

[Home](#) > [Vol 7, No 1 \(2006\)](#) > [Daley](#)

Theory discussion in social work journals: a preliminary study

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Abstract

Social workers are taught to strive to link theory with practice. A primary source for social workers to update theory and practice knowledge is the myriad of social work journals. However, how much discussion of theory occurs in social work journals? The authors developed criteria to evaluate the degree and quality of theory discussion and progression in social work journals. They used the criteria to evaluate 885 articles from 30 journals published in the year 2002. Great variability in theory discussion was found. The majority (71.7%) of articles contained no theory discussion (discussion that mentions a theory superficially but does not provide refinement of the theory). Few (9.5%) of the articles had theory progression (an article which is an empirical study or conceptual explanation that advances a theory in clarity, evidence base, or precision). Those articles that include theory provide a low quality of theory discussion or progression. Implications for practice and education are discussed.

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Last updated: November 20, 2007

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Reading Tools

Theory discussion...

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