

**Counterpoint**  
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When I began reading Dr. Karger's commentary "Reforming the Dissertation Process", I felt a bit sensitive. I was thinking to myself that my dissertation will be my *métier*, an original and important piece of work from which I will publish a scandalous number of articles. But yes, I am naïve, and as I read further, realized the point (the point that I took): that there is a political process to the dissertation endeavor and that the question of "so what?" is sometimes lost. I know that I have to do the dissertation "dance" to make my way to the PhD jackpot, but I also know I do not have to agree with it. An argument is effective when you know the language. However, on my way, will I forget my vision and passion? I think this is what Dr. Karger is saying. If we forget why we set out on this course and become automatons of linear research ideology, then is the significance lost along with the "so what?"

It is not hidden that Social Work is trying to make a name for itself in the empirical world. We want to show everyone how research-oriented, scientific, and objective we really are. Since Flexner's scathing critique of our non-discipline discipline, we have been theorizing, researching, writing, establishing models, codifying, and making every reductionistic attempt to become a scholarly institution that operates under the same academic rigor as psychology, sociology, and even psychiatry. PhD students get this in large doses in Philosophy of Science courses, as we learn about how reasoning should adhere to the pure/natural scientific way of doing things, and we walk away knowing that pure/natural science is the paradigm we live under as Social Workers. Social Work is not a pure/natural science and never will be. It is social science, about human behavior and all the complexities that lie within us. It is vague, confounded by many variables, and is not exact in any sense. Social Work separates itself from other human sciences by uniquely emphasizing skills, client self-determination, and political action. Are our efforts at making ourselves appear as a scientific as psychology hurting our credibility and distracting us from our purpose of client-driven and socially just practice? How can I relate to a person when I am obsessing over whether they fit in a logistic regression equation?

Yes, quantitative methods are our friend because they are a scientific route to present our social science research. But the same rules do not apply to different things, Natural science paradigms, which are similar to social science paradigms, are not a good fit with client-driven practice or social advocacy. Is our attempt at proving our empirical value and contribution distracting us from other forms of research, such as qualitative methods, which are a good fit with Social Work since they do not reduce a person to a number but convey context richness through narrative and ethnography? Why are these social work ideas absent from the dissertation process? What is primary, empirical research that furthers the profession or Social Work ethical values that further the profession?

Social Work started out political, passionate, and striving for social justice. We may have gone wrong on some things like trying to make minorities assimilate, but we can admit this. Now we are obsessed with quantitative numbers and significant alphas, making outcomes so immediate and impressive that no dissertation committee could deny. Where is the social justice in that? If we continue this thinking as we do now in our PhD programs, we will miss the human aspect of our dissertation process, the significance to and importance of the populations we are researching. I am already so disappointed that the persons I will be doing my dissertation research on will not be able to read it.

Occasionally I meet with a friend/professor/peer/mentor and we discuss how school is going, politics, Feminism, whatever. I was excited to share my recent decision of my dissertation topic with her, knowing she would support me and give needed feedback. It is what I think a creative, important, and significant topic should be, as well as adding to knowledge, different, and original. She supported me and also warned me about appearing too narrow, controversial, that I must consider the politics of my topic as well as the resistance that may occur from my committee if I appear too passionate. She knows how it works and she was informing a young mind of what is to come. So the dilemma: Do I go for it knowing it could have been easier or, do I go with what adheres to the “formula”, data that I already have and meets with present trendy research? You tell me.