

Detailed Response to Review Board Suggestions:

(Responses in Blue)

Reviewer A Comments:

If you look deep enough there are several pieces on strengths-based practice and/or the strengths perspective the highlight that compatibility of this approach to services and motivational interviewing. Accordingly, this piece does not break new ground in an appreciable fashion. The use of the Rapp et al., framework was a nice twist to this article and clearly highlight the areas of congruence.

We have conducted a thorough review of the literature and we agree that there are several pieces that allude to consistencies between MI and strengths-based practice/the strengths perspective (particularly Michael Clark in the Juvenile Justice literature). However, all of these pieces do so in an off-hand manner and do not make an attempt to be methodical or systematic. In other words, most of them simply state that MI is strengths-based, or make a few simple comparisons, but do not justify the strengths-based claims. We have added additional references on page 3 paragraph 2 which reflect our additional literature review. We respectfully suggest that our present manuscript is the first published attempt at making a *systematic* comparison of the two approaches and therefore is unique. This article attempts deepen and nuance the understanding between the compatibilities and differences between SBP and MI.

“Strengths-based work, as is acknowledged in the paper, is best articulated in case management practice – otherwise the notion of strengths-based work is predicated on a set of values, principles, and assumptions that have gained popularity. That said, motivational interviewing is a tool or approach – it is a means to an end. Interestingly, that end is often problem focused - it is seen as a way to make clear to consumers those things that get in the way of the goals they have – but that focus is often a problem or malady – most often in the literature – alcohol and substance abuse.

We agree that, depending on the context, MI may contain a problem focus (although it doesn’t always). We have therefore included more detail regarding this issue in a newly added section called *Areas of Divergence* which starts on page 15 and ends on page 17.

This becomes very important because one of the key areas where the tie between MI and SBP pointed out in the literature was in the area of resource acquisition – and resource acquisition isn’t just one aspect of strengths-based practice it may well be the most important area of all (see Davison & Rapp, 1976). Simply saying that MI “assumes that people know their environment better than anyone else” simplifies how this works in SBP. The idea is to build from strengths and aspirations, agree on a set of goals, and match these goals with the natural resources in the community. This isn’t about knowing resources – this is at the heart of creative practice. Where claims about SPB go array it is often because this very aspect of SPB is omitted and defaults to a simple clinical model of care that devotes some attention to strengths.”

This critique is well taken. We have included a discussion of this issue in the new *Areas of Divergence* section. We have also revised the comparison section which discussed *Environmental Resources* on page 10 and 11. We maintain that MI remains philosophically consistent in this area…but has room to improve. In the *Areas of Divergence* section we specifically compare MI with Strengths-based Case Management and note that SBCM does a better job at this than MI. We hope you do not mind that we borrowed some of the wording from this critique in the reformulation of these sections.

There is no question that MI can be an important aspect of strengths-based practice, particularly as one goes about conducting and assessment and then helping the consumer hone in on a goal or set of goals important to them. Frankly, a more detailed discussion of this – how MI can augment SPB in some degree of detail would make this paper stronger – and I would prefer to see that as opposed to the rather superficial discussion of implications for social work at the end. This work was hinted at under the heading “Good Fit for Social Work” – here was a chance to provide some in-depth examples of using MI in the context of SBP complete with a good use of the literature.

We have adjusted the section *A Good Fit for Social Work* to reflect this suggestion. On pages 17, 19 – 22, and 30 we have added language regarding how MI and SBP can augment each other, including references. We have added a case-example which depicts a worker using MI skills during a strengths assessment encounter. The case example starts on page 22 and ends on page 29.

In essence MI is an important tool – but in itself it is not an intervention – it is a means to an end. How that fits with SPB could be very fruitfully presented and that could be grounded in a particular area – case management – substance abuse treatment or another area of practice.

We now discuss this concept in more detail on page 17 paragraph 1. We also address this comment by including the transcript and transcript discussion which illustrates how MI could potentially be used during case-management.

There are some very good sections of the paper – but there areas where the paper read more like a student effort and not a scholarly piece. This was particularly true in the mid-sections of the paper where many sweeping statements were made with little literature support.

The entire manuscript (including the sections specifically mentioned here) was reviewed again with an eye toward augmenting statements with literature support. These sections now include many more references. The paper overall was reviewed for sentence structure and increased literature support through added citations and clarification.

If some of the areas I have highlighted are addressed it could make a nice contribution to advances.

Thank you.

Some specific issues

On page 4 – Saleebey is misspelled every time

This was changed to the correct spelling

The definition that is provided after the heading is way too close to a direct quote – cite directly

This has now been cited directly

There are areas where I found the writing to be awkward – example – last full sentence on page 8

The full manuscript was reviewed for awkward wording and adjusted accordingly. The example given was adjusted as well.

From page 8 on there is too little support for bold statements of fact – draw on the actual literature – use more cites and more direct quotes -

These sections were augmented with added citations and clarification.

as an example – the use of the term spirit breaking should be properly cited as an article by Deegan – this is a term she used in a widely cited article

This article is now cited.

Provide cites for sentences at the end of page 10 - begins “As noted

Citations were added here.

Under the section Trials and Opportunities - cite the sentence that begins “Often individuals …

A citation was added.

Under a Good Fit for Social Work – there is a discussion of additive effect – intervention potency etc -= but the reader has no idea what the intervention was or even what it is focused on. This is a key area where real detail can be provided and the paper could move in the direction suggested above.

Greater clarification of the nature of meta-analyses and the combined approaches were provided see pg 19.

Second paragraph p. 16 – This is not clear and I am not sure what an MI practitioner is – this is a practitioner in some area using MI as a tool - give detail – provide an example.

The term “MI practitioner” was removed from the document. This sentence was changed to be clear and an example was provided.

Under Social Work Agencies - No agencies cannot claim they function from a SNB approach if MI is a strong component – go back to your original definition of SPB as offered by Saleebey – it says *everything* you do …. not simply the interview method you use but what is the overall focus of the work that is done – it is the same as suggesting that if agencies assess client strengths they operate from the strengths perspective which is inaccurate.

The Social Work Agencies section was changed to reflect these suggestions. While we compare MI with SBP the article focuses more on areas of divergence and convergence. Throughout the paper we changed focus. Instead of making the claim that MI equivalent to a SBP, we contend that MI is consistent with SBP and that the two can augment each other.

Reviewer B Comments

This article is framed as a response to Rapp et al (2005) who suggested that social work practices should be methodically evaluated against standards of Strengths-Based Practice (SBP) before assertions of their compatibility with SBP are made. This article provides a history and overview of SBP and Motivational Interviewing (MI), and then proceeds to conduct a comparison of goodness of fit between the two. The article is generally well conceptualized, methodologically appropriate, and clear in assumptions and writing.

Thank you.

It is a timely piece that will be well placed in Advances in Social Work, particularly given that the Rapp et al article to which authors are responding also appeared in Advances.

Thank you.

The authors’ conclusion that MI is compatible with SBP, with accompanying evidentiary analysis, will progress the literature and has educational, practice, research, and agency implications as the authors have outlined. This article may be of particular interest to the journal’s readership now, given the implications for enhancing and documenting evidence based treatment and social work student competencies.

There are a few suggestions intended to make an already strong manuscript even better.

* There are a few typos that I have corrected in text with track changes. Note, there were several instances of use of the singular “individual” paired with “their” later in the sentence.

The paper was reviewed for typos and for sentence consistency. The track change adjustments were also accepted.

* Page six discussion of the spirit of MI is clear and concise. I must admit that I have been trained in MI and am more familiar with it than the written literature on SBP. Given my use and attempts to teach MI, I think a little more context is needed in the explanations of the juxtapositions of: collaboration versus confrontation, evocation versus education, and autonomy versus authority. It would be helpful to reiterate that education (such as normative feedback) may be a tool used in MI, but is not the goal. Similarly, confrontation may be the procedural outcome, but is not the style of MI. Not everyone transitions easily between the abstracted spirit (principles) and the pragmatic tools by which they may pursue these abstracted goals. Nor do people always readily understand the hierarchical relationship of tools supporting goals. You may want to consider if there is a parallel consideration within SBP that could also be addressed.

Greater attention is paid to the constructs indicated by reviewer B on pages 6 and 7.

* Systematic comparison (methods) section was clear and appropriate for the purposes. The parallel theory descriptive paragraphs of SBP then of MI per SBP domain was easy to follow. I note that only in domain #3 do authors break from pure description to include evaluative discussion of the fit between the theories. Can this be a third paragraph for this section? For parallelism and reader ease, perhaps concluding each domain with a summary statement about the explicit or philosophical fit could be done?

Per your suggestion a concluding statement has been added to the end of each comparative section. In addition, the evaluative discussion of the fit between SBP and MI was moved to the new section termed *Areas of Divergence.*

* The first paragraph, page 15, of the good fit for social work section, is a little wonky. “the additive effect finding lends weight. . .” sentence and the next through “. . . practitioner functions from a strengths perspective.” Are not yet a logical jump. I think it reads better if you move the last sentence up, with those two sentences to follow. Then the argument becomes that SBP models may enhance their effectiveness through use of MI. This suggests that SBP and MI are not only compatible, but that their paired use may leverage the outcomes of existing programs that implement MI in their service delivery.

This suggestion was completed and now the section is more easily read.

* Consider reiterating the above potential of sustaining good outcomes longer, directly above, in the social work agencies subsection of Implications for Social Work. Enhanced outcomes are clearly an agency consideration.

This suggestion is now included in the manuscript (See page 30).

* Table 2 comes out of the blue at this point. I think it adds further to the argument that MI is a practice theory very compatible with social work. This section is illustrative and not compiled through a systematic methodology, as the bulk of the article has been. I am a little concerned about if and how the average reader will interpret this data and it if it will alter how they might interpret the soundness of your prior analysis. I just raise that as a consideration that you might want to address. You should keep the argument. If you keep the table, I would suggest concluding the practitioner section with this argument and alerting the reader in the introduction, and perhaps the abstract, that you will also discuss the compatibility of MI with NASW code of ethic’s values. The first sentence under Table 2 is wonky and may need some help. Do you intend to say that “the MI-SBP approach may help both the practitioner and the client develop skills to more easily align with client goals?”

Thank you for this suggestion. After review we decided the table was best removed in order to keep the article focused on the main conceptual comparisons.

This was an enjoyable and thought provoking read. I look forward to being able to use it in teaching. Thank you!