore advocated for in these theoretical works; similarly to modernism perhaps they see an emancipatory role for knowledge although with different ideals and rules for what is to count as knowledge. Of relevance to this research is considering the validity of multiple ways of knowing. It allows for considering different pathways – such as clients, practice wisdom and intuition – to knowledge generation as well as their use in practice. It can form part of a response to the critique of social work as an art as atheoretical by highlighting the constraints of what is considered knowledge.

3.3.2. Dualisms

Dualisms have functioned in the social sciences, under the influence of Western science and the empirical paradigm, as a principle for categorising and describing a rich multiplicity of phenomena (Gunew 1991; Morgan & Ramirez 1983). Modernity’s commitment to order, control and unity saw the establishment and entrenchment of binary opposition as a way of denying contradiction, difference and multiplicity (Leonard 1997). This dichotomous opposite perspective is generally associated with Descartes ‘truth’ of mind-body separation (Ramsay 2003, p.332). Dualisms are a conceptual arrangement according to principles of order, represented in the form A/not-A to which there are three logical rules:

(i) Principle of Identity (if anything is A, it is A)
(ii) Principle of Contradiction (nothing can be both A and not-A)
(iii) Principle of the Excluded Middle (anything must be either A or not-A).

(Jay 1991, pp.92-3)

Science and art have traditionally been understood in dichotomous relation to one another. Such organisation appears to be a neutral way of dividing a continuum into two equal yet opposite poles where the concepts represented are seen to operate in separate, opposite and mutually exclusive yet parallel spheres. Underlying such seemingly neutral or simple divisions are pervasive power relationships; dualisms represent a hierarchical, non-reciprocal relationship, reduced to one term and its other (Gunew 1991; Walter 2003).
primary terms has positive reality and is privileged; identity for its opposite is in terms of difference as defined in relation to the dominant form, and not by essence, or self-realised, self-actualised identity creating therefore a universal, infinite category (Grosz 1991; Jay 1991; Sutherland 1986; Hoffie 1991; Gunew 1991).

Feminists have argued that dualisms such as male and female, work and home, city and suburb reflect the patriarchal organisation of society. In particular, there is an association between the private sphere (home life, families, social reproduction) with women and the public sphere (work, city, public places) with men (Wannan 1986; Sutherland 1986). The binary form of such relations is implicitly sexualised, underscored by sexual-political values, and related to the patriarchal differentiation of the sexes (Grosz 1991). Feminists in particular therefore have worked to deconstruct and transcend dualisms.

Foucault demonstrates how discourses based on the dividing practices of dualisms had a profound impact on state practices, and in particular definitions and solution of social problems. For example the division between rational and irrational, sanity and madness, was a necessary precondition for the establishment of the profession of psychiatry (Leonard 1997; Chambon 1999). The welfare state more generally developed upon divisions such as poverty and pauperism, health and ill health, good mothers and bad mothers and so forth and became the grounds upon which entire professional disciplines formed (Leonard 1997).

The essence of the postmodern argument according to Delamont (1996, p.131) is that the dualisms that dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding and do not correspond to a world of multiple conceptualisations and historical and cultural knowledges that interact in complex and non-linear ways. Postmodernism rejects the inherent power or privileging that occurs within binary opposites and the limiting effect on debate to all-or-none propositions (Wood 1997; Jay 1991). Such divisions serve to ignore not only the diversities within categories but also the commonalities amongst them. There is seen to be a natural, logical, static order creating resistance therefore to the understanding and acceptance of change (Healy 2000; Hoffie 1991; Gunew 1991; Jay 1991).

However, there is the potential that recognising the sameness in dualisms will result in depoliticising as they do allow the identification of the rules of exclusion operating and the
power relations underlying those, a diminishing of differences and dissipating subjective positions in which disadvantage is located and from which collective strength may be gained (Crinall 1999, p.78; Leonard 1997, p.26). Some dualities remain useful in analysis and practice; Healy (1999, p.122) for example states that while radical social work strives to transcend dualisms, the major duality of the powerful and powerless must remain central to analysis and action.

There are multiple ways of describing or exploring the nature of the relationship between seeming opposites then (see Chapter Eight for a discussion of the meaning of these for science and art in particular). One way to ‘correct’ a dichotomy is to convert it into a continuum (Schwartz 1977, p.211). In this way ‘opposites’ are conceived as complementary – providing together a comprehensive and balanced perspective, moving back and forth one to the other, mutually complete and existing in inter-relationship (Abell 1970; Read 1970). However, even in the centre of a continuum, comparison as to relative nearness to the two poles is possible, while considering only sameness is as problematic as focusing only on difference.

Duality can be seen as an artificial split in a seamless whole, for in every explicit duality is an implicit unity (Alan Watts quoted in Gammack 1982; Flyvbjerg 2001). In this way, neither ‘pole’ can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomised – a ‘both-and’ rather than ‘either-or’ relationship. The ‘opposites’ are instead part of a whole, meeting and mingling, as two kinds of processes or systems or principles operative at any time and in various combinations (Read 1931; Gardner 1973). The very notion of being separate, yet connected, yet part of a whole, is to still fall into the conceptual trap of assuming the exclusive binary categories however.

Post structural theory destabilises the oppositions by pointing instead to the similarities that exist between such ‘opposites’; what dichotomous representations ignore is the importance of similarity and connection (Healy 1999). Critical theory allows the holding of apparent contradictory opposites, where it is seen that from the apparent arising tensions creative change can emerge (Ife 1999; Canda 1998). This leads to the idea of a shift to a ‘dialectical relationship’ with the two poles in continuous interplay, mutually constitutive rather than exclusive (Leonard 1997; Freire 1996). Not all dualisms are in the form of binary
opposition but rather can allow for an acknowledgment of difference, locating it in the relationship rather than the individual or group, without turning it into the ‘other’ (Bainbridge 1999; Parker, Fook & Pease 1999; Hoffie 1991). Dualisms between subject and object, individual and social, theory and practice, art and science are richly joined and reframed, affirming the importance of the experiential and interconnected ways of knowing the world (Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Fook 1996).

Social work provides for a reading of how dualisms are managed, for example individual-society and reform-therapy and can be seen as a coming together of previously opposing forces. It embraces seemingly opposite ways of practice, for example to care and control, to work at both the private and political level and so forth (Howe 1994; Haynes & White 1999; Camilleri 1996). The notion of dualisms and how to manage them is integral to understanding the place of science and art in social work (see Chapter Eight).

3.3.3. Reality and the Social World

In principle modernism posited that the structures of reality were ‘out there’, penetrable and knowable, a universalistic understanding waiting to be discovered by science (Parton & Marshall 1998; Leonard 1997). There was a distinct framework of humanism in modernism; the individual as the highest value, each possessing a unique essence of human nature namely rational consciousness. Postmodernism views social reality as complex, contested, emergent and ambiguous, constantly being defined and redefined by different actors in different contexts with fragmented subjectivities and identities (Wood 1997; Ife 1997; Payne 1996). In turn, notions such as truth, knowledge and culture are no longer essential notions or part of the natural order but are context-dependent social processes that must be conceptualised within an analysis of power relations (Noble & Briskman 1998; Rice & Ezzy 1999).

Critical theory is concerned to develop a broad and critical understanding of the public sphere seeing society as a totality, a social and historical entity (Fisher & Karger 1997; Held 1980). Concepts, experiences, and events must be understood therefore in their historical context and in relation to the social world of which they are a part (Hoffman 1987; Healy 2000; Taylor-Gooby & Dale 1981). It is also concerned to highlight the
relationship between ideology and context, the limits that contain and redirect critical discourses, the social practices that influence almost all aspects of daily life and exploring the conditions which make possible both the reproduction and transformation of society (Held 1980; Healy 2000; Taylor-Gooby & Dale 1981). Both postmodernists and critical theorists are concerned with the role of language in creating meaning; language is thought to mediate what is known, reflecting and shaping the world created in order to define, describe and interpret it (Hartman 1994; Pardeck, Murphy & Choi 1994; see below).

Feminist theory is concerned with the deconstruction of gendered identity, which is seen as constructed within a fundamentally patriarchal historical and social context; such a perspective may reveal alternative modes for the construction of masculinities and femininities not yet realised (Pease 1999; FitzRoy 1999). Feminist theory is concerned to discover the social world through the experiences and meanings of those usually marginalised from such interpretations, in particular women, the poor and the disempowered as demonstrated through the construct of the personal as political (Hudson 1985; see above).

Given that social work operates at the intersection of the private and political, it is important to consider how the social world, reality and human nature are conceived. Social work’s understanding of these concepts – and how they can come to be known about – gives boundaries and purpose to how we are to practice in and to know them. Such notions of reality provide an insight into the processes that create and maintain power, the spaces for and challenges to adopting alternative and critical standpoints, and the voices left out of such definitions. This may be important in considering the place of science and art in social work.

3.3.4. Private and Political
The ‘personal is political’ has been a foundation to most feminist theory, pedagogy and practice and is seen as a specific and fundamental contribution of feminism to analysis (Ife 1997; McDonald 1988; Fisher & Karger 1997; Figueira-McDonough 1993; Wilson 1980). Feminism has argued that the very separation is a patriarchal concept that has seen virtually all social institutions such as the family, market and welfare state structured along the
binary classification of private (female) and public (male) (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001; Fisher & Karger 1997; Ife 1997; see above). The personal experience is political (Fook 1993, p.15); feminism has shown how the personal experiences of women are strongly linked to structures of patriarchy and validates that as a position from which to develop analysis (Ife 1995a; Hudson 1985).

A postmodern reading of the personal is political is related to expanding public life to include multiple and competing perspectives and publics previously rendered invisible or private, where subjective differences and cultural diversity form the central base of participation (Fisher & Karger 1997; Leonard 1997). Critical theory is concerned for people to be able to relate – with an activist stance - their experience to the social and political structure and in particular, how personal problems are frequently internalised public issues of power (Morrow & Brown 1994; Ife 1997). It is concerned with the meanings people attach to social rules and actions, the power dimensions underlying those and understanding these in critical relation to the public sphere (Hartman 1991; Ife 1997; Hoffman 1987; Held 1980). It provides an analysis rooted in social justice and emancipatory ideas (Fisher & Karger 1997). Critical theory sees that traditional social work has been party to a political doctrine that directs clients and workers to blame the individual rather than economic and social institutions and structures for social problems.

Social work itself is seen to occur in an ‘intermediate zone’ that straddles both public and private domains (Stacey & Davis 1983 quoted in Christie 1998; see Chapter Four). Radical social work in particular reinforces the connection of the private and political in its linking of personal problems to the inadequacies and inhumane features of the socio-economic structure, a commitment to social critique and a goal and value of social change (Trainor 1996; Fook 1993; Clarke 1979; Webb 1981; Philp 1979; Brandon 1976; Howe 1987; Healy 1999, 1993). On another frame of analysis, social work is usually undertaken by women, transferring their caring roles from the private to public sphere, while it enters the private realm of family life bringing with it a public, social agenda of care and control (Christie 1998; Wannan 1986; Otter 1986). I see that the private is political in that what we do in our social work practice – which is often a private experience between practitioner and client – is at once a manifestation and a contribution to how we construct and consider our practice.
in the public sphere. The private is political in terms of what we accept as competent and professional practice.

3.3.4.1. Power Relations

Power is difficult to define and is indeed one of the most contested of concepts (Clegg 1998). Power has variously been considered from what it is to what it does and has been defined as a process, contextual, lying in language, action, ideology, values and structures, a capacity, as something actualised, or as occurring in relationships and interactions (Payne 1996; Pinderhughes 1983; Marchant & Wearing 1986). In a modernist sense, power was conceived in positivist terms as something directly observable and measurable; there was a concern with the causal and mechanical nature of the relations of power (Clegg 1998).

Power was seen to be held by individuals rather than organisations with no consideration of the structural factors that contributed to an individual’s power. Clegg (1998, p.11) talks of the ‘second face’ of power, a recognition in the literature of the 1960s of the power not only in decision-making but also in ‘non-decision-making’ in ensuring that things did not get done. Foucault is interested in the relations of power as something exercised rather than possessed, a practice that occurs particularly through notions of discourse, and rather than being a negative it produces reality, domains of objects and rituals of truth (Flyvbjerg 2001; Clegg 1998).

Power relations are an essential part of understanding the personal and political link, the influence and position of professions, division and inequalities in the social world, determining targets for change and strategies for action (Ife 1995a). Institutions, including professions, constitute privileged observation points that are concentrated, ordered and often effective as their very professional position constructs many of their acts as powerful (Flyvbjerg 2001, p.117; Schon 1983). Social work needs to consider then how it contributes to constructions of clienthood, social problems, theory and practice and how the personal-political link is conceptualised and actualised (Payne 1996; Brake & Bailey 1980).

What is important to this research is considering the power over ideas and discourse, and what that means for the kinds of knowledge considered appropriate for social work. Power over ideas includes the power to think autonomously and not have one’s worldview dictated, and the capacity to enter into dialogue and contribute to public culture (Ife 1995a;
Barber 1991). Power and knowledge directly imply one another; for Foucault (quoted in Flyvbjerg 2001, p.125) there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor is there any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

Where there is power there is also resistance (Flyvbjerg 2001). Complementary to this therefore is having skills for critical resistance and a perception of self as having power (Pinderhughes 1983). For social work, this means developing similar capacities in its clients so they can have some influence or control over the forces in their lives, and in terms of developing the art of practice having a well-developed critique and formulation from which to position this argument.

3.3.5. Social Change

It is important to consider social change here as it is an important part of social work’s historical and contemporary aims and functions, and secondly because knowledge is part of the social sphere such that when considering art and science and their relative positions processes of social change may be relevant also. Modernism held a linear and inevitable view of progress with science the path to emancipating and liberating humans from poverty, despotism and ignorance (see above). Postmodernism does not specify the need for, nature of, direction or strategies for social change. However, it does have an emancipatory potential that some analysts have drawn on in its interest in the politics of domination and resistance, exclusion and inclusion, and advocacy for a diversity of participants and viewpoints in public life (Ife 1997; Pease & Fook 1999; Irving 1991; Fisher & Karger 1997; Gaha 1998; Noble & Briskman 1998; Leonard 1997). However, some also question as to whether this celebration of diversity and difference means an end to the possibility of a mass politics of resistance or liberation (see above).

As outlined above, critical theory has an explicit normative element based on ideals of social justice and human liberation as well as a specific action component linking analysis and practice. It is concerned to empower people to become active partners in producing their realities and locating emancipatory possibilities in the sites at which discourse can be resisted and challenged (Ife 1997; Held 1980; Lane 1999; Morrow & Brown 1994; Fook
2000; Morgan & Ramirez 1983). Part of this is critical imagination to avoid seeing the current context as natural and unchangeable. Critical theory has a particular interest in language and its role in constructing and continuing social reality and power relations. Three aspects of power in language are considered:

(i) the role of science and instrumental reason in linguistic domination
(ii) the use of expert knowledge to exclude citizen participation in political debates
(iii) how language is used by the establishment to define meanings – violence for example is not a word used to describe the actions of the armed forces. Marcuse called this political linguistics. (Curry Jansen 1983, pp.347-8)

Social change therefore would require that the language of domination be overcome and a new language developed to create and communicate new values (Curry Jansen 1983; Leonard 1997; Healy 2000). One contribution of critical theory to social transformation could be the promotion of authentic public debates (Leonard 1997; Healy 2000; Hoffman 1987; see Chapter Nine for a discussion of language and the public place of art). Habermas in particular was concerned with the process of dialogue and that other arguments needed to be heard alongside those of instrumental reason. He outlined the ideal speech situation for public participation and democracy in which all potential participants have equal chances to initiate and perpetuate discourses, to criticise, ground or refute explanations and interpretations, and to do so free from the external constraints of domination (Flyvbjerg 2001; Curry Jansen 1983).

Feminism advocates the need for both individual and collective resistance and action where personal and political change and activity are explicitly linked (Payne 1991; Dominelli 1997; Leonard 1997). As part of this analysis is a challenge to the legitimacy of the political system and deconstructing ‘natural’ patterns of domination (Rein 1970; DeMaria 1993; Ryant 1969). Feminists argue for a conceptualisation of public life to include private matters (Fook 1993; Fisher & Karger 1997; Howe 1987). Acting on the analysis of social situations and in turn influencing the analysis by the experience of the action means an emphasis on praxis (Payne 1991). Feminism identifies personal, ideological and structural barriers to enacting completely a new agenda (DeMaria 1993).
3.4. MEANING FOR SOCIAL WORK

Each body of theory outlined has particular meaning for and interpretations of social work, as shown in the following table. In the same way that the theories are not necessarily comparable – but rather discussed because they have some analytical meaning for the research – the presentation of the following table is not meant to imply that they (1) provide a model of social work or (2) that they are comparable. While the theories themselves involve a critique of one another or at times offer an analysis that incorporates aspects of both or form a joint analysis, they do not offer themselves for comparison and I would not presume to do so either. The table therefore is a way of presenting their analysis of important social work concepts and should be read down instead of across. Table 3.1 outlines these interpretations along six dimensions; knowledge base, social work relationship, outcomes and goals, values, professionalism and critique of social work. The references are on the following page.
# Table 3.1: Informing Theories and Interpretations of Social Work Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Postmodernism</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
<th>Feminist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Base</strong></td>
<td>Social science based on natural science model</td>
<td>Deconstructs established discourses(^1,2)</td>
<td>Critiques yet holds a place for rational scientific knowledge alongside other ways of knowing</td>
<td>Affirms &amp; uses client and worker’s experience as basis for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positivism and empiricism(^1,2)</td>
<td>Totalising critique of rational science</td>
<td>Affirms different, continual reconstructions of reality</td>
<td>Social work only recently begun to incorporate feminist concerns (^8,9,10,11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusive knowledge base possible and desirable</td>
<td>No privileged positions(^3,4)</td>
<td>Values subjective experience</td>
<td>Absence of women’s voices in social work knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows space for marginalised voices(^3,4)</td>
<td>Praxis</td>
<td>Structural analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Worker and client must construct shared meaning through dialogue(^5,6)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critiques yet holds a place for rational scientific knowledge alongside other ways of knowing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Death of author – client and worker both create meaning</td>
<td>Critiques expertise and privileged position of professional</td>
<td>Collegiate, egalitarian, flexible, reciprocal, non-exploitative(^8,9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social worker as expert</td>
<td>Understanding of power and how it is experienced in the relationship(^5,12,13)</td>
<td>Traditional notions of replicate and reinforce broader social processes and power relations</td>
<td>Relate to whole person and emphasise connectedness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commitment to casework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on power imbalances; if not redressed reproduce women’s subordinate position(^9)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ethic of individualism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Generalised and unified ideals of a universal good</td>
<td>Public good as subjective and culturally relative (^1,15,16)</td>
<td>Emancipation</td>
<td>Individual and social change together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence based, identifiable outcomes</td>
<td>Social transformation required – to what end not specified</td>
<td>Social transformation based on principles of social justice</td>
<td>Dismantling patriarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value of diversity questions value of evaluation</td>
<td>Multiple methods of evaluation possible, including empirical methods</td>
<td>Subjective evaluation valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professionalism</strong></td>
<td>Traditional models including exclusive body of knowledge based on science, technical skills, objectivity Rational form of service organisation and delivery</td>
<td>Critique notions of care and therapeutic institutions as leading to increased surveillance, management and control of problem populations(^10)</td>
<td>Analysis of power and the struggle to change it(^16,20)</td>
<td>Critique hierarchical notions, privileging of worker’s knowledge Accountability to client</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regime expertise</td>
<td>Critique expertise</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages voice of those traditionally positioned as clients to be heard (^5,6,7)</td>
<td>Ideology leads to domination through privileging of professional’s knowledge(^21)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need to recognise power in professional traditions &amp; structures(^5,6)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
<td>Universals such as human rights, social justice, common human needs, human dignity and worth(^1)</td>
<td>Diversity and heterogeneity</td>
<td>Social justice and human progress</td>
<td>Social justice, particular emphasis on dismantling patriarchal structures, elimination of discrimination based on gender Value system as a conscious filter(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opposes the regulation of society’s marginal members(^12,18,19)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critique of Social Work</strong></td>
<td>Lack of scientific status – including scientific knowledge, processes and ways of evaluating the work</td>
<td>See knowledge and professionalism</td>
<td>Individualistic focus – actually a political doctrine(^11)</td>
<td>Male views and ways of knowing that have dominated – seen in values, qualities, knowledge, organisation(^22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship and professionalism reinforce domination and oppression</td>
<td>Feminist ideals of caring not supported by environment; Standardisation, outcome measures, formulaic methods(^23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) McColl, J., \(^2\) B. S. (2009). \(^3\) B. A. G. (2009). \(^4\) B. A. G., \(^5\) J. A. McColl, \(^6\) J. A. McColl, \(^7\) J. A. McColl, \(^8\) A. J. C. \(^9\) K. J. C. \(^10\) J. A. McColl, \(^11\) J. A. McColl, \(^12\) J. A. McColl, \(^13\) J. A. McColl, \(^14\) J. A. McColl, \(^15\) J. A. McColl, \(^16\) J. A. McColl, \(^17\) J. A. McColl, \(^18\) J. A. McColl, \(^19\) J. A. McColl, \(^20\) J. A. McColl, \(^21\) J. A. McColl, \(^22\) J. A. McColl, \(^23\) J. A. McColl.
3.4.1. Modernism, Postmodernism and Critical Theory

Modernity, or modernist thinking, has had a significant impact on social work. The influence of modernism in the welfare state that social work operates in can be seen in the belief in generalisable and unified ideals of a universal good, the desire for evidence-based practice, identifiable outcomes and in its organisation within bureaucracies (Fook 2000; Camilleri 1996). In social work in particular it can be seen in the commitment to ethics of universal justice and tolerance and a belief in the capacity for individual and social understanding and change (Gibbons 2001; Damianakis 2001). Social science theories were looked to, to justify social work’s goals, concepts, methods and knowledge base and to provide the profession with a rational, certain and objective base from which to operate (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Rapoport 1968; Davies 1981; see Chapters Four and Eight). There is a view in mainstream social work that objective reality exists, can be discovered by value and context free research, faith in rational science and a professionalism that privileges the skills and knowledge of the worker (Lane 1999; Pease & Fook 1999; Narhi 2002).

Postmodernism invites critical practices, deconstructions which question and disrupt established discourses, responsiveness to context, rejection of hierarchical expertisation, and the locating of a plurality of complex and diverse solutions (Lane 1999; Pease & Fook 1999). As social workers living in a postmodern world, the task is to try to make sense of and reformulate a world where certainty is no more, and the meta-narrative of the profession’s identity (rational science) has been deconstructed (Irving 1991; Pease & Fook 1999; Applegate 2000; Walker 2001). Social work appears to be incorporating diversity, reflexivity, deconstruction, uncertainty, fragmentation and ambiguity, all themes of postmodernity (Parton 1998; Howe 1994; Applegate 2000). Postmodern thinking then provides a process and framework for constructing and developing critical practice; it challenges social work to critically analyse its worldviews, and entrenches critical thinking
as part of an evolving practice (O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Wood 1997). However, critics see that a relativist position on knowledge means there is no means of evaluation or appraisal, such that social work practice and knowledge are not transparent or accountable (Gambrill 1999; Bolland & Atherton 2002; Rubin 2000; Walker 2001). As noted above, there is also concern that postmodernist ideals are incompatible with social work’s ethics of universal human rights and social justice (Gibbons 2001).

Of particular importance from critical theory is its notion of the relationship between theory and practice as one of praxis. This is the specific linking of theory and practice that suggests a reflective process of learning by doing and of doing by learning (Ife 1999, p.220; see Chapter Four). Within this, critical theory accepts the inevitability of social science being essentially normative; it deconstructs therefore science as traditionally understood and in particular the power relations underlying it, while maintaining its relevance and utility. Social work shares a concern with how knowledge forms come to be legitimated, as its theory and practice have always been at the ‘edge of the frame’ between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy (Martinez-Brawley 1999, p.333). Critical theory, with its normative element, provides a framework within which the postmodern critique of universals and dominant discourses can be maintained alongside a universalist humanist vision of social work (Pease & Fook 1999; Walker 2001). For social work, critical theory therefore allows a place for science alongside other ways of knowing.

3.4.2. Feminism, Gender and Social Work

The parallels between social work and feminist commitments, theory and aims have been noted by a number of authors, while acknowledging that there are multiple theories of both (Swigonski 1994). In particular, social work and feminism share a common concern with the social relations of the family, social control and social change. Feminism can provide social work with new perspectives on inequality and injustice in the inter-personal sphere – such as the family, social expectations, roles and personal identity – where the discipline operates. Feminism as outlined above is concerned with difference, the legitimisation of the voices of ‘other’ and a construction of alternative positions, as are art and social work (Brook 1992; Ife 1997). Feminist practice also draws on a strengths perspective, identifying personal strengths and change rather than pathology and adjustment,
concomitant with social work’s ethical commitment to human dignity and worth, self-determination and social justice (Fook 1986; AASW Code of Ethics 2004).

Social work becomes a place between the private and political worlds (Camilleri 1996; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 1998). Social work’s history lies in the unpaid work of women, and the profession itself continues to be defined as a female profession and an intrinsic female function. Its roles and functions are in many ways extensions of women’s private caring roles and feminine characteristics of care and nurturing into public professional ones as ‘society’s housewives’ (Smith 1986, p.201; Christie 1998; Leonard 1997 Camilleri 1996; Epstein 1991; Chambers 1986). It needs to be acknowledged also that gender for men is rarely analysed as a feature of their practice or as having an impact on their careers, whereas women are seen to have chosen a typically female profession constructed within their own personal life experiences, knowledge and social roles (Camilleri 1996; Christie 1998; Gumprecht 1986; Freedberg 1993).

The definition of femininity is central to the purpose and operation of welfarism. While women’s roles as carers and nurturers are socially sanctioned they are inadequate in the face of rational scientific definitions of professional behaviour. The appeal to rational science therefore may be as a counter to the status of social work as women’s work and the resulting meaning that has for its professional role and authority (Freedberg 1993; Epstein 1999; Weick 2000). The organising principles of the welfare state reinforce women’s domestic caretaking roles, economic dependence on men and particular forms of family (Hudson 1985; Marchant 1986). Further, women are often clients in their role as mothers and carers, particularly in their failure in these roles or as part of an infrastructure on which agencies depend to support services to the elderly, disabled, sick and mentally ill (Orme 1998). Gender analysis therefore is important in understanding the weak and ambiguous status and position of social work in the welfare industry (Martin & Healy 1993; Epstein 1991; Dominelli 1997). As Smith (1986, p.201) points out;

…women are no more rewarded for doing society’s housekeeping than their own.

It could be argued that there are two cultures in social work the masculine and the feminine. Camilleri (1996) describes this as a split between researchers and academics (the world of
rationality, abstraction and logic and therefore primarily masculine) and practitioners (in which knowing, caring and doing occur in constant interaction). The reification of theory and the marginalisation of practice wisdom give some indication of the status of these two cultures. Leonard (1997, p.19) identifies ‘masculine’ sectors of the welfare state – related to policy, rights, research, administration, allocation of resources and purchase of services, compared with the ‘feminine’ sectors of treatment and direct client care. Women do the ‘caring for’ while men do the ‘caring about’ (Camilleri 1996, p.79) – the latter being where judgements are made on the basis of rationality and logic (Bryson 1992; Christie 1998; Payne 1996; Marchant and Wearing 1986). These two cultures may also be described as the science and art of social work reflected in the polarisation of nurturing-caring feminine attributes and scientific rigour. Such an understanding may account for the private nature of art – that the desire to validate our knowledge through science has silenced women’s ways of knowing (Weick 2000; Palmer 2002; Powell 2003a).

Feminist social work places an importance on particular qualities of the practitioner. It puts a central emphasis on developing analysis from experience; for feminist social workers this means working out concepts and definitions of practice through daily encounters with clients and in their organisations (Hudson 1985). The manner in which the interviewer uses his/herself in feminist interviewing is understood to be distinctive and is a more active role than is normally considered appropriate in social work interviewing. The worker is an authentic, available role model making deliberate and critical use of his or her own values, thoughts, experiences, opinions and reactions (McDonald 1988). In feminist interviewing it is important to acknowledge and value traditionally ‘female’ characteristics – empathy, nurturance, sensitivity, intuition, subjectivity, intimacy and non-authoritarian relationships (Fook 1986) – qualities seen important in a social work as art approach also (see Chapter Seven). However, this caring work is seen as natural for women and therefore there is a paucity of analytic material articulating the elements of this caring role (Camilleri 1996; Brown 1986). It is important therefore to revise the bases by which women commonly evaluate themselves, bases which devalue behaviours and characteristics commonly associated with the feminine (McDonald 1988).
3.5. PLACING MYSELF AS RESEARCHER

Necessary in research such as this is placing myself analytically as researcher (see Chapter Two). If knowledge is power, and discourse is political then I need to consider my position as regards the theoretical frameworks discussed here. Following are my reflections – and sense-making – regarding the contributions of each body of thought to the research.

Postmodernism and critical theory are both useful in terms of their deconstruction of dominant forms of knowledge, analysing the power relations at work in constructions of reality and human nature. Postmodernism allows for a diversity of forms, styles, expression, content and so forth and in that sense creates a space for the art of social work. Postmodernism however does not provide two things: a way of evaluating and therefore validating those other ways of knowing, or a normative element so fundamental to social work. Further, it provides a totalising critique of rational science, which I think in terms of this research, would be an uncritical and non-engaged position.

Critical theory is more useful in considering the place of science and art as it provides a way of holding at once different ways of knowing. It is engaged with yet critical of rational science. It provides a strategy through its linking of knowledge and power; that when there is knowledge about something there is power in it also providing some validation to the research aim of bringing social work as an art into the public arena by developing its theory. Further, it contains a normative element that is compatible with the social work values of social justice in particular.

The major contribution of feminism to this research is the work on dualisms and considering how to transcend them. The consideration of dualisms has been fundamental to the shape and direction of this research. The question for me is whether the binary form of the inquiry (is social work a science or an art) is the only form of interrogation or inquiry possible. Am I creating a privileged position for science (and therefore an unprivileged one for art) by continuing with that construction of the relationship? Is the relationship necessary – can the art of social work not be considered on its own? Feminism provides further explanation in looking at the qualities of social work as an art – generally considered female qualities and therefore natural and not available to development.
Where would I locate myself? The ways of thinking and being that brought me to social work I would consider as being humanist and structuralist. I am committed in my personal and professional life to ideals of social justice and human dignity and a need for social change. The idea of social worker as artist always spoke to me so I would add that to the list of humanist, structuralist, feminist, and beginning critical theorist!

3.6. MEANING FOR THE RESEARCH

Are the modern-postmodern and science-art relationships in social work actually parallel ones? Do the masculine-feminine cultures in social work explain the status of the science-art continuum? Can critical theory provide an analysis of how to hold rational scientific knowledge alongside other ways of knowing? While the meaning of these theories and related concepts will be discussed as relevant throughout the thesis, in particular in examining the relationship of science and art, a brief summary is provided here.

Social work has been conceived within the project of modernity and in particular has embraced the modernist ideals of rational science, positivism, progress and a search for truth. Postmodernism challenges the received wisdom of science and deconstructs it to reveal its domination in institutional structures, practices and relationships of power. A postmodern reading of social work allows a focus on social work as text, narrative and artistry as opposed to social work as science; where science looks for explanations and causes the former approach is concerned with finding a meaningful account with the constant reinterpretation of reality and meaning (Parton & Marshall 1998).

Postmodernism helps to legitimate forms of knowledge outside of the empirical paradigm including the arts and humanities such as literature, poetry, philosophy and theology. For social work it gives emphasis to communication, empathy, understanding, the use of self and the importance of relationship (Hudson 1997; Irving 1999; Ife 1997). It reflects the current context of social work, and allows for different voices and sources of knowledge, redefines the audience/artist and social worker/client relationship and deconstructs the binary oppositions of fact and fiction, history and story, art and science. This can be useful in the search for a perspective broader than science or positivism, or to see how the two
‘opposites’ may indeed work together (Parton & Marshall 1998; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998). In return, the social work as art approach with its emphasis on creativity, flexibility, contextual knowledge and reflection can assist social work in making sense of the postmodern decline of grand narratives, including that of rational science as the only way of knowing (Irving 1999).

The debate about the place of art and science in social work can perhaps be seen as social work being in a process of transformation between its modernist origins and its struggle in a postmodernist era (Camilleri 1999, p.26). Postmodernism gives social work permission to re-explore its artistic dimensions in that it celebrates and accommodates the possibility of a convergence of paradigms, however does not articulate or construct it within its own parameters (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Lane 1999). Postmodernism is seen here as essentially an allowing theory, giving space and permission for alternative explanations and forms of knowledge, diversity, multiple voices including an acknowledgment of suppressed voices, as well as a critique of the claims of modernity and the scientific paradigm in which social work has located itself. Postmodernism’s critique of rational science however is complete, where rather what is being explored here is the place of both science and art. Critical theory, discussed below, allows more for this exploration.

Critical theory has significant meaning for social work in terms of its explicit linking of the private and political, understanding of power and domination, deconstruction of knowledge and theory, and explicit linking of theory and practice in praxis. It shares parallel aims with social work in social justice, human progress and emancipation. Of particular relevance here is that critical theory holds a place for rational science alongside other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing in a position that is not privileged. It maintains a critical stance towards all knowledge forms and the power relations underlying them; this is important as it is necessary that any engagement with a social work as art approach be just as critical and available to deconstruction and analysis also. This invites social work to critically examine its traditional knowledge bases, the functions it has had for the profession, in particular in credibility and the professionalising project. It allows us to consider therefore how science and art might be placed together in social work, and what form that relationship might take, other than as binary opposites.
It could be argued that the masculine-feminine dualism is similar to the science-art one for social work particularly in terms of qualities, status, and forms of knowledge used. Feminism provides a critique of the ‘malestream’ discourse, knowledge and male views that have formed the infrastructure of practice and external structures within which it operates and is informed by (Carter & Delamont 1996, p.xi; Marchant & Wearing 1986). Rational science has a gendered quality in that many of its characteristics – objectivity, rationality, logic, reason – are considered masculine ones. This also highlights the gendered nature of social work’s suppressed, artistic qualities – intuition and use of self for example are traditionally seen as female ones (Imre 1990a). In this way, it may also provide an account for the status of social work as an art. These characteristics are seen as natural to women, bound up in traditional, sexist notions of femininity and masculinity and an inherent part of the caring role; as such, they are not afforded significant status nor seen as available for development and learning. More broadly, social work itself is seen as women’s work and the process of the feminisation of care is important here; rational science as a masculine way of knowing was used to give social work credibility and professional status (see Chapter Four). Within the feminist argument is space for art as an alternative for science, one connected to feminine ways of knowing, that celebrates and utilises those feminine qualities, without labelling them as natural to women or unavailable to men.

3.7. SUMMARY

The theories or concepts outlined above inform the exploration of the art and science of social work practice undertaken here. They inform the methodology by giving legitimacy to many ways of knowing and the validity of theorising from the personal – for me as researcher and in the voices of practitioners. For the content analysis it gives credibility to the notion of multiple readings of texts, and points to the traditional authority of text legitimising it therefore as a useful target of analysis. Postmodernism and critical theory in particular inform the construction of the concept of art used here while all provide a critique of rational science and point to possibilities for a reconceptualisation of the relationship between science and art. The contribution of feminism to transcending dualisms is vital then in reconsidering the possibilities for a place for both art and science. Importantly, there is attention given to understanding how knowledge forms come to be
legitimised and marginalised, and what might underlie that other than the intrinsic value of
the knowledge per se. This helps contribute to an understanding of the relative positions of
scientific and artistic ways of knowing for social work.

The notions of paradigm and discourse provide an analysis of how knowledge is
constructed and its relationship to social and political structures and relations of power in
particular. This means that what comes to be accepted as credible, legitimate, truth
knowledge is the result of processes of power, domination, marginalisation and oppression.
The central point here is that there are competing conceptions of what scientific activity and
social science should be (Morrow & Brown 1994). Critical theory and postmodernism in
particular are concerned to deconstruct taken for granted knowledge forms; in this way they
both provide for a re-examination of rational science and allow an intellectual space for the
development of a social work as art approach. This facilities the analysis and exploration
undertaken in Chapter Eight. Together these perspectives demand the acknowledgement
and celebration of diversity in cultures, sexualities, abilities and so forth, which within
modernism were excluded, suppressed or discriminated against (Leonard 1997). The
challenges of change processes are evident however; the emergence of a new paradigm
threatens stability, the security of existing relationships, questions cherished beliefs and
definitions and is disconcerting and uncomfortable (Imre 1991; Peile 1993). To ask people
to call into question their conceptual structure is to ask that they be prepared to give up a
piece of themselves (Imre 1982). Taken together, these theories provide a space, a critique,
an example, a way of conceptualising, and permission for a re-examination of the science
and art of social work.
CHAPTER FOUR
ISSUES OF IDENTITY: THE DEBATE
OVER SOCIAL WORK’S ‘TRUE NATURE’

We must remain the visionaries, we must remain the optimists,
we must remain the profession that’s willing to speak out
and seize an opportunity to bring about change in society and in ourselves.

Jo Gaha, President,
Australian Association of Social Workers, 1998

4.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the captivating forces of social work according to Weick (1983) is the profession’s persistent willingness to look at the edge of the way things are. In a postmodern sense, social work has been a collage where science and art, rationality and intuition, systematic and asystematic knowledge meet (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998). Yet, for much of its professional life social work has struggled with issues of identity and its public image, a struggle incorporating a broad range of issues about its true nature, legitimacy, respectability and competency (Azzarto 2001; Gaha 1998; Reeser & Epstein 1990; Hugman 1996; Gordon 1983; DeMaria 1981). Social work is not unique in its search for identity – many professions debate similar issues (Gibelman 1999). As Gibelman (1999) points out such debates can be seen as appropriate and positive, as it signifies awareness of the dynamism of social work and its capacity to respond to and address a changing world.

Social work is not practiced in a vacuum and is determined to some extent by its relationship to other key social and political institutions. These include: agencies; discourses about professions, social problems and clients; academia; accrediting and funding bodies; social and economic policy; clients; as well as the way in which members themselves perceive and define their practice (Webb 1981; Hartman 1994; Payne 1996; Petruchenia & Thorpe 1990; Gitterman & Miller 1989; Bartlett 1970; Pearson 1973). Given that it is concerned with issues of power, public life, welfare and social change, with little that is predictable or routine about it, social work and issues of its identity may always be complex and pluralist, troubled and troubling (Ife 1997; Hugman 1996; Gaha 1998; Jordan 1984; Hepworth & Larsen 1990). Social work has been variously defined by its social nature and role, humanism, particular value base, linking of the private and political,

There are questions of what sort of knowledge is needed, its philosophical, ideological, value and ethical underpinnings, paradigmatic assumptions, the kind of discipline needed for good practice, core practice and qualities and the most appropriate way of going about that development. Underlying this is the question as to whether the search for a universal identity is appropriate given the diversity, complexity and contextual nature of social work (Hugman 1996; Gibelman 1999; Imre 1982; Peile 1993; Ife 1997; England 1986a; Fook 1996; Pearson 1973; Gammack 1982; Payne 1991).

England (1986a) sees that issues of definition are problematic because the structure of debate about the nature of social work precludes its proper discussion and description as it is framed in inappropriate materialist and positivist terms. Such debate highlights attempts to assert the importance of alternative perspectives, adequate knowledge bases, purposes and values appropriate to the profession and so forth (Payne 1996).

This chapter will explore some of the controversies surrounding social work’s identity and whether these represent opportunities or barriers to the development of a social work identity based in art, the place of science, and the relationship between the two. A brief examination of the history of social work highlights the origins of some of these issues.

4.2. HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK
An awareness of social work’s heritage provides a perspective on its traditional aims, functions and ways of knowing as well as revealing something of its purpose and nature. It is also important to acknowledge that history is not necessarily a conscious process; key events and research in social work can now be identified although they were not necessarily purposeful or consensus acts at the time.

As a formalised occupation, social work is global, however its origins are to be found in the industrialising Western nations, particularly Europe and North America, exported through colonial or neo-colonial economic and cultural relations (Hugman 1996; Camilleri 1996).
Social work in the United Kingdom started as a reform effort to find more realistic remedies to social problems than traditional forms of philanthropy and charity (Seed 1973). Casework was directed to the poor with aims of supervision and containment and the problem of poverty was seen to lie in character and morality rather than power and disenfranchisement (Woodroffe 1962; Jones 1998). Casework was thought to be the ‘science of doing good and preventing evil in [our] social system’ (Reverend Solly of the Charity Organisation Society quoted in Woodroffe 1962, p.48).

Social work in the United States emerged through two distinct movements; the scientific charity of the Charity Organisation Society and social reform work by the Settlement Movement (Camilleri 1996; Haynes & White 1999). As the progressive era came to an end in the early 1900s, the social reform front of social work gave way to its concern for professionalism; politics were the antithesis of the objective, rational, technically competent work of professionals (Camilleri 1996). There was an accompanying rise of and demand for training with the start of a theme to be reiterated that training was to be both theoretical and practical.

Of relevance here are the attempts to define early social work in terms of scientific methods and principles. This was in order to organise philanthropy, address social problems effectively, allow transfer of techniques to other workers and therefore found professional training, and establish authority, discipline and routinisation (Camilleri 1996; Seed 1973; Gibbons 2001; see Chapter Eight).

Although its origins can be traced to the 1920s, Australian social work as an occupation with a clearly defined identity and organisation is essentially a post World War II phenomenon (McDonald & Jones 2000). According to Camilleri (1996, p.49) Australian social work was ‘born modern’; it borrowed heavily from the literature and institutions of American and British social work respectively including the concern for a scientific knowledge base (Gaha 1998; McDonald & Jones 2000; Camilleri 1996). The development of social work in Australia is marked by a number of themes (i) a high level of government intervention in welfare issues means social work has a distinct place as part of the state apparatus

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(ii) a strategy of professionalisation including both functionalist and critical models of professionalism
(iii) the search for a unitary approach to promote and protect its identity
(iv) a concern with therapies and models of intervention with a methodological expertise backed up by rigorous and objective social science
(v) social work as an agent of reform and justice drawn from models of radical, structural, feminist and anti-racist social work. These represent the paradoxical and contested nature of the professional project.

(McDonald & Jones 2000; O’Connor 2000)

In Australia at the present time however – as in other parts of the world – the human services sector is expanding, resulting in new tasks, new occupations and different funding strategies with meaning for professional practices and identities (Shapiro 2000).

4.2.1. Tracing the Art and Science of Social Work

The art/science duality in social work has been apparent throughout its history (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Walter 2003). Social work as an art has been a pervasive theme throughout the decades, however science building has been a powerful phenomenon (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Schon 1983). This section traces the history of science and art in social work as represented through the profession’s literature. The place of science and art are considered – including their status, rationales for, and critiques of – in Chapters Eight and Nine.

It is traditionally assumed that there is a necessary and integrated relationship between social work practice and the social sciences and there has been much work to fit the profession’s ‘soft’ work into the scientific mould (Davies 1981; Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998). Attempts to strengthen the scientific basis of social work have taken a variety of forms including efforts to design and evaluate interventions, to improve research training and opportunities, to increase the collaboration of researchers and practitioners, to encourage the use of research findings by practitioners, to model practice on scientific processes, and to develop a scientist-practitioner style (Wakefield & Kirk 1996; see below). However positivist, empirical and rational scientific ways of knowing and practice have prompted controversy throughout the decades also and it is not clear that
the profession as a whole has developed a scientific base (Fraser et al 1991; Reamer 1992; Hepworth & Larsen 1990; Klein & Bloom 1994; see Chapter Eight).

Early social work was developed by practitioners who relied on the richness of their insights and the wisdom gained from their day-to-day experience of the work – social work as an art (Greenwood 1955; Bartlett 1964; Bitel 1999). Science was seen by some as an advance from the art of social work which preceded it (Bowers 1949; Gordon 1965a). The emergence of the scientific paradigm for social work had meaning for its art also. As the profession sought to increase its scientific standing, the artistic characteristics of the social worker were overlooked and neglected, treated as relatively unimportant or discredited (Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Goldstein 1990; Zolberg 1990; Gammack 1982; Ryser 1964; England 1986a; Taylor 1987; Palmer 2002; see Chapters Eight and Nine). For example, Bowers (1949) in a review of 34 definitions of social work that appeared in the literature between 1915 and 1947, found that the 17 that appeared before 1930, more than half used the term art as part of the definition, whereas only one after that date did.

As part of a response to Flexner’s 1915 challenge to American social work’s professional status, and due to its place in universities, the influence of psychotherapy and the medical model, social work became caught up in the Modernist pursuit of predictability, causal explanations, cumulative hypothesis, generalisations and technical rationality (Martinez-Brawley 1999; Gaha 1998; Briar 1968; Goldstein 1990; Swigonski 1994; Papell & Skolink 1992; Philp 1979). This led to a rather general assumption that the theoretical base of social work lay in the so-called social sciences (Bowers 1949; Specht 1979). Mary Richmond was one of the first to formulate a theory and method of casework in *Social Diagnosis* (1917) a method that required scientific data collection, diagnosis and treatment (Freedberg 1993). What followed were vibrant and sizable contributions made in empirical conceptualisations, valuations and general commentary (Klein & Bloom 1994).

Science achieved even greater stature in the post-war years as a result of the excitement generated by rapid advances in the physical and informational sciences (Goldstein 1990; Karger 1983; Zolberg 1990; Flyvbjerg 2001). The higher status of empirical social work was underscored as a way of knowing, as was the need for social work to strive to be more scientific in its practices (Rapoport 1968; Martinez-Brawley 1999). Science shaped views
of problems, clients and intervention including differentiating the deserving and undeserving poor, the relationship of the individual to society, relations between the weak and strong and so forth (Fraser et al 1991; Philp 1979; Howe 1994; Specht 1979). Social work began to emphasise the importance of objective assessment, a concern for rational decision-making and an interest in striving for measurable outcomes (Hudson 1997). The role of art moved from the centre and was more often seen as the means by which to apply scientific knowledge (Papell & Skolink 1992). Yet many authors (including Macdonald 1960, Bartlett 1964, Greenwood 1955, Falck 1970; Gordon 1965a) saw in this period that social work had not yet achieved independent scientific status while the critique of the scientific approach began to emerge in the literature (Azzarto 2001, p.59).

The 1970s was a period of development of radical social work, and a return to a focus on the personal-political relationship in social work including a revisiting of artistic, critical and participatory models of practice (Adams 1998). This also meant a re-emergence of anti-science arguments (Gibbons 2001). It was still not uncommon however to hear social work academics lamenting the lack of empirical rigour and competence in the field (Ife 1997).

The 1980s saw the reintroduction of controversy regarding the nature of social work as an applied social science (Klein & Bloom 1994; Heineman 1981). This was essentially a debate about research methodologies, quantitative versus a variety of approaches labelled qualitative. The two approaches were essentially dichotomised and it is now questioned how useful such a debate is to social work. The anti-science stance was more predominant now than previously (Barber 1996; Gibbons 2001). Social work’s status as a science was still considered inadequate however as it drew primarily on the science of other disciplines, while the assumptions and definitions of positivism remained present in much of the social work literature and discourse of that time (Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; Fraser et al 1991; Imre 1982; Heineman 1981; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Sherman & Wenocur 1983). The scientific-practitioner model as initially outlined by Richmond in 1917 also re-emerged in the profession’s literature of the 1980s and 1990s. In this model, social work and scientific practices were seen as parallel ones of collecting evidence and making rational decisions about services. It used scientific standards for assessing and planning its practice activities, and used with clients the practice methods and techniques known empirically to be the most
Social work therefore continued to post a hierarchy of research that ran from least to most scientific (Heineman 1981; Battye & Slee 1985; Siporin 1988; Fischer 1981; Davies 1981; Hartman 1994; Witkin 1991a; Ife 1995b; Gordon 1983; Sheppard et al 2000). In this time came a call for an alternative research paradigm from writers including Goldstein (1990), Heineman (1981), Imre (1986), Marsh (1983), and Weick (1987), including a renewed emphasis on the art of practice. However there have been often bitter and angry responses by researchers in the empirical tradition to this call (Camilleri 1996). Further, Camilleri (1996, p.63) saw that little discernible change in the social work discourse had occurred as a result; empiricism remained the tradition of social work research and the questions raised by postmodernism had no or little meaning. He considered that as a result, the social science world might well have been passing social work by.


The place and nature of science in social work continues to be debated in the contemporary professional literature. The debate about science for social work takes the form of one about evidence-based practice, competency-based approaches, and practice guidelines. None of the contemporary articles on science mention art. Many of the advocates of these approaches accept empirical science as an appropriate model for social work and do not address some of the complexities or even acknowledge that there are controversies (see for example Rosen 2003; Thyer & Myers 1998; Reid 2002). The rationale for such approaches includes organisational and client demands for accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and an ongoing concern regarding social work’s professional status (Rosen 2003; Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003; Faul, McMurty & Hudson 2001; Thyer & Myers 1998; Gellis & Reid 2004; Gibbs & Gambrill 2002) – all familiar themes (see above, see Chapter Eight).

Critiques also contain some familiar themes – that science is exclusionary, missing a vital human element, and does not allow for subjectivity and creativity. This perhaps indicates that proponents of science for social work have not been able to respond to – or integrate – such concerns. Critiques are dismissed as philosophical and as responding to an old model of science (namely, positivism) and not offering an alterative methodology (Rosen 2003;
Bolland & Atherton 2002). A stinging accusation comes from Sheldon (2001, p.807) that social workers would not allow such ‘methodological relaxation’ by professionals they were seeking the assistance of yet we allow it when ‘the poor and disadvantaged are the recipients of services’. The paradigm battles have not ended and the passion of the debate remains alive!

4.2.1.1.1. Evidence-Based Practice

The predominant contemporary model of scientific knowledge for social work is evidence-based practice (EBP). It is a model drawn from medicine primarily, but also nursing, psychiatry and psychology (Gilgun 2005; Rosen 2003). The principles of EBP are varied across different definitions although the central one is that ‘practice involve the conscientious, explicit and judicious application of best research evidence’ (Gilgun 2005, p.52). Most proponents then posit a hierarchy of research methods that constitute ‘best evidence’ reflecting an inherent preference for certain methodological perspectives (Lymberry 2003; Webb 2001; Faul, McMurty & Hudson 2001). Usually this runs from randomised-control trials as the gold-standard to qualitative (and the term is used that broadly) methodology (Gilgun 2005; Gellis & Reid 2004; Webb 2001).

Gellis and Reid (2004) do argue for a broadening of the notion of evidence to include local, case-specific evidence. Further, in some models practice wisdom and client’s values and unique circumstances can augment EBP (see for example Rosen 2003; Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003; Gambrill 1999). Indeed, Gilgun (2005) outlines that these are strong features of the model in medicine and nursing. Social work however does not appear to emphasise these to such an extent and focuses instead on the application of research evidence to practice (Gilgun 2005) – due to its ongoing concern for scientific status perhaps?

What many proponents do not acknowledge is that EBP is based in scientism and a technical-rational discourse (Lymberry 2003; Webb 2001), although some do celebrate the ‘reaffirmation of [the] profession’s commitment to a scientific knowledge base’ (Rosen 2003, p.197; see also Gellis & Reid 2004; Howard, McMillen and Pollio 2003; Reid 2002). There is little reflection – other than by critics – on the debate about the appropriateness of this for social work. This includes questions about the nature of evidence, the nature of
practice, limitations on research evidence, contextual rather than best-practice demands for EBP and the assumption of a ‘rational’ decision-making process (Smith 2002; Gilgun 2005; Webb 2001; Taylor & White 2001). While factors that may impede the implementation of EBP are noted, none relate to the model itself other than some ‘misconceptions’ about the model (Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003, p.254; see also Rosen 2003; Gibbs & Gambrill 2002). It would appear that one of the few expressed dilemmas for proponents of this model is how to get practitioners to make better use of research findings (see below).

4.2.1.1.2. Competency-Based Approaches

As outlined below competency-based approaches are increasingly defining professional roles and behaviours. Also based in scientific models of discrete, technical and concentrate behaviours, such approaches are seen as a response to the current context. The latter creates demands of routinised, proceduralised, and standardised work with a focus on outcomes and measurable performance (Lymberry 2003; Walker 2001). This approach is changing definitions of professionalism and restricting the capacity for professional judgement and creativity (Lymberry 2003; see below).

4.2.1.1.3. The Research-Practice Split

A question remains about social work’s status as a science – and a concern that it has not achieved scientific status. While science is seen to have informed curricula and debate, it has not necessarily improved outcomes or changed practitioner behaviour (Kirk 1999). This concern is evident in the current emphasis and concern about the ‘challenge’ of getting practitioners to utilise research findings. The researcher-practitioner split has a long history in social work. Indeed, Rosen (2003) states that the emphasis on EBP began due to a growing realisation that practitioners do not routinely use the best available evidence for their practice decisions. Many authors note, and then lament the lack of use of scientific knowledge by practitioners (Faul, McMurty & Hudson 2001; Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003; Gibbs & Gambrill 2002; Reid 2002).

A variety of reasons for this lack of research utilisation are considered, primarily to do with practitioner and practice inadequacies. These include practitioners not accessing the research and not having the skills or motivation to do so at any rate, ambivalence by practitioners towards social work research, and the demands of practice as immediate, time-
consuming and complex (Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003; Gellis & Reid 2004; Rubin 2000). Organisational issues are identified also such as inadequacies in graduate programs, continuing education and supervision, and a lack of dialogue between researchers and practitioners (Myers & Thyer 1997). Clients do not escape blame either: Gellis and Reid (2004) cite the dependence on clients’ self-reporting as a source of bias that limits the utility of evidence while Myers and Thyer (1997) accuse clients of being uninformed.

Very few authors question whether this situation may be related to either (i) the nature of research itself or (ii) that practitioners do not speak in the language of science and research. Osmond and O’Connor (2004) for example have identified that knowing may be expressed through examples, stories, metaphor as well as in ways that resemble existing theoretical knowledge. Further, inexplicit use of knowledge may occur (Payne 2001; Howe 1987). Only a few authors outline some inadequacies in the research and literature itself, but namely a lack of it or issues with its organisation and presentation rather than problems with the method or quality of research (see for example Rubin 2000; Thyer & Myers 1997; Kirk & Reid 2002). Indeed, the whole notion of applying research-based knowledge to practice assumes that the research base is adequate (Herie & Martin 2002, p.92). Kirk (1999) is one of the few who raises questions about the quality of the research literature in that much of it is ‘messy, methodologically flawed, often dated, inconsistent and ambiguous’ (Kirk 1999, p.306).

4.2.1.1.4. ‘Other ways of knowing’

‘Other’ or ‘many’ ways of knowing is a phrase often used in the contemporary social work literature. Indeed, the science-art dichotomy seems to have been replaced by one of scientific in opposition to other ways of knowing. The latter represents a diverse range of sources of and paths to knowledge, primarily those that do not fit the prevailing research paradigm of linear, rational approaches (Martinez-Brawley 2001). In particular has been a recent emphasis on the place of spirituality in social work (see for example Epple 2003; Canda 1998). These other ways of knowing emphasise heterogeneity, context and culture, inclusion, interpretation, humanism and subjectivity (Martinez-Brawley 2001; Weick 2000). They are able to provide insights into human nature, social life, self, clients as well social work practices and understanding (Damianakis 2001; Weick 2000).
Those advocating a postmodern approach to social work usually use the phrase, and in particular claims for other suppressed voices to be heard in the profession’s discourses. The postmodern approach is critiqued by proponents of EBP as being so relativist that it provides no standard of evaluation, preventing the critical appraisal of knowledge, and that many truths leads to no truth. Therefore, they proclaim that scientific knowledge still represents the best approximation of the truth (see for example Thyer & Myers 1998; Reid 2002; Gambrill 1999). The dichotomy between science and other is therefore perpetuated and maintained by those on both sides of the debate.

4.2.1.1.5. Social Work as Art

Very few contemporary articles could be located that discuss the notion of social work as an art (see Chapter Nine). All articles that do discuss art also refer to science, and in particular the meaning that this has had for an approach based in art (see for example Powell 2003a; Palmer 2002). Art is still seen as mysterious and in need of articulation and development (Seligson 2004; Powell 2003a; Palmer 2002; Fish & Coles 2000). The position of art is related to the dominance of science, social work’s gendered identity, the lack of a language for art, and seemingly endless concerns regarding social work’s professional status (Powell 2003a; Weick 2000; Walter 2003; Palmer 2002; see below). As outlined above, art is variously replaced on the other side of a dichotomous relationship with science by other ways of knowing, spirituality, qualitative research methods and so forth. There is little written about the qualities of art, which is what dominated the earlier literature, although some identify parallels between art and social work in terms of particular qualities of the practitioner. Similarly to the literature on science, the focus is now on ways of knowing. More work has been done identifying parallels between social work and art, namely humanism, the need for knowledge and technique, use of self, subjectivity and social roles (see for example Baldino 2001; Palmer 2002; Seligson 2004; Bitel 1999). These are discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

4.2.1.1.6. Summary

The ongoing debate about the place of science in social work represents other debates about social work – its place, nature, values, epistemological foundations and so forth. Dualisms between science and ‘other’ are continued. The critique of science from the other side of the dichotomy tends to be a totalising one, and I question whether this is useful. Essentially
the debate is related to a knowledge base – what type of knowledge? How is it used? What does it say about the nature and status of social work? There are also links to professionalism and the changing meanings of the concept in current contents. There are many ‘shoulds’ in the ‘other ways of knowing’ literature with few models being articulated. However, given that such ways of knowing have been suppressed in the dominant paradigm of rational science, they are obviously in the beginning stages of being articulated.

4.3. DEFINING ISSUES IN SOCIAL WORK

4.3.1. Private and Political

The artist is that paradoxical creature who is both at one with his society and fundamentally at odds with it. Yeats said poetry is the social act of a solitary being. Wilson 1964, p.176

It has been argued that social work developed out of the space between the private and political sphere (Hartman 1994; Petruchenia & Thorpe 1990; Brown 1988; Payne 1996; Parton 2000; see Chapter Three). A defining relationship in social work has been the linking of the private and political; how to manage this duality has been a recurrent theme in the social work literature since its origins. It is seen as what differentiates social work from other helping professions and approaches in its particular ability to communicate and work with both (Gaha 1998; Gibelman 1999; Brake & Bailey 1980; Barber 1991; Ife 1997; Fisher & Karger 1997; Abromovitz 1993; Specht 1979; Shapiro 2000; Hartman 1994; Jordan 1984).

4.3.1.1. Maintaining the Dualism or Breaking Down Barriers?

A constant question throughout social work’s history has remained as to whether it is primarily concerned with the individual or with society or both, and if both, what is the nature of this dual commitment (Robinson 1972; Boehm 1958; Imre 1982)? There are three fundamental responses to the private-political dualism. While the organisation of this is credited to Dominelli (1998) and Payne (1998a) many other authors have identified similar themes in social work’s response, namely:

(i) individualist, reformist views; therapeutic helping approaches focusing on the individual and their psychological functioning
(ii) reflexive-therapeutic; maintenance approaches related to personal growth, self-actualisation and personal power and helping people cope in the existing environment

(iii) socialist-collectivist views; emancipatory or social change approaches, addressing structural problems and social divisions.

(Payne 1998a; Dominelli 1998; Davies 1981; Greenwood 1955; Noble & Briskman 1998; Siporin 1985)

Social work’s political nature has shifted throughout its history due to a variety of factors such as: processes of professionalisation; theoretical advances including the emergence in the 1960s and 1970s of models of radical social work and the debate about the meaning of postmodern and critical approaches; critiques of its efficacy in impacting on large-scale social problems; a valuing of individualised help over more collective efforts; the ongoing shift from public to private provision; and the separation of micro and macro practice (Haynes & White 1999; Clarke 1979; Ryant 1969; Fisher & Karger 1997; Howe 1987; Webb 1981; Fook 1993; Camilleri 1996; Freedberg 1993; Gyarfas 1969; Briar 1968; Tesoriero 1999; Trainor 1996; Bardill 1993; Parton 1998; Ife 1997). O’Connor (2000) sees a need for social work to re-evaluate and re-elaborate the meaning of its social justice mission for the twenty-first century in the context of markets, managers, and the recognition of the breakdown of universal discourses about public good, human nature, scientific knowledge and so forth.

In another example of how social work manages dualisms, a pure approach of either is limiting and constricting for both client and worker where rather the links can be seen and used as reciprocal, integrated and dynamic at the level of analysis and ethical practice (Ife 1997; Howe 1987; Robinson 1972; Clark & Asquith 1985; Bartlett 1970; Webb 1981; Brandon 1976; Noble & Briskman 1998; Schwartz 1977; AASW Code of Ethics 1997; Brake & Bailey 1980; Fisher & Karger 1997; Furlong 1987). Perhaps social work’s strength is its way of serving society through both channels simultaneously; social work cannot give up either approach and still be social work (Millard 1977; Bartlett 1970; Imre 1982). It is essential that the worker maintain a dual focus, pursue pluralism rather than uniformity, to make the connection in a way that enables people to take action for change, that does not deny individual responsibility or biography but rather places choices and

4.3.2. The Science and the Art of Social Work

Many professions are concerned with the balance of their art and science, one that will enable it to grow and improve the effectiveness of its service to society (Bartlett 1970; Schon 1983). There is an historical and evaluative story to the art and science of social work, and debate as to their use in social work practice and theorising, their contribution to the profession and areas for development. The relationship between the two and the meaning for practice of science and art are discussed at greater depth in later chapters; it needs to be noted that they have something to do with discussions about social work identity.

4.3.3. The ‘Professionalising Urge’

Throughout its history social work has been characterised by a professionalising urge (Trainor 1996; Greenwood 1957). There are several reasons for the pursuit of professional status for social work: a response to the demand that social work prove itself; search for a unified identity and certainty; a base from which to compete for resources; expanding the discipline’s domain; and in aiding social work in its mission and goal of improving social conditions (Howe 1987; Payne 1996; Jordan 1984; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998).

4.3.3.1. Models of Professions

There is a long history of theoretical and empirical work concerning the nature of professions evident in the literature (Shapiro 2000; Schon 1983; Phillips 2000). While the concept may be elusive and there are conflicting ways of framing the professional role, knowledge and skills, society identifies certain occupations as professions and accords them power and prestige as a result (Popple 1985; Schon 1983). Three models dominate the sociological literature on professions (Payne 1991):

(i) **Trait model**: identify core attributes of a profession. Reference to an abstract, discrete and scientific knowledge base seems to be the only point of agreement from proponents of this model (Popple 1985; Shapiro 2000; Greenwood 1957;

(ii) **Process models**; identify stages or processes occupational groups must complete to attain professional status (Hugman 1996; Popple 1985; Reeser & Epstein 1990; Shapiro 2000; Wilensky 1964).

(iii) **Power model**; analyses patterns of occupational control, concerned with the acquisition of power, status and autonomy, where professions are occupational groups that have secured a dominant position (Jones 2000; Shapiro 2000; Hamilton 1974).

Common elements include an exclusive, scientific and educationally communicable body of knowledge, a service ethic or ideal, professional culture, autonomy, a defined area of expertise, community sanction or social assignment, norms of professional-client interaction, and values and preferences usually embodied in a Code of Ethics (Kenny 1992; Shapiro 2000; Payne 1991; Leonard 1997; Hepworth & Larsen 1990; Wilensky 1964; Nelson-Reed & Peebles-Wilkins 1991; Popple 1985; NISW 1982; Austin 1983; Gibelman 1999; Figueira-McDonough 1993).

Of relevance here is the relationship between science and professionalism – that the strive for both by social work is interconnected. The scientific perspective has informed notions of professionalism with qualities such as objectivity, rigour, accountability, a separation of the ‘expert’ professional and ‘non-expert’ client, authority, and technical skills stemming from a scientific knowledge base generated through the scientific method (Fraser et al 1991; Gibbs 1991; Trainor 1996; Payne 2001; Weick 1983; Palmer 2002; Greenwood 1957). Conventional professional practice then is thought of as applied science (Saleeby 1989; Kirk & Reid 2001) with theory and techniques derived from scientific research as conceived under the rational, empirical paradigm (Schon 1983). In particular, academic knowledge that brings prestige to a profession is a systemised, abstract knowledge that presents a rational, organised and logical way of theorising about the issues with which it deals (Shapiro 2000; Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Walter 2003; Thyer 2002). This is part of the process of the commodification of knowledge – professions appropriate themselves a field of discourse, becoming consultants for their own thinking, and convert knowledge into a form of property (Leonard 1997; Zolberg 1990; Hartman 1993; Chambon 1991).
Traditional definitions of professionalism are being challenged from a variety of sources while there are fundamental and rapid changes in the work context that are shaping the mission, structure, funding, governance and organisation of human services (O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000). There are critiques from postmodern and critical theory of the rational scientific knowledge base that professions have traditionally sought, as being hierarchic and monopolistic, and incomplete in leaving out essential human qualities (see for example Ife 2000b; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; England 1986a; Lane 1999; Leonard 1997; see Chapter Three). At the same time, professional autonomy and power are being eroded through increasing regulation, removal of final decision-making power, standardisation, routinisation, and competency-based approaches leading to an overly technical view of the social work role (Ward 1998; Lishman 1998; Ife 1997; McDonald & Jones 2000; Ingamells 1996; Shapiro 2000). Removed from both social workers and service recipients (and their values and mission) professional practice in many areas is increasingly subject to the structures of management, corporitisation and bureaucracy, with work contexts defined by those with backgrounds in economics, law, management and politics (Figuiera-McDonough 1993; Specht 1979; Shapiro 2000; Gaha 1998; Ife 1997). Such approaches are very apparently not consistent with the enactment or even conceptualisation of social work as an analytic and creative activity (Healy & Meagher 2004).

Of particular influence has been the emergence of a competency-based approach involving a focus on the technical aspects of the professional role which are reduced to discretely identified parts of empirically based competencies (Dominelli & Hoogvelt 1996, quoted in Healy & Meagher 2004, p.245). The work takes on therefore a more routinised, standardised format that is task-oriented, performance related, quantifiable, measurable, product-minded, specialised, mechanised and automotive (Howe 1994; Parton 1998; Ife 1995a; Ife 1997; Fisher & Karger 1997; Lee 1982; see below). What is lost in this approach is the synergy of bringing skills together to form, collectively, a holistic integration of knowledge, values and skills – that is, the art of practice (Lishman 1998; Lymberry 2003).
4.3.3.2. Social Work’s Status as a Profession

It seems ever since Abraham Flexner accused social work of failing to qualify as a fully-fledged profession in 1915, it has been anxious about its lack of ‘hardware’ and preoccupied with achieving ‘professional’ status (Gammack 1982, p.3; Trainor 1996; Chamberlain 1988; Phillips 2000; Camilleri 1996; Thyer 2002). Flexner in particular pointed out that social work did not have a sufficiently scientific knowledge base and therefore limited educationally communicable techniques (Flexner 1915). The model of a profession adopted was based on linear career lines, rationality, technical competency, a hierarchical ordering of power, and scientific objectivity (Camilleri 1996; Chambers 1986).

It continues to be debated within the profession however how far it is possible, or desirable, to regard social work as a profession with its own expertise and rules of practice (Lee 1982; Ife 1997; Gaha 1998; Reeser & Epstein 1990; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Jordan 1984). Social workers have variously described their profession as unloved (Richan & Mendleson 1973; Brandon 1976); incomplete (Gilbert & Specht 1974); acquiescing (Souflee 1979 quoted in Jones 2000, p.151); invisible (Camilleri 1996); a minor profession (Schon 1983); as well as a semi-profession, administrative profession and emerging profession (Popple 1985)! There are issues of power as to why social work may not yet be considered a profession, related to: gender in terms of being a female-dominated profession and that its skills are viewed as natural feminine characteristics and therefore not available for scientific validation (see Chapter Three); the status of its clients as poor and disempowered; the dual focus of care and control; being a state mediated occupation; and the ambiguous standing of the social sciences generally (see Chapter Eight; Camilleri 1996; Freedberg 1993; Dominelli 1997; Imre 1982; NISW 1982; Hart 1980; Epstein 1991; Payne 1996; Hugman 1996).

4.3.3.3. Meaning for the Art and Science of Social Work

The issue of science and art in social work is clearly associated with a search for professional status. This drive to professional status and trying to achieve in particular a scientific knowledge base have had significant impact in the construction of social work
Science appeared the appropriate paradigm to obtain legitimacy, respectability and a long sought after professional status (DeMaria 1981; Powell 2003a; Payne 1991). In order to differentiate themselves on a continuum in which everyone has some expertise in humanity and human problems, social workers have had to appeal to science (Rosen 2003; UN Report 1968; NISW1982; Nystul 1993). Many of the reasons that social work sought a scientific base appear to be internal and concerned primarily with its academic and professional status, without necessarily holding much interest or value for practitioners or clients (Payne 1991; Ife 1995b; see Chapter Eight).

With the adoption of a scientifically based professional identity and epistemology, ways of understanding rooted in intuition and creativity became increasingly discounted and subsequently under-valued (Vass 1996; Imre 1982; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Fraser et al 1991; see above). There is concern from both academics and ‘professionalisers’ that any acceptance of art would lead to an abandonment of the professionalising project (Camilleri 1996, p.96). Omissions regarding these concepts may reflect ambivalence towards issues that cannot be readily encompassed by a scientific philosophy as traditional definitions of professionalism require (Imre 1982; England 1986a). As art becomes increasingly devalued, it is unlikely to be recognised as a component of professional practice and therefore also unlikely that any provision will be made within the organisation, profession or research to foster its use and development (see Chapter Nine).

4.3.4. The ‘Social’ in ‘Social Work’

It is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.

Karl Marx, 1859 quoted in Howe (1987), p.37

Social work developed out of a recognition of the need to provide services to meet basic and humanitarian needs, to deal with problems that demand an immediate social response such as crime and mental health, and for certain social control and reform functions (Rosenfeld 1983; Bartlett 1958; Imre 1984b; Gaha 1998; England 1986b). The public sphere is essential to the definition of social problems and their solutions – it is also critical
therefore in determining the nature, function and aims of social work in a given era (Fisher & Karger 1997; Payne 1991; Bartlett 1958; Petruchenia & Thorpe 1990; Boehm 1958; Brake & Bailey 1980). The political, social, economic, organisational and legislative context in which social work is performed exerts an important influence on the profession’s forms of knowledge, its duties and powers, models of practice used, the political imperatives it responds to and the values that shape the policy to be implemented by social workers (Hudson 1997; Bartlett 1958; Munro 1998; Cooper 1988; Bitensky 1973; Tesoriero 1999; Clark & Asquith 1985; Kilty & Meeaghan 1995; Philp 1979; Davies 1994; Reeser & Epstein 1990). Worker, client, agency and welfare state themselves are socially constructed with rules governing their interaction (Payne 1991; Clark & Asquith 1985; Imre 1982; O’Connor 2000). The definition of social problems, maladjustment, adjustment, normal, abnormal, healthy, unhealthy and so forth is a social process also (Howe 1987; Munro 1998; Greenwood 1955). It also needs to be acknowledged that clients are negotiators of their reality and their context also (Howe 1987; Camilleri 1996; Leonard 1997).

There are a variety of ways in which the social role of social work can be construed including: prevention and risk management; social control in ensuring socially appropriate behaviour and applying sanctions where required as well as explicitly statutory roles (Sherman & Wenocur 1983; Figuiera-McDonough 1993; Howe 1987); social maintenance with the aim of achieving reconciliation between the individual and society (Davies 1994; Payne 1996); social change in work with individuals, groups, communities and organisations and in social work research, education and knowledge (Rosenfeld 1983; Noble & Briskman 1998; Barber 1995; Petruchenia & Thorpe 1990; Cooper 1988; Fisher & Karger 1997; Fook 1993; Abromovitz 1993; Ife 1995a; UN Report 1968; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Gaha 1998); social care; critique and social conscience of society (Hart 1980; Philp 1979; Youngusband 1964; Figueira-McDonough 1993). There are complexities to each of these (Payne 1991; Barber 1991; Jordan 1984; Howe 1987; Fook 1990); dilemmas around social change for example include questions of social change to what, when, for whom, by whom and under which ideology? There are parallels between the social roles of social work, and those of art, as will be outlined in Chapter Seven.
Social work can be seen as having a social career defined and redefined according to broader changes in its context (Vass 1996; Brown 1996; Furlong 2000; Gibelman 1999; Camilleri 1999). Given the complexity of the issues it deals with, the kinds of people it works with and its championing of social justice and humanist ideals, there can be inherent tensions in the relationships between social work and its context. For the purposes of this debate, it needs to be noted that ideas and ideologies cannot be isolated from the context in which they are produced, and further that a realistic assessment of the limitations of social work to determine its own identity is necessary when considering the possibility of a social work based in art (Webb 1981; Fook 1993).

4.3.4.1. Features of the Current Context
Fundamental aspects of the context of social work practice have been significantly transformed in the last decades posing new threats and contradictions for the welfare state, social work and the populations it serves (McDonald & Jones 2000; Ife 1997; Mayo 1998; Tesoriero 1999; Parton 2000; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Lishman 1998). The welfare state has and is continuing to undergo massive change of either reconstruction or deconstruction at both the level of discourse and service delivery (O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Camilleri 1996; McDonald & Jones 2000). There is increased concern with care planning, risk management, accountability measures, targeting resources, efficiency measures and so forth while the state takes on an increasing role as contractor, regulator and evaluator (Walker 2001; Camilleri 1996; George 2000; McBeath & Webb 1991; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Kilty & Meeaghan 1995).

Despite national and local differences, there are powerful trends in the current context of social work. Primary, inter-related features include: economic rationalism in which social welfare is seen as an imposition or a concession on and by the economy; privatisation and marketisation of services; managerialism where management is considered a generic skill, relying more on technical expertise than value-based practice; liberalism and individualism and a parallel de-emphasis on the collective; and globalisation which has seen the increasing mobility of capital, labour, populations, goods and services across national boundaries, with cultures and economies increasingly interlinked, resulting in homogenisation of production, consumption and cultural values (Carter 1997; Ife 1997, 2000; Howe 1994; Figueira-McDonough 1993; Hudson 1997; Bryson 1992; Tesoriero
Increasing inequality and uncertainty, social marginalisation, disenfranchisement, the depoliticisation of social problems, the objectification of clients, and dispossession that are the consequences of the above processes means the role of social work as it is traditionally conceived is more necessary than ever (Martinez-Brawley 1999; O'Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000). Yet what social work values in terms of equality, human service, caring, cohesion and community are threatened by the values of individualism, the ‘free’ market, the valuing of achievement over service and so forth (Walker 2001; Davies 1981; Gaha 1998; Ife 1997; Tesoriero 1999; Fisher & Karger 1997; Healy & Meagher 2004). The above changes has meant that the future of social work is seen by some to be in the balance and how to manage such dilemmas is strongly debated within the profession (Shapiro 2000; McDonald & Jones 2000; Jones 2000; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Gaha 1998; Carter 1997; Fook 1999).

4.3.4.2. Meaning for Science and Art

Context is essential to understanding what social science is and can be (Flyvbjerg 2001; Chalmers 1982; Seidman & Wagner 1992). The social sciences are a major social power; science can protect and limit different groups, interests, methods, processes and types of change accepted (Seidman & Wagner 1992, p.7; Partridge 1967). The current context is marked by scientific concerns; efficiency, rationality, outputs, outcomes and so forth. Positivist understandings of the world have been embraced and have influenced how services should be planned, described, implemented, organised and evaluated (Imre 1982; Hough 1999; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Ife 1995b). Knowledge is defined as that which emerges from science, obtained through empirical methods.

Scientism however can also be seen in the organisations social work is a part of with an instrumental approach to people and nature, an emphasis on predictable results, efficiency and the measurement of productivity, competency-based training schemes and inspection and quality control (Hough 1999; Ife 1997; Fook 1996; Imre 1982; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995). The use of scientific methodologies occurs within a political context of valuing
certain populations and addressing certain problems, and of shaping social identities and normative and institutional order (Hudson 1997; Seidman & Wagner 1992; Kilty & Meenaghan 1995). In the welfare state science helps with the registration, administration, control and redistribution of resources among various groups in a rational, logical and objective approach (Flyvbjerg 2001; Gaha 1998; Bridgstock et al 1998). In terms of the welfare state, formal scientific processes have been introduced for monitoring the social services, for determining desirable and not-desirable, deserving and non-deserving populations, program strategies, and informing definitions of accountability in efficiency and effectiveness (Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Taylor & White 2001). This in turn has created and reinforced assumptions about the nature of social work, its location within the welfare state and its professional organisation (Ife 1995b; DeMaria 1981).

The scientific strivings of social work need to be seen within this context and the need for social sanction in a world that values the scientific (Imre 1982; Peile 1993; Ife 1995b; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; see Chapter Eight). This context presents challenges to the notion of a practice based in art, and its associated concepts of creativity, subjectivity, imagination, use of self, acknowledgement of humanity and so forth. Yet at the same time, creativity, imagination and innovation will be required to transform this reality through the articulation and development of alternatives and skills in change and critical resistance (Tesoriero 1999; Ife 1997; Gitterman & Miller 1989; Leonard 1997; Freire 1996; Gummer 1990).

4.4. A SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE BASE?
4.4.1. The Debate
The prevalence of theory use as a topic in the social work literature suggests it is important and necessary, and further, there is no shortage of knowledge (Reid 1981; Loewenberg 1984; Paley 1987; Camilleri 1996). Yet, it has long been contested as to whether social work does indeed have a distinctive knowledge base (Fischer 1981; Bartlett 1964; Reid 1981; Kirk 1999; Payne 2001). There are questions around what counts as knowledge? How is such knowledge produced and distributed? Whose interests are served? How do we know? What kind of research paradigm is appropriate for a discipline that involves such an explicit value base? What concerns are addressed? How might knowledge be
engaged so that alternative forms of knowledge and knowledge production might be considered (DeMaria 1993; Ife 1981; Chamberlain 1988; Gordon 1965a; Bartlett 1970; Hugman 1996; DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999)? The debate maybe is not so much about whether social work has a knowledge base, but rather what is its nature? How are social workers guided by theory and by what kind of principles (Goldstein 1990; England 1986a; Bartlett 1970; Reid 1981; my emphasis)?

Philosophers throughout the ages have been wrestling with some of the dilemmas that social workers encounter in their everyday practice, including individual versus social responsibility, liberty and social justice, private morals and public consequences and so forth (Younghusband 1964, p.108). The definition and validity of knowledge is subject to shifts in the culture and paradigms of the scientific community and there are conflicting evaluative criteria regarding what counts as valid research and theory (Seidman & Wagner 1992; Chalmers 1982; Battye & Slee 1985; Crane 1966; Sadique 1996; Gowdy 1994; Payne 1991; see Chapter Three). Social work is a constructed activity and its knowledge is developed and utilised in an imperfect world; given the complexity and contested and changing domain of the phenomena that social work deals with much of the profession’s knowledge will remain incomplete (Pozatek 1994; Reid 2002; O’Connor 2000; Gaha 1998; Held 1980; Kirk 1999). Further, postmodern understandings lead to the question of the relevance of expert, objective and generalised knowledge (Ungar 2004; Parton 2000; see Chapter Three). However social work has long sought a unified knowledge base, seeing it as a path to professionalisation, unity, acceptance and sanction and maintaining a competitive edge as well as contributing to the profession’s understanding and interventions for practice (Howe 1987; Camilleri 1996; Reid 1981; Hugman 1996; Rapoport 1968; Hudson 1997; McDonald & Jones 2000; Wood 1997; England 1986a; Loewenberg 1984; Mailick 1990; Carew 1979; Bitensky 1973; Leonard 1997).

4.4.2. Types of Knowledge
The history of social work theory can be seen as a struggle to develop a more scientifically defensible system of thought and systemise the knowledge put to use in casework (Payne 1991; Macdonald 1960; Bartlett 1964; Wood 1997). Part of this struggle is related to the more ambiguous standing of the social sciences – from which social work has drawn – in
political and popular consciousness compared to the natural sciences (Hugman 1996, p.133; see Chapter Three). Knowledge has come to be identified almost exclusively with rational science and social work has aligned itself with these particular models (Gellis & Reid 2004; Palmer 2002; Camilleri 1996; Saleeby 1979; Howe 1987; Imre 1984a; Flyvbjerg 2001; Damianakis 2001; Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Munro 1998; see Chapter Eight). This influences definitions of theory as being that which is evidence-based and verifiable, general, objective, provides a picture of how the world is rather than preferences or values and can be applied to the instrumental problems of practice (Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Reid 1981; Gordon 1965b; Leonard 1997; Schon 1983; see Chapter Three). Anything intuitive, moral, spiritual or metaphysical was regarded as unscientific, unknowable or meaningless (Imre 1982; Heineman 1981; Crane 1966; Clark & Asquith 1985). It has also meant that some topics in social work have been avoided or ignored, including the art of its practice (England 1986a; Peile 1988; Reid 1981; Imre 1982).

The insights gained from social science have been beneficial to both social workers and their clients (England 1986a; Imre 1991; see Chapter Eight). There are questions however over whether social and psychological aspects of life may be objectively and indisputably known and indeed, over the ways in which these might come to be known (Payne 2001; see Chapter Eight). Further, social science is part but not all of the kinds of knowing needed for understanding how a good, disciplined practice can be intellectually informed, emotionally responsive and morally committed – all at the same time (Imre 1991). Social work’s processes of theory-building have excluded some important characteristics of clients and their lives, methods for helping, personal knowledge in terms of the role of the knower and self-awareness as well as the knowledges of women, people of colour, the poor and other marginalised groups (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Imre 1982; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Bricker-Jenkins 1990; Wood 1997; see Chapter Eight).

What has been suggested throughout the decades is that social work needs to assess the type of knowledge it needs and how to develop it, rather than following prescriptions that the only real knowledge is that which has been developed through science (Irvine 1979; DeMaria 1981; England 1986a; Held 1980; Carew 1987; Peile 1993; Ife 1997). Post-modernism and critical theory create an opening to move beyond the boundaries of empirically based research as the fundamental standard for accepting knowledge (Koenig &
Spano 1998; Leonard 1997). Further, as social work engages people with marginalised truth claims, it is in a unique position to deconstruct the power of privileged (and unprivileged) social discourses (Ungar 2004). Forms of knowledge that emerge in human experience – practitioner’s own and that of their clients – are validated therefore (Held 1980).

Postmodernism shows us knowledge is a human, discursive, social and political production (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Saleeby 1979; Philp 1979; Pardeck, Murphy & Choi 1994; Payne 1991) while critical theory sees knowledge as a structure that is a specific product of a social, economic, organisational, a racial, gendered and historical situation and analyses how it informs thoughts, norms and common wisdoms (Philp 1979; Healy 1993; Cosis 1998; Brewer & Hunter 1989; Kilty & Meeaghan 1995; Howe 1994; Payne 1991; Webb 1981; DeMaria 1981; Jay 1991; Bainbridge 1999; Fook 1993). Foucault’s notion of discourse as a regime of truth and the relationship between knowledge and power is relevant here. Power defines what gets to count as knowledge, the rights to speak and be heard, and therefore a certain conception of reality; it therefore is able to define physical, economic, social and environmental reality itself (Flyvbjerg 2001, p.155; Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Imre 1991; see Chapter Three). Social work itself operates in the control of discourse (Hartman 1994; Karger 1983).

Social work knowledge is a pluralistic and eclectic phenomenon (McDonald & Jones 2000; Philp 1979; Reid 1981; Lee 1982; Payne 1991; Goldstein 1999; Pilalis 1986). There are a variety of sources of knowledge for social work including: the social and natural sciences; procedural knowledge and practice theory; practice and personal experience and perception; clients and client groups; the arts, literature and media; conventional wisdom; practice wisdom of individuals and from colleagues; insight and intuition; and values and ideology (Loewenberg 1984; Goldstein 1990; England 1986a; Macdonald 1960; Narhi 2002; Imre 1982; Gordon 1965a; Carew 1979; Payne 1996; Clark 1995; Fook 1996; Mailick 1990; Bartlett 1964; Ife 1981; see Chapter Seven). The judgement and understanding of the practitioner play a central role also in the use of theory creating another ‘level’ of knowledge as theories in use (Wilensky 1964; Imre 1984b; Scott 1990; Loewenberg 1984; Lee 1982; Saleeby 1989). Social work is in a continuous process of
(re)constructing its knowledge (Payne 2001). The processes by which all these are employed are less understood.

4.4.3. Theory and Practice Relationship

The nature of the relationship between theory and practice is a major organising concept in social work and has long been debated and in particular references to a gap or discontinuity between them (Sheppard et al 2000; Pilalis 1986; Kondrat 1992; Camilleri 1996; Fook 1996; Lee 1982; Brown 1996; Sheppard 1995; Marchant 1986; Howe 1987; see above). ‘Practice’ is separated from ‘knowing’ in a dichotomous relationship that values the knowing over the practice (Camilleri 1999; Pilalis 1986; D Howe 1980; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995). Even the focus on a ‘knowledge base’ disconnects knowledge from practice; knowledge is seen as available to practice and practice uses it or not (Payne 2001, p.144).

There is seen to be a distinct division of labour based on an assumption that theories are developed by academics and researchers, and practice is something done in the field by practitioners (Scott 1990; Clarke 1979; Pilalis 1986; Kondrat 1992; Sheppard 1995; Camilleri 1996; Sadique 1996; Raynor 1984). This institutional separation reflects the influence of the Western natural sciences program regarding the source of knowledge for social work; ‘science makes knowledge, practice uses it’ (Rein & White 1981 quoted in Pilalis 1986). The so-called divide between theory and practice may not therefore be the problem of translation, but about the politics of the occupation: who is to control the discourse of social work, academics or practitioners (Camilleri 1996)?

The problems of dualisms have previously been discussed (see Chapter Three); for many the distinctions between theory and practice are artificial. Knowledge does not create understanding while the act of knowing is a dynamic and incomplete act (Freire 1972). Theory and sense-making are implicit in all practice, however both are constantly evolving as they are informed by one another in a dialectical relationship (Fook 1996; Sutherland 1986; Ife 1995a; Imre 1982). Further, knowing, the use of knowledge and decision-making is a subjective process; subjects play an active role in constituting the world they know, while its integration is an intuitive process (England 1986a; Held 1980; Brown 1996; see Chapter Seven). Decision-making has been shown to involve rational as well as emotional, moral and contextual processes (Taylor & White 2001; Webb 2001; Fish & Coles 2000).
For Goldstein (1990, p.34) it is as much about the type of thinking that is encouraged in using the knowledge – and the kind of thinking that advances practice is more like the product of the mind of a speculative, imaginative philosopher than it is like the controlled analytic and logical mind of the prototypical scientist for him. Social workers need to be ‘philosophers’ because their work requires an openness and breadth of mind, and a penchant for reflection and criticism (Trainor 1996, p.102; Brandon 1976).

This leads to the notion of praxis, a concept that considers how thoughts and reflexive processes interact with the world, and that the evidence of how the world is should reform and affect beliefs (Payne 1998a, p.123). It is an escape then from the splitting of theory, values and practice as it considers them part of the same process where one cannot be reduced to the other (Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Payne 1991; Freire 1972, 1996; Ife 1995a; Fisher & Karger 1997; Clark & Asquith 1985). Social work then becomes the continuous interaction of theory-making, judgement and action; it is an ongoing reflective action within an ongoing social context (Schon 1983; Payne 1991; Fook 1993; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995). It also means workers, clients and students are just as much theory makers as academics (Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995). It is not a matter of gaining wisdom, but rather of entering upon a way of growing wisdom (Krill 1990, p.15).

4.5. A UNIVERSAL SOCIAL WORK?
Considering the ‘defining issues’ in social work leads to the question as to whether it is possible to identify universals in social work? There is debate about whether social work can be seen as a profession that has distinct qualities that are universal and fundamental or whether in a postmodern sense there are many ways of knowing and practising, creating for a diversity of social works (Howe 1994; Martinez-Brawley 1999; Heinemann 1981; Payne 1991). Authors across the decades, including Boehm (1958), Bartlett (1964), England (1986a), Rosenfeld (1983), Loewenberg (1984), Austin (1983), Payne (1991) and Camilleri (1999) have documented social work’s search for a meta-narrative, a unified theory of practice or a social work frame of reference. The profession is far from agreeing on a unified social work practice theory – or even the desirability of such a base (Loewenberg 1984).
Some see that with a greater coherence social work could achieve greater success towards its aims as a better advocate for change, a louder voice in social debates, to stand stronger for the weak and vulnerable and to determine responsibility for professional standards, ethical behaviour and client commitment (McBeath & Webb 1991; Gaha 1998; Haynes & White 1999). There is concern that without this unified identity what is known to social work will not be acknowledged, legitimised, resourced adequately, be part of a deliberate process of theory development, nor become known to other disciplines all of whom might use it to improve social welfare (Ingamells 1996; Carew 1979; Bartlett 1970). There is also the danger that other helping professions will (and already are in some settings) doing the tasks or the work or taking over the jobs that social workers traditionally have believed to been theirs (Gaha 1998; Gibelman 1999). The current workplace and context exacerbates these dilemmas; social work needs to identify, articulate and market the competencies it contributes. Sadique (1996) saw a particular urgency to this, given contemporary preferences for science and technology with social, economic and political benefits to disciplines that model themselves after the culture of science. A unitary approach upholds universal ethical values and ideals of universal provision (Rosenfeld 1983; Haynes & White 1999; McBeath & Webb 1991; Howe 1994). Some argue that it is a mistake to think that any generality must be suspect; just as there are limits in generalising, so there are too in diversification (Witkin 1991a; Adams 1998; England 1986a). Social work needs to counteract the tendency to turn inherent and inevitable differences in contexts into grounds for claiming that each context needs a unique, distinguishable expertise (Rosenfeld 1983).

Others see that a universal approach could lead to the provision of standard solutions, overly-technical practice, treating clients uniformly rather than as active and meaning-making participants, limit knowledge expansion and development and imposing the practitioner’s definition of reality on others (Trainor 1996; Jordan 1984; Ife 1997; Dominelli 1997; Bartlett 1970; Wood 1997). Trying to find stability when what the profession works with is constant change, to find consensus in diversity, for standardisation in such a value-laden field, and importing an image of intellectuality of a profession marked by theoretical heterogeneity is false and contrived (Howe 1994; Adams 1998; Jones 1998; Austin 1983; Pearson 1973). Fragmentation and diversity exist in social life and so too in social work (McBeath & Webb 1991). In social science, Flyvbjerg (2001) quoting Foucault argues that no one has yet demonstrated the existence of universals in philosophy.
and social science so we must operate as if they did not exist. Given that social work is so bounded by context, culture and intimately connected to social reality, some argue that no one universal framework can be relevant for all situations (Howe 1994; Fook 1996; UN Report 1968; Trainor 1996; Jordan 1984). Further is the critique that Western models of social work have dominated the development and understanding of social work in quite diverse and different cultures; this has led to the rejection of alternative values and knowledges (Payne 1996).

Again, this represents another dualism, that between the universal and the particular. Social work requires a means to develop, recognise and evaluate good practice, a method for developing relevant practice and theory, setting its own research priorities and to engage in its own discovery of truth that incorporates the subjective nature of the profession (Carew 1987; Gordon 1983; England 1986a; Falck 1970; Epstein 1991; O’Connor, Smyth & Warburton 2000; Sheppard et al 2000). This will require a conscious effort to question assumptions that have become dominant, customary ways of thinking, an awakening out of acceptance, and an acknowledgement that science is not the only way of knowing (Imre 1984a). There is no reason why an underlying identity of social work could not be employed discriminately, critically and appropriately (Trainor 1996). Indeed, Parton (2000) argues that social work is identified as being essentially ambiguous, complex and uncertain! For Ife (1999) the task it to continue to value difference, and reject the imposition of artificial uniformity while maintaining some understanding of universal human values. Strength and integrity for social work can lie in an active respect for multiplicity, flexibility and difference and their possibilities (McBeath & Webb 1991; England 1986a).

4.6. SUMMARY

The issues of social work identity highlighted in this chapter provide some explanation as the place of science and art in social work, and the influences on the balance of their relationship.

Social work has long struggled with issues of identity, underscored by debate about whether it is even possible to arrive at a meaningful universal definition. Part of this
'struggle’ has been locating the appropriate place of its science and art. The other dimensions of social work discussed here – the nature of the private-political link, the questions of knowledge, the profession’s social role, the professionalising project, and the influence of context – are also part of the difficulty of finding the balance of its science and art. What many of the issues discussed here highlight however is the pervasiveness of dualisms in social work. The nature of the private-political link for example has been variously interpreted from binary opposites to integrated. Similarly discussions over its social role are couched in binary form – care or control, change or maintenance for example. The debate about knowledge also is underscored by dualisms of theory-practice, researcher-practitioner, quantitative-qualitative research methods, science-humanities and so forth.

The history of social work demonstrates the ongoing dance of tension between science and art. The attempt to build a scientific body of knowledge and skills has been an ongoing process throughout the profession’s history. The reasons for this include the success of science, the strive for professional status, social work’s place in universities and the need then for transferable skills and knowledge, and so forth (see Chapter Eight). The role of art in social work has also continued to be debated, as has the relationship between the two. This very pervasiveness highlights at once the complexity and importance of these two concepts for social work. Their balance has yet to be resolved.

However, the question of whether there can be a ‘universal’ social work raises issues about the very possibility of such a resolution. There are challenges to the development of a ‘meta-narrative’ of social work from a variety of sources. Social work is defined in part by its relationship to its context, which also determines in part its roles and functions. These changing and divergent contexts therefore change how social work is constructed. The current context however is particularly hostile to the artistry of professional practice with its emphasis instead on competencies, outcomes, rationalisation and so forth. Notions of any ‘meta-narrative’ are also challenged by postmodernism which highlights the emergent and contextual nature of both knowledge and identity.

The professionalising project in social work represents the search for a universal identity and status also. This project has significantly influenced the balance of social work’s
science and art. The scientific perspective has been influential in models of professions including the need for a scientific body of knowledge and qualities such as objectivity, technical skills and expertise. Added to this are demands in the current organisational, economic and social context for task-oriented, performance related, specialised and quantifiable services and outcomes (McDonald & Jones 2000; Parton 1998; Fisher & Karger 1997). It needs to be noted that the debate is not about whether competence is required for good social work, but rather the substance of competence. Such considerations are difficult given the models of and current pressures on professionalism. The conceptualisation of social work as an artistic activity is certainly challenged by these constructs.

The use and development of theory is related not only to the theories themselves but also in how social work and its roles in society are to be understood and becomes a way in itself though which the identity of social work is constructed and projected (Payne 1998a; Gordon 1965b; McDonald & Jones 2000). The question of knowledge and the place of science in social work are related. In Modernist terms, science and knowledge became equated. Although this has been deconstructed by the three bodies of thought outlined in Chapter Three – all of which have highlighted the relationship of knowledge and power and processes of inclusion and exclusion in rational science – the view remains pervasive. The many ways of knowing in social work are still often placed in a hierarchy from least to most scientific. A significant critique of social work as an art is that it is atheoretical (see Chapters Five, Six and Nine); given the emphasis on knowledge in social work, and the supposed relationship between knowledge and science, this is a significant hurdle for social work being modelled as an art. Moreover, identifying the insights gained from clients, practice wisdom, imagination and intuition as a form of knowledge is difficult. Further is the dichotomous split between theory and practice in social work; again, the nature of their inter-relationship has long been debated.

The space occupied by social work is complex and contradictory; it operates in the sphere between the private and political, care and control, individuals and families and the state, between the respectable and deviant, an agent of both society and the client, those with access to political rights and those who are excluded (Ife 2000b; Parton 2000; Jordan 1984; Philp 1979; Siporin 1979; Davies 1981; Abromovitz 1993; Bardill 1993; Clark & Asquith
1985). It is a practice that is constantly negotiated (Camilleri 1996; Gelfand 1988). The project of social work then is perhaps about holding in place the tension between dualities such as these and including that of art and science (Payne 1996; Heineman 1981; Jordan 1984; NISW 1982). The management of dualisms as it applies to science and art is explored in Chapter Eight. However, in the search for theoretical understandings, a sense of vision and an examination of the nature of practice, there is hope that this process in itself will stimulate an informed, creative, critical and reflective approach to social work.

The first four chapters have provided a methodological, theoretical and historical context for the research. The following two chapters present the data and data analysis from the content analysis of social work texts, and the interviews with practitioners. Then the remaining chapters present an integrated discussion of social work as an art, and the relationship between science and art in social work.
CHAPTER FIVE
PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF SOCIAL WORK:
TEXTUAL STORIES OF SOCIAL WORK

5.1. CONTENT ANALYSIS; PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF SOCIAL WORK

Textbooks play a major role in Western education, and may provide structure to teaching and learning as well as socialisation and introduction to a profession (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; Mullaly & Wachholz 2001; see Chapter Two). Some knowledge is given this public space, while other knowledge is rendered invisible (Mullaly & Wachholz 2001; Payne 2001). Textbooks are one source among others, including educators, student colleagues, journals, practitioners, clients and so forth, that contribute to students learning about the nature of knowledge and practice. It needs to be noted also that students do not necessarily access the literature suggested to them, and the role of their former knowledge and frameworks for understanding in interpreting the texts cannot be assessed here either. Textbooks nevertheless provide for one public account of social work (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991; see Chapter Two).

In doing a content analysis looking specifically at representations of science and art, a picture of the visibility and treatment of these bodies of knowledge and in particular how public or private they are seen to be, can be developed. The aim was to explore the presentation of the key concepts from the art-science, private-political intersection. While a critical analysis, the content analysis is not meant as a critique of the texts analysed; it is an analysis of the representation of the art and science of social work in mainstream texts.

Booklists for first-year (social work) units were obtained from fourteen (of 22) Australian Schools of Social Work. Books were critically read, noting if words in the categories of science and art, private and political, were mentioned, the coverage given including level of operationalisation, and whether they were presented favourably, unfavourably or neutrally (see Appendix E, Content Analysis Data Sheet). Categories were developed according to the conceptual tool (see Chapter One). I also acknowledge that some of the qualities discussed here could have a scientific or artistic interpretation, or be used across both fields. Major themes in the text were located around the original organising diagram; what did and
did not appear in the text relative to the diagram and its concepts could then be analysed. 
Presented here is a combined and comparative analysis of the texts.

5.2. SAMPLING UNITS

The sampling unit was social work textbooks most commonly used by Australian Schools of Social Work in the first year of their social work program (see Chapter Two). Table 5.1 shows the most commonly used texts and the number of schools that referred students to them. While the Australian Association of Social Work’s (AASW) Code of Ethics is not a textbook as such, it is included as it is a significant document in the Australian social work profession. From here, I refer to texts as ‘Text One’ and so forth, as indicated in Column One.

Table 5.1: Sample Units for Content Analysis by Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title of Textbook</th>
<th>No. of Schools used by (n=14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5.2.1. Observations About the Nature of the Texts

The following table provides a context to each text by presenting a summary of its audiences, aims, content areas and theoretical orientation. I have based the latter on identification of theoretical orientation in the text, or by the model being developed, for example radical social work.
### Table 5.2: Features of the Content Analysis Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text, Place of Publication, Authorship</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Content Areas</th>
<th>Theoretical Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT ONE</strong> O’Connor et al</td>
<td>Beginning and student social workers and human service practitioners</td>
<td>To provide a map of practice and the basic knowledge, skills and processes for the reader to use that map (p.2)</td>
<td>Social welfare in Australia; self, relationships and process; practice; assessment; intervention and ethical self-reflective practice</td>
<td>Draws on critical theory, feminist theory, and postmodernism (p.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT TWO</strong> Payne</td>
<td>Practitioners and students</td>
<td>Review social work theories, provide a guide to different groups of theories &amp; how they may be used in practice (p.3)</td>
<td>Social construction of theory; using theory in practice; an overview of a range of models including psychodynamic, crisis, systems and humanist</td>
<td>Argues for a postmodern understanding of theory as multiple and contextual (pp.30-32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT THREE</strong> Fook</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Develop a theory for practice of radical social casework (p.43)</td>
<td>Theoretical underpinnings of radical social work; practice principles for assessment, strategies &amp; goals; case studies; theoretical, ethical &amp; practice issues</td>
<td>Grounded in socialist feminist theory and drawing from critique and analysis of the radical debate of the 1960s and 1970s (p.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT FOUR</strong> Adams et al</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Introduction to social work contexts, values, approaches and practice (p.xv)</td>
<td>Values and ethics; social work and society; research; counselling; group work; community work; various models, frameworks for practice</td>
<td>Commitment to advocating and developing an anti-oppressive model of social work (p.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT FIVE</strong> Ife</td>
<td>Social workers and students in Australia seeking creative responses to the political dilemmas of practice (p.xi)</td>
<td>Develop, articulate and promote a critical form of social work practice</td>
<td>Competing discourses on human services; critical theory and social work; humanist vision; critical practice</td>
<td>Critical theory, including the centrality of a structural humanist vision (p.xi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT SIX</strong> Petruchenia and Thorpe</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Promote and develop a model of radical social work</td>
<td>Casework; community work; particular practice areas including youth, women and mental health</td>
<td>Radical social work, feminism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT SEVEN</strong> AASW Code of Ethics</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Set ethical standards, aid regulation and contribute to ethical decision-making for practitioners</td>
<td>Outline principles of ethical social work around five core principles human dignity and worth, social justice, integrity, competence and service to humanity</td>
<td>Purpose not to outline a model of social work practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT EIGHT</strong> Bryson</td>
<td>Part of a series of sociological texts</td>
<td>Explore sociological perspectives on the welfare state, and what is left out of traditional analyses</td>
<td>Sociological context; welfare discourse; men’s and women’s welfare state</td>
<td>Critical approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT NINE</strong> Mullaly</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Develop a progressive, transformative social work (p.ix)</td>
<td>Social work vision; structural social work theory; oppression and practice elements of structural theory</td>
<td>Structural social work, as it has a political and practical intent (p.ix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT TEN</strong> Howe</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Review of theories for social work and their meaning for practice</td>
<td>Consumer perspectives; order and conflict in society and; an overview of theories including psychoanalytic, behavioural, client-centred approaches as well as models for making sense of theory</td>
<td>Argues that all social work is theoretical, integral to any practice (p.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT ELEVEN</strong> Barber</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Develop a workable approach to social change based in casework (p.3)</td>
<td>Casework theory; empowerment; casework with involuntary clients; community work theory; political activity; practice issues</td>
<td>Advocates a political role for casework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text, Place of Publication, Authorship</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Content Areas</td>
<td>Theoretical Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEXT TWELVE Dominelli England Author</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Develop the parameters, justification and strategies for anti-racist social work</td>
<td>Racism in social work; strategies for tackling racism; developing anti-racist social work</td>
<td>Anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT THIRTEEN Egan United States Author</td>
<td>Helping professionals, particularly psychologists, working in counselling and psychotherapy roles</td>
<td>Outline a model of helping concerned with problem management and opportunity development</td>
<td>Stages and strategies of the helping model including building relationships, developing preferred scenarios, helping clients to act and communication skills</td>
<td>Psychology and the helping relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT FOURTEEN Pease and Fook Australia Editors</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Deconstructing traditional social work and exploring the meaning of postmodern critical theory for social work (p.1)</td>
<td>Postmodern critical theory; emancipatory practice; de- and re-constructing education, practice and organisational contexts</td>
<td>Postmodernism and critical theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of the fourteen texts are published in Australia, written or edited by Australian authors and academics. Many of these authors are well known Australian academics, and have published a variety of works. Six further texts are published from the United Kingdom, one from the United States and one from Canada. As outlined in the history of social work (see Chapter Four) Australian social work has relied heavily on the work of American and British scholars. All but one of the texts is written by (and for) social workers; Text Thirteen is written by a psychologist writing for helping professionals. Three are edited texts with multiple authors; there is some overlap of authors particularly Fook, Payne, Dominelli and Ife.

This list was compiled from booklists used by Schools in the year 2000; eight texts were published in the six years prior, while six were published ten or more years previously. This indicates at once the importance of contemporary changes and currency in theory, context and practice and the longevity in relevance and use of some texts. Some of the later texts are also one of multiple editions; Text Thirteen for example is in its sixth edition, indicating also its longevity.

The texts are classified into four broad content categories:

(i) overview of social work practice (Text One, Text Four)

(ii) overview of social work theories (Text Two, Text Ten)
particular models of social work including radical social work (Text Three, Text Six, Text Eleven), critical (Text Five), structural (Text Nine) and anti-racist (Text Twelve)

other; welfare state (Text Eight), ethics (Text Seven), helping model (Text Thirteen), theoretical analysis (Text Fourteen – a postmodern critical interpretation of social work)

Of the six Australian works, four (Text Three, Text Five, Text Six, Text Fourteen) are written from within a critical or radical tradition of social work, namely advocating for social critique, analysis and change. Two in particular look at the meaning of postmodern and critical theories in constructing social work (Text Five, Text Fourteen). Of the international texts, five are written in the radical tradition of advocating some form of a structural approach to practice (Text Four, Text Eight, Text Nine, Text Eleven, Text Twelve). Both overviews of social work theory are British.

5.3. PRESENT AND ABSENT: ART AND SCIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK TEXTS

The following table (Table 5.3) demonstrates whether the primary concepts of the art-science relationship, art and science as models of social work separately, and the private-political relationship are presented in the texts and the nature of their representation. Following that is a discussion including a consideration of the representation of some of the concepts of social work as science and social work as art.

Table 5.3: The Presentation of Art-Science, Private-Political in Content Analysis texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Science and Art</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Private and Political</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEXT ONE O'Connor et al</td>
<td>Relationship not discussed</td>
<td>Role of scientific knowledge in welfare state. Scientific knowledge as public knowledge</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme that individual and social environment interaction describes social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT TWO Payne</td>
<td>Tracks debate re theory of social work as postmodernism V positivism. Does not discuss science-art per se</td>
<td>Theme of empiricism. Evaluates theory by their empirical status. Argue the validity of a scientific approach to theory development</td>
<td>Briefly presents as a model but is rejected Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Analyses notion of this relationship for theories presented. Three constructions: therapeutic, collective, reformist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Science and Art</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Private and Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT THREE Fook</td>
<td>Relationship not discussed</td>
<td>Empiricism as an ideology. Science a way of evaluating theories</td>
<td>Mentioned in a historical review of social work. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme is linking of; extends to analysis, strategies, assessment and goals of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT FOUR Adams et al</td>
<td>Discuss in relation to a postmodern understanding of social work</td>
<td>Place, contribution and debate re social science. Empiricism as a way to evaluate models/practice</td>
<td>As a postmodern approach. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Social work should link, but question if it does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT FIVE Ife</td>
<td>Relationship not discussed</td>
<td>Theme is meaning of empiricism and modernism for social work, critiques, yet states alternatives not well articulated</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme as critically important for social work, underlies social work and model developed in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT SIX Petru-chenia and Thorpe</td>
<td>Relationship not discussed</td>
<td>Critique of science in mental health as ignoring social-political components, linked to individualist approaches</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme is social work at interface of; understanding and action at both ends essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT SEVEN AASW Code of Ethics</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Social work operates at interface of people/environment. Social justice a theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT EIGHT Bryson</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>How Enlightenment ideals inform welfare state. Concepts of rationality and neutrality but not linked to science as such</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>Historical shift in terms of analysis and services in the welfare state, fundamental to the analysis in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT NINE Mullaly</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>Associates science with modernity, yet also holds a place for science in terms of a critical theory analysis</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>Major theme in analysis and practice, and in the classification and evaluation of theories for social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT TEN Howe</td>
<td>Not directly compared, however models of discussed separately</td>
<td>Presents different positions regarding social science as a way of thinking about theory for social work. Benefits and critique of science for social work</td>
<td>Critiques social work as an art and related qualities as a-theoretical and anti-intellectual</td>
<td>Connection made in analysis of particular models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT ELEVEN Barber</td>
<td>Relationship not discussed</td>
<td>Associates more empirical approaches with individual and diagnostic approaches</td>
<td>Concept of not discussed. Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme is that this relationship is an identifying feature of social work, integration of occurs at a higher level of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT TWELVE Dominelli</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>Some use of related terms, does not associate with science as such</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
<td>A theme that action at both ends required as experiences of racism occurs at both. Interdependent and interconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT THIRTEEN Egan</td>
<td>Concept of social work as not discussed; helping portrayed as an art and a science</td>
<td>Efficient therapy that which is empirically viable but must be human</td>
<td>Conceptualisation and operationalisation of primary social work as art qualities – is not a social work text however</td>
<td>Does not link in a relationship. Promotes an individualised approach but distinguishes this from individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT FOURTEEN Pease and Fook</td>
<td>As masculine and feminine voices of social work</td>
<td>Science related to modernism, seen as inadequate in representing social work as it leaves much out</td>
<td>Qualities of for use in particular strategies; not related to social work as art</td>
<td>Theme that this relationship is social work’s particular concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.1. The Art and Science of Social Work

In only two texts – Texts Four and Fourteen – is the relationship between science and art in social work discussed. In Text Four, it is stated that social work goes beyond such dualisms and the creative approach suggests that there:

...lies a transcendent position which harnesses instrument/technical and expressive/artistic components of theory and practice. (p.270)

While in other chapters social work as an art, or associated qualities or the meaning and value of science for social work are discussed, they are not compared or discussed in relationship.

In Text Fourteen a discussion about social work’s search for meaning refers to the ‘voices’ of social work and whether it is a ‘science’ or ‘art’ (original quotation marks). It is claimed that the literature on empiricism for social work has:

...sparked opposition among a number of writers, who have predicated their response to the empiricism of social researchers-academics on humanism. Social work within this tradition rejects empiricism and sees social work as ‘art’...[yet] little discernible change in the social work discourse has occurred. Empiricism is the tradition of social work research and the questions raised by postmodernism have had little impact. (pp.31-3)

Possible explanations for this varying status are briefly discussed, namely that it may be related to the relative status of science and art as masculine and feminine voices in social work.

5.4. SOCIAL WORK AS A SCIENCE

All texts refer to science in some way; in most, it is not a significant theme, but rather discussed sporadically throughout or used to evaluate theories. In many texts the influence of science on social work at varying levels is discussed including: its dominance in the current context, the welfare state and therefore social work; in the profession’s understandings and definitions of knowledge; and as a way of working. Following is a discussion of the presentation of social work as a science in the three texts in which it is a significant theme.

In Text Two the most comprehensive discussion of science and social work is provided. Indeed, the discussion of the politics of social work theory is framed around the debate or comparison of ‘postmodernist views of “theory” and, alternatively, modernist, positivist or
“hard science” views of social work “theory”” (p.27). Key components of the discussion of the positivist view include:

- A history of the Enlightenment and modernist thinking;
- The characteristics of positivism, including phenomenalism, unity of the scientific method, experimentation, universal laws, and neutral observation (pp.27-9);
- How the modernist belief system about knowledge and what constitutes it have become a taken-for-granted part of the world (p.28);
- A history of science in social work knowledge as a way to develop a more scientifically defensible knowledge base and for professional status (p.32);
- A critique of positivism as leaving out different ways of understanding including a feminist critique that ‘female voices have been suppressed in favour of male positivist perspective’ (p.245-6) as well an inappropriate definition of evidence for human interactions.

These are then compared with postmodern understandings of theory as a human representation of reality, the importance of the role of language, issues of communication and independence, the reflection of social forces and power relations in knowledge, ambiguity, deconstruction, critique of truth, multiple knowledges and so forth (pp.29-32).

The role of science in social work theory is therefore discussed but not social work as a scientific activity per se.

In Text Ten theory and practice from the functionalist school is likened to that of a science, giving an insight into what social work as a science might look like. In the functionalist school, methods of enquiry are like those of the natural scientist with behavioural and social knowledge gained from sense data and involving measuring, categorising and establishing causal relationships (p.53). It is a consensus model of practice, aimed to maintain society and its members in a relatively stable state (p.54). The worker is the expert, diagnosing problems and treating clients (p.55). Leonard (1975) is quoted in saying that this model has been attractive to and influential on social work as:

Economical, tough-minded, and ‘hard-scientific’ explanations came as something of a relief in social work after so many years of convoluted, tender-minded and woolly explanations. (p.55)
In another chapter, Text Ten reports behavioural social work is in the ascendancy, as the only model with strong scientific credentials. Rather than provide an analysis of this, it is stated in the text that:

…other theoretical outlooks will have things to say about whether curing the pathological state of individuals is really anything to do with social work or even a proper way to view welfare matters.

(p.59).

In the concluding statement in this chapter Brewer and Lait are quoted in recommending that ‘social workers…become scientists if they want to survive as an occupational group’ (p.59). A positive evaluation of models that draw on science is therefore made. This discussion represents more of an outline of social work as a scientific activity including elements of theory, practice and the role of practitioner.

In Text Five the relative position of rational science and other approaches in social work is discussed:

While some schools within social work…have enthusiastically embraced the scientific rational paradigm….there has always…been a contrary tradition in social work which has emphasised the qualitative, and has allowed room for intuition, practice wisdom, phenomenology, grounded theory and so on. Such a practice perspective has not always been legitimised in course curricula, accreditation guidelines or recommended text books but it has remained part of the lived experience and practice wisdom of social workers in their day-to-day work. (p.20)

The manifestations of positivism and rationality in the current context and how it has shaped policy, the welfare state and social work’s roles, competencies and professional identity are discussed. A critique of this position is also outlined (see below). The difficulty of establishing an alternative or counter position is discussed.

5.4.1. The Role of Science in Social Work

This section outlines specific roles or a place for science in social work, while below the actual contributions of science are identified.

In many texts the role of scientific knowledge in the welfare state (Text One), in its definition of clients and other social identities (Text One, Text Nine, Text Fourteen), the identification of social problems (Text One, Text Five, Text Nine, Text Ten), solutions and service delivery (Text Ten) are discussed, for example:
Categorisation, classification and ‘scientific’ study of the dependent classes provided the basis for the development of the new social professions such as social work. (Text One, p.24)

The need for social workers to be confident of the effectiveness of their interventions in a competitive environment and in order to demonstrate the outcomes and effectiveness of services are also discussed in Text One (p.39), although empiricist definitions of outcomes and effectiveness are not used. In Text Fourteen this is related to ‘a need to demonstrate to [social work’s] constant critics its scientific status and hence to be able to claim academic validity’ (p.30).

While in Text Nine the social role of science is critiqued, it is also portrayed as a source of critique of the social order albeit with limitations:

> These criticisms are important for social work because they identify and illuminate the sources and reasons for many of our social problems and show us what it is we are struggling against. However, although critical analysis may show us what we are fighting against, by itself it does not show us what we are fighting for. (pp.25-6)

In Text Fourteen the use and development of critical social science aimed at social change is outlined, while drawing on the emancipatory goals of modernism (p.12).

In many texts, science is presented as a way of evaluating theories in particular empirical evaluations (see below). In Text Seven the importance of social workers being knowledgeable, able to evaluate knowledge, and a commitment to and participation in scholarly inquiry as an ethical obligation are outlined. There is no evaluation as to whether such knowledge should or could fit with particular models of theory development, scientific or otherwise.

### 5.4.2. Science as Public Knowledge

Text One, Text Four, and Text Six present scientific knowledge as public knowledge, and that, further, it is a privileged knowledge:

> Processes that are dressed up as research and come to be accepted as such are powerful in that they produce knowledge that is thought to be credible, to be ‘true’. (Text Four, p.108)

All question what is left out of such understandings of knowledge, for example:

> One of the unfortunate consequences of the privileged position attached to rational scientific knowledge is that in written discourse, knowledge, feelings and action have become separated. It is sometimes difficult to find words that adequately encompass what we
know and feel and that hold together the complexity of living….
(Text One, p.83)

A stated aim in Text One is to draw attention to the ‘bodies of knowledge’ which underpin and inform practitioners’ understanding and to provide a routinised way of making sense. In Text Four it is stated that alternative ways of knowing need to be sought and in particular ‘our own and other’s “truths”, “stories” and “constructions”’ (p.248).

In Text Nine science is seen as part of the context – there are social consequences of this, including influencing definitions of knowledge:

The knowledge historically used by social workers has been that of ‘expert’ knowledge derived from objective, scientific, and professional sources and has reflected a Eurocentric, patriarchal, and bourgeois bias rather than the lived reality of oppressed persons…. disempowering for marginalised populations because it reproduces relationships of hierarchy and subordination and excludes the voices of the very people with whom social work claims to be concerned. (p.117)

At the same time it is argued that the model presented is a good one, as it can be operationalised, is objective and observable (p.XX); it is evaluated therefore within the bounds of scientific concepts.

5.4.3. Critique and Complexities of Science

A theme in Text Fourteen is who and what are left out of the discourse of objective science and how it ‘has silenced the experiences of women and ethnic groups’ (p.14). Text Three also highlights that empirical beliefs reflect an ideology while Text Eight outlines how science has assisted the welfare state to appear rational and neutral. Similarly in Text One it is outlined how the various forms of social sciences themselves function as sources of power and:

…reflect ideological assumptions about gender, class, ethnicity, age and health…clients…are constructed within these discourses by health and welfare professionals. (p.8)

This is similar to Text Nine’s critique of expert knowledge (see above).

In Text Five a significant humanist, critical and postmodernist critique of the models of science, namely positivism and empiricism, shaped under modernity (see pages 10, 46, 79, 84-92, 129-141) is offered as having provided the context for capitalist, colonialist, patriarchal and environmental exploitation (p.102). In Text Fourteen, it is claimed that
many of the older certainties of social work practice no longer seem relevant, among them the ‘idea that empirically verified social science could guide practice…[given that]…The current practice environment is more uncertain, more hostile and constantly changing’ (p.211). Text Six provides a critique of positivism as a model for research in radical social work due to its dehumanising of individuals, separation of facts and values and incompatibility with social work’s theoretical aims (p.87).

Some texts make a link between empirical approaches and more individualised help (Text Three, Text Six, Text Eleven – see table). Given they are advocating political and radical models of casework and community work this could be seen as a negative evaluation, for example:

Theorists, writing from a left-wing perspective, have criticised child welfare practice for using a disease or individual pathology model and treatment technology rather than recognising the racial, gender and economic context in which the system operates. This has served, they argue, to deflect attention from the real social ills in society, from the deficiencies in welfare provision and the institutional and structural problems which underpin them. (Text Six, p.147)

5.4.4. Contribution of Science

In many texts, the contribution of theories is evaluated according to their empirical status (Text Two, Text Four, Text Nine, Text Ten and Text Thirteen). Text Thirteen states that efficient therapy is that which is empirically verifiable – in this way it is also open to growth and development (p.12); however, the use of science must be human. The model in this text focuses on behaviour and observable, assessable outcomes: strategies for evaluating these at each stage of the process are given. Similarly, in Text Four it is outlined that evaluation and systematic practice does not have to mean a rigid, pseudoscientific approach to practice and research, but can draw instead on some of its qualities and processes in flexible and creative ways.

Text Two states that the empirical movement in the United States has provided clear evidence of effective practice. While empiricism cannot identify all useful aspects of practice or a model, it can provide guidance:

…for selecting appropriate methods where effectiveness is demonstrated and the research is relevant to the practice situation…to
see what kind of methods may be effective in less certain situations. (p.288)
The use of empirical status to evaluate the status of theories is not consistent in Text Two however; this is perhaps a reflection of the complexity of evaluating social work theory. In the final chapter however, it is stated that as social work enters the twenty-first century ‘it seeks to implement the strongest possible base of evidenced theory in its practice’, however these can have a variety of applications in practice (p.298). Two chapters in this text particularly highlight issues related to a scientific approach to social work (see discussion on humanism below). The chapter on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy highlights its basis in research evidence of effectiveness (p.115) and its concern with progress, measurement, baselines and outcomes with explicit, structured guidance on practice offered. Its primary strengths are stated as its:

….empirically tested success in attaining results….the acceptability of scientifically proven methods when working with other professions….contribut[ion] to arguments for the professional standing of social work… (p.122)

A critique of its technical character with jargon terms and formal procedures and ethical concerns related to expert manipulation rather than client control are outlined, however ‘the most ethical treatment is the one that works best’ (pp.122-3). The model is seen as having remained somewhat marginal in practice perhaps because ‘the alliance of behaviourists with the positivist critique of the effectiveness of social work seems to have led to a degree of defensiveness’ (p.136). It has been the incorporation of humanistic ideas in cognitive behavioural therapies that have seen them become more established in social work however (p.121).

5.5.5. The ‘Other’
Text Four points to the debate around scientific and ‘other’ ways of knowing (p.268) – although the latter is portrayed as a diverse rather than unified response, which is a significant critique of the social work as art approach (see Chapter Eight). In Texts Five and Six the validity of alternatives is questioned; this may reflect the dominance of a scientific position, a critique of alternative models or an acknowledgement of the difficulty of articulating such alternatives. Text Five claims that social work’s striving for scientific status means that there is little room for phenomena that do not lend themselves to ‘scientific study’ and ‘rational analysis’ (p.10). However, as is pointed out in Text Three,
questions of effectiveness remain unanswered for both radical and traditional social work, and both require documentation and testing (p.152).

It is, however, in Text Two’s chapter on humanism that some of the challenges of an approach to social work that is non-scientific are highlighted. Humanism is seen as part of the cause of a critique of social work as vague and idealistic (p.180). The complexities of this model are outlined as:

- such elements do not necessarily need to be made explicit, as they just exist (p.196).
- yet it lacks clarity, explanations, targets, evidence of effectiveness, providing no formal benchmark for evaluation (p.197).
- status is theorised as being related to the framework of social work in agencies, its social control and bureaucratic functions, the need to meet external objectives and targets that are inimical to such approaches and their lack of acceptance among powerful groups in society (p.197).
- yet empirical work has confirmed effective elements identified in humanism of client-practitioner relationships that are empathic, valuing and genuine (p.178) which are necessary if not sufficient for therapy.
- it is considered then at once basic and peripheral to social work theory:
  …basic because many take it for granted as the fundamental attitude of social workers...peripheral in that it is not even treated as a perspective, since it is seen as more a general philosophical position informing practice than a way of defining a specific approach to practice. (p.176)

5.6. TERMS AND CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL WORK AS A SCIENCE
The following table indicates the presence (or absence) of core qualities and concepts from a social work as science perspective either as terms (i.e. the word only is used) or concepts (explanation, analysis or conceptualisation is given) and the evaluation of those in the texts. The evaluation is ‘qualified’ when the use of qualities is associated with particular strategies or contexts, rather than necessary for or part of all practice, or in edited volumes where different texts present different positions on the concept. A positive evaluation is determined where the usefulness or importance of a quality is indicated, a negative evaluation where the use of the quality has been critiqued, minimised or dismissed.
Table 5.4: Presentation of Social Work as Science Concepts in Content Analysis texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT ONE O'Connor et al</th>
<th>Rationality</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM Qualified Positive or negative depending on context in which used. Part of the welfare state</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Related to ethics. Evaluation is contextual</td>
<td>TERM Negative 'Social work not an ahistoric, technical entity' (p.3)</td>
<td>Concept of rational scientific knowledge – but not related to these particular models</td>
<td>Qualified Public – but question what left out</td>
<td>Qualified Public – but question what left out</td>
<td>Qualified Public – but question what left out</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Negative Work with clients not like a diagnosis (p.54)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT TWO Payne</th>
<th>Rationality</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM Qualified As part of particular models of working. Refers to both human nature &amp; social work processes</td>
<td>TERM Positive Social understanding – becomes shared and objective (p.14)</td>
<td>TERM Negative A technical approach does not fit with a human activity like social work (p.155)</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Historic critique Part of general understanding. Hard to relate to daily practice</td>
<td>CONCEPT Positive Presents debate re, but also evaluates theories by their empirical status</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Postmodern critique re theory</td>
<td>TERM Negative Theory created by what social workers do, not experimental testing (p.24)</td>
<td>TERM Positive Social work should seek to implement the strongest possible base of evidenced theory (p.298)</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Part of particular models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT THREE Fook</th>
<th>Rationality</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM Negative Humans as rational beings: critique as deterministic</td>
<td>TERM Negative Critique as deterministic &amp; expert; part of professional ideology. Want clients to see their situation objectively</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Any technical solutions need to be consistent with radical ideals (p.9)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Cites empirical evidence Need to identify empirically based beliefs in consciousness-raising</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Negative Disease model; ignores structural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT FOUR Adams et al</th>
<th>Rationality</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM Negative Grand narrative of disappearing. Reflective rather than rational practice important</td>
<td>CONCEPT Qualified (i) Critique as seemingly neutral when is actually political. (ii) Need to be in assessment</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Critique in relation to competency based approach as compared to reflective practitioner</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Modern/postmodern notions of concepts. Link to rise of science, rationality and objectivity</td>
<td>TERM Positive Different authors used to evaluate theory (chs.7, 9). Pure empiricism unlikely to produce adequate analysis (p.259).</td>
<td>TERM Negative Out-dated and irrelevant. Compared to critical approach (p.268)</td>
<td>TERM Negative Alternative research methods available. Critique objective/rational view of research</td>
<td>CONCEPT Positive Work open to is ethical and effective</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Critique as expert- top-down.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT FIVE Ife</th>
<th>Rationality</th>
<th>Objectivity</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Modernism</th>
<th>Empiricism</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TERM Negative Uniform when social work is diverse. Part of welfare state &amp; environment</td>
<td>TERM Negative Related to values and neutrality. Postmodern critique of</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Reducltionist, not compatible with social work</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Historical. Postmodern critique of</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Critiques, empirical science not fit with values of social work</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Critiques model and its dominance</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT SIX</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Modernism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petruchenia and Thorpe</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Discuss in relation to</td>
<td>madness and irrationality rather than social work</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT SEVEN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>As part of principle of integrity</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASW Code of Ethics</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Related to welfare state – helped to appear politically neutral</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT EIGHT</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Related to welfare state – helped to appear politically neutral</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryson</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>Use in particular model of social work</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT NINE</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>Use in particular model of social work</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howe</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Political. Always a subjective element. Not for research</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT TEN</td>
<td>CONCEPT</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>Across different contexts. Part of context. Enlightenment concept</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Critiques as technical as is impersonal and elitist. A myth that technical is not political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullaly</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Critiques as technical as is impersonal and elitist. A myth that technical is not political</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT ELEVEN</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>View of humans as rational. Use in particular approaches. Critiques as protects status quo</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td></td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Associates with scientific approaches to evidence collection (see evidence column)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT</td>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Modernism</td>
<td>Empiricism</td>
<td>Positivism</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEXT TWELVE Dominelli</td>
<td>TERM Negative Rationalising of services. Racist</td>
<td>TERM Negative Neutrality actually political</td>
<td>TERM Negative Constraints of mean bypass the political</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT THIRTEEN Egan</td>
<td>TERM Negative Complex and ambiguous. A social construction</td>
<td>TERM Negative No such thing as due to subjective and interpretive element of worker and client</td>
<td>CONCEPT Negative Advocates an integrated approach – skills and techniques an extension of worker’s humanity (p.90)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEXT FOURTEEN Pease and Fook</td>
<td>TERM Negative Deconstruct as approach to theory and practice. Part of welfare state</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Interpretations always present. Objective data may have limited cultural relevance therefore (p.153)</td>
<td>TERM Qualified Communication skills as in particular models – advocate post-structural approach (p.168)</td>
<td>CONCEPT Qualified Influence on social work. Inadequate in representing knowledge for social work, yet emancipatory ideals valuable</td>
<td>TERM Negative Certainty of now questioned, no longer meets needs of many practitioners (p.211)</td>
<td>TERM Negative Rejected by critical theory and postmodern-ism (p.219)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6.1. Models of Science

Some texts examine the meaning particularly of positivism and modernism for social work, while others evaluate theory by its empirical status.

In Text Five modernist concepts and their manifestations and dominance not only in social work but also in other contexts are discussed. There is a critique of modernist rationality for social work and welfare including that it leaves little room for values or ethics, involves simplistic cause/effect reasoning, is reductionist, hierarchical, the search for uniformity ignores the importance of diversity and so forth (pp.18-20, 80; see above). In Text Fourteen, the development of social work within the modernist paradigm is examined, for example:

Social work can be located within modernity. This means that social work is characterised by an emphasis on rationality and scientific knowledge. It has involved the development of a worldview in which logic and science are brought to bear on explaining and controlling problematic people and situations. Modernism involves dichotomies – for example, reason is elevated above emotion… (p.27)

The meaning of that specifically for knowledge, professionalism and identity (Chapter 2), organisation (Chapter 3) and values and ethics (Chapters 2 & 14) as well as social work identity and professionalism (Chapter 10) are discussed. Connections however between modernity, critical theory and postmodernity are reflected throughout Texts Nine and Fourteen. For example in Text Fourteen it is stated in the introduction that:

[we] side with those expressions of postmodern thinking that do not totally abandon the values of modernity and the Enlightenment project of human emancipation. (p.12)

Positivism as a model of science is critiqued – from a postmodernist or critical theory position – in all six texts in which it is discussed (Text Two – see above; Text Four, Text Five, Text Six, Text Ten, Text Fourteen). The evaluation of empiricism is more varied however. Text Four discusses the role of social science, and debates some of its primary concepts, questioning whether they need belong to an empirical model. A place for social science is held however and what science leaves out is also highlighted. For example:

…what is not directly observable and therefore easily measured and described gets left out; mindfulness, the process and nature of relationships, managing the affective component of the work, the ‘artistry of social work’ (Youll 1996). (p.151)
There are different points of view regarding social science and empiricism according to different chapters and authors, highlighting perhaps the complexity of both social work and science. In Text Fourteen, it is outlined that a distinction needs to be made between empirically generated knowledge and that which comes through self-reflection and interaction; as both types are necessary processes of communication, dialogue and reflection become important in generating this knowledge (p.201).

Text Ten posits four positions sourced from Leonard (1975) regarding the human sciences/physical sciences paradigm essentially regarding how similar the physical and social sciences could and should be (p.23). In this some of the debates and issues surrounding science for social work are highlighted, including different models and the meaning of those choices for how human nature, the social world and social work’s place in it are understood.Behavioural social work is provided as an example as to why science is good for social work in that it is a public practice, is ‘purposeful and methodical, organised and scientific, concrete and explicit’ (pp.82-3) and that it provides certainty, effectiveness, measurement and may meet demands that social work proves itself (p.110, see above). In the text, a critique of science from ‘humanists’ is outlined, as being incomplete, reductionist, mechanistic, impersonal, and expert (pp.96-110):

As appliers of science, social workers want to explain – but they will not understand. They use their heads but know nothing of the heart…It turns social work into a branch of technology. (p.110)

This is the only critique of science provided in this text. For Text Ten, theory must enable its users to do four things; describe, explain, predict, control and bring about and that ‘clearly social workers are people who attempt to do all four of these things’ (p.12). These are all characteristics of a rational scientific approach to knowledge (see Chapter Three).

5.6.2. Qualities of Social Work as a Science

Both rationality and objectivity are discussed in thirteen texts. Rationality is used as term only in twelve texts, and one (Text Nine) conceptualises it. All give either a negative (9) or qualified (4) evaluation of it in that it has application in particular processes or models of social work. Texts One and Ten are the only two where it is discussed as a quality of the practitioner, and both give it a qualified evaluation. Others see it as part of the welfare state (Text One, Text Five, Text Eight, Text Twelve, Text Fourteen), for example in the rationalisation of services or rationally-derived policy, and as a description of human nature
in particular theoretical models or discourses (Text Two, Text Three, Text Six, Text Eleven, Text Thirteen). It is given a negative evaluation due to its links to modernity and that both have been deconstructed (Text Four, Text Nine), its use in discourse and ‘the binary system of oppositions with its corollary of domination and subordination (Text Fourteen, p.180, see also Texts Four and Nine).

In eleven of the thirteen texts that discuss objectivity it is given either a qualified or a negative evaluation, primarily related to an association between objectivity and neutrality when social work is actually political (Text One, Text Four, Text Five, Text Eight, Text Ten), for example:

People’s lives are not only affected by the ‘objective’ components of these factors [age, class, gender, etc] but also by the way in which we theorise about them…which are culturally, occupationally and temporally specific. (Text One, p.9)

Others indicate that a subjective element of interpretation is always present (see table).

Texts One, Four and Seven evaluate objectivity positively if viewed as an ethical standpoint and a way of avoiding bias. In Text Four this requires ‘taking account of the perspectives of all concerned’ (p.303), and in Text Seven this involves practitioners ‘refraining from imposing their personal values, views and preferences on clients’ (p.9), providing services in an ‘objective, equitable and just manner’ (p.12). Texts Three and Twelve however provide a critique of the ethic of objectivity as reproducing inequitable relationships:

…it may mask professional ideologies which subtly control clients...Clients may act in complementary ways when confronted with a professional playing an objective role. They may defer to the professional, uncritically believe what they are told and find that they receive more positive attention when they behave in this way. (Text Three, p.61)

5.6.3. Social Work Processes

When considering the role of technique, diagnosis, evidence and experiment, most texts indicate that while such processes may have a place they are not complete for social work. The term technical, whether applied to social work in general, or as a quality of practitioners is evaluated negatively as being reductionist (Text Four), incomplete (Text One, Text Two, Text Three, Text Five) and apolitical (Text Two, Text Nine, Text Fourteen). In Text Thirteen technique is portrayed as part of an integrative approach where
‘…skills and techniques become extensions of the helper’s humanity and not just bits of helping technology’ (p.90). Yet in a chapter on interpersonal skills in Text Fourteen, Text Thirteen is cited as an example of a model where communication skills are seen as technical devices where ‘it is assumed that both the worker and the skills used are largely objective, neutral and facilitative’. This is in contrast to the poststructural approach being advocated, one that is critical, cultural and deconstructive (p.168).

Experiment (2) and evidence (5) were the least often mentioned terms from a scientific approach. Experiment was critiqued as being only one way of generating knowledge as compared to its privileging in positivism (see table). Evidence is evaluated positively, where the process of evidence gathering and analysis are portrayed as political (Text Four, Text Eleven, Text Twelve, Text Thirteen). For example in Text Four, it is argued that workers must ask questions about why any one piece of evidence is given more weight than another, as this will assist in assessment in anti-oppressive practice by determining issues of power (whose evidence counts) and the explanations (individual/structural) emphasised by the evidence. In very few texts is the nature of evidence and what constitutes it discussed, although in Text Four a differentiation is made between evidence and ‘our own predilections’ (p.186) giving an indication of what evidence is not.

In seven texts diagnosis is mentioned in terms of its role in the medical model, which is critiqued by all (Text Two, Text Three, Text Four, Text Nine, Text Ten, Text Eleven, Text Fourteen). Again there is concern about what is left out (Text Fourteen, p.183), its links to personal rather than structural analysis and reform (Text Three, Text Nine), partialisation (Text Two) and its disempowering impact on clients (Text One, Text Four). In Texts One, Two and Four the need instead for dialogue with clients, and generating a holistic representation of their situation is identified.

5.7. SOCIAL WORK AS AN ART

In seven of the fourteen texts the concept of social work as an art is not discussed in any way as either a term or concept. All of those texts other than Text Seven are concerned with developing a particular model of practice, primarily concerned with a radical or
structuralist interpretation and model of social work (i.e. Text Five, Text Six, Text Eight, Text Nine, Text Eleven, and Text Twelve).

In Text Thirteen the art of helping rather than the art of social work is discussed. Helping is seen as ‘more than the technology found in these pages. It is also an art’ (p.102), and the mastery of skills being attaining the ‘art of…’.

In six texts the concept of social work as an art is presented; two of these are reviews of social work theory where this model is presented as one position among many, two are particular chapters from authors in edited texts, while the others use brief references to other scholars’ work. Following is a summary of what is presented in each text.

(i) Text One: briefly refers to Jordan’s (1979) work on the art of helping in the assessment process, and related to use of self and empathy (p.88).

(ii) Text Two: as outlined above positivist and postmodern positions on theory for social work are compared – and arguments made for the latter. Social work as an art is briefly acknowledged as one of four constructionist responses to positivism:

   Jordan (1978) and England (1986a) argue for an artistic and imaginative approach to understanding social work, although Smith (1987) rejects this because it does not provide clear enough practice guidance. (pp.33-4).

The final criticism – not providing clear enough practice guidance – has been a significant theme in the critique of this approach. As outlined above, a chapter on humanism presents some of the barriers pertaining to a ‘non-scientific’ theory for social work; while these could be translated to include a theory of social work as an art, this imputation is not made in Text Two. England’s model is mentioned as part of these humanistic approaches to social work concerned with meaning, and making sense (p.180) and of art and literature as an aid to understanding and helping (p.180). The coverage given to social work as an art is minimal therefore.

(iii) Text Three: in a historical review of how socio-economic structural issues are considered in personal problems Bowers’ 1949 publication is quoted in which he characterises social work ‘as an art which uses individual capacities and community
resources for better adjustment between clients and their environment’. This is portrayed as historical rather than contemporary and as linked to individualist notions of casework, which are critiqued in the text.

(iv) Text Four: similarly to Text Two social work as an art is discussed within the context of postmodern understandings of social work, and the text also looks at England’s model. Essentially there is a positive evaluation of the concept of social work as an art, as the text is arguing for a postmodern understanding of social work that goes beyond dualisms (including that of science/art) and that deconstructs the dominant paradigm of science. Art is seen as a theme associated with social work for much of its history (p.245), concerned with meaning – which is important to clients (p.247), and as a contribution to social work thinking (p.270). The social worker as artist is also considered:

….not as an artist who imposes order and creates beauty through domination but as a co-creator of harmony, particularly with those who are marginalised and excluded. (p.248)

(v) Text Ten: discusses social work as an art in a section on client-centred approaches and describes practice of this nature as:

….social workers being ‘person-centred’ and empathetic. They have and use ‘intuition’. They show ‘love’ and ‘respect’. Feelings are shared. The touchstone of true reality is experience. Therefore ‘experiential’ learning is the only worthwhile learning. Good social work is described as ‘creative’, more like an ‘art’ and less like a science. (p.108)

Concern is expressed that given the demands on the person of the worker that there is a danger that ‘person-centred’ becomes ‘self-centred’, sanctimonious and blinded by egotism (p.109). The work of Hugh England (1986) is quoted, describing the model as being critical and concerned with meaning, relationship and communication. England’s work is drawn on in describing the social worker as artist:

….someone possessed of particular skills. She can do two very important things…get inside and understand an experience; and she can express and communicate that experience in a way that allows others also to understand that experience… (p.116)

The text states it is ‘difficult to capture examples of good, vivid practice in print’ (p.111) when considering social work as an art, and therefore there are questions as to the meaning it can have for practice:
There are few guidelines, no formulae for what we say, except, says Brandon (1979, p.31), that our words and actions come from the heart rather than the head. Again, quite what this actually means in practice is not quite clear. (p.115)

In the text some allowance for this is made however in that:

As practice in this manner relies on intuition, the use of self, the quality of the relationship, the understanding of experience, the search for meaning and the communication of these understandings, we should not be too surprised to discover that written accounts somehow fail to do justice to the full intensity that characterises work of this kind at its best. Nor do we find a neat, clear sequence of problem, assessment, aims and method…(Text Ten, p.117)

The evaluation therefore is essentially negative as while it is seen that there is value for this position there are issues identified in terms of translation into practice principles.

(vi) Text Fourteen: as previously outlined, art and science are discussed as possibly the feminine and masculine voices of social work, and in turn issues are raised regarding the nature of social work. It is considered whether this tension between social work as science or art:

…can creatively be seen as social work practice being in the process of transformation between its modernist origins and its struggle in a postmodernist arena. (p.26)

In a chapter on community development examples of this work are likened to those of an artist:

…[with] the possibility of multiple explanations and multiple strategies…can lead us to ever-more creative practice… to theorise difference whilst yet retaining commitment to justice and social action…a tricky but not impossible combination for postmodern times. Bring on the artist… (p.147)

It is argued that it is time to move on from modernist structures and their generalised models, competencies and narrow scientific ways of knowing (p.147) – in this way the two are juxtaposed, although social work as art or science are not discussed as such.

5.8. QUALITIES OF SOCIAL WORK AS AN ART

The following table (Table 5.5) outlines the representation of core qualities of social work as an art in the texts (see description of Table 5.4).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Imagination</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Intuition</th>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>Use of Self</th>
<th>Practice Wisdom</th>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TEXT ONE O’Connor et al | **TERM Positive**  
Use in empathy for tuning in to client: Link between theory and practice | **TERM Qualified**  
Appropriate if analysis underlies its use | **TERM Negative**  
Is uncritical, juxtapose with working theoretically | **TERM Qualified**  
Appropriate if used with awareness | **CONCEPT Positive**  
Related and relevant to all areas of practice | NO | **CONCEPT Positive**  
Related to self-knowledge and use of self |
| TEXT TWO Payne | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
Tension between creative, non-directive approach and authority and control (p.196) | **TERM Positive**  
Refers to Schon’s work re how to use knowledge and skills | **TERM Qualified**  
As a client outcome, not a quality of the practitioner | **TERM Qualified**  
In ecological approach, integrated with objective assessment | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
i (i) Theory use becomes part of style  
(ii) Separation of to maintain professional role |
| TEXT THREE Fook | **TERM Qualified**  
Use in consciousness-raising as form of rehearsal & linking with possible situations | **TERM Qualified**  
Use in a group with clients. Creative interpretation of policies | **TERM Qualified**  
Needs to be checked with client. Less distancing than professional interpretation | NO | **CONCEPT Positive**  
Social self-awareness  
Provides exercises for developing | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
Related to nature of client relationship |
| TEXT FOUR Adams et al | **TERM Positive**  
Opens up opportunities for creative practice (p.320) | **TERM Positive**  
Provides links; postmodernism opens up possibility of more creative practice | **TERM Positive**  
Used in 'comprehensive definition' of counselling as a component of (p.140) | NO | **CONCEPT Positive**  
Central theme. Related to critical reflection. All practice needs | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
Qualities of counsellor, associated with person-centred counselling |
| TEXT FIVE Ife | **TERM Positive**  
Needed to move beyond constraints of current context | **TERM Qualified**  
Use in interpretation of policy and procedure – as way of ‘working’ the system | **TERM Qualified**  
Use in application of practice wisdom. Not sufficient alone | NO | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
Values alternative sources of knowledge  
Not sufficient alone | **TERM Qualified**  
Provides qualities of critical social worker |
| TEXT SIX Petru-chenia and Thorpe | **TERM Qualified**  
In conjunction with analysis to determine alternatives. Clients can use as rehearsal for change | **TERM Qualified**  
Use in particular strategy of ‘creative solutions rap group’ for clients | NO | NO | **TERM Qualified**  
Practitioners to identify & overcome internalisation of dominant ideologies | NO | NO |
| TEXT SEVEN AASW Code of Ethics | NO | NO | NO | NO | **CONCEPT Positive**  
Self-awareness necessary for integrity | NO | NO |
<p>| TEXT EIGHT Bryson | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO | NO |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Imagination</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Intuition</th>
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<th>Use of Self</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Text Nine Mullaly</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text Ten Howe</td>
<td>TERM Positive</td>
<td>NO</td>
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<td>TERM Qualified</td>
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<td>Text Eleven Barber</td>
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<td>NO</td>
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<td>Text Twelve</td>
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<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Positive</td>
<td>Political self-knowledge</td>
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<td>Dominelli</td>
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<td>CONCEPT Positive</td>
<td>CONCEPT Qualified</td>
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<td>Text Thirteen Egan</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Term Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pease and Fook</td>
<td>TERM Negative</td>
<td>TERM Positive</td>
<td>TERM Qualified</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>TERM Positive</td>
<td>Term Positive</td>
<td>Term Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8.1. Imagination

In nine texts imagination is mentioned: five evaluate it positively, three with qualifications, and one negatively. Imagination is portrayed as providing links between aspects of social work, including theory and practice, client and worker and current and future situations (Text One, Text Three, Text Four, Text Five, Text Six, Text Ten, Text Twelve, Text Fourteen). In Text One, for example, imagination is discussed in terms of empathy, for tuning in to another’s experience:
…the imaginative consideration of others and a recognition and relinquishment of the stereotypes we carry so we may relate to this person as an individual rather than this person as a representative of a class of persons. (p.74)

In Text Three a role for imagination is considered in consciousness-raising, helping a client imagine the outcome of a situation, allowing a basis for comparison and a rehearsal (p.100).

It is acknowledged that:

- Picturing an option is not, of course, the same as achieving it. But the imaginative exercise may, at the very least, help break down any attitudinal or mental barriers to attempting it. (p.100)
- Text Thirteen considers the stimulation of the client’s imagination ‘critical’ as a means to avoiding ‘stagnation’. Others see imagination takes social workers beyond routine practice and expands the range of possible action (Text Four, Text Ten).

In Text Five the use of imagination is discussed in a broader sense:

- Unless social workers are able to be more imaginative and creative in their definitions of their own roles…the only alternative for survival is to move to join the managerial and market orthodoxies of economic rationalism. (p.35)

As the characteristics of this environment are critiqued as being incompatible with good, critical social work, the use of imagination is necessary and positive therefore. Similarly, in Text Four it is claimed that the ‘strength of commitment and imagination’ of social workers has seen sensitive and innovative practice survive the current context (p.62).

In Text Eleven the use of imagination in a particular stage of working with involuntary clients is outlined. However, this is juxtaposed with previous steps in the sense that:

- …some of the skills required to undertake this task successfully are the antithesis of those required in step three. Whereas in step three worker and client are engaged in a process of careful definition requiring precision, attention to detail and careful scrutiny of presuppositions, step four requires creativity and imagination as well. (p.54)

Strategies for using imagination and creativity in a brainstorming exercise aimed at identifying negotiable aspects of intervention with involuntary clients are provided (pp.54-6).

5.8.2. Creativity

Creativity is discussed in nine texts and all give it a positive (3) or qualified (6) evaluation, the latter in the sense that it is used in particular strategies. In Text Thirteen creativity is
conceptualised and operationalised, including its uses for both worker – ‘the helper needs…creative and humane ways of being with clients’ (p.41) – and client. Characteristics of the creative person are seen to include:

...optimism and confidence...acceptance of ambiguity and uncertainty...a wide range of interests...(pp.226-7)

It is seen that ‘Many clients don’t know how to use their innate creativity. Thinking divergently is not part of their mental lifestyle’ (p.246) and strategies for stimulating clients’ creativity are provided (see Chapter Seven).

In Text One creativity is used as a term describing use of self (p.53), having a role in interviewing (p.67), interpreting policy (p.167) and working in organisations – which may in themselves restrict or encourage workers’ creativity (p.149). In Text Two a creative approach is briefly referred to, citing another’s work on existential approaches in a chapter on humanism (see table, see review of this chapter above). In Text Four, creativity is used as a term in three chapters, in relation to exploiting and identifying spaces in and connecting different areas of legislation (p.63), as a goal of groupwork (p.155) and as a way of working in anti-oppressive practice (pp.237-8). In Texts Four (p.147) and Fourteen (p.241) it is argued that postmodernism creates the space for more creative approaches to practice.

In many texts written to a critical or radical model the political use of creativity is promoted, such as in the creative interpretation of policy and procedure (Text Three, Text Five, Text Fourteen) or use of material resources (Text Three) as a way of ‘working the system’ (Text Five, p.169). Text Five explicitly links the two by stating that the ‘effectiveness and creativity [of social workers] could have a significant impact in helping to create an alternative future…’ (p.31). In Texts Three and Six creativity is used in consciousness-raising for creating alternatives, and in particular in a ‘creative solutions rap group’ involving brainstorming concerns, causes and options (Text Three, p.100). In Text Fourteen creativity is about critical questioning such that ‘reality’ and ideas constantly shape each other (p.166). Creative thinking is seen to help us link the particular and the general (p.200), while in the final chapter the need for ‘creative tools to resist, challenge and reconstruct’ (p.227) to be fostered in students (p.227) is outlined.
5.8.3. Intuition and Insight

In eight texts the term intuition is used, often defined as either (i) being one way of knowing among many or (ii) knowledge extends what we already intuitively know (Text Two, Text Four, Text Ten, Text Thirteen, Text Fourteen). In Text Two intuition is discussed in the context of Schon’s theory of how professionals use skills and knowledge, responding to new situations intuitively, following the guidelines in a constant process of reflection and readjustment (p.44).

Text Three warns that intuition should be checked out with the client, rather than imposing the practitioner’s interpretations; this should be done within a relationship where the use of intuition is less personally distancing (p.103). Similarly, in the two texts in which insight is discussed as a quality of the practitioner, both warn that ‘…we should always be aware of whose agenda we are following’ (Text One, p.129) and not impose our own assumptions or agendas (Text Four, p.93).

In two places in Text One the use of ‘gut feelings’ is juxtaposed with the skilled use of knowledge. The use of knowledge is important in order to learn from the past, to provide a routinised way of ordering and understanding the world, for ethical reasons. By contrast, uncritical reliance on ‘gut feelings’ is inappropriate and practitioners’ formulations as a basis for intervening in people’s lives need to be based on more that this, in order to be in control of and explain the process (p.84).

In Text Ten intuition is discussed in relation to humanist practice and the art of helping. It is seen to have a role in tuning in to clients, creating a picture of their situation, empathy, communication and knowledge (pp.108-112). It is stated that in a humanist perspective there is a position that:

There can be no science of knowing people...what we have is a natural ability, if we allow it, to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of others. In short, we have intuition. (p.111)

As stated earlier, I have postulated that given that Text Ten outlines that all social work practice is theoretical ‘no matter how much the social worker speaks of her simple reliance on commonsense or intuition’ (p.48), this is a negative evaluation of this position. When discussing the art of helping, however, intuition is referred to as a form of knowledge:
…men and women are natural psychologists. We learn about each other, not through reading textbooks, but naturally, intuitively. Through our imaginations and innate ability to resonate with the experiences of the other, we can create our own picture of the client’s world…It is an altogether ‘softer’ kind of knowledge, born of experience, born of the imagination and the worker’s intuitive use of self. (p.113)

5.8.4. Use of Self

Use of self is the most commonly discussed and conceptualised quality of the social work as art approach (10 of 14 texts), although none of the texts make this connection between the quality and the model.

In Text One use of self is a major theme throughout and is evaluated positively. One chapter of eight is dedicated to ‘Self, relationship, process and practice’ as it is the ‘distinguishing feature of social work’ (p.48) and further that the remaining chapters ‘assume an understanding of yourself’ (p.47). Various dimensions of use of self are discussed including self-knowledge and identity, reasons and motivations for doing social work, private and public self, contexts and discourses, sense of self in different situations, gender socialisation and self-worth, as well as in social work processes of assessment, intervention and communication (pp.50-53). Use of self is connected to personal qualities and the development of a worker’s personal style – how one interacts and acts with people and situations. It is emphasised that use of self must be critical, conscious, disciplined and reflective (p.50), acknowledge the power issues present (p.8) and include reference to knowledge and purpose (p.12). Some operationalisation is provided for developing active use of self, for example a range of questions for considering the issues related to self in the assessment process (p.88).

Similarly, in Text Four use of self is outlined as integral to social work in recognising impact on others, to ensure confidence that responses arise from the client’s situation rather than the practitioner’s own needs, to be aware of and address personal and professional strengths and weaknesses, and to meet the complex demands of social work (pp.93-8). It is portrayed as having been overlooked in the current emphasis on vocational training and technical competencies (p.89). Strategies for personal and professional development of
supervision, collegiate discussion, evaluation, recording training and critical reflection are provided (pp.92-102).

In Text Ten the client-centred approach’s focus on listening, genuineness, empathy and warmth are listed, including a view that:

The ‘use of self’ defines both the social work’s practice knowledge and her practice behaviour. (p.113)

Elsewhere it is stated that ‘throughout the writings of this school, there is a vigorous anti-intellectualism which social workers pick up with glee’ (p.99) and it is considered ‘more a philosophy than…applied theory’ (pp.98-9). There is a concern as outlined above that such self-consciousness can become self-centred (p.109) and further given that the position in this text is that all social work is theoretical (p.1) this could be seen as a negative evaluation of this way of working.

Other texts focus on the importance of self-awareness rather than active use of self as such, in particular for reflection on the practitioner’s biases and to understand difference (Text Three, Text Four, Text Six, Text Seven, Text Twelve, Text Thirteen, Text Fourteen), for example:

…..[practitioners] should be aware of their moral, cultural, political, religious, societal and professional values and biases and the possible influence of these on their judgements. (Text Seven, p.22)

Texts Three and Twelve are concerned with social self-awareness, and both provide exercises for examining and developing this critical and active kind of awareness (see p.156 and pp.83-91 respectively).

In Texts Two and Thirteen a connection is made between self and knowledge. Text Two states that personal experiences have shaped us as thinkers and talks about the role of reflection-in-action (p.120), while in Text Thirteen it is seen as one of ten sources of knowledge for helpers. The only text to differentiate use of self and self-disclosure, as several interview participants were keen to do also, is Text Thirteen.

5.8.5. Practice Wisdom

In four texts the term practice wisdom is used (Text Four, Text Five, Text Thirteen and Text Fourteen). Two give a qualified evaluation in that while practice wisdom is important
it is not sufficient (Text Four, Text Five). In the introduction to Text Four, for example, practice wisdom can be considered in ‘viewing knowledge in a broader sense, as crossing personal, professional and disciplinary…boundaries’ (p.xvii). Throughout this text practice wisdom and knowledge are linked in informing practice, academic knowledge, interpretation and intervention. Texts Thirteen and Fourteen both give a positive evaluation of practice wisdom, privileging it as a source of understanding.

5.8.6. Personal Qualities

In six texts the role of personal qualities in social work are outlined. Three (Text One, Text Four, Text Five) provide lists of personal qualities for a good social worker including compassion, hopefulness, respect, genuineness, and integrity. Text Five provides an outline of qualities for the critical social worker as being a ‘well-informed, broadly educated, critically reflective and sensitive person….’ (p.199). In Text Nine the anti-theoretical stance of a position that sees ‘spontaneity and personal qualities of the social worker as more important than theory’ (p.99) is critiqued where theoretical ignorance is an excuse for sloppy and dishonest practice (p.100). In Text Two, a discussion on role theory raises the debate about professional role and separation of personal qualities and attitudes, and the resulting meaning for equality in client relationships (p.161). In an earlier chapter, personal style is discussed as the integration of knowledge and personality (p.46).

5.9. PRIVATE AND POLITICAL

In terms of the private and political, I have analysed whether these terms are used to consider or conceptualise discourses about social work, and therefore whether it is considered that there are dominant paradigms or understandings informing social work in the private or public sphere of practice. The majority of these texts hold as a theme that the individual-environment or private-political relationship is central to, creates or describes social work with a range of interpretations of the nature of that relationship (Text One, Text Three, Text Four, Text Five, Text Six, Text Seven, Text Nine, Text Eleven, Text Fourteen), for example:

… [social work] deals with individual difficulties and suffering but which also challenges structural constraints. A new social work agenda will have to incorporate the dictum ‘the personal is political’ to take on board the fact that our individual experiences reflect the social position within which we find ourselves. (Text Twelve, p.61)
In all texts, other than Text Thirteen, a positive interpretation of linking the private and political is made, seeing it variously as necessary for good, ethical social work practice, and critiquing models that do not contain a structural analysis. In Text Thirteen, on the other hand, it is argued that an emphasis on the social environment assumes a lack of control, choice and responsibilities for the individual, although individualism and working in an individualised way are differentiated. While most acknowledge that social work is political and that the public sphere influences social work’s practices and understandings, this is made as a statement, rather than forming an analysis of the dominant and public discourses of social work. These concepts are not used in relation to social work theory and its status – or therefore its science and art.

5.10. DISCUSSION
Science is seen to have a role in the definitions of social work, its practices and knowledge, to demonstrate effectiveness, and as a source of critique and change to the social order. Modernism and positivism are discussed as models of science and placed in their historical context. Links between modernism and its emancipatory ideals (rather than its science) and social work are outlined. Contemporary models of science are not outlined or discussed although in many texts empiricism is referred to, and the empirical status of theories used to positively evaluate their utility and place. In most texts the critique of science is of particular models and uses or applications. The critique centres on what science leaves out and that there are alternative ways of knowing. The contribution of a scientific approach is to internal professional matters for social work related to its professional status, and to clients through more effective practice.

In terms of qualities of science, rationality is not seen as a desirable attribute for social workers throughout their practice, although it is seen as part of the current context. It is seen also as historically valued, and part of discursive practices that continue to deny other experiences and ways of knowing. Objectivity is essentially critiqued as masking other processes taking place in social work research and practice; it is often dichotomised with a subjective position although some texts see the interplay of the two. Similarly, notions of social work as a technical activity are seen as masking political processes. Evidence and experiment are used as terms only and so it is not possible to determine how they are being
defined, although they are generally given political and negative interpretations respectively. Diagnosis is seen as belonging to particular models only and generally historically relevant rather than contemporary understandings. None of the qualities of science are therefore seen as integral to all practice and indeed most are interpreted negatively as hiding what are political and power processes.

In four of the six texts in which social work as an art is discussed, it is in the context of postmodern understandings of social work, and how this allows us to consider more creative ways of practice. The four in which it is conceptualised in some way refer to the work of Hugh England in this field; perhaps indicating that there has been limited work of significance or comprehensiveness since he wrote about that model in the 1980s. It is interesting to note that while in the evaluation of science, various models of science were discussed and in particular its historical influences on social work tracked, this is not so for social work as an art. Although its historical presence in social work is acknowledged, it is not formulated as a model for practice in the same way as science – and indeed this is the source of one critique of art.

In most texts when the qualities of social work as an art are discussed:

(i) their use is in particular strategies or contexts rather than a part of all practice. They are usually related to political strategies, and given that most texts are aiming to develop a more political social work practice, this could be seen as a positive evaluation;

(ii) they are not related to a social work as art approach, or indeed any particular model or method of working; they are ‘stand alone’ qualities in that sense.

There is one text where qualities associated with social work as an art are not discussed at all, either as terms or concepts (Text Eight). Text Thirteen, by a psychologist, is one of the only texts in which the qualities of art are conceptualised, where the helping process is an art based on principles rather than a technology involving a particular formula (p.102, 266). In most texts the qualities of social work as an art are used as words or terms rather than concepts. That is, they are used as adjectives to describe a way of working or particular use of a strategy. They are not therefore described, defined, or conceptualised in any way, nor are they operationalised in that there are no guidelines or strategies for how to use these
qualities in practice. As stated above, in no text are these related to a social work as art approach; they are not seen as belonging therefore to an overall model or way of working, giving them no theoretical or intellectual context.

The qualities of art most commonly discussed are:

- Use of Self (10 of 14)
- Creativity (9)
- Imagination (9)
- Intuition (8)

The only three of these that are operationalised in any way are creativity (in Text Thirteen and to some extent Text Eleven), use of self (Text One, Text Three) and imagination (to some extent in Text Eleven). Use of self is the most common attribute that is positively evaluated, although it does have various meanings from active use of self and personal qualities in the helping relationship to self-knowledge related to insight into one’s own biases and triggers. It is portrayed in most texts as necessary for authentic and ethical practice and for removing possible barriers to the helping relationship.

Imagination is evaluated positively as a quality that facilitates connection – with clients, with theory, with self – and to project and move forward seeing new possibilities. Creativity is similarly seen as a connector and can also assist workers to work politically, at once within and outside the boundaries of their agency. Intuition is given a qualified evaluation; while identified as a source of knowledge it needs to be checked against other sources whether they be theory, clients’ understandings or others perceptions. Practice wisdom also is seen as necessary but to be used alongside other ways of knowing including theory, values and experience. Insight is only ever used as a term and as an outcome of the therapeutic process usually rather than a quality of the practitioner; where it is used however it is evaluated positively. Personal qualities are often understood in terms of personal style and are seen to form a springboard to other aspects of practice. There is no discussion on whether they can be learnt or developed which is one of the debates in the social work as art literature (see Chapter Seven).

As Table 5.5 shows the evaluation of the qualities of social work as an art is often qualified in that they are discussed as related to use in particular political strategies such as
consciousness-raising and advocacy (Text One, Text Two, Text Three, Text Seven, Text Six, Text Eleven, Text Fourteen). Given that many of these texts are aiming to develop a more political social work practice, it could be seen that their use of these qualities is positive, applied as they are to political strategies. Use of self is the most common attribute that is positively evaluated, although it does have various meanings, as above. Text Ten, in which many of the qualities of social work as an art are discussed, also outlines the strongest critique of them, reflecting themes in the critique of social work as an art as being atheoretical, soft and anti-intellectual.

5.11. CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS

There is limited discussion about the science and art of social work as models of social work in the fourteen texts analysed here. There may be a variety of reasons that this relationship is or is not represented in the texts including their specific aims and content areas as well as more political ones of dominant and marginalised perspectives. Therefore, it may be that the art of social work is missing from these texts because it is not particularly meaningful to the model of social work being developed in them. However, these are the texts most commonly suggested or recommended to first year social work students meaning that representations of art are missing from their potential literary introduction to the profession.

Many of these texts acknowledge that social work in a postmodern sense transcends dualisms even if they do not specifically refer to science and art; the science-art dualism is not meaningful in this kind of discussion therefore as most writers assume that social work already blurs these distinctions. However, given that the discussion of dualisms and how to manage them is still taking place, can social work claim that it has indeed transcended them? There is still no discussion of what this looks like in practice either, and they are still discussed in relation to one another – or rather art is discussed as a response to rational scientific models.

Science is discussed primarily as an historical force that still has manifestations in social work, however contemporary models of social science are not discussed. Does this in fact represent the comparison in Text Four of a ‘traditional’ school of social work that still adheres to an antiquated model of science – that indeed it is still this antiquated model that is being critiqued rather than engaging and joining in contemporary developments and movements in social
science. That leaves the question of what modes of evaluation are being utilised. The evaluation of science is essentially negative therefore as it is seen as historical rather than meaningful in the contemporary setting, and is often associated with individual models of practice, whereas most texts here are advocating a structural form of social work.

Social work as an art is mentioned only briefly rather than being subject to discussion or in-depth analysis; as noted before while there are models of science there are not for art. This has also been one of the critiques of this way of working – that it provides limited models and structures for practice. Indeed, many of the critiques of social work as an art come through in these texts, as being atheoretical, based in personal ways of working, limited translation to practice, and so forth. The work of others – and particularly Hugh England – in developing social work as an art is quoted. There is very little contemporary work referred to; that raises a question again of the current relevance of the debate and whether any original work is being done?

The qualities of social work as an art are not connected by any of the texts to this model. Is that because of the related absence of social work as an art as a model? Is it because the model has not been formulated to such an extent that such qualities are readily identified with it? Does it reflect something about the status of these particular qualities, seen perhaps as natural or insufficient and therefore not necessary for discussion and development?

If discussion of social work as an art and a science are primarily absent from the literature except as historical entities, are they relevant at all? Are there other reasons for this – such as a postmodern assumption that social work always has done and already does work across such binaries? Does the fact that in the evaluation of science there were models available and in not in art indicate something about their status and level of formulation? Is art not a model for practice? And if not, is it because as Text Two states it is at once ‘basic and peripheral’ or because it is difficult to formulate given the scientific history of social work? Is it a way of being rather than a way of working or does art always needs to be used in conjunction with other ways of working as some texts suggest here? These questions are addressed in Chapter Eight ‘Conceptualising a Relationship’. The next chapter provides a second reading of the art and science of social work – practitioners’ stories. The data from these two chapters is presented in an integrated form in Chapters Eight and Nine.
CHAPTER SIX
PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF SOCIAL WORK;
PRACTITIONERS STORIES OF SOCIAL WORK

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As Siporin (1988) argues, clinicians have made continuing progress in developing the art of social work – their insights and learning are therefore essential to any process of developing a theory of social work as an art. Flyvbjerg (2001, p.115) argues that practices are more fundamental than discourses: practice is a ‘way of acting and thinking at once’ such that discourse analysis must be disciplined by the analysis of practices as discourse is not life, regular, daily practice is. Practitioners’ stories of their social work – and its art and science – therefore can provide a reading of how these ways of seeing social work are part of the ‘acting and thinking at once’ of social work. They provide these practitioners’ understandings of the art and science of their social work and are necessarily personal stories therefore. However, as feminism, and indeed postmodernism and critical theory tell us, there is knowledge in the story and in the personal. These practitioners are experts about their own practice and its art and science.

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the responses of the twelve practitioners interviewed under the major themes of social work as science, social work as art, qualities of social work as an art, social work as science/art (i.e. their conceptualisation of the relationship), definition of social work, and knowledge in social work. These themes are also used in later discussion chapters.

6.2. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS

A summary of the interview process, including the theoretical and methodological justification for its use, can be found in Chapter Two. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve practitioners. Characteristics of the interview group are discussed below. In general terms the interviews explored their understandings and perceptions of:

- Social work as a science
- Social work as an art
The role of creativity, imagination, intuition and use of self in their practice
The barriers to social work as an art
Knowledge for practice
Definitions of social work

Following completion of the transcription process for all the interviews, they were read through, themes identified and then compared within and between interviews.

6.2.1. Interview Sample Characteristics

A brief introduction to each practitioner is provided in the table below; the majority specifically asked that their workplace not be identified, so I have generalised the area of work that they are in. Throughout the text I have referred to them as Practitioner One, Two and so forth, rather than the confusing practice, for me as writer, of using pseudonyms.

Table 6.1. Sample Characteristics of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Current work environment</th>
<th>Other relevant information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Aged care</td>
<td>Came to social work as a mature age student, having been a full-time parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Tertiary hospital</td>
<td>Is a classically trained pianist – she drew on the analogy of music and social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Tertiary hospital</td>
<td>Previous career in another health profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>On extended sick leave, this practitioner passed away six months after the interview</td>
<td>Previous career in another health profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Child protection, crisis work</td>
<td>Previous career in another health profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Social policy, drug and alcohol field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>Describes herself as an ‘Aboriginal person who happens to be a social worker’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Counselling to trauma survivors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Community development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Women’s Health (non-government organisation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3. THE ART AND SCIENCE OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS: THEMES AND CONCEPTS

The following table summarises the practitioners’ views on what is science, what is art, and then how they see social work as a science, and as an art. As presented here, the latter are not necessarily discussed in a relationship (see below). The concepts are then discussed in the following relevant sections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Understanding of social work as a science</th>
<th>Understanding of social work as an art</th>
<th>Is social work a science?</th>
<th>Is social work an art?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>As research</td>
<td>Parallels in social themes</td>
<td>Not personally, but yes for profession as a whole</td>
<td>Yes, as practice from the heart. Is personal though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding – a public knowledge Methodologies</td>
<td>Expression Like a performance Simulate qualities of in clients</td>
<td>Yes, necessary for all areas of practice</td>
<td>Qualified – in particular functions of social work only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Knowledge Rigour</td>
<td>In the relationship Self as tool</td>
<td>Yes, although not like a pure science, but uses knowledge and rigour</td>
<td>Yes, in the application of science, the integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>As particular qualities – particularly creativity Uniqueness</td>
<td>No, but should be – is weak as one, no research culture</td>
<td>Not considered in that way before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Research Knowledge can be, but not necessarily</td>
<td>Knowledge As particular qualities – use of self</td>
<td>No, practice is not like a science</td>
<td>More like an art form than a science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Knowledge Understanding</td>
<td>As particular qualities – innovation and creativity</td>
<td>No, but should be – is weak as one, no research culture</td>
<td>Not considered in that way before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>Knowledge Rigour and ethics of</td>
<td>Bringing colour to people</td>
<td>Aspects of</td>
<td>Yes, as makes use of self and cannot separate those.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>Knowledge – what we do with it that’s important</td>
<td>As particular qualities – use of self and intuition</td>
<td>Depends on which model considering – aspects of</td>
<td>Makes sense to think of social work in this way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine</td>
<td>A number of models of Critical Methodical</td>
<td>Expression Methodical</td>
<td>Depends on which model considering – aspects of</td>
<td>Makes sense to think of social work in this way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>A number of models of Critical and rigorous</td>
<td>As particular qualities – use of self, creativity and intuition</td>
<td>Depends on which model considering Ethics of</td>
<td>Necessary in her work in community development, as no formulas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>Knowledge Rigour</td>
<td>What we want it to be – not supported by skill or knowledge</td>
<td>No – but it should be</td>
<td>Qualified, in particular instances of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>Knowledge – but a restrictive view of</td>
<td>Exclusive and elitist As particular qualities – creativity</td>
<td>Not a science – incompatible</td>
<td>Social work like one because subjective and human</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4. SOCIAL WORK AS A SCIENCE

6.4.1. Defining Science

As can be seen in the table above, practitioners primarily defined science as being knowledge (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12). For Practitioner Three for example, science provides us with understandings that are ‘out there’, a collective and public knowledge that is more than practitioner’s own private understandings:

...there are certain things that are known and that can be built on and that provides some sort of basis for the work that we do. So while I don’t think it’s clear-cut in the sense of the physical sciences it’s still...something we can look at and try and study and research....we’re not just coming up with ideas that are just plucked from nowhere or that we’ve made up.

Three practitioners qualified this identification in that scientific knowledge was not reflective of the nature of social work (5), that what social workers do with knowledge is the primary consideration (8) and that it is a restrictive view of knowledge that does not account for clients’ contexts or their own stories (12).

In a related way, others identified science with research and research methodologies (1, 5, 7, 12) while five identified it with ethics, in being rigorous and critical (3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). The latter is particularly meaningful to social work as it ‘is important to be clear about your work and evaluate what you do’ (10). Practitioner Seven saw that science has ‘some kind of ethical standpoint, that scientific discovery be for the betterment of mankind, so I think that social work would have that as well’.

Two practitioners (9, 10) did identify that there were a variety of models of science, and that when discussing science for social work it had to be considered in the context of the models of science social work had taken on:

P10: When I think of science I think of that empirical model, and that there has to be a right way and a wrong way of doing things, and everything can be measured. And that doesn’t really hit with my idea of social work. Although, you can talk about science, perhaps you might talk about it, the chaos theory and that kind of thing.

6.4.2. Is Social Work a Science?

The way practitioners viewed whether social work was like a science or not related to their definition of science and the models they thought it represented (see above).
6.4.2.1. Social Work is not a Science – but should it be?

Four practitioners (4, 5, 11, 12) thought that social work was not a science although two thought that it should be (4, 11). Practitioner Twelve saw that science and social work were incompatible:

Everything that is opposite to what science purports to be is what social work actually is...science is about predictability, and cause-and-effect. Because we work with human beings, you can’t categorise and classify and predict in that kind of way.

She also critiqued notions of objectivity as creating distance between an expert practitioner and client, whereas social work is about subjectivity and acknowledging clients’ expertise.

In the mental health area particularly she felt that science failed to ‘take into account the context of someone’s life’ and instead isolated different variables in an artificial way.

While for Practitioner Five social work practice was not like a science as social workers don’t ‘test hypotheses and explore in a scientific methodology any of the issues with our clients or generally in practice’. This was because social work is work with humans and occurs in a complex social context:

P5: [there are] no givens, there are no concrete or definitive answers to any of the questions we have when we are working within the social context.

As above, two practitioners thought that social work should be a science, but had not achieved this status. Practitioner Eleven associated science with knowledge. She was deeply concerned that in her agency – and in her experience of social workers elsewhere – there was no rigour, and no reference to knowledge:

…I know that there’s a whole body of knowledge in terms of child protection...it’s all well documented in terms of studies. And yet we take no notice of it. So I suppose that’s what I guess as being a science. Stuff that is as absolute as you can get in services...it’s there, it is up to date, it is critical in terms of our work, but no one’s paying any attention to it.

She saw that this lack of reference to knowledge was due to several reasons including that:

- there is ‘no culture of research’ or use of research in either the social work profession or the organisations social workers worked in but rather a ‘culture of lets do it ourselves, let’s not see what anyone else is gong. We can do it better.’
- that workers were ‘under-resourced’ and therefore often had to be functional.
• there was no time for supervision and a lack of recognition of what good supervision is – ‘people don’t know how to supervise. People don’t know what supervision is about, so they have no expectations…’

• that social workers ‘whole training is to question’ rather than conform so that they would not ‘follow guidelines in terms of their practice, some of which are well founded in the research.’

• that there is no rigour post-graduation – further study is something private individuals do, and there are not the same demands for continuing professional education in social work as for other professions.

The lack of use of knowledge has been a ‘reason for criticism of social work’ she believed, and yet social workers as practitioners, and as organisations, continued to take no notice.

Similarly, Practitioner Four saw that there was no culture of research in the profession:

P4: …it wasn’t solely the funding [for research in her department] as much as adaptation to and allocation for that decision…. [ideas that] this person continually floating around doing research, when they could be doing something more productive, could be doing the hands on, are beginning to change now I think, slowly…. [but] we are doing it to ourselves.

Practitioners 6 and 7 similarly saw that social work did not use research as much as it should and that this led to a lack of transparency and an inability to shape science or social change:

P7: …social workers don’t use the research and the literature to guide their practice as much as I’d like; what I’d like to see more of our work referenced to the literature… I think that sometimes we make assumptions that people know why we’re making decisions about child protection and all the implications and I think that’s not really enough, I think we need to be very clear about why it is we’re taking this course of action.

P6: …the nineties has probably been very much dominated by a rational approach and social work has spent most of its time resisting it… although I don’t really think there’s been all that much critique of it, really has it?… Whereas we need to take on an approach which actively shapes it.

He saw that:

…..social work’s strength at the same time is understanding that there is a whole complexity to a situation, and it hasn’t really articulated that very well.
Further social work did not present its understandings to other professions – indeed social work had floundered with its own science and therefore turned to other professions for theirs. If social work voices are not heard in ‘some kind of viable solution…what can we do with [a critique]?’ (P6).

6.4.2.2. Social Work as Social Science

Two practitioners differentiated between the physical and social sciences, and that social work could be like the latter rather than the former. Practitioner Six saw that this was because it is human and has multiple levels of understanding – for him this humanity and broadness is the art of social work:

[I] see social work as a social science and not a science, and the social science is that it’s about people…and you can never talk in absolutes…which is in the art sense about being creative and not talking about absolutes but rather about people…about broad understandings and recognising that it’s complex.

Similarly, Practitioner Three saw that social work is a social science because as well as listening to the scientific knowledge, social workers heard clients’ stories as knowledge also. Practitioner Two however thought that all social work needed to be scientific, ‘a gold standard of how to go about things’ that informs all its tasks, roles and functions.

6.4.2.3. Aspects of a Science

For others social work was not a science, however science had a place in informing the profession, particularly in its knowledge bases and frameworks of understanding (see above). Social work therefore was seen as having aspects of a science (1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10): depending on the model of science being discussed (9, 10), or that there were multiple ways of understanding and science was one of these (3, 7, 8), that it was not a personal model of practice but necessary for the profession as a whole (1), or that science provided the knowledge but not the process (3). Practitioner Eight particularly had two ways of conceptualising or understanding encompassing everything she said; one was her cultural way, which informed all her ways of understanding, and a postmodern perspective, which to her meant she was able to deconstruct and then reconstruct multiple ways of knowing. This meant for her that science was one colour in a ‘coat of many colours’ and in using any form of knowledge social workers needed to be open, human and flexible. For her the primary understanding that should inform social work practice is the client’s narrative:
Practitioner Nine made the point that social workers did not necessarily need to be scientists, but they need to know how to use science, and use it critically.

Science had some specific roles in social work, in addition to providing its knowledge base, including in evaluation (1, 9, 10):

P9: …this is my theory of what is going on, then let’s test it…and see whether that is an accurate set of assumptions. If it’s not, then you’ve got to record it and move on…it’s more a methodical…. checking and validating…so in terms of problem solving, scientific approach is very useful…and in providing research methodologies (1, 2, 8). Practitioner Seven saw that she used scientific processes in her work at multiple levels in ‘the way we analyse data, the way we find information and the way we go back to research to guide our practice…we need to do research to find information and we really need to use that information we get, into learning’.

6.4.3. Why Science for Social Work?
Practitioners provided a variety of reasons as to the importance of science for social work, including intrinsic values of science such as its ethics, and external demands for it. Reasons for a place for science in social work included therefore:

(i) **Contextual demands for:** including from organisations and funding bodies (1, 6, 8).

P1: …this age that we live in is very scientific and funded that way…at uni it was sort of put into your mind that the facts and figures were basically to get funding…if you wanted to do anything…it would all have to be scientifically explored…if we don’t have a measured outcome, why do you do this, why they should fund this, why do we need more social workers, why do we need more hours, if we can’t produce things then we don’t get it…

(ii) **Dealing with other professionals** (4, 6, 10) in sharing a common language and therefore able to engage with and advocate to others (6, 10), and demonstrating social work practice (4):
P4: I consider it important too that our practice is demonstrable in a scientific manner to other professions because I think...there’s still that inability to adequately describe and demonstrate it to other professions with a scientific basis...

P10: When you’re trying to convince people of something, you’ve really got to have those facts and figures and people’s feedback written down, and all that. “I know this because”.

(iii) **Ethical reasons** including the need to be accountable (1), clear and transparent in decision-making and activities (4, 7, 10), and rigorous and critical in the work and understandings (2, 3, 7, 10, 11) by using what is known to guide and explain practice (1, 7, 11):

P3: It’s the rigorousness of it...something we can put out there and say this is what we believe and that it can be researched and studied in the context of whatever.

P7: Well in terms of analysing information to assist decision-making here...I chair case conferences and what I’m really doing is pooling and analysing information from a whole lot of sources, and using my knowledge of the research, and the literature, and current practice to guide decision making...it has to be very transparent...to parents...to foster carers...to other agencies.

(iv) **Professional status**: Two practitioners saw that striving for science was about a strive for professional status and legitimacy (5, 9):

P5: I think that social work is interested in adapting from science some of its principles... giving professionals who are social workers legitimacy rather than science making a contribution; we take what we want and then perhaps leave the rest.

Practitioner Nine felt that rather than from science, social work’s credibility should be based in the profession’s values:

I think where in the past we hung our credibility on being as scientific as possible, I think we now have to hang our credibility as being as true to our values as possible, and I think brings us back more to core of what social work is.

(v) **Research and Evaluation**: to create knowledge for practice (2, 7, 10) and to evaluate its practice (1, 10):

P10: …try and evaluate what you do. Sometimes I do that in really formal ways, for example, if I’d run an event and...I’ll get them to do a quantitative analysis and answer some questions as well...it does give some really valuable information, some real key insights into what’s really important for people....what they get out of it I can take
because I’ve actually researched, and I can say: ‘Well we’ll get off in this direction, rather than [that] direction…

Two practitioners thought that accessing the research could be a response to the critique of social work as atheoretical and subjective (6, 11).

(vi) Knowledge: For most the need for science was related to the need for knowledge (2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11). Practitioner Two for example saw that science provided social work ‘a sandwich…layers’ of understanding, and that social work in particular could ‘access any of those areas’. She saw this as very helpful in dealing with complex human and social problems. Similarly for Practitioner Six, in his day-to-day work science informed his way of understanding the problem and he provided examples of different ways of understanding that had been promoted in the alcohol and drug field:

There’s the individual and that’s really where it dominates in our field and although we talk about this interaction model, which is a systems model, the theory is actually dominated by focusing on the individual and it’s very much about cognitive behavioural therapies in responding to that.…. Three practitioners pointed out the ‘public nature’ of scientific knowledge in that it is collective (3), objective (6), and able to be shared with others (7). Similarly, one role for science according to Practitioner Two was that it could be helpful in creating a mindset in the community – that knowledge of people’s experiences creates a consciousness about them and possibly therefore an understanding:

…somebody who goes through a burn injury goes through massive [trauma]….they might have lost somebody, they might have heard somebody screaming who dies in a car…but that’s all unseen. It doesn’t belong to our culture, it doesn’t belong to our experience and we don’t reach out to them…

One practitioner pointed out specifically that science provides one understanding but not the only way of understanding (8).

6.4.4. The Use of Science in Practice

Related to identifying science with knowledge, most practitioners made use of science in their practice for providing understanding and theoretical frameworks for practice (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11). Practitioner Three outlined how this knowledge for her provides a framework for understanding and considering what might be meaningful to a client – and that she always checked this formal knowledge with her client’s understanding:
...then I meet the person, and I’m just checking it out…if I’ve got a young person in the room, can hypothesise that some of the development stages they’re going through is the need for individuation…to further develop their own identity and development of sexuality…and that also helps me to understand some of the struggles that they may have in sort of, as their facing dialysis, or hospital, or perhaps why the relationships with the family is so important, you know, how they met those needs that other people of that age are meeting…

Practitioner Eleven believed that while social work should make use of scientific knowledge in practice it did not and that indeed social workers were not encouraged to do so (see above).

Practitioner Nine outlined how she made use of scientific methods for problem-solving, not in individual cases, but when she and her colleagues could detect a pattern in the difficulties their clients were experiencing or in service delivery:

…where I came across a problem that would seem to be a repeating problem, there was something that every time I tried it or other workers in other agencies tried it, we would get stuck, so I would try a scientific method to work out exactly what was going on…so let’s break it down into steps so we can see which part of the whole thing isn’t working….the statistical end of things….I think that is something that has to be done to give you a sense of the scale of problems or some sort of measurement of the environment…I see that as being a part of management of whatever you are doing.

Rather than generating research, Practitioner One considered, in a critical manner, how research findings (she defined science as research) related to her practice considering ‘how is this meaningful for myself’ and checking as to whether the two experiences matched up. Interestingly however, few practitioners when asked what sources of knowledge they used identified particular models or researchers or theorists that they accessed or utilised.

6.4.5. The Critique of Science for Social Work

For five practitioners the critique of science was about its use or application in social work and in particular seeing science as the only way of knowing (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9):

P1: …[they] wouldn’t go with [their] heart feelings….and I think if you do practice in a very black and white way there are no grey areas…there wouldn’t be any way that it could be an individual, I mean everything that we deal with is very individual….

P4: …[a risk] of being carried away by being hard-nosed about…the methods we use and getting our results to the extent that some of what
I think is important to the profession some of the more humane aspects might get reduced. Practitioner Four was concerned that while science might help us to produce professional standards, it might take something away from the intangible and human aspects of social work practice, so important for her was ‘tying in those two aspects’. Practitioners One, Two and Three were concerned about purely scientific practice leading to rigidity, however as Practitioner Three points out:

…maybe the rigidity is a good word that can confine us to, not go into areas that are not known or understood, or be open to that.

Practitioner Eight’s concern was what practitioners do with their scientific ways of knowing, and in particular a concern that understandings from science could sometimes lead people to believe they were experts rather than engaging in the clients narrative to direct the process:

But what they don’t understand is that they themselves put more instruments of control which actually stifles some of the narrative …you’ve got to ask questions, instead of letting…their own journey, because one hand of it is saying that I’m the expert type stuff…I’m the social worker, and therefore I control what to do…and the other one is saying that the answers are in the other people and you are kind of the catalyst in allowing that to happen….some people I find…it’s more uncomfortable to do that because….within themselves…they have more inner control in themselves or control issues…power issues…which often does stifle a narrative in itself. They can’t be with the journey…

Practitioner Twelve was similarly concerned that the use of science could lead to professional distancing and a discounting of the client’s lived experience.

Some saw that science could not capture all that was meaningful in the human and social spheres social work operates in (1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12):

P12: ….the lack of context and the bigger-picture sort of stuff, whether it’s social learning, or the way your family interacts, or whether it’s something you’ve inherited…It’s not grounded in any kind of human reality, really, in my experience in mental health. For some this meant that prediction and relationships of cause and effect and generalisations could not necessarily be determined (1, 9, 10, 12). Yet, as Practitioners Three and Six point out, while there might not be generalisations, there are some things social workers do know:

P6: …there are some things that we know, and we can't dismiss them all, because they’re not the whole picture, they are nonetheless part of the picture.
In a similar way, it meant that some of social work’s outcomes therefore were also intangible, and different from those accessible through measurement (1, 2, 3, 4), as Practitioner Four put it ‘it’s very hard to meet scientific practice with measuring intangibles’.

6.5. SOCIAL WORK AS AN ART

6.5.1. Is Social Work an Art?

Practitioners’ responses were varied as to whether social work was an art or not. Three practitioners had not considered their practice in this way before (4, 10, 12): Practitioner Four for example stated she ‘thought of art as a painting or sculpture or something’ and considered it a ‘product’ rather than a process or practice. Three practitioners thought it was considering the very best of practice (2, 9, 11), for three it definitely was (1, 3, 7 – see table) while the remaining three saw it in relationship to the science of practice although with different interpretations (5, 6, 8).

Practitioners Two, Nine and Eleven thought that art was considering the ‘very best of social work’ (P9). Practitioner Two and Eleven thought this occurred in particular forms or functions of social work, namely work in relationship with another individual:

P2: ...I think that the artistic goes with the ‘Rolls Royce’ of social work….there’s different functions that go into social work and I think that the old hierarchy of needs, if you’ve got someone who needs a bus voucher, well there’s not a whole lot of artistic work that goes into that. But if you’re at a very, very deep level, trying to talk to someone’s soul I think that does then require the artistic side, because about the artistic thing is, is expression, its sensitivity, its the ability to bridge sometimes hopelessly large gulches between people or between conscious states or between physical states.

For her, social work in this manner was ‘similar to a, trying to do a performance with a particular audience in mind’ and is difficult work to match communication and expression to the specific audience:

It’s hard work. Because you have to create situations where, you know, it’s like, not only do you have to call upon yourself deeply, and know yourself deeply to be able to do that, you have to create the situations and the expectations and the whatever so you’re having to make yourself available in situations that you wouldn’t necessarily [otherwise]…
In the latter group (above), Practitioners Six and Eight could not separate art and science. For Practitioner Six, the social in the social science of social work was its art – the humanity that social work brings to its understandings and the managing and understanding of complexity:

We’re dealing with people in real-life situations and complex situations…and that becomes a central part of my practice, realising in the first place that I don’t have all the answers.

Practitioner Eight’s postmodern understanding (see above) meant that she saw social work as drawing on multiple sources of knowledge, including science and art. Practitioner Five thought that social work was ‘more an art form than it is a scientific endeavor’, but social work for her was essentially as professional practice – rather than an art or a science.

6.5.2. The Parallels Between Social Work and Art

6.5.2.1. Qualities of Art

Ten practitioners identified particular qualities when asked about any parallels between social work and art, primarily creativity (6, 9, 10, 12):

P6: ...social work needing to be innovative in its approach, needing to come up with new models and new approaches to deal with old situations...In terms of responding to the social, political and purchasing environment, social work needs to be creative...[it’s] time to come up with approaches and responses that are reflective of what social work is about in the first place.

and use of self (3, 5, 7):

P7: I think it’s definitely an art because social workers use so much of themselves and their own individual creativity in what they’re doing ...and that’s one of the most exciting things about social work I think. And because we’re all growing and developing all the time, you know the way that you can develop that art side of your work is constantly expanding, it’s not limited.

Other qualities also identified were intuition (6) openness to different forms of knowledge (8), humanness, subjectivity and empathy (1, 12) communication and expression (2, 9).

For Practitioner Eight it was about taking risks and that this occurs within the framework of values:

The guts to take risks is the art of it. When there is no framework to fall back on you have to be comfortable in yourself what risks you’ll take, comfortable with awkward situations and allow it to be....it may be creative [but] that’s according to values...

For her then art is also about the ability to have trust, courage and learn with the ‘anguish that is unchartered waters...uncertainty is what the families live with...understand their
fear and your own, accept fear and resistance’. For two, social work became an art when aspects of the work became intuitive (2, 3):

P2: ...I think that ultimately with art...is when you’re very, very comfortable with the skill...certainly with playing a musical instrument there’s a certain time when you know the skills...where your hands know where to go so you don’t need to think about it.

Creativity, use of self, intuition and imagination are discussed further below.

6.5.2.2. The Humanity of Social Work

The ‘human-ness’ of social work is what makes it an art for some practitioners in terms of being about relationship (3, 11):

P3:  I feel like the people you work with – that’s the art, that’s the beauty of it. I suppose it’s like your watching every single angle and then the artist might have a very scientific understanding of colours, or what should go with what, or look best, but the art is in transforming that on canvas, and in social work the art is in how that is transformed in relationship with your client…

being personal (7, 9), recognising the uniqueness in each client encounter (4), communication and expression (2, 9), involving different levels of understanding (6) or the areas and people social work is involved in (1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10). For Practitioner One, this was about the portrayal of human and social themes in art, which social work was then able to work with on a personal level:

Well I’ve always thought of historically, that the social workers before social work was actually founded were the literalists or artists of the day….the way they portrayed human beings and suffering…have portrayed what’s happening and…the social part of life…They would comment on it (social issues and social justice), but now we [social workers] can act upon it.

For Practitioner Nine it was about using the creativity and imagination to be change agents:

P9: I think when you do allow for creativity and imagination, people checking with their intuition, you allow for that expansive work, social work is just totally totally fascinating, and I think far more productive as well, so instead of maintaining people, you look at actually [being] change agents, then you do have a chance for improving their social conditions, improving their lives, and stronger and more able to get action and response – and change – from the system.

Practitioner Seven talked about bringing colour to people’s lives:

I think the real parallel between art and social work is the colours it brings to you as a person, like the colours that you see in the work that you do and the relationships you have with people and changes that you help people to make, and the improvements hopefully that you bring to the world…some people don’t get much colour…and it’s
good to help them realise that life can be a richer tapestry than they
amay have imagined, or been able to imagine before.
Interestingly the human dimension was also one of the reasons some identified that social
work could not be a science.

6.5.2.3. The Use of Art
Practitioner Ten thought that social workers could derive inspiration and insight from art
and creation. Practitioner Eight talked about the use of art and creating art with clients in
her practice, as a way of sharing and demonstrating meaning in a safe way that does not
necessarily require language skills. To her then the tools of the art of social work were
varied; it could involve using different mediums, making use of the environment one was
working in, using different venues (she provided the example of holding a case conference
under a tree on a remote mission rather than in the department’s offices in town as was
usual practice), different strategies for drawing out the narrative, and the use of creation to
draw out meaning. Art then could be used very broadly, ‘re-enacting it in different ways to
draw out meaning’.

6.5.2.4. Parallel Processes
Six practitioners saw parallels between social work processes and those in art – or at least
as analogous:

P4: …it’s a bit like…or even a tapestry…you’ve got so many
strands…you’ve got to join them all together….
Practitioner Two saw the art of social work coming into being when it was like a
performance: ‘a performance presupposes someone expressing themselves and an audience
you’re trying to reach’. This included being methodical and critical (7, 9):

P9: …and if you look at art as also having quite a methodical
approach to critiquing its own work, so artists looking at other artists
work…. there is that impact on how you feel, when you are listening
and experiencing someone else’s art, then you back it up, so what is
it, so it’s allowing the feelings, what could it have been that created
that work. So it’s not like saying only science has method, art has
method as well; it allows the personal to be real.
And there being a framework in the use of knowledge (3, 5):

P5: I think there’s a use of self, there’s a framework, knowledge, and
all of those things are necessary in any art form. You don’t paint a
picture unless you understand how paint goes on a canvas. I mean
you need to understand the medium within which you are working…
6.5.3. Why Art for Social Work?

There were two main reasons given for a relationship between social work and art:

(i) **the complex, broad and grey areas that social work works in** (3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11), in particular working in systems (5, 9):

   P9: Social work usually gets called in, whether it’s individuals, families, communities, or something that’s gone wrong, and usually intractably wrong, so everything’s been tried and nothing’s working, and coming and trying the same things just isn’t going to help, so I think if you can come in with the spark of creativity that allows change to start happening…to spark off a new challenge, and explore new directions, explore new possibilities, and again I think that happens across all areas of social work.

   P3: So I think it’s something that can be in other professions too, but in our own, it’s perhaps more so because we’re often working in sort of contested areas, or in difficult areas and where, you know truth, maybe not in all those, questions we’re working in the grey, and they’re not ones that have definite answers.

(ii) **the role of use of self**, which cannot be separated from social work practice (3, 5, 7, 9) with all four describing self as the ‘tool’ of social work. As part of this, two identified that this was about having energy and attachment for and to the work (3, 9). Use of self is discussed below.

For Practitioner Eight art was about being multi-dimensional and holistic; science belonged to expertise, which by definition is about one dimension of a problem only. She highlighted this with the example of a young Aboriginal girl she was working with, who had a history of sexual abuse, presented with many behavioural problems, and was involved with multiple professionals:

…without ultimately leaving it to speech pathologists, a scientific paradigm, very specialist mental health services, another scientific paradigm, specialist with the ADHD, another scientific paradigm, then I actually said to her about her own culture and the strengths of it…sometimes [you] have to allow yourself to work with that intuition and to work through it in that way, and that to me is being creative, lateral thinking, and not just looking at a situation in one dimension, to art is also having the ability to see whether it has many forms and many structures and many facets that are unseen.
6.5.4. Critique of Social Work as an Art

Practitioner Eleven had negative connotations of social work as an art as having ‘no body of knowledge behind it’, not skilful, and highly individualised with no reference to knowledge or what has been done before – and therefore boundary-less – ‘you could do anything and call it social work’. Art if anything was about being ‘very skilled and like an artist in a sense in working with someone and that can be based in good theoretical knowledge’. However, this was a limited application as she saw it had no connection with macro practice or that practitioners who achieved this kind of work did not take it to a macro level:

And, I mean I’ve seen people do that beautifully…the individual…at that moment, and yes, there is something very powerful for that client in that experience, and for the social worker.

Practitioner Four also thought that art could often be ‘contrived…. and some of it can look unfinished’ and that ‘social work could have a similar analogy’! Practitioner Twelve also had negative connotations but for different reasons, namely as the terms art and artist could be exclusive and exclusionary in the same way science could (see above):

I have some problems with using the word ‘art’ as well, or ‘artist’, because traditionally we assume that art happens in somewhere that’s exclusive, like an art gallery. It’s not accessible, that you need to have skills to be an artist, and it’s quite elitist in that sense…. just being mindful of who you’re excluding.

She agreed with the principles behind social work as an art, in particular the notion of creativity. See below for a further outline of issues to do with the social work as an art approach.

6.5.5. Barriers to Social Work as an Art

I asked practitioners to identify possible barriers to social work being conceived of as an art. Practitioners identified barriers internal and external to the profession, including:

(i) Issues with the model: as atheoretical and unskilled (11), individual and subjective (6, 11) elitist (12), and not well-defined (4).

(ii) That it’s hard work in particular maintaining comfort with the grey in an ongoing search for certainty (2, 3 7), difficulty in demonstrating outcomes (2, 3), and requiring significant energy to sustain working at such a creative and intense level (3, 10). Further, issues of burnout and organisational
demands could contribute to a lack of energy (5, 9, 10).

(iii) **Fear of not being accepted** both within the profession and in relationship with other professionals, with a resulting ‘self-consciousness’ in presenting social work as an art form (4, 5, 7, 10):

P4: …maybe looking at it as an art form you might be we might feel under threat of being ridiculed by professions that come from a very scientific based approach…and somehow [art’s] not seen to be acceptable.

(iv) **Professional survival** in the current economic and employment context had meaning for social work identity and in particular an identity based in art (5, 6, 9):

P5: I think with economic rationalism, we’ve torn down the path of saving our own arses, and legitimising social work practice within the confines of this economic rationalistic view and we stop listening to our clients and we stopped reflecting on our ethical basis for practice and we stopped articulating…

(v) **Barriers internal to the profession:** four practitioners identified that there would be some barriers internal to the profession (1, 2, 7, 10) in portraying social work as an art:

P1: I think there would be some social workers that would not like it to be presented that way….They wouldn’t accept that you could say that it was coming from the heart. They wouldn’t accept those things you would have to back them up with the theory…before that they would even have an understanding.

Practitioner Ten saw more generally that there were challenges in the profession to developing new ways of working, in particular that the relationship between theory and practice was one way:

P10:….you learn…you should apply that [theory] to your practice when you’re out there, but it doesn’t seem to flow the other way…When you’re actually out there in the field, you are constantly developing ways of working, models of practice. Even new theories that you could use for understanding what’s going on. I don’t think there’s enough recognition or flexibility to accept that, so that’s a bit of a barrier, sometimes.

Practitioner Four thought a primary challenge would be to make it relevant as people got ‘weighed down by the practicalities of practice and a lot of the romance goes out the door’. She saw also that time was a significant barrier, as practitioners did not have the time to ‘really think in a more profound way
about the profession and your part of it’. She thought this also reflected a lack of a culture of self-care in the profession.

(vi) A personal and individual practice was the most common reason identified – some saw this as a positive, others a negative (1, 3, 5, 7, 10):

P7: Oh yeah, it’s very personal stuff, you don’t really want to talk about it to everyone...it’s good...if we talked about it with everyone it wouldn’t be personal....And you don’t talk about it with a lot of people, it just happens and you do it.

Practitioner Seven also felt that a lot of the qualities of art were used at an unconscious level and that this interview process had made her think about it ‘so it was a very interesting experience for me, because it has made me think about those things’. Practitioner Three also felt it was difficult to talk about in a public way and there was therefore a need to find ways of talking about the commonalities:

...while I think we do it consciously, I’m not sure if we do do it publicly or if we do it very well because they are very difficult concepts to talk about and occasionally I’ve seen it happen, people get a bit sort of squirmy...it’s almost like laying claim to something that nobody else has and that’s, and that’s all there is, that it’s like where does it come from...So I think it does need to be talked about but I think we have to find ways of doing that that are credible...

There were therefore more risks associated with it and these were felt at a personal level (5, 10):

P10: Being really creative and going with social work as an art, I think there’s more risk associated to it. When you’re putting yourself out on a limb, and sort of showing this quite creative way of doing something, then there’s probably more chance, you might fail, or maybe that’s how you perceive it in your mind, anyway. So there’s that fear perhaps if you take more of a risk, and do something a bit more creative, that it won’t work out. And also, if people don’t share the same vision as you, then there may be that fear there that you are going to have to contend with all these people who are going to shit on you.

Related to this was the question of whether it needed to be or could be public (5, 7, 8)? Practitioner Eight for example did not think how to use the qualities of art could be discussed in a prescriptive way and that actually allowing the space for them was a creative ‘art in itself’. 
(vii) **Issues to do with social work identity** in that social work is not public about social work at all – its science or its art (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) and that:

P4: [we need] to recognise our own potential, consider our own potential as practitioners…[there is] a large degree of need with respect to being accepted, publicly accepted as a profession….and using a scientific basis is becoming more and more important.

Further, social workers are not explicit about the use of artistic qualities in their practice (2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11), and it was not part of written or verbal ways of portraying the work (9, 10). In a different way, Practitioner Five saw that part of the challenge was defining social work as both a profession and an art:

No, I don’t think [we are explicit about our art] no. I don’t think you can be….And that’s the dichotomy really is that we call ourselves a profession. In most professions there is a very clear list of competencies or standings or ways or models or methods of doing stuff and I don’t think that applies to social work. So we are kind of on the fringes of a professional existence. I mean an artist is certainly not called a professional…

### 6.5.5.1. Overcoming the Barriers to Social Work as an Art

The barriers to art also provide some of the strategies for overcoming them. A beginning process would be recognition of the use of such qualities and then some attempts at identifying the commonalities (1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9) and greater assertiveness in claiming what it is social work does (3, 9).

P3: In some respects, we need to be able to talk unapologetically about what we do…we are not divorced from [scientific knowledge] but I think perhaps we should be more assertive and confident in saying we’ve perhaps used this, that and the other from each place, and this is how we try and integrate it into our work and this is what happened, and be much more confident about how we work with people….you need to define it.

Practitioners identified strategies of discussion, dialogue, developing a language, education and supervision that could further develop these qualities (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10). Practitioner Ten did question what forums might be presently available for the consideration of such concepts. Some saw it as a key responsibility of social work to identify its practices – and that developing the art of practice was therefore a contribution to ethical practice (2, 5, 8, 9) ‘that your job is to draw out suggestions, solutions, new ideas, whatever it is you are working on’ (P9).
6.6. QUALITIES OF SOCIAL WORK AS AN ART

I asked practitioners specifically about the role of creativity, intuition, imagination and use of self in their practice.

6.6.1. Imagination

All identified roles for imagination in social work; four saw it as important (3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12) albeit down-played (3, 9) while Practitioner Eleven saw it as being a bonus rather than a core quality. Key roles for imagination were in maintaining a vision (5, 6):

P5: If you don’t have imagination you can’t really move forward, you need a vision, you need a perspective, you need to believe that other things are possible than the ways things are...you need to be able to imagine that the world can be a better place...that children can be protected and live happy, satisfying lives and that parents can experience the rewards of being parents and overcome their own pain etcetera.

In this way social workers can create for their clients a picture of how things could be (1, 2, 5, 12):

P1: I quite often would say to a person who’s in distress, I could give them a picture of what it would be like....say somebody was in a situation of domestic violence and I do quite often, recreate a situation whereas they’re not in that situation anymore and how it feels for them and give them that story...they often don’t act on it straight away but it empowers them to see how it could be.

Five practitioners saw a role for imagination in problem-solving, in particular in providing a picture of a solution or improved situation, to then plan from (5, 7, 10, 12) or in generating more options (11), for example:

P10: You really have to be able to sort of form that picture in your mind and then go through all the steps and then incorporate other people’s ideas into that picture, which certainly takes a lot of imagination.

P7: ...and when you see that picture you know what you have to do, so it’s then translating the picture to reality, and you do that using your interpersonal skills...and your experience....and an understanding too of who you are in the system....
Imagination was also linked to creativity (1, 4, 7, 9) in maintaining an openness to possibilities (3, 8) – for Practitioner Nine creativity was important to imagination so that practice does not become stuck:

So that combination between imagination and creativity allows you to have some space to start thinking about sparks that could create possibilities for this person in that situation or this community that’s got stuck where it is….

For Practitioner Eight in particular imagination was a powerful medium; culturally she said she had an understanding of the power of the mind, in dreams and spirits. Imagination allowed exploration of different levels of understanding with clients, and how problems manifested themselves. She gave an example of working with a young girl whose mother had passed away, and saw her mother in a cat that visited their home. To invalidate this girl’s understanding was to dispel her reality, when in fact, her way of imagining things and the stories she had created were they only way she could explore the trauma and loss of her mother.

Imagination was seen as a key part of generating empathy, in helping social workers understand or connect with a client’s experience (2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11) and then use this as a starting point for what they want to achieve (5, 11). Imagination though for Practitioner Nine actually took us beyond empathy:

Generally you’re working with people in situations that you don’t know…for you to be of any help as a change agent, you have to imagine what it’s like….But I think if you only imagine how I would feel in that situation you come up with an entirely different suggestion, from imagine what it’s like for this person, and for that you get a more complex and meaningful idea.

Processes that contributed to imagination included collaboration (12):

...a collaborative imagination process of, you know, ‘what about’, ‘what about’, and building on each other, and about acknowledging, or letting our clients know that they can, they are allowed to, and sharing knowledge to inform client’s choices and pictures (1). Practitioner Three described the process of imagination for her as:

….just actually let things go a bit, I mean I suppose I’m just reflecting on it in my mind a bit, I think I use a guidance that sometimes comes from when you don’t try too hard… I mean I think it’s to see the difference and other possibilities…I would sort of feel there would have to be at time to do that, and you have to feel reasonably relaxed…
Practitioner Five saw that it was essential that practitioners understood the guidelines of their job, the policies and interface with other professions for imagination to be at all useful to the profession. Practitioner Eleven thought that an important thing for social workers to learn about imagination was ‘that we’re not the most imaginative people and seek out what other people have done before them’.

6.6.2. Intuition

Many practitioners saw intuition as important, essentially because it is part of us, and part of the subjective experience of being a human being (2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12) and as an important part of reading people (7, 10):

P7: I actually think intuition is a part of the judgments that you make….I mean, if you’re not picking it up then what are you doing…you need to see where people are and you need to be able to empathise and relate and get a sense of where they are and what their life has been like.

Most defined it as a kind of knowing, a feeling or a sensitivity (1, 2, 5, 6, 9) like ‘little antennas going up’:

P5: …it’s a kind of knowing that comes from nowhere but I mean nothing comes from nowhere…something informs an intuitive response…I guess to incorporate intuition one must be open, receptive to possibilities…one must believe in another person or another situation without knowing and take a risk…

Practitioner Six thought it was harder for men to consider the role of such qualities in their work, as it was not something they normally discussed – ‘men are never called intuitive, we tend to be more rational in our approaches to things’. Practitioner Two animatedly discussed the differences between gut feelings and intuition; gut feeling for her was an uninformed quality that people could become quite pedantic about.

Nine practitioners saw intuition as something that occurred in relationship with another person, as a sense of understanding (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Practitioner Eleven thought this meant it might be better defined as ‘accurate empathy’ and certainly many practitioners described it as a having a sense of where the person you’re with is at, for example:

P7: I think sometimes when people come into your office you pick up from them some feeling or whatever, and you know that you know where that person’s coming from…but you have to be very clear about what’s you and what’s them, but then you need to be able to put yourself in the other people’s shoes.
It was about picking up cues, from body language, from responses, from the person’s energy (1, 3, 7, 10). For others it was as much a sense that something was not right, a kind of not knowing, that could alert practitioners to things missing in their understanding of a client or as an indication to be aware of safety (2, 3, 11):

P11: I think this person is a nasty piece of work therefore, I’m going to keep myself safe. Which is, as we know, the most powerful indicator of keeping yourself safe, they may or may not have known what the research was, but they acted on their intuition and they were correct to do so.

It was in the sense of occurring in relationship that intuition was seen to have a role in practice, of finding ways of joining with people (8), to be able to start where the client is at (7), and how to respond to the person (3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12):

P8: …so it’s about having the ability to actually know when to allow something to be very fragile and vulnerable to when people have the strength to open that up…being wary and actually work at the…people’s pace…at their level and when they’re ready…that is bordering on wisdom and intuition…the wisdom…to have the knowledge and know when to back off…and the wisdom in the intuition to know when you’ve pushed people to a limit and they need space to digest it and to make meaning out of it…

It was also seen to have a role by some in assessment (5, 7, 11), however these could and should always be traced back to what informed or formed that hunch or intuitive process in the first place:

P5: If I think I know, or think I understand I have to actually clarify, and I have to verify and then have to put a framework around it so that the intuitive considerations or judgement isn’t what I’m left with at the end of the day….I then have to draw out the threads that actually make a kind of intuitive assessment, so that it’s legitimate.

Most thought that intuition ‘came from somewhere’ and was informed by a range of things including prior knowing (5, 6, 7, 12), experience (1, 3, 5, 12) and your use of self (7, 12) – ‘they are a combination of all different things that make you up as a person’. Almost all made the point that they analysed or tried to make sense of their intuitive understanding. For those that saw it occurring in relationship, it was crucial to check intuitive understandings with the client (3, 7, 9, 12):

P12: Intuition often precedes only briefly something that you need to ask, to name out loud, and to ask and clarify: “My sense is that; is that right, or have I got it wrong?”
Similarly, Practitioner Nine thought that it was in the ‘checking’ that intuition became understanding:

…it’s an understanding you need to listen to and you might feel it as a little niggle at first and the more you ignore it, the more you’re going into…dangerous territory because you’re not listening to more of the information, and intuition I think is probably the best influence to be able to get shared experience with the clients you’re working with, so checking out your intuition with the clients is your best way to check out the feelings that you’ve got and the information you’ve collected really do reflect what the person is trying to get across….

In this way many highlighted the connection between intuition and knowledge – intuition being one way of getting to meaning and understanding.

For Practitioner Eleven it was not intuition itself that was problematic, but rather its use – it must be dealt with. She provided an example of a case of a child death she had reviewed where workers did not access or utilise their intuitive understandings:

What they didn’t translate it to was that the intuitive feelings that given all of this, they didn’t think the baby would be safe with him, in terms of facts and in terms of their intuition, they still intuitively felt unsafe about it and every individual in the case discussed that informally with everyone else in the case, but no one took it into the formal realm, they didn’t take it to supervision, and say I really want to give this guy a chance but I feel really unsafe with that…can we talk about it. So no one analysed it so the baby went to him…

She considered that if they had been assisted to draw this out, they would have been able to identify what was triggering their concern, and relate this back to what was known about assessment of safety in child protection. She thought ‘while intuition might be an art…making sense of it is a science I think’. She saw there were several reasons that intuition was not paid attention to including fear of documenting such feelings, fear of the court process, of being judgmental, the rule of optimism in child protection, and a lack of skilful supervision that could enable people to make sense of their intuition. Similarly Practitioner Four saw that practitioners ‘need to think about it and practice tuning into it and using it’, it was something that needed to be ‘fully practiced’.

6.6.3. Use of Self

Use of self was seen by many as important to good social work practice (2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and was one of the definitions of social work as an art that they used (see above). Some saw that self was the tool of their social work trade (2, 3, 9) whereon one called upon
various aspects of self as required by the situation. Three practitioners indicated that self had something to do with the choice of social work as a profession in the first place (2, 5, 7). Practitioner Seven saw that use of self was one of two basic thing social workers have:

Well if you’ve got two equal things, one you’ve got the formal knowledge and the other thing you’ve got is yourself…they’re your two basic things…they keep changing…. they inform each other, they definitely inform each other, continually.

For two practitioners it was about seeing the limits to self as well to not get ‘precious about it….as it’s not a place for egos’ (2) and to realise that ‘it’s not about you, what you believe, its actually working through where other people are stuck, where their strengths are’ (8).

Practitioner Eleven felt that while self was important, social work required more. She told of an experience in discussing with her first supervisor doubts she had about her competence, and was reassured with ‘you’re such a nice person’ however ‘I had studied for four years I just don’t want to be me…. it didn’t really give me anywhere to go’. Yet Practitioner Four told of an experience where she:

[was] talking to a colleague once…and I really admired his qualities as a social work practitioner…and when I questioned him about this person and what I should best do…he said no, just be yourself…. and I’ve remembered that ever since…I’ve also believed in it as well, because I think that you take a lot into the relationship….

Five practitioners identified use of self with self-awareness (3, 7, 8, 11, 12) including understanding and owning one’s biases and therefore avoiding imposing values and judgments on clients (3, 5, 8, 9), the limits of one’s knowing that ‘we don’t know everything of life’ (P8), and how one could work with and impact on others:

P8: …you have to be very secure in your own values, very secure in your own meaning and understand your principles, because to understand that means is to how you can work with others or not work with others…if I wasn’t clear about what bottom line principles I had, it would be very hard to work.

P4: …the use of self…is not going to be very productive if you don’t have the capacity to do some ongoing sort of analysis and think about how you come across to other people, whether its’ your own colleagues, clients or other people.

P5: I think honesty is actually really important, that’s that stuff about who you are and where you are coming from so that you don’t blunder in and impose your values and judgements on someone else, or some other system or whatever else….And I think you have to be
very respectful of others so that you can listen to what it is they want….

In this way, use of self was seen as requiring growth and maintenance on the part of the worker (4, 5, 7, 9) as:

P4: …if you are unable to be reflective about yourself and the way you do things and maybe that involves anticipating change…then how do you really expect client population to do things differently?

Practitioner Nine referred to an article she had read about self as the tool of social work:

…if you look at a social work as a tradesperson with a tool bag, then the tools they have in there is themselves, and that needs to be as well maintained…to protect that tool from damage and to prepare and maintain it….I think yourself is just a very important part of it.

Practitioner Seven outlined what contributed to this continual growth of individuals as practitioners:

…personal life experience, part of that is why you get drawn to the profession and also it affects how you practice…work experiences…colleagues that you meet, training that you have… difficult cases that you have that challenge you, and make you consider how you can do things better or meet the challenges more adequately… and you learn a lot from your mistakes.

Practitioner Eleven thought social workers being required to attend counselling would help to draw this out a sense of self and identify their issues, and also to ‘understand what that relationship is like’.

Many emphasised that it was important to continue to maintain boundaries as well in terms of a separate personal life (2, 3), being aware that clients ‘exist in their lives without you’ (8), knowing the difference between yours and your client’s issues (8, 11) and self-protection and safety (7, 10) and in terms of self-protection (10):

‘Which face do I show today?’ To the group of seniors that I work with, I’m quite happy to show much more of a personal face, whereas if I’m in a meeting with a bunch of bureaucrats, I’m not likely to show so much of a face, or I might show a face that is going to be more influential with them. I guess that’s about being creative as well.

Related to this, was differentiating use of self with self-disclosure (1, 2, 5), although Practitioner Five drew on feminist counselling principles of linking the personal and political and thought that ‘my own experiences can be quite relevant’. However, any self-disclosure needs to be constructive:

…..my own experience can actually be quite relevant, it can show difference or showing understanding and making a connection with
the client, but...using it in a constructive way, is a tool of social work, it’s all that stuff about the art...when I’m dealing with child protection when I’m dealing with parents who are in poverty like I have never known, with abusive relationships like I have never known, from a family history that is one of extreme deprivation and abuse, I have to be careful how I use my experiences. But I think the fact that I have four children and I do know how exhausting it can be to keep a house clean with four kids, and run around after them, and just knowing that means I extrapolate and think, I mean, how terrible, how much more difficult can it be...I have some knowledge of a lot of stuff that I can use, but I have to be very thoughtful of how I use that, and I have to be very careful of how I impart my knowledge and experience....

As well as the above roles of identifying bias and limitation use of self was seen to have a role in building relationships with others in assisting them to engage with others (2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12) in part by giving clients someone to relate to (8, 10), to be authentic and congruent (7, 10, 12) and build trust (12):

P7:  ...you have to be authentic with the person you’re doing that, because if you’re not it’s even more damaging than if you didn’t do anything.... and at the same time keep sufficient boundaries so that you stay safe and that you stay safely in the system while you are doing that sort of work...

Understanding of self could also help us to understand others and their experiences (2, 7, 11) through the ‘wisdom of the knowledge of being.... and that’s through my social construction and my culture’ (P8). Practitioner Four outlined that one could be a role model ‘to inspire confidence.... like you are setting an examples.... use of self I think it can be the difference between achieving a mutually agreed outcome and not’. Practitioner Nine similarly saw it was necessary in order to have impact, to engage people and to maintain energy in being ‘personally attached to the work we are doing’.

6.6.4. Creativity

Creativity was seen by many to be an important and significant part of social work practice (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12). Practitioner Eleven saw it as not essential to social work, although it could allow the worker and client to generate more options. Similarly Practitioner Four thought that while creativity could give ‘you some more colour in the whole process and I suppose gives you thoughts and ideas to take the other to another level’, she thought it was difficult to be creative all the time and at times there was ‘no colour at all’.
Creativity was defined by most as being about new and different ways of working across new or known situations (3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12):

**P7:** But I think that things like going into an unknown situation, like the Fremantle Prison riot, where no one had done it before, like it was a riot, a hostage taking and a fire all on the same night, concurrently…we had no access to our books or our files because everything was burnt, and so we had to rely on each other and our creativity to address the problems and we had to work in very different ways, very different ways, than we were used to working and that was a real challenge, a huge challenge…New pathways, yes, new ways of doing things and also new ways particularly of working with systems I think.

At another level, Practitioner Twelve saw that creativity was more about the uniqueness of the relationship:

When you work with another individual, you are creating a working relationship that is unique to the two of you, for starters, and that you can’t superimpose, perhaps in a way that you’ve worked with someone else, onto that person. So that everyone is unique and everyone is different. So in that, you are creative and you are flexible in your approach.

For Practitioner Ten, creativity was not just about new ideas but thinking of ways to engage a variety of people to make the ideas happen ‘to give you the resources you need and to getting people involved as well’. Building those resources and relationships is in itself an art. Practitioners saw creativity as being supported by other qualities including flexibility (10, 12), openness and sitting with uncertainty (3, 8, 12), lateral thinking (8), and confidence (3).

Two practitioners identified that it was in working with systems that social workers particularly had opportunities to be creative (7, 11):

**P7:** Because I think the things that social workers do so well, which other professions aren’t so good at is working with systems. Because systems are dynamic, they’re a challenge to your creativity and there’s also lots of opportunities, if you’re creative, to impact on the system, because there’s not just one way because a system is dynamic, its got lots of ins.

In terms of its role in practice, five practitioners identified that it was actually about simulating client’s creativity in considering understanding of and solutions to their problems (1, 2, 4, 8, 12):
P12: But that more creative social work is about identifying collaboratively opportunities for different forms of ‘therapy’. At the base of all that is what your client identifies, or group of clients, preferably, as being the best way to solve, or to resolve, and issue that they share.

Similarly, for Practitioners Eight and Twelve creativity was about identifying opportunities and in reframing:

P8: …looking at it in a different way. To have the ability to be more lateral in your thinking and your approach, and to draw on the things that are already there….

Practitioners Seven and Nine outlined the role of creativity in problem-solving:

P7: …every problem has a solution and so life and work is one big challenge really. And the more creative you are, the more chance you’ll have of solving problems….so the [example] that comes to mind is that we had some really messy, complex case with a lot of different people, very damaged child….We just said you know we were going around in circles and I just said look, what we need to do is have regular meetings of all the people involved; it’s a basic thing really but no-one was standing back, really to see it, to have a look, they were all come on, let’s do this. We’ve had three or four meetings about this case and it’s really coming together….and I thought, yeah, that was creative in that they hadn’t done that before and it did improve….

Others saw creativity as important in building networks and connections (10, 12), and as each situation was unique (12) and as the ‘world is changing and we need to come up with new ways of doing things’ (6).

Three practitioners again emphasised the importance of the client being the guide in trying new ways of working (3, 5, 12). Practitioner Three saw it important to not engage in experiment with clients in the name of creativity:

…you can’t use your clients or patients…to experiment on…to me it’s not fair, because it’s not about using new techniques, I think people can fall into that, and think that that’s creative and it might be quite dangerous…But I think just being open and just really, listen to your clients because sometimes they can be our guides, you know and sometimes you can think yeah, we can give it a go.

Three practitioners particularly made the point that professional and agency guidelines and boundaries also had to inform creativity and where it could lead us (4, 5, 6) as well as in supporting that creativity:

P5: I think with maturity as a professional and with good supervision…in an organisation that tolerates creativity, I think that you can reach for something that perhaps at the outset you wouldn’t
even consider. But that is in line with or in response to your client’s direction what they see as possible…

Indeed for her, imagination and creativity are of no use to social work if there is no understanding of those policies and guidelines, professional obligations under them, and the interface with other professions.

6.7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ART

There was only one practitioner who saw that social work should not draw on both the science and the art as they were at ‘deep ends of the spectrum’ and further that science and social work were completely incompatible (12). This did not mean that the art was primary for her as she thought that both science and art were elitist, whereas clients’ knowledge and understandings were fundamental to social work practice.

Practitioner Eight stated she had a postmodern framework which to her meant that many ways of knowing have a place in social work and it’s about knowing when to use them:

So I think the art and the science in social work has a time and place in all of the areas, it’s just that you have to know how to tread water…and know when to swim, and what stroke to use…what medium people are swimming in….if they’re swimming in quick sand, or fresh water or salt water, to know the difference that you’re swimming in.

As the client’s narrative for her is also primary, one cannot be prescriptive about either the art or science and how to use them in practice either. She felt however that social work could develop more expertise in the art of its practice – that it could be demystified through growth and sharing.

The remaining practitioners saw that social work required some combination of the two although the nature of this relationship varied. Two practitioners, as stated previously, thought art only appropriate in certain aspects of practice, whereas the knowledge of science was relevant for all practice (2, 11). Practitioner Two saw that it was the practitioner’s responsibility to draw upon whatever paths were required to aid practice:

But I think there is responsibilities to see very very clearly as best as one can being a mere mortal and to draw upon every available, whether personal, artistic, theoretical, scientific precepts or whatever that you can draw on…
Practitioner Four saw that the link between the art and science was the individual practitioner:

...linking factor is with the individual...not the theory....looking at a scene...and the individual being...the interpreter...and taking from the theory what’s required and translating it into something that’s acceptable, meaningful.

Similarly, Practitioner Three for example, stated that while knowledge is provided by science, the art is how that knowledge is transformed in relationship with the client, much how the ‘artist transforms his knowledge of colour and technique to the canvas’:

So, I can’t see that social work acts in a scientific way, it might draw on scientific knowledge, but it doesn’t, it acts in different ways...it uses that science for its art, and I don’t see there’s necessarily a conflict with that at all. You know, it’s like that’s the beauty of it, it’s how you can integrate it.

The danger for her of an imbalance in this relationship was that science could become ‘rigid.... that you really think there’s a set body of knowledge that’s absolutely unmoveable and you can therefore practice in a set, certain way’. In terms of the art she saw that humans are ‘more than just intuitive beings’, there are things that practitioners can know as individuals and collectively. Practitioner Nine also saw that science alone was restrictive, but that practitioners needed to make good sense of both so that they could bring them to the work together as ‘excellent practice means you mean to be in touch with what art can contribute to social work as well as the science side of things’.

Practitioner Six could not differentiate them, as stated before he saw that social work was a social science, the social being the art and humanity of it. Indeed for him, it was the combination of the artistic and scientific ways of doing things and understanding that is useful. Practitioner Seven did not specifically discuss a relationship between the two, however indicated throughout the interview that she drew on both in her practice. Likewise, Practitioner Ten did not discuss a relationship between science and art, although indicated throughout the interview she drew on both, science primarily in its ethics of rigour and critique and in evaluation methods. Both had also indicated they had not previously considered their practice in this way.

Practitioner One felt that on a personal level, social work was for her an art, however she felt that for the profession overall science was needed to maintain its professional standing:
….in the world that we live in that to get the professional status that we actually I think deserve, we have to sort of it, with what’s going in the world and we do have to have some sort of scientific backup to say we are who we are.

Also on a personal level, Practitioners Five and Nine said that while they did not consider themselves artistic, social work allowed an expression of their creativity:

P5: …I’m not a very artistic person, I have an appreciation for many art forms, and take great delight but I don’t seem to be able to produce any art of my own, except that social work actually does give me an opportunity to really use my self and I really like that and I think that is the artist in me being given permission…I think I’m a kind of creative person and I’m open to new experiences and new ideas and I really enjoy exploring new ideas and gaining confidence in that.

6.8. KNOWLEDGE FOR PRACTICE

This question enabled me to identify what participants identified as knowledge – and whether this matched their analysis of the use of science and art in social work.

All made mention of various models they used in practice, including crisis, systems and theory from psychology and sociology and knowledge of organisations, and the importance of being open to a variety of knowledge bases and ways of understanding. Systems theory was identified as many as identifying to social work, for example

P11: …generic and fundamental to social work is systems theory…they [practitioners] can take that anywhere. You know without it I don’t know how they make sense of anything.

Practitioners Five and Six emphasised that social workers needed a grounding in politics and philosophy, and an understanding of the nature of social work. Some identified experience – personal (1) and work (1, 10) and other colleagues (1, 7) as being a source of knowledge although Practitioner Ten saw that while everyday practice contributed to theories, that one of

…the sad things about social workers is that they don’t very often get around to writing up the new theories and ideas, the models that they’ve come up with.

Five practitioners identified the client as a source of knowledge (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 12). For Practitioner Three one of the things that makes social work different is that it hears those stories:

We’re hearing stories from people long before things are proven…. and for clients to be able to say there’s stuff—all evidence has been discovered about this, but this is how it is for me. And so that’s our
powerful position in social work, is that knowing perspective, we can understand some of that perspective and we can look at it with our clients.

Two practitioners mentioned that knowledge is what differentiates the professional helper from a friend, and that the knowledge contributes to those other qualities (5, 12):

P12: Knowledge contributes to all those other things, your self, intuition, creativity. But knowledge is an essential part of being a social worker, and I guess, what differentiates being a social worker from being a friend, really.

This practitioner struggled with the meaning of knowledge for the notion of client as colleague.

Practitioners used various descriptions of the relationship between their theory and practice. Practitioner One described it as ‘like a second nature…. it’s the theory intertwined with experienced and knowledge is what my practice is about’. Practitioner Seven felt that self and knowledge constantly informed one another in practice. Some indicated they made use of their knowledge to understand people and the situations they are in (10) or as a framework to building that understanding on (3). Others indicated they used it as a guide to practice (2):

….a little pointer….and ultimately I try and deal with the person in the context of what they are….the boundaries are so kind of fluid….I think we use these things to guide, but certainly not to pre-empt how you’re going to be acting...

Others indicated their knowledge was something they shared with clients (1, 5, 12) in an effort to aid understanding and expand the options for intervention. Three practitioners indicated they kept up to date with theoretical developments through the literature and Continuing Professional Education (2, 5, 7).

I did not ask a question about the gap between theory and practice, so it is interesting that six mentioned it in relation to a general question about the use of knowledge in social work (4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11). Practitioner Nine discussed the importance of understanding how we understand in the interplay between theory and practice, rather than being concerned for specific sources of knowledge:

I think that the divide between theory and practice still seems to have quite a strong tendency and the only way I know to engage people, is to say, you need to start off with something, bring it out and try to make it fit with the practice that you’re doing and then go back and
have a look at the theory again and see whether the theory helps you, helps you understand the theory a bit more, whether you can change the theory a bit yourself.

Practitioner Eleven saw that knowledge should have a significant role in social work, but that it was actually ignored by practitioners and the organisations they worked for:

Speaking ideally, then knowledge has a huge role in terms of social work…however, when you work in an agency like I work in, then the practice isn’t so much determined by theoretical knowledge but it’s determined by the resources and the structures within the organisation and some of the limitations of some of the thinking of the people within those structures.

Practitioner Six discussed experiences he had with other practitioners claiming they did not use theory as they functioned in the ‘real world’; he felt that this could not be true as all people bought an understanding and a way of thinking about the work to it. He thought perhaps it was easy for people to become functional and work within their agency’s mandate and guidelines but this was not actually a level of understanding. Practitioner Seven felt that any perceived gaps between theory and practice were ‘because somebody ran out of energy’.

6.9. DEFINING SOCIAL WORK

This question helped me to match any themes in the practitioners’ responses with definitions of social work as art or science and in some of the answers strategies for how social work could build its professional identity may provide some links for how to build social work as an art also.

Some practitioners thought that social work was difficult to define (1, 3, 4, 8, 11), or definable only in general terms by its breadth (1, 3, 8):

P11: [there] are huge extremes within the profession, I don’t think the profession thinks you know in a common way….it prides itself on being the reverse of that you know, which is a pain in the arse….

P2: [we are] free-floating, so they’re continually redefining themselves. I don’t know that there’s a strong consciousness.

Practitioners Seven and Nine thought that social workers needed to be active in defining social work both in how they practice and in how they present practice. However, for Practitioner Nine the question was perhaps not who defines social work as how the environment of economic rationalism and the struggle of professions to survive it meant
…stay down and don’t get hit and I think it’s going to take quite a bit of courage to stand up within the profession before we can actually portray that [the art].

In terms of who defines the profession two identified the practitioner (1, 3), three education and educators (5, 6, 10), and one textbooks (10).

Almost all identified some form of understanding the individual-environment relationship as being an essential element of social work – a goal of the individual functioning in society (1) to making use of the ‘sociological imagination’ (3) to helping people link the private-political and be active in that (10). For Practitioner Eleven the core elements of social work were that social workers should always be looking at the macro issues, and that perhaps that ‘moved towards the art continuum rather than a science because it involves a system and analysing the system, all parts of that…’.

For some social work could and should be a political profession (6, 10, 12). For Practitioner Twelve it was about linking the private and political – for clients and in practice:

Social work IS political…we have a responsibility to be political and to collate our clients’ experiences, and information, and stories where they can’t, and give that to the public as well…Because if you’re confining what they say to the room that you’re working, that’s almost irresponsible as well…we see the recurring issues in people’s lives.

Three practitioners specifically mentioned social justice (7, 9, 12) and social change (6, 9):

P9: I think social work is about social change…and it’s taking a broad view of all the structures that create the environment we live and operate in…for myself I can’t see the sense in simply maintaining a system that isn’t working, isn’t meeting people’s needs and just jumping up and down and saying this isn’t working isn’t enough, that is when you have to start using your imagination and creativity and engaging other people’s imagination and creativity, and then you’re working towards social change.

Four practitioners identified the ethics base of social work as being a core element (4, 5, 7, 11): ‘…we have certain standards of behavior…ethics that guide and fashion what we do and how we do it’ (P4). Three practitioners saw it as a particularly human enterprise (2, 4, 8):

P8: Because it’s basically about humans…human regard…and anywhere there’s a pulse beat of some sort and humans exist…you actually can work in any industry…that’s the versatility of social work….it’s quite the golden egg.
6.10. DISCUSSION

As in the content analysis, practitioners were able to more clearly identify science than they were art. Here, science was linked with knowledge in particular as well as research and methodologies. Science had a role in practice therefore as providing the theoretical understandings of social work, although practice itself was not identified as being like a scientific process. However, when asked what knowledge sources they used for practice none identified particularly social science theories or theorists, or indicating how and where they accessed this knowledge. Reasons for science were related primarily to contextual demands, the need for knowledge for practice, and the ethics of science in its transparency and rigour. It could be seen however, that this would also require practitioners to practice in such a way – to be able to articulate their science. The primary critique of science for social work was in seeing it as the only way of knowing for social work – that as well as this kind of understanding, social work also required knowledge from other sources including humanistic understandings, clients, experience and though qualities such as use of self and intuition.

Art was given more layers of definition by practitioners; this may reflect that the art of social work is not as well developed or articulated as a model, or that this very diversity is what marks it. For many, it was a range of qualities – namely use of self and creativity – that defined social work as an art, rather than it being an approach to or model for practice. Other parallels included its humanness as well as furnishing various analogies between artistic and social work processes. The reasons for art were parallel to the critique of science – the former’s human-ness and the need for complex understandings in the broad and grey areas social work is involved in. Barriers to social work being conceived of as an art were many and varied including issues relating to the model, as well as personal, professional and external barriers. Of significant interest was the notion that social work did not articulate its identity – whether that be based in science and/or art – in a public or confident way. Their definitions of social work – as being difficult to define – reflected this. Strategies for addressing these barriers were related to discussion and recognition, although what this would actually look like is not clear.
The four qualities of social work as an art discussed – intuition, imagination, use of self and creativity – were seen as important by most practitioners, and to have particular roles and contributions to practice. Problem-solving – considering possibilities for deconstructing the problem and generating solutions – was one area where creativity and imagination in particular were seen to have a role. Use of self and intuition were seen instead to have roles in relationship – building rapport, connecting with clients, responding, developing empathy and so forth.

On a much greater level than in the content analysis, the client was given a louder voice by practitioners. Many made the point that knowledge and insight gained from both scientific and artistic sources needed to be checked with the client, or used as a framework that the client then filled in. Further, clients could contribute to these understandings. In terms of the qualities of art, some saw that rather than being qualities of the practitioner, it was important to stimulate these in clients – and that indeed this was one role of the practitioner.

All but one of the practitioners did not see art and science in a dichotomous relationship, but rather that they were integrated in practice, providing different ways of understanding to contribute to a holistic comprehension, or that they had complementary roles, one the knowledge (science), the other the application (art). Only one identified this with a postmodern understanding, although it can be seen that the others were demonstrating this by their view of their being multiple sources of knowledge (of which science and art were only a part). It could not be said that these were deconstructed by participants in their practice however. Further, in their descriptions of art and science practitioners did provide some juxtapositions also – that science was public and collective, art private and individual, science rigorous and ethical, art as determined by the practitioner, science as knowledge, art as atheoretical, science as knowing, art as doing.

6.11. CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS
The complexities of considering social work as an art and/or science are evident in participants’ responses. Both are seen to contribute to practice and knowledge, yet both have their limitations also. It is in their limitations particularly that they are seen to have an important inter-relationship. While science provides knowledge, art provides qualities that
facilitate relationship. While science is seen as incomplete for understanding complex human and social situations, art is seen as humanising and as a connection between different elements of a situation, in particular the current and the possible.

Science was identified with knowledge and research by many practitioners. However, the application of this knowledge was not necessarily reflective of a scientific process, informed as it was by the client’s unique circumstances, and the practitioner’s own practice experience and wisdom. Art was seen as facilitating understanding beyond the limits of scientific knowledge – of the human experience. Yet always the use of knowledge was boundaried – by the client, by the profession’s ethical commitments, and by organisational determinants.

Some of the critiques of social work as an art as an approach or model are evident throughout the interviews also – as being atheoretical, lacking a coherent structure for practice or discussion, and personal. The latter however was also seen as a strength of the approach – that it drew on the qualities and uniqueness of the practitioner, client and their relationship. The question remains then of whether it is possible to consider an approach based in art that is theoretical and informed? Does art provide a way of knowing at all?

The different status of art and science were apparent also. Science was associated with the public sphere in that it provided generalised and recognisable forms of knowing, and that these were available for use and discussion with other professionals. Art was associated with the personal, which as indicated above had negative and positive connotations, however it did mean that there were barriers to discussing practice from within this approach. Is it possible therefore to maintain the joy and uniqueness of this personal approach yet make it public in the sense that it can be conceptualised and scrutinised?

Few of the practitioners saw that art and science were binary opposites, that both were essential to good practice, and each on its own was inadequate. In this sense, it could be argued that they are dichotomised, as they are given different roles, however this was not how practitioners viewed them. Do practitioners already manage dualisms in their day-to-day practice? Again, these issues will be explored in Chapter Eight.
As outlined above, practitioners identified several parallels between social work and art, particularly in the use of self and humanism. It is now to the parallels of social work as an art as identified in the literature that I turn, including an examination of the use of qualities of the approach and their links to knowledge.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SOCIAL WORK AND ITS ART:
PARALLELS OF SOCIAL WORK AND ART

Art is not in pictures alone. Its place is in everything, as much in one thing as another. It is up to the community as a whole, in conduct, business, government and play.
Henri 1930, p.133

7.1. INTRODUCTION
Art is essential to the study and practice of social work yet there is a significant line of undeveloped analogies between social work and art (Imre 1982; England 1986a; Gammack 1982; Siporin 1988). While many authors writing about the art of social work have discussed the artistic qualities in social work, few have examined the parallels in social work and art to inform and enliven the argument or, further, to develop practice theories. This is a current gap in the literature and research around social work as an art and a contribution of this research is to the debate on the place of art in social work.

As Goldstein (1999, p.387) points out it is difficult to think of art when social workers confront daily in their practice, bitter and awful human ordeals which scarcely seem to relate to the lyrical, aesthetic, balance, form or beauty we generally associate with art. Yet it is the often unpredictable, complex, changing and uncontrollable situations that social work operates in that require creativity, imagination, and the humanity of the practitioner (Lymberry 2003; Rapoport 1968; Siporin 1988; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Fook 1996; Gelfand 1988; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; see Chapter Six). Explored here therefore are the reasons for a relationship between social work and art.

This chapter conceptualises and develops the parallels between social work and art, including common qualities used by the artist and social worker. It is drawn primarily from the social work literature, although the data gained in Chapter Six particularly generated some of the concepts to be explored. The data from Chapters Five and Six is presented in an integrated form from the understandings developed in this chapter and in Chapters Eight and Nine. I begin with an examination of the difficulties in defining art including interpretations from the bodies of thought from Chapter Three. I then consider why art and
social work in particular share a relationship, which of course includes the parallels, but also relates to the common concerns and requirements of social work and artistic practice. Finally, I consider the relationship of these parallels and qualities to knowledge.

7.2. ISSUES IN DEFINING ART

Nothing is positive about art except that it is a word. (Chipp 1968, p.556)

There is a lack of consensus around art – its history is written as one of variations in and debates about style and form, social and political influence, individual and social development, and competing theories, uses and purposes (Carroll 1999; Brook 1992; Collingwood 1977; Gardner 1973; Zolberg 1990). In contemporary terms particularly, there is an unprecedented coexistence of a diversity and variety of art forms, styles and genres, which has led to debate and a challenge for art philosophers to define and categorise art (Zolberg 1990; Taylor 1987; Carroll 1999). Yet art may be regarded as universal, appearing in roughly comparable forms in all known civilisations and part of common experience (Wilson 1964; Manfredi 1982; Gardner 1973; Henri 1930; Brook 1992; Chipp 1968). It is important to recognise that while there is disagreement over aesthetic properties and their meanings such disagreements over terms exist in science also, but this is not taken to mean that such concepts do not exist (Carroll 1999). These are not issues to be cleared up therefore but rather acknowledged as the very state in which they appear (Brook 1992; Zolberg 1990; Carroll 1999; Collingwood 1977; Read 1931).

The difficulty of defining art in theoretical and conceptual terms may highlight one of the difficulties of considering it as a model for social work practice. Indeed, one of the differences noted in discussion of art and science in both the content analysis and interviews, was that while models of science could be identified and articulated, this was not true of art.

7.2.1. Theoretical Considerations

Modernity and postmodernity in particular represent not only systems of thought, but particular aesthetic movements also. Much traditional art was religious or political, deigned to glorify gods and saints, portray important religious and political events and so on (Carroll 1999). Art during modernity became part of intellectual debate; it was seen to
have a political posture aimed at the transformation of events and thinking (Kedward 1972; Taylor 1987). A characteristic tendency of modern art was its optimism – reflecting modernity’s project of unending progress – for both an improved exterior and interior world, promising adventure, power, joy, growth and transformation (Taylor 1987). It saw also the emergence of formalism; a concern with rational, formal structure, order and the production of images noteworthy for their visual organisation, form and design (Manfredi 1982; Carroll 1999).

Postmodern art, architecture and literature challenged these norms and offered different values of art such as decoration, and a plethora of styles and forms incorporating fragmentation, impurity, colour, asymmetry, eliminating ‘reality’ from (re)presentation and transcending barriers of space and time (Taylor 1987; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Ife 1997; Zolberg 1990). As outlined in Chapter Three postmodernism challenges the authority of authorship and instead demonstrates how author, text and reader are changed by multiple readings (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Taylor 1987). The postmodern artistic condition is similar to its theoretical orientation according to Taylor (1987, p.121), responding to the conditions around it but compliant with these as it does little more than tell us what we already know.

Critical theory sees art as part of the social structure as well as a creator and reflection of that structure and highlights therefore the particular social nature of art. Art is understood in terms of its social origins in that society expresses itself through its cultural life. Form, content, ideas, artistic expressions and function are understood in terms of the social totality (Held 1980). Art is seen to derive from the established order, but interprets and portrays that order in a non-conventional manner, at once leaving and highlighting reality, affirmative and negating (Held 1980; Leonard 1997). Culture itself is viewed as invented or created, rather than revolving around traditionally objective standards. Art has the capacity to transform a particular individual experience into a universal statement, and to create awareness of and thematise social contradictions and antinomies (Held 1980). In this way, it explicitly represents the private and political. Art can speak for individual experiences giving form and tone to that which is silent, distorted, and suppressed in the established reality.
Feminists also have been concerned with the voices and works left out of mainstream art and art history. In particular, they have associated modern art with male art, including the ‘myth’ of individual (male) creativity, where instead the artist can be seen as a social being, with artwork and artistry as collective processes (Taylor 1987).

These analytical works therefore see art as being a distinctly social process and on a variety of levels as having diverse social roles, influences and functions (see below).

7.3. THE USE OF ART IN SOCIAL WORK
Art products and creation can play a useful role in social work intervention to gather insight into human nature, aid understanding of the world, awareness of others and to assist in helping (Jordan 1979b; Wasow 1992; Payne 1991; England 1986a; Goldstein 1990). Art explores the meaning of existence and can be a form of knowledge that helps us understand the world (Leepa 1970; Brook 1992). Art can be used as an assessment or diagnostic tool, a vehicle for expression and communication on the part of the client, a collective experience, and personal and social development. This use of art in social work is different to the parallels discussed here although it highlights again the different ways of knowing required for practice. Art therapy and the use of art in therapy are different categories to social work as an art and have been explored at great length elsewhere (for example Ulman & Dachinger 1975; Case & Dalley 1997; Lowe 2000).

7.4. WHY DOES SOCIAL WORK CALL FOR ARTISTRY?
In this section, I consider some of the reasons for a relationship between social work and art. Some of course can be seen in the existence and nature of their parallels and shared qualities. Yet, why are these parallels evident? What is it about social work that requires artistry in its approach?

One of the primary reasons that social work requires artistry as identified in Chapter Six, and in the professional literature, is the areas that social work operates in. The concepts of social work as an art lie in social work’s heritage (see Chapter Four) and are reflected in the day-to-day practice of social workers (Powell 2003a; Brandon & Jordan 1979; Clark & Arkarva 1979; Palmer 2002; Gelfand 1988; Siporin 1988). The social worker deals with
uncertainty and unpredictability, with complex social and individual issues, a broad range of problems and diverse populations, and unique configurations and experiences (Gelfand 1988; Cornford 1972). They need to incorporate and make sense of large amounts of information, adapt rapidly to new situations, achieve some level of understanding of meaning, be able to evaluate the contributions made by others; to adapt flexibly and intelligently to new problem situations; and have internalised an adaptive mode of approaching problems (Bartlett 1970; Wiegand 1979; Davies 1981; England 1986a). Social work requires then the fashioning and fusing of so many elements into the professional act that this effort might be likened to the creative one of an artist (Lane 1999; Bowers 1949; Irvine 1979; Goldstein 1990; Krill 1990).

Objectively therefore, creativity, imagination, and use of self are important because social workers deal with the highly complex problems of both individuals and society and operate in what is a turbulent and constantly changing social environment where policies and programs cannot always fit the complexities and exigencies of life (Weissman 1990; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991). It also requires then form and style, attention to the unique aspects of clients’ situations, an understanding of and active stance towards context, an acceptance of multiple realities, and skills in communication and expression – parallels explored here. It is of course for some of the same reasons that social work has looked to science also (see Chapter Eight).

Dealing in such complex and contested areas require ethical self-awareness (Abramson 1996; Chapman et al 2003). A high level of self-awareness can generate a critical awareness of background, attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices that are derived from personal and cultural history, and therefore of one’s own value base and its congruence with the profession’s (Ife 1995a; Compton & Galaway 1994; Abramson 1996; Lishman 1998; Kondrat 1999; Cosis-Brown 1998). In this way self-awareness helps practitioners identify their biases, and to attempt to control the noxious affect of these on clients by serving them more consciously and objectively (Lishman 1998; Kondrat 1999; Ringel 2003; UN Report 1968; Butler & Morphew-Chambers 1979). It was in containing bias that use of self was seen as important in Chapters Five and Six. Use of self is discussed below.
Social work is a caring profession, and provides an inherently personal and personalised service mediated through relationships. The dynamics of the social work relationship are significantly affected by the practitioner’s use of self to express empathy, compassion, caring and understanding with the self-disciplined use of internal resources in their communication and expressive style. The centrality of self in social work practice was identified in Chapter Six as a significant reason for a relationship between social work and art. Use of self, imagination and intuition aid in understanding clients and recognition of common humanity – and therefore also the expression of empathy and caring (May 1989; Camilleri 1996; Imre 1982; Nystul 1993; Elliot 2000; Freedberg 1993; Howe 1987; England 1986a; Edwards & Bess 1998; Davies 1994; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Munro 1998). Practitioner Five for example outlined how she made imaginative use of her own experience of parenting in considering the complexities of this role for her clients in child protection. Clients need to recognise an identifiable person and are influenced by the personal style of the counsellor, who can use their personality to create a present that portrays encouragement for, belief in, and support of the client (Nystul 1993; Davies 1994); for Practitioner Ten this is why use of self was so important to social work. The worker can also be an authentic, available role model with the deliberate use of self, values, thoughts, experience, opinions and reactions (McDonald 1988) – Practitioner Four saw this as one of the roles of use of self. The art of social work re-emphasises the importance of human-ness, subjectivity, and the person of the practitioner (see below).

Kaminsky (1985, pp.20-1) in an amusing article on the marriage of social work and art sees their significant ‘compatibility’ being:

…the idea or image of transitional areas. I [art] always see myself as working at a constantly shifting border, mediating between different realms, perhaps that’s why I’m attracted to you, social work; you are another realm, an outer realm, directly and materially in the world. You work directly with things of this world….It’s as if we were both, in different ways, secretaries to the interior; you are charged to work with marginalised populations, to be society’s delegate to those who have been pushed onto special reservations for the underclass; you stand on the border, between the dominant powers and institutions of society and the ghettoised groups, and permit some traffic to flow between them…you and I both mediate between incommensurate, and often conflicted realms by working in a special area that participates in both, but belongs to neither.
Art and social work operate in the space where thinking and feeling meet requiring the integration of theory, philosophy and subjective experience (Krill 1990; Imre 1990a). Social work operates across many dualisms, as outlined in Chapter Four, and the idea of artistry privileges concepts usually located on the ‘other’ of the dichotomy.

Social work, like art, is engaged in problem-solving, be it the problem of expression, communication, insight and awareness, transformation or change. It requires improvisation, multiplicity and ambiguity, where solutions are not so much arrived at as found in the making (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Kaminsky 1985; Fish & Coles 2000; Adams 1998; Parton 2000). If social workers approach people and use their theories and experience imaginatively, then their range of effective action and strategies increases, they become freer (Howe 1987; Powell 2004). The generation and testing of alternative hypotheses in any particular case or with alternative approaches, emphasises the imaginative qualities of seeing connections and generating possibilities, while a sceptical approach to these emphasises precision and rigour (Payne 1991; Sheppard 1995; Zeira & Rosen 2000). If an art form refers to a medium through which art is produced and expressed then social work is an art form that utilises original and creative as well as conventional activities and ideas to help clients lead full and productive lives (Siporin 1988; Goldstein 1992a). In every encounter the social worker and client share in performing, narrating, composing and interpreting experiences transforming them into complex creations and producing a rich dialogue (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Goldstein 1992b).

The above review identifies the need for a consideration of the artistry of social work in the complexity and contradictions of the work, the centrality of relationships, empathy and caring, the location of social work in transitional areas, and the involvedness of problem-solving. This also highlights some of the parallels of social work as an art, and it is these I now consider.
7.5. PARALLELS BETWEEN SOCIAL WORK AND ART

The social worker is like the sculptor who frees the sculpted form from the marble; the worker recognises the potential of the client and enables him to realise that potential. Wiegand 1979, p.94

In this section, I explore the parallels between social work and art in terms of process, function, philosophy and nature. Parallels in terms of qualities are outlined in the following section.

7.5.1. Form and Style

Form – the media of communication, the mode of presentation – is argued to be one common denominator among all artworks (Collingwood 1977; Lacy 1970; Carroll 1999). The artist needs a respect for and understanding of the materials with which they work, their treatment and what they are likely to yield for a known transformation to occur with constant development of new forms as human situations change and new issues arise (Wolff 1981; Collingwood 1977; Bitel 1999; Perlman 1985; Carroll 1999; Kroeber 1970).

Social work interactions too require some form, some sense of organisation and structure, and an intimate knowledge of their working and impact. The worker can then design and form therapy into a clear and coherent structure that pays attention to the rhythms of therapy and melodies of life themes, making use of various technical procedures to engage, arouse and influence the client intellectually and emotionally (Siporin 1988).

Siporin (1993) argues that the artistry of the practitioner is articulated through personal and professional style. Style can be considered a particular use of self. Style constitutes the spontaneous, honest expression of the self in the role of professional helper, involving cognitive, feeling and action patterns, a way of relating and interacting, of responding empathetically, of presenting reality, contained within the structure provided by both the purpose and process of the relationship (Edwards & Bess 1998; Ringel 2003; Siporin 1988; Jordan 1984; Davies 1981; Imre 1982). Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi (1991, p.30), see that style is actually the combination of the social worker’s art and science (my emphasis); how they apply the science of social work and communicate this to their clients.
7.5.2. Uniqueness

Originality and uniqueness are seen by some to define an artefact as a work of art, while the influence of mass production on the aura of original works of art has been debated (Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995; Taylor 1987; Brook 1992). Workers reveal their artistry according to Schon (1983) in their capacity to construct models for unique and changing situations. There are various unique aspects to the social work interaction, including the unique and emerging circumstances of the particular client and the adaptation of the worker’s style, knowledge and skills in a flexible, creative process to create a unique response to the situation (Trainor 1996; Nystul 1993). It was in this way that Practitioner Twelve saw social work as an art – in the creation of a unique relationship with the individual client.

7.5.3. Contextualisation

The modernist view had art largely outside the historical process, as transcending ordinary life and material and economic processes in particular (Taylor 1987, p.18; Lucie-Smith 1972; Baxandall & Morawski 1973). However, later art movements and the paradigm of postmodernity projected art upon a broader plane than had previously been thought relevant while critical theory is particularly concerned with the social nature of art (see above). Works of art came to be understood in terms of their social origins, with a set of social practices, identities and processes, and as having a relationship to the means of production, distribution and consumption (Zolberg 1990; Lowe 2000; Leonard 1997; Taylor 1987). Institutional issues of aesthetic conventions, socialisation, modes of creativity, publics and audiences as well as broad cultural values also influence art, its meaning and social value (Brook 1992; Butler & Morpew-Chambers 1979; Taylor 1987; Fisher & Karger 1997; Wolff 1981; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Dewey 1970; Held 1980; Carroll 1999). While at the same time, the rise and effects of modern technology, economic organisation and globalisation have seen the development of mass culture and the creation of a mass audience where capital is rarely risked in creations which are beyond a certain taste, experience, knowledge and expectation of the audience (Zolberg 1990; Bensman & Gerver 1970; Wolff 1981; Leonard 1997). Viewing art in this way requires an analysis of who is excluded from these cultural discourses; as in science, the voices of women, ethnic
minorities, working class populations and other subordinate strata are generally unheard (Leonard 1997; Kirby 1991).

As outlined in Chapter Four, an analysis of social work separate from its context is not possible, as context determines at some level the nature of the work, including institutional dimensions that involve conventions about relationship, form, style and content. Social work exists and performs in the grey areas of life and it is this very location that creates the tensions and stressors within the work; in Chapter Six, many practitioners indicated that it was this position that meant social work was an art.

7.5.4. Private and Political
Art is profoundly individual, the sacred private vision of its creator involving the intellectual and emotional investment and expression of the artist. For the audience, receiving an artwork can also be a profoundly personal experience. At the same time art is resolutely social – a pervasive transaction among a symbolic tradition, an artist, a medium, a company of perceivers, and social organisation (Held 1980; Watts & Pitts 1991; Brook 1992; Wilson 1964; Chipp 1968; Plekhanov 1953; Wolff 1981). Great poetry, art and philosophy spring from the collective unconscious of humanity; the great artist such as Aeschylus or Dante or Shakespeare taps these deep levels of human sorrow and joy and fear and hope and spring them into expression (May 1989, p.27). As outlined in Chapter Four, social work similarly involves a constant movement between the private and the political, requiring an expression of self in social relationships, and works with common human themes. As did some of the practitioners in Chapter Six, Gordon (1983) sees that the art of social work practice is the individual-environment relationship and work at the interface of this.

7.5.5. Meaning
Art explores human existence, and can be seen as meaning-making in generating understanding and insights through distinguishing and capturing elements of feeling, thought, relationship, experience and imagination (Wollheim 1970; Mukerjee 1945; Imre 1990a; Wilson 1964; Gardner 1973; Gridd 1970; Carroll 1999; Brook 1992). There is a movement to create art by some contemporary artists that is utterly meaningless, in order to
deconstruct the distinction between artworks and real things (Carroll 1999); this is still a comment on meaning. Social workers too help others understand their experience and find meaning, and are involved in the sharing and communication of understanding (Vass 1996; England 1986a; Howe 1987). Part of this is integrating a vast array of changing, multi-layered and complex knowledges into understanding, insight and perceptiveness (Goldstein 1999).

7.5.6. Social Role

Art is the community’s medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of consciousness. Collingwood 1977, p.336

Art and social work both perform social functions and by their very nature are political (Binns 1991; Grana 1964; Lowe 2000; Chipp 1968; Brook 1992; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Henri 1930; Wolff 1981). A great many roles have been assigned to the arts in human life from therapeutic play to the communication of emotion to the revelation of metaphysical truths to political and social consciousness-raising to social critique and so forth (Brook 1992; Zolberg 1990; Barbu 1972; Albrecht 1970; Watt 1964; Held 1980; Chipp 1968). Similar to the social roles outlined for social work in Chapter Four, art can also perform a variety of social roles including:

i. **Social commentary, consciousness-raising and innovation:** a work of art may be regarded as a sort of map of society in which the artist – and their public – lives (Seligson 2004; Zolberg 1990; Fischer 1970; Wolff 1981). Artists can comment, analyse, thematise and explain the human condition, at once leaving and highlighting reality and in this sense provide a critique of that reality (Manfredi 1982; Bitel 1999; Ife 1995a; Held 1980; Plekhanov 1953; Albrecht 1970; Brook 1992; see Chapter Six). Art can also give vision and form to experimental and innovative forms of social organisation, and serve as an instigator of change in this way (Chipp 1968; Taylor 1987; Read 1970; Brook 1992; Nostrand 1970; Fischer 1970). Both social work and art can have a role in consciousness-raising in celebration, consolidation or even creation of class-consciousness, education, highlighting common traits and stimulating emotions, and contributing to public knowledge (Taylor 1987; Binns 1991; Watt & Pitts 1991; Plekhanov 1953; Gardner 1973; Noble & Briskman 1998; Figueira-McDonough 1993).
ii. **Social Maintenance and Control:** Art can serve a regulatory function operating as icon, propaganda and commemoration in reinforcing prized world designs, cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs (Carroll 1999; Krill 1990; Collingwood 1977; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Nostrand 1970; Rapoport 1968; Plekhanov 1953). One way of seeing this is examining the ‘silences’; the ideas, values and events not present (Wolff 1981; Appignanesi & Garratt 1995). A universal culture is currently emerging in which television, music, architecture, film and other forms of art and recreation are becoming increasingly homogenised and standardised across diverse societies, reinforcing dominant interpretations of reality (Held 1980; Ife 1995a; Binns 1991). Critical theory is also concerned with the effects of the culture industry and the way in which consciousness and unconsciousness are encroached upon, controlled and managed – ‘colonis[ing] the consciousness of the industrialised masses’ (Curry-Jansen 1983, p.344) – by the agencies which organise leisure time (Held 1980; Taylor 1987). Social work likewise has normative and regulative functions in promoting conformity with the ‘binding obligations of civil society’ although the nature of this is debated (Payne 1991, p.218; DeMaria 1981; Rapoport 1968; Fook 1993; Tesoriero 1999; Pearson 1973).

iii. **Social Change:** Marx believed that the function of art was determined by its relation to the revolution (Chipp 1968; Trotsky 1938; Wolff 1981). A capacity of art is to point the way forward, articulate new content, raise new questions, help people rise above the conventions and constraints of current modes of thinking, provide experimental models, speak to hopes and dreams, provide an awareness of the strategies and structures of social action and thus help to change society (Plekhanov 1953; Brook 1992; Lowe 2000; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Fook 1990; Taylor 1987; Carroll 1999; Chipp 1968; Shahn 1970; Ife 1995a; Bitel 1999; Hart 1980; Hull 1991; Collingwood 1977). Watt (1991) sees art practice as a political act that is very much part of the struggle to claim and reclaim space for many kinds of ‘suppressed voices’ giving word, image and tone to that which is silent, distorted and suppressed. All social workers will be confronted by the challenge to seek changes in the way things are and many argue that all social work is, and should be, about social change (Fisher & Karger 1997; NISW 1982; Fook 1990; Brown 1988; Ife 1997).
iv. **Aesthetic experience, beauty and harmony:** the idea of art for beauty’s sake or art’s sake is a relatively modern, Western one; among ‘primitive’ tribes decorative art for its own sake hardly exists (Mukerjee 1945, p.499; Watt 1964; Carroll 1999). The aesthetic experience provided by art, its beauty and harmony, can perform a social role. It can be a recreation, notes the existence of order and harmony, stirs imagination and inspiration, connects people, is a means of releasing tension, and addresses and reveals our human sensibilities and commonalities (Seligson 2004; Mukerjee 1945; Carroll 1999; Lucie-Smith 1972; Henri 1930; Zolberg 1990; Gardner 1973; Carroll 1999). Social work too strives for harmony and integration in individual and social relationships, social institutions and in processes of social change (Parton & Marshall 1998; Chipp 1968; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Siporin 1993).

7.5.7. Multiple Realities

Art in principle is metaphysically open, even pluralist, holding a ‘multicore’ of overlapping circles of knowledge and allowing for a broader and more diversified meaning of reality including other, latent understandings such as dream, illusion, imagination, intuition and chance (Chipp 1968; Brook 1992; Sherman & Wenocur 1983). Similarly, social work acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, in particular how class, gender and race intersect to create individuals’ different experiences of reality. The social worker must also recognise dominant definitions of reality, and how they inform personal and social experiences. In this way, art and social work can have a role in creating alternatives, stimulating imagination and creativity, and motivating thought and action to achieve desired ends (see above).

7.5.8. Communication and Expression

Every art form involves communication on the part of one person to another through a medium of his or her own creation (Gardner 1973; Read 1931; Henri 1930). Some argue that communication is art’s one purpose (Wilson 1964; Read 1931). The artist communicates feelings, thoughts, experiences, meanings, knowledge and perceptions: art communicates at levels for which no other language is adequate or available in symbolic and metaphorical ways (Brook 1992; Imre 1982; England 1986a). Communication
necessarily involves expression and it is here the link is made between the private and public realms (Carroll 1999; Chipp 1968; Bell 1970; Read 1931; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Fischer 1970; Collingwood 1977). Therefore art also involves perception, a novel ordering of ideas and feelings, an opportunity to articulate, reflect and evaluate, and help others experience meanings and understanding (Rapoport 1968; Imre 1990a; Palmer 2002).

This concept of art recognises and affirms for social work its emphasis on expression and human experience, and the necessarily intimate, subjective nature of that expression. Social workers need to be able to understand people and their situations and communicate this understanding (England 1986a; Palmer 2002; Jordan 1984; Leepa 1970). An essential part of all social work is communication, as an active and creative process, requiring connection and genuine response, the interpretation and articulation of meaning and understanding, and the expression and checking of that understanding (Jordan 1979b; England 1986a).

7.5.9. Humanity

Art is immersed in the world, seeking to change something in it, to add something to it, even to remake it (Rapoport 1968). Art is a peculiarly human function and process, one that involves bringing form to the human experience in its struggles, joys, problems and possibilities (Manfredi 1982; Edwards 1986; Gardner 1973; Carroll 1999; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Read 1931). Art humanises the world for us, exploring the realm of feeling and understanding, showing us things with their human qualities manifest and drawing on human knowledge in their creation and interpretation (Brook 1992; Read 1931; Carroll 1999). What artists have always known is that in order to deal with human ambiguities and complexities, one must detour the rigid walkways of reason, science and logic and access instead imagery, dreams, symbols, metaphors, spirit and integrity (Laird & Hartman 1990; Read 1931; Henri 1930).

The genuine social worker, like the true artist, must frequently play upon the unique, emergent and inimitable aspects or dimensions of human experience (Saleeby 1979; Raine 1990). One of social work’s and art’s claims to legitimacy is that they do represent an expression of humanist values and themes in a society that increasingly marginalises them.
(Baldino 2001; Bitel 1999; Seligson 2004; Palmer 2002; Ife 1997; Vigilante 1974). Both deal with human materials or human themes and require intimate knowing and contact, calling on the creative and imaginative use of self, communication of subjective, personal experience and meaning, enlarging of awareness and transformation of perception (Irvine 1974; England 1986a; Rapoport 1968; Prins 1974; Palmer 2002; Bitel 1999; see Chapter Five). For consumers of social work it is that personal, intuitive understanding that the profession can offer that distinguishes it from the more technical and specific service of others (Peile 1993; England 1986a; Adams 1998; Howe 1987). The human-ness of art was one of the parallels identified by practitioners in Chapter Six also – and one of the reasons that science alone was inadequate for social work understanding.

7.5.10. Professionalism

Notions of professionalism in art are tied to how the artist is viewed – as born or made, the result of genius or training (see below). Art has also been subject to the influence and demands of patrons and sponsors (Hearn 1982; Albrecht, Barnett & Griff 1970). Postmodernism has since challenged notions of the artist as sole creator throwing into question notions of professional expertise and exclusivity also (Zolberg 1990; Wolff 1981; Barbu 1972; see Chapter Three). Further, expertisation, specialisation, technocratisation and so forth can stifle innovation and creativity (Krill 1990; Kenny 1992; Statkus & Mayhew 1992). Both social work and art are seen to be activities that can never be professionally exclusive (England 1986a) but rather broadly encompassing, diverse and open while still requiring discipline, rigour and an inclusive expertise.

7.5.10.1. Role of Critique

Integral to the world of art are the processes of criticism and evaluation (Zolberg 1990; Rapoport 1968; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995). The critical traditions of art show the possibility of adopting a critical approach to intuitive understanding and communication from which social work can learn. It is a process of comparison and contrast, experience and discussion, acceptance and rejection, by the inner critic of the artist and others through which the values and processes of the art culture evolve (Albrecht, Barnett & Griff 1970; England 1986a; Hudson 1997; Siporin 1988; Weissman 1990). The evaluation of good and bad art is a difficult and contentious process, but is an accepted one (England 1986a). The
first step for social work is getting such accounts in the public sphere so dialogue can occur as well as dialogue in supervision, peer review, education and so forth (see Chapter Nine).

As Practitioner Nine indicated, central to this is the artist’s role as critic, as evaluator of his/her own art, as an integral and continuous part of the work itself (Gelfand 1988; Jordan 1979b; England 1986a; Collingwood 1977). This is similar to the process that Schon (1983) refers to as ‘reflection-in-action’, as a researcher in the practice context evaluating practice as participant. The subjective elements are not eliminated or denied but rather receive systematic, sustained and extensive study. For the social worker, s/he must evaluate the effectiveness of his/her work with the client while also experiencing and analysing his/her own behaviour (England 1986a). The audience and client are essential providers of feedback and perhaps the most important critics of all. Both disciplines require in-built mechanisms to receive critical feedback from their publics.

7.5.10.2. Discipline

The painter who is just beginning thinks that he paints from his heart.
The artist who has completed his development also thinks he paints from the heart.
Only the latter is right, because his training and discipline allow him to…..
Chipp 1968 p.141

Art is more than a spontaneous splash of self-expression: real spontaneity grows out of a disciplined and conscious approach to practice (Collingwood 1977; Perlman 1985; Chamberlain 1988; Bitel 1999). As identified in Chapter Six, the art of social work takes practice and effort. Practice deserves condemnation if it is uncritically performed by unknowledgeable practitioners; practice needs disciplined creativity, where departure from precept and precedent is informed by a wide knowledge and deep understanding drawn from self-awareness and the profession’s wisdom and scientific knowledge (Clark 1995; Imre 1990a; Jordan 1984; Perlman 1985; Brown 1988). Essential to this is a capacity for questioning and change where exposing practice to reflection allows for inquiry, criticism, change and accountability (Fook 1996). The requirement of discipline demands a background of theoretical and technical knowledge and skill (Seligson 2004; see below).
7.5.11. Subjectivity

Art can be defined as that which provides us with a particular and unique experience of attention, namely an aesthetic one (Weissman 1990; Plekhanov 1953). Derived from the Greek word *aesthesis* it means ‘sense perception’ or ‘sensory cognition’ (Carroll 1999, p.156). The aesthetic properties of art alert us therefore to the qualitative dimensions of the world and our capacities for discovering them (Carroll 1999). Social work too highlights qualitative dimensions of human experience. Art and social work have subjective elements to the experience for both artist and audience (Leepa 1970; Gardner 1973; Chipp 1968; Krill 1990; Carew 1987; Lee 1982). Subjective knowledge is not a knowledge about, but a direct awareness of life born of experience, imagination, and intuitive use of self in a meaningful framework (Howe 1987). However, both combine subjective and objective factors in a dialectical unity, transcending the distinction between affect and cognition, between feelings and truth (Gardner 1973; Siporin 1998; Freire 1996; Chipp 1968). It is the objective however that is reified by the current dominant paradigm, and both require a philosophical base that can handle their subjective nature (Carew 1987; England 1986a; Freire 1996; see Chapter Eight).

7.6. QUALITIES OF THE PRACTITIONER

It is important…that…social workers’ use of art should not be limited to the ‘consumption’ of existing art; equally significant is the need for social workers and students to be artists. (England 1986a, p.133)

If social work is an art then it follows that the social worker is an artist, requiring the recognition, maintenance and development of distinct characteristics. It is the less tangible qualities that are the most difficult to comprehend and conceptualise and have perhaps been neglected (Edwards 1986), yet it is these abilities that lie at the centre of social work as an art (Heraud 1981; England 1986a; Moore & Urwin 1991; Krill 1990). Considering the qualities identified as being artistic is the traditional way of conceptualising social work as an art. Yet, in the content analysis, qualities of social work as an art were not connected by any of the authors to this approach. This may relate in part to the discussion below as to whether the artist is born or made – that is, that the qualities are considered natural and therefore not connected to a particular approach.
This section conceptualises the qualities of the artistic practitioner and their role in social work practice. The following qualities are those most commonly identified in the literature as belonging to a social work as art approach; some have of course been considered separately from the model by some authors. As stated previously, some of these qualities are important ones for the scientist-practitioner also. Examined here are creativity, intuition, imagination, insight, use of self, practice wisdom and personal qualities. Their role and place in social work practice is considered as well as how they can be used rigorously and further developed. The final quality considered is the use of ‘intellectual capacity’ as the combined quality of art and science. This leads to a discussion on the place of knowledge in the artistry of social work.

7.6.1. Is the Artist Born or Made?
The question arises of whether the artist is born or made, the result of innate natural endowments or specific education and training (Collingwood 1977; Creedy 1972; Briar 1979). Such ideas can be seen in relation to theories of creativity and the status of the artist: the Renaissance and Romantic periods in art for example elevated the artist to genius with natural capacities that made him/her gifted, intuitive and spiritual giving him/her a monopoly therefore on artistic creation (Carroll 1999; Zolberg 1990; Furlong 1987; Fischer 1970; Rapoport 1968; Henri 1930). Postmodern notions that the author is no longer the fixed source of meaning of the work deconstructs also the position of the social worker as the primary creator of the social work dynamic and owner of artistic capacities and awareness (see Chapter Three). Similarly, in social work some argue that certain qualities need to be present in the first place and cannot be taught while others argue that all have the capacity for social work and the specific techniques and methods can be acquired through rigorous training (England 1986a; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi; Perlman 1985; Manfredi 1982; Wodarski & Bagarozzi 1979; Davies 1981).

One of the difficulties with the notion of a born artist is that the skills, innovations and knowledge developed by those individuals are marked as personal, unique, and unavailable for transfer, teaching or development (Rothman & Ayala 1990; Taylor 1987). As Edwards (1986, p.7) points out the notion of artistry as unteachable actually reflects a belief that such abilities are largely non-essential in modern, technological society. Camilleri (1996,
p.57) believes it is an important view in social work that practitioners are born and not made – and therefore that theory does not provide one with the ability to function as a social worker. This may reflect an ambivalence in social work towards theory, towards social science, or a fear of being removed from its practical and social change efforts.

Good disciplined practice surely requires some combination of the two: native artistic capacity used in a disciplined, considered and learned way (Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Zolberg 1990; Manfredi 1982; Gardner 1973). Both sides of the personality must play their part; the conscious and unconscious, intellect and imagination, rational and intuitive, thinking and feeling, discipline and sensitivity, order and surprise (Held 1980; Finestone 1962; Raine 1990; Imre 1990a). This recognises also the capacity for growth and development of individuals as attributes and abilities change over time in relation to successive contexts, through training and experience, and the deepening of human and social experience (Zolberg 1990; Taylor 1987; Gyarfas 1969; Gardner 1973; Rosenberg & Fliegel 1970). I argue that while the capacity for creativity, imagination and intuition are human ones – and therefore possible for all – the rigorous and critical use of these qualities in competent professional practice comes as the result of education and experience and must be used in the context of social work’s purpose and values.

7.6.2. Creativity

Siporin (1988, p.180) states that creativity is the dominant characteristic of the art of social work practice. As Weissman (1990, p.10) points out however creativity respects no disciplinary boundaries – artists, scientists, philosophers and practitioners of many persuasions make use of and try to discover the sources of creativity.

Creativity for the artist is at once a quality in order to generate ideas and forms, a process by which the creation is prepared and produced, and a product. Creativity is defined as an active process to produce new and original ideas, insights, actions, inventions and thinking that have social value (Edwards 1986; Wolff 1981; Wilson 1964; Wiegand 1979). Creativity is transformative and constructive, the active part of artistry in that it requires action in terms of a product of some description – for example the generation of novel ideas that are then transformed into practice principles or experiment, a novel or fresh
perspective, or a form of problem-solving (Gelfand 1988; Laird & Hartman 1990; Wiegand 1979; England 1986a). There are certain conditions for creative thinking (see Intellectual Capacity), as well as being supported by particular personal qualities such as energy and confidence (see Personal Qualities).

Henle in 1962 (pp.32-9) outlined four features of creativity, which still provide an elegant analysis of what creativity for professional work needs to look like, namely;

(i) Correctness – the necessity of relevance, a relation to reality in the creative solution so that it may do justice to the requirements of the problem. Involves the ability therefore to genuinely grasp the requirements of the problem and evaluate conclusions.

(ii) Novelty – usually considered a necessary or sufficient condition, he argues it is about truly understanding and problem solving that incorporates all the demands and complexities. Then discovery of solutions is possible.

(iii) Freedom – the essence of creative thinking. Such thinking consists in breaking out of one’s conceptual system when it no longer does justice to the problem.

(iv) Harmony – the creative solution is one which provides a deeper, more comprehensive or clearer way of understanding the structure of the problem, and generates a new ordering of understanding

7.6.2.1. The Creative Process

Researchers have generally agreed that creativity involves progressive stages, which occur over varying lengths of time (Edwards 1986, p.4). Four stages of creativity for social work can be identified:

(i) *First insight*; the first perception of a problem; this definition of the problem then directs the search for solutions

(ii) *Preparation and Saturation*; all known information, ideas and facts about the problem are sifted and analysed, ideas are identified and played with

(iii) *Incubation*; the unconscious plays with and sorts ideas

(iv) *Illumination and Solution Finding*; the creator becomes aware of how all the elements fit together, and evaluates the solutions arrived at

(v) *Verification*; when an idea is put into a form that makes it accessible to others (Wiegand 1979; Edwards 1986; Gelfand 1988, 1982; Gardner 1973; Weissman 1990).
7.6.2.2. The Role of Creativity in Social Work Practice

The above process highlights the role that creativity can have in the problem-solving processes including: innovative and alternative problem definition; producing many ideas to solve problems; applying different methods of seeking solutions from reflection to experimentation; and the invention of new social technology (Gelfand 1982; Peile 1993; Compton & Galaway 1994; see Chapter Nine). The creative process of finding form in chaos and the forging of something new can be seen as parallel to the social work assessment process of identifying problems, generating a picture of what is going on, and planning and moving forward in the creation of change (Ringel 2003; Siporin 1988; Rapoport 1968; England 1986a; Wilson 1964; Gardner 1973). Creativity also assists in the development of theory, new therapeutic approaches, the novel organisation and delivery of services, ethical interpretations of policy and procedure, and generation of resources including improvisation (Rapoport 1968; Weissman 1990; Gelfand 1988; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991). As outlined in Chapter Five, there is a role for both creativity and imagination in the interpretation of policies, guidelines and resources.

7.6.3. Imagination

Imagination allows us to see the world in a new way, how we might change it or ourselves, and allowing questioning and reflection. It is a generative skill to provide novel or unusual ideas and insights and to combine or juxtapose previously held notions or images (Hogarth 2001; Brook 1992; Bierter 1977; Gardner 1973; Gerard 1954; Collingwood 1977; Rapoport 1968). Imagination is generally associated with illusion or fantasy; it is however a road to reality as it offers imaginative models to criticise before we act (Brook 1992; Kaminsky 1985; Collingwood 1977). Imagination is a component of intelligence in the ability to use different frames of reference and consider other’s experience (Gerard 1954; Read 1931). Imagination allows us to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the work of the intellect (Collingwood 1977; Millard 1977). To be useful therefore, imagination is fed from and feeds back to the conscious and critical level (Chipp 1968; Imre 1984b; Gerard 1954). It is also crucial that the imagination should be relevantly educated and not naïve, and that rule-breaking should be knowledgeable and not ignorant; this is particularly important when working with vulnerable and powerless individuals and groups.
7.6.3.1. The Role of Imagination in Social Work

Imagination contributes to a problem-solving process by giving shape to constructions about the problem and possible answers to it (Payne 1998b). It aids in the analysis of a particular problem to see its unique aspects, visualising alternative ways of considering problems, to search for alternative solutions, new combinations or novel pathways and involves departure from traditional theoretical systems and previously prescribed practice patterns (Clark 1995; Payne 1991; Siporin 1988; Rapoport 1968; Imre 1982; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Trainor 1996). In both Chapters Five and Six imagination was also given a broader role, in providing a vision, and therefore sustenance to both worker and client.

Imagination is also important to bring about understanding and the empathic response so crucial to relationship; to imaginatively consider and picture the client’s experience and the capacity to put oneself in the place of another’s affective realm without losing one’s sense of identity and purpose (Imre 1982; Rapoport 1968; Powell 2004; Younghusband 1964; Jordan 1984). This was how some practitioners in Chapter Six viewed the role of imagination, as allowing them to consider the inside of a client’s experience.

7.6.4. Intuition

Art is perfectly defined when simply defined as intuition.

Bernard Croce in Mishlove (1994), p.33

Intuition is certainly not a new concept. It has engaged the attention of such minds as Aristotle (384-322 BC), Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), Kant (1724-1804) and Bergson (1859-1941) who have grappled with describing and comprehending intuition (Luoma 1998; Mishlove 1994). It has played a role in the creations of philosophers, scientists, inventors, artists and spiritual leaders (Mishlove 1994). Some point out that we are all familiar with intuition and use it in everyday life (Flyvbjerg 2001; Ife 1995a). Flyvbjerg (2001) claims that as intuition is internalised, existing research has been unable to provide evidence that it can be externalised into rules and explanations. Further, it has often been neglected or belittled in scientific study, perhaps because science tends to emphasise analytic rationality as its own tool (Flyvbjerg 2001; Manfredi 1982; Luoma
1998; Ringel 2003). It is one of the most problematic concepts when considering social work as an art, as it appears private, individual, uninformed, unreliable, unscientific, irrational and without foundation (Mishlove 1994). ‘Getting to’ this wisdom has remained important for its professional use and credibility however (Camilleri 1996; see Chapter Six).

Gammack (1982, p.15) refers to intuition as ‘uncommon sense’. It can be seen as a power of understanding without necessarily rational thought and inference, a spontaneous process of awareness, a flash of keen insight (Edwards 1986; Hudson 1997; Damianakis 2001; Imre 1984b; Ringel 2003; Rapoport 1968; Luoma 1998; Mishlove 1994; Henning 1970). Intuition refers to direct perception and the ability to incorporate experience, understanding and perception to penetrate and understand a problem or situation (England 1986a; Mishlove 1994; Rapoport 1968). A practitioner may not have to think about actions, recognition and judgement during a performance – it is a spontaneous process of integration (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Imre 1984b; Luoma 1998).

To some authors intuition relies therefore on internalised principles, feelings, values, experiences and knowledge (Ife 1995a; England 1986a). Indeed Carew (1979, 1987) argues that this is all intuition is; internalised and absorbed experience and knowledge, integrated such that its use is unconscious. He sees however that it is a knowledge that practitioners deepen, broaden and correct in the course of their experience – but that they can eventually explain how ideas were obtained or conclusions arrived at (Carew 1987). Many of the practitioners interviewed also saw that social workers could and should always be able to identify the sources of one’s intuitive understanding, and make them explicit (see Chapter Six).

Intuition has particular links to knowledge. It can be considered a method by which knowledge is used expertly – the rapid, continuous, interpretive and holistic selection and use of appropriate insights from the profession’s body of knowledge. It is an integration of knowledge that generates a unique theory in action, or praxis (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Flyvbjer 2001; England 1986a; Bartlett 1970). This requires that the practitioner be aware of the status of the professional knowledge and educate their intuition (Weissman 1990; England 1986a; Dawes 2003). Intuition also figures prominently in the creative
process in that it enables the artist to make judgements, recognise significant factors and make connections without consciously knowing how s/he arrived at them (Rapoport 1968; Fook 1996; Mukerjee 1945; Read 1931; Mishlove 1994). It is important to point out therefore that the intuitive mode or way of knowing needs to complement and be integrated with rational analysis (Luoma 1998; Elks & Kirkhart 1993). This was emphasised by two practitioners in the interviews who outlined that intuition in itself was not problematic, but that its use needed to be acknowledged and therefore scrutinised and analysed (see Chapter Six).

7.6.4.1. The Role of Intuition in Social Work

Intuition is an important key in efforts to perceive reality and to add to a comprehension of human existence, a direct and intimate contact with the essence of being, of experiencing (Luoma 1998, p.33; May 1989; Sheppard 1995). It is also important in social work that practitioners have an expanded and flexible view of human nature – the spiritual and tacit dimension cannot be ignored or left. This will allow growth of the spiritual dimension of social work practice recently and increasingly identified in the literature as important to complete practice (Luoma 1998; Canda 1998). Intuition can become a critical tool in accessing these dimensions in ourselves and our clients (Luoma 1998).

Social work requires rapid, economical and accurate transactions; attention to intuition allows for this kind of infiltration of a problem and the grasping of its essential structure and dimensions (Rapoport 1968). It is therefore part of sense-making processes; simultaneous selection and synthesising of diverse material, bringing it together in some form, comprehension, the forming a mental picture of the material (Brandon 1976; England 1986a; Gardner 1973; Freud & Krug 2002). This process of making order allows us to create a picture of the client’s world (England 1986a). Interestingly, some of the practitioners interviewed described intuition as a not knowing – a sense of a gap in their understanding or reading of the client and their presentation.

Practitioners’ immediate behaviour and on-the-spot responses are largely intuitive, through connecting, sensing, anticipating and checking, although grounded in expected roles and in accordance with personal and professional values (McAuliffe & Coleman 1999; England 1986a; Jordan 1979b; Canda 1998). This was how many practitioners saw the use of
intuition – as directing how they were to respond to a client in the moment. Two practitioners also outlined how it informed their responses in terms of safety – their own need to take care of being with a client, as a trigger that something was not right.

Practitioner Eleven described intuition as ‘accurate empathy’ (see Chapter Six). Intuition can refer to the experience of penetrating an otherwise private inner core of another’s experience (Jordan 1979b). Empathy draws from the humanist base of social work – the art of understanding, compassion, being non-judgemental, individualizing the client in their own narrative and imaginatively entering into their experience or situation. It can allow an understanding of how they handle the world and help practitioners engage with different levels of meaning (Goldstein 1999; Ife 1997; Jordan 1979b; Philp 1979; England 1986b; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Bartlett 1970; Davies 1981).

7.6.4.2. The Rigorous Use of Intuition

For Howe (1987, p.112) intuition is one of the reasons social workers very often annoy and mystify their critics. Intuition is often associated with ‘gut feelings’; Imre (1990a) laments this as it obscures the importance of disciplining feelings with complex cognitive processes, and down-plays even the significance of this kind of emotional responsiveness in social work. Practitioner Two pointed out the differences between gut feelings and intuition for her, the latter being a sensitivity that one examined in relation to the client’s presentation (see Chapter Six).

Intuitive responses can be mistaken, but they can also be accurate, an indispensable guide or cue; what is required is a checking of the responses in terms of the client’s reality as well as past, present and future client behaviour and interpretations (Weissman 1990; Imre 1990b; Epstein & Grasso 1990). Any intuitive understandings must be stated to the client, in a context of tentativeness to check their accuracy – to seek feedback and in particular provide permission for disconfirmation (Raines 1990; Imre 1982; Hogarth 2001). For several of the practitioners interviewed, this was the key component to the role of intuition – that its use be made explicit, and explicated. In valuing intuition it is important to try to understand its course, its close connection to self-awareness, and seek to understand it and how it effects one’s decisions (Ife 1995a; Imre 1990b; Rapoport 1968). It requires
therefore reflection, enabling the inquirer to criticise, test and restructure his/her understandings (Raine 1990; Schon 1983).

7.6.5. Use of Self

What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life...of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humour, of his understanding...in giving he cannot help bringing something to life in the other person, and this which is brought to life reflects back to him.

Gammack (1982), p.18

Use of self – as the core of process, method and skill, as a potential source of bias and of knowledge – has been one of the traditional concepts of good social work practice throughout the decades (Kondrat 1999; see for example Bowers 1949, Bartlett 1964, UN Report 1968; Brandon 1976; Dominelli 1997; Camilleri 1996). The conscious use of self requires self-discipline, which in turn necessitates knowledge of the self and one’s world, acceptance of one’s limitations, self-confidence, and being genuine and human in one’s approach (Imre 1982; Jordan 1979a; Collingwood 1977; Krill 1990; Nystul 1993; Davies 1981; May 1989; Compton & Galaway 1994). The artist uses their art to both express and explore ‘self’ while audiences are encouraged to reflect upon their own experiences of the work in question (Carroll 1999; Brook 1992; Chipp 1968; Collingwood 1977; Imre 1984a).

There is of course the complex issue of how self is defined, related to definitions and beliefs about human nature, notions of identity including social identity, the objective-subjective dimension, the influence of context and socialisation, and so forth (Kondrat 1999; Payne 1996; Fay 1976; Miehls & Moffatt 2000). In Western society we are taught to dismiss self-knowledge as it does not fit the rational scientific ideal of the objective and neutral practitioner, however both social work and art require a reflective attitude and a willingness to question and explore (Elliot 2000; Weick 1983; Jordan 1984; Imre 1984b; Edwards & Bess 1998).

7.6.5.1. The Role of Use of Self in Social Work

The use of self has influence on the relationship, language, intervention and outcome of social work activity as well as the very choice of social work as an occupation (see Chapters Five and Six; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Pearson 1973; Imre 1982;
An essential resource in social work is the availability of the practitioner as a person who can authentically engage with others in their real world, requiring vigorous self-examination and self-knowledge including an understanding of one’s own social existence (Brown 1988; Jordan 1979a; Gardner 1973; Carroll 1999; Seligson 2004). Use of self has been conceptualised as a – or the – clinical tool (Chapman et al 2003; Newell-Walker 2002; see Chapter Six). There are also the technical uses of self-disclosure and countertransference (Edwards & Bess 1998). Use of self has also been conceptualised as part of the critical thinking process in a tolerance of ambiguity, self-criticism and self-reflection; in this way it is linked to creativity as it enhances a willingness to risk, learn from mistakes and to change (Ringel 2003). As outlined above it is also linked to ethics, in particular the containment of bias.

Social workers need self-awareness and reflection to meet and manage the complex demands of the work; indeed an awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and a capacity to tolerate and contain responses can help practitioners survive the very demands of that complexity and uncertainty (Lishman 1998; Davies 1994). Use of self also assists in maintaining boundaries in recognition of self as a separate identity from that of clients, and differentiating our own and our clients’ issues (Davies 1994; Nystul 1993; Siporin 1988; Freedberg 1993; Siporin 1985; Howe 1987; England 1986a).

**7.6.5.2. Rigorous Use of Self**

There are of course dilemmas with the use of self, and social work’s resources are not limited to the use of self. Payne (1996, p.61) outlines the problems with use of self namely that it implies that approaches to clients will be stable and unchanging and that workers will have style as opposed to roles and functions. This detracts from the possibility of flexibility and might imply that workers do not take on new ideas and theories once their self has become established.

Use of self needs to be purposeful, learnt and constantly improved by maturing practitioners who see themselves as growing, developing people, and be genuine and congruent if good standards of practice are to be reached (Jordan 1984; England 1986a; Camilleri 1996; Compton & Galaway 1994). Self-reflection then is important; standing
back enough from oneself to question the meaning of what is going on as well as being sensitive to one’s own internal workings and dialogues (Compton & Galaway 1994; Imre 1984a). Kondrat (1999, pp.453-6) for example differentiates between

- simple conscious self-awareness – becoming awake to present realties and being able to name one’s perceptions, feelings and behaviour
- reflective self awareness – in which attention is turned to a self who ‘has’ the experience and the self’s behaviours and affect become objects of reflection
- reflexive self-awareness – which is to become aware of those processes by which the self interacts with others to create meanings and identities and allowance is made for the possibility of a valid subjective knowledge of the self.

Knowledge acquired in this way needs to be treated as tentative and subject to further testing (Munro 1998; Lishman 1998). In Chapter Five, the importance of a critical social self-awareness was emphasised also, with exercises provided in the relevant texts to facilitate this. Edwards & Bess (1998) suggest beginning with an inventory of self, of personal traits and characteristic behaviours, and specifically how one acts and one’s unique modes of expression. Self-knowledge and its use should be subject to assessment by colleagues whose judgements can be corrective, available for consideration in supervision as well as critical engagement with education and experience (Butler & Morphew-Chambers 1979; Camilleri 1996; England 1986a; Pinker 1982). Some also suggest that practitioners engage in therapy themselves in order to develop self-knowledge (Edwards & Bess 1998), or as Practitioner Eleven suggested to gain insight into the experience of the therapeutic relationship.

7.6.6. Practice Wisdom

It is important to be wise rather than clever. Brandon 1979b, p.30

Practice wisdom was a concept first developed in the 1950s and is seen to be knowledge and theories of intervention that derive from the experience of doing social work – the worker’s own cultural store of naïve praxis (Kondrat 1992). Yet, as Dybicz (2004) notes it has historically been defined in juxtaposition with empirical research. Wise practice wisdom is an effective integration of knowledge, skills and values by which experienced practitioners develop a rich, diverse and almost intuitive style in using them (Turner 1990;
Practice wisdom then is not just knowledge, but a process (Dybcz 2004). Some see that practice wisdom can be mistaken for intuition (see above; Scott 1990; Klein & Bloom 1995; Carew 1987; Kondrat 1992), where rather practice wisdom is a collection of explicit principles of and insights on practice.

7.6.6.1. Sources of Practice Wisdom

Practice wisdom draws on empirical research, theory, religious and philosophical perspectives, the ethos of the profession, direct practice experiences, clients and self-awareness – as well as a recognition of the limitations of one’s knowledge (Klein & Bloom 1995; Turner 1990; Krill 1990; Schon 1983; Sheppard 1995; Goldstein 1990; Clark 1995; Dybcz 2004). In terms of acknowledging the clients experience, it also requires a deep respect for people’s innate wisdom about themselves and their lives. Some see that what defines practice wisdom is that it incorporates values into the system of knowledge; that it is the use of knowledge in a moral framework, so important in a value-laden practice such as social work (Vass 1996; Boehm 1958; Flack 1970; Klein & Bloom, 1995; Saleeby 1979; Camilleri 1996; Goldstein 1990). This leads to the concept of praxis; the notion of practice wisdom growing from as well as contributing to practice and scientific knowledge – each type of knowledge mutually constructing part of the other (see Chapter Four).

Some authors see practice wisdom as a connection between two types of knowing; scientific information and the phenomenological experience of the client situation. It allows the development of professionally guided interventions that include feelings, insights, values and supports the translations between these two systems of knowing (Luoma 1998; Munro 1998; Weissman 1990). This seems to dichotomise however practice wisdom and empirical knowledge. It has also been seen as a link between the general and the specific; practice wisdom allows us to discern what is common and what is unique about a situation (Azzarto 2001; Klein and Bloom 1995). Munro (1998, pp.96-7) highlights the similarities between practice wisdom and scientific explanation:

- like scientists social workers generalise from their experience with individual clients
- they try to explain why problems arose
• they draw on such understanding to make predictions and to plan how to help clients
• they attempt to identify and classify recurring features.

Practice wisdom therefore is reconceptualised as an integrating vehicle for combining the strengths and minimising the limitations of both the empirical practice model and subjective intuitive phenomenological practice model (Klein & Bloom 1995, p.799).

7.6.6.2. The Role of Practice Wisdom in Social Work

A discussion of the relevance of practice wisdom is a discussion about the relevance of knowledge to social work (see Chapter Four). Practitioners’ voices in research often emphasise the relevance of their clinical wisdom and spontaneous ‘doing’ yet they are not taught to trust knowledge sprung from such awareness (Saleeby 1989; Goldstein 1990). Practice wisdom can serve as a basis for evaluation and reflection that in turn contributes to social work models and theories and can form the basis for developing research (Adams 1998). It is also about being open to what clients and colleagues have to teach us (Sammut 1999; Scott 1990). For Dybicz (2004) it is part of the problem-solving effort, in recognising the uniqueness of each situation and applying our knowledge to the problem at hand. Klein and Bloom (1995) outline how practice wisdom plays four distinct roles in the use of the empirical practice model that has dominated social work;

(i) fills gaps in an incomplete system of knowledge of organised practice
(ii) functions informally as a type of ongoing practice evaluation
(iii) provides timely information for immediate use in practice and
(iv) contributes directly to the development of emerging theory.

7.6.6.3. Rigour in Using Practice Wisdom

Of course, practice wisdom is not always wise; some of it requires unlearning as it can become practice prejudice and without critical awareness, its limits and quality cannot be determined (Gammack 1982; Scott 1990; Sheppard 1995). To be useful it must help the worker understand the client and his problems and offer advice on how to help (Munro 1998). Scott (1990, p.565) refers to using practice wisdom as a cognitive schema – a cognitive structure or a filtering framework through which information is organised and interpreted. Practice wisdom should not be an unconscious use of knowledge, but rather a critical and analytical one, making it explicit such that it is available for critique and
inquiry, and openness to learning from both the successes and failures experienced in providing services (Sheppard 1995; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Kondrat 1992; Scott 1990; Carew 1979; Vass 1996).

Peile (1998, p.74-5) says that practice wisdom recognises the research implicit in all practice, the practice implicit in all research and the practice/research evident in the action of everyone, including clients. Yet, practitioners often see researchers as a threat to their use of practice wisdom, of values and ideology to guide practice and their belief in an artistic quality of practice, thus setting the stage for an ambivalent relationship between researchers and practitioners. However, the first stage in making practice wisdom more valid and credible is getting it out in public – through research processes (Munro 1998 Goldstein 1990; Weick 1983; Bartlett 1970; Peile 1988; Saleeby 1989; Gordon 1965a; Krill 1990). Scott (1990, p.565) suggests methodologies such as combining quantitative analyses of sentence patterns with in-depth explanations of the meanings assigned, direct observation, and informant interviewing. It is precisely that step of communication to others and the development of a shared language for categorising it that is required for practice wisdom to take its place in the wider system of scientific knowledge (Klein & Bloom 1995; Munro 1998; Turner 1990; Vass 1996; Hudson 1997; Sheppard 1995). It is then available for comparison, examination, critique and further systematic formulation.

7.6.7. Personal Qualities

Many of the qualities discussed above require other personal characteristics to support them. These include

- being non-judgemental and accepting – of others and different ways of knowing
- willingness to take risks
- tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty
- thoughtful
- adaptable and flexible
- open with a capacity for critical reflection

Self-confidence is also required, courage and independence to be a nonconformist, to imperfection and to be open to others ideas (Rapoport 1968; Davies 1981; Gelfand 1988; May 1989). Creativity is also said to require energy and persistence as well as hard work and discipline in order to translate creative ideas into feasible actions: indeed without this creative ideas are of little value to clients (Wilson 1984; Weissman 1990; Wolff 1981). Some of the practitioners interviewed in Chapter Six identified this level of energy as one of the barriers to social work being an art.

As Davies (1994) argues it is also important to avoid such lists of qualities becoming some catechism of virtue. As argued above, the resources for artistry, and for giving help are present in all of us, what has to be learnt is how to uncover these resources and use them constructively. It is perhaps better then to consider these as supporting qualities. It also needs to be acknowledged that it is not the sole responsibility of the practitioner to generate and support the above-listed qualities. The manifestation and use of them is also supported – or otherwise – by organisational norms and mores, professional rules and obligations, clients and ethical boundaries, as well as personal energy and confidence.

7.6.8. Intellectual Capacity

The social worker and artist need to be able to employ logical and rational as well as nonrational, parallel, lateral, sensory, emotive, analogical and intuitive kinds of reasoning (Weissman 1990; Gelfand 1988; Siporin 1988; England 1986a). Further, it is in the kinds of thinking required for social work that the merging of science and art can be seen. This however requires an acknowledgement of artistry as an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing.

Social work’s holistic concerns lead us to a form of theory-building and understanding which is descriptive and systemic; this kind of non-hierarchical thinking-in-action is quite different to formal Western thinking that sees the world in terms of hierarchical cause-and-effect, rather than in networks of understanding (Adams 1998). Intelligent thought and action consists of something other than just analytic rationality; our bias towards logical thinking blinds us to the non-logical processes and the precise subjectivity in perception, appreciation and understanding, which are omnipresent in effective practice (England
The artist is a supreme user of lateral thinking in his/her search for new ways of looking at things, to find coherence in disorder, and in their dedication to breaking down the old conventions of perception (Imre 1990a; Cornford 1972).

The intelligence component includes the capacity for both convergent and divergent thinking, to think critically and constructively about different approaches, intellectual curiosity and an interest in the diversity of the world, and the capacity to abstract and symbolise experience (Siporin 1988; Gelfand 1988; Nelson-Reed & Peebles-Wilkins 1991; Zolberg 1990; Wiegand 1979). The worker must be able to: conceptualise; to reflect; to analyse and evaluate competing theories, ideologies, and models of practice which will inform their work and person; and be capable therefore of intelligent choice (Payne 1996; Wiegand 1979).

It includes the intellectual qualities of openness, receptivity to new ideas, a liking for complexity and challenge, preparedness and immersion, tolerance for ambiguity and not understanding, being able to hold multiple conceptualisations at one time, risk-taking, self-direction, flexibility, competency and fluency, and a sense of adventure and play (Rapoport 1968; Cornford 1972; Siporin 1988; Gelfand 1988; Wiegand 1979; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Davies 1981; Weissman 1990; Laird & Hartman 1990; Compton & Galaway 1994; Ringel 2003). This suggests a state of intellectual freedom that enables the person to detach from old conceptual systems, or keeps them from making too deep a commitment to certain theoretical positions or explanatory systems of thought (Rapoport 1968). It requires an intellectual preparedness of thorough familiarity with and knowledge about all aspects of the problem, including the courage not to understand (Cornford 1972; Rapoport 1968; Berry 1972). It also requires being able to bring our imagination and intuition up to a level of conscious awareness, to give voice to our creative ideas, and then convergent thinking to critique and evaluate for choosing the good, important and feasible in each stage (Edwards 1986; Gelfand 1982; Payne 1991).

Important for social work is that thinking be oriented toward action. One of Foucault’s intellectual virtues was reflective thought aimed at action; stepping back from conduct to question its meaning, its conditions and its goals, the ability to think differently in order to
art differently (Flyvbjerg 2001). Artistry is also a collaborative process – not only because many different perspectives enhance the probability of generating more and unique ideas for solution – but such collaboration will be part of what makes art a public practice.

7.7. THE ARTISTRY OF CLIENTS

In order to succeed in the artistic realm, social workers need to recognise clients as creative, imaginative and wise beings, and to relate as mutual participants in a way that recognises and uses each other’s creative potential (Peile 1993; Brandon & Jordan 1979; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Weissman 1990). Indeed, many practitioners interviewed for this research saw that stimulating the above artistic qualities in clients was one of their professional roles. Martinez-Brawley and Zorita (1998, p.207) argue that the artistry of the practitioner is dependent on the imaginative freedom of the client to change pain into gain, powerlessness into strength, or weakness into resolution such that the worker and client are co-creators, medium, performers and audience all in one. Stimulating a client’s imagination for example may assist them to project forward, integrate their experiences, construct a vision of alternatives and as a tool of empowerment in imagining different ways and action towards it (Ife 1995a; see Chapter Five). Egan (1997, p.222) contrasts the characteristics of a creative person with how clients might experience the world; one of the goals of his helping process is to stimulate clients’ innate creativity which he claims people in trouble often fail to use. He offers four strategies to help clients stimulate their creative potential:

(i) assume that your clients have unused creative resources and acknowledge with them their creative potential
(ii) create the right atmosphere for creativity by helping clients relax and feel they are in a safe place for experimentation
(iii) help clients become more mindful about their problems and opportunities as mindfulness is the opposite of routines, conformity and passive learning which restrict creativity
(iv) help clients break with self-restricting mindsets – from an ‘I can’t’ to an ‘I can’ mindset.

If as argued above, creative solutions come more easily to a mind that is prepared with knowledge, one role of the practitioner is to share their knowledge with the client and
validate the client’s own understandings. Again, in Chapter Six, practitioners saw sharing knowledge as contributing to clients’ creativity and problem-solving, and clients’ wisdom as a source of knowledge.

7.8. ARTISTRY AND KNOWLEDGE

I have shown how the knowledge base of social work, and the relationship between theory and practice, is the subject of much attention in the social work literature (Chapter Four). The arena of knowledge is also one where the issues of science and art are manifest from science being equated with knowledge to art being seen as atheoretical. Yet knowledge – or ways of knowing – is one area where art and science can particularly be integrated.

Anti-intellectualism – which social work as art has been accused of representing – is of course dangerous and potentially destructive for social work and its clients (Sheppard 1995). The use of qualities such as intuition and creativity do not remove from the worker the responsibility to be informed and knowledgeable but rather it means that s/he has to ensure that the ‘person’ becomes informed, that his own understanding is appropriately broad, subtle and complex (England 1986a, p.36). The use of qualities such as imagination, insight, intuition and creativity are informed by and developed through the development and use of knowledge while knowledge is also mediated through such qualities (May 1989; Zolberg 1990; Chipp 1968; see above). A new idea is brought about when the mind is prepared: knowledge is a prerequisite for creativity and further, at some point the novelty and playfulness will be integrated into the structure of what is known in some way that makes sense (Gelfand 1988; Weissman 1990; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991). Creativity, imagination and practice wisdom are not only a use of knowledge but also a source of perceptual knowledge and a significant contributor to the development of knowledge, as a creative and constructive source and awareness leading people to important discoveries (Luoma 1998; Rapoport 1968; Creedy 1972; Carew 1987; Kedward 1972; Jordan 1979b Mishlove 1994; Weissman 1990).

There is a continuing need to define and evaluate appropriate and helpful practices (Imre 1982). Social work research must be grounded in an epistemology that honours all our professional commitments – and that enables integration of the various kinds of knowledge.

Maybe the fundamental role of the scientific in social work is not to develop laws or to predict the behaviour of individuals, or the functioning of organisations or communities, but to develop perspectives or ways of understanding that combine the rational and the intuitive, the real and the imaginary. Experienced practitioners are not so much atheoretical as they are practical, concrete and intuitive.

It is about critical engagement therefore, as Fee (1986, p.47) similarly argues:

A person whose thoughts and feelings, logical capacities, and intuitions are all relevant and involved in the process of discovery. Such scientists would actively seek new ways of negotiating the distances now established between knowledge and its uses, between thought and feeling, between objectivity and subjectivity, between expert and non-expert, and would seek to use knowledge as a tool of liberation rather than domination.

Practitioner Four similarly saw that the individual was the link between the art and science of practice. Each perspective can contribute to a re-evaluation of the other, to engage in some fundamental reappraisals, and identify areas where dialogue can take place, identifying what we want to hold on to and what we want to change (Halladay 1988; Ife 1995a; Hoffie 1991). However, it is important that such processes involve praxis: reflection and action as part of the same process, and in particular how practice reflects on and alters theory (Payne 1991; UN Report 1968; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995).

There is a postmodern recognition of the essential involvement of the person in knowledge and the links to approaches to knowing which are intuitive, inductive and subjective including knowledge of oneself as a person (Morrison 1993; Brown 1988; Imre 1982; Zubrzyki 1999; Ringel 2003). In addition to personal experience, the social worker internalises those features of their professional experience which have proved useful into their practice repertoire as well as generating new concepts through their practice experience (Hudson 1997; Bartlett 1970; Morrison 1993); many of the practitioners interviewed identified personal and professional experience and learning as sources of knowledge. There is experiential learning provided through the lives and struggles of clients, and as clearly identified as central by Practitioners Eight and Twelve. Use of self also gives the practitioner on-the-spot knowledge, in recognising and understanding what is being experienced in the client encounter. The choice as well as application of theoretical orientation is informed by personality factors also (Edwards & Bess 1998; Applegate
2000). In a postmodern sense therefore, social workers do not discard their scientific knowledge but rather cease to privilege it and recognise it as one of many truths to be applied with caution and humility (Hartman 1993, p.366; see Chapter Eight).

The relationship between art and science is specifically discussed in the next chapter; however knowledge is one area where there is seen to be a particular integration of science and art so it is important to refer to it here. For some, the art and science of knowing is about movement between the specific and the general. Indeed this is how some practitioners saw social work itself – as individual, personal services that drew on the generalisations offered by science and/or art. Science attempts to discover and explain general patterns, while the art is about finding meaning in the diverse aspects of the human condition (Goldstein 1999; Bowers 1949). For others, the two intertwine through experimenting in practice – paying attention to phenomena, surfacing the intuitive understanding of them, exploring, testing and hypothesis formulation and checking (Gibbs 1991; Schon 1983). Again, practitioners saw a role for art – and in particular the qualities of imagination, intuition and creativity – in problem-solving and generating an initial formulation of the client. In a more formalised way, both are seen as contributing knowledge to one another – art drawing on science to give pattern to its method or practice wisdom as a source of ideas to formulate scientific theories (Munro 1998; Bowers 1949). In order for this to occur however, social workers will need to make their practice wisdom, intuition, imagination and so forth explicit so that it is available for testing, evaluation, and sharing with the profession and clients (Munro 1998, p.194).

7.9. SUMMARY
Artistry has a place in all of social work; its methods, techniques, processes, evaluation, education, research and knowledge. It acknowledges the sensitive integration of thinking and feeling, intuition and intelligence. It allows social work to celebrate its diversity and the qualities that make for a competent social worker. The theories of feminism, postmodernity and critical theory as outlined in Chapter Three, support the development of such a concept, and allow for an exposition of the parallels between the two. A broad definition of art is used here, in that it is seen as a human process, that is very much a social product, universally accessible as both artist and audience, and as a medium of expression,
communication, and individual and social change. Social work is similarly a process, shaped by and shaping of its context, concerned with human themes and concepts, and as a medium of communication and change. Both make similar demands on the creative and imaginative capacities of the people who are part of the process – both practitioners and clients or audience alike. In Chapter Nine, the meaning of these parallels, including the qualities, for practice, ethics, knowledge and relationship are formulated.

What has been interesting in constructing this chapter has been the multiple use of terms such as conscious, explicit, critical, open, and public. Perhaps this is an implicit acknowledgement that such qualities are still considered part of the private nature of social work, and a recognition that to be useful and constructive – and ethical – they need to be part of public accounts of social work. The following chapter begins the discussion of the ‘public-isation’ of the concept of social work as an art, with an examination of the place of science in social work, the conceptions of the art-science relationship and the meaning those have had for the place of art.
CHAPTER EIGHT
ART AND SCIENCE
– CONCEPTUALISING A RELATIONSHIP

…there is no reason why different factions should not attempt to achieve some degree of rapprochement. After all, there is a common enemy, human misery, that all social workers should be set against.

Reid 2002, p.286

8.1. INTRODUCTION

I have demonstrated in preceding chapters how, as a profession committed to the empowerment of oppressed groups, social work has struggled with its epistemology including the role of scientific inquiry and artistic qualities. Whilst professions are customarily described as a combination of art and science where both approaches are needed and should not be separated – it is usually their balance and relationship that are problematised (Bartlett 1970; Rapoport 1968; Bitel 1999). Some scholars see that social work has transcended dualisms, including that of science and art. I will argue that their relationship remains hierarchical, while the nature of their inter-relationship is unarticulated.

This chapter examines the relationship of science and art in social work and various ways in which it may be conceptualised. It begins with an exploration of the place of art and science in the content analysis, interviews with practitioners and scholarly writing about social work. Following this, I provide four alternative ways in which the two approaches can be seen to relate to each other in practice. I have drawn these four forms of the relationship from the work on dualisms presented in Chapter Three, and the argument for the validity and currency of the particular relationship drawn from the content analysis (referred to hereafter as Chapter Five) and the interviews with practitioners (Chapter Six).

8.2. SOCIAL WORK AND ITS SCIENCE

Science and its associated technology have been steadily growing in importance throughout history and it has contributed much to the development, improvement and evaluation of social work theory, practice and ethics (Bridgstock et al 1998; Imre 1982; Gardner 1973).
The history and development of science has been well-documented in Howe (1994), Hudson (1997) and Applegate (2000), and the art and science of social work traced in Chapter Four. Science has a long history in social work across all its dimensions – knowledge, practice, practitioner qualities, ethics, functions and professional status. This leads to the primary consideration of science for this research – how it has been conceptualised within social work, why, and the meaning that has had for other ways of conceptualising social work. The science of social work highlights some of the reasons that a social work as art approach has been marginalised, as well as some of the creative tensions that exist between them, and allowing therefore for a beginning understanding of how they might be used together in practice. Therefore, I begin the discussion about the place of science with an examination of some of the reasons for a relationship between social work and science as well as some of the controversies related to this.

8.2.1. Why Science for Social Work?

The reasons that social work has tried to align itself with science are evident in the issues of identity discussed in Chapter Four, the data presented in Chapters Five and Six, and the professional literature. They are presented in an integrated form here. Reasons identified include:

(i) **Context:** Social work grew up in a time when it was widely believed that science could ‘cure all ills and lead to unlimited progress’ (Peile 1988, p.70; see Chapter Four). This was reinforced by demands for science in the institutions social work was a part of including academia, research institutions, funding agencies, bureaucracy, and government (Camilleri 1999; Gammack 1982; DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Healy 1996; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; see Chapters Five and Six). Science became a quest for certainty in the face of the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty with which social work deals (Martinez-Brawley 2001; Taylor & White 2001; Smith 2002; Goldstein 1992a; Walker 2001).

(ii) **Contributions to Knowledge and Practice:** Science has made great advances in understanding, improving, and controlling certain aspects of human and social life. It has provided social work with understanding, helping methods and techniques, and research advances as well as contributing to critical thinking
(Blythe 1991; Davies 1994; Bloom 1978; Wodarski & Bagarozzi 1979; Gibbs 1991; Haynes & White 1999; Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; see Chapters Five and Six). In another way, it has also served social work in addressing anxieties about being intellectually ‘soft’ (see Chapter Four). Many practitioners in the interviews conducted for this research identified science as being about knowledge, and indeed the terms science and knowledge are sometimes used interchangeably (Imre 1984a; Held 1980; see Chapter Six).

(iii) **Efficiency and Effectiveness:** By linking cause and effect, providing proof of change, outcomes, and treatment models that are tangible and practical science has assisted social work to demonstrate effectiveness, and therefore efficiency (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Imre 1982; Leonard 1975; Siegel 1984; Hudson 1997; Gammack 1982; Howe 1987; see Chapter Five).

(iv) **Ethics:** by providing strategies to avoid bias and vagueness, and transparent and defensible practice models and behaviour, science has enhanced accountability to clients and funding bodies (Gibbs 1991 p.48; Bloom 1978; Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Faul, McMurty & Hudson 2001; Hilariski & Wodarski 2001; Hudson 1997; Tesoriero 1999). The rigorousness and transparency of science can serve as a model for social work ethics also (see Chapter Six).

(v) **Science as Public:** The basis of scientific laws and theories are made up in public observations, statements and knowledge rather than the private, subjective experience of individual practitioners (Chalmers 1982; Munro 1998; Fee 1986; see Chapter Six).

(vi) **Power Issues:** It is not possible in the present environment to sustain and develop a profession based on intuition, related to a belief that there are no legitimate alternatives to empirical practice and research (Witkin 1991a; Jones 2000; Swigonski 1994; Peile 1993; see Chapter Five).

(vii) **Professional Issues:** Social work’s enthusiasm for social science can in part be related to its concern for professional status. Other views of social work – including humanism and art – are seen as part of the cause of public criticism of social work being vague and idealistic (see Chapters Four, Five and Six).
8.2.2. Controversies of Science for Social Work

The contribution of science to social work can be found above in the reasons why social work has looked to science for a comprehensive and relevant knowledge base, the clarity, transparency and effectiveness of different interventions, and so forth. Of significant concern to many authors however is that social work has explored too little the debate about the nature and status of the social sciences, the dominant ideologies underlying these and the resulting restrictions in thinking (see for example Hawkins 1996; Rees 1988; Bartlett 1970; Imre 1991; Peile 1993; Jordan 1984; Heineman 1981; England 1986a).

Critiques and controversies of science for social work include:

(i) **Critique by Oppressed Groups**: Many activists and theorists have argued that the dominant discourse of rational science has silenced the experiences of women, the poor, and ethnic groups – oppressed groups that social work has aligned and practiced with and for (Pease & Fook 1999; Leonard 1997; Seidman & Wagner 1992; Vigilante 1974; Karger 1983; see Chapter Three). Related to this is a critique of the separation of facts and values resulting in an apolitical representation of problems (Wasow 1992; Peile 1993; Siporin 1988; Imre 1991; Bowers 1949; Pease 1990; Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; Jones 1982; Rees 1988; Gorman 1993).

(ii) **Maintenance of Dualisms**: See below, and Chapter Three.

(iii) **Professional Power**: Scientific qualities of objectivity and value neutrality can hide the use of power, thereby using technical expertise to further oppress the powerless. The voices of the oppressed and marginalised are excluded therefore from professional discourse (see Chapters Five and Six; Taylor 1987; Trainor 1996; Ife 1995b; Seddon 1979; Schon 1983; Fook 1993; Andrews 1992; Jones 2000; Leonard 1997).

(iv) **Definitions of Knowledge**: Social work requires a broader definition of knowledge in terms of both content and process including social intelligence, practice wisdom, intuition, aesthetic intelligence, and client’s stories (see Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven; Irvine 1979; England 1986a; Imre 1982; Gelfand 1988; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Parton & Marshall 1998)

(v) **Reflective of Practice?** Science, it is argued, is not reflective of the entirety of practitioners, or clients, lived experience and some have questioned whether
positivist ideas have had much impact beyond academia to actually influence practice thinking (see Chapters Five and Six; Payne 1991; Fraser et al 1991; Karger 1983; Gorman 1993; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman-Pieper 2002; Sherman & Wenocur 1983; Jordan 1984; Beckerman 1978; Ife 1995b; Finestone 1962). For some of course this is a critique of social work – that it is not systematic, not guided by empirically tested knowledge and not empirically evaluated (see for example Rosen 2003; Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003).

(vi) **Reductionist:** A focus on science has reduced the scope, methods and possibilities of social work research, understanding and practice (Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Fraser et al 1991; Peile 1988; Briar 1968; Martinez-Brawley 2001; Palmer 2002; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman-Pieper 2002). Modern social science is a secular science; yet many cultures rely on and share dreams, prayers and numinous experiences that are important to the life of the family and community (Waldegrave 1997; Ife 1997; see responses from Practitioner Eight, Chapter Six). Positivist and empirical science have also reduced and simplified a range of complex variables in order to arrive at laws and generalisations (Damianakis 2001; Weick 2000). In the same way, it cannot provide adequate descriptions of qualities such as creativity, sensitivity, intuition, warmth, respect, or the process and nature of relationships – the artistry of social work (Bierter 1977; Lee 1982; Bartlett 1964; Howe 1987; Sammut 1999; Irving 1991; Wakefield & Kirk 1996; Adams 1998; Ward 1998).

(vii) **Critiques from Theory:** Refer to Chapter Three.

(viii) **Dehumanising:** Science misses the entirety of what it is to be human, the person in their system as well as the uniqueness of individuals. Any assumed similarity between studying physical, natural phenomena and the study of humans minimises the importance of meanings, cultures, values, interpretations and subjectivity unique to human social life (Goldstein 1990; Flyvbjerg 2001; Rice & Ezzy 1991; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Ife 1997; Carew 1987; Goldstein 1992a; Collingwood 1977; see Chapters Three, Five and Six). This was the main critique of a purely scientific approach to practice from the practitioners interviewed for this research.

(ix) **Success of Science for Social Work?** Human service professionals have not succeeded in solving the problems that they claimed they could (McDonald &
Jones 2000; Anderson & Weissman 1990; Kirk 1999; Parton 2000). Hopes that social scientists would make the intellectual discoveries for social workers have proven to be disappointing and illusory (Weissman 1990; Goldstein 1992a; Gellis & Reid 2004; Reid 2002). However, this is also taken to be a critique of social work, as a number of reviews of the profession’s research and literature over the years have essentially found it lacking in scientific merit (see for example an historical overview in Thyer 2001a).

(x) **Ethical Issues:** Rational science is seen by many as incompatible with the profession’s history and mission related to social justice, care and concern (Vass 1996; Pearson 1973; England 1986a; Peile 1993; Siporin 1988; Imre 1991; Goldstein 1990; Munro 1998; DeMaria 1981; Bowers 1949). Some have actually identified the use of scientific inquiry with political conservatism, constriction of resources and professional interests while others highlight the emancipatory goals of modernism and its science (Kilty & Meenaghan 1995; Gordon 1983; Witkin 1991b; Pease & Fook 1999). Yet others see that the only way social work can be accountable is through using and implementing empirical practice models (Myers & Thyer 1997; Faul, McMurty & Hudson 2001; see above). This of course assumes that accountability itself is an objective process of discovery and assumes that only empirical ways of knowing provide the above. Further, ethics in social work has focused on decision-making as a rational and logical process, rather than on the decision-maker and the inherent subjective and moral elements present (Abramson 1996; Webb 2001; see Chapter Seven).

(xi) **Issues to do with Particular Models of Science:** The hostility should not be to science, but to the discredited positivist account of it; for example, Munro (1998) is concerned that social work rejects science based on the limitations of this one model (see below).

The above critique from the social work literature, as well as that from the content analysis and interviews, highlights the central concern with seeing science as the only legitimate form of knowing and practising, rather than one among many. This retains an essentially dichotomous understanding that sees science and ‘other ways of knowing’ as incompatible and mutually exclusive. It is now this place of science that I conceptualise.
8.3. THE PLACE OF SCIENCE

The place of science in social work is analysed here. I have already outlined the history of science for social work (Chapter Four) and the broader development of science through tracing the influence of modernist and postmodernist thought in the social sciences (Chapter Three). Here I discuss the place of science as presented in the content analysis, as discussed by practitioners, and as presented in the social work literature.

8.3.1. From the Content Analysis

All of the texts referred to science in some way and the influence of science on social work at varying levels. In only three of the fourteen texts analysed was science a significant theme. It is the nature of the treatment of science that is important: it was presented as a public way of knowing, and models for analysis (and critique) are readily available.

In particular, science could be seen in many of the public institutions and manifestations of social work. This included in the welfare state and service delivery, the construction of social problems and solutions, in defining clients and other social identities, and in the dominant and privileged ways of knowing in the profession.

Models of science were readily identified within the texts, particularly those drawn from the modernist tradition. All questioned what is left out of such models of knowledge, in particular the voices of the powerless and oppressed. In this way, science and power were linked. Other critiques were similar to those outlined above, with positivist and empirical models of science critiqued as dehumanising, individualised and incompatible with social work’s values. Many drew on contemporary, critical social science theories, particularly postmodern, feminist and critical theories.

In other texts empiricism was linked to effective practice. Empirical or evidence-based practice, as well as providing for efficiency, could also provide practitioners with clear and certain ways of working. In particular, it could be of use when working with other professions. The qualification was made however, that the use of such strategies must be
human and flexible. Others also maintained connections between modernism – and particularly its emancipatory ideals – and other ways of knowing.

Highlighted also were some of the challenges of conceptualising knowledge and practice outside of the scientific approach. In particular, humanist and client-centred approaches were seen as vague and idealistic, and not providing frameworks for practice. In Text Two, it was indicated that some of the elements of humanism did not need to be made explicit, as they ‘just exist’ (p.196).

Many of the concepts identified with science – such as rationality, objectivity, diagnosis and evidence – were evaluated negatively or with qualifications in the texts. The reasons for a negative evaluation had similar themes in that they were seen as deterministic, dehumanising and having a false neutrality. Reasons for a qualified evaluation related to their use or place in particular methods or strategies of social work, and a questioning of what is left out. Further, such approaches or qualities were seen as useful – but incomplete. Many made the point that there were more layers and complexities to the understandings required for social work in addition to these scientific ones. However, connections were also made between these qualities and ethical ways of being, namely in avoiding bias and ensuring consistency and therefore justice.

8.3.2. From the Interviews

As outlined in Chapter Six, nearly all of the practitioners interviewed identified science with knowledge. Further, some saw that it was a public knowledge as opposed to practitioners’ own private understandings. Five also identified science with ethics, namely in being rigorous and critical. It needs to be noted further that all identified the centrality of knowledge and ethics to social work – and therefore of science also.

Many highlighted the complexities of a scientific approach to social work. All saw a place for science, but that it was not all there was for social work knowledge, ethics and practice (and nor was art, see below). Most saw that there are multiple ways of knowing for social work – and science is one of these.
The primary critique of science for social work was seeing it as the only way of knowing, or its use or application. In particular, practitioners were concerned that client’s voices could be left out of such understandings. Further, practitioners thought that relationships of cause and effect, prediction and generalisations were not readily available for the kinds of issues that social work deals with. Similarly to the content analysis, although not articulated by practitioners, this is a critique of particular models of science.

Others saw that social work did not make good or critical use of the scientific knowledge available to it, and that this was a reasonable source of criticism of social workers. One of the concerns of this was that social work could not then be a part of shaping science either.

Practitioners saw science then as providing for many public aspects of social work – transparency, evaluation, and a knowledge base. This public aspect is reflected in the reasons practitioners gave for a role for science in social work; that it is part of the context, for professional status, in dealing with other professionals and ethical reasons of being accountable to others and explaining practice. Most related the need for science to knowledge however, and three particularly pointed out the public nature of this knowledge.

8.3.3. From the Literature

Major classical figures including Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Spencer, and Weber promoted the privileging of science for its quest for intellectual unity and its beneficial practical role (Seidman & Wagner 1992). Science has been described as the ‘modern religion’ (Chalmers 1982, p.xvii) with a lot of our creative, intellectual and resource energies committed to its development. Science has a deep cultural significance and is held in high regard. It has a role in explaining and controlling events, affecting our views of ourselves and our place in the universe. Further, our social, political and economic institutions are embedded in scientism (Chalmers 1982; Seidman & Wagner 1992; Sutherland 1986; Bridgstock et al 1998; Imre 1982; Leonard 1975; Fee 1986; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Ife 1997; Flyvbjerg 2001; see below). In Chapter Five for example I have already outlined how some authors observed how notions of objectivity and rationality have informed recent debates about the welfare state – hallmarks of a preoccupation with science and its privileged place in policy.
As outlined in Chapter Three, discourse analysis has demonstrated how particular ways of knowing can come to be seen as the only basis for choosing, utilising and evaluating a theory or an intervention strategy. Dominant discourses involve processes of domination, as the gatekeepers of what matters and what aspects of life should be acknowledged (Pease & Fook 1999; Imre 1982; Leonard 1997). In Chapter Five, those authors who discussed modernism and models of science all point to what and whose knowledge was left out of such accounts. Yet at the same time, I observed that while authors provided a critique of particular models of science, they did not offer detailed and particular alternative methods for evaluating and demonstrating effectiveness.

Some authors have argued that the ideal of modern rational science has come close to being the only legitimate view of what constitutes good science, such that all intellectual activities have to legitimate themselves in terms of this Enlightenment ideal (Flyvbjerg 2001). Truth, rationality and instrumental science have come to be seen as intrinsically good, and a hallmark of validity – and as mutually exclusive. Science became not one way of knowing but the way of knowing (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Seidman & Wagner 1992). Thinking about alternative positions and challenging rational science becomes difficult (Vigilante 1974; Chalmers 1982; Ife 1997; Imre 1982; Brook 1992; Irving 1991; Peile 1993; Payne 1991). While many now believe that alternatives to instrumental rationalism are needed their precise content and form remain vague and beyond our current vision (Flyvbjerg 2001) and little social work research explicitly using these alternative approaches has been produced (Reid 2002). Yet interest in the articulation of alternative paradigms including those such as naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, ethnomethodology, critical theory and postmodernity has grown in recent years (Ife 1995b; Camilleri 1999; Gorman 1993). Part of the challenge is seeing science as only one of many stories or explanations, with no particular privilege (Irving 1999).

In social work there has been a consistent emphasis on a commitment to the value of science (see Chapter Four). Yet, social work has remained at the edges of mainstream scientific discourse also (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Applegate 2000). This is due in part to the complexities of science, and the complexities of social work. The history of social work theory is the history of a struggle to develop a more scientifically defensible system of thought, a technology for practice, and professional status (see Chapter Four). In
Chapter Six, practitioners indicated that this struggle is still meaningful for them in terms of trying to articulate and develop their practice. The conceptualisations of science most significantly debated in the social work literature derive most directly from the logical empiricist philosophy of science (Heineman 1981; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Sherman & Wenocur 1983; DeMaria 1981; Fraser et al 1991; Rojek, Peacock & Collins 1988; Ife 1997; see Chapter Four). This is reflected in Chapter Five where the models of science most often discussed – and critiqued – were those of positivism and empiricism. It takes place in a broader debate around the relationship between the natural and social sciences, the place of and models of science in different and contemporary paradigms, and a struggle to reclaim appropriated spaces and suppressed voices (Papell & Skolink 1992; Binns 1991; Peile 1993; Flyvbjerg 2001). Social work finds itself debating within the general confines of scientific wisdom, yet this is only one of the significant intellectual traditions in social work (England 1986a).

Scientific technology has and can be useful in the definition, development and evaluation of social work practice and knowledge (DeMaria 1981; England 1986a; Imre 1984a; Siporin 1988; Payne 1991; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998). Practitioners interviewed, rather than authors in the content analysis, outlined the positive role of science in research, knowledge development, and methods of evaluation and analysis. Further, science has assisted social work to establish its place in universities, to obtain professional status and has established clear, public and accountable processes that have enabled the welfare state to function (Austin 1983; Walker 1994; Siporin 1985; see Chapter Four). Social workers have been urged to not just be consumers of science, but to use scientific standards to evaluate and develop their own practice as well as to stimulate their thinking (Munro 1998; Camilleri 1996).

**8.3.4. Bringing it All Together**

The complexities and issues surrounding science for social work, including different models of science and their meaning for how social work knowledge and practice are constructed, are evident in all three readings of social work outlined above. Several themes can be identified regarding science and social work:
(i) an identification between science and ‘public’ aspects of social work including the welfare state, defining social identities, and in the privileged ways of knowing in the profession. Further, is a connection between science and social and political spheres.

(ii) the identification of science with knowledge.

(iii) the availability of models of science. This has several meanings; it is more available for discussion, critique and to provide guidelines for practice. It also has a theoretical and intellectual context.

(iv) the primary critique of science is when it is seen as the only way of knowing. Particular models of science, as well as the privileging of rational science (see Chapter Three) promote this position. Of particular concern is that clients’ voices are left out of rational scientific knowledge.

(v) related to this is concern regarding the creation of ‘other’ ways of knowing as a generalised category, and the difficulties of articulating alternatives are acknowledged.

(vi) one of the primary absences from science is a certain ‘human-ness’. This same human-ness is seen as being the core to social work.

(vii) a significant need is seen to be for social work to engage with science in a more critical and reflective manner.

As noted in the literature however a struggle with the complexities of science and its meaning of practice is not just the province of social workers. This reinforces the need however for a critical engagement of social work with science. I divert slightly at this point therefore to consider how the ways in which science is conceptualised informs the nature of the debate regarding the place of science and art in social work.

8.3.5. A Note about Models of Science.

As identified by some practitioners, one of the difficulties in considering the relationship of art and science relates to what definitions or models of science are being discussed. Some scholars who argue for a scientific approach to social work believe that their critics misunderstand the nature of science or critique old models of science that are no longer advocated for at any rate (see for example Thyer 2001b; Reid 2002; Gambrill 1999;
Bolland & Atherton 2002). It is a critique of these models and their application rather than science per se for social work that is required. This was indeed what occurred in the texts used for the content analysis. Even the dichotomous understanding of the relationship between science and art belongs to a particular model and paradigm of science.

Many authors see social work’s acceptance of rational science as being an uncritical one, with its concepts and their meaning for the profession and its client’s essentially unexamined (Witkin 1991a; Smith 2002; Imre 1991; Peile 1993; Siporin 1988; England 1986a; Webb 2001; Wasow 1992; Martinez-Brawley 2001). This requires what Imre (1984a) calls an awakening out of acceptance. A critical examination involving questioning and critical reflection reveals the contradictions, complexities and incompleteness in an acceptance of rational scientific ideology (see above). Yet social work has avoided exploring the concepts of social work as an art further also, or has retreated into ‘scientist-practitioner’ entreaties (Cheers 1987, p.51; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Karger 1983; England 1986a; Goldstein 1990).

Social workers should and could not eschew science in all its forms but rather should utilise it critically and reflectively and from within the strong ethical and philosophical base informing social work. For many practitioners in Chapter Six, this meant clients informing their use of and understandings from scientific knowledge. A critical position would allow the profession, as Practitioner Six pointed out, to play an active role in the development and use of scientific knowledge and principles. Further, the philosophy and ethics of science – transparency, discussible, communicable, public, rigorous, critical, sceptical – can contribute much to the development of the art of social work (Falck 1970; Munro 1998; Peile 1988). Practitioners also saw that it was these ethics of science that meant it was important to social work. England (1986a), a significant contributor to models of social work as an art, sees that the social sciences will inform the social workers schemata, offering us tools that assist us to see, evaluate and respond.

I argue that social work, of all professions, with its concern for human well-being and social justice, should move beyond empiricism to adopt a more contemporary view of what is a complex, human world. Reflexive ways of knowing are being discussed more often in the social science literature (Payne 1996). The ‘complexity’ sciences (Ramsay 2003),
reflexivity, the wisdom of clients, and ‘other ways of knowing’ are being further developed and articulated, while the meaning of postmodernism and critical theory for social work are also being considered. Social work therefore is in a position to rethink its exhortations to science including the place of – the privileging of – rational science as the only way of knowing.

8.4. THE STATE OF THE ART

8.4.1. From the Content Analysis

Only half of the texts analysed in Chapter Five discussed the concept of social work as an art. The historical prevalence of art in social work was noted. The approach was discussed as being concerned with meaning, relationship and communication, stemming from humanism. Social work as an art as an approach to practice was therefore not explicated by any of the authors. In two texts art was discussed within the context of postmodern understandings of social work, with essentially a positive evaluation of art as the texts were advocating for postmodern understandings. As noted previously one author in Text Fourteen discussed art and science as possibly two different voices in social work, the male and female, or perhaps as a transformation between its modernist origins and postmodern context. Two other texts briefly referred to the work of others in an overview of social work.

There were questions raised however about what meaning it could have for practice, as the model did not provide clear practice guidelines. Art as an approach to practice was also seen as being essentially atheoretical, further evidenced by the fact that the qualities were not linked to any model, including one of art.

Primarily a positive or qualified evaluation was given to the qualities of social work as an art assessed in Chapter Five. Qualified evaluations were given as the quality was presented as belonging to particular strategies rather than part of all practice. However, in none of the texts were qualities linked to a social work as art approach. I discuss the particular roles of these in practice in the following chapter, what needs noting here is that they were not linked to a particular approach. Rather, they were ‘stand alone’ qualities with no theoretical or practice context.
8.4.2. From the Interviews

There were four distinct strands in practitioners’ perceptions of whether social work was an art; for three it definitely was, three had not considered their practice as art before, for three art was related to particular aspects of practice, while three saw it in relationship to science. Practitioners gave a clearer definition of science than for art, although there were themes in their definitions of the art of social work as being about qualities of the practitioner, and its human-ness in particular.

The parallels between social work and art identified by practitioners highlight some of its private and personal aspects. One significant parallel was in qualities of the practitioner; these by definition belong to the individual although there is of course scope for them to be discussed and developed. Similarly, one of two primary reasons for a relationship between social work and art was the role of use of self. The human-ness of social work and art was another parallel in particular related to being about relationship and communication, being personal, and related to the areas social work is involved in. The latter was a reason for a connection between art and social work also.

There were a variety of critiques of social work as an art, the primary one being that it was atheoretical, and similarly, personal and subjective. One thought that it was not well-defined as a model of practice, while as indicated above three had not considered it as a way of looking at their practice before.

One of the primary barriers practitioners saw to social work being considered an art was a fear of it not being accepted – this was a fear of presenting it in the public sphere of practice. The main barrier however was that art is a personal and individual practice. Some viewed this as positive, that it would lose something if translated to the public sphere. Others felt that this indicated a need for discussion and dialogue about the approach.

8.4.3. From the Literature

Emphasising the humanity and artistry of social work has become a counter-position; social work however has always been committed to those who are at the margins, to those whose very identity stands in contrast to nineteenth-century positivism (Martinez-Brawley &
Zorita 1998; Payne 1991; see Chapter Seven). England (1986a) sees that art is at once
central and marginal; central because accounts of social work have consistently recognised
its importance and marginal because despite this recognition it is generally seen as
inaccessible to analysis, exploration or proper discussion. This makes it impossible to
develop any proper critical procedures and therefore to distinguish competent, genuinely
helpful practice (Imre 1982). For the art of social work to be accountable and accounted
for, it requires further explication.

The first point of interest when examining the representation of social work as an art in the
literature is the actual lack of such references. While discussions of the art of practice have
occurred throughout social work’s history, the approach has been absent from the literature
since the 1980s. While evident in the literature in that decade and earlier such debates and
discussions have diminished in the 1990s and have not been taken up since (see Chapter
Four). The artistic dimensions of social work have been highlighted or downplayed
depending on the spirit of the times, and according to some authors tend to be seen as
related to social work’s ambitions for status and esteem among other professions and within
universities (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Palmer 2002).

The literature search undertaken as part of this research and articles reviewed for previous
research undertaken by the author examining social work as art contained certain common
themes: the inadequacy of a scientific approach to social work, the relationship between
science and art in social work, and the artistic elements in social work practice and theory.
Very little then is written purely examining the concept of social work as an art as a
framework for practice. The literature to date around social work as an art therefore has
been limited in volume, scope and comprehensiveness.

It is seen that the qualities of art – imagination, creativity and intuitive insight – have little
to do with knowledge, and are even portrayed as sources of irrationality (Imre 1982;
Wasow 1992; see below). Indeed social work as an art has been accused of being anti-
intellectual and atheoretical and has not favoured the systematic development of knowledge
(Howe 1987; Howard, McMillen & Pollio 2003). Social workers have been criticised in
the literature for having lagged behind other professions in using knowledge from research,
allowing instead intuition, experience, values and client self-direction to be a substitute
(Rothman & Ayala 1990; Rosen 2003; Mullen 1992). Indeed, some writers view the artistic components of social work as representing a temporary state of being until they can become truly scientific (Imre 1982; Rapoport 1968). Practitioner Four saw this to be the case, optimistic that science would eventually help social work to develop and clarify its ‘intangibles’. Within this framework, artistry is regarded as a professional weakness.

Those who critique an approach to social work as an art point out its current status, namely that it is undeveloped and unarticulated, is private and individual rather than public and therefore not generalisable, accountable, ethical, professional, open, nor accessible (Howe 1987; Irvine 1979; Bartlett 1970; Wodarski & Bagarozzi 1979; Watt 1991; Eaton 1958). The few writers who have articulated a move away from positivism in social work do not form a distinctive movement and offer more a ‘pot-shot’ strategy than a deliberate concerted attack, meaning there has not been any semblance of a debate (Karger 1983, p.201; Clark & Asquith 1985; Schuerman 1982). In Chapter Five for example art was seen as one of a number of responses to modernist and positivist accounts of social work, rather than an articulated model on its own.

A further critique of the current literature and research lies in its failure to provide practitioners with the means to translate descriptions and analyses of social work as an art into practice principles or guidelines (Ife 1997; Cheers 1987; Howe 1987). Cheers (1987, pp.51-2) for example in a review of Hugh England’s book states that beyond sensitising readers to these processes, he does not make them concrete or detailed. He felt most practitioners would feel frustrated that they have not been given more to take to work with them despite the initial joy of discovering an analysis that gives academic permission for their ‘real’ work. Howe (1987, p.117) outlines that while the aim is quite distinct (helping the client realise his experience and understand its meaning) there is no clear sequence of problem, assessment and method (see also Chapter Five). In this way, it has also failed to provide practitioners with the means to place this analysis into the public arena.

The art of social work has not been made the subject of serious inquiry and this minimisation reinforces the ever-present tendency to mystify the art of practice. Further, in lacking an alternative methodology the primacy and tenacity of rational science itself is implicitly acknowledged.
In Chapter Five I highlighted how the work of others – and primarily Hugh England’s 1986 work – was referenced rather than any new or critical work being offered. The consequences of this ‘mysterious’ status are outlined in Chapter Nine.

The most compelling critique therefore of social work as an art is that it does not constitute of model of practice or analysis, is individualised, atheoretical and therefore unethical. The resulting mysteriousness of the art perpetuates the dichotomy, creating a misleading impression that practitioners must choose between one or the other (Schon 1983). Howe (1987) feels however that we should not be surprised that written accounts of social work as an art fail to do justice to the full intensity, complexity and subtlety that characterises work of this kind at its best. Similarly, some of the practitioners interviewed felt that the art of practice might lose some of what made it unique if it were made public.

8.4.4. Bringing it All Together

Several themes can be identified from the three readings of social work regarding its art. They are compared where relevant to those identified in the discussion of the place of science:

(i) while various models of science were discussed this was not so for social work as an art; it has not and is not formulated as a model for practice in the same ways as science. This is explicit and implicit; the latter in the lack of theoretical context given to the qualities of social work as an art.

(ii) questions remain about the meaning of the art approach for practice. This is to do with the absence of a model or practice guidelines, and difficulties in articulating it. The content analysis and practitioners interviewed do provide some idea of areas where the art of social work and its qualities can be used, and conceptualise therefore some beginning practice principles. That is the topic of the next chapter.

(iii) related to the above, art is seen as a personal and individual practice. This is given both a positive and negative evaluation. Positively, this is seen as the uniqueness and special-ness of this position. The negative however are the consequences of that – that it remains submerged in practice and unaccountable in that way.

(iv) art is portrayed as a response to science. While this may be a valid counter-position, it is not a separate, independent identity for art.
an identification between art and humanism. An absence of humanity is a critique of science, and is therefore one reason for a view that the two are necessary for good practice.

an identification in the interviews and the literature of art with certain qualities of the practitioner. The qualities of art were not seen as necessary for all practice – and indeed neither were the qualities of science.

An association of art with the private sphere and science with the public is evident therefore. This on its own is not necessarily problematic, however one of the reasons for this association is the lack of models and practice guidelines for social work as an art. I consider this in the following chapter. Having discussed the relative position of art and science in social work as separate approaches, I now consider the nature of their relationship – and what these different associations mean for how this relationship is conceptualised.

8.5. CONCEPTUALISING THE RELATIONSHIP

As stated earlier, the structure of this section draws from the work on dualisms in Chapter Three. I present any analysis from the authors and practitioners in Chapters Five and Six on each conceptualisation of the relationship between science and art. In this way, the representation and meaning of each conceptualisation by the authors and practitioners respectively can be determined. For example, how do practitioners understand and manage the dualism of art-science in their practice?

As already discussed in Chapter Three there are three ways of conceptualising the relationship between seeming opposites such as art and science. These are as:

- Binary opposites
- Parallel processes
- Complementary processes

In the following discussion I give a brief overview of the three ways of conceptualising each process for art and science, including whether and how authors and practitioners viewed them in such ways. Postmodern and critical theories discuss the possibility of a dialectical relationship between dualisms; the fourth and final section explores the
possibility of this from the point of view of the content analysis texts, authors and practitioners when considering the relationship between art and science.

8.5.1. The Constructs as Binary Opposites

8.5.1.1. The Nature of this Relationship
The binary understanding of art and science sees them as fundamentally different and opposed. Professional practice based on Cartesian rational science rests on institutional and conceptual dichotomies between not only art and science, but theory and practice, value and fact, care and control, subjective and objective, knowing and doing, person and environment, and so forth (Imre 1991; Kuhn 1969; Gardner 1973; Saleeby 1989; Powell 2003a; Walter 2003). Art is given the status of other, a broad, non-defined term as one of the systems of thought subjugated to the dominant paradigm (Klein & Bloom 1995; Payne 1991; Hoffie 1991; Nelson-Reed & Peebles-Wilkins 1991; Collingwood 1977; Martinez-Brawley 1999; see Chapter Three). The implication is that only the scientific approach is rational and any other way of thinking represents the abandonment of reason, and a descent into pure intuition, irrationality, mindlessness and so forth (Schon 1983; Jones 1982; Imre 1982; Edwards 1986; Hilarski & Wodarski 2001; see above). It becomes difficult to even imagine that there might be other valuable, yet different, means for understanding and thinking as any differing analysis is considered prima facie in error (Imre 1984a, p.42; Pease & Fook 1999; Edwards 1986; Saleeby 1989; Witkin 1991a; Hoffie 1991; Hudson 1982).

8.5.1.2. From the Content Analysis
Of the two texts in Chapter Five that discussed the art-science relationship, both noted that social work had moved beyond such dualistic understandings. However, two other texts, which discussed ways of categorising social work theory, compared and contrasted scientific with ‘other’ ways of knowing. In all texts it was identified that social work required a diverse knowledge base, with many using the private-political link as a major tool of analysis. Many of the remaining texts provided an analysis within a postmodern framework, which by its very nature entails a deconstruction of dualisms. Therefore, although they did not explicitly address the art-science binary, they move beyond dualistic understandings. One of the two texts in which the art-science relationship is discussed
talked about the masculine and feminine voices of social work as being those of science and art respectively; it was seen that they have a different status in that empiricism remains the tradition of social work research.

8.5.1.3. From the Interviews
All but one of the practitioners did not understand or experience science and art as binary opposites. Some found it difficult to even discuss the two separately. All the practitioners identified science with knowledge, yet also identified a range of other ways of knowing they accessed including clients and practice experience. Practitioners did however provide some juxtapositions, although they did not identify these themselves. These included: art being private and individual, science as public and collective; and science as knowing and art as doing.

8.5.1.4. From the Literature
Much of the social work literature discusses the result of the dichotomisation of art and science. Art as a form of practice has consistently been defined through the perceptions and meanings of the more dominant partner of science, somewhat ‘co-dependent’ on the good and bad habits of science (McNiff 1998, p.18), while social work has been reluctant to challenge this dominant paradigm in the public arena (Ife 1995b; DeMaria 1981; Saleeby 1979; Davies 1981; Imre 1990b; Goldstein 1990). Positivists would see such a debate as simply one about evidence and method; however, I take a postmodern view that such debates are political struggles over meaning (see Chapter Three).

As I posed in Chapter Three, do the masculine-feminine cultures in social work explain the status of the science-art continuum? The separation of art and science in social work has a gender-related history in Western culture. Social work has traditionally been considered a women’s profession and thus carries the associated stigma of low status and limited access to power (see Chapter Three). As discussed in Chapter Three this may provide some explanation as to why social work sought a scientific knowledge base and dissociated itself from its artistic traditions. However, as Walker (1994, p.511) points out to imply that women generally cannot – and need not – be scientifically aware is to put down their very real reasoning powers. Similarly, many practitioners thought social work could not afford – as a profession accountable to a variety of stakeholders – to abandon science.
As Goldstein (1990, p.33) points out a peculiar paradox has been persistent over time in that in adopting a scientific character social work has not entirely discarded its humanistic and social ideals. At the same time, we can recognise that the articulation of difference need not be an attempt to annihilate, discredit, or invalidate (Adams 1991). Social workers need to consider a range of knowledge bases to capture the uniqueness, diversity and complexity of the issues and clients populations they work with (DePoy, Hartman & Haslett 1999; Imre 1982; Elliot 2000; Schon 1983; see Chapter Four). Much social work literature identifies and accepts other kinds of knowing, contrary to the scientific viewpoint (Payne 1996).

8.5.1.6. Conclusion
The dichotomisation of art and science has proven itself artificial and indeed misleading; it is not how practitioners understand nor manage their practice. Dualisms are a modernist form of categorisation that have been soundly deconstructed by postmodernism, critical theory and feminist thought as highlighted by the texts in Chapter Five (see also Chapter Three). Further, the sharp line between empirical and artistic questions disables the study of their relationship, and suggests that in trying to build the art necessarily means a discounting of the scientific – which is not the aim here.

8.5.2. As Parallels
8.5.2.1. The Nature of this Relationship
Despite all their precious and inerasable distinctions, there exist close and persistent parallels in science and art (Kuhn 1969; Kaplan 1968; Wilson 1964; Gardner 1973). They draw on many of the same qualities of the human mind including imagination, creativity, intuition and make use of knowledge and skill in their execution and development (Imre 1982). Creativity is one of the most significant parallels between science and art as both rely on innovation and diffusion (Dornbusch 1964; Wilson 1964; Kaplan 1968; Peile 1988). Both artists and scientists try to create order out of the seemingly random and diverse experiences of the world. They are concerned with the discovery, exploration, growth and development of human life and the world (Kaminsky 1985; Gardner 1973; Kuhn 1969; Gibbs 1991). There is debate however about what their essential differences are – their
products, their relationship with the public, their raw materials, their relationship to subjectivity and so forth.

8.5.2.2. From the Content Analysis
As noted above, only two of fourteen texts discussed the art-science relationship and did not discuss any parallels between them.

8.5.2.3. From the Interviews
One practitioner identified a commonality between science and art in social work: Practitioner Twelve thought that both were elitist and expert, and in that way removed from the client’s reality. For her the client’s knowledge and interpretation were of primary importance.

8.5.2.4. From the Literature
The primary parallel identified in the social work literature between science and art is in their use of similar qualities, particularly creativity (see for example Imre 1982; Peile 1988; Weissman 1990). It is interesting to note that the authors that do discuss the parallels are writing primarily about social work as an art.

8.5.2.5. Conclusion
The idea of science and art in parallel is not evident in the literature, interviews, or content analysis. Further, the problem with such a conceptualisation is that while it acknowledges the commonalities, they are still maintained as separate entities. Being parallel does not mean there is no allocation of characteristics. It is also an old argument (as noted by the age of the references) that does not take into account the possibility of a rich interrelated position that postmodernism and critical theory develop.

8.5.3. Complementary
8.5.3.1. The Nature of this Relationship
Social work can be considered partly an art and partly a science (Nystul 1993; Imre 1982). Different roles and qualities are still prescribed to both; however, they are seen to complement rather than annihilate one another. The development of theory is a particular
process where art and science can have complementary roles. Imagination and intuition can be a source of ideas and making connections, science the verification and expression of those (Henri 1930; Gardner 1973; May 1989; Gustafson 1982; Beckerman 1978). Practitioners clearly indicated that imagination for them was a form of idea and image generation from which to work and analyse from. Sheppard (1995) sees therefore that the proclaimed gap between social science and social work is incorrect; the linking factor is in fact the common methodology for understanding and reflecting upon situations which allows practitioners to accumulate practice wisdom. Quantitative and qualitative research are needed to arrive at different kinds of truths related to different kinds of tasks, problems and situations and therefore provide different sources of understanding (Siporin 1985; Ivanoff, Blythe & Briar 1987; Flyvbjerg 2001; Ife 1997; Papell & Skolink 1992). Usually science is seen to explore and access the objective outer world of nature and human behaviour, art the inner world of feeling, self and experience (Carroll 1999, p.66; Manfredi 1982).

8.5.3.2. From the Content Analysis
None of the content analysis texts discuss this conceptualisation of the art-science relationship – or indeed of other dualities in social work.

8.5.3.3. From the Interviews
Some practitioners did assign complementary roles to science and art, identifying the science with knowledge and the art with its application. Yet, they also made the point that this was not to understand or practice them as separate, but rather as an integrated part of a whole. Some of the reasons for art in social work were to complement what science could not provide, namely complex understandings related to the human and complex nature of the areas social work is involved in.

8.5.3.4. From the Literature
Some writers prescribe particular roles to art and science in social work; usually the scientific aspect being how knowledge is arrived at, the artistic how that is then adapted and applied (Munro 1998; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; England 1986a; Siporin 1985; Schon 1983; Bowers 1949; Macdonald 1960; Rapoport 1968). Siporin (1985, p.206) for example would like it to be a scientific art:
In general, science tells us what to know, and art tells us what and how to do. Neither social work as a whole, nor clinical social work in particular, can be a science. It is and can be a better scientific art, based on valid data, with theories, principles, and techniques that are tested and verified in systematic and public ways. England (1986a) is concerned however that the idea of an artistic science actually proposes a residual role for art as the skill which social workers will use in the application of systematic, scientific formulae, and as such, the art does not require attention.

8.5.3.5. Conclusion
An understanding of art and science as complementary avoids the excesses of both. Artistry does not negate the necessary rigours of scientific thinking, nor does science negate the humanism and subjectivity of the art of social work (Goldstein 1999). They both stand as but one strand in a complex pattern of human interactions, and that the social worker has to reach this decision or recommendation in the light of all the evidence available (Davies 1981, p.190; England 1986a). A complementary relationship however is still to understand them as fundamentally different and separate.

8.5.4. Synthesis
8.5.4.1. The Nature of this Relationship
As discussed above, an artificial dichotomy has come to exist between the scientist and the artist in social work. What needs exploring is the possibility of reconciling these two ‘opposites’ in a more dialectical understanding of the relationship between the ideas (Leonard 1997). Indeed, Powell (2003a, p.459) argues that for the profession to evolve in a healthy way, it needs to become whole instead of divided, to learn to meld art and science (my emphasis). Art and science still have roles that are complementary or informing but there is no hierarchy or privileging and both change and alter one another in a dynamic and interactive relationship, which always involves process. The complex interactive patterns are held in a holistic view in an invitation to consider all aspects of our practice (Vass 1996; Witkin 1991a; Walker 2001; Ramsay 2003; Powell 2003b; my emphasis). However, it is an approach that requires a critical and reflective style to hold the tensions and stabilities between the various types of knowledge and practices (Narhi 2002). This generates two other questions: is considering the art and science of social work actually about reconsidering dualisms in social work, and what does this synthesis look like?
8.5.4.2. From the Content Analysis

In Chapter Five, in one of two texts in which the art-science relationship is discussed, it was suggested that social work goes beyond such dualisms and ‘lies in a transcendent position’ (Text Four). While most of the others do not address the particular dualism of science-art, most do discuss the link between the private-political. In this way, they provide for a reading of how dualisms are managed in social work. They all emphasise that the linking and interaction of the private-political is what defines social work.

8.5.4.3. From the Interviews

Although most practitioners saw that the art and science of social work were integrated in some way, the nature of this relationship varied. What is important to this discussion is that it was difficult for most practitioners to consider them separately. Most identified art and science as two of the many ways of knowing needed for social work. In particular, they saw it as our responsibility to bring whatever knowledge available to us to enable us to understand a problem or situation. For all, finding some kind of balance was important. Such an understanding also highlights that art and science – however their relationship is conceptualised – will not necessarily provide for a full account of social work either.

8.5.4.4. From the Literature

The challenge of good social work is to integrate the art and science of human beings and human systems; this is seen to simply reflect the inextricable intertwining of thinking and feeling in human life itself (Imre 1982; Goldstein 1999; Elliot 2000). Science and art may be viewed as two dimensions in social work, in a relationship where both inform one another while still maintaining a creative tension between them (Ife 1997; Clark & Asquith 1985; Elliot 2000; see Chapter Three). Indeed in many fields the boundaries between art and science are being blurred (Hartman 1990). The boundaries of our profession are wide and deep and no one way of knowing can encompass this vast and varied territory; social work therefore has no choice but to explore and recognise this duality and to use any or all perspectives which can offer analysis and access to it (England 1986a; Hartman 1994; Kaminsky 1985). As Weick (2000) points out women have always been able to manage diverse and complex tasks, roles and knowledges. Walter (2003) describes social work as
an improvisational performance in the previously unrecognised third space between traditional categories such as art and science:

Characterised by openness and flexibility, the third space is one that defies the very categories it references....dissolves the dichotomies that conceal the borderlands and obscure the third space....art and science bleed into each other, begin to be merged, stretched, and reshaped, opening a space of improvisation. (Walter 2003, p.319).

Such a position is an acknowledgement that science does not have a monopoly on reasoned argument, nor art one on expression, creativity and humanism (Payne 1996; Pearson 1973). Being scientific does not necessarily entail a rejection of ambiguity and uncertainty (Munro 1998; Payne 1996). Intelligent, compassionate, innovative, and informed practice is the result of the synthesis of the art and science. Calling on art and science widens both our methods of intervention as well as more systemic and ultimately professional understanding. Without art, the science is of little value in social work practice. However, without the science, the art is of limited effectiveness (Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991). This allows the linking between the private and public knowledge of the worker, as outlined by Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi (1991, p.3):

The art and science possessed by the individual social worker blend in daily practice. The talents, practice wisdom and style of the individual social worker, as well as the specialised professional knowledge and a generally accepted set of values and ethical behaviours, should guide the thoughts and actions of the social worker.

8.5.5.5. Conclusion

I do not wish to fall into the trap that Lane (1999) warns of for the postmodernist – the search for a unitary definition and the reduction under one label of complex clusters of thought. Art and science are complex as is their relationship and role in social work and I am not going to solve complex conceptual problems that philosophers and theorists have been pondering for centuries! The above readings of social work however highlight that the dualistic understanding of science and art is not relevant to how practitioners manage or understand their practice. Nor are science and art all that there is to social work; they but two colours in a ‘coat of many colours’ (Practitioner Eight). However, the idea of synthesis highlights that a call to develop the art of social work is not about adopting an anti-scientific solution – this would be to continue to fall in the trap of dualistic thinking.

Practitioners and researchers can be accountable for practice in valid scientific and non-
scientific ways so as not to lead to a merely emotional appreciation of practice or complete subjectivity and uncritical reliance on intuition (Siporin 1979; England 1986a). The particular example of knowledge in social work – which has been a significant point of difference in how science and art are viewed – highlights how synthesis can occur.

8.6. SUMMARY: ESTABLISHING THE SYNTHESIS

I have considered here four ways of considering the relationship in social work between science and art. The structure of this was drawn from the work on dualisms, as this is how science and art have traditionally been understood. Practitioners and the literature identified some parallels and complements between science and art; however the former in particular did not see science and art as separate entities. Practitioners and social work authors understand art and science as having an integrated relationship – and that further they do not, either alone or together, provide for a complete reading of social work. Using the illustration of one practitioner, social work is like a tapestry that expertly weaves together various threads to make a complete picture.

However, the previous section on the place of science and art highlights that while they may be seen as integrated, they still have different levels of articulation and presence in the social work literature. In particular, the art of social work has not been articulated as a model for practice. This means that it has not been available for discussion and critique in the same way that science has. It also means difficulties in capturing its meaning for practice. In the following chapter I use the data that has been collated to present an analysis in which art itself is seen to be moving further into the public sphere of analysis and practice, including its meaning for practice, knowledge and ethics. I develop this analysis to demonstrate a beginning conceptualisation of how social work as an art can be incorporated as a model of practice.
CHAPTER NINE
THE ARTISTRY OF SOCIAL WORK
UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE

9.1. INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this chapter is to chart a possible journey of art into the public sphere of practice. As part of this its meaning for knowledge, practice, relationship, education and ethics are conceptualised. The chapter draws on the analysis from Chapters Five and Six, as well as from the existing social work literature. I present them in a more integrated form than in the previous chapter to provide for greater clarity in reading. I clearly indicate the sources of ideas or analysis however.

As I argued in the previous chapter, the art of social work is a private practice that as an approach provides little in the way of practice guidelines. It is tempting to become enamoured of these aspects of practice and allow them to retain their ‘mystery’ (Eaton 1958). However, there are consequences to any approach to practice remaining unarticulated in that it is not part of a conscious theoretical development process and cannot be accounted for to clients, colleagues or organisations. It is not easy to discuss however as it comes out of neither ordinary language nor any agreed technical vocabulary – it is an expression waiting for useful work and clarification (Brook 1992; Imre 1982; Schon 1983).

9.2. A PUBLIC ART
9.2.1. Why a Move into the Public Sphere?
No authors in Chapter Five discussed the possibility of art moving into the public sphere of practice. However, the critique of the approach – (i) as being atheoretical and (ii) not providing practice guidelines – evident in their presentation of it highlights some of the issues of art being in an ‘under-developed’ state. The first critique is meaningful in the importance given to the role of theory in social work and that the nature of its theory is one of the ways in which social work articulates its identity (see Chapter Four). I demonstrate the meaning of the second critique in the analysis below.
If art remains in the private sphere, there is a resulting failure to make sense of these processes and qualities, to understand their nature and implications. There is then a lack of sufficiently common meanings and purpose or growth and change and its practice left to change and circumstance (Powell 2003a; England 1986a; Peile 1993; Schon 1983). The art of social work remains unavailable for teaching, analysis, development and critique – and space is not made in the organisation of social work for it (England 1986a; Powell 2003a). Any significance of its contribution is underestimated and unrecognised (Carew 1987; Bartlett 1970; Ingamells 1996). Practitioners expressed frustration that social work was not public about its identity, and the meaning of this for our influence as a profession. It results also in the inability to recognise good or bad practice (England 1986a; Rein 1970; Powell 2003a). Further, what social workers know may become lost to social work, its clients, other disciplines, and ultimately to society, all of whom might use it to improve social welfare and the human condition (Weissman 1990; Smith 2002; Carew 1979).

It is difficult to establish standards of consistency and accountability when practice remains highly individualised without any agreed upon framework for analysis and decision-making (Battye & Slee 1985; Hudson 1997; England 1986a). More rigour and precision needs to be developed about the meaning of social work as art to develop increased competence, clarity and security in this way of working and ultimately therefore to provide a better service (Imre 1982; Bartlett 1958).

By marginalising one perspective, competing viewpoints are limited, the scope and nature of the questions studied are restricted and important data are excluded – implicitly reinforcing and reproducing dominant discourses therefore (Rowles & Reinharz 1988; Heineman 1981; Elden 1981). If we truly value the artistic dimensions of social work, we must more consciously project and develop this capacity such that it can be conceptualised and incorporated into theory and ultimately praxis (Siporin 1979; DeMaria 1983; Hudson 1997).

9.2.2. Barriers to a Move
There exist barriers to change from both within and outside the profession including institutional, economic, ideological and historical as well as personal and characterological
forces (Barber 1991; Ife 1997; Fisher & Karger 1997; Leonard 1997; Hartman 1993; Gelfand 1988; Brandon & Jordan 1979; Fook 1993). Such barriers as identified in the literature, and in the interviews with practitioners, to the notion of social work as an art include:

(i) **Dominant Discourses:** create obstacles to new ideas and preserve the status quo (Fook 1996; Laird & Hartman 1990; DeMaria 1993; Hartman 1993; see Chapter Three). Science has diverted attention from the art of practice, leaving the profession at a loss to explain or even describe its artistry (Schon 1983; Gelfand 1988; Palmer 2002; Powell 2003a). Social work needs to escape from the intellectual constraints imposed by the belief that what we are doing must be essentially scientific and find the necessary intellectual resources to study and talk about the importance of the subjective, caring and artistic dimensions of social work practice (Azzarto 2001; Parton 2000; DeMaria 1981; Morgan & Ramirez 1983; Rees 1988; Fook 1996; Imre 1990a; Gammack 1982; Carew 1987). This will not lead to the abandonment of science but it will enable that body of knowledge to sit appropriately alongside other realms of knowledge, without dominating (Waldegrave 1997). This is also about avoiding the trap of dualistic thinking while recognising the inherent power behind such conceptualisations (see Chapter Three).

(ii) **Political:** E Howe (1980) sees a tension for social work between being a public profession and trying to appear private; professions such as social work resort to the role of the value-free technician to separate them from the more public or political aspects of their jobs. Knowledge presented as objective hides the political and power privilege it provides to those who have control over it (Brown 1991; see Chapter Three). As outlined in Chapter Four the current social, political and organisational environment make demands that are seemingly contradictory to the artistry of professional practice.

(iii) **Organisational:** barriers include work demands, lack of sufficient time and resources, and a focus on objectives and outcomes based on notions of technical rationality (Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Rapoport 1968; Krill 1990; Sammut 1999; Lymberry 2003). Weissman (1990) points out that the quality of interpersonal relationships can effect creativity too, with a lack of trust, cooperation, acceptance of different behaviours, respect for one another and so
forth affecting the safety of the environment from which to experiment. Similarly, some of the practitioners interviewed pointed out that our interface with other professions meant a need for a common language and knowledge base, and further, a level of ambivalence about describing it to others as an art on the other. Healy and Meagher (2004, p.243) argue that while contemporary practice theories assume social workers have the capacity to be analytical, creative and thoughtful in agencies that support and recognise this capacity, in fact the practice environment is unsupportive, and indeed hostile, to professional social work. The industrial and cultural dimensions of social work must be considered therefore also. It is an issue however that must be confronted in the light of what constitutes good practice (Barber 1991; Hartman 1991; Rees 1990; Weick 2000).

(iv) **Professional:** traditional definitions of professions emphasise the need for a scientific knowledge base, while limits on the autonomy, control and decision-making power of individual practitioners as well as routinised work are redefining professionalism (Gitterman & Miller 1989; Rees 1988; Weissman 1990; Barber 1991; Ife 1997; see Chapter Four). Competency-based definitions of roles and routinisation mean a loss of opportunities for creativity, reflexivity and discretion by practitioners (Healy & Meagher 2004; Lymberry 2003). As Practitioner Five points out, one difficulty then is defining social work as both a profession and an art.

(v) **Personal:** barriers to creativity exist in the minds of social workers, attributing their own doubts to their agency (Jordan 1979b) yet it is individual practitioners that bear the risk of creativity also (Practitioner Ten). Few have been willing to reveal the inner processes of their work (Raine 1990). As some practitioners felt, the actual personal nature of the art of social work is also a barrier (see Chapter Six). To suppose that we can describe and examine these qualities takes away the personal subjectivity that must remain spontaneous and open, and to do so is to risk the rigidity which has been part of the critique of a scientific approach (Edwards & Bess 1998, p.90; see Chapter Six).

(vi) **Social Work Identity Issues:** some see that social work also seems to have accepted unquestioningly, or with resignation, its restricted and controlled roles and limits on its knowledge (Hawkins 1996; Gitterman & Miller 1989; Cigno
Social work itself has been variously described as insecure, uncertain, troubled, fearful of not being taken seriously, puzzled and confused over its nature, form and purpose (Trainor 1996; England 1986a; Hugman 1996; see Chapter Four). Many practitioners interviewed felt that social work was not public about its identity at all – its science or art. Others also felt that some social workers would not want their profession portrayed as an art. I argue however that social workers can be more assertive in projecting their identity, including as artists, and utilising the private and political link to make their art more public. Uniformity at any rate is difficult to achieve around any analysis of social work (see Chapter Four).

(vii) **The Nature of Helping** itself is one of great diversity and change, preventing the analysis and development of new perspectives (Turner 1990). There is also little time to reflect on our work without having to do something and do it now; we are always being recalled to the concrete, the present and the clearly ‘real’ (Imre 1990).

(viii) **Burdens of Change**: questioning of our beliefs and knowledge is disconcerting and uncomfortable (Imre 1982). Unlearning is difficult, and our old ways of thinking colour the possibilities of new paradigms, leading to diminished understanding and application of new principles (Brandon 1976; Weick 1983). This requires then a continuous, energetic and critical process of reflection and action in developing a social work identity based in art.

(ix) **State of the Model of Social Work as an Art** itself (see critique and status above and Chapters Five and Six) and in particular, a view that it is atheoretical.

9.2.3. Public Art

Dominelli (1998) discusses what is needed from practitioners of anti-discriminatory practice – which she argues is yet to fulfil its potential – to develop and understand their theorising and practice. She outlines that such work requires the practitioner to integrate their understanding on three levels:

(i) *intellectually*, to grasp its central principles and methods of working

(ii) *emotionally*, to feel secure about and confident in working in anti-oppressive ways, and to learn from mistakes and disappointments
(iii) *practically*, to be able to implement the principles they have learnt and feel they own in their practice (Dominelli 1998, p.16).

She further outlines what she calls a dialogue over controversies including the need for supporters of anti-oppressive practice to form stronger alliances, to build a stronger theoretical base that is also published and accessible, for clients to be actively involved as collaborators in such developments, demonstrated improvements in practice and a coherent professional organisation. Similarly, for Goldstein (1990) the process of developing a theory for practice of social work as an art has three phases; the integration of vision and analysis, reframing the resulting critique in vocabulary which is widely accessible and finally, translating that into effective action. Herie and Martin (2002) talking about knowledge diffusion more generally refer to four strategies: the development of the product (what is being disseminated), promotion, politics (lobbying for change) and public opinion. These frameworks are useful in considering what is needed to build a ‘public’ art of social work. Below I consider what is needed in each of Dominelli’s three spheres of development to do this.

### 9.2.3.1. Intellectual Development

As indicated in the content analysis, part of what is required is a step beyond dualistic thinking that constantly compares art and science. Types of thinking required therefore include an ability to accept uncertainty, tolerate questioning, a balance between continuity and change, openness to learning, and doubt (Weissman 1990; see Chapter Seven). It requires a professional culture that legitimises the questioning of cherished ideas.

These ideas and concepts must first be captured in words and ‘converted’ into written knowledge, in a language available to a public, common usage – the development of the ‘product’ (Herie & Martin 2002; Reid 1981; Collingwood 1977). This may involve the development of linguistic conventions, that reflects and communicates what social workers actually know and do, what they reveal in their doing, and how their doing recasts and shapes what they know (Saleeby 1989). Practitioners saw a need for developing a language for discussing social work as an art, and that discussion and dialogue could follow as a way to develop it. In this way, social work can get used to describing and discussing these concepts (Schon 1983; Fish & Coles 2000) and attempt to achieve some sufficiently shared understanding (England 1986a; Munro 1998). The creation of public accounts and then
testing and criticism of social work as an art is then possible. Practitioners did consider however how they contribute (or otherwise) to theory development in public spaces, and the opportunities for and professional validity of doing this. As outlined in Chapter Three, this involves issues of how language gets its meaning and the power relations underlying that.

9.2.3.2. Emotional Development

The approach behind social work as an art is one that itself is active, dynamic and creative. It takes imagination and intelligence, time and effort, as well as encouragement and allowing professional conditions (Munro 1998). It is essential that social workers also utilise these former qualities in developing and promoting the perspective (Weissman 1990; Jordan 1979b; Schon 1983; DeMaria 1993; Imre 1982). Practitioners indicated in Chapter Six that working in this way was challenging, as it drew heavily on one’s personal resources. Many saw it was important for practitioners to be reflective, and to engage in processes of change and growth.

This may require the creation of a professional community that can offer sanction and support, processes of affirmation and confirmation, comparison and contrast, experience and analysis (Weissman 1990; England 1986a; Hudson 1997; Munro 1998). This would include creative structuring of professional meetings and associations, setting of a flexible professional agenda of programs and training, a professional structure that allows for the diffusion of ideas. Practitioner Ten for example questioned what opportunities were available for practitioners to present their creative and innovative work.

9.2.3.3. Practical Development

Alongside efforts to understand it, the action component – which many claim is what is missing from analyses of social work as an art – needs to be developed. Social workers should take more notice of their art and be encouraged to evaluate their own work and consider it an important and effective way of helping – the ‘promotion’ (Herie & Martin 2002; Imre 1982; Vass 1996). In Chapter Five, although not referring specifically to developing the art of social work, strategies for professional and personal development including supervision, collegiate discussion, evaluation, training and critical reflection, were provided.
Such evaluation processes may include the articulation of our practice in supervision, peer review, with clients and in publishing as well as research processes involving qualitative and narrative inquiry (Schon 1983; Papell & Skolink 1992). Supervision is an opportunity for reflectivity, generating hypotheses, and sharing of practice wisdom (Scott 1990; Sheppard 1995). It could be supported in publishing through the openness of journals to non-academic authors, an emphasis on practice and practitioners, a corner for sharing practice wisdom, dissemination and evaluation of new ideas and creative journal editorial policies (Weissman 1990; England 1986a). As above, this would require practitioners putting forward qualitative and narrative accounts of experience and performance and the cultivation of a body of practice knowledge through a joint and ongoing inquiry involving practitioners, teachers and researchers (Saleeby 1989; Martinez-Brawley 2001).

Some have seen a disempowerment of social workers in public agencies (Garrett 1980; Rees 1988; Fisher & Karger 1997; Sherman & Wenocur 1983; Howe 1987). This makes it essential for social workers to determine their core objectives and roles as well as criteria for effectiveness (Rees 1988). At a greater organisational level is work at humanising and democratising organisational forms and collegial work formats to be more flexible, demystifying of expertise and decentralised with a qualitative appreciation of complex processes (Fisher & Karger 1997; Schon 1983; Leonard 1997).

9.3. MEANING FOR SOCIAL WORK

9.3.1. Practice, Skills and Technique

The term practice has received less attention in social work than the term theory (Pilalis 1986). This may reflect the position of art in social work in that it is often associated with the application of scientific knowledge – the practice (see Chapter Eight). D Howe (1980, p.388) states that no amount of knowledge of what is the case can ever establish for us what to do about it – the need for practical judgement and action is always required. Good clinical social work involves creative assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation. It also means a practice richly informed by the human and social sciences as a source of ideas and providing structure to the process.
9.3.1.1. Reflexivity

Social work is inherently reflexive, adjusted in response to the stimuli coming from our clients, respecting and making a role for them in the formulation of social work (Payne 1996; Ringel 2003; Walker 2001). Practice involves unique adaptations as required by the individual differences in its practitioners, their material, client situation and environment (Bowers 1949; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Siporin 1988). Many practitioners discussed the influence of clients in their use and adaptation of theory. It means listening to and acknowledging the stories of our clients – and working with the possibility of them re-authoring their lives using more helpful stories, to promote new and more positive versions of situations (Parton & Marshall 1998; Goldstein 1992b). In this way, many practitioners and texts in the content analysis saw imagination and creativity as useful – in helping clients develop a different picture of their lives, and then starting to think about how to achieve that. Reflexivity also means that practitioners’ and others’ knowledge claims and practices are subject to analysis and careful judgement (Taylor & White 2001).

9.3.1.2. Assessment

As individuals live their lives they both tell a story with a distinctive plot and characters, and they paint a canvas that forms the backdrop of that story (Newell-Walker 2002; Goldstein 1992b). Postmodernists emphasise the importance of seeing life not as a fixed course with a single end but as an artistic composition with room for improvisation and change; solutions are found in the making, the telling and the expression (Parton & Marshall 1998; Damianakis 2001). In assessment it means paying attention to the unique, subjective elements of the experience for the client – and reading our intuitive responses to these as a way of recording (England 1986a; Lymberry 2003; see Chapter Six). In terms of intervention it means working with the client in revising the plot, examining how the purposes of the story serve the narrator, consider alternative meanings of events, or determine where distortion or overgeneralisation occur (Goldstein 1992b). In Chapter Five, creativity was also seen as a link between the general and the particular, which is useful in assessment of seeing the commonalities and differences between clients’ problems.

Art gives practitioners permission to seek information from a collage of ways of knowing. Further, it means that while we can make judgements, we cannot rely on finding objective certainty (Taylor & White 2001, p.54). For the practitioners I interviewed, a way of getting
to their client’s story was in the use of qualities such as intuition and use of self. Imagination provided a picture of what was occurring and also allowed exploration of different levels of understanding for example, making use of metaphor. Further, as social workers work with systems, there is opportunity to be creative and imaginative in how one develops a picture and in finding places to intervene. For some, intuition also informed their assessment as a way of getting a picture or sense of their client and their situation. It was a skill of reading people and could provide cues as to where and how to direct an interview and one’s responses. All made the point that these intuitive understandings had to be traced back and accounted for in some way if they were to inform decision-making. As one put it – it is in the checking that intuition becomes understanding.

9.3.1.3. Problem-Solving
The literature, texts, and practitioners indicated that the most significant role for the qualities of social work as an art – imagination, creativity and intuition in particular – was in problem-solving. Practitioners outlined how they used these qualities to generate a picture of the current situation, to deconstruct the problem, consider potential future situations and the possible paths between them. This then provided a position to plan from and further, could assist in generating more options. Considering a client’s situation creatively could also assist practitioners to identify opportunities. Most practitioners also pointed out that they did this with the client, or by stimulating these qualities in the client. Creativity is required to generate a variety of possible interventions, methods and strategies (Payne 1996). Further as outlined in Chapter Six, creativity can enable practitioners to work in new and different situations, or to use novel solutions and strategies for known problems. In Chapter Five, imagination was seen as important to move beyond routine practice.

9.3.1.4. Resourcing
According to the texts in Chapter Five, the use of creativity and imagination is in the interpretation of policy and resource constraints. They can be used as a way of ‘working the system’. Many practitioners however made the point that any creative or imaginative exercises needed to occur within the boundaries of their organisational and professional obligations.
9.3.1.5. Evaluation

A practice based in art requires a recognition that some outcomes are more difficult to quantify than others while the creation of methods to assess competence in artistry presents a challenge (Clark 1995; Bloom 1978). Indeed practitioners saw that one role for science was in the evaluation and identification of outcomes. Some made the point that the intangibles such as art were harder to identify and therefore evaluate, yet remained fundamental to good practice. Similarly, many texts used the empirical status of theories to evaluate them. Other ways of evaluating remain somewhat elusive therefore.

There are already studies that show us that the variables that appear to affect a positive outcome are related to the personal qualities of the therapist, including personal well-being, social influence ability, competence, collaboration, self-investment, affirmations, genuineness, and empathy (Goldstein 1990, p.37). England (1986a) sees that social workers must offer their own work samples, in writing or on tape or in simulation, and search out the detailed critical evaluation of their colleagues, and in turn learn to offer constructive and precise evaluation of the work of others. Supervision likewise is a source and opportunity for such detailed evaluation (see above). See also ‘Role of Critique’ and ‘Discipline’ in Chapter Seven.

9.3.1.6. Working with Involuntary Clients

As outlined in the content analysis, work with involuntary clients is an area where the use of the qualities of art can have particular application, providing an opportunity for creative practice. Involuntary practice is an area of authority and control, with statutory functions, defined in part by law, with still a number of moral, social and political matters to be decided (Jordan 1979b; Ife 1997). It highlights not only the need for flexibility and imagination but also the need for transparency in social work around the limits of statutory authority, expectations and rights, requirements and consequences and so forth (Jordan 1979b; Marshall 1995; Barber 1991). Such a process requires creativity and imagination, for the client and worker to think as broadly and divergently about the opportunities present in the situation (Ife 1997; Payne 1996; Barber 1991; see Chapter Five). Although some of the practitioners interviewed worked in statutory settings, none related the art of practice specifically to working with involuntary clients. This difference between interviews and texts may be that the latter for the most part were concerned with developing political ways
of working, and involuntary practice provides a particular site of analysis for issues of control and power. Alternatively, the art of social work for practitioners could have been relevant to all their practice, not just work with involuntary clients.

9.3.1.7. Report Writing

Recording and report writing are often seen as bureaucratic requirements rather than a creative process; they can serve both, as a means to reflect on practice and in keeping with agency procedure and formality (England 1986a; Little 1995). Every social work report should tell the story, a story about the client and a story about the worker, including thoughts raised, feelings stirred and understandings shared (England 1986a, p.128). Practitioner Eleven provided an example of where such accounts were missing in documentation, and a significant source of insight that could have informed decision-making was therefore unavailable (see Chapter Six). In terms of making art public, it may also be about documenting different sources of evidence and knowledge – and what informs those understandings. This is similar to what practitioners were saying about ‘tracking back’ their intuitions and identifying what was informing them.

9.3.1.8. Skills and Technique

A work of art cannot be produced without some level of technical skills; the painter must have the skills of wielding a brush and control of movement, of colour distinctions and quality of line for example (Collingwood 1977; Gardner 1973; Chipp 1968; Kroeber 1970; Brook 1992; Palmer 2002; Seligson 2004). Skill can also include the ability to use knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance including reflection on the how and why of the interaction (Bartlett 1958; Lee 1982; Weick 1982). Skills are teachable and learnable through training, personal experience and sharing of others practice wisdom. Yet skills are uniquely individual at the same time transformed by the user through their personal qualities and talents, knowledge, understanding, and creativity (Collingwood 1977; Brook 1992; Manfredi 1982; Henri 1930). Social work is inaccessible to purely technical analysis, description, and duplication yet talent or personal suitability alone is insufficient (Fook 1996; Zolberg 1990; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Briar 1979). Eventually the artist is able to use skills in absence of self-consciousness and with sincerity, self-discipline, and in intelligent and purposeful labour (Seligson 2004; Collingwood 1977; Rapoport 1968; Brook 1992; Gardner 1973; Manfredi 1982; Henri 1930; Wilson 1964;
Plekhanov 1953). This is what some practitioners referred to as the art of social work – the intuitive use of skill and knowledge. Technique became art when it was ‘like a performance’ (Practitioner Two), used at an advanced level, part of a whole, yet where one did not have to self consciously focus on its use. Camilleri (1996) uses the metaphor of ‘jazz’ to imply virtuosity, skill, knowledge and flexibility. An essential skill or capacity identified in both Chapters Five and Six for the use of both artistic and scientific qualities and knowledge, was of being reflective and critical. In that way, their use could be conscious and disciplined.

9.3.1.9. Developing the Artist

The use of creativity, intuition, imagination and so forth is hindered by psychological blocks such as habit, custom and fear of failure, characterological blocks such as perfectionism, and institutional and socio-economic blocks such as lack of resources, dependence on authority, attitudes of society (Weissman 1990; Gelfand 1988; Egan 1997). They must also be reconcilable and reconciled with formal and often large-scale structures (Davies 1981). Development of these capacities begins with their recognition, and an articulation of their use in practice. This can be facilitated by self-audit in supervision and journaling– locating zones of cognitive, attitudinal and motivational strengths and blocks (Weissman 1990). However, as outlined in Chapter Seven, creative ideas come most frequently to the prepared mind that has available to it knowledge, information, and cognitive and conceptual maps; creative development involves the education of the making, perceiving and feeling systems.

9.3.2. Knowledge

Paintings are but research and experiment. I never do a painting as a work of art. All of them are researches. I search constantly and there is a logical sequence in all this search.

Pablo Picasso, quoted in Gardner 1973, p.269

The role of theory is debated in art as it is in social work. Theory is seen variously as annihilating and controlling (Taylor 1987), a way of avoiding self-deception and dominance (Binns 1991), or indeed as defining art in the imaginative application of what is known or creation of something new (Rapoport 1968; Collingwood 1977). Yet art creation
of any sort does require knowledge of self, as well as technical and social knowledge (England 1986a; Carroll 1999; Brook 1992; Read 1970; Fischer 1970; Leepa 1970). Some practitioners pointed out that art is not possible without knowledge of how one’s materials and techniques are likely to form and impact. Yet many also associated science with knowledge, while one explicitly linked art with an atheoretical approach. Does this reflect a traditional understanding of the relationship of the two – science the knowledge, art the practice? Or is it possible to consider an art of social work that is theoretical?

For social work, an area fraught with moral and social dilemmas, the ability to formulate and analyse is essential (Howe 1987; Manfredi 1982). The very nature of the content analysis texts – concerned with analysing or developing theory for practice – demonstrates the importance of knowledge in social work as well as debates over its nature. Because social work has unique, inexact and unpredictable elements, the practitioner must be able to work with an analytic and convergent knowledge base. The variety of sources of knowledge that practitioners in Chapter Six identified they accessed reflects this.

The emphasis in art and in a social work as art approach on subjectivity, intuition, creativity and so forth, in no way diminishes the importance of knowledge and theory, nor does it remove from the worker any obligation to be as informed as possible (England 1986a; Goldstein 1992a). As Practitioner Three put it, we are more than intuitive beings. Further, the importance of learning and integrating a variety of theories is essential for growing our inner, creative, integrative process so they remain appropriately open, expansive, broad and inclusive of other concepts and experiences (Ife 1995a; England 1986a; Krill 1990; Fish & Coles 2000). As one practitioner pointed out it also about knowing the limits of our understanding. Two authors in Chapter Five outlined a connection between self and knowledge, and how personal experiences shape us as thinkers, and the role of the knower in knowing.

9.3.2.1. Sources of Knowledge
Social workers need a collage of ways of knowing that go beyond the art/science duality (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; England 1986a). The worker’s use of knowledge may include sources from formal learning of relevant theories, models, research, ideology and philosophy as well as colloquial learning, personal and professional experience, clients,
insights from intuition, self-awareness and imagination, and emotional understanding (England 1986a; Payne 1991; Schon 1983; see Chapter Six). Art itself can be a source of active discovery or a form of human inquiry (Brook 1992; Edwards 1986; Leepa 1970). Recognising the boundaries of what we know also acknowledges the existence of uncertainty and mystery in human experience (Fish & Coles 2000). We employ all that we are as human beings to support practice (Elliot 2000) – Practitioner Two saw this as part of our professional responsibility.

Understanding ourselves and the people around us is a fundamental element of everyday life (Munro 1998); Irvine (1979) sees a need to become aware of, enhance and utilise the particular and peculiar knowledge each of us has of people just by being one of them! This also links to the notion of use of self and self-awareness as a form of knowledge (see Chapter Seven). Access to such understandings can come from paying attention to intuition also, as identified in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven outlines the links between the various qualities of social work as an art and knowledge.

9.3.2.2. Theory and Practice: Making the Link in Praxis

Much is made of the ‘gap’ between theory and practice in social work. It has been identified in the literature that few social workers use theories in a formal, explicit way (see Chapter Four). Most absorb a selection of theoretical ideas into their background knowledge and use it intuitively. Munro (1998) identifies three types of usage, the everyday social, the fragmented and the fluent, the latter being where:

[practitioners] were able to integrate the different sources of knowledge and use both commonsense wisdom and theories in direct work with clients; theories were not used in an uncritical way… also able to share their thinking with clients… ability to do this suggests that the issues of moving from a private, personal style of working to a more public, accountable one may be at least as much to do with levels of expertise as with philosophical debates about knowledge. (Munro 1998, p.46-50)

Similarly, Trainor (1996, p.87) discusses that the ‘gap’ is not a regrettable weakness or lack but rather represents the space in which the individual social worker uses the values of the profession and reflects upon their social science knowledge to analyse the unique situation. Social work explicitly relies on the social worker to make the link between theory and practice.
As outlined in Chapter Seven, knowledge is an essential part of the use of qualities of social work as an art. Knowledge is in part mediated through other qualities such as imagination, creativity and insight (Goldstein 1990; Gelfand 1988). Using theory then, according to Payne (1998a, p.135), requires the application of exactly the social and interpersonal skills in working openly with people that social workers like to claim; reflecting theoretically with clients and colleagues, making reflection-in-action an everyday part of practice, and having the self-confidence to be open about your ideas and willing to experiment to put ideas into action. Use of self is essential therefore, as it becomes the medium through which the worker realises his or her knowledge.

This integration of theory and practice leads to the notion of praxis. The essence of praxis is that one is involved in a constant cycle of action, learning and critical reflection so that each informs the other and the three effectively become one (Ife 1995a; Payne 1991; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Fisher & Karger 1997; see Chapter Four). The mind of the worker weaves together the various theoretical, creative and intuitive responses in order to give meaning and coherence to what is being experienced (Imre 1990b; England 1986a; Baxandall & Morawski 1973; Ife 1997; Goldstein 1990; Irvine 1979). It means the interpretation and integration of theory and research with data generated in practice and where such knowledge is not available the necessity to improvise (Weissman 1990; Butler & Morphew-Chambers 1979). If the theory and practice of social work as an art are to become public the notion of praxis is essential – for removing it from the realm of the atheoretical and articulating its practice principles in particular.

9.3.3. Education

Education was not specifically discussed by practitioners or in the content analysis texts in terms of art or science; however practitioners thought that social work education and educators had a significant role in defining the profession.

Social work educators need space to challenge students to direct their enthusiasm, idealism and creativity into purposeful actions guided by values (Brown 1988). The aim therefore is to encourage learners who are creative subjects – knowledgeable, critical, responsible and autonomous learners and thinkers – rather than receiving objects (Brigham 1977; Smith
The education process in social work should in itself reflect the pattern that social workers intend to adopt in their interface with clients and therefore:

- provide for a fully-informed vocational choice
- encourage self-awareness
- involve an active discovery of one’s world
- begin where the student is
- establish holistic notions of social work practice
- build on the student’s own enthusiasm, creativity and idealism;
- and be presented in a way that is authentic for the educator.

(Paulo Freire’s approach to education is one that also moves beyond the idea of linear, cause-effect relationships and of a hierarchy between knowing and doing, research and practice. The distinctive elements of his approach are:

- learners are subjects, not objects
- horizontal dialogue, a world in which people create their own reality
- the necessity to try to achieve a unity of theory and practice
- education is not, cannot be, neutral
- content and process are and ought to be strongly related.

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- content and process are and ought to be strongly related.

Brigham 1977, p.7)

The process can call the student to work through steps of self-awareness, knowledge-building, and skill-development to reach an aliveness, a humanness, and a spontaneity of action that give them the potential to empower others (Brown 1988, p.123). Understanding of self can be actively used to observe and make meaning of the interaction between others and critical aspects of their world (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). Knowing includes awareness that the learner is not only affected by the world but also can have an effect upon it; knowing is a human act implying reflection and action (Brigham 1977; England 1986a; Imre 1982). The teacher must assist the class and its participants to draw deeply from this background of life experiences and to use the rich resources of thought, feeling and action of each learner (Brigham 1977). Further, the teacher can make use of self and their own
experience as teaching tools, thereby creating an innovative and collaborative environment (Ringel 2003).

The development and acquirement of the art of practice is a lifelong process, and not one that can be conveniently described and taught from one practitioner to the next:

An experienced practitioner cannot convey the art of his practice to a novice merely by describing his procedures, rules and theories, nor can he enable a novice to think like a seasoned practitioner merely by describing or even demonstrating his ways of thinking. (Schon 1983, p.271)

This is where Freire’s concepts of the active and conscious learner come into play also as a commitment to artistry and its development – and the skills for critically doing that – is one desired outcome of education.

9.3.3.1. Selection of Students

Selection of students reflects qualities that the profession, as well as the university, are looking for. Academic performance is the basis of selection for social work, while subsequent academic performance informs the right to stay (Stratton 2000; England 1986a). England (1986a) believes that selection processes should instead place an emphasis on individual experience and perception with an associated recognition that social work requires personal wisdom and maturity – characteristics that he believes can be enhanced but not created. However, he also argues that personal qualities are amenable to educational change – we can learn to see and interpret the world (see Chapter Seven for a discussion on whether the artist is born or made).

In looking at students the art of social work means an emphasis upon personal suitability, including the ability to understand and make use of one’s own life experiences, capacity for self-doubt, discovery and criticism, inquisitiveness, insight and the ability to think critically about his or her experiences of helping (Jordan 1984; Brown 1988). In previous research, I have examined admissions processes to Australian Schools of Social Work and how they reflect the concepts of social work as an art. At that time those processes were based on a science perspective in terms of qualities looked for and assessment tools utilised. While social work educators perceived the qualities from an art approach important and expressed a desire to further explore them, reasons internal and external to social work restricted this.
There was a belief that it was too difficult, too subjective, there was uncertainty about how to do so and/or there were limits of resources and university requirements. The rationale behind such approaches appeared to be institutionally based and because of a belief that fair and accountable decisions are mutually exclusive with a scientific approach (Stratton 2000, pp.34-5).

9.3.4. Ethics

All professions have value preferences that give purpose, meaning and direction to their practice, outcomes and theories (Bartlett 1970; Hepworth & Larsen 1990). Social work is essentially a moral and political enterprise by virtue of its intervention in people’s lives; questions of values permeate every context (Clark & Asquith 1985; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; Ife 1997; NISW 1982). Further, it has defined itself in terms of a broad mission, namely a commitment to social justice (Jones 2000; Hepworth & Larsen 1990; see Chapter Four).

Of relevance to this research is the debate between modern ideals of universalism, commonality, truth and determinism and those of postmodernist thinking of particularism, difference, partial truths, relativism and (de)construction (Briskman & Noble 1999; Freud & Krug 2002). Is it possible for there to be a universal value system for social work or will changing contexts and clients constantly redefine it (McAuliffe & Coleman 1999; Briskman & Noble 1999)? Others argue that the moral dilemmas of social work cannot be reduced to psychological or scientific questions (Jordan 1984; Payne 1996; Carter, Jeffs & Smith 1995; NISW 1982; Hepworth & Larsen 1990; Elks & Kirkhart 1993). Yet many practitioners saw a contribution of science to social work in its ethical stance of transparency and rigour. As Freud and Krug (2002) argue, a balance in ethical decision-making processes is required, in which abstract moral principles and moral particularities, reason and emotion and intuition, are all bought to bear.

In terms of the values of art, there is an emphasis on the importance of the qualitative nature of experience (Albrecht 1970; Goldstein 1992a). This is where practitioners saw the value of art – in its affirming of the personal and of the innate human-ness of social work. The most important ethical consideration for the artist according to Henri (1930) is his or
her attitude towards his or her subject; this determines the quality of the work, while the
nature and distinction of its technique depends on it. Similarly, social work is bound by
moral obligations towards the client as a fellow human being and how they are the objects
In this way, the ethic of evaluating the nature and worth of professional efforts is central.

Of particular importance from the notion of social work as art in relation to values comes
the notion of use of self. It is essential – an obligation even – that the worker be aware of
their belief systems, their implicit and stated values, and the impact of these on their use of
theory and use of self in order to liberate themselves from their prejudices and biases
(Compton & Galaway 1994; Hudson 1997; NISW 1982; Pearce 1996; Hepworth & Larsen
1990). This is how use and understanding of self was important in Chapters Five and Six,
in determining one’s impact on others, as well as bias and maintaining appropriate
boundaries between work and personal lives. In a different way, imagination was identified
in Chapters Five and Six as a way of sustaining self through maintaining a hopeful vision
of the world as a better place.

9.3.5. Client and Relationship

Any artistic response involves a dialectical relationship between artist, audience and work –
the consciousness of both artist and audience are related to the totality of their worlds
(Wolff 1981; Wilson 1964; Collingwood 1977). One parallel between art and social work
is their particular ability to be able to communicate with and assist transformation processes
in very different audiences (Collingwood 1977; Gardner 1973).

In modernist terms, the author was the privileged interpreter of the text; postmodernity has
challenged this authority and emphasised the role of the reader in interpreting and co-
creating the text (Leonard 1997; Collingwood 1977; Ife 1997; Wolff 1981). Meaning is
dynamic and comes from a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of interpretations
Such a reading of social work sees the client moving from the ‘other’, a passive recipient of
the expert social workers interventions, to one who is a partner, an active and critical
participant, in the process (NISW 1982; Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998; Payne 1996;

Most of the practitioners clearly identified that it was necessary to check knowledge gained from scientific and artistic sources with the client, or used as a framework that was then informed by the client. Most also identified the client as a source of knowledge – for some this was their primary source of understanding. They were practising therefore the postmodern form of the relationship outlined above.

The idea of client as colleague means it is necessary to know how the social worker’s service is being personally experienced (Howe 1987). Openness to different ways of knowing means listening to the ‘lived experience’ and ‘local knowledge’ of clients (Camilleri 1996; Koenig & Spano 1998; Howe 1987; Payne 1991). This can be a form of evaluation also. The artist/social worker must know the audience they are addressing, and adapt their language and practices accordingly to ensure it contains appropriate stimulus and through their experience with different audiences develop and alter their skills accordingly (Collingwood 1977; Kern 1970; Peile 1993).

A role in stimulating qualities such as imagination and creativity in clients, in order to assist them to move beyond the constraints of their current situation, was clearly identified in Chapters Five and Six. In order to succeed in the artistic realm, the social worker has to involve the creative prowess of his/her clients and in this way involve them as mutual participants (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998).

The relationship with the client also requires active use of self to engage and relate to the client, recognition of our common humanity as well as the exercise of intuitive and imaginative capacities to develop empathy (see Chapters Six and Seven). Indeed, some practitioners argued that the art of practice lies in relationship, as do some scholars (Siporin 1993; Ringel 2003). Use of self was the most commonly discussed quality in Chapter Five, and was seen as central to the ability to form effective helping relationships. This requires
a distinctive and active use of self, with the central importance of the worker as an authentic presence, made up of values, thoughts, experiences, opinions and reactions moulded into a personal professional style (McDonald 1988; Payne 1996; Davies 1981; Wodarski & Bagarozzi 1979; Munro 1985; May 1989; see Chapters Five and Seven). This leads to the notion of practitioner style; some practitioners in Chapter Six identified self as the tool of social work, while in Chapter Five self was seen to inform communication and interaction patterns.

There was a role for imagination in empathy in Chapters Five and Six, as an aid in understanding clients and their situation. Further, use of self was seen in both to be important in developing relationships with others, providing clients with someone ‘real’ to connect with. Intuition was also given an important role in relationship by both sets of data, in terms of determining how to respond to a client, what issues to explore, and to check for safety and ‘hidden’ truths. Intuition was a way of reading and tuning into clients and matching communication accordingly. The art of the social work relationship therefore assists in the application of social work knowledge and values (Dutton & Kohli 1996; Imre 1982).

9.4. SUMMARY

Social work education, practice, knowledge and research as an art must be that which is sound, fluent and accessible and subject to rigorous scrutiny, public debate and careful evaluation. New directions require dedication to discovery, to creativity and to holistic thinking in all domains of social work (Bardill 1993). Social workers should recognise, know, and articulate their own art as something that is valuable and worth preserving for future generations of social workers and for service users who will continue to benefit from them. I have considered the barriers to social work as an art being public as well as possible responses through the intellectual, emotional and practical developments and supports required. I have outlined the role of art in practice, relationship, ethics and knowledge. In particular, art has a role in the application of knowledge, as a source of knowing, in problem-solving, relationship formation and response to the client, and in a valuing of the subjective and unique elements of human experience. The following chapter is the concluding chapter and draws inferences from the research on the place of science
and art in social work, the nature of dualisms, as well as reflections on the research process itself.
CHAPTER TEN
SOCIAL WORK AS AN ART:
CONCLUSIONS, CHALLENGES AND HOPE

To get the best out of research you need an inquiring mind, the desire to improve performance and a critical and sceptical intelligence... Research is a means, not an end in itself – a tool with which to improve and perfect one’s business... it is not a machine which dispenses neat answers on cardboard squares.

Researching social work is about making judgements on what and how social work is constituted and constructed (Camilleri 1996). This research has highlighted for me the complexities of ‘constituting and constructing’ social work and has in some ways made me reluctant to therefore draw ‘conclusions’. This is also because so many discussions in social work are termed as debates or marked by their claims about uncertainty. Further, as Martinez-Brawley (1999, p.335) points out it is essential to adopt the position of philosopher rather than be tempted by the ethos of the expert: the expert ‘concludes’ while the philosopher ‘questions’.

One similarity that does appear to me however is the structure of such debates in the form of dualisms. These include those around the nature of the private-political link, theory and practice, care and control, qualitative and quantitative research, and of course science and art. The continual debates around these important relationship has in part resulted from the attempt to place practice in the empirical mould (Cheers 1987, p.51). Indeed it could be argued that the most significant legacy of science for social work has been dualistic thinking. Considering the art and science of social work is also about considering dualisms in social work and how they are managed in analysis and practice.

Describing social work as an art often seems to imply criticism of practitioners or an apologetic tone about the lack of objectivity that could be achieved if only social work could become more scientific. Similarly social work as science implies absence of humanity, incompatibility with social work values and an incompleteness of explanation for relationship. However, as McNiff (1998) points out, art and science have always been
closely allied and have complemented one another throughout history: both share a common commitment to innovation and creative imagination, while social work itself has commonly been described as both an art and a science (Camilleri 1999; Sheafor, Horejsi & Horejsi 1991; Siporin 1988; Imre 1982; Rapoport 1968). As highlighted by the ongoing debate about the nature of social work, no single way of knowing dominates the profession. I would argue that neither could it; the complex pressing demands of social work with its ethical base, place in the welfare state, decision-making, management of the private-political link and so forth requires social workers to draw on a diverse range of knowledge sources.

While the debate about science and art as binaries may have been useful to clarify extreme positions and highlight differences it has become counterproductive to producing an adequate analysis and development of the complexity and multiplicity of social work. This thesis argues for social work to transcend the oppositional duality of science/art in its practice and knowledge-building and utilise instead their inter-relationship. The research question became then not about whether art and science do have a place, but rather the nature of that place. However, given their different statuses within social work, I would still argue that this necessitates exploring and developing the art of social work. The aim of this research was to continue to bring social work as art in ‘from the margins’ and to begin to conceptualise social work in a way that allows its art to be recognised and incorporated into ‘mainstream’ understandings and constructions of the profession.

Art and science then are in fact deeply related aspects of the whole human process, not adversaries or even complements, but two processes of finding out and checking our beliefs, practices and knowledge, in constant dialogue with one another (England 1986a; Gowdy 1994; Hartman 1994; Hudson 1997). They exist therefore in an ever changing state of suspended resolution (Edwards & Bess 1998).

Strengths and limitations of the research methodology have been discussed in Chapter Two. The sample size for the interviews was small, the purpose of the research being to generate categories through which the art of social work could be better understood rather than to evaluate practice. The content analysis generated a picture of the status of science and art in the social work literature as recommended by Australian schools of social work.
Those texts represented critical constructions of social work in particular. This research contributes to an understanding of the role of art in social work practice and understanding. Further areas for research and development are highlighted primarily in: continuing to develop the links between social work knowledge and contemporary social science, capturing the practice wisdom of social workers through collaborative research processes as well as continuing to ‘get out in public’ accounts of social work artistry (see below).

The primary research question:

Is it possible to locate the art of social work within the public sphere of practice?

was then reflected in a primary aim exploring the feasibility and development of the social work as art approach as a theory for practice. This question is addressed through considering the secondary aims of the research.

(i) exploration of the place of an art approach in social work, including any parallels between social work and art

The place of art in social work continues to be debated and it has been given many and varied roles. The content analysis would indicate that the place of art in social work is as a response to models of science, or that it is not relevant to debates about social work that explore the nature of the private-political relationship. Practitioners saw art as one way of making sense of their practice but that a place for it in the public arena of practice was problematic due to its personal nature and issues of professionalism. Art has also been given a role in the application of scientific knowledge, as a precursor to scientific ways of knowing, as the feminine, as a counter-position, as a way of knowing and so forth. I would argue that art has a place as a way of knowing, including insight from intuition, imagination, and self. It also has a place as a way of doing – with humanity, with colour, with creativity, with energy and with skill. Parallels identified between social work and art include qualities of the artist/practitioner and in particular use of self and creativity, social roles, humanism and definition through audience/relationship.
(ii) exploration of the place of the rational, scientific perspective within social work.

The place of science likewise continues to be debated in social work. Part of this debate revolves around models of science and which of these is appropriate for social work. The nature of this debate reflects a search for some Modernist ideals – a universal and generalised body of knowledge and professional identity. The content analysis would indicate that particular models of science, namely those articulated in modernist thinking, have an historical place in social work, and that empiricism may be used to evaluate the status of theory. The interviews associated knowledge and science, and all saw that knowledge (and therefore) science had an essential role to play in social work. It was not a simple matter of ‘applying’ this knowledge in a linear process however, but was rather a reflexive one informed and shaped by the client and relationship.

Social work has long strived for scientific status and in some ways that strive itself has distracted from the contributions that science can make to social work – and even more so from the contributions that social work can make to science. Social work is a professional discipline that uses science in its knowledge generation and use, research, ethical bases, evaluation and practice principles. However, it does not and should not depend on it for self-definition. If the limits of positivism and empiricism mean that they are inappropriate for social work, then the profession needs to engage with emerging models of social science. In this way it can shape contemporary models of social science and their use to generate ways of knowing and practice appropriate for social work.

(iii) exploration and development of the social work as an art approach as a theory, philosophy and model of practice, including its relationship with science

Art was not presented as a model of practice in the content analysis, nor were its qualities connected to this model. The interviews indicate that it is one of the ways that practitioners understand their practice. Both however contributed to an understanding of the role of art in social work knowledge, practice and ethics as outlined in Chapter Nine. In particular art has a role in:

- the application of knowledge (scientific or otherwise) using imagination, intuition, use of self;
- problem solving;
• relationship with the client;
• re-emphasising the humanity of social work and a resulting meaning for approach to client, problem, relationship and sense-making;
• use of self across relationship, ethics and use of knowledge;
• recognising the divergent knowledge bases of social work – in particular clients understandings – and the practice wisdom of social workers.

The relationship of art and science has in the past detracted from the art, as they are usually understood in the form of binary opposites. An understanding instead of synthesis sees that there is a constant dance between and across the two. To start however, it is important to better understand how artistic knowing is different from scientific knowing – in some sense they need to be dichotomised before they can be bought back together in order to appreciate their differences, commonalties, and unique contributions. The texts analysed contain little reference to the art and science of social work, yet most focus on another dualism central to social work, the link between the private and political. They represent a reflection of the discussion around the relationship between science and art; the meaning of dualistic thinking and the need for a redressing of what is seen as an imbalance. Where science is discussed, it is in a critique of particular models of science, where art is seen as one response to these models. No practitioner saw that social work was either an art or a science, but rather relied on some combination of both. Neither was enough on its own. Is it perhaps true that social workers in practice are already transcending and managing the dualism of science and art? At base for most practitioners this seemed to be an ethical stance – that we need to draw on all available ways of understanding and sense-making.

Art as an integral foundation of social work can be recognised, articulated, evaluated and developed. This would facilitate a process of the ‘demystification’ of art and allow it to be available for public critical appraisal and use (Brook 1992; Schon 1983; Hudson 1997; Irvine 1979; England 1986a; Siporin 1988; Imre 1982; DeMaria 1981; Collingwood 1977). Security may then come in trusting these formulations. Strategies for doing so include dialogue and discussion in the private and public forums of social work including supervision, documentation, research, education, and publishing. Social workers then are invited to take an active part in the process of constructing further a social work as art.
approach. In particular, for practitioners to contribute their practice wisdom and ways of working to the public forums of the profession.

(iii) to identify barriers and needs internal and external to the profession that contribute to the current status of the social work as art approach, including dominant concepts and beliefs underlying social work

The tensions between this subjective, artistic approach and the current culture and context in which professional definition and identity are being challenged cannot be ignored. It would be optimistic and perhaps naïve to believe that new or different methods could be developed and introduced independently of any changes in the structure or relations in which social work is organised. Yet, it is important to remember that those conditions and constraints are not necessarily fixed, permanent or solid but rather are normative – as demonstrated by history itself (Clarke 1979; Dominelli 1997; Siporin 1988; Davidson 1990). At the same time, the impact and influence of social work and its professional organisations in defining practice is increasingly limited while political and managerial control increases (Munro 2004). There are increasing demands for accountability, efficiency and transparency (with essentially empirical definitions of those terms being the ones utilised), a change in practice focus from humanist concerns to risk management, with different kinds of evidence for practice acceptable and valuable to a range of audiences (see Munro 2004 for an analysis of these issues). While this research has focussed on social work as a profession developing its artistry, the next step is to consider how to engage in discussions about and the use of artistry in a context so preoccupied with science. I now need to consider how I can use this research to contribute to an integrated and constructive discussion about the place of science and art in social work and its various contexts.

The barriers also exist internal to the profession and in our relationship with science. As practitioners identified, social work is not good at defining itself, let alone the art of its practice. The social work literature continues to debate whether art and science have a place in social work, and this may be in part why the art of social work as a theory for practice has not been developed. Getting issues of social work identity into the public sphere could be an enlightening and liberating experience according to Karger (1983). As identified by many authors, a first step in this is having and helping practitioners make their practice wisdom and principles available for study and analysis. It is here that possibilities
for further research are identified; a research-practice collaboration in getting practice wisdom into the public sphere through joint ventures in research and publishing.

As Bardill (1993, p.15) points out we will never solve our educational and professional problems as long as we remain at the same level of thinking that created our current identity problems. In terms of the art and science of social work this means transcending dualistic understandings of these ways of thinking and practicing. Science is no longer seen as mutually exclusive with knowledge, rigour and critical thinking, while art is no longer seen as mutually exclusive with creativity, imagination and use of self. This involves a reformulation of both on their own and in relation to each other; it means alternative definitions and constant dialogue around what is meant by theory, knowledge, professionalism, accountability, research and so forth. If social work is to live up to its own identity, it must openly and unapologetically acknowledge that the rational is not more important than the intuitive, the systematic is no more valid or truthful than the asystematic and that truth itself is evasive and knowledge relative and situated (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita 1998). Social work characterised by flexibility, imagination and rigour represents a target to which practitioners may reasonably aspire (Sheppard 1995).

Social work still needs to make its artistic knowing public and adopt a more reflective, purposeful style of working and theorising in this way (Munro 1998), and to consider where the arts can offer a system of knowledge and practice in social work (England 1986a; Nelson-Reed and Peebles-Wilkins 1991; Sadique 1996). We must more consciously project and develop our artistic capacity by attention to how we develop and utilise our knowledge, educate social workers and organise our practice such that it can be conceptualised and incorporated into theory. As England (1986a) points out, it is important that social workers’ use of art should not be limited to the consumption of existing art; equally important is the need for social work educators, practitioners and students to be artists. The acquisition of an art is not quickly learnt; it is a lifelong and growing achievement and challenge.
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Dear ________________

As we discussed on the phone please find following further details and confirmation regarding our research interview. As I explained I am a PhD student at the University of Western Australia, supervised by Professor Jim Ife. I am conducting research on the relationship of the science and the art in Social Work across the private and political divide. The essential aim of the research is to contribute to the development of a theory for practice of Social Work as an art.

I am interviewing Social Workers in order to explore their construction and interpretation of their practice looking specifically at the science and art dimensions in Social Work. As such the interview will take the form of a reflective conversation. I anticipate that the interview should take an hour and a half of your time, in addition to half an hour’s reading time prior. As we discussed, the details for our meeting are as follows;

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Prior to our interview, please
i) read the summary paper attached – we will be discussing many of the issues raised
ii) complete the attached demographic information sheet, to return to me at our meeting

Please be reassured that in any presentation of the data no identifying information will be used and all participants will remain anonymous. At the time of the interview I will provide you with a consent form that also confirms this confidentiality. Please be aware that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice. I wish to tape record our interview and you will receive a copy of the transcript for clarification or comments if necessary. If you would prefer that I record our interview in a different manner please let me know prior to the time and alternative arrangements will be made.

If you have any questions regarding the research or the interviews, please do not hesitate to contact either myself on 9340 8290 (W) or 9271 0115 (H) or my supervisor, Professor Jim Ife on 9380 2996. I look forward to meeting with you on (date) and discussing the art and science of your practice! Thank you again for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Stratton
PhD Candidate
Appendix B – Consent Form (Interviews)

‘A critical examination of the relationship of the science and the art in Social Work across the political and private divide’

Katrina Stratton
PhD. Student.

CONSENT FORM - RESEARCH INTERVIEW

I __________________ have read the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to do so by law. I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used. I am entitled to a copy of the thesis or any other results as I request them.

I understand that if I have any further questions about this research I can contact Professor Jim Ife, Head, School of Social Work and Social Administration on 1234 5678 or Katrina Stratton on 1234 5678.

The Committee for Human Rights at the University of Western Australia requires that all participants are informed that, if they have any complaint regarding the manner, in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or alternatively to the Secretary, Committee for Human rights, Registrar’s Office, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6907 (telephone number 9380 3703). All study participants will be provided with a copy of the information Sheet and Consent Form for their personal records.

Participant: __________________________

Date: __________________
Appendix C - Interview Schedule

Introductions

Acknowledgment

What I’m wanting to do is have a reflective conversation with you about the science and the art of your practice. Take your time and ask for clarification if you need to. There are no right or wrong answers - what I want to hear about are your ideas, your reflections, your thoughts, your experiences.

Thinking back to the summary paper I want to talk with you about some of the specific issues that were raised in that and then move on through there.

SCIENCE (Why; Impact on practice; Contribution; Critique)

*What sense do you make of the idea of Social Work as a science?*

ART (Parallels; Qualities; Meaning for practice; Barriers)

*What sense do you make of the idea of Social Work as an art?*

*What meaning, if any, does imagination/intuition/use of self/creativity have for your practice?*

PRIVATE AND POLITICAL (How link?; Fundamental to Social Work)

*What is your understanding of the private-political link in social work?*

* What does this concept mean for you in practice?

Narrowing down to some more specific questions but I still want you to think of them within the context of science and art

SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY (What is it; Who defines)

*What do you think are the essential elements of Social Work identity?*

*Who defines Social Work?*

*What are your views on Social Work’s status as a profession?*

*What sources of knowledge are there for practice?*
FINAL QUESTION

Finally, could you give me your reflections on whether Social Work is a science and/or an art?

Thankyou and acknowledgment; transcription process
Appendix D – Content Analysis; Letter to Australian Schools of Social Work
Requesting Information

Name
Co-ordinator, First Year
School of Social Work
Name of University

Date

Dear ______

I am a PhD student at the University of Western Australia, supervised by Professor Jim Ife. I am conducting research on the relationship of the science and the art in social work across the private and political divide. The aim of the research is to contribute to the development of a theory for practice of social work as an art.

As part of my research methodology I plan to undertake a content analysis of the indexes of major social work texts, looking at how the concepts of art and science are represented. In particular I wish to look at how social work students are introduced to these concepts. This will also enable an insight into the representation of these concepts in mainstream literature, and literature that is accessed by formal institutions.

Therefore, I am writing to request a copy of your reading list for first year social work students, in particular preliminary reading, recommended texts and reading lists for introductory units.

I understand that this is a very busy period for you with the start of the academic year and would be greatly appreciative of any time you could spare in collating and forwarding this information. The information can be sent to me at;

Address
or katrins@tartarus.uwa.edu.au

If you have any questions regarding this request or the research, please do not hesitate to contact either myself on (08) 1234 5678 (W) or (08) 1234 5678 (H) or my supervisor, Professor Jim Ife on (08) 1234 5678.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours sincerely
Katrina Stratton
PhD Candidate
University of Western Australia
Appendix E – Content Analysis; Data Recording Sheet
Note: this is a condensed version of the data sheet used, which allowed more room for note-taking etc.

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The explanatory memo to the above concept map highlighted the following issues:

- Art and science are two *dimensions* of social work
- They share some qualities, process and parallels (art and science)
- They also share these with social work
- The appropriate nature of that relationship and its balance needs examining
- There are also other constructions of social work e.g. anti-oppressive practice, which also overlap, but with which this research is not concerned
• Encompassing all of this is the private and political relationship – this is what makes social work social I believe
• It is also relevant to the science and art spheres – for parallels it shares with them as well as providing a useful tool of analysis in looking at their place in social work
• Still what I am focused on is developing the art sphere – the relationship of science and art would be drawn a little differently if done to represent status and so forth
• Aspects of their relationship include
  • credibility
  • accessibility (both difficult for different reasons)
  • visibility
  • private and political nature of their practice and if this is appropriate
  • status (general and in social work)
  • commonalties/differences
  • Placing the science sphere appropriately; building an art sphere
Appendix G – Memo: Determining your Purpose (1)

Memo: Purpose

31/3/00

Questions to ask
1. Why should such a study be conducted?
2. What kinds of information will be produced?
3. What types of information are of particular importance?
4. How will this information be used?
5. Who wants the information?


In [student colleague’s] [post-graduate] seminar last week she said she had read somewhere you should write and reflect on your purpose – focus, changes, direction etc. Out of one of the focus group readings I got the above questions to consider when thinking about purpose.

Why should such a study be conducted?
This study should be done to discover how social workers use the qualities and parallels of art so that they can become explicit, transferable, teachable and learnable, open, subject to scrutiny and debate, so that we can trust them, develop them, scrutinize them, explain and defined them. Currently these qualities are latent in much social work practice and theory. There is a danger therefore that they may be lost, submerged, or rejected, particularly by the purveyors and promoters of science. I want to know how social workers think about and use these qualities.

What kinds of information will be produced?
The kind of information that will be produced will be qualitative – the product of reflective and critical conversations and dialogue. It will be rich, based in experience and ‘reality’ and therefore complex and subtle also. It will be hard to analyse! The data will be layered – it will represent further multiple layers also.

What types of information are of particular importance?
The type of information that is of particular importance is
i) people’s experiences – these make the qualities real and acknowledge their existence and use. this is my ‘proof”. These also provide the inspiration, the ideas, the stimulation and the examples to other people
ii) the theoretical data – the books that also provide stimulation and examples but perhaps will provide a strong foundation for the study. My analysis and drawing together of the theory and literature is central and crucial to the argument – that is perhaps what will get credibility on the academia side the above for practitioners
How will this information be used?
The information will be used to mount an argument regarding the art of social work. It will provide examples, evidence parallels, thoughts and reflections, insights, analysis, links and so forth between social work and art. It will also be used to create a document that will get me a Ph.D. It will also be used – in other forms – to stimulate other social workers to practice in this way – or develop or reflect on how they already practice in this way.

Who wants the information?
I want the information – and I want it to develop the concept of social work as an art. I hope that other social workers want the information to validate and assist them to practice in this way. The purpose is to not only develop but give credibility and sanctity to social work as an art.
Appendix H – Memo: Determining your Purpose (2)

Memo: Purpose
18/9/04

Why should such a study be conducted?
Due to the status of social work as an art and that it should be in the public arena of conceptualising of and understanding in social work for a variety of reasons:

- Accountability in using such a perspective – it needs to be tested publicly and be able to be scrutinised and analysed
- Transferability – to students and other practitioners. If it is a truly individual practice it remains the exclusive province of that practitioner rather than being able to be used and accessed by both clients and practitioners
- Holistic practice – if we don’t have public and accessible and meaningful ways of knowing about it either it doesn’t consciously contribute to practice or it is absent – when in fact it can facilitate human connection, understanding, the gathering of information, assessment and making sense, generating plans and solutions and the evaluation of work
- Service to clients
- Confidence and validation to practitioners who work in this way
- Challenge to scientism – as the dominant way of knowing, if indeed that is how it remains. I guess rather what I’m talking about here is a contribution to the different ways of knowing that for so long have remained outside the boundaries of rational scientific ways of knowing – and been dismissed actually as not being knowledge
- Lack of presence in the literature. This is two-fold. If it has a presence in the literature than the above things are achieved. The other side of that is an opportunity, to provide some analysis to fill those gaps
- My own reasons! A study of this breadth on social work as an art has not been conducted before, there is a current presence in the literature – a re-emergence of the debate which presents some opportunities to contribute to that

What kinds of information will be produced?
The information will be qualitative – although at times I am a bit scared by that – but is that fear because I am internalising the dominant paradigm so completely? These issues I will need to address in my conclusions – the strengths and weaknesses of the study and in the information gathered. I think though I have been transparent in my collection methods, analysis style and have provided ‘evidence’ for concepts, analyses and conclusions I have generated from the data, including the literature.

What types of information are of particular importance?
The type of information that is of particular importance remains what practitioners are saying – this is the gap in the current research as it also demonstrates and provides examples of art in practice. Yet at the same time it is the interview data I have struggled with analysing and bringing together – although once I immersed myself in it (as per the creative process I’ve learnt about from my reading) it became better known to me, and from this knowledge came illumination and connection. I think what I have been afraid of is my own contribution and ability as analyst and researcher – addressing this is in considering the
potential contribution to the idea of social work as an art my research can made to the above issues.

**How will this information be used?**
In a quite practical sense the information will be used to construct a thesis, to be published, to achieve for me the title of doctor, etc, etc!! In a conceptual sense, it is thinking currently about where the individual analyses of the content analysis texts and the interviews go – in the body of the text to be read side by side and compared to one another, or in an appendix, so that the cross-sample analysis and concepts come through. It is really the latter that allows conclusions and dimensions to be drawn and developed. Later, I hope the information will be used and accessed in public forums – primarily through journals, and that in that way it is given some relevance for practitioners, even if it is to validate or stimulate their artistic ways of working.

**Who wants the information?**
This is part of my fear and lack of confidence at the present time – that only I want the information and it won’t be relevant to the workplace or to other practitioners. But if I consider the other purposes, they kind of meet each other. Of course I still want to achieve the somewhat loftier goals I set early in the research piece about contributing to the art of social work, but at this stage of the process the content does not motivate me as much as the process goals now – getting the bloody thing done!!!