

**SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL  
MEDIA:  
EDUCATING FOR A  
NETWORKED PROFESSION**

**ANZSWWER  
symposium  
2017**

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Photo credit Sarah McKay  
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## HULA BY YOUTUBE

- You can do anything on YouTube. I was looking at one of my mokopuna, she was doing the hula. She was so beautiful and I went oh baby, who taught you to do the hula? YouTube man! and I was like, oh ...

(focus group participant).



## SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL MEDIA IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

- Brief overview of research project (definitions, literature, methodology) and some findings.
- Presentation of focus group analysis.
- Summary of challenges and ideas put forward by participants.

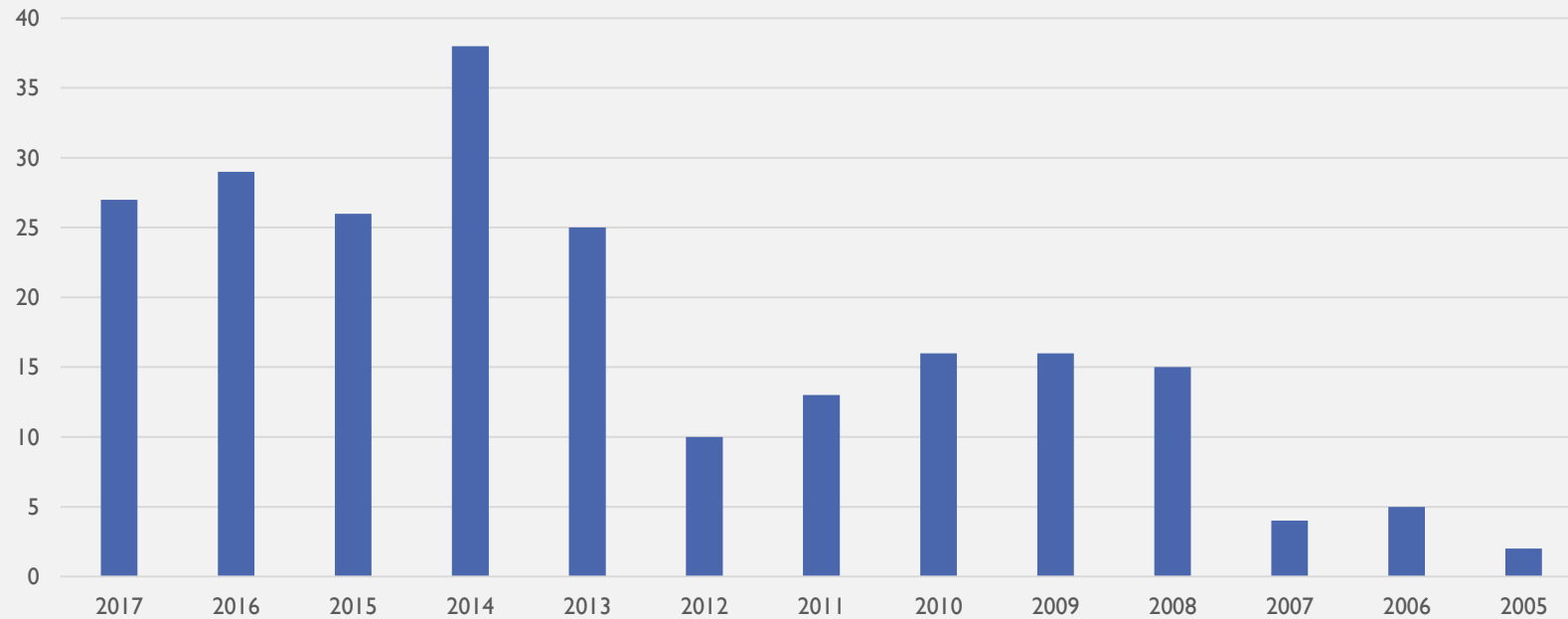
## SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINED

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). We can also generate **profiles** and lists of **connections** (ie ‘friends’) who are visible to and can communicate with each other.

## LITERATURE – WHAT SHOULD WE BE TEACHING?

- **The relevance of social media to social work.**
- **The application of ethical, professional behaviour to the use of social media**
- **Social work analysis of social media in society (ie, digital divide)**
- **Social work assessment of the “networked life” of clients.**
- **The dynamics of social networking sites and ‘big data.’**
- **The use of social media as an educational tool. *Twitter essay, blogging, virtual reality apps, Pinterest, Facebook and other interactive platforms.***

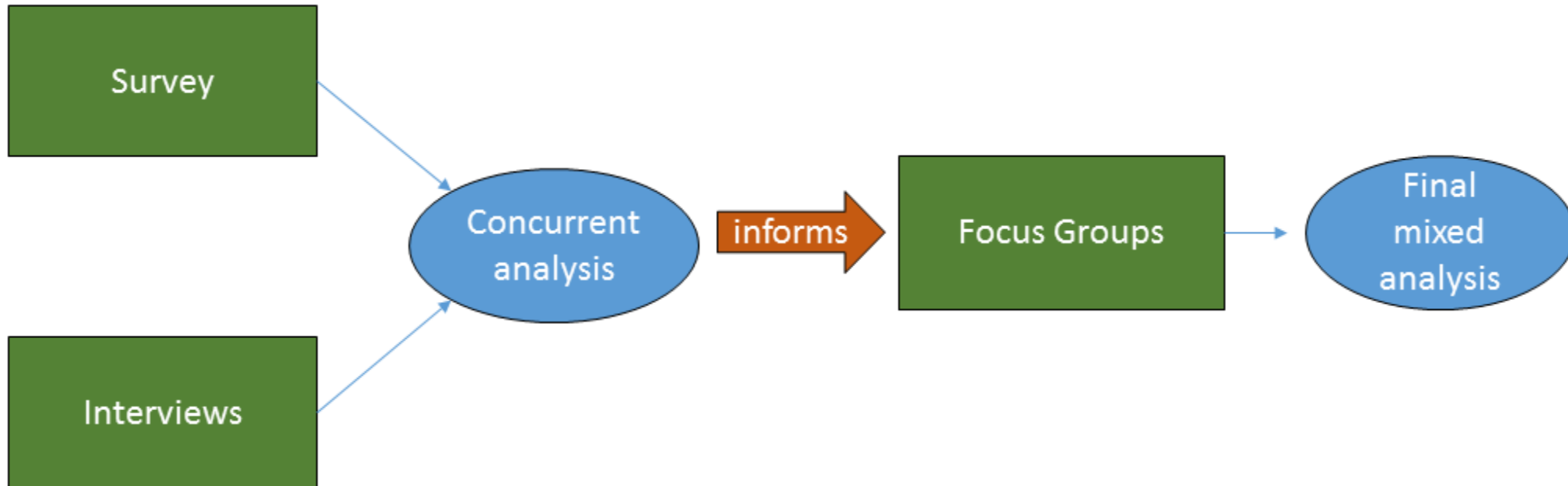
## SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL MEDIA REFERENCES (N=188) BY YEAR



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are New Zealand social workers participating professionally in social media?
- What do New Zealand social workers perceive to be the professional benefits and challenges of social media?
- What is the opinion of New Zealand social workers about the value of social media to their profession?
- **What do NZ social workers want to learn about social media, and how do they want to learn it?**

# Mixed Methodology





**SURVEY 2014: DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA  
FOR PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK REASONS?**

**YES 47% (n=158)**

- Networking
- PD
- Research
- Information sharing
- Advocacy
- Client communication

**NO 53% (n=181)**

- Security, ethical, privacy worries
- Employer says no
- No time
- Not interested
- Not enough knowledge
- No internet access

## SURVEY 2014 – YES, WE NEED TRAINING

All participants regardless of their use of social media, agreed with the following statements:

- **Social workers should be trained in the potential uses of social media** (m=3.79, SD= 1.10).
- **Social workers should be trained in how to use social media safely** (m=3.77, SD = 1.12).

likert scale: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)

## KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW THEMES

- **Identity: cultural, personal, professional, organisational, public, private**
- **Double-edged sword: promises and perils**
- **Face to face practice challenge: kanohi ki te kanohi**
- **Utility and innovation: potential uses/misuses**
- **The relevance of social media: a new role for social work**

## SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Really it comes down to ... perceiving social media as part of the social world, not separate from it, and for social workers to educate themselves so that it becomes familiar. So it moves from the scary unknown to the known. There may still be scary bits about the known, which is valuable to recognise but while it's still unknown then people are going to feel less confident around engaging. Becoming informed, become aware, and developing a more sophisticated view of social media; it's not all good and it's not all bad. (Key Informant)**

## SOCIAL WORKERS LEARNING ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA – FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Generating  
personal  
meaning

Generating  
professional  
meaning

Tackling  
dilemmas

Discovering  
ways to learn

## DISCOVERING WAYS TO LEARN

Seeking  
leadership

Supporting &  
mentoring  
peers

Generating  
'data' – learning  
by doing

## SEEKING LEADERSHIP – WHO’S THE KAITIAKI OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

So what is the tikanga, what is the tika about social media?  
Who enforces that? It comes from the home and the norms  
within the home or the norms within the school of social  
work or within what’s modelled through ANZASW rightly  
or wrongly, or SWRB. Who’s the kaitiaki of social media?

(focus group participant)

## SEEKING LEADERSHIP– WHERE SHOULD KNOWLEDGE COME FROM?

- **Do you think academia has a role to play in promoting the use of how we use social media? It's like if Dr so and so was to say social media is a great way to go, it almost legitimises it. (2)**
- **We need a reference point to show us - this is how social workers use it. (5)**
- **Yeah, it is because the Dr said so. (2)**
- **It's the evidence base, isn't it? We're evidence based practitioners, so we want an evidence base for this (raised voice, bangs on table). (1)**
- **Because the registration board can write a policy, but it really needs to come from our leaders, our thought leaders. (2)**

(Focus group discussion)



## CONFUSED LEADERSHIP

- What about the mixed messages we're getting about the ethical use of social media, for example – our students being told it's not okay to be spying on CYF kids, what they're doing on the weekend, when you're on Facebook. (social work educator)
- I do it all the time. They gave us Facebook so that we could do it. (child protection social worker)
- Yeah. So there's a disconnect between what the keepers of our code of ethics are saying and practice. (social work educator)

## EMERGING LEADERSHIP

And there was a powerful whero that was put forward by the tangata whenua voices on social work, saying, 'Come and talk with us. Don't use Facebook and social media to air your dirty washing. Come and sit with us and together you will find there's a force that's working forward but don't do our washing in public.' That was the direction.

(Focus group participant)

## PEER SUPPORT/MENTORING

- It would be really cool, eh, to have peer supervision on use of social media. Have a support network of people to be able to pick the brains of – how are you using it, have you tried this, did it work? That would be great. (1)
- It's getting your like-minded people together, isn't it? (3)
- Yeah, and you feel safe. (2)
- And it creates a sense of permission, as well, to make mistakes and to see it as a work in progress. Rather than just being this lone voice out in the wilderness, waiting for something bad to happen, you've actually got a little support group. (1)

## FOCUS GROUPS – LEARNING BY DOING

Data from focus groups approximate natural interaction between people, allowing the observer to witness how gaps in knowledge are filled, how complexities and contradictions are managed, how discourse is created.

Focus groups offer opportunity for connections to be made between participants which in turn create “opportunities for solidarity building and political action” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 40).

## FOCUS GROUP LEARNING BY DOING

I'm not confident in how I fit ... within a social media space, so I'm not really visible in social media. I don't have a strong voice speaking out, but I spend a lot of time reading and thinking and critically reflecting on what's coming through the feeds.



I suppose for me, it's not enough to say that I only like face to face. I need to get stronger in my use of social media, I do see it as a way to rally people and bring people together for social justice.

## FOCUS GROUP LEARNING BY DOING

It's just an interesting situation to be potentially at risk of being targeted, shot down, being trolled by people and having your integrity questioned. All of these quite scary potential knock-on effects of being vocal, being visible, being out there as 'this is me and this is my view.' And that puts me off. That puts me off a lot.



We've got to give it a go. Just got to do it. Because I feel like I've been tiptoeing around the edge and doing a bit of it kind of, but I think we've just got to take the plunge and roll with mistakes but actually create some data to then create rules from.

**SOCIAL  
WORKERS  
USING  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA –  
LEARNING  
BY DOING**

POVERTY  
IS  
Unacceptable

HOUSING  
IS A  
HUMAN  
Right

PEOPLE  
BEFORE  
PROFIT

Photo credit: Sarah McKay



Hīkoi Whakaara -  
Everyone Matters

@Hikoiriseup

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## SUMMARY

- **Social workers agree that we should learn more about social media.**
- **There is pressure on academia, professional and regulatory bodies to provide leadership**
- **Social workers and social work students can rely on collective wisdom to learn and generate new knowledge about the professional use of social media.**
- **The social work profession needs to support social media practice, the generation of 'data' for research and the development of theory.**

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