

Social work and social media in Aotearoa New Zealand

Forging new boundaries



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This presentation

- Background to the research project
- Some related themes in the literature
- Presentation of some data and emerging themes
- Questions



Background to study

- Relationship between **media (journalism) and social work**; collaborative teaching opportunities (Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013).
- Relationship between **media and social media** (or new media).
- Relationship between **social media and social work**.

What is social media?

- In 2004, Web 2.0 was introduced, offering the public a new kind of relationship with the World Wide Web. Prior to this time we were able to *consume* large amounts of information contained on the internet. After 2004 however we were more able to *create* material, leading to the concept of an online “participatory culture.” (posting responses, rating, sharing and commenting).

Themes in the literature

- The relevance of social media to social work (social justice, advocacy)
- The application of ethical, professional behaviour to the use of social media
- The growing use of social media in social work education.
- The call for a social work analysis of social media in society

The social media imperative

- Overall, social workers are challenged to take advantage of "every advocacy tactic available to the greatest extent possible to ensure timely policy change for vulnerable populations" (Edwards & Hoefler, 2010, p. 220).

The Challenge

- The lack of social work advancement in internet technology could lead to its role being surpassed by other professions (Giffords, 2009), and that without “immediate engagement, our profession risks becoming irrelevant and inaccessible” (Schembri, 2008, p 119).

Gaps

The literature makes a strong case in principle for the professional use of social media by social workers, and guides us in its ethical use.

We **don't know** much about how social workers *are* using social media, or what they *think* about it.

Aims of the research

- to explore and describe the current professional use of social media by social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
- to contribute information about the perceptions held by New Zealand social workers as to the professional benefits and challenges of social media.

Mixed Methods

- Self administered internet survey
- Key informant interviews
- Other methods “under construction”



Stanfield, 2013

Survey Participants: ANZASW membership

- 4.5 million people live in Aotearoa NZ
- 4000 registered social workers (Social Workers Registration Board SWRB)
- 6600 employed as social workers (NZ Statistics, 2012)
- 3430 members of *Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW)*
- 342 members responded to the survey

Survey

- Using **scales and multiple choice questions**, information was sought via a self administered internet questionnaire about the social work experience (**behaviour, opinions, attitudes**) of using social media for professional reasons, including motivations, limitations and challenges.

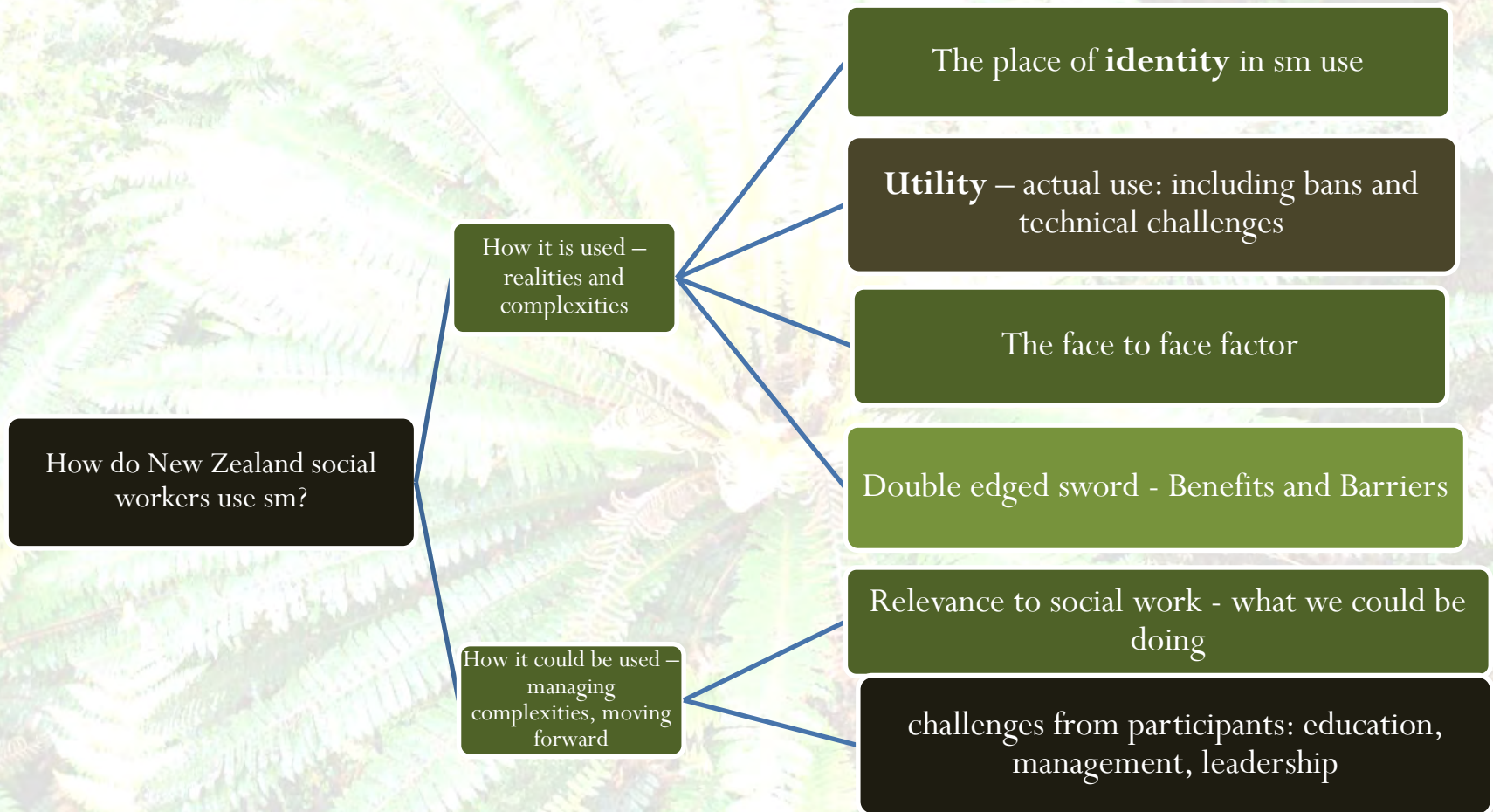
Do you use social media for professional social work reasons?

- *Of the 342 respondents, 47% (n158) answered “yes” to this question, and were then prompted to answer a series of questions designed to capture their behaviour related to this use. The remaining 53% of respondents (n181) answered “no” and were prompted to answer a different set of questions designed to capture their decision making around this non-use.*

key informant interviews

- Selected leaders in the New Zealand social work community were invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews as key informants.
- 12 interviews were conducted: social work managers, academics, senior practitioners, clinical/practice leaders.

Emerging Themes





Emerging Theme: Identity & Boundaries



- **Cultural identity:** tall poppy, geographic influences, 'kanohi ki te kanohi,' privacy.
- **Social media identity (self-described):** geek, promiscuous, Neanderthal, virgin
- **Social work identity:** relational qualities, professional and personal, public and private

Personal/Professional Boundaries

In the context of using social media at work..this is a no no. Access to social media is banned or blocked. I am however linked to ANZASW through FB at home and to social action sites and use these to keep up knowledge...learning and development I guess...in my own time however.

I use my personal social media for professional reasons. Networking, advocacy and information sharing. I find it challenging to consider how to keep my personal and professional life separate in this context (i.e. My FB 'friends' who should really be professional contacts).

Professional/Organizational Boundaries

- *... we sign up to a particular contract with our employer that says we can't really have a political voice and there are certain things we can and cannot talk about. We can't say anything that's going to go against our organisation. That makes it hard, so when we're told as social workers to be aligned with a social justice conscience under our ethics and standards, and to have a voice, really there's another part of us, or society or our employers and organisations shutting that down.*



Summary



- *You could argue that social media is providing an emerging field for social work practice that we actually are in the midst of trying to come to terms with, but we're being taken there by society and we're being taken there by our client group whether we like it or not, and we have to then respond to that and find our way.*

(Interview Participant)

Questions



Stanfield, 2015

Deb Stanfield, 2013

References

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Independence & individual professionalism

The internet provides “ways to share expertise and knowledge nationally and internationally and allows the “power” and “knowledge” to be transferred away from organisations and directly to professionals”

(Ayres, 2011, p. 21).

- Studies show that those who use social media as a news source are increasingly more interested in the views and “media analysis” of their personal networks, rather than what was traditionally offered by journalists. This suggests that “hierarchical relationships between mass media consumers and producers of media content are being further unravelled” (Hermida et al, 2012, p. 816).

**Strongly
agree**

Agree

**Strongly
disagree**

Social workers should be competent in the use of social media.

22%

15%

35%

24%

4%

Social workers should make professional use of social media.

13%

15%

30%

35%

6%

Social workers should be offered training on how to use social media safely.

38%

14%

37%

9%

2%

Social workers should be offered training on the potential professional uses of social media

37%

17%

35%

8%

2%

Competent use of social media is important to the social work profession

22%

17%

30%

26%

6%

Personal/Private Boundaries

- *... they then have access to a whole lot of information about you personally including your 'likes,' literally the things you tick and like on FB and the comments in some cases that you make. This might be a good thing in the long run because it might mean that we are challenged increasingly to live our lives in a way that's congruent. But it potentially also means that it's harder for us to find private spaces or private social spaces.***(interview participant)**

Professional/Organizational Boundaries

- *There are certain things and certain people who are political people that I have 'liked' on my personal page but I am really mindful around what I choose to 'like' or 'share' or not 'like,' because I don't want to compromise myself professionally. Which is really interesting. Not that I would 'like' something personally that would not fit with a social work perspective, because I wouldn't, but it's more about organisationally where we sit in terms of being really apolitical. (Interview participant)*