25 years of Social Work Research

Summary of Data Cleaning Procedures

Methods

Extraction of Article Records

The work of Hodge and Lacasse (2011) served as an initial list of 84 core social work journals. This list was based on a review of a variety of sources, including An Author's Guide to Social Work Journals (NASW Press, 1997), Thyer's (2005) more recent listing of social work periodicals, and Genamics JournalSeek (http://journalseek.net/). Hodge and Lacasse (2011) examined the mission and aims of each journal, and eliminated all journals that had an inter-disciplinary focus. An initial search query was built using all the journal titles, limiting the results to only journal articles.

To help ensure comprehensive coverage of all possible core social work journals, a subsequent search was conducted by searching the journal titles of each database using the following search specification, limiting the results to only peer-reviewed journals and journal articles. This subsequent query included the following search terms:

- "social work"
- "social welfare"
- "social casework",
- "social service",
- "human service",
- "social development",
- "social environment"

These queries were used to extract articles from three major databases on the EbscoHost platform: PsycINFO, Social Service Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts. We then conducted a supplemental search of the ProQuest database that searched across an additional 46 minor databases, including (but not limited to): ERIC, Sociological Abstracts and Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. We limited the search to all research from 1988 to the end of 2013, representing a quarter century of social work research. Articles published in 2014 and 2015 were excluded because of observed delays in indexing for numerous journals.

Search results were exported in series of large batches as raw text files in a generic bibliographic format. Article records were merged into a single file and then transformed into a structured database for subsequent data cleaning and analysis. This transformation was done using a set of scripts designed specifically for the R statistical programming language.

Pre-processing and cleaning of data

The extraction process resulted in 36,094 article records from 117 different journals. The search process was designed to be overly inclusive to ensure full coverage of all possible social work journals contained in the major and minor databases. Thus, it was necessary to implement a series of data cleaning procedures to ensure a focus only on journal articles from peer-reviewed social work journals.

The first step involved fixing journal title names because of discrepancies that occurred in the indexing process. For example, *British Journal of Social Work* was extracted as a journal that was different than *The British Journal of Social Work*, and *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services.* Some social work journals changed titles over their history. For example, *Families in Society*

had three titles that preceded the current title: *Social Casework*, *Journal of Social Casework*, and *The Family*. The database that contributed the largest number of articles to the study database indexed the majority of journal titles under the journal's current name, and provided an additional data field for the historical name. However, historical names from Social Science Abstracts and Social Work Abstracts were not merged with the current name. Thus, the last step of the data cleaning procedures was to conduct these merges.

We then excluded all non-social work journals from the search list. These journal titles were captured in the search because many journals from allied health disciplines (e.g., nursing and psychology) used the term "psychosocial" in the title of a special editions. To facilitate this process, a list of all journal titles that did not match the core list (as defined by Hodge and LaCasse) was created and distributed among the study authors. Study authors reviewed these candidate journal titles and discussed whether each candidate title should be retained or excluded. When disagreements occurred, the study authors reviewed the mission and aims of the journals, names of editorial board members, and focus of the articles. A consensus was reached on all journal titles, reducing the article and journal count to 36091 106 (respectively).

Because separate searches were conducted across multiple databases to help ensure comprehensive coverage due to known gaps in indexing for many social work journals, a matching algorithm was developed to identify and remove duplicate article records. The matching algorithm reduced the total number of article records to 33768.

In the extraction process, limiters were applied to extract only journal article in order to avoid other scholarly communications from being captured, such as editorials, commentaries, book reviews, software reviews, tables of contents, obituaries, and calls for papers. A visual scan of the database revealed many instances in which these limiters were unsuccessful. Thus, a set of regular expressions were created and tested against a reduced database comprised of representative examples of communications to be excluded and articles to be retained. Regular expressions are special search strings used to identify specific search patterns within text. When the regular expression achieved $> 98\%$ sensitivity and specificity in detecting target article records, they were applied to the full database, reducing the article count to 33202.

The final step involved scanning the database to exclude article records without any information in the author, journal title, article title, or publication year fields, as well as eliminating social work journals with total article counts of < 10 for the entire 25 year window. This produced a database of 32890 unique social work articles, and 79 journal titles.

Results

This section provides a summary of the revised database after the initial processing with the `ebscoBWR` function and the subsequent data cleaning. An additional code is included in this summary to indicate whether the journal title overlaps with the list of Hodge (indicated by *H*).

```
Joining by: "articleID"
```

title	first	last	n	H
Administration in Social Work	1988	2013	605	Y
Advances in Social Work	2000	2012	236	Y
Affilia	2007	2013	186	Y
Arete	1988	2013	361	Y
Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work & Development	1997	2003	37	Y
Australian Social Work	2006	2013	244	Y
British Journal of Social Work	1988	2013	1404	Y
Canadian Social Work	1999	2005	47	Y
Canadian Social Work Review	1988	2013	422	Y
Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal	1988	2013	725	Y
Child & Family Social Work	1997	2013	570	Y

```
                           Children & Schools  2003 2013  239 Y
                China Journal of Social Work  2009 2013   97 Y
                  Clinical Social Work Journal  1988 2013  803 Y
             Contemporary Rural Social Work  2010 2013   23 N
                       Ethics & Social Welfare  2009 2013  115 N
            European Journal of Social Work  2000 2013  395 Y
                          Families in Society  1988 2013 1862 Y
                        Health & Social Work  1988 2013 1022 Y
               Indian Journal of Social Work  1988 2012  759 Y
     International Journal of Social Welfare  2000 2013  386 Y
                  International Social Work  1988 2013 1014 Y
            Journal of Applied Social Sciences  1994 1999   47 Y
         Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work  1995 2013  299 Y
         Journal of Comparative Social Welfare  2008 2012   43 Y
Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work  2000 2013  260 Y
         Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work  2004 2013  123 Y
                Journal of Family Social Work  1995 2013  218 Y
         Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services  1994 2013  514 Y
         Journal of Gerontological Social Work  1988 2013 1268 Y
            Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services  2002 2013  262 Y
Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment  1997 2013  799 Y
            Journal of Multicultural Social Work  1999 2000   21 N
  Journal of Practice Teaching in Social Work & Health  1999 2005   40 Y
Journal of Practice Teaching in Social Work & Practice  1998 2000   27 N
         Journal of Progressive Human Services  2000 2013   97 Y
             Journal of Psychosocial Oncology  1988 2013  627 Y
  Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work  2004 2013  181 Y
            Journal of Social Service Research  1988 2013  637 Y
                     Journal of Social Work  2001 2013  255 Y
         Journal of Social Work & Human Sexuality  1988 1993   45 N
            Journal of Social Work Education  1990 2013  953 Y
              Journal of Social Work Practice  1999 2013  375 Y
  Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions  2001 2013  363 Y
     Journal of Social Work Research & Evaluation  2000 2005   99 Y
         Journal of Social Work Values & Ethics  2004 2012   42 Y
Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation  2002 2013  113 Y
Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care  2005 2013  149 Y
         Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare  1988 2013  880 Y
           Journal of Teaching in Social Work  1988 2013  430 Y
           Journal of Technology in Human Services  1988 2013  451 Y
  Journal of the Society for Social Work & Research  2010 2013   63 N
                Practice: Social Work in Action  2005 2013  176 Y
                 Prevention in Human Services  1988 1993   91 N
                   Professional Development  1998 2012  216 Y
                  Psychoanalytic Social Work  1988 2013  275 Y
                    Qualitative Social Work  2002 2013  290 Y
     Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping  1995 2013  739 Y
           Research on Social Work Practice  1991 2013 1114 Y
                         Rural Social Work  2000 2004   39 Y
                 School Social Work Journal  2002 2013  148 Y
         Smith College Studies in Social Work  1988 2013  501 Y
                       Social Development  1992 2013  691 N
                Social Development Issues  1992 2013  252 Y
                    Social Service Review  1988 2013  801 Y
```

```
                            Social Work  1988 2013 1715 Y
                Social Work & Christianity  2005 2013  189 Y
        Social Work & Social Sciences Review  1989 2013  213 Y
                    Social Work & Society  2003 2012  212 Y
                    Social Work Education  1999 2013  832 Y
                        Social Work Forum  2004 2009   27 Y
                     Social Work Research  1994 2013  547 Y
          Social Work Research & Abstracts  1988 1993   67 N
                       Social Work Review  2010 2013  184 Y
                 Social Work With Groups  1988 2013  671 Y
            Social Work in Health Care  1988 2013 1058 Y
            Social Work in Mental Health  2002 2013  300 Y
            Social Work in Public Health  2007 2013  156 Y
    The Hong Kong Journal of Social Work  1993 2012  159 Y
```

Intersection

This list shows which journal titles are common to both lists.

```
unique.swHistory <- filter(full.df, attributes == "journal") %>%
                distinct(record)

hodge.swHistory.intersect <- intersect(hodge, unique.swHistory$record)

hodge.swHistory.diff <- setdiff(hodge, unique.swHistory$record)
swHistory.hodge.diff <- setdiff(unique.swHistory$record, hodge)

#hodge.swHistory.union <- union(hodge, unique.swHistory$record)
```

```
print(sort(hodge.swHistory.intersect))
```

```
##  [1] "Administration in Social Work"
##  [2] "Advances in Social Work"
##  [3] "Affilia"
##  [4] "Arete"
##  [5] "Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work & Development"
##  [6] "Australian Social Work"
##  [7] "British Journal of Social Work"
##  [8] "Canadian Social Work"
##  [9] "Canadian Social Work Review"
## [10] "Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal"
## [11] "Child & Family Social Work"
## [12] "Children & Schools"
## [13] "China Journal of Social Work"
## [14] "Clinical Social Work Journal"
## [15] "European Journal of Social Work"
## [16] "Families in Society"
## [17] "Health & Social Work"
## [18] "Indian Journal of Social Work"
## [19] "International Journal of Social Welfare"
## [20] "International Social Work"
## [21] "Journal of Applied Social Sciences"
```

```
## [22] "Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work"
## [23] "Journal of Comparative Social Welfare"
## [24] "Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work"
## [25] "Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work"
## [26] "Journal of Family Social Work"
## [27] "Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services"
## [28] "Journal of Gerontological Social Work"
## [29] "Journal of HIV/AIDS & Social Services"
## [30] "Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment"
## [31] "Journal of Practice Teaching in Social Work & Health"
## [32] "Journal of Progressive Human Services"
## [33] "Journal of Psychosocial Oncology"
## [34] "Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work"
## [35] "Journal of Social Service Research"
## [36] "Journal of Social Work"
## [37] "Journal of Social Work Education"
## [38] "Journal of Social Work in Disability & Rehabilitation"
## [39] "Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care"
## [40] "Journal of Social Work Practice"
## [41] "Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions"
## [42] "Journal of Social Work Research & Evaluation"
## [43] "Journal of Social Work Values & Ethics"
## [44] "Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare"
## [45] "Journal of Teaching in Social Work"
## [46] "Journal of Technology in Human Services"
## [47] "Practice: Social Work in Action"
## [48] "Professional Development"
## [49] "Psychoanalytic Social Work"
## [50] "Qualitative Social Work"
## [51] "Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping"
## [52] "Research on Social Work Practice"
## [53] "Rural Social Work"
## [54] "School Social Work Journal"
## [55] "Smith College Studies in Social Work"
## [56] "Social Development Issues"
## [57] "Social Service Review"
## [58] "Social Work"
## [59] "Social Work & Christianity"
## [60] "Social Work & Social Sciences Review"
## [61] "Social Work & Society"
## [62] "Social Work Education"
## [63] "Social Work Forum"
## [64] "Social Work in Health Care"
## [65] "Social Work in Mental Health"
## [66] "Social Work in Public Health"
## [67] "Social Work Research"
## [68] "Social Work Review"
## [69] "Social Work With Groups"
## [70] "The Hong Kong Journal of Social Work"
```

Differences

This list shows the articles on Hodge but not the current study.

```
print(sort(hodge.swHistory.diff))
```

```
##  [1] "Annual of Social Work"
##  [2] "Black Caucus"
##  [3] "Caribbean Journal of Social Work"
##  [4] "Critical Social Work"
##  [5] "Electronic Journal of Social Work"
##  [6] "IUC Journal of Social Work Theory & Practice"
##  [7] "Japanese Journal of Social Services"
##  [8] "Journal of Changsha Social Work"
##  [9] "Journal of Forensic Social Work"
## [10] "Journal of Rural Social Work & Social Development"
## [11] "Journal of Social Work in Long-Term Care"
## [12] "The New Social Worker"
## [13] "The Social Worker/Le Travaileur Social"
## [14] "The Spirituality & Social Work Forum"
```

This list shows the articles on the current study but not on Hodge.

```
print(sort(swHistory.hodge.diff))
```

```
## [1] "Contemporary Rural Social Work"
## [2] "Ethics & Social Welfare"
## [3] "Journal of Multicultural Social Work"
## [4] "Journal of Practice Teaching in Social Work & Practice"
## [5] "Journal of Social Work & Human Sexuality"
## [6] "Journal of the Society for Social Work & Research"
## [7] "Prevention in Human Services"
## [8] "Social Development"
## [9] "Social Work Research & Abstracts"
```

Descriptive summary of records

```
number.of.articles <- length(which(full.df$attributes == "article"))
range.of.years <- range(full.df$record[full.df$attributes == "pubYear"])
```

```
# Number of articles
cat(number.of.articles)
```

```
## 32890
```
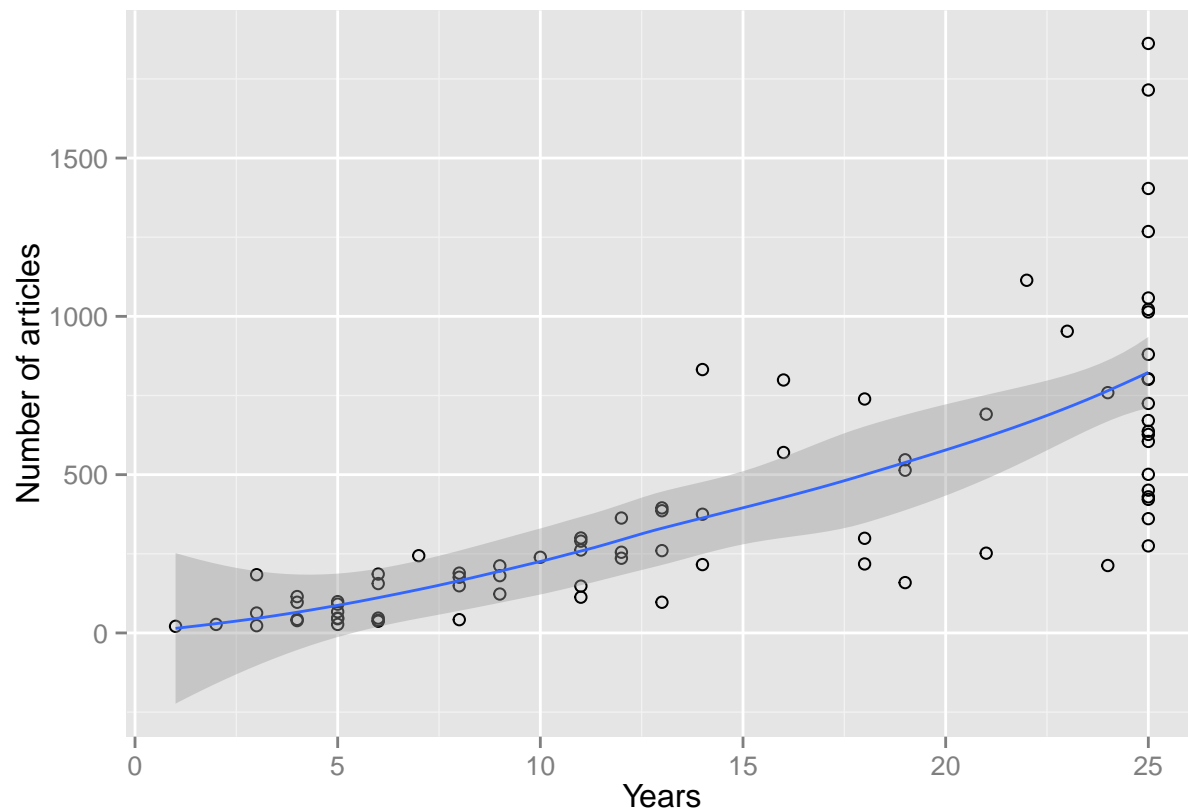
```
# Range of years
cat(range.of.years)
```

```
## 1988 2013
```

```
cor.data <- select(final.list, first, last, n) %>%
        mutate(no.years = as.numeric(last) - as.numeric(first))

ggplot(cor.data, aes(x = no.years, y = n)) +
        geom_point(shape = 1) +
        geom_smooth() +
        xlab("Years") +
        ylab("Number of articles")
```

geom_smooth: method="auto" and size of largest group is <1000, so using loess. Use 'method = x' to ch


```
cor(cor.data$no.years, cor.data$n)
```

[1] 0.7487

The following evaluation argument in the chunk is set to FALSE. Set this function to TRUE to process CSV files of the target journals for inspection. CSV files are named by the journal title. Be sure to use the exact spelling of the journal as it is contained in the data files. Set the other arguments to TRUE if you want additional fields to be included. Please note that it will save the files to your current working directory, which is not specified in this Markdown document.

```
journalArticleFinder.f <- function(journalTitle, keyword = FALSE,
                        authorAff = FALSE, abstract = FALSE){
    article.search <- which(full.df$record == journalTitle)
    article.search <- full.df[article.search,]
```

```r
    article.search.ID <- select(article.search, articleID)
    target.ID <- full.df$articleID %in% article.search.ID$articleID
    journal.article.df <- full.df[target.ID, ]
    if(keyword == FALSE){journal.article.df <- filter(journal.article.df, attributes != "keyWord")}
    if(authorAff == FALSE){journal.article.df <- filter(journal.article.df, attributes != "authorAff")}
    if(abstract == FALSE){journal.article.df <- filter(journal.article.df, attributes != "abstract")}
    x.shortened <- gsub(" ", "", journalTitle)
    write.csv(journal.article.df, file = paste0(x.shortened, ".csv"), row.names=F)
    }

journalArticleFinder.f("Research on Social Work Practice")
journalArticleFinder.f("Social Work")

articles <- filter(full.df, attributes == "article") %>% arrange(record)
write.csv(articles, file = "articles.csv")
```