The Practice and Science of Social Good: Emerging Paths to Positive Social Impact

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Abstract

Purpose: To explore the practice and science of social good and identify avenues for producing research and evidence-based practice in this area. The main proposition of this paper is that social good has the potential to promote ideals that directly align with social work values, offer new alliances and innovative technologies for achieving them, and spark interest in macro practice. **Method:** To gain an understanding of social good, a three-pronged approach was used: (a) review of multidisciplinary academic literature; (b) review of web-based information; and (c) analysis of qualitative interviews with nine social good experts. **Results:** The combined data indicated three social good domains: diversity and inclusion, environmental justice and sustainability, and peace and collaboration. A proposed definition and conceptual model of social good has emerged from the data: (I) social good domains; (II) unconventional systems of change; and (III) innovative technologies and approaches. **Conclusions:** Social good can open up new opportunities for the social work profession, together with allied disciplines, to lead the development of evidence-based practices and educational programs aimed at promoting social justice. It can bring a fresh direction to social work, rooted in the profession's bedrock values and befitting the entrepreneurial spirit, advances and technological innovations of the 21st century.

Keywords

social good, macro social work, environmental justice, diversity and inclusion, peace, harmony and collaboration, social entrepreneurship, social policy, social capital

Several trends have converged in recent years to create a sense of urgency for social good and to bring together grassroots organizations, global leaders, businesses, and social entrepreneurs interested in finding creative, lasting solutions to the greatest challenges of our society (Foley & Chowdhury, 2007; Makwara, 2011; Roy & Karna, 2015; Viswanathan, Seth, Gau, & Chaturvedi, 2009). These challenges include social problems such as mass immigration, uncertain economic futures, human right abuses, food shortages, affordable housing, and inadequate responses to natural and man-made disasters. They have brought new perspectives and energy toward finding innovative solutions for large-scale social causes that have historically been important to the social work profession and now comprise the profession's Grand Challenges (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2017).

In this article, I propose that the term social good embodies ideals that are at the heart of the social work profession and promotes its values and goals (Foley & Chowdhury, 2007; Verdugo, 2013; Viswanathan et al., 2009). By embracing this term, alliances of like-minded disciplines will be formed, opening up new strategies for social change, while also connecting with diverse constituencies and offering original solutions to pressing social problems. A focus on social good has potential for reconnecting the profession to its roots in social change, as articulated in the work of Nobel Peace Prize

laureate Jane Addams (1893), widely considered the founder of the social work profession, and to the profession's next-generation ambitions as represented by the Grand Challenges (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2017). By championing social good for the social work profession and by engaging allied disciplines in the Grand Challenges, we may anticipate accelerated development of evidence-based practices and educational programs aimed at promoting social justice.

Social good broadly refers to services or products that promote human well-being on a large scale (e.g., Business Dictionary, 2017; Law Dictionary, n.d.). Services or products may include timely access to health-care services, educational attainment, clean water, and more recently, equality and women's rights or social determinants of health. Based on the literature review and expert interviews presented in this article, I offer the following specific multidimensional definition of social good:

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Individual, community and society well-being related to (a) domains such as environmental justice and sustainability, diversity and inclusion, and peace, harmony and collaboration; (b) engaging unconventional systems of change such as grass roots and business collaborations, national and international NGOs, and social entrepreneurs; and (c) utilizing innovative technologies and approaches, such as design thinking, big data driven models, and harnessing social media for social change, all aiming to promote social justice.

The quest to promote social good around the world has brought together physical and virtual communities that unite around a cause or an idea, discoursing globally and instantaneously, and translating their concerns into coordinated actions such as protests or petition drives (prime examples of this phenomenon are the Black Lives Matter movement and #OscarSoWhite). Social good is a term that coalesces many movements around the world, is featured in corporate websites, and unites different sectors of society—government, nonprofit, grassroots groups, and business.

A clarification of terms is warranted to distinguish between public goods, common good, and social good. *Public goods* are products and services that are typically provided by the state or government, funded by taxation, and include national defense, public safety, education, health services, emergency services, infrastructure, public transportation, water, and telecommunication services (Scott, 2014). Public goods are defined in contrast to *private goods* that include commercial products and services that are created by businesses. *Common good* refers to voluntarily shared resources, which people manage by negotiating their own rules through social or customary traditions, norms, and practices for the fulfillment of their needs (Messner, 1965). Common good is not the "total good" or sum of all goods and interests within a community; it represents a greater "whole" that is created and shared by the community members (Melé, 2009). The common good principle rests upon the idea that members of a community are united by shared goals and resources (Melé, 2009).

Social good is a newer term compared with the other forms. In contrast to public good, social good does not depend on public policy or public funding and typically draws on resources from several seemingly disparate systems such as grassroots organizations, businesses, and social entrepreneurs. And, in contrast to common good, it is not tied to a specific community's goals, norms or resources, and is often national or global in its aspirations, reach, and resources.

The term social good has been widely used, primarily in the business and nonprofit worlds (Gordon, Russell-Bennett, & Lefebvre, 2016). A search of the literature for articles addressing social good indicates a growing interest in the term and increasing efforts to define, measure, and study the construct (Cicmil & O'Laocha, 2016; Gordon et al., 2016; Verdugo, 2013). Research is limited, however, and there is no commonly agreed upon scientific measure for the construct. It seems that the academe has lagged behind grassroots and business initiatives in addressing social good, using the construct primarily as a contextual descriptor or referring broadly to the social phenomenon (Cabrera & Williams, 2014; Hicks & Tran-Parsons, 2013; Rixom & Mishra, 2014). Social good can serve as an organizing construct to articulate the juncture between systems of change in society such as grassroots and nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and business organizations.

The purpose of this article is to explore the construct of social good in its broadest sense and to identify possible scientific avenues for producing and disseminating useful research in this area. The main proposition is that social good promotes ideals that directly align with the values and ethical obligations of the social work profession. Furthermore, it holds potential for development of a robust social good literature and models of practice that will stimulate renewed interest in the macro practice specialization in social work. In essence, it will reframe conventional social work practices within communities and organizations and within management and administration by developing and advocating for policies that promote social justice. This article thus offers a conceptual model for social good that includes three elements: (a) social good domains, (b) unconventional systems of change, and (c) innovative technologies. At its core, social good may be the spark needed to bring about a new dialogue within the profession with the hope of bringing fresh direction and energy to the social work profession that is rooted in its values of social justice, yet befitting the spirit, advances, and technologies of the 21st century.

Impetus for the Focus on Social Good—Why Now?

Reactions to globalization, mass immigration, and uncertain economic futures have fostered a political swing toward populism and conservatism across many locations and at varied scales (Aydın-Düzgit & Keyman, 2017; Kriesi & Pappas, 2015; M. A. Peters, 2017). This populist movement engenders, in some cases, regressive political forces that exacerbate inequalities among large segments of populations. Science is sometimes questioned, "alternative facts" are presented as facts, and a free press is mocked or stifled in many places (Ostiguy & Roberts, 2016; Schindler, 2017). Historic restrictions on certain cultures and religions, races and ethnicities, genders, and those with different abilities are revived. The environment is under threat from climate change deniers, repeal of environmental protections, and governmental inaction. Conflicts, wars, dislocation, and famine create large-scale human misery that is largely overlooked by wealthy nations (Crane, 2008; Speciale, 2013).

In response to the backslide around the world, progressive voices with restricted access to current political structures are looking for new avenues to express their values and effect change. There is a burgeoning consciousness about the importance of "making a difference." We see university students, older adults, and schoolchildren engage in fundraising to support causes in their neighborhoods and across the world (Mohanty, 2010; Slocum & Rhoads, 2009). Research on

millennials and postmillennials (also called Gen-Z), although somewhat mixed, appears to be trending toward increasing motivations to contribute to social good (e.g., Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Leveson & Joiner, 2014; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Ng & Gosset, 2013; Suleman & Nelson, 2011).

Alongside these local and global trends, and at times triggered by them, individuals and groups within the social work profession have engaged in formal and informal discussions about the future of the macro specialization (e.g., *CSWE Affirms the Need to Advance Macro Practice*, 2017; Hill, Ferguson, & Erickson, 2010; McBeath, 2016; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). The common concern addressed within these discussions is that the broad macro specialization—interventions that address social change in large systems through community organizing, management and administration, policy advocacy, and collaborations with businesses, nonprofits, and grassroots organizations—has lost its direction and energy (Hill et al., 2010; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Macro social work typically focuses on large-scale intervention and analysis rather than on individual clinical outcomes or behavioral change.

In the last several decades, it has become increasingly apparent that this specialization struggles to gain relevancy among students, failing to ignite their imaginations and motivate them to pursue macro-level careers (Bogo, Michalski, Raphael, & Roberts, 1995; Hill et al., 2010). Although the macro, community-based perspective is at the core of the profession's origins, we have witnessed a contraction in the size of macro specializations over the past several decades, relative to micro specializations, in most schools of social work around the nation (Hill et al., 2010; McBeath, 2016; McNutt, 1995; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). In light of this trend, the Council on Social Work Education's [CSWE] Board of Directors at its June 2017 meeting affirmed the need to ensure that the preparation of social workers is rooted in the profession's historic mission to promote social justice through social change. Establishing the Special Commission to Advance Macro Practice, CSWE adopted the Commission's goal of "20 by 20"—20% of Masters of Social Work (MSW) students will concentrate their studies in macro practice by the year 2020 (*CSWE Affirms the Need to Advance Macro Practice*, 2017).

This trend toward stagnation, or even contraction, of the macro specialization within the social work profession stands in stark contrast to the growing interest among younger generations in getting involved with community projects, social entrepreneurship, and grassroots organizing (e.g., Leveson & Joiner, 2014; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Ng & Gosset, 2013; Suleman & Nelson, 2011). There is evidence that millennials, for example, are less likely to seek and accept employment in work organizations that are unethical or are not working to benefit their communities and environment (Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Ng & Gossett, 2013). Conversely, community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, and business enterprises demonstrate growing interest in sponsoring and collaborating on projects and activities that contribute to social good (Eisenberg, 1998; Marshall, 2012; Mertens, 2007; Niyizonkiza &

Table 1. Summary of Social Good Literature.

Social Good Fields and Article Type	n
Total number of different fields	16
Fields	
Business/management	22
Education	4
Health care	3
Law	3
Sociology	5
Other	14
Article type	
Commentary	8
Conceptual	27
Qualitative	9
Quantitative	7

Note. n = 51.

Yamamoto, 2013). Together, these trends represent opportunities for the social work profession to engage with diverse constituencies and to inspire the younger generations to participate in innovative initiatives that contribute to social good.

Literature Review

To gain an understanding of the social good domain, I used a two-pronged approach: (a) review of the academic literature and (b) review of web-based information.

For the systematic review of the academic literature on social good, two postgraduate research assistants conducted a review of the academic literature by searching the first 100 entries of three databases: Google Scholar, EBSCO Business Source Complete, and their research university's comprehensive computerized library system. Included in this review were full-length, academic peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2017. Excluded from this review were abstracts and conference proceedings, books and book reviews, blogs, and dissertations. A total of 51 peer-reviewed articles were included in this literature review.

An analysis of the academic literature revealed that social good has been discussed across 16 different disciplines spanning the social sciences (e.g., Kasper, 2007; K. Peters & Kashima, 2015), education (e.g., Goldweber et al., 2013), health care (e.g., Hooker, 2009), and law (Allen, 2003). With 22 of the 51 articles, the field most frequently represented in the social good literature is business and management (see Table 1).

The review indicates that conceptual articles constitute the majority of the literature on social good (e.g., Banerjee, 2008; Gilligan & Golden, 2009). Of the empirical articles, almost one half used quantitative methodology such as survey research (K. Peters & Kashima, 2015), experimental designs (Rixom & Mishra, 2014), or statistical analyses (Taute & McQuitty, 2004), and the remainder used qualitative research methods such as case studies (e.g., Roy & Karna, 2015) or interviews (Viswanathan et al., 2009).

Table 2. Examples of Social Good Definitions in the Academic Literature.

Reference	Field	Type	Definition
Cicmil and O'Laocha (2016)	Business/ management	Conceptual	"A commitment to a future state of being . . . takes shape in, with and through the ongoing interaction of beings in relation to themselves, each other and the world, and as such it can be seen as an ongoing accomplishment of collective being"
Clark (2003)	Sociology	Qualitative	". . . the vital and virtuous aspect of the society"
Kasper (2007)	Sociology	Conceptual	". . . that which is necessary for the functioning of society and which is interconnected with other fundamental societal characteristics"
Verdugo (2013)	Education	Conceptual	"Abstract and concrete resources characterizing a society that lead to its general well-being"
			"The common good—that is, those things, material, and nonmaterial, that lead to safety, security, and the continued existence of a group"
Viswanathan, Seth, Gau, and Chaturvedi (2009)	Business/ management	Qualitative	"Individual and community welfare encompassing a range of issues across different realms, such as preservation and improvement of the local ecology, enhancement of living conditions, and increased availability of livelihood opportunities"

When discussing social good, researchers drew on related constructs including corporate social responsibility (Gao, Lisic, & Zhang, 2014; Viswanathan et al., 2009), social profit (Gilligan & Golden, 2009), collective social entrepreneurship (Montgomery, Dacin, & Dacin, 2012), and social capital (Ellison & Mullin, 2014; Wright, 2013). Although there is a general agreement on what the construct social good refers to, there was no universally agreed upon definition, and the operationalization of the construct was in its early stages (e.g., Kasper, 2007; Dann & Dann, 2016; see Table 2). Viswanathan, Seth, Gau, and Chaturvedi (2009), for example, offer a descriptive and complex definition that reflects the comprehensive nature of the construct: "individual and community welfare encompassing a range of issues across different realms, such as preservation and improvement of the local ecology, enhancement of living conditions, and increased availability of livelihood opportunities" (p. 406; see Table 2). In addition to the research and scholarly sources, the two postgraduate research assistants have also conducted a web-based information search using Google search engine and the search term "social good." This search yielded 504,000 hits spanning a wide range of resources. A review of the top 110 search results revealed communities, networks, articles, guides, and engagement platforms focused on generating, connecting, and sharing resources related to social good. Examples of web-based resources include websites of annual meetings (e.g., Social Good Summit), university programs (e.g., University of Chicago's Data Science for Social Good), corporate programs (e.g., JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s Technology for Social Good), award and recognition ceremonies (e.g., Shorty Social Good Awards), online engagement platforms (e.g., Facebook pages), and audio and visual media (e.g., Champions for Social Good podcast and a TED Talk playlist). A sample of relevant websites is presented in Table 3.

The literature review highlights three important trends related to social good: The first trend includes changes in institutions and their role in social good. For example, Gilligan and Golden (2009) present a new conceptual framework of "social profit" that highlights goals that can be shared by for-profit enterprises and nonprofit organizations and that facilitates collaborations between these entities to promote social good (for additional examples, see Nicholls, 2009; Perlich, 2014). The second trend includes changes in technology and how it is used for social good. An example of this trend, presented by Farr, Wardlaw, and Jones (2008), is an innovative use of market research methods in the public sector employing a geodemographic approach to address health inequalities (for additional examples, see Roldan & Burkhard, 2010; Ross & Tomlinson, 2010). The third trend includes changes in the way populations are engaged to accomplish social good. For example, Goldweber et al. (2013) describe a framework for motivating computer science students by adding the context of social good to introductory computing assignments (for additional examples, see Mildon, 2013; Montgomery et al., 2012; Roy & Karna, 2015).

This literature review of academic and web-based resources reveals that there is a growing interest in social good. The large number and the diversity of the disciplines that focus on this topic, and the wide range of online resources dedicated to advancing its cause, are a strong indication that the domain of social good appeals to academics and nonacademic audiences. It is also clear that the academic literature on social good is nascent and fragmented, lacking a comprehensive conceptual framework with relatively few, but growing, studies that examine social good empirically using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Theoretical Perspective

Social capital theory helps explain behaviors that address social problems on a large scale and incorporates technology, such as virtual community modeling and online social networks, to create social good. The main argument of social capital theory is that individuals obtain resources through their networks of trusted social relationships (Coleman, 1988). The term social capital is defined as "the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). Putnam

Table 3. Social Good Web Search Results—Illustrative Examples.

Resource Type	Number of Results	Example Sites
Meetings/conferences	5	Social Good Summit: http://mashable.com/sgs/ Social Innovation Summit: http://www.socinnovation.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=213468& Agents of Change Summit: https://agentsofchangesummit.com/save-the-date/
University groups/ programs	5	University of Chicago Data Science for Social Good: https://dssg.uchicago.edu/ UC Berkeley Tech for Social Good: http://berkeley.techsocialgood.org/ Stanford Business School Center for Social Innovation: https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/stanford-gsb-experience/academic/social-innovation
Corporate programs	3	Dell: http://www.dell.com/learn/us/en/uscorp1/2020-goals Johnson & Johnson: https://www.jnj.com/tag/social-good JPMorgan Chase & Co: https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/About-JPMC/technology-for-social-good.htm
Award and recognition ceremonies	5	Cynopsis Media (for companies or individuals generating prosocial impact): http://www.cynopsis.com/event/2017-social-good-awards-results/ Shorty Social Good Awards (for initiatives taken by brands, industries, or nonprofits): http://shortyawards.com/socialgood
Media	5	Plus Social Good (online engagement platform): http://plussocialgood.org/ TED talk playlist: https://www.ted.com/playlists/139/social_good_inc Champions for Social Good Podcast: https://soundcloud.com/user-392540374
Blogs/online publications	5	Social Good Guides (guides from industry experts): http://www.socialgoodguides.com/ npENGAGE (nonprofit resource blog): https://npengage.com/social-good/ Stanford Social Innovation Review: https://ssir.org/
Online articles	7	Forbes: https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianrashid/2017/04/25/why-more-and-more-companies-are-doing-social-good/#67b41719db07 Impatient Optimists: https://www.impatientoptimists.org/Posts/2013/09/The-Question-You-Were-Too-Afraid-to-Ask-What-is-Social-Good#.WdWJ1siGOM8 Huffington Post: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jennifer-risi/doing-good-is-good-busine_b_10439610.html

(1995) suggests that a hallmark of social capital is coordination and cooperation among people for mutual benefit.

Applying social capital theory to social good can demonstrate that online communities, for example, can increase the social capital of individuals and groups who unite around a social cause, enabling them to combine resources (e.g., ideas, funding, tools) and to find solutions to social problems (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). At the heart of social capital theory is the idea that resources are exchanged and distributed through social networks. Emerging communication platforms, such as online social communities that unite around a social cause, are a mechanism for developing new, diverse, and widespread social network connections for resource exchange. This can increase individual- and community-level social capital and allow members to share and communicate information, build relational and logistical support, and generate solutions for challenging social problems (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006).

In addition, mutual trust builds when people coalesce around a social issue that they are passionate about. Social relationships and interactions thus can increase social capital across the network, improve coordination among members, and create greater efficiency in obtaining goals (Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2005). This relational aspect of social capital, particularly the creation of mutual trust, provides benefits that improve individual and community ability to achieve social good.

Social Good Expert Interviews

To delve deeper into the scope and nature of social good, nine experts were identified for interviews in collaboration with an external consulting firm, the GreenHouse Center for Social Innovation. We selected these experts according to the three criteria. First, each expert represents a current trend in social good and can provide specific examples from her or his work. Second, their expertise covers one of the three broad social good areas that have emerged from our literature review: changes in institutions and their role in social good, changes in technology and how it is used for social good, and changes in the way populations are engaged to accomplish social good. And third, the experts represent a diversity of disciplines (e.g., scholars, researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, public speakers), backgrounds, and perspectives.

Each expert in the area of social good was interviewed by telephone for approximately 45 min. The interviews were conducted by a principal from the GreenHouse Center, who was oriented to the concept of social good, and yet was less invested than the author and perhaps more open to the emergence of objective content. Recorded and transcribed by an external transcription company (the interviewees agreement to be interviewed was recorded), each interview was structured around seven open-ended questions related to trends in social good: (1) Tell us about this trend and how you came to be involved with

it, (2) What would you say is the theory of change that drives this trend? (3) How would you say this trend compares with other current approaches to social good? (4) How would you say this trend has changed over time? (5) Where do you think this trend is headed? (6) How might it change the world? and (7) What are the primary lessons you have learned from this trend that you would like to transmit to people who are pursuing social good in other ways? These questions were designed to elicit the essence of each "path to impact of social good."

A doctoral student independently analyzed each transcript. This student is trained in qualitative methods and was not involved in the data collection process. The student used the interview questions as sensitizing concepts during the coding process (e.g., strategies for creating social good, trends/future directions, barriers, and advice). Additionally, the doctoral student created case summaries in the form of a comprehensive Excel spreadsheet and individual descriptions in Word. She used NVivo 11 to code the transcripts and identify illustrative quotes.

Social Good—Themes Gleaned from the Expert Interviews

Three major themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: (I) social good domains, (II) unconventional systems of change, and (III) innovative technologies.

I. Social good domains. The three domains of social good that have emerged from the interviews—(1) diversity and social inclusion, (2) environmental justice and sustainability, and (3) peace, harmony, and collaboration—are universal elements of social good. Each domain is described here along with representative quotes from the interviews.

Domain 1: Social good is diversity and social inclusion. This theme is based on a broad conceptualization of diversity. While diversity includes typical dimensions such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and identity categories that are specific and meaningful to a particular culture or community, an important dimension of inclusion is intersectionality, the idea that multiple identities, such as race, gender and social class, intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities (Collins, 2015). Inclusion is relevant to social justice in that disadvantaged groups are more likely to be excluded from opportunities for education, employment, and health care, which adversely affects their quality of life and longevity (Mor Barak, 2017). Another dimension of diversity is that talent comes in many forms, and inclusion means that each member of an organization or society is recognized for who he or she really is and is provided with a sense of belonging. This inclusive approach is beneficial to individuals and to organizations and society as a whole. As one interviewee stated:

> The very best groups are diverse and the very worst groups are diverse.

This illustrates the idea that inclusion is essential and that organizations have to be strategic about diversity, especially in the context of solving complex problems. Organizational leaders must ask themselves:

> How do you change this from something that's risk and randomness into something that you can leverage?
> One interviewee further described social inclusion as,
> Moving away from thinking about this in terms of splitting the pie and thinking about enlarging the pie.

Domain 2: Social good is environmental justice and sustainability. This theme goes beyond environmental protection and conservation to describe a commitment to ensuring that all individuals—especially vulnerable populations that are disproportionally affected by environmental deterioration, degradation, and disaster—are able to live in a space that is clean, healthy, and safe. An example of the differential impact of environmental neglect and injustice is the 2014 water crisis in Flint, MI, in which cost-cutting measures led to tainted drinking water that contained lead and other toxins, with disastrous impacts on Flint's primarily low-income and minority populations (Cable News Network, 2017). In a similar vein, the impact of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina was exacerbated by the slow response that has caused and amplified the human misery of the mostly African American and poor populations affected by the disaster Cable News Network, 2016). Less dramatic examples include food deserts defined as communities void of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually associated with impoverished urban areas due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers (American Nutrition Association, 2017). Qualitative interview responses emphasize the generational value shifts that have occurred around environmental issues. As one interviewee noted:

> It has created this sense of generational injustice that I think has been very powerful.

Younger generations, driven by a new set of values, are disrupting political and economic structures and redefining environmental activism such that, as one of the interviewees put it,

> What started as a moral demand, started to have a measurable financial impact.

Domain 3: Social good is peace, harmony, and collaboration. This theme captures the idea that human beings need to live in peaceful, interdependent, and harmonious societies, absent not only of war but also of destructive intergroup conflicts. To achieve this, different groups need to work together and intergroup collaboration should be a foundational aspect of these societies. One interviewee discusses two major "growing gaps" that hinder the creation of inclusive societies: a vertical trend (localist/tribalist vs. globalist) and a horizontal trend (secular

vs. religious). One way to bridge this divergence is to educate individuals for responsible citizenship. Responsible and engaged citizens are, according to one of the interviewees,

> People who care about global issues, and to say we are not just about people from our own community and neighborhood, but who are sharing the same planet. But, in the meantime, be[ing] respectful of people who have a different perspective and try[ing] to bring them on your side or engage in a conversation.

II. Engaging unconventional systems and collaborations. A common theme across the qualitative interviews was the idea that social good requires global, multilevel thinking and a diversity of perspectives, values, and disciplines. As one interviewee explained:

> So much of the social good history has been about how you can do social good, how you can help others. And the thing is that has been—we're talking about a situation where social good needs to be everybody's business, everybody's, not just a social innovator's businesses, or someone who's in the impact sector. It needs to be everybody's business.

Interviewees stressed the importance of including users, patients, and those affected by the social problem. As one interviewee explained:

> I think that also moved more towards the why don't you talk to the people. . . . Sometimes I think we just go too high brow with it when we just need to have conversations and figure it out on the lower level—lower direct level.

Another interviewee described it in this way:

> You have to think in terms of empowering everybody. You can't any longer think you're going to find a few more leaders. It's just not enough. You have to change the system, so that everyone is equipped with that agency, that creativity to be able to look at and solve problems that they come up against. People can't be waiting for somebody else to come around and solve it for them.

Social good also requires cross-sector partnerships among government entities, private-sector businesses, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots coalitions. One interviewee highlighted the importance of staying open to unexpected relationships and "looking outside of your friends in order to build allies." Another interviewee added, "We tend to see the NGOs that have become huge behemoths. And sometimes they need to be. But the true innovation is when the empowerment is happening in the very culture, the very fabric of society."

Social entrepreneurs—defined by one interviewee as "a person who is transforming a system"—may play a unique role in engaging diverse and unconventional systems. In the context of social good, "You need a mosaic of solutions. You need a network of innovators. And you need people to tap into a level of leadership that they haven't yet practiced possibly." Key skills of a social entrepreneur (identified by an interviewee) include empathy, creativity, the ability to fluidly work in teams and cultivate inner well-being, and a strong commitment to personal growth.

III. Effectively leveraging innovative technologies and approaches. Across the qualitative interviews, participants recognized the importance of properly defining the problem before developing solutions and aligning them with innovative technologies. As one interviewee stated, "It starts with a conversation with those affected by the problem." Another interviewee acknowledged the importance of including the user in the development of solutions:

> There's more credibility, there's more engagement, there's more sustainability, because it wasn't something that was designed for them, it was designed by them.

Furthermore, when designing strategies to achieve social good, researchers and leaders must acknowledge that the values of the decision makers are infused in the model or strategy and consciously ask, "The solution is 'optimal' for whom?"

Additionally, across the qualitative interviews, participants discussed the role of technology in achieving social good and most acknowledged that to some degree, "Technology is disrupting everything." One key theme is the idea that technology is not always a good thing. One respondent observed that "technology amplifies underlying human forces," and its benefit depends on the human institutions in which the technology is embedded. One interviewee acknowledged that technological benefits have not been evenly distributed and that technology alone cannot achieve political or social change. Human capacity and intention are the real drivers of change, and

> You need a very capable human presence for things to go right.
> Along these lines, another interviewee noted,
> We are still thinking from a fixed point of view. . . . We're not thinking from the human infrastructure of the way we want to be with each other, which is the empathy and the compassion.

One interviewee identified the need for "technological skepticism," which encourages a realistic understanding of and expectations for what technology can and cannot do in the context of social good.

The expert interviews suggest the following examples of strategies for achieving social good:

Design thinking. Design thinking removes power and authority and integrates the tenets of human-centered design (consideration of the user) and participatory design (giving users the tools to participate in design activities). Design thinking asks that researchers include users in the design process and communicate an idea: "You are the designer. Here are the tools. Make something that is useful to you." For one interviewee, "Everyone's a design thinker. . . . It's a mindset. It's a method."

Furthermore, "Social workers are the ultimate paradigm of people who are trained to be design thinkers."

Big data-driven models. Although big data models can be beneficial, one interviewee cautioned that these models do not capture the motivation behind why decisions are made or the "intrinsic forces of human behavior." Big data models "are now more passive and massive," and machines will always optimize the response. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the values embedded in the inputted variables and the inherent political nature of the problems being solved with big data. In this context, it is also relevant to note the growing interest in using social analytics tools to gather information about populations, regions, practices, and tendencies that could inform social policy initiatives and social advocacy actions. With increased awareness of citizen sentiment and government policy practices, social good initiatives could use these data to create campaigns that are maximize effectiveness.

Using social media to create social change. Social media is immediate, accessible, and global; can be more accurate and direct than other sources; and creates connections to people and resources to which individuals might not otherwise be exposed. As one interviewee explained, "You can effect more change because your universe expands." Although social justice campaigns have to be multifaceted and strategic, social media should always be a component because it is a tool for reaching the masses and to have their voices heard in a way that has never been seen before, "Social media is a great equalizer."

Putting the Pieces Together: Toward a Model of Social Good

Based on the literature review, a review of web-based social good initiatives, and the findings from the expert interviews, the model presented in Figure 1 provides a conceptualization of social good. This model for social good is composed of three components: (I) social good domains, (II) unconventional systems of change, and (III) innovative technologies and approaches. The three domains provide the foundation for developing a new definition of social good: The systems of change engage diverse and nontraditional systems to promote social good, and innovative technologies offer novel, unconventional modes for designing and executing solutions for achieving social good. Please note that the multidimensional definition offered in the beginning of this article is based on this model of social good. The model suggests that social good resides at the intersection where the three overlap (see Figure 1).

Discussion

Social good is key in coalescing different constituencies, such as grassroots organizations, social entrepreneurs, public–private collaborators, celebrities and other well-known personalities, and business leaders to find innovative solutions to the greatest challenges of our societies. The goal of increasing

social good is scalable from local to societal interventions and has brought fresh energy to social causes that are core concerns for the social work profession. Causes, ideals, and achievements championing social good are ubiquitous on websites of private foundations, social entrepreneurs, and business organizations, and yet social good has its own yearly conference (United Nations Foundation, 2017).

In this article, I propose that social good can renew or create new alliances among social work and other disciplines and change agents in exploring new avenues that promote social justice. It can bring fresh energy and direction to the macro practice agenda within the social work profession, a specialization that has regrettably become stale in recent decades (Hill et al., 2010; McBeath, 2016; McNutt, 1995; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). The social good model proposed in this article unites ideals that are rooted in the social justice tradition and are relevant to our times. Focusing on the social good domains of environmental justice, social inclusion and promoting peace together with technology and systems befitting the 21st century, can ignite the imaginations of younger generations to motivate them to pursue macro-level social work careers (Farrell & Hurt, 2014; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Leveson & Joiner, 2014; Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Implications of the Social Good Model for Social Work profession

The social good model presented in this article provides a strong link between the roots of the social work profession and its future aspirations. Jane Addams, considered the founder of the modern social work profession with its emphasis on creating change at systems levels, worked toward all three of the social good domains noted earlier (Johnson, 2004; Senecah, 2017; Steyaert, 2013). For example, in the tenements of Chicago surrounding Hull House, Addams advocated for environmental justice to disadvantaged groups, the first domain of the social good model. She specifically advocated for improved housing and sanitary conditions: public health, sanitation, clean water, and industrial safety. In fact, her passion for sanitary garbage collection motivated her to volunteer to serve as a sanitation inspector for the city of Chicago (Senecah, 2017).

Addams also worked to promote social inclusion, the second domain of social good model. In addition to making available social services and cultural events for the largely immigrant populations residing in neighborhood tenements, Addams and colleague Ellen Star developed three ethical principles for social settlements: "to teach by example, to practice cooperation, and to practice social democracy, that is, egalitarian, or democratic, social relations across class lines" (Knight, 2005, p. 182). On this topic, Addams (1893) wrote:

> The blessings which we associate with a life of refinement and cultivation can be made universal and must be made universal if they are to be permanent; that the good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain, is floating in mid-air, until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life. (p. 7)
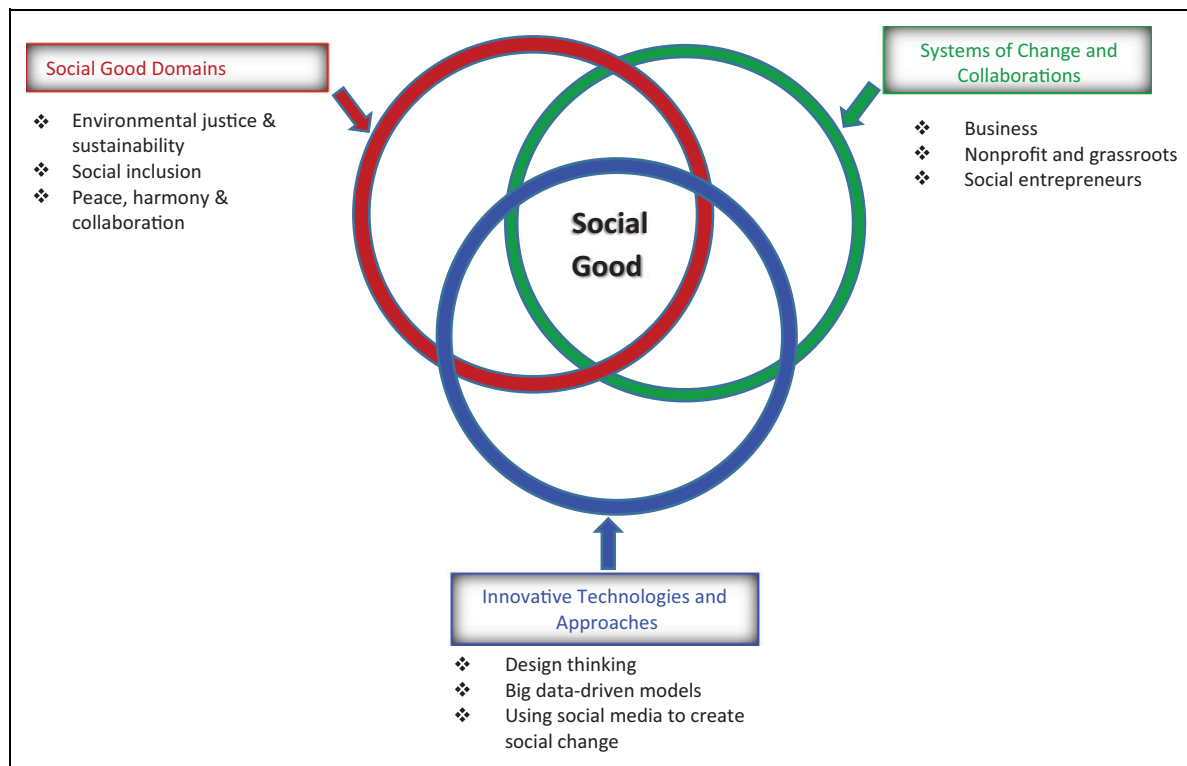
Figure 1. Social good conceptual framework.

Finally, Addams worked to promote peace and collaboration, the third domain of social good. As an organizer of the Women's Peace Party, Addams was nicknamed Saint Jane due to her efforts on behalf of peace during the World War I (Steyaert, 2013). Her talks and publications influenced the formation of the League of Nations, paving the way for the eventual creation of the United Nations. She was the first American woman to win in 1936 the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in promoting peace.

Defining the future aspirations of the social work profession, the Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare has embarked on an ambitious project championing 12 Grand Challenges for the profession aimed at creating social progress powered by science (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2017). By definition, the 12 Grand Challenges strive to promote social good in our society. Each one of the challenges can fit under one or more of the domains, and one even states it in its title (Harnessing Big Data for Social Good).

Why is social good relevant to the achievement of the Grand Challenges? The major goal for the Grand Challenges was to create a sense of shared ambitious, yet obtainable, goals for the profession that would contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, groups, communities, and society. A second goal was to create excitement among the younger generation to join the ranks of the social work profession and to make a difference in the world.

The social good conceptual model complements the goals of the Grand Challenges for the social work profession. The extent to which the Grand Challenges will become part of the social good movement will depend on the extent to which the social work profession will embrace innovative technologies and communication methodologies and the extent to which they will engage different systems and constituencies along the way. The social good movement has the potential to bring new energy to the Grand Challenges, internally and externally, from grassroots organizations, businesses, social entrepreneurs, and diverse traditional and nontraditional constituencies, particularly from millennials, while building new collaborations across disciplines.

Future Research and Practice Implications

One of the main challenges for establishing evidence-based methods in achieving social good is that the scientific foundation for the social good literature is still in the developmental stage. A search of articles studying social good indicates emerging literature that presents efforts to define, measure, and study the construct. Yet the literature does not have commonly agreed upon definitions, theories or frameworks, and measures. It seems that academia has lagged behind in addressing social good, using the construct primarily as a contextual descriptor or referring broadly to the social phenomenon. This article aimed to close some of that gap by offering an overarching conceptual framework of social good that can provide a beginning road map for developing future research.

There is clearly a need to explore social good from interdisciplinary perspectives and to propose a scientific agenda for the social work profession—and for allied disciplines—that will amplify its potential for impact in promoting social

justice. Given its history and goals, the social work profession can be a leader in scholarship as well as the practical applications of social good. Future research needs to focus on definitions, theory, anchor concepts, technology, and systems to shape a scholarly and scientific agenda, potentially moving toward convergence science, and a multidisciplinary practice agenda.

The National Science Foundation (NSF, 2017) defines convergence science as an approach to problem-solving that cuts across disciplinary boundaries. Convergence is characterized as the deep integration of knowledge, techniques, and expertise from multiple fields to form new and expanded frameworks for addressing scientific and societal challenges and opportunities. It is related to other concepts used to identify research that spans disciplines: transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary. Convergent research is most closely linked to transdisciplinary research in its merging of distinct and diverse approaches into a unified whole to foster new paradigms or domains (NSF, 2017). By merging these diverse areas of expertise in a network of partnerships, convergence stimulates innovation from basic science discovery to translational application. The broad challenges associated with generating social good in our society will require deep transdisciplinary partnerships and could potentially lead to the development of convergence collaborations.

Social good is challenging practitioners and scholars alike to think big about solutions to social problems; use new avenues such as technology, media, business, and engineering; and open the door to diverse, new partnerships, and collaborative models. There is potential synergy and congruence between this new emphasis on social good and the values of the social work profession and the skills and competencies of social workers. We need to understand how to leverage the potential synergy across disciplines with future research exploring the convergence of the social work profession with allied disciplines to move society up a notch on the inspiring scale of social good.

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Additional Resources

Annual Meetings and Conferences

Agents of Change Summit: https://agentsofchangesummit.com/save-the-date/

Social Good Summit: http://mashable.com/sgs/

Social Innovation Summit: http://www.socinnovation.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=213468&

University Groups and Programs

Stanford Graduate School of Business' Center for Social Innovation: https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/stanford-gsb-experience/academic/social-innovation

UC Berkeley Tech for Social Good: http://berkeley.techsocialgood.org/

University of Chicago Data Science for Social Good: https://dssg.uchicago.edu/

Corporate Programs

Dell: http://www.dell.com/learn/us/en/uscorp1/2020-goals

Johnson & Johnson: https://www.jnj.com/tag/social-good

JPMorgan Chase & Co: https://www.jpmorganchase.com/corporate/About-JPMC/technology-for-social-good.htm

Social Good Awards

Cynopsis Media (for companies or individuals generating prosocial impact): http://www.cynopsis.com/event/2017-social-good-awards-results/

Shorty Social Good Awards (for initiatives taken by brands, industries, or nonprofits): http://shortyawards.com/socialgood

Media

Champions for Social Good Podcast: https://soundcloud.com/user-392540374

Plus Social Good (online engagement platform): http://plussocialgood.org/

TED Talk playlist: https://www.ted.com/playlists/139/social_good_inc

Blogs and Online Publications

NP Engage (nonprofit resources blog): https://npengage.com/social-good/

Social Good Guides (guides from industry experts): http://www.socialgoodguides.com/

Stanford Social Innovation Review: https://ssir.org/