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In Social Work Practice, Social Justice is the Rock

**Learning About Social Justice
During Field Education**

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Author's Declaration

This is to certify that:

- I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Social Work Degree.
- II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
- III. The thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.
- IV. No part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.
- V. This thesis meets the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of research.

Signature. 

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Abstract

Social justice is widely accepted as a core principle of social work and underpins the knowledge and teaching in social work education programs in Australia. There is a large body of writing and research on the importance of incorporating a social justice framework across the curriculum of social work courses (Briskman, 2013; Ife, 2010). It is through field education that students are given the opportunity to discover the complexity of social work and the practicalities of incorporating their learning into their professional practice (Maidment, 2000; Noble, 2001). While field education is an integral component of social work education, there is insufficient research to enable the widespread inclusion of an essential principle of the social work profession, social justice, into field education. This dissertation focuses on this under-researched area.

The research undertaken for the dissertation examines social work students' understandings of social justice and their experience, or lack of experience, of learning about social justice during the field education component of their courses. A qualitative study involving in-depth individual and focus group interviews surveyed 32 social work students, new graduates, field educators, managers, and academics with an interest in social justice on placement. Using a critical theory perspective, these interviews were thematically analysed.

It was found that the participants in this study viewed field education as being of central importance in developing and enhancing professional practices with a social justice focus. Students and new graduates had a range of understandings of social justice that included concepts of equality and fairness, and for some an awareness of structural factors that maintain injustice. Significant influences on their understandings were found to be prior experiences of injustice, ideas promoted within their families, and inspirational individuals encountered during their studies. Students and new graduates described learning about social justice during field education from reflecting on their interactions with others. Their reflections were aided by linking their placement experience to their campus learning, however many students and new graduates experienced difficulty in applying theory to practice and often struggled to fully grasp how concepts of social justice applied to professional practice.

The academics, field educators and managers described from their different vantage points a range of ways in which they sought to assist students to make links between their experiences and their understandings of theories and theoretical models. In several instances the field educators professed expecting from the students a greater degree of readiness to experience a particular social justice focus within their practice context. The field

educators, academics and managers were at the same time alert to the complexity of field education learning. On the whole they considered that each particular organisation's perspective on taking a social justice focus to social work practice had a significant impact on student learning.

The findings from this study affirm the central importance of field education for learning about social justice in social work courses. The research exposes the tensions that exist between campus learning and field education, especially involving the ways in which theory and practice are articulated and implemented in the field. This is teased out through the accounts of students gaining confidence in their understandings of social justice.

Chapter One

Setting the scene

Many social workers attest to principles of social justice being at the core of their work with people, communities and organisations (Ife, 2002; Saleeby, 1990). At the same time some practitioners report difficulty in naming what they do to address the structurally based disadvantage experienced by particular people and communities (Birkenmaier, 2003; Finn and Jacobson, 2003). For other practitioners, 'striving to achieve social justice' simply does not figure as being of key significance in their practice framework (Gray, Collett van Rooyen, Rennie and Gaha, 2002; Hawkins, Fook and Ryan, 2001).

Given the social work profession's commitment to social justice, understanding how students learn about social justice during their specialised education should be highly relevant. This study's focus is the field education component of social work education. Field education is described by many social workers as the most memorable aspect of their course, and sometimes as the most significant in their development as a social worker (Fortune, McCarthy and Abramson, 2001: 111; Kadushin, 1991; Maidment, 2000; Ryan, Toohey and Hughes, 1996; Tolson and Kopp, 1988). Addressing the focus of this research, that is, student learning about social justice during field education, I sought to open up dialogue between social work practice and academe about social justice knowledge, understandings and strategies.

As a social worker with many years' experience in the areas of child protection, mental health and community development around issues of substance use, I became interested in how social workers learn to create change. In addition to my personal awareness of my own stages of development, over the last 20 years I have observed and supported students on similar journeys as they engaged in field education. I had witnessed students experience the power of learning about social justice when undertaken by students who had chosen to go on a rural and remote field education experience away from home (Gaha, English and O'Sullivan, 1997). The difference in everyday surrounds seemed to create in the students an alertness to inequity of resource distribution and the concern that this inequity has impacted on people's life chances. I considered that learning about social justice during field education might be, for a student, the experience of making a difference in people's lives through something that they might identify as 'praxis', and/or of critically reflecting on their own engagement with 'social justice' values. In an ideal scenario this would take place while the student was observing social work practice within a human service organisation, working with and being supervised by a field educator articulate about social justice (and other) principles. An important starting point to exploring the links between learning and social justice involves

identifying the influences on students' development of knowledge, skills and values that align with principles of social justice. For a number of future social workers, these values are established in childhood and adolescence, that is, long before enrolling in a tertiary program. Attaching importance to these values may lead someone to enrol in social work education. A nuanced understanding of these values underpins social work practice that prioritises social justice.

Field education is a critical part of social work education, contributing a different type of learning experience to the student's formation as a social worker. These experiences are valued by social work educators and seen as complementary to classroom-based studies. Field education offers students an opportunity for integration of their institution-acquired knowledge with experience-based 'learning by doing' in the 'real' world working with someone from the same profession, doing social work.

Aims

The ways students learn about social justice is largely unmapped in field education. The aims of this study were to explore how students learn about and apply social justice in the field education component of their course. An aim of this research was to seek the views of students, new graduates, field educators, managers and academics about how learning about practice in the field connects with education about social justice and affects its future within the profession of social work. One overarching question facilitated the exploratory nature of the study:

How do social work students learn to put social justice into practice whilst participating in field education?

The study explores several quite distinct areas of knowledge. Firstly, the idea of social justice and its application within social work practice and education for practice, were examined with reference to the students and new graduates interviewed. I specifically wished to uncover what is understood as social justice. *What do students and new graduates understand social justice to be?*

Secondly, in order for participants to contribute ideas as to how they developed their understandings, they were asked to locate the significance and relevance of different influences for them, and these are also analysed in the study. *What influenced students' and new graduates' understandings of social justice?*

Thirdly, the study sought to detail the explicit experience of field education (relating to its contribution to learning about social justice) and also from the vantage points of a wider set of participants. It also sought to illuminate the

factors that hindered and enabled students to learn about putting social justice into practice. This imperative guided the framework of the study. *What do each of the participants observe about how students learnt about social justice through field education?*

The research methodology informing this study sought the voices of social work students and other social workers about their experience of putting social justice into practice within field education. The significance of this research is that through exploring social justice, as learnt about in field education, multiple meanings in respect of social justice in social work practice are highlighted. The personal and local nature of developing confidence in practicing from a social justice stance can be linked to an overarching structure of a profession educating for principled practice. The link between social work and the outcomes of practices that strive to address structural inequality and injustice can be openly examined within field education, and overtime, in the wider profession. A greater dialogue between practice and academe can be achieved. In each of these ways new social work knowledge is being constructed.

Glossary of terms

The term 'Field educator' is used in this study to describe the key role within a human service organisation ("the field") to support a social work student's learning. Students and others interviewed in this study have often used the term "supervisor" to describe that person. Many educational institutions in Australia refer to practitioners in the field who are supporting students to learn about practice, to use the term "field educator" to reflect their role of facilitating a student's learning within that practice context not solely watching over the student. "Social workers" and "practitioners" are terms used inter-changeably within this study to describe someone with a social work qualification who is currently practicing within the human services sector. "Social work managers" are those who have a social work qualification as well as a role within their organisation that is one of managing other workers. This may or may not involve providing professional social work supervision for these workers. The term "on-site" educator or supervisor is used where the person taking the role of facilitating the student's learning within the human services organisation does not hold a social work qualification. To take this role with a student on behalf of a university, this person is required to have a tertiary qualification and experience of at least two years duration within the human services sector. At the same time for such a 'non-social worker' led placement to be authorised, social work supervision is to be provided by a social work qualified person contracted by the university. This person is called variously an "external

social work consultant”, an “off-site social work educator or “off-site supervisor” and is required to work collaboratively with the on-site educator for an authorised placement to occur. The terms “placement” and “field education” - and less often “practicum” - are used to refer to a learning experience within a human services organisation that is authorised by the university as leading to the professional qualification of social work.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, with Chapter One providing the rationale for the research and an overview of the study. Chapters Two and Three address the literature and existing research about social justice in social work. Chapter Two reviews literature relating to broad philosophical and sociological understandings of justice and social justice, and to the history and complex range of issues that situate social justice as central to the social work professional knowledge base. Chapter Three reviews literature related to social work education with a social justice focus. This includes literature whose focus is on issues arising for educators and in educational practices due to the ‘learning by doing’ nature of the field education component of social work education.

Chapter Four presents the methodology. The epistemological base of social constructionism, the critical theoretical perspectives that underpin it, and how it influenced data collection and analysis is outlined. The data collection process and the analysis of the data are overviewed.

The findings of the research are reported in two chapters; Chapter Five presents findings from the individual and focus group interviews with students and new graduates, and Chapter Six presents findings from interviews with field educators, managers and academics. In Chapter Seven, the key implications of the research are discussed, and suggestions for areas in need of further exploration and practical strategies for consideration by the profession are presented.

Chapter Two

Social justice in the literature: a complex landscape

This research seeks to better understand how students develop a social justice 'confidence' whilst in field education. Literature that discusses the genesis and development of the construct of social justice traverses the disciplines of philosophy, politics, history, economics and other social sciences. I also identify the professional and academic social work literature that relates to the application and practical relevance of social justice constructs. In particular I focus on literature that considers the meanings attributed by social work professionals to the social justice construct.

Social justice: the evolution of its meanings

Social justice is now a generally accepted core principle of social work. This is clearly evidenced in the current definition of social work used by international and national organisations.

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being [through] utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (IFSW and IASSW, 2001)

However, the term social justice emerged from disciplines other than social work including philosophy, politics and history, disciplines upon which social work has drawn to build its knowledge base. Valentine (2005: 94 citing Hayek, 1976) reports that the term social justice was first used in 1840 by Taparelli d'Azeglio in Italy. This was a time of significant change in Italy, as across Europe a new source of wealth (for some) emerged from shifts in political and economic structures as a result of industrialisation. It was seen (by some) as the ethical and moral responsibility of those advantaged by the new economy to attempt to redress the social disadvantage experienced by others as a result of it.

Reisch (2002) argues that social justice was a driver in the formation of the social movements of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The vision of 'justice for all' was often the catchcry of these movements. Their ideals supported the notion of a social contract that balances "the goal of social equality with the preservation of individual liberty" (Reisch, 2002: 345). This ideal presented a notion of justice between individuals that had simply been expanded to meet the needs of whole societies. The term 'social justice' was not used by these early social movements, however at that time it was expected that structures would be created and treat everyone fairly,

maximising individual and collective well-being. Expectations were that greater equality would be achieved through the creation of societies with structures powerful enough to pursue 'justice for all' (Reisch, 2002: 344 citing Hobbes, 1996). Despite such ideals, not only were these social movements unable to eradicate ongoing inequality and injustice in society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the institutions and structures they created were also unable to protect those societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from the persistence of injustice.

The meaning of social justice today is contested, complex, shrouded in confusion and yet powerfully symbolic (see Chatterjee and D'Aprix, 2002; Craig, 2002: 669; Craig, Burchardt and Gordon, 2008; Drake, 2001: 60; Galambos, 2008; McCormick, 2003; Reisch, 2002; Valentine, 2005). This confusion and symbolism highlight one of the ironies of the early twenty-first century, wherein people of all ideological persuasions proclaim contrasting visions of society, yet each names their own version 'social justice' (Reisch, 2002: 343). Currently, in the twenty-first century, social justice is connected to notions of equality, fairness and freedom within (and sometimes despite) the relationship of rights and responsibilities existing between a society's institutions and members (Ife, 2002; Reisch, 2002). It is conceived as both goal and process.

Ife (2010: 148) describes social justice in the following way:

Social justice refers to the concept of a society in which justice is achieved in every aspect of society, rather than merely through the administration of law. It is generally considered as a social world which affords individuals and groups fair treatment, equality and an impartial share of the benefits of membership of society.

Ife contends that social justice should be seen as a meta narrative, leading to a deeper understanding of the many dimensions of structural inequality — class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality — that operate in all societies and challenge citizens to strive to achieve 'just' societies.

Notably, several contributory principles have been integrated into Ife's definition of the term: a 'whole of society' approach; being alert to the intent and outcome of distribution of social benefits. While Ife's definition encompasses a broad and accountable vision of social justice, some other scholars apply their more particular sets of justice principles — such as procedural fairness — to society as a whole. To elaborate, commencing from a premise that a principle of justice is to "give one their due" (McCormick, 2003: 8), a just society is one in which there is "proper and fair administration of the laws" (Garner, 2001: 390). Garner (2001: 390) refers to social justice as a particular type of justice that is meted out in a way that "conforms to a moral principle"; an example of such a principle is "that all people are equal", and distribution of a society's benefits according to that principle would be

considered socially just provided the related laws were “properly and fairly administered”. Gil (1998: 13) includes reciprocity, in that social justice is achieved when all people have equal “social, civil, and political rights and responsibilities”. An alternative model is that of Chatterjee and D’Aprix (2002: 374), who conceptualise justice to be the development of formal and informal rules that enable groups, communities, strata of society and whole societies to look after each other. The operation of justice — the group’s rules — has several purposes in a society, but two broad dimensions. The first dimension, commonly seen as ‘justice’, enables the society to function through the application of laws that protect, correct and restore rights in that society. The second dimension, identified as ‘social justice’, has an active re-distributional and representational function that addresses the concerns of vulnerable and marginalised populations and is based on a norm of mutual aid. A dynamic of social change is generated by the interaction of these two dimensions, which moves the society closer to where social justice can be said to exist (Chatterjee and D’Aprix, 2002: 374).

Conceptualisations of (social) justice found in the literature

In Valentine’s view, the most commonly debated areas in the literature are related to the “nature and intent of social justice” (2005: 222). Reisch surmises that the debates revolving around social justice are mainly distinctions between contributive and distributive views of justice, and the implications of these concepts for the allocation of social rights, goods and responsibilities (2002: 345).

The literature informing understandings around social justice commonly begins with four conceptualisations about the just distribution of social goods and benefits in society (Boucher and Kelly, 1998; Craig, Burchardt and Gordon, 2008; Drake, 2001: 60; Humphries, 2003; McCormick, 2003; Valentine, 2005). These are: justice as utility; justice as entitlement to liberty; justice as fairness; and justice as complex equality. The latter two emerged from the ‘justice as entitlement to liberty’ conceptualisation in the 1970s. Linked to these tenets are three, more recent conceptualisations that for the purposes of this review are particularly relevant. These are: justice as redress (emerged from justice as fairness); justice as redistribution, recognition and respect (emerged from justice as fairness, justice as respect and justice as complex equality); and justice as capability (emerged from justice as fairness and justice as complex equality).

Justice as utility

Justice as utility means that justice is achieved when “the greatest good for the greatest number and the individual supported by society” is achieved (see Drake, 2001: 61 citing Bentham, 1780 and Mill, 1859). This conceptualisation of justice is often seen as benevolent, given that a rational

decision-making process is employed to determine the greatest good for the greatest number, and the concerns of the individual —wealthy, powerful or neither — are not privileged. Thus utilitarian justice is sometimes seen as a way of challenging wealthy and powerful groups determined to maintain their power and influence, and of seeking to develop a society where everyone is dealt with equally and each person benefits to the same extent irrespective of their needs or wants. Many also consider this type of equality as the same as being fair. As a principle it is also 'inclusive of all', enabling participation by all recognised members of a society, and thus supportive of active citizenship and responsive to the needs of the majority. However, as there is no imperative for the generation of social justice within this conceptualisation, it cannot be 'fair' (Rawls, 1971). A key criticism of utilitarian justice is that individual human rights may be put at risk. "Rights will be protected as long as they preserve the greater good, but can be over-ridden or ignored if they conflict with that principle of utility" (McCormick, 2003: 10). This has significance for many involved with the development and implementation of social policies, and particularly for the social work profession with respect to a society's acknowledgement of its responsibility to address the disadvantage of vulnerable minorities.

Justice as entitlement to liberty and freedom

An individual's entitlement to the liberty or freedom to pursue their own interests to such an extent that they do not violate that same freedom in others is the concept of justice originally formulated by Herbert Spencer and John Locke (1689, cited by Drake, 2001: 62). The entitlement to liberty, as a core human right, also protects rights to life and to one's property. The liberty to pursue one's own interests in the day-to-day world involves transactions and exchanges with others. An exchange of social benefits of any kind is evaluated as 'just' if both parties have mutual freedom to take part (Drake, 2001: 62; McCormick, 2003: 10; Nozick, 1974). By complying with a limited set of rules in a particular transaction, a person is both acting without unnecessary constraint and not violating the same freedom in others, and is thus participating in an exchange of social benefits that is 'just'. By facilitating 'just' exchanges, society ensures that its benefits are distributed 'justly'.

Contemporary libertarians such as Robert Nozick (1974) view the primary role of a government as enabling its members to go about their business, while ensuring that no one violates another's freedom to do the same. Arguing from Nozick's view, a government is considered by libertarians as guilty of theft if it acts to redistribute wealth in order to support the poor and marginalised through "enforced redistribution" such as a taxation system, inferring by doing so that the poor have a greater moral claim on the "surplus wealth" of the society (McCormick, 2003: 10). As an extension of the poor and marginalised not having any intrinsic capacity to claim resources from the 'well off', this conceptualisation offers no recognition of people's rights to the

basic necessities for sustaining life, nor to equal access to goods, services or jobs (Sterba, 1998). It is therefore dubious that these poor and marginalised would have the capacity to engage in transactions in 'mutual freedom'. However, if poverty is conceptualised as the *outcome* of injustice at the hands of another, this viewpoint would indeed acknowledge that a claim for redress has intrinsic validity.

Justice as fairness

Rawls introduced the theory of justice as fairness (Rawls, 1971; 2001). Rawls was influenced by the social contract theories of both Locke (1689) and Rousseau (1762) concerning the bases on which people will give power to the state (Rawls, 1971: 131). He argued that justice must protect the rights of individual persons whilst at the same time enabling equality of opportunity and providing a minimum of protection to the poor and marginalised. This combination of rights and responsibilities is widely accepted as a key conceptualisation of social justice (Drake, 2001: 63; Rawls, 2001: 43; Reisch, 2002: 364). In Rawls' view, justice is measured by the equal distribution of fundamental rights and responsibilities, of economic opportunities and of social conditions in the various sectors of society. These social goods should be distributed equally unless it benefits the whole of society for them to be distributed unequally. Distribution should be of greatest benefit to the least advantaged in society. This contractual process of distribution was expected to be rational (without personal bias) and fair for everyone: a 'just' (fair and equal) process. In this sense a just society is one in which everyone may participate and have equal opportunities to benefit from the distribution of social goods. When that equal opportunity to participate — 'a fair chance' — is not possible, the responsibility falls on those with the capacity to redress the disadvantage to enable a righting of the balance on behalf of those who endure 'undeserved' inequalities. Such intervention is seen as necessary in all just societies (Rawls, 2001 cited by Valentine, 2005: 60).

A powerful critique of Rawls' conceptualisation of social justice is the absence of the principle of just outcomes, without which the possibility for inequality continues to exist (Drake, 2001; Ife, 2002). This critique argues that society's benefits can never be redistributed effectively, ensuring the achievement of just outcomes, until there are structural changes that remove the different forms of oppression. Bannerjee (2011) identifies a range of unsuitabilities in Rawls' conceptualisation of justice in terms of its use as a framework by the social work profession. Specifically, it is inadequate in ensuring the well-being of marginalised and vulnerable groups. For any social justice strategy to have value it must address outcomes for those less likely to benefit from full participation in the market economy (Ife, 2002; Mowbray, 2000; Young, 1990). The way toward this greater goal is the recognition of diversity beyond economic and social equality. The inclusion of groups long denied the benefits of justice would lead to greater acknowledgement of the multiplicity

of ways of helping that exist. Recognition of diversity may be powerfully achieved through the formation of social justice oriented coalitions (Chatterjee and D'Aprix, 2002; Humphries, 2008).

Justice as complex equality

Justice is different in different spheres of human activity, thus creating a 'complex equality'. In this view, no single definition of justice dominates, and everyone in society is assured they will benefit from justice in one sphere or another. A person who has a social good such as wealth will not dominate other spheres of human activity such as health, education or politics because of the boundaries between spheres of activities (Drake, 2001; Kymlicka, 1990; Walzer, 1983). This egalitarian vision of justice rests on recognition of diversity and does not seek to eliminate differences. Complex equality is achieved through a "decentralised latticework of autonomous goods, authorities and standards" and seeks to prevent domination or tyranny in any sphere, be it economics, education or politics (McCormick, 2003: 11 citing Kymlicka, 1990). It is a position that compromises a truly egalitarian society and, in Walzer's view, can only be achieved by "repressing freedom and granting a monopoly of political power to the state" (McCormick, 2003: 11 citing Walzer, 1983: 6). Having a 'whole of society' focus on complex equality accommodates a type of societal justice, a civil society, whilst retaining relationality between individual members of society. It enhances inclusion and participation but does not facilitate redistribution of social goods or proactive redress.

Justice as redress

The principle of redress is raised frequently in the literature about social justice. Proposed by Rawls (1971: 100), redress was considered by him "to give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into the less favourable social positions", "to bias contingencies in the direction of equality" and "to equalise people's life chances". Given this apparently humane acknowledgement of those with less power, Rawls' work has been continually referred to since the early 1970s as corresponding to the social work profession's own development of a conceptualisation of social justice (Goldstein, 1987; Reisch, 2002).

Querying this alliance proposed between social work and the principle of redress, Valentine (2005) and Bannerjee (2011) consider it to be a misreading of Rawls. Redress can be seen as a component of both a reactive and a proactive construct of social justice. Bannerjee (2011) claims that Rawls' principles of redress do not fit with the social work profession's principles of valuing the humanity and dignity of every individual. In a reactive construct of social justice, individuals may be compensated in recognition that they have suffered disadvantage due to the imposition of structural factors: undeserved inequality that is 'unfair' and 'not their fault'. Undeserved

inequality cannot be moderated, as any exchange of social goods will always be limited by (the original) unequal distribution of resources and opportunities (Valentine, 2005). If this form of redress is limited solely to material compensation and no further acknowledgement is made, nothing in this act of limited redress prevents a similar situation arising in the future, nor is structural change likely to be an outcome (Valentine, 2005). Such a reactive construct of social justice is readily adaptable to different politics, and both Reisch (2002) and Valentine (2005) note its popularity across the political spectrum. Redress, implemented as a tool of a reactive construct of social justice, has become an established strategy in social policy. Given its orientation toward a more just distribution of social goods, it is often seen as a measure of greater justice in society, irrespective of the flaws outlined above.

Redress as a *proactive* construct of social justice seeks to challenge and make amends for the structural causes of oppression and domination, immediately and into the future. Efforts to redress the structural causes of oppression are commonly constrained by institutions being unwilling to embark on making changes. Many social and political institutions discriminate and do not take literally their obligation to recognise the implicit dignity and eligibility of all 'citizen subjects' as members of a civil society (Ife 2010; Valentine, 2005).

Justice as redistribution, recognition and respect

Recent literature builds a 'whole and diverse society' perspective, developing conceptualisations of justice as symbolised by "redistribution, recognition and respect" (Lister, 2008: 105). The notion of equality applied here is not of citizens' identical treatment, rather it recognises greater diversity and lays a basis for arguments of equality to also include positive discrimination. This construct includes fairness, enhanced participation, and inclusion, and thus meets the notion of the civil society in which all members are entitled to an equal and impartial share of benefits.

Justice as diverse capability

Sen and Nussbaum (1993) posit that a just society requires recognition that all members have different capabilities. If a person does not have the particular capabilities required to live their life to its fullest potential, they should be provided with resources — social, financial and environmental — to endow them the freedom to socially participate. From this perspective, referred to in the literature as 'justice as capabilities', equality is "beyond equality of opportunity, it is rather equality of freedoms" (Sen, 1992: 7). Friedman (2010) comments that this conceptualisation offers a non-utopian notion of social justice with a focus on strategies that lessen injustice. This notion offers the broader society-wide possibility of positive discrimination in order to effect inclusive citizenship. Critics of the approach consider that the loss of focus on

bringing about larger scale social change diminishes our capacity as a member of a society to lessen those injustices (Solas, 2008).

The above conceptualisations of distributive justice demonstrate some of the ways that the broader concept of social justice can be explored. It is evident that whilst these particular conceptualisations contribute to an understanding of social justice they also add to the complexity around the meaning of the term (e.g. the range of meanings ascribed to the words 'equality', 'fairness' and 'participation'). Reisch (2002) recognised this and identified two core problems in applying justice principles to contemporary social policy debates. He argued that, firstly, there is a paradox in attempting to develop principles of justice within a "political, economic and social context based largely, if tacitly, on the preservation of injustice" (2002: 346). Secondly, if social justice is defined by applying concepts based largely on the expansion of individual rights and resource share to policies, programs and modes of intervention that address group needs and concerns, this difference between individual and group focus limits the capacity to create change (Reisch, 2002: 347). Without capacity to create change, societies worldwide are consigned to continuously dealing with the persistence of injustice and inequality. The challenge discussed in the literature becomes one of distilling the core elements that define social justice in society whilst also critically attending to structural injustice by identifying who is marginalised or excluded and determining what processes are and are not being employed to strategically address it (Craig, 2002; Ife, 2002; Reisch, 2002; Solas 2008; Valentine, 2005).

Equality and fairness

The next layer of terminology on which the literature builds the picture of social justice is the identification of the core concepts: 'equality' and 'fairness' (Boucher and Kelly, 1998; O'Brien, 2009). It is necessary to locate how these concepts, and their various elements of participation, equality for all, equal opportunity, inequality and injustice, sit within the conceptualisations of justice described above. It is also necessary to consider a broad group of constructs that are contributive to social justice, such as social citizenship, civil society, social inclusion and participation, recognition of complex and diverse identities, human rights, self-determination, sense of personal agency, and emancipation and empowerment (Freire and Moch, 1987; Narayan, 2001; Reisch, 2002; Truman, Mertens and Humphries, 2000; Witkin, 2000).

The complexity of the notion of equality is evident by its numerous meanings and uses in the literature. These include: equal rights to intangibles such as freedom (Nozick, 1974); equal opportunity to obtain social goods (Rawls, 1971); equal distribution of social goods to all or equal distribution of social goods to those of equal merit or productivity (Reisch, 2002); unequal or 'different' services as needed to create equality (Fraser, 1995; Lister, 2008; O'Brien, 2011); diverse and unequal treatment in recognition of structural

barriers experienced by vulnerable populations (Fraser, 1995); policies and interventions valuing difference and diversity (O'Brien, 2011); policies and interventions informed by values like equal opportunity and equality of outcomes and treatment (O'Brien, 2011); policies and interventions informed by values like recognising dignity and equal worth and encouraging self-esteem (Craig, 2002); and creating equality by maximising reduction of inequalities in wealth, income and life chances (Rawls, 1971).

'Equality and justice for all' was identified as a universal concept from as early as 2500–1500 BC. The concept was founded under the influence of institutionalised religions and literature core to the development of Western civilisation. In Plato's Greece, however, the call to equality was made only in relation to members of Plato's own strata of society. Plato expanded the 'original' meaning of equality to include the notion of human well-being, thereby linking the individual to a broader social construct in which, if harmony was achieved, justice would be served. But by excluding all other strata, practical enactment of the concept led to a particular group of people being advantaged over and over again, and thus the universal 'all' was not achieved here (Reisch, 2002). Broader applications of the concept of 'equality' and 'justice for all' are reported by Chatterjee and D'Aprix (2002) and Reisch (2002) as taking place during the growth of secular humanism and a rationalisation of the rise of state power under the monarchies of the day.

The multiple meanings of 'fairness' include: fair access to resources, ensuring adequate opportunities (Rawls, 1971); fairness as non-discrimination (Rawls, 1971); fairness to vulnerable populations (providing redress and/or additional resources to enable access to opportunities) (Craig, 2002); fairness in terms of treatment (Garner, 2001); and fairness as the promotion of the rights of Indigenous, minority and disadvantaged groups (O'Brien, 2011). A significant theme emerges from the literature when considering fairness. Goals and processes of 'being fair', having or giving someone 'a fair go', 'righting the balance', 'not being fair' and transcending mere 'procedural fairness' all turn on the 'who': who is considered to have responsibilities to ensure fairness; who possesses the rights to benefit from fairness. Thus access, participation and authority are key to any consideration of what makes a fair distribution of resources in society (Rawls, 1971).

When considering participation and equality, O'Brien invokes the notion that citizenship is both a status and a practice (2011: 143 citing Lister, 1997). The status of citizenship enables the explicit identification of a right to services for which one is eligible. Acknowledgement of citizenship status is through the particular practices by which an individual is "treated in their social and political relationships" and which "shape their experiences and their lives"; "the included are citizens, the excluded are not" (O'Brien, 2011: 144). In O'Brien's (2011) view, social work acts as the bridge between the citizens and

the excluded. Enhancing participation is the context in which, in Lorenz's (2006, cited by O'Brien, 2011: 144) view, social work needs to become the practice of social citizenship: "every intervention [is] not just the resolution of a specific problem ... but ... the re-examination and reclaiming of the sets of rights and obligations ... which constitute the substance of social integration".

Injustice is the result of institutionalised oppression and domination. Oppression can be the experience of powerlessness, marginalisation, violence, cultural imperialism or exploitation that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in society (Young, 1990: 42). Given the persistent association between political and economic structures operating in discriminatory and unequal ways, it is critical to understand how society's institutions generate injustice and to create a context within which a just social contract can be made. In seeking to understand what appears to be the continuous re-creation of oppression, persistent injustice and inequality, Young (1990: 42) proposed that the presence of these criteria (powerlessness, marginalisation, violence, cultural imperialism and/or exploitation) flags that oppression is being generated. Using Young's criteria it is possible to identify, both historically and currently, policies and practices that either maintain or challenge these oppression-creating relations. In order to challenge them, Reisch considers that "a societal imperative exists that promotes full participation of each member of the community in the community's activities", generating greater social solidarity accompanied by the reassertion of "collective responsibility, a community of need and public virtue" (2002: 347).

Moral principles related to policies that attempt to ensure the inclusion of all, particularly the most disadvantaged, are actively contested in Australian society (Calma and Priddy, 2011; Gibbons and Gray, 2005; Ife, 2002; Weiss, 2003). But in a broader view, resources (e.g. a social worker or other paid government worker) are allocated that enable the marginalised and excluded to begin to take part in society by 'walking alongside' others. Ensuring the uptake of rights to participate can include enabling access to resources as well as providing opportunities. Participation is seen as being nurtured where an empowerment approach enables "the improvement of the quality of those peoples' lives through their access to resources which enhance dignity, individuality and self-determination" (Flynn, 1997: 23 citing Benn, 1991).

Another way of increasing opportunities for the marginalised and those experiencing social injustice has, in recent history, been state intervention. State power has largely replaced the power exercised by religions or divinely-attributed monarchies. 'Justice for all' was closely associated with the ideas of the Enlightenment that sought to apply universal non-religious 'truths' discovered through science to the whole of society. In the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries the emergence of commercial and industrial capitalism also challenged those advantaged by the new economy to ensure their behaviour was moral towards those not able to participate in the same way (Rawls, 1971; Reisch, 2002). Reisch (2002: 344) notes that Hobbes' conception of justice involved state-created institutions enforcing laws and social norms to preserve peace and to restrain people from harming others while in pursuit of self-interest. This dilemma is identified by Valentine (2005:56) as a time when the economy started to shape relationships as opposed to giving support to achieving the common good, and despite some state attempts to achieve 'justice for all' the persistence of widespread injustice was indisputable. At different times throughout history, despite significant political will, the difficulty of administering egalitarianism whilst ensuring the preservation of individual liberties has rendered the goal of social equality unachievable (Reisch, 2002: 345). Individualising social justice, and thus limiting the reach of social justice for all, remains a constant problem.

In recognition of the perceived need for the state to actively intervene, Craig (2002: 671–2) makes a case for the structural implementation of social justice and the place of social work.

Social justice [is] a framework of political objectives, pursued through social, economic, environmental and political policies based on the acceptance of difference and diversity ... [It is] an explicitly value-led framework determined by the state through publicly funded services ... [T]he work of social workers is to push forward a progressive social work agenda.

It is not new that political and economic structures are seen as important features that create and constrain the environment. Valentine (2005: 94) identifies a range of concepts around mutual responsibility that were a feature of social relationships in feudal times, a "framework to structure social and economic relationships in order to promote the common good". These feudal concepts were said to acknowledge the dignity of each individual. Reisch, in his discussion of Marx (1964, cited in Reisch, 2002), describes the development of the notion of creating fairness and access to social goods for all as being born of significant historical periods of injustice and discrimination. In his view the rapid development of the notion in times of strain can be seen as an example of a dynamic that can generate a demand for change. Reisch thus disputes the idea that injustice is and will forever be a feature of the human condition, arguing that it is the result of political and economic structures based on discrimination and inequality (2002: 345, citing Marx, 1964). He posits that justice would prevail if and when individuals received what they needed on the basis of their humanity, not merely what they 'deserved' because of their social class, origin or productivity.

Ife (2010: 82) expresses concern that in conducting an analysis in association with a human rights discourse, those experiencing dimensions of structural

disadvantage — class, gender, race/ethnicity, disability — are at risk of being marginalised, as

human rights tends to treat all people as one ... [It is] a discourse of human unity rather than of human diversity and the human rights discourse is always ready to ignore gender, race and class [and] is likely to reinforce structural inequality rather than address it.

Rights are not in isolation of a societal analysis and structural discrimination. Ife draws on Benn's (1991) work to identify appropriate foci for strategic alliances that could lead to social change. These are: "power over personal choices and life chances; power over the definition of need; power over ideas; power over resources; power over economic activity; power over reproduction" (Ife, 2002: 58). Whilst acknowledging the persistence of injustice and seeming impossibility of achieving a socially just society, the importance of continuing to strive to make injustice visible especially with regard to those marginalised in societal discourse "can no longer be negated" (Solas, 2008: 820). Calma and Priday (2011: 153) note how systemic discrimination has manifest patterns in behaviour, policies and practices and these are maintained despite the legal, moral and political structures that have been created to challenge this, such as in the case of discrimination against Indigenous Australians.

None of the contributing concepts to the construct 'social justice' (equality, fairness, participation, oppression, challenge to persistent injustice) are applied in politically neutral ways. Rather, the use of these terms are powerfully influenced by the economic, political and social forces impacting on societal institutions and are subject to how social goods and benefits have been and are distributed in societies (Reisch, 2002; Reisch and Jani, 2012; Valentine, 2005). The current economic paradigm of neo-liberalism redefines society's expectations to the extent that social justice is thought of as simply an "economic form of procedural fairness" (Valentine, 2005: 193). And as can be seen in the literature, in the distribution of 'fairness' the outcome can be unfair, or at least unpredictable and therefore, in its unpredictability, unjust (Bannerjee, 2011; Rawls, 1971).

Themes arising from this overview include, firstly, recognition of diversity and acknowledgement of many ways of distributing the benefits of society. Secondly, there arise numerous suggestions but few answers as to how redistribution can be put in place to bring about twenty-first century social justice. Finally, the literature supports the contention that there is complexity and uncertainty involved in striving to achieve social justice. It indicates that it is important to locate claims for social justice within the socio-political and socio-economic structures of each particular society.

Locating social justice in social work

Working towards social justice has particular resonance for the social work profession. Humphries declares that “the claim is that social workers know about injustice because they work so closely with its manifestations” but that they need “to be more systematic in making it [injustice] visible” (2008: 25). In Humphries’ view, the ongoing debate throughout the life of the profession about the centrality or otherwise of social justice to social work (see Bailey and Brake, 1975; Galambos, 2008; Jordan, 2007; Olson, 2007; Pelton, 2001; Reynolds, 1951 cited by Reisch, 2002; Rossiter, 2005; Rountree and Pomeroy, 2010; Specht and Courtney, 1994) is a distraction from the task of rendering injustice visible.

Hugman (2009) provides a brief history of the profession of social work specific to the issues he considers are central to the above debate. He tells us that the profession of social work was born of local social, economic and political factors in the particular contexts of the United Kingdom and the United States in the mid to late nineteenth century, and that Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and, to some extent, Europe adopted versions of the profession from the UK. The profession was generated from two strategic approaches: the Charity Organisation Society and the Settlement Movement. Both approaches were responses to the upheaval of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. This created dislocation and poverty on a massive scale. Each approach viewed the social problems of the time as having different causes and therefore their responses differed (Hugman, 2009).

The Charity Organisation Society was seen as implementing a ‘scientific’ approach to social problems, where the problem was identified as being a person’s own failing or inability to change in their own best interests unless they had help. Social problems such as poverty, family breakdown, and inadequate housing were responded to by social workers who, in close relationship with families, helped them develop better coping strategies with the intention that with this support the problem confronting the family would recede. The Charity Organisation Society has been seen as politically conservative and as having the capacity to be scientifically accountable. Its micro or individual level interventions can be viewed as an area of verifiable social work practice knowledge (Hugman, 2009; Olson, 2007).

Members of the Settlement Movement (e.g. Toynbee Hall in the UK and Hull House in the USA) considered that social problems were the result of inequitable distribution of resources by society. Addressing this, they argued, involved active engagement by people with a range of social resources, living and working amongst people who had not had the benefit of educational and other resources. Problem solving skills were developed through social relationships within the local community and together, responses to disadvantage were identified which included advocating for wider change.

This was seen as the beginning of 'macro' level practice in social work, and therefore as politically radical (Hugman, 2009; Parry and Parry, 1979; Payne 2005; Pogue, 2011).

In much of the literature a clear division between these two typologies of response is made, and the distinction has set the scene for continuing to characterise whole interventions as either 'micro' or 'macro' (Hugman, 2009). In terms of 'micro' interventions, having a discrete, scientifically verifiable knowledge base was in the late nineteenth century seen as essential for the credibility of the new profession of social work, and it was thought that the 'micro' level of practice established that (Olsen, 2007). However, legitimating practices that concentrated on individuals and their pathologies meant that social work could not also claim social justice as its professional purpose (Olsen, 2007). In terms of 'macro' practices - in the 1960s and 1970s - a renewed demand for a broader view of legitimate practices led to the development of radical social work and structural social work (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Corrigan and Leonard, 1978). An exponent of the activist as opposed to the traditionalist position, Saleebey (1990: 34) considers the pursuit of social justice to be "the central ontological business of social work".

As mentioned, in Hugman's (2009) view the traditionalist/ activist debate has been unnecessarily polarising and divisive, with proponents of each charging the other with not practicing 'proper' social work. More recently there have been calls for collaboration and consolidation from national and international social work organisations actively seeking to inscribe a social justice purpose into the formal structures of the social work profession (AASW, 2010; IFSW, 2004). As a result, recognition of the importance of social justice is now found in many Codes of Ethics and in the formalised accreditation processes of social work education programs in many parts of the world (AASW, 2010; IASSW, 2001; IFSW, 2004; NASW, 2008).

Many of the challenges of broadening the vision for social justice in social work identified in the literature are attributed to the complexities existing within both traditional and activist traditions of social work theorising and practice (Fook, 1996; Healy, 2005; Pease and Fook, 1999; Rojek, Peacock and Collins, 1988; Yeatman, 2004). Reisch (2002: 348) considers that "today's complex environment obscures both the meaning of social justice and the goals of social justice". Some authors argue that social workers themselves struggle to name how they professionally operationalise constructs of social justice as they understand them (Birkenmaier, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; McLaughlin, 2011). Many authors have expressed concern for future practitioners about the difficulty the social work profession has in naming its 'mission' clearly with respect to complex constructions of social justice (Bannerjee, 2011; Finn and Jacobson, 2003; Galambos, 2008; McLaughlin, 2011; Pease and Fook, 1999; Sachs and Newdom, 1999; Shaw, 2003). Concerns are

also expressed in the literature that seeking as an outcome a socially just society, such as that defined by Ife (2010), is utopian and impossible to achieve through the actions of a social worker, and from a traditional perspective having such goals is indeed sometimes seen as compromising the credibility of the social work profession (Friedman, 2010; Pelton, 2001; Rossiter, 2005).

Friedman (2010) proposes applying Sen's capability model (2009) as a non-utopian conception of social justice appropriate to the practice and education of social workers. Sen (2009) further refines the term as 'progressive social justice' and describes seeking to enhance the extent of social justice rather than agreeing to a particular goal. Through strategies of social advocacy, the duty of a social worker would, according to Sen, be to overcome a specific instance of injustice, not to fulfil the more generalised goal of seeking a just society. Friedman's example of the problem of homelessness presents a specific, if somewhat narrowed-down need possessed by an individual person. This specific 'injustice' becomes the focus of social advocacy whose goal is to achieve shelter for that individual that responds to that individual's capabilities, rather than an 'unachievable' goal of everyone having shelter. Friedman's application of Sen's model aims to make social justice more accessible through promoting and fostering skills of social advocacy in future practitioners. By Sen and Friedman shifting their sights from the broad horizon of 'social justice for all' and refocussing on 'second best' justice that tries to complement peoples' own capabilities, they generate a key response to the concern voiced throughout the industry about utopian impossibility (Atkinson, 2010: 221).

Without the professional practice literature as well as the academic literature tackling these areas — irrespective of the need to act as witness to persistent inequality in people's lives — social justice practice in social work is either yet another 'received idea' or an idea that can be discounted due to the insularity of the profession's knowledge base (Jordan, 2010; Pease and Fook, 1999; Rojek et al., 1988; Valentine, 2005: 231).

Inclusion of social justice in definitions and understandings of social work

There are numerous definitions and understandings of the purpose of social work. This plethora may be a result of attempting to establish 'once and for all' the credibility of social work as a 'legitimate' profession. Social justice is central to some of these definitions but not all (AASW, 2010; Bolzan, 2007; Craig, 2002; Craig et al., 2008; Humphries, 2008; IASSW, 2004; IFSW, 2004; Shaw, 2003). Definitions of social work integrating social justice principles have been developed that outline the breadth to practice responsively and support different ways (methods/interventions) of practicing whilst still working towards a goal of the removal of disadvantage.

Bolzan's work has made a useful contribution by moving beyond the notion of definitions to pose and respond to the question: What do social workers do?

Social workers work with, or on behalf of, individuals, groups and communities to identify, minimize, and ultimately remove disadvantage associated with social arrangements, both formal and informal. (Bolzan, 2007: 56)

Bolzan argues that the multiple methods of social work are different approaches that emerge from common values and knowledge, and are guided by a shared goal "variously termed as, for example, empowerment, human rights, liberation, and personal fulfilment" (2007: 58). This argument effectively moves away from privileging any one practice method. In this way Bolzan acknowledges the need for a working definition that resonates with students, early-career practitioners and also busy, organisationally-accountable, pragmatic practitioners (2007: 64).

Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2005) name being involved in change and the complexities of peoples' lives as key to social work. Their understanding of social work identifies challenging injustice and working actively towards societal change and, similarly to Bolzan, not seeing the change as limited to a particular practice method.

Social work is about human beings in their social worlds ...
[Transformational practice is] ... a form of social work practice that uses reflexive and critical practice with individuals, communities, families and groups to achieve social changes that enhance social solidarity and reduce or remove inequalities in society. (Adams, Dominelli and Payne, 2005: xxvi-1).

Some discussion in the social work literature over the last two decades of what social work 'is' has explored the impact of taking a postmodernist perspective on social work in relation to social justice. No longer a grand modernist meta-narrative, social justice within social work is now splintered, a multiplicity of processes and outcomes (Dean and Rhodes, 1998; Fook, 2012; Ife, 2010; Leonard, 1997; Reisch, 2002 citing Mullaly, 1997). By recognising the impact of local demands, power relations and practices, social justice appears to be different in different contexts, whether considered as a process or as an outcome (Fook, 2012). Resistance practices and processes newly considered as 'social justice in action' are seen as part of localised struggles against oppression (Ferguson, 2008; Healy 2000). Some authors express concern about the potential loss of a 'social' perspective and wonder whether postmodernism can offer anything more than struggling at a local level as the individualism signified by postmodernism replaces any notion of working together or 'solidarity' (Ferguson, 2008). Another significant concern in Ferguson's view is the loss of sense-making analysis, since postmodernism does not acknowledge structural causes of poverty and inequality, thereby offering little capacity to develop a critical analysis for social work

intervention (Ferguson, 2008: 115). Fook (2012) considers on the other hand that postmodernism sits well with social work in its emphasis on diversity, providing a stronger theoretical base for practice at the point of intersection between the “person-in-situation” (by Fook, 2012: 4 citing Hamilton, 1951). However, Fook also acknowledges that postmodern ideas do not offer a direction by which to infer best course of action and sees postmodernism rather as an epistemology — a way of knowing — that is more usefully combined with critical theory to enable a critical social work practice to develop.

A postmodern and critical social work practice is primarily concerned with practising in ways which further a society without domination, exploitation and oppression. It will focus both on how structures dominate but also on how people construct and are constructed by changing social structures and relations, recognising that there may be multiple and diverse constructions of ostensibly similar situations. (Fook, 2012: 18)

Fook comments on the importance of different understandings of social work and social justice coming from different national contexts. She argues that the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia have slightly different journeys represented in the literature around social justice and its position within change-focused social work practice (Fook, 2012: 18). This too is recognition of the importance of acknowledging local diversity.

As noted by Healy (2000), Bolzan (2007), Wendt and Seymour (2010), Fook (2012) and others, literature on the profession of social work celebrates diversity as a critical ‘way of knowing’ highly relevant to social justice principles. Postmodern and poststructuralist thinking around diversity moves away from ‘knowledge as product’ to the processes involved in ways of knowing and local knowledge development (Healy, 2000: 145). The literature also discusses the claim that multiple meanings of social justice can be accounted for by different epistemologies (Johnson, 2008). Johnson argues that “one’s questions about social justice are informed by one’s epistemological commitments and theoretical preferences” and that “these preferences lead to differing foci and concerns about social justice” (2008: 301). Smith (1999) identifies how Indigenous peoples feel, and are, excluded from researching about their lives unless ways of knowing are developed that are culturally safe.

Some commentators have concerns about a professional knowledge base in which self-described ‘social justice’ outcomes are claimed without sufficient critical analysis (Humphries, 2008; Le Croy, 2010; Rountree and Pomeroy, 2010; Shaw, 2003; Truman, Merton and Humphries, 2000; Valentine, 2005). Valentine (2005) considers that these are not so much inflated claims as the flagging of insufficient critical analysis and knowledge development in the profession. In his review of social work education programs in Australia, Valentine showed that social work students are rarely offered inter-

disciplinary sources of knowledge. This potentially creates graduates with a surface understanding of social justice which would not stand up to rigorous critical analysis. Valentine (2005), Hawkins et al., (2001) and others contend that this level of understanding leads social workers to apply a reactive construct of social justice, over-simplifying it as meaning that 'justice should be granted to those who deserve it'. Valentine (2005: 231) concludes that by "adopting an individualised construct the opportunity to address structural oppression is lost".

The goal of integrating into a response an individual's need and social injustice poses a 'duality' for many in the social work profession that has been difficult to span (Birkenmaier, 2003; Dessel, Rogge and Garlington, 2006; Epple, 2007). Social workers have been described as occupying one or the other positions (Benn, 1991). She located this polarisation as social workers holding either the "empowerment approach" view, "where the professional is committed to structural change and the improvement of the quality of people's lives through their access to resources which enhance dignity, individuality and self determination"; or the "ameliorative approach" which is "the professional as dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo and the alleviation of social problems" (Benn, 1991: 33).

There is another dichotomous 'demarcation issue' identified in the social work literature as being between direct and indirect practice (Hunter and Ford, 2010; Salas, Sen and Segal, 2010). This differentiation often carries in-built assumptions about indirect practice as meeting social justice criteria and direct practice as not (Hugman, 2009). Some literature describes this as a 'false dichotomy', creating a polarised approach towards practice in social work that may lead students, practitioners, and educators to emphasise one over the other intervention focus, and to specialise in one area while no longer seeing the need to have competency in the other (Hunter and Ford, 2010; Rountree and Pomeroy, 2010; Salas et al., 2010). The literature on social justice practices seeks to address 'practice bifurcation' by reframing social justice practice as actively bringing together direct and indirect practices through 'vertical integration', that is by conducting critical analysis at every level of intervention and considering practices that work towards critical social change (Salas et al., 2010). Taking this critical approach enables a diversity of local practices to be promoted, which in turn allows the opportunity for critical reflection about gaps in social work practices and resource distribution locally (see Bolzan, 2007; Chapin, 1995; Gil, 1998; Healy, 2000; Hunter and Ford, 2010; Salas et al., 2010). Critically reflective strategies are responses to tensions which continue to arise in the social work profession and of relevance to the wider Australian society. Tensions within the profession appear to have links to, or conflate with, other topical arenas such as 'academy-practice debates', the 'micro-macro debate' and a 'direct-indirect practice' dichotomy. Salas and colleagues (2010) discuss the tensions

arising within social work of being reduced to a dichotomous profession. Webb (2010: 2376) gives his synthesis of the debate in social work as distinguishing between capital C 'Critical' and lower case 'critical':

'Critical social work' has close affinities with the transformative aspects of redistributive social justice, while 'critical social work' lends itself more readily to the affirmative aspects of recognition elements of social justice; the first is more demonstrably aligned with radical politics, while the second is closely associated with identity politics.

The many ways to act and the links between principles and responsibilities are explicitly stated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2004). Significantly the International Federation states that social workers have a "responsibility to promote social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work" (n.p.).

In an effort to address the issues discussed above of struggle and ambivalence, this definition excerpted below provides some examples of what this engagement might look like.

Social justice

1. Challenging negative discrimination* – Social workers have a responsibility to challenge negative discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation, or spiritual beliefs.
2. Recognising diversity – Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the societies in which they practise ...
3. Distributing resources equitably – Social workers should ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need.
4. Challenging unjust policies and practices – Social workers have a duty to bring to the attention of [all] where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful.
5. Working in solidarity – Social workers have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion ...

*in some countries

(IFSW, 2004)

Another example noted in the literature is the inadequacy of social work's social justice involvement as demonstrated by a lacklustre effort by the profession to contribute to the influence of social justice in developing social policy (Gibbons and Gray, 2005). Concern is frequently expressed about the absence of a social work voice within the social policy literature, and about the perception that social work does not take a position despite being familiar with clients' and the broader community's concerns, such as domestic violence, poverty, mental health and refugee welfare (Beresford and Croft,

2010; Weiss-gal, 2009). Despite social policy being seen as relevant to social justice and social change initiatives by much of the profession, and being required in social work education curricula, there continues to be an ambivalence about the place of advocating for change through social policy in social work (Gibbons and Gray, 2005; Mendes, 2009; Pelton, 2001; Weiss, 2003).

Academics reporting the dilution of the meaning of social justice are found across social work research and social work research education. Wendt and Seymour (2010: 670) note that this growing area of critique makes a point of the indiscriminate use of the term 'empowerment'. Working in partnership with groups and individuals in the community is nominated as a critical goal of the research, and believed to benefit participants directly (Mertens and Ginsberg, 2008; O'Connor and O'Neill, 2004; Pomeroy, Holleran and Kiam, 2004). However, an alternate perspective is provided by Strier's (2007) full and descriptive account of a research project where the extensive resource commitment, required in order to achieve the claimed social justice and empowerment outcomes, was inordinate to the capacity of the researchers. The claim was to accompany research participants on their journey of 'empowerment'. However, in Strier's account the project transpired as almost overwhelming for both participants and researchers; it was overwhelming to be expected to achieve that outcome from the research study.

Social justice in practice

The literature on what social justice looks like in practice responds to queries of legitimacy by offering more explicit descriptions of practice on which practitioners can model their own practice.

Birkenmaier (2003) reviews literature that describes social justice practices, their current use and involvement in many different processes and contexts. A broad range of practical activities that work to achieve social change are identified, including development of social justice oriented coalitions, implementation of strategic policies to minimise and address injustice, and transformative actions with clients and their communities (Adams, Dominelli and Payne, 2005; Bolzan, 2007). Birkenmaier seeks to address the breadth, diversity and possibility in terms of social justice practice by using the term 'justice-infused social work practice' and applying it to the "plethora of social issues, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, oppression, income inequality" that exist in the context of service delivery (2003: 44). In Birkenmaier's view, social justice is a combination of legal justice, commutative justice and distributive justice. Society's obligation to individuals, "that is, distributive justice ... is the focus of social change activity by social workers [who work] through seeking responsiveness to clients' needs at the structural or institutional level" (2003: 44).

Birkenmaier sees social workers as demonstrating social justice through a multiplicity of processes as well as bringing a local focus to social changes. Birkenmaier gives similar examples to the examples given by the IFSW (above), of justice-infused practices that have been collated from her own practice:

Advocating for clients with public and private human service professionals and agencies; supporting the disadvantaged in their collective efforts to improve their social and economic well being; conducting research to identify inadequacies of the social welfare system and striving to influence political decision-makers through professional organisations about the needs of vulnerable populations; teaching nonviolent conflict resolution in schools; working with families to decrease violence within their families and neighbourhoods; evaluating programs to inform policy initiatives towards better service delivery and providing economic literacy training to women to enhance their empowerment; engaging clients in reflection and dialogue concerning consequences of the current social, economic, political, cultural and community realities on their everyday lives and seeking to engage clients to become involved in community efforts toward institutional change and reform. (Birkenmaier, 2003: 44 citing Gil, 1998)

These explicit examples were listed by Birkenmaier to generate a greater recognition about the diverse range of ways social justice action could take place.

There is an array of literature that focuses on direct service to clients. The concept of daily, 'just' practices has been significant in this literature because it is how practitioners are most likely to describe their own practice (Finn and Jacobson, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; Jordan, 2007; Lundy, 2004; O'Brien, 2011; Van Soest, 1996; Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka and Campbell, 2003). 'Just therapy' is a family-based therapeutic practice where the practitioner acknowledges the strengths and creative strategies that people use to access the necessities required for their lives, hearing the pain impacting on their clients' lives (Waldegrave, 2005: 6). The importance of a just therapy practice is in using that understanding of sociocultural pain caused by economic and political inequalities in a way that can generate create policy and institutional change (Waldegrave, 2009: 98). In Lorenz's view, the focus is to work in this way towards a broader social integration and social citizenship (Lorenz, 2006: 9).

In some forms of 'just' practice, the worker openly discusses the power relationship between themselves and the client with the client, actively seeking to reduce the power differences between the two, to build empathy and open communication in order to more easily work together to make a difference in the life of the client (Vodde and Gallant, 2002). Where institutional policies contribute to inequity for the client, the worker and the client will work together to create a difference in those policies. This can be in

relation to service delivery where the practitioner works to support the client to develop a capacity to be part of a collective action, which might change the social structures that have generated racial, gender, class or sexual orientation oppression (Garcia and Van Soest, 2006; Bennett, Zubrzycki and Bacon, 2011; Green and Baldry, 2008; Lundy, 2004; Vodde and Gallant, 2002).

Vodde and Gallant (2002) describe how, in their view, 'narrative deconstructive therapy' informed by the work of White and Epston (1990) seeks to assist clients to link their experiences with those of others to build a community of resistance. Connecting at a micro level the experiences of the impact of macro structures generates greater choice for clients and thus diversifies power relations. It may create possibilities for change at a broader level than just for the individual (Vodde and Gallant, 2002). Further, without acting to transparently link the level of micro engagement with the impact of macro structures, the practitioner may be seen as effectively maintaining the oppression that limits their clients' lives (Vodde and Gallant, 2002: 440).

Community development that aims for social justice is where a community themselves undertakes to develop a response to their self-defined needs (Ife, 2002). The social problems within a community, for example poverty, sexism, racism, scarce resources and poor quality housing, are not caused by the individual members of the community but are experienced individually by them. The responses to these problems are driven by the grassroots knowledge of the community, but they are aimed at challenging the impact of macro structures. The growth of the service user movement is drawing on community development strategies to achieve greater justice within society's structures (Beresford and Croft, 2001). Similarly Calma and Priday (2011: 149) point out the relevance of these strategies to and by Indigenous communities.

Group work is many different configurations of an area of practice. Several of these are closely linked to social change and social justice (Freire, 1972; Weeks, 1994; Weeks, Hoatson and Dixon, 2003). Group process in community development is well recognised as a tool, and those who work to address crises presented as individual problems (e.g. domestic violence) develop strategies to link group members to press for wider social change. Here the power of coming together creates an opportunity for support and the solidarity needed to act (Dessel, Rogge and Garlington, 2006; Freire, 1972; Vodde and Gallant, 2002; White and Epston, 1990).

Social work research encompasses a range of research practices contributing to responsive social change (Humphries, 2008). One approach is community-based participatory research. In this approach workers engage with marginalised community residents and support them to re-value the potential of their contribution to the community. The residents' experiences of living in that community are thereby made available to be part of the

process of building a response to community concerns. Community-based participatory research is defined as “fundamentally a group process through which participants problematize their social reality and build collective capacity to challenge and change that reality” (Finn, Jacobson and Campana, 2004: 326). This clearly enables the voices of those experiencing disadvantage to create change to address those problems. “If the goal of research is to change the problematic conditions of client groups, then research becomes a form of social action” (Vodde and Gallant, 2002: 453). Smith (1999: 15) however describes how participation can continue to be part of some colonizing methodologies when tokenistic or simply an ‘add on’, speaking to unequal power relations.

These concerns demonstrate the importance of the link between the research dimension of social work practice and social justice and is reflective of the collaborative ways of working promoted a century ago by Jane Addams and John Dewey at Hull House (Addams, 1990; Pogue, 2011, Reisch, 2002).

Given the dramatic and constant shifts in social work practice contexts as a result of globalisation, political climates and demographic change, any effective systemic practice requires confidence in policy development and implementation (Dempsey, 2008; Reisch and Jarman-Rohde, 2000; Weiss-Gal and Gal, 2008). Social policy as a social work practice is a method of achieving social justice when it is geared to utilise the intimacy of involvement in people’s lives toward being alert to the gaps in society’s provision. The profession can then inform the creation of structures that respond to and redistribute society’s benefits, address disadvantage and extend citizenship practices and status to the excluded (Camilleri and McArthur, 2008; Fawcett and Hanlon, 2009; Goodwin, 2005; Humphries, 2008; Lister, 2008; Zufferey, 2008).

From this overview it is evident that social workers need to have both a capacity to intervene with individuals, groups and communities and a confidence in utilising a range of practice methods to strive towards societal change. For this they need to be able to analyse, advocate and act.

Social work practitioners describe their practice of social justice

In the implementation of justice-infused practices, service delivery models either use practices that are seen as enabling social justice processes or practices that seek outcomes that can be said to achieve social justice. The next area described in this literature review is the research conducted into this type of social work.

Several researchers have undertaken research on how social work practitioners view their work and whether this fits with social justice

(Hawkins, Fook and Ryan, 2001; McLaughlin, 2011; O'Brien, 2011). Specifically in relation to 'justice-infused' practices, some research has documented practitioners' descriptions of their practices and then these have been analysed for evidence of a social justice focus (Hawkins, Fook and Ryan, 2001). Some studies have noted the absence of a practitioner focus on injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples (Bennett, Zubrzycki and Bacon, 2011; Stanford and Taylor, 2013). Studies have also documented practitioners' own perspectives on the way they brought a social justice focus to their interventions (O'Brien, 2011). In a broad sense each of these studies made a similar overall finding: that there is exploratory work still to be done by the profession to identify and build within the everyday practices of social workers an understanding of social justice.

An influential study undertaken in the late 1990s by Hawkins, Fook and Ryan (2001) analysed social work practitioners' use of social justice language in reports of their practice and responses to set scenarios. Responses by students, early-career practitioners and experienced practitioners were reported. Hawkins and colleagues concluded that the practitioners typically did not integrate the language of social justice into describing the social work they do with clients, and further, that many fields of social work practice do not have an associated discourse that focuses on social justice.

O'Brien (2011) found that, although practitioners regarded social justice as being at the core of their work, they focussed on advocating for individuals around injustices and discrimination. Only a few practitioners reported seeking to challenge policies and practices in society more broadly. O'Brien concluded that social work practice "needs to encompass daily practice that reduces social exclusion ... individually and collectively" (2011: 157).

In another study, McLaughlin (2011) noted that social work practitioners working in the mental health field were hesitant to describe their everyday work as having a social justice focus. McLaughlin's conceptualisation of social justice in practice is multi-dimensional, consisting of systems influence, available resources and transformational respect within the client-worker relationship. She identifies links between these constructs and the work of Gil (2008) and Miller (1999). McLaughlin identified as especially relevant the 'perception as possibility' that individual practitioners held about the work they were doing, inclusive of possibilities of achieving social justice. Birkenmaier (2003) too refers to this vision towards the horizon as a particular stance taken by justice workers. McLaughlin also considers it important to de-mystify social justice through locating practices and strategies firmly in their systemic context. As a consequence of her research, McLaughlin recommended that current and future practitioners should have the opportunity, through social work education, to address these areas so that

they can gain confidence about the meaning of social justice in the work they do.

Political perspectives of social workers

As discussed earlier, social workers hold a variety of ideological positions on a spectrum between traditionalist and activist (Rosenwald, 2006). Reviewing the literature on the place of politics in social work, I found that social workers often take a political stand in their private time (sometimes outside of their professional roles), but not often within their employing organisation (Brill, 2001 cited in Birkenmaier, 2003; Chui and Gray, 2004; Ferguson and Lavalette, 2006; Gray, Collett van Rooyen, Rennie and Gaha, 2002; Hamilton and Fauri, 2001; Mary, 2001).

Studies have been conducted on social workers holding public office, particularly in the USA (Lane, 2011). The emphasis in Lane's study was on identifying the political and communicative skills that graduates learnt during their social work courses, and how or if these skills assisted them to take steps toward being elected. But being political and being a social worker does not always mean being a social justice advocate. Reisch and Jani (2012) describe a current picture in the US where social workers are reluctant to see themselves as advocates challenging accepted patterns of distribution of social goods (see also Swank, 2012). The capacity to advocate across client systems and to take social action is critical for any a social worker informed by social justice principles (Pearlmutter, 2002; Weiss and Kaufman, 2006). It is also seen as particularly important to have opportunities to analyse, reflect on, critique and refine these skills and values during social work education (Hamilton and Fauri, 2001; Saleh, 2012; Storms, 2012).

Transformation into a social work citizen

Forster and Rehner (2011) describe as transformative the emergence and stabilisation of a professional identity of 'social work citizen'. Social work 'citizens' are professionals whose work, and view toward future work, "bears an inherent and irreducible reference to social and economic concerns" and who wish "to become change agents within the public world" (Forster and Rehner, 2011: 230).

The process of developing self-consciousness and agency around making a difference as a social worker is a critical area of values reflection (and often lifetime in development) (Barretti, 2004a,b; Birkenmaier, 2003; Van Soest, 1996; Weiss-gal, 2009). Calderwood (2003) in particular has identified a multi-phased approach to becoming a 'social justice professional'. She proposes an alignment between learning about power at the same time as learning about injustice in pre-service/ placement experiences. For individual professionals, she proposes purposeful decision-making and engagement in some form of

change-focussed group. Calderwood believes that this latter stage of engaging in a dynamic group to create greater social justice would support one's ongoing individual commitment to developing an ethical centre to one's professional practices.

Similar key requirements are identified by several authors. Firstly, it is required that a worker have the consciousness to acknowledge that the world is a place where injustice flourishes. Secondly, that professional must decide, based on self-conscious reflexivity, if they are desirous and capable of individually taking a stance in relation to structural injustice (Adams, Bell and Griffin, 2007; Benn, 1991; Birkenmaier, 2003; Flynn, 1997; Rocha, 2000; Van Soest, 1996).

The literature on personal development as a justice worker describes the importance of working with, and engaging creatively to respond to, injustice in the face of not knowing and uncertainty (Balen and White, 2007; Grise-Owens, Cambron and Valade, 2010; Shields, 1994). Birkenmaier identifies ways of building confidence around working to achieve social justice through internships where social justice practices are brought together with clinically focussed interventions and discussed and closely analysed in trusted groups (2003: 45). In the work of Hawkins and colleagues, some evidence is found for the benefits of social workers with more experience using social justice language more frequently in accounts of their practice, to encourage others and strengthen their own convictions (2001: 8).

In addition to developing life experience, particular challenges identified for the 'activist' social worker are the need to acknowledge and engage with the complexity of the wider systems within which the work is located. Several authors call for both future and current practitioners to be introduced to debates outside the social work discourse (Hong and Hodge, 2009; Rountree and Pomeroy, 2010; Valentine, 2005). Fook and colleagues (2000) note that in the opinion of the practitioners interviewed in their study, long term burnout was minimised through focussing on a broader vision about the work, so that everyday disappointments did not undermine them in the same ways. Shields (1994) and Knight (2010) discuss the issues of vicarious traumatisation that can exist for activists dealing with those who have experienced trauma and who continue to experience dislocation and exclusion by society for a range of reasons. These experiences of indirect traumatisation can be isolating and distressing, and are variously termed 'secondary stress trauma', 'compassion fatigue', and finally the hopelessness and intense disorganisation of 'burnout'. Preparation for the possibility of experiences such as these is essential for new practitioners, and training about how to manage these feelings if they arise can play a part in minimising their negative impact (Maidment, 2003). In itself, engaging in

preparation for the particular demands of this role is building a capacity for new practitioners to develop resilience.

Empathy is essential to sustaining the social contract; it maximises communication between people and allows deeper understandings of others' experiences of oppression (Gerdes, Segal, Jackson and Mullins, 2011: 109 citing Laub and Auerhahn, 1989). Without an understanding and critical analysis of others' oppression and of taking action, many social workers will likely experience ambivalence to acting to address instances of injustice (Freire and Moch, 1987). It is possible to make an authentic and transparent contribution, and not be overwhelmed by an otherwise clouded experience of unacknowledged ambivalence, if issues of potential indirect traumatisation are discussed openly (Calderwood, 2003; Rossiter, 2005; Shields, 1994; Van Soest, 1996).

In much of the literature it is acknowledged that it is not possible to specify all the particular skills with which practitioners should be prepared. It is however, predictable that injustice and exclusion will continue to limit some groups' access to social justice (Birkenmaier, 2003; Shields, 1994; Van Soest, 1996; Weick, 1993). In light of this, some skills have been identified as likely to be needed by a practitioner with a focus on social justice. These are: alliance building skills; capacity to critically analyse complex situations; critical self-reflection; self-awareness and self-development; and resilience in the face of persistent injustice (Adams, Bell and Griffin, 2007; Birkenmaier, Cruce, Burkemper, Stretch, Wilson & Curley, 2011; Calderwood, 2003; Green and Baldry, 2008; Hackman, 2005; Ife, 2002; Vodde and Gallant 2002).

Concluding remarks

Social work literature across the UK, USA and Australia speaks to a frequently posed question of social work's social change capability, and queries whether current social work practices are capable of enabling social justice (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2006; Gibbons and Gray, 2005; Healy, 2000; Jordan, 2007; Reisch, 2002; Sheppard, 2006). In conclusion, this overview acts as a basis upon which to consider how the social work profession has taken and applied to practice particular interpretations of social justice. There is significant complexity to come to terms with. It is the argument of this study that future practitioners will be supported to be more confident in taking a social justice focus in their practice if they have confidence to analyse these complexities and refine their values and understandings through critically reflective discussions with colleagues, allies and the wider society. Without these analytic capacities honed, the social work profession is likely to continue to be charged with not addressing the gaps in the profession's praxis, that is, the gaps between vision, principles and practices. The next chapter will review the literature in relation to social justice within social work education, specifically field education.

Chapter Three

Learning about social justice within social work education

The previous chapter reviewed literature on the history and meanings of social justice in social work. This chapter reviews literature on social work education, focussing specifically on student learning about social justice in field education. The review includes research studies, practice descriptions and theoretical discussions. Much of the material on field education is from social work education as it is practiced in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK and the USA.

The chapter commences with an overview of curriculum design and content, as well as teaching/learning processes that assist students to develop knowledge, skills and values that align with practice prioritising social justice. The significant literature on how students learn about social justice during field education is reviewed: the structures, models, key factors and issues that impact on their studies. The overview concludes with literature that deals with transitions and transferring knowledge and confidence about social justice between contexts such as campus, field and onward into the first years of practice.

Social justice and student's motivations to study social work

Becoming a social worker who practices with a social justice focus is built on identifying and reflecting on one's own values and assumptions as they integrate with the larger goals and purpose of social work, and a commitment to promoting the interests of those who experience injustice (Garcia and Van Soest, 2006). In surveys of social work students, Osteen (2011) identified that values related to social justice were a key influence for the students in their choice to study social work. There were multiple forms of motivation to study social work, including its practicality, sense of legitimacy and positive service to people. On being asked 'why study social work as opposed to psychology?', there were three differentiating values that students identified: "the systems approach, emphasis on social justice, and emphasis on multiculturalism" (2011: 430). The personal values of a student's family were in many instances seen as a fit with the professional values identified by social work (430). Some students noted that their religious values were experienced as congruent with those of social work. Osteen notes that several students without a religious background expressed a type of spirituality as being influential in their choice of social work, using expressions such as 'connectedness with humanity' (438). Osteen's view is that students are

undergoing a “dynamic process of identity integration”, and that within this “there is a significant level of agency” for students to choose their own identities (440). His study notes the impact on students’ personal and professional values of a flux of influences arising whilst studying social work. Barretti, too, notes the influence of academics on students’ views of what it means to be a social worker (2009). Osteen’s opinion is that some form of understanding of social justice is likely to figure in the nominated personal value bases of students entering social work, but that how they negotiate their course and what impacts their professional and personal identity integration relates to the student’s own agency (2011: 442).

Gilligan (2007) describes how students enrolling in a social work education program come to an understanding that their values are most likely derived from their family and their prior experiences. He considers it necessary to clearly understand the frame of reference the student is operating from in order to offer alternative frames that are relevant to the student (2007: 755). In progressing through their course, some students feel that in order to survive the assessments and classroom interactions, they must put to one side their own values and principles for those of the social work knowledge base as represented in their course (Osteen, 2011: 433). Some students that Osteen surveyed experienced this as being forced to dismiss their own, ‘hard won’ understandings; others anticipated that they would take a different ‘journey’ with respect to their own and their family’s values once the course was complete. Osteen links this discrepancy to his exploration of the understood meanings of ‘being a social worker’, which he found to be a different construct for different people (2011: 442).

Research by Van Soest (1996), and by Van Vourhis and Hostetter (2006) identified students as beginning their social work education with certain views. Van Soest (1996: 195) identified constructs termed “belief in a just world” and “locus of control” in relation to the individual’s reflection on their work and their effectiveness in client empowerment practices. Van Vourhis’ and Hostetter’s research reiterates these constructs a decade later. They found that studying social work and gaining confidence with the practical component of being an advocate led students to have a slightly greater sense of self-efficacy and be more likely to be involved in seeking to address injustices at the end of their course of study (Van Vourhis and Hostetter, 2006). There is a significant debate, particularly in the US literature, about how directive course content should be in aligning personal and professional values (Osteen, 2011: 441 citing Will, 2007). Barretti’s (2004b) review of this literature challenges the idea of socialisation into a new ‘social work identity’, and describes some of the multiplicity of legitimate values that students, new graduates and practitioners see themselves as holding in relation to social work. Contrary to many inferences in the academy to date, it is Barretti’s view that social work courses are not able to steer students in any particular

direction, for example towards operating with a social justice value base. The work of O'Connor and Dalgleish also demonstrates this broad contention (1986: 433). Barretti considers that managing personal and professional understandings is only part of how students construct their knowledge throughout a social work course, and that even though students may undergo a relatively uniform training module they will negotiate their experiences uniquely through their own needs, experiences and self-concepts (2004b : 277).

Social justice in social work education

In Australia there are accreditation requirements in social work education programs. These are stated in the guidelines for Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS) (AASW, 2012) and supported by the Code of Ethics (AASW, 2010) and the Practice Standards (AASW, 2013). Both social work practice standards — “Values and Ethics” and “Knowledge for Practice” — include social justice (AASW, 2013: 7). The Australian Practice Standards are intended to be used as a guide, as a description of expectations, and to assess practice (2013: 6). In other countries these requirements vary as each national accrediting organisation has different constituencies to engage around different nuances in relation to social justice (Galambos, 2008; Valentine, 2005). There have been a number of studies discussing how social work education programs are responding to their respective accreditation requirements, identifying issues and opportunities for learning about social justice both on campus and in field education (Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Collins, Gutridge, James, Lyn and Williams, 2000; Funge, 2011; Hong and Hodge, 2009; Kennedy, 2001; Macey and Moxon, 1996; Rocha, 2000; Valentine, 2005; Van Soest, 1996).

Valentine (2005) and Hong and Hodge (2009) have undertaken studies about the social justice content in social work education programs. In Australia, Valentine conducted an overview of social work programs and concluded that there was a lack of clarity around the meaning of social justice as well as insufficient philosophical introduction. He found that social work students were rarely offered interdisciplinary sources of knowledge about social justice, resulting in an individualist and uncritical social work perspective. “[S]ocial workers in their application of knowledge about social justice tended to use a ‘reactive construct’ of social justice and one of ‘justice should be granted to those who deserve it’, that is, based on merit” (Valentine, 2005: 231). Valentine concludes that this means “the opportunity to address structural oppression is lost” (2005: 231). He argues that social work practitioners should be introduced to debates outside the social work sphere, and that there should be agreement on the definition of social justice and its related values in order to facilitate strategies to address structural oppression (2005: 231).

Hong and Hodge (2009; 2011) reviewed 59 Masters of Social Work programs in the USA. Similarly to Valentine, Hong and Hodge found that overall, program content on social justice was issue based as opposed to being philosophically or theoretically based. Valentine, Hong and Hodge argue that without integrating these philosophical and theoretical perspectives directly into social work program curricula, students remain unaware of the principles and debates, and of the range of ways of achieving social change and understanding the persistence of injustice in society (Hong and Hodge, 2009; 2011; Valentine, 2005). Hong and Hodge also found that course content was fragmented and lacked opportunities for students to become fully engaged in devising and applying strategies to moderate inequitable practices, whether in theory or action. Classroom experiences were primarily didactic and 'top-down' (Hong and Hodge, 2009). In this respect the role of academic staff has lately come under closer scrutiny. Funge (2011), Webhi and Straka (2011) and other researchers have found that attitudes of teaching staff are important in relation to effective delivery of social justice concepts and to generating environments where students can engage with social justice concepts and possibilities. Funge (2011) identifies that the extent to which social justice related content is brought into the classroom may depend on students' responses, the time needed for an educator to develop the material, and the support from the educational institution for them to do so. Others have flagged that many students are not comfortable with a view of the world as immersed in injustice, and may experience anxiety about dealing with this material. Alternatively, they may react because of their own political positions based on social class, culture or life experience (Deal and Hyde, 2004; Garcia and Van Soest, 2006). Barretti (2004b) notes that in many instances, students develop their understanding of social work values as they are modelled by academics, as opposed to the content communicated in courses. Academics and educators themselves are susceptible to being influenced along the lines of 'do as I do, not as I say', which might imply that macro levels of societal structures are less relevant to social work practice than micro levels (Gibbons and Gray, 2005; Hunter and Ford, 2010; Longres and Scanlon, 2001; Mendes, 2009; Weiss, 2003). Given these pervasive influences, academics need knowledge of injustice in society, and the self-awareness and confidence to integrate it into their teaching. They should raise material around socially embedded injustice in discussions to encourage students to engage consciously and thoughtfully with the material (Hong and Hodge, 2011). In particular, some authors in this review identified the need for academics to have more confidence in peer group dynamics (Gibbons and Gray, 2005; Hong and Hodge, 2011).

Explicit social justice content in campus curricula

The introduction of social justice content into social work curricula is a strategy designed to enable social work students to formally have the associated knowledge and skills in their practice framework once they have

graduated. The literature describes a range of ways of introducing explicit social justice content into campus-based curricula, as well as a range of views about whether this should be done (Birkenmaier, 2003; Flynn, 1997; Reeser and Leighninger, 1990). In the USA, Reeser and Leighninger (1990: 73) describe seeking the support of their faculty in re-modelling one stream of a social work education program to include a social justice 'concentration'. They posited that for students to understand social justice they needed to analyse the political, economic and social structures of society and how these lead to oppression; to acquire a vision of a just society where the basic needs of all members are realised; to develop an understanding of the power of the people to change unjust structures; and to develop the skills necessary for leadership in the empowerment of people to move toward a just society. In Reeser's and Leighninger's view, the whole faculty needed to agree on the personal, political and professional value base of educating for social justice. However, they were unable to get this agreement from their colleagues, suggesting that broader forces were also at work such as a shift to neo-liberalism and an associated perception of social work's 'need' for a defined market share (Reeser and Leighninger, 1990: 74).

Birkenmaier and Cruce (2011: 214) claim that the key issue for inclusion of social justice content to social work education is definitional, "the degree to which efforts to address equality seek to advance system change [by] changing the social systems that have led to discrimination and oppression". Current models of curriculum delivery have begun to broaden definitions of social justice practice to include both vertical and horizontal intervention foci, professional values analysis, and interdisciplinary knowledge bases. Hackman (2005: 103) identifies the five key course components for social justice education as being to provide students with tools for content mastery, tools for critical thinking, tools for action and social change, tools for personal reflection and tools for awareness of multicultural group dynamics. Hong and Hodge (2011: 92) write that social work education in the USA is more frequently fostering a critical understanding of diversity through peer education sessions integrated into social work program design. Pogue (2011: 43) considers that theory-based material should be provided to support the integration of social justice within program design, calling for an "andragogical framework that included adult learning theory, critical social theory and transformative learning theory". In combination, these elements would contribute to an understanding of social justice for an engaged learner, and also have an effect on the student's own agency because their learning is integrated into an intellectual understanding of their experience. 'Engaged learning' can enable the content covered in the classroom to be transferred into the everyday world, and thus enhance a capability to act in the world (Pogue, 2011).

Webhi (2011) identifies another benefit of experience-based learning on campus as being a chance to remedy the overreliance on field education in its capacity to teach students practice principles and to bridge the theory–practice gap. Experience-based learning on campus can act to enhance students’ repertoire of ‘student-owned’ learning processes (Webhi, 2011: 241). Broadening this perspective from student-owned learning processes to relational learning, Mayhew and DeLuca Fernandez (2007: 74) consider that relations within the classroom (as a microcosm of society) are an important way to engage individuals meaningfully in the exploration of social in/justice. Hong and Hodge (2011) argue that a combination of transformative and cooperative learning opportunities in the curricula is the primary way to achieve social justice understanding and engagement amongst students. A cooperative learning experience can nurture innovative ideas through debates, reflection, intergroup dialogue, and critical thinking exercises.

Another course design strategically including social justice into its curricula is described by Flynn (1997). The University of Newcastle (Australia) social work education program is underpinned by an experience-based learning structure. Flynn describes students engaging professionally and personally with an area of social injustice whilst developing an understanding of sustainable social justice strategies. This subject module stressed the power of critical reflection in student learning (English, Gaha and Gibbons, 1994; Gray and Gibbons, 2002; Plath, English, Connors & Beveridge, 1999). Social justice content was integrated with ‘lifelong learning’ and awareness of professional values. Flynn concluded that it was the engagement of students “during the process of learning for practice that can confront the students with the strength of their own value stance ... [I]t is that stance that will ultimately help or hinder them when they are making judgements about targets for change” (1997: 23).

There is extensive literature on supporting social work students to develop confidence in critical thinking and reflection (Allen and Tracy, 2008; Birkenmaier, 2003; Badger, 2010; Barron and Taylor, 2010; Fook, 2002; Fook and Askeland, 2007; Foote, 2012; Noble, 2001; Rosenman and Wilson, 1990; Salas et al., 2010; Walker, 2010). By building opportunities for creativity into curriculum delivery, it is hoped that students will be exposed to envisioning a world with greater justice (Balen and White, 2007; Birkenmaier, 2003; Brown and Young, 2008; Garcia and Van Soest, 2006). Grise-Owens, Cambron and Valade (2010: 133) describe tools they use for maximising student engagement with real world practice, such as integrating current significant events (e.g. Hurricane Katrina) where society-level inequity is in evidence. In their view, focussing on such current events assisted students to be curious and motivated in seeking a multi-level structural understanding of an

individual's situation. That is, students developed a critical and engaged analysis of social justice and inequality (2010: 141).

Transition and transfer: campus to field

Social justice education strategies implemented within social work education are often seen by commentators as a way of assisting students to transition to a confident practice with a social justice focus. Educative strategies that engage students in explicit practices toward promoting systemic change are seen as working towards social justice and reducing discrimination via our future practitioners (Birkenmaier, 2003: 47).

In some social work programs students are assisted to prepare for social justice practice once they graduate by developing their awareness around resilience and resistance. Students are supported to develop a 'critical educational stance', assisting them to understand the assumptions they may make about clients, peers and educators and how these can influence limitations they may place on achieving change (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Healy, 2000; Humphries, 2008; Napier and Fook, 2000; Pease and Fook, 1999). By building in processes that foreground assumptions students may make, it becomes possible to experiment with power relationships between clients, educators and students, and for students to reflect on and own these. Challenging assumptions within a learning context enriches students' development toward future practice (Garcia and Van Soest, 2006; Gurin, Lopez and Nagda, 2004; Wendt and Seymour, 2010).

Mezirow originally defined transformational learning as "perspective transformation ... opening up possibilities of broader communication thus [making people] more likely to have a fuller grasp of reality and thus make more effective decisions" (2000: 8). This view does not explicitly engage a social justice perspective; rather it allows such a perspective to sit amongst others. In O'Sullivan's view, however, transformational learning includes "a broader societal and social justice vision" as an outcome (2003: 327). A transformative experience as an outcome of cooperative learning can be one that students take and transfer into their practice (Hong and Hodge, 2011: 93).

Webhi relates how experiential learning supported students to transfer their learning between practice and campus, noting that when students were engaged with their own experience, they were able to demonstrate their learning "beyond the confines of the course" (2011: 493). Storms (2012: 547) also found that experiential learning had more impact than any content on students' preparedness to consider social actions as strategies. Another benefit identified by Webhi was when the relationship between educator and student enabled modelling of professional skills and attitudes which became

part of the students' experience-based understanding (though was also subject to issues of negative modelling in the classroom discussed earlier) (2011: 498). Both Calderwood (2003) and Webhi (2011) describe the significant engagement that can be achieved through allowing students to explore creatively responding to challenging events that might later confront them in practice. Calderwood (2003) describes specifically the cross-fertilisation of ideas when discussing these challenges in small but trusted groups of peers. Morley (2004) describes a critical reflection approach in a subject undertaken by students between first and final field education experiences. The students became familiar with the process of critical reflection utilising their recent experiences from field education, and reflected on a challenging incident that was experienced as disempowering. Power is important, in Morley's view, and by using this process the student may transcend a view that the power held by the placement organisation is adverse and dominant, and discover different possibilities to achieve the desired aims for their clients (Morley, 2004: 14). Webhi and Straka (2011) describe a similar decentring of power and knowledge (2010: 53). Despite all this reframing, there are some findings that new graduates report that in the first 18 months of their practice, challenges posed by events are not ameliorated by any features of exposure to practice in the field education part of their social work course (O'Connor and Dalgelish, 1986: 433).

The research reviewed above provides a sound basis upon which to consider the place of learning about social justice as part of the direct experiences of skill and knowledge development gained during field education.

Field education and social justice

Field education and social work

Field education is viewed by students as an opportunity to gain key skills, knowledge and experience of social work (Cleak and Wilson, 2007; Maidment, 2000; Williamson, Hostetter, Byers and Huggins, 2010). Students see their performance in field education as demonstrating a capacity for employment and providing information about a fit between themselves and social work (Han and Chun-Chung Chow, 2010; Maidment, 2003; Napier and Fook, 2000; Patford, 2000). Employers regard field education as a valuable orientation — and probation period — for potential recruits (Barton, Bell and Bowles, 2005). Many social workers regard their field education experiences as having been the most significant experience of their degree (Kadushin, 1991; Shardlow and Doel, 1996), and as having a powerful influence on their practices long into their careers (O'Connor, Wilson and Setterland, 2003).

Not only is field education a “nexus of influence” (Schneck, 1995: 6) between academic and practical knowledge in social work, it also has the potential to be considered the signature pedagogy of the profession. It is a “test location

of the viability of what the professions' practices are, and the education systems that ... it uses" (Shulman, 2005 cited by Wayne, Bogo and Raskin, 2010: 327). A frequently identified argument to make field education the focus of a pedagogy of social work is that the professional literature is rich with theoretical examples of 'how to', yet the profession itself struggles to address the theory–practice integration gap (Lesser and Cooper, 2006). Practitioners raise concerns that the practical profession relies too heavily on limited field education to provide the authentic and credible practice knowledge and skills to students, and that those in the field are in one world and the academics engaged in research, writing and teaching are in another (Noble, 2001: 348). However limited, field education is sometimes referred to as the component of the social work course which delivers the actual content of social work practice, but that gives little attention to the process of learning (Gitterman, 2004; Novak, 1995).

Field education in social work education

In twenty-first century Australia, field education within social work education takes place when a student has successfully completed part of their degree at a higher education institution and can test their burgeoning practice skills by being 'placed' within a human service organisation. Within that organisational placement, students work with a field educator who is an experienced social worker — or sometimes with a suitably qualified 'co-field educator' onsite with a social work consultant — who guides their learning and contribution to the organisation's responsibilities. Typically, neither student, organisation or field educator are paid in relation to field education (AASW 2012).

Learning in field education

The core educational purpose of field education is where social work students "learn by doing" through participating in the delivery of human services (Bogo, 2005: 163). In Fernandez's view the essential starting point is the student's engagement in learning (1998: 198). As with all field education learning, it can be assessed as "satisfactory" where a student can apply the profession's values and knowledge base in a field of social work practice using appropriate intervention methods and skills (Jenkins and Sheafor, 1980 cited in Fernandez, 1998; Cleak and Wilson, 2007).

Malcolm Knowles's work on the principles of adult learning informs the educational approach of andragogy "the art and science of helping adults to learn" (1970: 38) which is considered by Shardlow and Doel (1996: 14) as being essential in field education. A learning approach based on adult learning principles is particularly relevant in learning within field education in that the adult learner, engaged in "learning by doing" within a human service organisation, is directly constructing practice knowledge and skills relevant to their future practice. Knowles considers an environment of

practical tasks that the student has designed linked to their understanding of their learning needs and where the student and field educator have a relationship that is mutually respectful of each other's experience, being able to develop these further (1970: 66). Here too the student develops their own understanding of the nature of social work practiced in a society. Shardlow and Doel note that at this point students can become intimately aware of the nature of the society as "stratified and unequal" (1996: 14). Notably, placement learning includes the field educator and others in the organisation such as team members and service users, then - with experience - their peers in a learning group (Fernandez, 1998; Coulton and Krimmer, 2005; Bellinger, 2010).

Widely identified as a strategic role supporting student learning, field educators facilitate learning in the human services context by introducing the organisational environment to the student to access different learning opportunities.

A field instructor represents the ideal social worker, and the way she or he enacts the trinity of head (professional knowledge: theory, research, practice wisdom), heart (social work values and emotional dispositions), and hand (helping skills and techniques) impacts significantly the intern's identity. (Forte and LaMade, 2011: 73 citing Barretti, 2004a)

Despite describing a highly idealised field educator, Barretti contributed significantly to an understanding of the particular nature of the relationship sought by students of field educators. She reviewed a range of research studies and concluded overall that students desire to be placed with: "field instructors that are available, respectful, responsive, supportive, fair, objective, and that are knowledgeable and able to directly communicate their knowledge and provide evaluative feedback...(and) encourage autonomy, provide the opportunity to be observed, and facilitate professional development" (2009: 51). Students also valued observing a practitioner modelling practice; participating with that practitioner in working directly with clients and communities; opportunities to reflect together with others about the application of theories from the curriculum content to this current practice site (Kissman and Van Tran, 1990; Knight, 2000; Maidment, 2000; Barretti, 2009). Research studies have questioned whether a student's preferred learning activity leads to their field educator's assessment of their performance as competent (Fortune, McCarthy and Abramson, 2001; Boud and Falchikov, 2006). There is a substantial literature on the best and worst experiences of learning for students in field education (Fernandez, 1998; Boud, 1999; Beddoe 2001; Crisp, Anderson, Orme and Green Lister, 2004; Bogo, 2005; Heron, 2004; 2006; Wilson, Walsh and Kirby 2008; Cleak and Smith, 2012). Bogo (2005) points out that much of this literature relates to students' views of their placement learning. For ownership of learning to occur it would appear structured feedback by a trusted advisor is key to self aware reflection and the development of core practice skills. From such a base

of a tested and trusting relationship, development of greater self-awareness can occur and subsequently enhance the student (and graduate's) practice (D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez, 2007). Should traumatic experiences arise, on being handled effectively within this relationship and the other relationships within the organisation, having the experience of overcoming these can also assist a student's learning processes and benefitting the student in the long term (Lam, Wong, and Leung, 2007: 96). From a perspective of duty of care towards those creating these learning experiences, it is seen as important for the student's institution to recognise the likelihood of difficult experiences taking place and to prepare students for these issues. Consideration of how these may impact on the student and implementing strategies of self-care and at the very least taking responsibility to be responsive if concerns arise is seen as essential (Maidment, 2003; Knight, 2010).

When a field educator is experienced as a 'positive' role model by a student, the relationship can assist with processing many of the concerns above. However if trust has been experienced as breached by a student, this can compromise their ownership of learning within a site of field education. On the other hand what a student may categorise as 'poor supervisory practice' by their field educator may be a practice imposed by or resulting from "intractable political and economic exigencies affecting the profession" (Barretti, 2009: 61).

In some instances ambivalence of this type also exists for the field educator. Some educators would like to offer a different relationship to a student learner than was their experience as a supervisee (Hughes, 1998; Maidment, 2003; Barretti, 2009; Barton, Bell and Bowles, 2005). Even so Barretti notes, a student's ownership of their learning can be promoted, with these complexities, by the support and active response of the social work education program (Barretti, 2009; Maidment, 2003; Morley, 2004).

Fernandez notes that field education is seen as the core context for the transmission of ethical and ideological content so that oppressive dominant ideologies are challenged in practice settings (1998: 195). This opportunity is not always available however, Fernandez noted the difficulties described by students they experienced when the social justice ideals of social work were not shared by their field educator (Fernandez, 1998: 185). A transparent model of supervision as part of the relationship between a field educator and a student can assist a student to understand differences in perspectives and still explore the oppression existing within the human services (Barretti, 2009; Hair and O'Donoghue, 2009). Tackling these types of issues within the relationship of field educator and student is identified as the field educator taking an educational "stance" in the relationship. For example in the field educator's processing of an intervention they have engaged in to bring critical reflection to life for the student and to model a process of professional

reasoning (Plath, et al, 1999; Banks, 2005; O'Hara and Weber, 2006). What is often described as the key role of a field educator, that is to demonstrate the application of 'theory-to-practice' and enable a student to develop those skills themselves during field placement, has however been shown to be only rarely present (Forte and LaMade, 2011). Hunter and Ford (2010) suggest the field educator structure particular learning activities that purposefully support the student to apply professional problem solving across diverse sites, explicitly guiding a student through the use of vertical integration of micro and macro structured interventions as learning experiences specifically to reflect on (Hunter and Ford, 2010). Several authors recommend training for field educators that assists them to develop their skills in supporting their students to systematically explore values and ethics, develop self awareness and build confidence (Williamson, et al : 244, 2010; Bogo, 2005; Maidment, 2000; Hunter and Ford, 2010; Simpson, Mathews, Croft, McKinna and Lee , 2010).

Participating in the organisation enables the student to understand worker "agency" and strategies to employ to support this, such as building alliances with one's field educator, one's team, other staff and - as described by Bellinger as customers from the same organisation (Bellinger, 2010; Hunter and Ford, 2010, cite Hancock, 2005). Field education can enable students the opportunity to personally follow a principle of de-centring professional power and in this way develop an understanding of taking a social justice focus to their practice (Brown and Young, 2008; Beresford and Croft, 2001; Wendt and Seymour, 2010). This approach will link directly to their growth in understanding themselves around their relationship with "consumer/ client/ service users" (Carey, 2009: 186). Through the immediacy and relevance of the relationships during a student's field education experience engagement, critical reflection and the struggle to understand for learning about social justice are heightened (Bellinger, 2010).

Noble emphasises the benefits of using reflective practice processes as students engaged in field education can simultaneously "engage with reflecting on the connection between the world of knowledge and the world of practice" (2001: 348). Bogo and Vayda propose the Integrating Theory to Practice Loop as a purposeful way of achieving this (1998).

The essence of 'Experience Based Learning' facilitation is identified by Boud : "While we commonly assume teaching leads to learning, it is the experiences the teachers help create that help prompt learning, not the acts of the teacher" (Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993: 9). This re-directs the emphasis of field education learning. Rather than the field educator being the conduit through whom the student achieves their learning, it is the field educator's role to create opportunities for learning that are key to social work education. Clearly knowing what is 'key' for the current context and the unknown future is relevant (Cooper, 2002; Eadie and Lymbery, 2002; Giles, Irwin,

Lynch and Waugh, 2010; Goldstein, 2001; Heycox, Hughes, Duffy and Studdy, 1999; Horwath and Thurlow, 2004; Kennedy, 2001; Noble, 2001; O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986; Patford, 2000; Pomeroy, et al., 2004; Rocha, 2000; Weiss, 2003;). Given that a common view expressed in the literature is that the consolidation of social justice practice comes through real world experience, modelling of practice and reflection, thus the structures and supports that assist this are of critical importance (Maidment and Cooper, 2002; Rocha, 2000; Wilson, Walsh and Kirby, 2008).

Learning through structured field education curricula

Shardlow and Doel (1996: 38) list a range of practice learning models that have informed field education in the UK. These models are familiar as components of teaching and learning: the apprenticeship model, competency-based models, growth and development models, the managerial model, the academic model, the role-systems model, and so on. Shardlow and Doel note that several models lack a clear mechanism of transferability and therefore are often specific to one practice area or principle. They propose a model that is purportedly universal in its applicability: a “structured learning model” which integrates how people learn, a planned curriculum, a variety of methods and a set of principles to inform assessment (1996: 52). To date in Australia the learning offered within field education is largely based on the everyday work of the chosen organisation, and the learning model on the particular professional interests of the field educator. Assessment is guided by the accreditation standards, code of ethics and practice standards related to the work field, and a separate planned curriculum is typically integrated by each university in the form of integrative workshops throughout the students’ period of field education.

Learning about social justice in field education

A review of the literature was undertaken to identify teaching and learning models of field education that take a social justice focus. Context, relationships and processes of learning were three features frequently considered in the texts reviewed. Largely, these models are posited by their creators and with little independent critique available in the literature. Between the models the key differences are relationship-based: the nature of the relationship between student and educator, the purpose of the student’s relationship with an organisation’s staff, and the calibre of the student’s relationship with clients with whom they relate most closely.

Transformational concepts in practice learning

Giles, Irwin, Lynch and Waugh (2010: 33) identify the core concepts below as enabling transformational learning and as having universal applicability.

1. the social construction of knowledge
2. experiential learning

3. critical reflection
4. emotional and social intelligence
5. an ethical approach
6. a supportive learning environment

As discussed earlier, transformational learning in this particular context is underpinned by the work of Mezirow (2000) and O'Sullivan (1999). For a student to undertake such a transformational journey requires their particular engagement in learning, and the empowerment that can come from ownership of the tools to understand the process (Giles et al., 2010: 33). Being involved in a field education experience generates just such an ownership. Skills in critical reflection are honed through making links between individual and societal needs, and through being accountable for using power ethically as a professional in the human services context; all these encounters contribute to the development of social intelligence. The strength of Giles and colleagues' set of criteria is that, if present, these concepts will enable an environment for transformational practice learning and impart the potential to learn to take action on the basis of a 'transformed understanding'. Because the criteria are transferable across diverse human services organisations, this model appears to be widely applicable and could potentially be embedded in social work field education courses offered by universities.

(Re)Generation model

Bellinger (2010) proposes an alternative field education model, stating that she prefers the term 'generative' to 'transformative'. In her view, the meaning of the term 'transformative' has been diluted in recent years. The model of field education Bellinger proposes is a framework for '(re)generation' where practice learning takes place in non-social-worker-led host agencies, which are more diverse than traditional hosts and thus more widely available. Here students and educators are co-constructors of new knowledge that in its process of discovery is "explicitly linked to the goal of social transformation" (Bellinger, 2010: 2450). The (re)generative model of placement learning is said by Bellinger to open up in the student a capacity for innovative learning. Bellinger makes a clear case for the generative potential of 'connective learning', where student and others in the organisation are co-creating new work practices that are more likely to be responsive to current and changing social and economic conditions impacting on peoples' lives. Through such powerful processes of knowledge transfer and development, the author claims that social work as a profession can renew itself.

The challenge of this model is that because the learning within a non-statutory organisation is not led by a social worker, the resourcing responsibility of the learning process typically becomes much more collaborative between organisation and university. In some instances the host organisation becomes essentially a satellite placement 'lab' of the university.

But Bellinger sees the established challenges of accessing sufficient learning experiences for a growing number of social work students and a growing number of programs as the likely lever by which to increasingly develop the educational base and concurrent resourcing of this innovative model (2010: 2462).

Social justice transformation model

Rutherford, Walsh and Rook (2011) described a model, operating currently within a particular partnership context, that aims for students to assimilate notions of co-learning, interdisciplinarity and social justice. They describe an initiative with the Salvation Army and undergraduate students from the professional disciplines of nursing and social work. These students work with each other, with clients of the service, with academic staff from both disciplines and with workers involved in the service itself. Though similar to Bellinger's (re)generative model, this Salvation Army model is less transferable due to the particular nature of its disciplinary involvement and context. The model offers a template, however, for building the nexus between human service organisations and academe; also between practice and theory, and co-learning and co-teaching. This model requires collaboration at many levels which in itself can lead to diffusion of skills and knowledge. Given the venue's interdisciplinary focus the placement experience is likely to require students to "wrestle with their concepts of social justice, power, privilege, oppression and other relevant concepts relative to their concept of social work" (Birkenmaier and Cruce, 2011: 215 citing Bogo, 2006).

Social justice stipend model

A merit-based social justice practicum stipend initiative was nominated by Birkenmaier and Cruce (2011: 218). A stipend is offered in a competitive process whereby students apply formally for funds to enable them to take part in a social justice practicum. This acts as a strategy to engage individual students beyond simply fulfilling a compulsory placement. The student application process involves declaring an organisation of their choice and self-identifying their practicum social justice learning goals to meet the stipend's requirements. This model definitively puts a learning framework around social justice into the hands of the student.

Content analysis of the students' evaluation reports and learning outcomes found that not only did the stipend increase the students' exposure to new ideas and practice approaches, but it also facilitated in the student a deeper understanding of social justice, conceptually and practically. The experience was found to have aided the student in their realisation a connection between social justice and professional practice, and of the role of advocacy for social workers (Birkenmaier and Cruce, 2011: 221).

Several students noted in their responses that without the stipend they would have followed their established preference areas, which would not have had a social justice focus (223). The students' case study descriptions professed deeper understandings about 'right relationships', the criticality of social worker advocacy at micro, mezzo and macro levels of intervention, and the long term nature of social justice oriented practice. Birkenmaier and Cruce noted that this understanding was gleaned by the students from the practice wisdom shared by their field educators (222). The authors acknowledged that further work on evaluating this program and specifically on evaluating student learning outcomes is required. Also noted was the significant support required from academic and organisation staff before, during and after each implementation of these innovative projects (223).

Given the resourcing requirements, the 'social justice stipend initiative' cannot be offered to all students. Birkenmaier and Cruce do recommend the dissemination of 'critical self-reflection question' assignments across all students embarking on field education, to strategically integrate social justice into their reflections (224). This task would be integrated into their portfolio assignments and educational discussions, and be accompanied by a list of reflection questions that can assist the learning purpose. Birkenmaier and Cruce regard this reflective list as a way to generate critical co-reflection where social work students and hosting workers "have a relationship whereby they can feel comfortable struggling together with these questions" (215 citing Bogo, 2006).

Without the incentive of a special status and stipend that achieves the extra level of student interest in seeking a social justice focus to the practicum, one wonders if there would be similar positive feedback to the stipend model to that expressed in Birkenmaier's and Cruce's findings.

Pedagogy of engagement model

Forster and Rehner (2011) describe a model titled 'pedagogy of engagement' that offers social justice education within field education. This model integrates components such as an experiential learning matrix (Kolb, 1984), transformational learning and immersion.

Pedagogy of Engagement

Stage 1: Transformational learning initiated by direct and immediate confrontation of injustice = stage: revelation and dissonance;

Stage 2: Ongoing learning by processing experiences under supervision actively integrating formal curriculum, reflecting on understanding of systemic interconnections of phenomena with unseen, causal structural explanations = stage: integration and linkage;

Stage 3: Learning transformation stabilised with integration of personal dimension of self awareness, identity growth and readiness to act purposefully as a 'social work citizen' = consciousness and commitment.

(Forster and Rehner, 2011: 234)

This model is described as relevant to immersion of students in a field education experience in which social injustice is a constant feature (e.g. poverty, homelessness, structural unemployment, racism in the legal system, and so on). There is also a type of contract or commitment made by participants where key principles of involvement are stated: “the 4-R’s: Resources, Rights, Reconciliation, Responsibility” (2011: 234). As an example the first principle, Resources, is quoted below.

Resources

Progress toward social justice requires the infusion of new resources into resource-deprived communities. Service / activism that does not result in a net gain in resources — goods, funds, programs, jobs, opportunities, capacities and competencies — for oppressed or marginalised communities and their residents cannot claim to make a real and potentially lasting contribution to social justice because they leave unaffected the unjust system of exchange and distribution.

(Forster and Rehner, 2011: 234 citing Gil, 1998: 14)

‘The 4-R’s’ are seen as a way to strengthen student engagement in the journey. These concepts, and themes addressing social justice in the long term, are considered able to be integrated into formal curricula. The authors propose that ‘social work citizenship’ be a learning outcome that is assessed as a standard within the final portfolio. They conclude that the conceptual foundation of social justice is core to the success of the program, as is an experienced field educator who will assist students to commit to longer term social work citizenship. The proposed course development is still in discussion. In order to continue to develop this model, the authors recommend qualitative analysis of brief interviews with students and field educators, and of learning contracts and other paperwork used by students during placements, in order to explore more deeply their engagement with the ‘social work citizen’ concept (2011: 234).

The ‘pedagogy of engagement’ model offers a range of social justice projects within one organisation that will create immediacy for a student and benefit for a community. Other authors have described possibilities for productive inter-professional social justice partnerships and collaborations, such as between law and social work, or chartered accountancy and social work, or teaching and social work. Projects around youth justice, environmental justice and international social development are seen as effective and relevant (Birkenmaier and Cruce, 2011: 216 citing Rogge, 1993; Gamble, Shaffer and Weil, 1994; Gutierrez, 2006; Hardina, 2006; Jones, 2009; Rutherford, Walsh and Hook, 2011; Sachs and Newdom, 1999).

Such social justice field education projects are anecdotally considered inherently transformative. However, Forster and Rehner have found that at the conclusion of placements very few students can confirm that they will be

taking up social justice practice in the future (2011: 234). The authors infer that it is the students' new awareness of personal and professional responsibility that leads to ambivalence toward taking the next step toward commitment. The authors also regard longevity of commitment to social justice by social workers as prerequisite to achieving real world social justice outcomes, and it would seem to them that gaining students' commitment is a struggle for the whole social work profession (Birkenmaier and Cruce, 2011 citing Bogo, 2006; Forster and Rehner, 2011).

Practicum-based learning assignments are being used more often to engage students in targeted adoption of particular principles of social work. This review of various models has identified that social justice principles, having been adopted into some definitions of social work, are part of the current 'evidence-based' knowledge environment being applied by course accrediting bodies for social work in the USA and UK (Plath, 2006). Evidence should now be sought of these outcomes in student learning in field education. Course evaluation research has increasingly made use of students' field education portfolios as a credible way by which to measure these outcomes. Collins and Wilkie (2010: 760) report on studies conducting content analyses to gauge student language usage and their analysis of terms related to 'anti-oppressive practice'. They note that despite the broad integration of anti-oppressive practice being considered "a tall order" a decade previously (Dominelli, 1998 cited by Collins and Wilkie, 2010: 760), by 2010 it had become ubiquitous. However, in their view the presence of the language throughout students' critical reflections in their field education portfolios does not create change in and of itself. Their concern is that anti-oppressive practice instances in field education have solely become an assessment hurdle. Students in the study continued to focus primarily on individual and family concerns, relying on organisation policies in their analyses rather than articulating an anti-oppressive model of practice. They did not identify broader injustices such as racism or institutional or societal innovations required to address the problems of clients (Collins and Wilkie, 2010: 760). Similarly, Collins, Gutridge, James, Lyn and Williams (2000) reviewed field education documents looking for issues relating to challenging racism but found that students did not attend to racism or anti-racism in their field portfolios. These findings suggest that introducing a targeted focus of social justice to field education assignments does not necessarily generate critical reflection nor justice-oriented professional practices.

The models discussed are based on educational frameworks of pedagogy and andragogy; some are unstructured whilst others are closely structured. They attempt to support students to engage in multi-layered experiences around injustice — its impacts on people they meet within the community and the host organisation — and to co-construct with field educators and hosts strategies and responses to make a difference. Not all of the models support

the difficult experience of “wrestling” (Birkenmaier and Cruce, 2011 citing Bogo, 2006) with the complexities and uncertainties of the institution, or indeed the community, in which the student is placed. And not all the models establish a critically reflective learning environment that enables that “wrestling” to be part of a student’s learning to be a social work ‘citizen’.

Creating a learning environment for social justice

Placement allocation by practice area

Hunter and Ford (2010) review the impact of micro- and macro- oriented placements on social justice learning. They identify how busy field education allocation units turn to structured patterns of finding micro-focussed placement experiences more frequently. Hunter and Ford identify that the ‘bifurcation’ of areas of practice is likely to be embedded within the structure of educational institutions, and may operate to inadvertently reduce the opportunity for students in these institutions to learn about social justice. Matching students less often to macro-oriented placements leads to graduates who are less confident in macro-oriented practice, and thus less likely to apply professionally for positions in those specialisation areas (Hunter and Ford, 2010).

Hunter and Ford cite Koerin and colleagues (2000: 118), who found that 20 per cent of their sample of graduating students reported having no field experience that involved them directly with communities or organisations as client systems. These authors define macro-oriented field placements as having “political focus; community mobilization focus; administration and program development; implementation policy analysis and policy development and networking” (Hunter and Ford, 2010: 16). They found that few texts designed to support field education covered macro placement issues beyond minimal levels of information, and that many students and recent graduates are concerned about reducing their employability if they have not specialised sufficiently in key modes of engagement, problem assessment, intervention and evaluation all associated with micro-oriented practice.

Hunter and Ford state that some literature already exists for students on how to translate their micro experience into macro (2010: 27 citing Abel and Kazmerski, 1994; Kasper and Wiegand, 1999; Wolk et al., 1996). In their view, educators need techniques to help students who might go for macro-oriented placements to generalise their skills from working with individuals. A significant strategy by which to address this is conducting field seminars, which can be a rich source of learning about generalist practice (but only if all levels and areas of practice are represented). Hunter and Ford concur with Webhi (2011) that it is important to impart to students the flexibility and curiosity required to make the bridge in understanding from micro to macro.

They suggest a vertical integration approach of open discussion between educators and learners in these seminars.

Challenges for educational institutions

Gursansky and Le Sueur (2012) recommend that structured, integrated learning and reflective practice in field education need further development and implementation. This view is supported by Hunter and Ford (2010), and by Salas and colleagues (2010). Gursansky and Le Sueur further recommend that the quality of supervision and methods of field teaching be more responsive to students' expectations, an area of potential development that they see as both a challenge and an opportunity (2012: 916).

The organisation

The organisation environment has been shown to influence students' integration of theory with practice and may have a significant impact on students' methods of working (Marsick and Watkins, 1990). Methods of working can be formed in response to barriers such as lack of time and/or resources, and limitations on support from managers and colleagues (Selber, Mulvaney and Lauderdale, 1998). The level of commitment by the human services organisation to student learning and, by association, to the future of the social work profession is a significant variable (Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012). However, when organisations do take students for field education experiences, there are clear and verifiable benefits to the organisation and direct benefits to the field educators' own personal and professional development, with only a minor level of "hindrance" being experienced (Barton, Bell and Bowles, 2005).

Human services organisations and universities are both accountable, through the implicit curriculum and the agreements formalising placement arrangements, for the structures that assist students to learn in a safe environment. This includes having sufficient activities that students can engage with in order to become competent in their practice as a graduating level social worker. As Maidment (2003) and others detail, the field education components of social work study programs are a significant financial and time impost on students. There is increasingly widespread recognition of the need for financially viable field education locations for the unpaid student to access (Maidment, 2003).

Transition and transfer: after graduation

Recent graduates hold a range of views on the relevance of their field education learning to their practice after graduation (Bates et al., 2010; O'Connor et al., 1986). Many have stated that despite their field experience, they were not prepared sufficiently for the realities of practice. Their field

education experiences can also leave them feeling ambivalent and less than confident into their first years of practice (Hawkins et al., 2001).

In Australia, the majority of the social work student body are also part-time workers, or primary carers for family members, or both (Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012; Maidment, 2003). Tertiary study can create further stressors for members of vulnerable populations (Maidment, 2003). Literature on the impact of the intense financial demands of the undergraduate education phase of most social work programs is largely anecdotal (typically, descriptions from single institutions), but highlights the demographic and cultural diversity amongst social work students and graduates. The task of supporting students to manage an array of stressors falls mainly to ad hoc relationships with campus staff and academics.

Williamson and colleagues (2010: 235) make a case for student reflection as best taking place at the end of their course (that is, after the experiences of placement), thereby enhancing the opportunity to develop an integrated understanding. Reflecting in this way fosters confidence and better responses to future difficulties (Ellis, 2001 cited by Williamson et al., 2010). Morley (2004) tries to assist students to process challenging experiences after the event, in a place of relative safety. Morley believes this generates critical awareness of the impact of power relations and refines strategies for resistance around these relations once students go into practice.

There is a significant demand imposed on social work education to 'produce' new graduates who are demonstrably 'fit for practice' (Agllias, 2009). There are often unrealistic expectations placed on recently trained professionals to manage entrenched and complex practice situations based on their limited field education experiences (Rossiter, 1993). Calderwood (2003) considers this demand on new graduates to be untenable and that the difficult goal in this context is to create viable communities for social justice within the social work professional association. Calderwood describes strategies that support communities of professionals confronted with slow and limited change, and links these strategies to the significant role of the social work code of ethics in making social justice a goal.

There is a disjuncture experienced for new social workers where, contrary to the altruistic image held of the profession on enrolment in social work education, after graduation social justice is not routinely discussed nor easily identified within professional decision-making, affording a disconcerting and gruelling experience of practice (Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012; Lewis and Bolzan, 2007; Maidment, 2003). The role of social work courses in educating future social workers about the realities of practice can only succeed if field education offers more opportunities for students, practitioners and academics to co-construct practice knowledge (Lewis and Bolzan, 2007).

This chapter has identified the potential for individual students to engage deeply with people, with communities, with field educators and with the projects they are working on, in such a way as to work effectively as a social worker with a social justice focus. It is stressed repeatedly in the literature that taking such a path is not automatic. The 'engaged experience' only becomes transformative practice if linked by critical reflection and a contemplative vision of how justice might be achieved. Those future practitioners who do take a critical transformative path will meet the challenge of confronting societal injustice at all levels of society. Some of the realities of this personal and professional choice are only fully evident once the student has some experience as an independent practitioner. In essence, the literature canvassed in this chapter does not offer any likelihood that confident social justice practice will ever apply to the whole of the social work profession.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology and exploratory processes that this research study will use to understand how students learn about social justice during field education.

Chapter Four

Methodology

Introduction

Orientation of the research

The epistemological basis of this research is social constructionism. It is knowledge constructed by people from their experience of everyday activities, their reality collectively generated and transmitted. In constructionism, meanings are constructed by human beings as they “engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998: 43). A prime assumption of social constructionism is that the meaning made of the world is individually understood within a sociohistorical context inclusive of the contributions of others, and that therefore reality is socially constructed. All that is engaged with and observed becomes meaningful. Each and every person constructs unique understandings of reality, and because they are observing and making meaning of their own reality based on and informing those of others, “there is no (one) true or valid interpretation” (Crotty, 1998: 47).

Gaining an understanding of what a student was learning when they experienced the world of social work on placement involved constructing knowledge from the observations, experiences and beliefs that research participants were aware of and able to describe. Within any one student’s experience of placement there are also expectations and assumptions generated and transmitted by others. Each of these transmissions comes from its own reality via various ‘tools of transmission’, such as curricula, social work models, tacit understandings and institution-specific philosophies. These form an extra dimension to the social construction of knowledge. The ‘others’ given voice within this research are people from different cohorts of the field education community: new graduates, field educators, social work managers and academics.

A shared understanding of reality and “the collective generation and transmission of meaning” enables a richer interpretation of an experience to be constructed (Crotty, 1998: 58 citing Schwandt, 1994: 127). Crotty considers collectively generated meaning more “useful, rewarding and liberating” than meaning generated from one viewpoint. Connecting our shared ways of knowing acknowledges the role of societal structures in generating particular

and “culturally bequeathed ... sets of meaning” (Crotty, 1998: 59). This acknowledgement underpins social constructionism, in Crotty’s view, and in my view it establishes the relevance of social constructionism to a qualitative study that explores meanings and values that inform the practice of a professional activity such as social work education.

Critical theory informs this research study. In understanding society’s symbols and meanings, critical theory assumes that people become engaged in “envisioning new possibilities” (Morrow and Brown, 1994: 7). Engagement in this way enables people to take action to achieve change and address “structures and discourses of inequality and oppression” (Ife, 2010: 143). A critical lens reveals not only the influence of social class, but also other structural social divisions such as race, gender, and physical and intellectual ability. Importantly, a critical lens identifies how these divisions influence societal relations. A critical lens also attends to local contexts, perceiving not only the dominant influences that enforce social divisions and create entrenched structural oppression, but also how division and oppression are experienced individually and personally.

In everyday practice social workers become alert to the presence of domination, submission and social inequality in society. Taking a critical theory perspective on these experiences focuses attention on what is required to create a fairer society (Humphries, 2008), therefore the perspective has a particular function in this current research study. Firstly, the study explores social work students’ and new graduates’ understandings of inequality and social justice, as observed in their field education program. Next, it explores how field educators, managers and academics observed how students learn about social justice in field education, and how they themselves facilitated student learning about social justice in relation to creating a fairer society.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was taken to exploring the research questions and choosing the data collection tools. Qualitative research enables rich and contextualised data about social life, in this instance social justice in field education, to deepen our knowledge of a particular area (Neuman, 2004). A qualitative approach allows for a range of different voices to be brought forward and differs from quantitative research in this respect. Such a methodological approach anticipates that interviewing a range of participants with a diversity of perspectives would provide useful insights.

Justification of data collection methods

Focus group interviews and individual interviews were the two data collection methods. The qualitative interview is less structured than many quantitative data collection methods (such as surveys), yet semi-structured

and unstructured interviewing elicits rich and complex data (Denscombe, 1998; Morley, 2004). If participants have prior advice about the areas to be discussed, this rich and complex data can be even further enhanced. Using a critical lens, semi-structured interviews can enable building of trust through acknowledging the researcher's position while reducing their voice and thus their use of power.

Through the focus group process, the development of group cohesion can enhance trust between participants, and this will then often be demonstrated by group members consolidating and contributing to each other's input (Hawe, Degeling and Hall, 1990; Fontana and Frey, 2008). Focus groups, as a method of data collection within social research, are seen as enabling expression of the opinions of those who may otherwise remain silent (Madriz, 2000). A significant factor within the focus group in gaining the broadest possible range of opinions and comments is the facilitator's conduct. Effective facilitation can optimise the expression of a range of opinions through giving respectful attention to participants' ideas and ensuring that they are understood properly. The researcher as facilitator can act to decentre their power so that a unique dialogue is constructed within the group dynamic (Creswell, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1998). However, one limitation of using focus groups is the potential convergence of opinion — participants are often influenced by others due to perceived status and other factors.

Individual interviews allow time for complex descriptions to be given by the participant about their own understandings and for these to be explored, where appropriate, through prompts from the interviewer. Ideally, the rich detail of a unique 'discovery' by that participant will be brought out (Denscombe, 1998: 113). Given sufficient time, and the development of trust, this process of exploration enables tacit as well as overt 'ways of knowing' to surface. Within the in-depth individual interview, pressures to conform to other's opinions or to silence one's own voice — sometimes known as 'convergence' — are minimised. In small-scale qualitative studies, a further benefit of the in-depth individual interview is its minimal resource demands.

In summary, the data collection methods utilised in this study — focus group interviews and individual interviews — enable a breadth, depth and a complexity of understanding to be developed about the experiences described by a range of participants.

Recruitment of participants

Recruits were sought from the many social workers and future social workers involved in the field education process across the state of New South Wales. Potential participants responded to advertisements in a state-wide professional publication and to advertising that was disseminated to the

social work professional community via established mailing lists from Charles Sturt University, the Australian Catholic University, the University of Sydney, University of New South Wales and University of Newcastle. The field education units within these institutions were members of Combined Universities Field Education Group, a state-wide network that meets quarterly to promote and enhance the quality of field education in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory. Advertisements were placed on student noticeboards by staff from these universities. The University of Western Sydney was excluded from the dissemination to minimise influence over the data as the interviewer was employed there. Dissemination commenced in March 2006 (see Appendix 2: Advertisement).

Participants were recruited by a purposive sampling strategy. Participants who had been involved in field education, were interested in exploring the presence of social justice within field education and were able to participate within the timeframe of the study were recruited.

Recruits who met these purposive sampling requirements and signed the 'research participant consent form' were allocated to one of five cohorts. The cohorts were populated as follows: current students enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work program (minimum one placement completed) (n=3); new graduates (between 6 and 24 months after completion of course) (n=5); field educators (n=8); social work managers (n=9); and social work academics involved in their institution's field education program (n=7) (see profile of participants below).

A total of 32 participants were recruited. An 'informed consent' process was completed (see Appendix 3: Participant information sheet and Appendix 4: Consent form). Confidentiality of participation in the interview process was confirmed at the beginning of the interview. The process of applying a pseudonym to the transcripts and the removal of any identifying institutional information, whether as a current or former student or employee, was a key component of ensuring confidentiality in the dissemination of the findings from this study. With respect to focus group participation, it not being possible to maintain anonymity within the interview, the use of pseudonyms and removal of any identifying institutional information in the transcripts was confirmed. Individual interview participants were offered copies of their interview transcripts to read and change should they wish. Three took up this opportunity but no changes were sought.

Recruitment issues arose and were managed in the following ways. Firstly, there was a difficulty recruiting students and new graduates in sufficient numbers to conduct cohort-specific focus groups. To address this, it was decided to conduct in-depth individual interviews or focus group interviews, with recruits from these cohorts. In this way the more recent experiences of

field education were brought to the data set. Two of the new graduates participated in both an individual interview and a focus group (the 'mixed cohort' focus group). No others took part in both types of interviews. Network members of the Combined Universities Field Education Group reminded students in class and via notice boards to the advertising for the research study however despite this strategy, student participants were not able to be recruited to focus group interviews. A second sampling issue arose in that half of all participants were employed by the same organisation, albeit across several sites. Thirdly, although advertising sought to encourage a wide range of individual recruits through all the networks described above, in several instances people volunteered with their colleagues. This was the case with both field educators and academics. Hence in three of the five focus groups participants had already established work-based relationships with each other. The potential impact of these issues is discussed further in a later section on the limitations of the sampling design.

Data collection: focus group interviews

Five focus group interviews were conducted with 22 participants divided into the following groups:

- Focus group #1: Social work practitioners/ field educators n=3
- Focus group #2: Social work managers n=3
- Focus Group #3: Social work academics: site 1 n=3; a work unit
- Focus Group #4 Social work academics: site 2 n=4; a work unit
- Focus Group #5: Mixed cohort membership n=9; a work unit within one health setting; a state government organisation. The team included: new graduates (n=4); field educators / managers (n=3); field educators / practitioners (n=2). Within this team there was significant variation in the length of practice experience, and of experience in the supervision of students.

The semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1) sought to maximise discussion. The duration of each focus group was between 100 and 120 minutes.

Several issues arose in conducting the focus group interviews. As noted above, three of the five focus groups contained participants with already established relationships, and their communication patterns were more free-flowing and conversational than those groups who had not met together before. The two smallest focus groups: managers and field educators (both n=3) comprised those who had not worked together before, and unfamiliarity may have led to a reticence to contribute differing opinions, however this was not evident in either the frequency of participation or the diversity of opinion expressed in the data. Only the mixed cohort focus group had more than four participants. Their team dynamic appeared to be democratic as shown by respectful encouragement of each participant to contribute and confidence to offer both differing and concurring opinions. In my opinion the semi-

structured interview format and fostering a democratic dynamic assisted the interviews to remain on the track across all the focus groups.

Data collection: individual interviews

Twelve single-session, individual interviews were undertaken with participants from the following cohorts:

- Students currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work program (minimum one placement completed) n=3
- Social work new graduates (6–24 months since graduating) n=3
- Social work practitioners/ field educators n=3
- Social work field educators/ managers n=3

Using a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1), participants were asked to explore in depth their own learning about social justice or that of their students. Individual interviews enabled the researcher to reduce any pressure for participants to conform to others' expressed opinions, a potential issue for focus groups (Creswell, 1998; Fontana and Frey, 2008; Punch, 2005). The individual interviews were between 56 and 140 minutes in length.

The resources required for arranging individual interviews were minimal, as the researcher was able to respond quickly to interest expressed by potential recruits. Such responsiveness ensured that interviews with representatives of all cohorts, particularly those under-represented in the focus groups (students and new graduates), took place. The interviews with participants from these under-represented cohorts took place in the latter stages of the data collection phase.

Profile of participants

Information was sought about each participant as a student, new graduate, field educator, manager and academic. Participants were asked the number of placements they had undertaken and when they graduated. They were asked how long they had held their current position and how many students they had supervised. Managers were asked how many field educators taking students they had supervised. Information about a participant's age or cultural background was not sought. The fields of practice involved were ascertained through examples given by the participant in their interview.

The students (n=3) were all female and had taken part in two placements at the time of interview. The fields of practice of these placements, ascertained during the interview, included child protection, women's refuges, primary and acute health settings, advocacy, and policy areas related to youth and community.

The new graduates (n=5) were all employed as social workers. 4 were female and one was male. As new graduates they brought their own experience of

two or three field placements as well as of their current workplaces to bear during interviews. These participants had experienced placements in areas including child protection (policy and direct practice), health, mental health (community and acute hospital work), advocacy and policy.

The field educators (n=8) were all female and currently employed as social workers in areas including mental health, primary health and acute hospital, corrections, income security, child protection, non-government family services and the non-government youth sector. These participants brought to the process their own placement experiences, their professional experience, and their observations of students they had supervised. The field educators had been practicing for between 5 and 18 years, and half of them had been in practice for over 15 years. This is a significant depth of experience within this cohort. Five of the 8 field educators had been supervising students for at least 3 years, with just one educator having taken students for more than 5 years (10 students over 16 years, in fact). A total of 33 years 8 months of taking a total of 28 students was reported across 8 participants. This averaged to one student per year in the cohort as a whole.

The social work managers (n=9) were each currently employed in fields such as mental health, primary health and acute hospital, corrections, income security, and non-government family services. Seven female and 2 male participants were interviewed. They had practiced for between 5 and 37 years. Five of the 9 managers had practiced for more than 16 years while only 2 had practiced for less than 10 years. They had supervised students for between 10 months and 33 years at the time of interview. One manager had taken over 45 students themselves, whilst across the whole group of managers 103 students were reported. One manager had not directly supervised a student, but had supervised staff who had, acting to support them to take students on placement. This person had been managing social work staff for between 5 and 10 years, and of the staff they managed approximately 50 per cent supervised students on placement. This group of managers brought to the research their own placement experiences as students, their observations of students supervised, and their observations of students of the staff they supervised.

The academics (n=7) were all female. They were staff involved in the social work field education program at two universities within New South Wales. There was a lengthy history of practice experience in this cohort, with a minimum of 22 years experience, and at least 3 academics having 30 or more years' experience. These participants did not describe themselves as having experience as social work managers. They had been teaching for 1–16 years at the time of interview, the majority having taught for at least 8 years. During their periods of social work practice they had worked in a range of roles.

Data analysis

Focus group and individual interviews took place over a 15 month period and were concluded when each person in the cohorts identified had been interviewed. The research data was recorded as a digital audio recording and then transcribed. The researcher conducted all the interviews and transcribed each of the focus group interviews and 6 of the 12 individual interviews. The other 6 interviews were transcribed by a research service. The researcher checked the transcribed versions for accuracy and ensured anonymity in sharing results of thematic analysis by de-identifying participants in the transcripts and allocating a pseudonym. Field notes were taken after each interview. The focus group transcripts and individual interview transcripts were coded separately. Steps in the data analysis process (see Appendix 5) were informed by the intent to complete a “deliberate and rigorous approach to thematic analysis” (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 77) and the analysis phase of ‘qualitative description’ (Sandelowski, 2000).

Intensive coding of all transcripts with the aid of a software package N-Vivo generated both latent and surface meanings (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 88) that were interpreted by the researcher. In preparation for utilising N-Vivo the researcher had participated in several specialised training sessions in order to substantiate the systematic analysis demonstrated in the research process. Context and meaning were retained by coding key sentences plus the relevant and surrounding sentences. This produced a significant amount of data to manage. Three overarching categories were identified to organise the data from interpretations made by the researcher. These were: ‘of the field education context’; ‘students’ pathways to understanding social justice’; and ‘narratives of social justice practice in social work’.

Data analysis of the focus group interviews was conducted by developing a nuanced summary of each focus group interview. This involved identifying the distinctive presence or absence of the above overarching categories, and factoring in the reflections that had been captured in the field notes on the dynamic operating during the group. Each focus group summary was then compared to each of the other summaries for patterns, disjunctures, links with professional literature, and areas that might need further exploration. A synopsis of the compared data was made.

Data analysis of the individual interview transcripts followed intensive coding in researcher-interpreted latent and semantic initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Sandelowski, 2000). Each of the transcripts was individually revisited and a summary made noting nuances of the interviewee’s story and any links with the overarching categories. These summary statements were then compared and contrasted within each cohort, and a synopsis of the presence of difference or patterns and of relevance to the literature was developed for each cohort. For example, the nuances of the interviews with

the students' cohort (n=3) were organised into potential themes arising from the categories, patterns or links. The researcher then 'stepped outside' this process and questioned whether the themes selected were relevant to the study, whether they were clearly distinctive, and whether they were similar to themes in findings reported in the professional literature. A synopsis of each of the themes was developed. The same process was undertaken for each cohort summary. The theme synopses were then compared and contrasted across cohorts, and with synopses from the focus group interviews.

Within the organising structure of the cohorts it could be said that students, new graduates and experienced social workers (including field educators, managers and academics) are each at distinctive points along the professional experience continuum. Within the data set each of the cohorts were kept distinct to enable identification of patterns. An exception to this was the mixed cohort focus group, which had representatives of three of the five cohorts within it.

After making the summaries and synopses, the focus group interview transcripts and the individual interview transcripts were revisited. Then, I critically reviewed the synopses for accuracy and relevance to social justice practice, adult education literature, the social work profession and social work field education. This penultimate stage acted as a form of returning to the field and to the reality of social inquiry (Crotty, 1998; Denscombe, 1998). The final stage was to specifically ensure that the nuanced explanations were a fit to the voices of the participants; where the researcher had developed a different interpretation, this was clearly notated. A report of the findings (see Chapters Five and Six) is made up of "the most vivid and compelling extracts" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 87) linked to the categories and themes identified, and concludes with discussion of their relevance to social justice in social work field education (see Chapter Seven).

Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney (see Appendix 6). As a doctoral candidate and the Research Student Investigator putting forward this research to the community of peers, participants and other interested parties, it was important to demonstrate that the purpose and design of the research was robust. Participants were made aware of the subjective position the researcher wished to take about enhancing the presence of social justice within social work education and that the research was conducted as a component of the Professional Social Work Doctorate program at the University of Sydney. Participants were made aware of my paid position as a Field Education Coordinator at another university. They were told that the prompting of my interest in the topic had been listening to students and

practitioners discuss the role of social justice in the students' placement learning. In this way I made my position transparent. I ensured that participants were informed of contact details for the Principal Investigator, with whom to raise any concerns.

In developing the research design, with regard to the conduct of the research I sought to demonstrate alertness to the exercise of power wherever possible, and to minimise it wherever possible. No student was interviewed with or by an educator they had a pre-existing relationship with. In framing the design of this study I noted that there was potential for participants to feel judged by their professional peers, and to prevent this I remained alert within the dynamic of the focus groups and intervened if necessary to ensure values of respect were a part of the study. A significant effort was made to ensure that an ethic of care was part of the research relationships.

Demonstrating trustworthy research

Qualitative research in a natural environment can demonstrate that it is authoritative and trustworthy by transparently describing the research methodology and illuminating how diverse interests and perspectives have not been glossed over; thus an 'accountable' knowledge is produced by a 'knowing subject' (Stanley and Wise, 2006: 10). Commonly used criteria by which to establish that research is trustworthy and robust are specificity and relevance to the research purpose. Trustworthiness criteria, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity are to be considered in order to assess the authority of this particular research methodology (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). I have addressed below how the current study meets each of these criteria of trustworthiness.

This study is credible in the ways in which new knowledge is created, accounted for and described. The theoretical perspective and research methodology have been made transparent. Critical theory underpins a qualitative research methodology which informs the research design. This enables clarity about the choice of congruent data collection methods and facilitates interpretation of the data. The resulting qualitative data become part of the construction of new social knowledge.

The chosen data collection methods enabled access to a significant range of voices with social work field education experience, thus further establishing the credibility of the findings as representative of the specific educational context. The data was from five different cohorts, each contributing knowledge of different roles and stages in relation to student learning in field education. Through the use of focus group interviews, the data set offered the analysis a breadth of opinion. From individual interviews, the data set gained depth of perspective. Both the findings and the research process have been shared with others in the professional and academic arena, further

establishing credibility by involving specialists interested in this area of study.

The research question was developed in order to study a particular manifestation of “what is and what could be” (Schofield, 1993: 208). Transferability in this study is partially established through exploring student learning in contexts in which, usually, professional practice takes place. The qualitative data, built from the ‘messiness’ of the natural environment of these practice locations, enabled ‘thick descriptions’ about ‘what is’ and the shedding of light on ‘what could be’. The thick descriptions developed from the data were local context specific. Provided these findings are considered only in comparable conditions and similar contexts, the findings of this exploratory study are dependable and relatively transferable. Through analysing the findings of this study with close reference to current professional literature, the transferability of outcomes is further supported.

Participant recruitment was achieved by a purposive sampling strategy. Hence, in contrast to much quantitative research, replicability of this study across social work educational contexts would not demonstrate the plausibility of its findings. However, after dissemination and dialogue, the findings of this study may indeed contribute to the understanding of social work field education and potentially enable theorising about student learning about social justice in field education (Creswell, 1998; D’Cruz and Jones, 2004; Denscombe, 1998; Riessman and Quinney, 2005).

‘Confirmability’ is integral to making an assessment that research outcomes are the result of an ethical process, and that researchers have not allowed their personal values to sway the conduct of the research, despite being interpreters of the data. To achieve this within a qualitative research study design required me to transparently demonstrate ways in which the use of reflexivity and critical reflection impacted on the way I undertook knowledge construction. In this way ‘confirmability’ was demonstrated in the first stage of external accountability: application to The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee by submitting the full design of the research for consideration prior to commencing participant recruitment. The committee validated the research design as ethical, transparent and appropriate to the research topic and goals. In line with auditing practices about the capacity of a researcher to demonstrate transparent processes, examples of researcher reflexivity and transparency in this study are as follows.

- Research design was discussed in several peer, professional community and faculty forums
- The researcher gave an account of her subjectivity (see Chapter One)
- A participant information sheet was provided to people at their first expression of interest, and discussed fully prior to a potential recruit to the study becoming a participant

- The conduct of the interviews facilitated diverse views being raised
- Individual interview transcripts were offered to interviewees to enable them to reconsider their participation as agreed
- Reports were developed on the following: field notes on establishing interview atmosphere, summarising the data collection process for audit, and demonstrating clarity in the process of conducting the data analysis and interpreting the findings (see Appendix 5)
- The findings were acknowledged as co-constructed by the researcher through interpreting and theorising, and were demonstrated to be closely analysed through frequent revisiting of original transcripts

Finally, the research purpose, design and analysis of this study took seriously the responsibility to be congruent with the overall goals of social work educational research (Alston and Bowles, 2003; Bryman, 2008).

Limitations of the study

The single-session format with individual participants limited the generation of shared understandings and ideas about the next direction for these exploratory themes to be taken. Adding further steps to the research design such as a critically reflective phase would potentially have aided each of the participants to move from engagement to analysis of assumptions, enabling even richer data to be gathered and processed (Fook, 2002). This could be seen as a limitation of the study. On the other hand, the single-session design may have attracted participants due to its minimal time demand. The small number of students (n=3) recruited, and the fact that students did not volunteer to participate in a focus group, could be perceived as a limitation due to less data from the students' 'voice'. Issues of disseminating the advertisement to participate through channels more frequently and comfortably used by students and new graduates may have addressed this. Similarly, in advertising the research study, the features within the design that acknowledged power differences, addressed confidentiality concerns and the use of pseudonyms to ensure anonymity should have been highlighted. By ensuring that the three students who did participate were interviewed individually and comprehensively, the data was optimised.

As discussed, differences between individuals in focus groups can lead to questioning that opinions will be valued equally. Participants may therefore self-censor, and this is one of the limitations that is potentially a feature of the data collection method. Given that a number of participants in 3 of 5 focus groups worked together on a daily basis, these established relationships may have had an inordinate impact within the groups involved. However, as noted earlier this familiarity appeared to lead to a more free-flowing discussion in those groups.

Individual and focus group interviews can produce a substantial output of rich and complex data, a corollary of which is that the researcher is

responsive to the management issues of the significant amount of data likely to result. It is important to also acknowledge as a limitation, the time between data collection and presentation of this thesis. This length of time was a result of multiple demands of managing full time work within a busy field education unit and the personal circumstances of caring for ageing parents. Progress was monitored and regularly reviewed with the support and encouragement of my thesis supervisors at the University of Sydney.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the qualitative research process undertaken for this study. An argument has been made to locate the research design within a social constructionist epistemology, utilising a critical theoretical perspective and a data collection and data analysis grounded in a critical research methodology. Focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews were outlined and explained. Key findings are reported in the next two chapters, followed by discussion of relevant overarching themes in the final chapter.

Chapter Five

Having a go!

This chapter documents and analyses students' and new graduates' conceptualisations of social justice, and how the students developed and integrated the values and theoretical frameworks of their social work practice through field education. This analysis is based on interview data from 8 of the participants in this study, the 3 students and the 5 new graduates. The students, Liz, Larissa and Toni, had completed at least one placement and were in their early to mid twenties when they were interviewed for this study. They were yet to do some further coursework and complete a final placement to meet the requirements of a social work degree. The 5 new graduates were Leah, Tim, Trista, Moera and Marina. They were in their mid twenties to early thirties and had been employed as social workers for between 7 and 18 months at the time of interview. Marina had completed a Diploma in Community Welfare prior to completing her social work degree and commencing practice. All the participants were graduates or current students from universities within New South Wales.

Understanding Social Justice

Social justice was a concept that the participants had thought a lot about. They had been given the interview questions beforehand and had prepared for the interview. They gave considered and careful responses to my questions, drawing readily on their personal and life experiences, and their experiences at university and in their field education placements. The research findings are presented in a chronology that parallels the participants' interview experience. First they looked back, reflecting on what had influenced their interest in social justice. Then they reflected on their experience of learning about social justice within their social work course. Next they gave detailed reflections on their experience of learning about social justice whilst on placement. Finally, they looked ahead to practicing as a social worker (the new graduates recounted what was happening for them at the time) in relation to taking a social justice focus in their practice.

At the start of the interview, the students and new graduates were each asked to describe their understanding of social justice. "Social justice is...?" When the participants' responses to this question were analysed it was found that a wide range of understandings of social justice were held. Each of their understandings were underpinned by commonly cited concepts, and integrated with personally held values. Of the concepts drawn on by the participants to describe their understanding of social justice, the most frequent were: equality for each person; the right to have different needs yet

still equal outcomes; fairness in distributing society's benefits; the right to support to access benefits; and recognition that society's structures create disadvantage for some. Some interviewees described their understandings in detail whilst others expressed their understandings more simply, often as a type of declaration.

Liz, a student, spoke of equality and stated that social justice for her was about

equality, and everybody's rights to have equal access to basic needs and wants as well.

Toni, a student, talked about equality and access to resources, but added the extra dimension of distribution based on an understanding of unequal societal structures, and of access to resources as a way to tackle discrimination.

Social justice is ... equality. Equal access to employment, income, like resources in the community, housing [and] all those sorts of things regardless of your race, ethnicity, your sexuality, whether you're a male or female, regardless of your class [and] all those sorts of things.

She elaborated, demonstrating a clear understanding of the entrenched relationship between inequality and structural disadvantage.

Looking at the way society is set up: patriarchy, class divisions and all that sort of thing, even language and the way we use language ... so you don't blame the individual ... Structurally ... things are kind of set up in a way that kind of keeps reinforcing the way things are at the moment, trying to keep things the same. ... So social justice, ... if you were working in that perspective you could also be ... trying to change the way things are so that things change and people don't just take 'it' [unequal society] for granted.

Toni spoke of the practical implications of meaningful social change, through questioning what individuals 'take for granted', thereby shifting the focus from an individual problem to a social issue.

Marina, a new graduate, also tied social justice to a critical analysis of social structures, drawing on the skills and knowledge she had gained from her university experience.

When I think of social justice, because of my studying at uni[versity], it's very much flavoured with a kind of left wing idea of politics and being able to critically analyse what's happening in the world and the decisions, like how decisions are made and then forming some kind of action or ideas around a way to address that.

Larissa, a student, talked about equality and fairness for all:

...it's about society and how equal and fair that society is for everybody,

and Trista, a new graduate, also saw social justice as being about equality.

Social justice [is] equality, equity, people looking after the ones that can't look after themselves.

She extended her notion of social justice to introduce responsibility for others.

Leah, a new graduate, reflected on her understanding of social justice as including equality in terms of opportunity and freedom to choose.

The big thing that I ... got out of my particular understanding of social justice was about not just what equality is, but about opportunity and access to services, knowledge about those sort of services, knowledge about the opportunities available to a person. I think that that's something that's really important and something, I guess that concerns me about today's political climate. But ... I think of health and education more than anything and access, you know, to just those very basic needs ... That's ... what I think about social justice ... but also ... the more I think about it, I start to think about ... gender equality, people's sexual preferences, cultural equality and respect for all of those things as well. So, it's not just the very basic needs, but also ... more the things that you can't really touch [such] as beliefs.

Leah illustrated a sophisticated understanding of social justice and the will to change, identifying the importance of links to politics, human rights and respect (Lister, 1998). She also saw education about existing social services as an important strategy in working to create an equal and fair society.

Moera, a new graduate, described her understanding of social justice as being clearly embedded in her practice.

How can I measure that I am actually making a difference? [I try] to strip it right down ... and look at what is the style of interacting, the warmth, the positive regard, the — as much as possible — non judgement, and really not underestimat[e] the difference you can make to an individual ... For example on the inpatient unit: I may not have been involved with every single patient, I may not have changed their whole universe, but they can come back into the ward and see me and feel safe and feel not judged and that is a big difference in that person's life.

Essentially, Moera integrates 'unconditional positive regard' and being alert to 'making a difference' interpersonally into forming a type of practice that, in her view, focuses on social justice.

Tim, a new graduate, saw social justice primarily as respecting human rights to dignity and respect, while recognising difference — implicitly, power differences — and ensuring freedom from discrimination.

Dignity, irrespective of ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference, age, beliefs, that sort of thing and it also means to me — what else have I got written down here? — not just freedom from restraint but also an opportunity to act.

He then looked to his practice to explore his capacity to practice these ideals.

It isn't that long since I have been a social work student and I remember, putting it crudely, learning about capitalism and how it breeds inequality

from one thing to another. It was just too big for my head to get around, how you could really make an impact on it: feminism, all these different areas. So to start practice and to think 'social justice', I realised there wasn't much I could input into the big picture, the macro side of things, because you have 20 clients to work with. So it's really looking at the small things and taking that notion of social justice to the individuals and families that you are really working with, and realising that really for me the big picture stuff I am not really going to have time to do.

Tim's notion of social justice changed from the one he held when he was a student and saw social justice as the 'big picture'. As a new practitioner, he identified social justice as having two types, the 'big picture' that he does not feel so involved in, and the smaller picture, in which he does person-centred, justice-focussed work with individual clients and families.

This overview of participants' views of social justice contains commonly held views as well as individualistic understandings. Several of the concepts the students and new graduates referred to are explicated in the literature review presented in Chapter Two.

'Big picture' social justice was seen as broad structural change that directly linked to a vision of equality and fairness for all. As Tim, Toni, Leah and Larissa have identified above, they see a vision of 'big picture' social justice on the horizon, but at a closer level they focus on their actions in the everyday relationships they have with clients, colleagues and their field educators.

'Equality' was used by the participants to mean rights for one individual being just as valid as for another individual, irrespective of diverse needs and wants. They acknowledged difference and the need to respond differentially to individuals and groups in order to achieve 'equality' as an outcome. They identified diversity as being a key element to the creation of social justice, and that in order for all to access the resources, benefits and opportunities available, discrimination on the basis of difference needed to be reduced or eliminated. A just society was one with 'fairer' distribution and social justice, from which everyone benefited. These principles of 'fairness' included everyone irrespective of their ability to participate fully.

The position taken by most participants of an 'equality of outcomes' perspective as a measure of social justice was at odds with the fact that they did not refer specifically to the rights or situations of any Indigenous, minority or disadvantaged groups, nor identify positive discrimination or re-distribution as potential policy approaches. Although in many instances participants took an 'individual rights and justice' approach to their statements about unfair and unequal distribution of resources, there did not appear to be a critical questioning or attempt to name exactly who benefitted

least. Despite an emphatic desire to ensure access to opportunities, there were few references made to specific strategies by which to minimise inequalities in health, education, wealth and life chances in Australia today or society in general.

There was an overall readiness among the participants to take an active role, to promote and support social justice in order to enhance the dignity, individuality and self-determination of an individual or group. Some participants, for example Toni, saw their role as being to challenge structural unfairness in some way, either by educating society about lessening discrimination or by scrutinizing decision-making processes. Two respondents, Leah and Larissa, saw social justice in social work practice as focussing on addressing the needs of marginalised communities existing without the necessities of life. For others, social justice was seen as individuals having the right to participate fully in society; these respondents believed that social work should enable this individual participation. The opportunity to participate was seen by all as an important measure of social justice, and all participants saw social justice as informing their view of social work practice.

Discovering social justice

The participants were asked to identify the primary influences on their particular understandings of social justice. The following overview highlights influences identified over the broad span of growing up and developing a set of personally understood values and beliefs, enrolling in a social work course to gain campus and field experience and, in the case of new graduates, practicing as a social worker. Participants described where a particular phase of this journey influenced their social justice concept and understanding.

Family life and childhood

Each of the participants nominated their family life as a primary influence on their understanding of social justice. Families were seen to have provided a core group of values, a way of seeing the world, and a base for the participant's early life experience and understanding of how society operates. In one instance, family life in childhood was described as a difficult experience. Some participants described themselves prior to commencing social work study as being alert to certain situations as 'just not being fair'; some of them felt this perception motivated them to be 'part of the solution'.

In the student cohort, values of treating people equally and challenging unequal treatment communicated to Toni by her family, which ultimately became her own values, led her to social work.

[My family is] quite a strong[ly] Christian family and things like treating everybody equally and...those sorts of things [were] instilled in me ... as

a child. I was brought up ... to believe that 'that's not fair' and that you should treat everybody the same regardless of what they look like or who they are. Then I guess when I sort of looked into social work it was talking about what social workers do and the fact that they do try to promote equality and that sort of thing and it really sat well with me.

Larissa told a similar story. She described growing up in a family that encouraged values of fairness, shared the view that 'the world is not fair' and saw it as important to discuss these issues.

Being brought up with having a social conscience and always talking about those type of issues helps. ... [Otherwise] I just don't think that I would've had the depth of understanding, in terms of being able to look at possibly the reasons why... things aren't socially just or things like that. Like the other day my 17-year-old sister said something outrageous and I said "do you think that's fair", and she said "no, that's not fair" and so she had a sense of what social justice is and what it meant, but ... it wasn't ... insight into any of the issues inside social justice. But yeah I think I definitely still would've had those basic values.

Larissa acknowledged that the original values provided by her family were the bedrock on which she built a social consciousness. She described feeling that social work had reinforced those original values. Over time, Larissa has developed her understanding of social justice to be more societally integrated, analytical and intellectually informed, due to her profession providing insight into the 'inside' issues.

Marina, a new graduate, grew up knowing that her worldview and values were different from those of her family. However, her family valued the right to express one's opinion and choose one's own direction, and hence supported her in working through her own principles and value base, respecting her right to hold different views. This has enabled Marina to develop a sense of her own autonomy and a capacity to articulate her view of social justice.

I would say that my family is significantly more conservative than I am and so it's interesting to see ... how my worldview emerged. It wasn't really from the family at all but it's a family where I'm an only child and ... I'm quite close to my parents, I still live at home ... But we will sit around the dinner table and talk about workplace reform and whatever the hot topic is and it can get really heated and we have kind of opposing views and so there's lots of political [discussion] ... So I guess on one point my interest in issues has been nurtured in that environment even though they're different opinions, 'cause my parents support me. They don't agree with what I think but they support the fact that I have an opinion and I'm willing to discuss it and [they accept that] if we're at a family function and someone makes a racist comment that I will actually challenge that.

Leah, a new graduate, spoke of her experience growing up in a family environment where social justice values were at the forefront. She saw this emphasis as being the base for her own understanding of social justice. Her respect for people's differences and the acknowledgement of the impact of injustice is considerable.

My family's always been very big on ... reading the newspaper [and] in terms of politics, talking about ... injustices of the world and ... having respect for everybody's different beliefs ... It seems, it feels to me, that that's always been a really big thing that's been, not drummed into me, but that I've been shown.

She recalled discussing issues such as difference and discrimination with her father, who encouraged her to critically question her assumptions.

So if perhaps anybody was talking about, I don't know, gay people or people of a different culture ... instead of just talking about it, my dad would offer up questions about why you would think [a particular] way ... That's sort of my earliest memory [of social justice].

In the interview, Leah explored how making links between her religious beliefs and sociopolitical values enabled her to analyse her feelings about social justice.

I would say I'm a Christian, there's sort of a side of that to it as well that kind of shapes that feeling of injustice for some people. And I guess I call it a feeling 'cause that's what I probably equate to my first knowledge of something being a little bit wrong, is a feeling ... And actually one thing that did stick with me was: I used to love, ever since I was a kid, that Martin Luther King speech, "I have a dream". It was just so — it always just stuck with me and I remember being a kid and going through Newtown to the pool for water polo or something and always watching out for that [mural evoking the speech in public space in Newtown, Sydney] ... and it just ... made me want to look it up and I always ... really felt the words that were in that speech.

Leah communicated her being inspired by Martin Luther King as a powerful connection at a young age, that provided a base to her values well into her adulthood.

Finally, Leah singled out the curiosity and the desire to understand that, as a child, prompted her to become engaged in learning about social justice.

I guess as a little kid asking so many questions ... you go and read ... and I've always been a big reader and I think even right back then you sort of start to wonder and question ... "but why is that?"

Leah's family modelled a range of ways to engage with issues, remain curious, respect people, question societal norms and value difference. Her childhood experiences in this regard influenced her capacity to critically reflect, and thus her journey toward working in social justice. As another outcome, Leah's personal confidence is evident, as is her personally-integrated autonomy.

For Liz, a student, growing up with the opportunity to travel enabled her to develop self-awareness, an understanding of difference and an understanding of social justice at the level of global inequality.

You want to help people and you want to be able to give people what you have as well. And have everyone be able to have, equally. I think there were a couple of people [in my social work course] that actually already assumed ... that the world was already like that. That surprised me. I think I've been very lucky and I travelled a lot with my parents, third world countries and things and so I've seen poverty and so I think that's what my parents taught me. I had an epiphany. I was in Guatemala ... and I met so many social workers ... getting right on in there doing exactly the things that I wanted to do and I just stood there going "how do I get involved?!"

Having seen poverty and the injustice of inadequate resources first-hand, Liz was galvanised toward actively making a difference. Through meeting people working in those difficult contexts, she was introduced to the profession of social work. Describing this as a significant event for her, Liz highlights how childhood experiences can set up an individual's unique path toward grappling with social justice.

Growing up in a family that experienced severe and debilitating difficulties due to mental illness and experiencing unequal treatment, disadvantage and discrimination coloured Trista's understanding of social justice and attracted her to social work. Trista is a new graduate.

The greatest influence for me coming into social work? There were lots — but ... I guess because I was a young child growing up in a family ... with issues around mental health and family members suffering from schizophrenia ... there was not a lot of focus on me ... One thing I do believe that was innate in me as a very young child, and still is to this day, was when someone needed my help, when someone needed me as a person I was there for them, it was more "someone wants me" and I want to help them, so that was a thing that sort of grew out even in my late teens before I hit 21, I'd help people with their problems ... Social justice for me was to try and advocate for a family member at that point in time, but still have everyone else advocated for as well — that was so tough. I think I am really good at using my network. Getting what's in my power ... for the benefit of whoever needs it!

Several participants described directly translating values acquired as a family member to social work study and/or practice. A capacity to question, a curiosity about the world and a sense of discomfort if something was 'not fair' were often mentioned. However, family members did not always need to agree on core values for the participants to have progressed into social work.

This overview of participants' perspectives on the influences of family life and childhood illustrates the complexity of values acquisition as discussed in Chapter Two (Barretti, 2004b; Osteen, 2011). The students and new graduates in this study each spoke of the importance of families in the development of their commitment to social justice. The stories they told hint at the array of experiences and expectations that are already part of peoples' lives prior to their enrolment to study social work (Gilligan, 2007).

Influence of the university experience

When asked what else had influenced their understandings of social justice, several participants described particular experiences from their university social work course. As outlined in Chapter Three, social work education explicitly aims to develop skills and knowledge for professional practice and, in parallel, to provide numerous opportunities for students to directly explore and challenge their personal values, so that they can develop a solid theoretical base to sustain and enhance their lives as professional social workers (AASW, 2012). Influences the interviewees identified as enhancing their conceptualisations of social justice were the impact of learning from inspirational lecturers and engaging in discussions that deepened their understanding.

Inspirational lecturers

When speaking about the influence of the university experience on the development of their own ideas, a prominent theme for the interviewees was the inspiration and leadership provided by some university lecturers, which had made them aware of different and deeper dimensions of the concept.

Liz singled out one particular lecturer who taught about social justice, was passionate and well informed, and continually explained what she meant.

I had this fantastic teacher ... She taught social justice but I was also in her tutorials and she is so passionate about it, so she talked about it a lot and explained it a lot.

Marina, a new graduate, made a similar comment.

I think that [my interest in social justice] was probably led mostly by the lecturers because in my mind I can still remember ... that they were very passionate about what they were talking about so that ... raised my interest as well.

Both Liz and Marina described their heightened engagement with what some may regard as challenging material: an engagement that a lecturer passionate about their topic was able to generate. Through becoming engaged in this way, they too have become leaders who are well-informed and enthusiastic in communicating relevant and applicable ideas.

Course content, theory, values and critical thinking

The social work course provided the opportunity for Marina to witness how complex ideas can be effectively communicated, and for the course content knowledge to become embedded in her thinking and analysis.

Uni was huge for me because TAFE [Technical and Further Education, an Australian vocational college] ... raised a lot of social issues and that was wonderful, but it didn't have the critical analysis part of thinking. Whereas university introduced me to that, especially subjects around philosophy and political economy. Yep, they were my two favourite subjects. I thought they were the hardest but they were my favourites because it just made you think on this whole other level and then that influenced certainly my worldview ... in regard to social justice.

Toni was similarly able to link her experiences of classroom-based learning directly to her deepening skills in critical analysis. For Toni, her understanding of the principles of social justice

has got to do with the things that we learn and talk about in class and the questioning and I suppose the critiquing of things. That ability to not just accept things but to think about it and unpack it and — I know that's emphasised a lot — and that helps when looking at things; and looking at a person's situation, unpacking it and thinking "well is this fair?" and "what's influenced those?" So I think that the uni side of things helps.

Through being offered coordinated and integrated opportunities to critique, question and analyse, Toni gained confidence in applying her understanding of social justice to the lives of people she encountered.

Connecting campus and field education learning with the vision of social justice

Being encouraged to refine her analysis of social justice was a feature of Liz's field education experience.

Vision, that's it, and bringing up constantly that this is social justice, or getting us to think about [it] because I think that's what helped me a lot in the last placement and in this placement as well ... the questions, the homework that they set, they make us try and think about what we're doing ...

This student account clearly reinforces the benefit of educators being alert to their role of supporting students making the transfer between campus and field education, by integrating critical questions and modelling a wider vision.

The field education component of her course gave Toni another setting in which to implement some of the ideas she had learned about at university.

Throughout the course I suppose my whole idea of social justice has been influenced by my lecturers at uni, and reading ... I guess particularly [works by] Jim Ife. He ... seems to come from a real social justice

perspective ... Especially [in] my recent placement in the women's refuge, although they never use the words 'social justice', that is what they were about. So [regarding] my understanding of ways that you can help go about bringing equality, I guess I saw some great ways to do that when I was on placement. I guess it's just been a real evolving thing throughout life.

Toni described developing the confidence to label as 'social justice' some of the practices she observed on her field education learning experience. She also identified ways of taking action that were likely to be the beginning of lifelong learning with a focus on social justice.

New graduate Marina also recalled her sense of satisfaction with the university study experience and her desire to have an equally challenging and satisfying field education experience.

Going to uni, what drives you is that your values and attitudes are challenged, and what is really good is when you can actually have an opportunity to have a placement where you're with a field educator who will continue to do that.

Several interview participants saw the interface between campus and field education as significant for their learning. Students described the relevance of being readied with useful ideas and aspirations on campus for learning the most on their field education experience. Students also saw moving from campus to field as an opportunity to 'road test' new understandings about social justice.

Learning how to learn in field education

The students in this study had commenced their second field education module and so had already had two distinct field education experiences. Seeing what happens in the professional and diverse world of human services can crystallise teachings about the nature of social work and actually make sense of course content.

Student Liz shared her realisation of a pivotal interconnection.

Placement ... it was such an eye opener and brought all the practice methods together — policy, advocacy, everything in social work was in the work.

As new graduate Leah pointed out, central to this learning is a student's capacity to take charge of their own learning.

Just getting to work with clients, learning how to talk with different disciplines, and [to] people and doctors and how to manoeuvre around different events and experiences. I sort of came out of that really feeling like "oh I love social work and I can't wait to finish, this is really great!"... In terms of social justice after this one [placement], I felt that I could be doing things and making a difference not just for myself but for people.

On reflection Leah felt she had learnt much to feed into her future practice: how to work effectively with individual clients; how to support the work by creating and utilising networks and building professional relationships.

For student Toni, field education widened her concept of the social work context.

I think that on placement just being able to experience [is valuable], experience peoples' situations from a different perspective [than] you would normally ... in your personal life.

Toni named her key criteria in evaluating a placement:

A placement where you actually feel you learnt [something] — that is important.

Toni's wish for learning from placement might be considered obvious, but in another way speaks to a specific challenge for students to gain something concrete — almost a sense of closure from the placement experience. There is much unknown, and in looking for a sense of satisfaction and achievement students may also be looking for a sense of certainty.

For student Larissa, learning how to learn initially involved a significant reliance on active contribution to her process by her field educators.

With my first placement my main learning was through the reflection. I had two supervisors on site with me so I could just go and speak to them about anything, anytime and that's how I learnt most of my stuff, through just talking to them about things.

Ease of access to her field educators' comments and answers led to Larissa developing more nuanced reflections. This experience was not repeated in her second placement, however, as from one placement to the next there may be markedly different learning opportunities and strategies required. After a period of adjustment Larissa moved toward a greater sense of autonomy.

I did hate it at the start and thought "how can this uni send people here?" Then [after] the first three weeks [the feeling] kind of shifted and I ended up really loving it. I just had to realise that on this [second] placement, that wasn't how I was going to be learning. I was going to be learning through my own doing and my own actions. I think that once I had that understanding and that clarity ... that's when I felt comfortable in what I was doing and was able to then move along and learn and do things, but ... coming to that realisation was quite a hard process. Then [it was] quite rewarding after. But it was one of those situations that I think some people would just continue trying not to give up and others would just work with it.

The pedagogic expectation, implicit here in Larissa's account, is that students develop increased levels of autonomy from first to second placement. Larissa's message for students going on field education is to be ready to learn, and to have a

mindset that they have to take the opportunities. 'Cause in my view, and in my experiences, that's what it was about, taking those opportunities and not sitting back and being passive. It was about being active about trying to ... seek meaning from things and participate in things.

New graduate Leah described the huge sense of responsibility that was attached to stepping into the field education context, and that rattled her sense of competence.

A lot of students coming in [to placement are] — I think I did as well — thinking "what am I doing! I don't know my theory! I don't know all these techniques of how to change people's thinking and what is the tangible thing here that I am doing? How can I measure that I am actually making a difference?"

She recalled being confronted with a sense of not being prepared for independence, and of doubt that she had the capacity to be a social worker in the way she thought would be expected, such as being required to demonstrate that she was 'making a difference'.

Liz, Leah, Toni and Larissa each described seeking to develop discipline-specific skills and knowledge, whilst also seeking to be personally accountable to broad professional goals such as being open to learning, being an independent learner and 'making a difference'. They each emphasised the importance of field education for their learning.

Learning to practice social justice in field education

Understandings of social justice were considered to deepen as a result of practice experiences in areas such as work with individuals, groups or communities, or social policy and research.

Student Toni wanted to be able to see for herself what social justice looked like.

I think it's an important part of your learning as a student ... actually getting out there on placement and having a good one. If you have a good placement, actually seeing how social justice is actually applied in practice rather than just in theory ... placement to me is very important for that, to see how you can actually go about doing it: rather than reading about it, just experiencing it first-hand. Having a go!

'Learning by doing' is what field education is explicitly able to offer and, in combination with critical reflection, is more likely to engage a student in social justice (Bogo, 2006). But the path is not straightforward. Toni found it hard to identify any positive aspects of social (in)justice in her particular

placement, and therefore questioned its status as a potential focal point for practice.

Children with [illness so chronic] that they'd just been placed in a hospital unit ... you'd see them [as patients] but it was really only short term and possibly [later] if they came back for counselling down the track. That was something I really grappled with. Like how, where, does this fit with social justice? ... I didn't, couldn't see it ...

Toni 'drilled down' into the experience as she searched for a different perspective.

But I suppose ... it was fighting for justice within that tiny little unit within the hospital. They [staff] were still fighting for a fair say for their clients in terms of the relationship with the doctors, so it wasn't just doctors dominating their lives, they could have a say ... So there were social justice elements within that tiny little unit, it just wasn't so broad.

Toni's initial reading of her direct practice was dominated by a view that social justice only pertained to the 'big picture'.

I think that took me a while to understand and [I managed to] just through having good supervision, ... persistence and ... throughout the placement thinking about it and trying to pick up places where it [social justice] was happening.

She was not realistically able to gain the solid sense of social justice confidence that she would have liked. This was discussed with her field educator in a general sense.

[We talked of] why is someone 'equal', how it's not fair ... And in terms of values as well, I suppose, talking about where values are being challenged, I guess we didn't actually really mention the words 'social justice' probably but [expressed it] in terms of just feeling that the way society is set up [isn't fair] and that's your challenge ... so we used to talk about things outside that were social justice, but not as social justice.

Toni's relationship with her field educator, although informative and clearly comfortable enough to allow open reflection, did not enable her to label her understanding of social justice in a clear-cut way, though it did provide some real-world nuances with its presence in the field. In this study it was found that field educators only rarely gave a significant profile to social justice within their work.

When critically reflecting on her second placement learning, Toni refocused on the interpersonal.

I know, in my recent placement when I did a bit of 'one on one' work with clients I used to very much go with what they wanted ... This is just one little example. At the beginning [of a relationship with a client] I mentioned that "we have groups here" ... and she said "oh no, no I don't want that ... Their situation's so different to mine", and all that sort of thing. But then by the end ... I said, "we are finishing up, but this is not the end of it, there are the groups, and she was like, "oh yeah, that might

be a good thing". My supervisor spelt it out to me: "that means that what you did might have been okay". And so, I may have ... empowered her a little bit anyway to feel that she could actually take that step ... The way I worked with her was very much 'going with what she wanted' and then considering weaknesses and strengths for each [proposed response to a problem], so I guess in a way that must've worked.

Toni described herself modelling a problem solving approach, building a respectful relationship with her client based on being alert to her own use of power, and placing the client's empowerment at the centre of the relationship. This was clearly validating for Toni, as was the feedback from her field educator. Toni elaborated on her experience of just practice as recognising the utility of groups and community in shifting emphasis from personal problems to public issues, thereby challenging a 'blame the individual' approach.

That was often a huge thing for many of the women, to come to that realisation that they were not alone and that there are other women experiencing such a thing, 'cause many of them did think that they were the only ones and they'd say that in the groups. "I didn't know that other people experienced this" ... I was attending the group over the 10 weeks — you could actually see the change in them. The women were — not all, but some — becoming empowered and realising that no, it's not their fault, and making some positive changes in their lives. Then the workers would say [to the women who were keen for change], "you know, there's another group" ... and then after that they [the women] can get in and do some community work like setting up [for] Reclaim the Night and things like that. Yeah, it's a part of social justice, I think.

By linking together social justice, group work and one-to-one work with individuals through acting as a therapeutic agent, 'to make a difference', Toni was testing her skills in implementing a type of just practice approach (Waldegrave, 2005; White and Epston, 1990). She could recognise that she was putting a structural analysis at the centre of the relationship between the woman and the range of strategies available her. Finally, Toni expressed concerns that learning about social justice may not be an option for some students if their field education organisation does not operate from that perspective.

I think some students completely miss out on that social justice side of things ... If you have a placement in a women's organisation where social justice is the focus then some are really exposed to it, so ... I think that with placements they [the university] sometimes just take anything that comes up, and some students are kind of left in placements where they're not really exposed to a great experience. [The university needs to think of] the reasons behind why some placements have students as well.

The readiness of the host organisation and the field educator to assist a student to develop an understanding of social justice is critical.

For Liz, a student, her second placement (policy focus) deepened her understanding of her first placement (direct service) about the different ways to focus on social justice.

This [second placement] is a policy placement, so I do see it [social justice] here as well. They have just created new restorative justice centres ... and they're just making [mediation support] more accessible. Again it's bringing it [decision-making] back to the community and [asking] what does the community want, and doing it respectfully. The director here is quite adamant, when she talks about developing policies and thinking up policies and research, that there is a focus on social justice.

Liz stated that at her first placement location there was a

'strengths-based perspective', yeah that's what they use a lot and [at the time] to me that was social justice.

She concluded:

What I've learnt the most ... in terms of social justice [is] it's about going back to the community and seeing what the community wants, and I think that's the biggest thing that I've learnt: that you just can't stand back and try and figure it out for somebody else, you have to work with somebody, with a group, with people.

In drilling down and reflecting on what she experienced in field education, Liz talked about social justice practice being inclusive of working with individuals, communities and policy makers. Explicitly Liz observed how practicing inclusion involved concepts of social justice such as ensuring that people have a voice in social decision-making, and that this type of active inclusion required attention to the very voices one is seeking to assist.

Larissa, a student, described learning about herself as a social worker struggling with taking a social justice focus to her work. This placement initially demanded more self-direction than Larissa was ready for. Larissa's story about managing this challenge included unpacking her own assumptions and then working out how to respond. In hindsight, in Larissa's view, taking action was critical.

Larissa was on placement with a non-government community-based organisation working with young people who have experienced disadvantage. Because of lack of access to information about recent changes to income support, the young people were unsure how their income would be affected, and Larissa's project sought to rectify this.

The purpose of it was to get information out to [disadvantaged young] people because the information that they'd been receiving ... had made them quite scared about what these changes meant for them.

Larissa worked to address this with the service providers by advocating for better access to information, and part of her job was to do a needs analysis.

When presenting her findings to policy implementers:

I witnessed [them] becoming detached from things, and the decisions they were making were detached from what was the reality of people's lives ... And so I think that that was a really big learning thing for me: that no matter what level you are in the decision making process, you still need to be right in touch right down at the individual level of what's important and impacting on people, people's lives.

The needs analysis report that Larissa prepared was made available to policy makers, however she was later advised that they were not prepared to act on the report's recommendations. Larissa described how she felt on hearing this news.

I could feel myself starting to get teary ... It was almost like this realisation hit ... that things aren't fair and I'd been, I felt almost cheated and lied to that I'd been led to believe that ... I was living in a place where I wasn't, and I think that that was a turning point for me that kind of made me think to [strive] for [better results].

Feeling that those without a voice had been unfairly treated motivated Larissa toward learning about inclusive practice, however she indicated that she personally experienced this unfairness as particularly isolating.

In analysing this critical learning incident, Larissa was able to articulate her ideal supports in learning about social justice on a field education experience, including those that were not available to her.

Reflecting ... or being specific about looking out for social justice may have helped because I didn't have [support to reflect]. Like, I had support but not much time to reflect on things with anybody on my second placement and I think that ... it would've been nice to have been specifically asked about social justice [or] what happened in this forum that you think might've created a more just ... place.

In addition to focussed, meaningful opportunities to reflect on social justice in the field, another component identified as valuable by Larissa was classroom discussion.

I did find it hard when I was in that period of ... disillusionment ... I actually had come back for a prac class and everyone was talking about elements of social justice in their placement and I'm just in my head thinking, "the lies, it's all lies, like it's not like that" ... but then I got out of that. Like it was just a kind of reaction phase, I think ...

And in hindsight, she identified the importance of the time and space to critically reflect in a 'safe' environment, supported by field educators and academics.

I went through a period where I thought "well, what's the point?", but my supervisor said to me "well, if everyone just kind of gives up and [says] what's the point then there's just no chance at all" ... Those people who can keep going [do, and so] I suppose can make the little steps ... After that everything subsided, and then [I was] just thinking "well, nothing could change if I — if people — don't put effort into it.

Larissa's analysis of her moving from disillusionment into an action phase prioritised her commitment to social justice, self-awareness and articulation of dilemmas, and support and feedback from her field educator (Birkenmaier et al., 2011). With these resources and skills, Larissa was able to transform intense discomfort into powerful and relevant learning about social justice practice, and prepare for a future practice with a greater confidence.

Because students in field education are 'learning by doing' — closely involved in constructing and responding to learning events — an unsettling experience can have a significant and personal impact. As discussed in Chapter Two, a powerful or disorientating experience around social injustice during field education may strengthen a student's capacity to intervene (and potentially to transform). There is, however, also a risk that such a powerful experience may lead to disillusionment (van Soest, 1996). For Larissa, the results were ultimately positive, and she had

[t]hat realisation that things aren't 'just going to happen' — I have got to do something!

She embraced the need for acting inclusively and strategically:

You could be changing law ... but at the same time, right down on the service delivery level, if there is not any justice down there between the people, then [change at a legal level] won't work.

The experience of adversity providing the motivation to act was essential to Larissa's account.

What it means, as a social worker fighting for social justice? For me that's about ... grabbing opportunities as they come — actively seeking those opportunities and kind of grabbing them and doing something with them is really important.

At the conclusion of her description of her experience, Larissa demonstrated her engagement with the necessity of taking a social justice focus.

Several participants, including new graduate Leah, had an image in mind of the kind of relationship with social justice that they wanted.

I guess I always feel quite special being a social worker and looking at people ... I've forever used this idea of walking next to a person and sort of helping them, ... of being the facilitator for them to ... have some self-determination, empowerment ... [I see myself as] having the advocacy role; whereas I know other disciplines kind of come from more of an expert position ... and I just don't think like that.

Similarly to Toni, Leah demonstrated her awareness of power and privilege in her willingness to 'walk in someone else's shoes', listening and learning and not being the 'expert'. In new graduate Moera's conceptualisation, social workers

are using our 'self' and I think what we mostly do is that we model ... a different type of relationship to an individual than they often experience.

[A more equal relationship] rather than experiencing one of judgement, one of stigma or of “you don’t really know what you are doing”, as if “what you want is not important”.

For Toni, Moera, Leah and Liz it was awareness of social justice within the relationships with clients that strengthened their social justice practice. Each woman summarised this feature of their professional position as ‘relationship’, a word that carries acknowledgement of a responsibility to be consistent.

Trista, a new graduate, gave an example of social justice practice that involved her taking a particular stance.

I wasn’t satisfied that the doctors wanted to discharge an individual when I was still in a process of trying to contact [an organisation offering post-discharge support]. I saw in bright lights that this [post-discharge support] would be a perfect opportunity for such an individual who had no direction [or] family ... [It would provide] immediate care with accommodation. I really saw an opportunity and I managed to extend her [hospital] stay for another day or two ... That was hard, but I really had to stand my ground. And I also know that even though my job description says that all interventions cease once they leave the ward, I now bend the rule. Sorry, I don’t care!

Trista’s committed stance enabled a strategic and creative intervention, consistent with putting social work principles into practice. Utilising her theoretical frameworks, critical thinking and professional ‘power’, Trista described challenging an ‘unhealthy’ paradigm that reduces people to cost-related service provision. This is indeed a classic example of an important area for critical reflection in social work practice (Bogo, 2006). In identifying that there is a dominant perspective — medical expertise — and people (‘patients’) with limited voices in decisions about their own lives, critical reflection suggest alternative practice frameworks by which social workers can intervene.

Toni, Liz, Larissa, Leah, Moera and Trista each powerfully communicated their concepts of social justice within practicing social work. Toni, Liz and Larissa described learning that there were a range of practices to which they could apply a social justice focus, but that to recognise the potential they had needed to be persistent: “trying to pick up the places where it was happening” (Toni). The learning techniques they described were dependent on student motivation, active engagement and commitment to social justice. For Leah, Moera and Trista (the new graduates) a deepened understanding of social justice turned on the importance of practicing inclusion, facilitating empowerment, providing information to support decision-making, and engaging proactively and persistently in ‘just’ practices.

Having a 'good' field educator

The 'good' field educator was strongly present in participants' reflections. Participants attributed their capacity to reflect, to question and to analyse practice as being in large part due to the guidance provided by 'good supervision'. Where this was perceived as absent, the 'loss' of a 'sounding board' was considered to have slowed the students' progress.

Marina, a new graduate, emphasised the pivotal importance of having had a supportive field educator. Marina described this field educator and social worker, Mary, as having had a profound influence on her.

Mary is inspirational and [she has] a really good sense of social justice and [is] really aware of not getting caught up in power dynamics. Being able to help you inch through, if you were kind of aligning with something that might disadvantage you. Yes, and again a leader and a mentor. Taking the time to do that with people ...

Further, in Marina's view, this inspirational educator modelled the integration of social justice into everyday practice, as well as demonstrating a commitment to educating about social justice. Due to discussions with her mentor, Marina felt more able to put her principles into practice.

Tim, a new graduate, spoke of how his field educator helped him challenge the medical model in his hospital placement. In a particular case concerning a patient's discharge, the field educator inspired him and gave him the confidence to put social justice into practice.

Being a social worker, [for] the first time I had to meet a doctor. By the end of [the placement I was more] comfortable as a social worker to document and challenge what the doctor wanted ... To try and get people out, that is the main doctors' thing ... And [it was good] being able to talk through [it], with a field educator, to feel supported — to feel like I have got support to advocate a bit harder ... Had I been treated, as I was by another field educator in another role, in a not so supportive way, your confidence just goes out the window and so does social justice really.

Tim attributed his confidence in strategic advocacy to feeling supported by his field educator. He also described the impact of contrasting experiences of supervision on placement, perceiving that in certain respects his progress and social justice confidence had been constrained.

Both Marina and Tim described needing to be alert to the many 'context tensions' in the workplace, and gaining confidence in negotiating organisational power dynamics. Overall, both described what had 'worked' for them as a student was having been offered general support from a field educator who was a trusted sounding board, a giver of constructive feedback, a mentor and someone who modelled practice wisdom. Clearly there is an important place for 'good' field educators in student learning about social justice on field education. However, in this study's findings there were only

limited examples given by students and new graduates of field educators directly naming social justice, or expressly helping students grapple with its complexities within a society whose institutions are based inherently on injustice (Reisch, 2002).

It does appear that these challenges could be diminished if the field education role inside an organisation was effectively resourced and more explicitly collaborative in exploring social justice with students. The ideal dynamic would be one that sought to co-create new understandings with the student to connect a social justice analysis to social work practice (Lewis and Bolzan, 2007). Structures to assist field educators to develop this area are detailed later as recommendations arising from this study. Given that students are moving between placement organisations throughout their social work studies, there is substantial scope for the different educational institutions and human service organisations to work together to develop explicit strategies to nurture confidence in students' taking a social justice focus across areas of practice and learning.

Transferring learning: "keeping those social justice values alive"

Students and new graduates spoke of the strategies they considered necessary in transferring their learning between field education, campus and, in some cases, practice. Larissa addressed the need to create a supportive network.

It's something that you actively have to encourage in yourself [by] surrounding yourself in things that remind you of your purpose. And I think that being clear in your purpose and what you want to achieve in your work can help keep ... those social justice values alive ... Being clear that I want to bring about positive things for people and create opportunities for people and know that's [my] purpose ... Going to a meeting once a week with ... people who believe in that same thing, to keep you in touch and connected with that. Any little thing, it could be even email, sending emails to someone ... just to stay connected to that belief.

Larissa clearly recognises the value of reaching out and getting support from like-minded practitioners in sustaining a social justice purpose. This view is also found in the Literature about the importance of establishing a community of support discussed in Chapter Two.

To feel prepared to work in the human services sector with a society's most marginalised people Toni considered that taking a principled position is necessary.

I think certain components of social justice are a really important part of the social work degree ... That may be different when we actually get out into the workforce and as a practitioner you have a lot on your plate and ... so you could quite easily just push [social justice] under the table. So I

guess it could be sort of seen as a burden, but as budding social workers people embrace the idea of social justice.

Liz spoke of how her vision had changed over time.

I think that it [creating social change] is really hard. And I think it is really a governmental issue. I think when I first went into social work, that's all I saw: ... how to help the majority of people and now ... that seems ... really extremely difficult.

Liz described how time has given her a deepened understanding of the broader challenges involved in seeking to create broad-reaching social change.

New graduates integrating social justice within organisations

New graduates described confronting new challenges in their roles as employees in the human services sector. Particular difficulties included maintaining a focus on social justice along with the expected responsibilities of their new roles.

I was only here a few months working full-time, and realised that my life was just about getting up, going to work, going — and I felt like I'd totally lost touch with social justice issues in academia, 'cause I just loved uni[versity], I loved the whole life. I mean, I was poor, but it was good just to have that kind of intellectual stimulation and I feel like ... there's a lot of training in [my workplace] but it's not the same, because ... there's so much of a huge workload.

For Marina, a new graduate, the pressures of daily practice cut across her ability to focus on social justice issues. Marina commented on the speed with which she felt she had 'lost touch' with academia, particularly singling out the lack of time to reflect. She considered that reflection led to her thinking more broadly and deeply than the organisation management expected.

Some people [students] at uni[versity] operate in a very practical way and don't really embrace the bigger picture stuff, the theoretical stuff, as much as others do ... I fell into the other group, of the people who did have the big lofty ideas, and then it is hard to come down. I've seen that the people who had the day-to-day practical stuff 'sewn down' a bit more have thrived more in this job. 'Cause a lot of us came to [my workplace organisation] from my year. But they may not be as reflective about it [as some of my cohort and I] are ... I think ... it's just up to me, just engaging in something outside of this, you know, outside of work. You just need to keep that [reflection] going.

Nevertheless, Marina stated that reflective practice sustains her. Trista, also a new graduate, also described her experience of these same pressures and how she has struggled to keep her social justice perspective at the forefront.

Social justice means not only advocating for your clientele but for greater control over your work environment, and ... we are at the end of the spectrum and the buck stops with us ... when they are having to be shoved out the door. And so we have to perform miracles at the last

minute. That puts pressure on us as individuals, puts pressure on our ethical standing: what we can do, what we can't do. I have to, more often than not, stand up for myself, for me as a social worker and what I want to do for my clients. That means standing up to doctors, standing up to nurses and actually just telling them ... "I need more time to do this". And you have to be more proactive on top of that, not only [in] how you identify that and verbalise it but to write it in notes to cover yourself, because if the buck stops with us and we can't do anything, you could eventually be held accountable!

Learning a range of strategies to deal with tensions that arise in her workplace has enabled Trista to work within her framework of just practices and to improve opportunities for individual clients.

Tim has dealt with these tensions in a different way. He talked about how disappointing this has been for him. His understandings of empowerment and the possibilities for change in the workplace are now under constant self-revision, client by client.

I would have loved to be someone who could make a difference [on a broad scale], but really I am not going to. Not my focus. So that becomes a disappointment. From [being] a student — where you learn about [social justice] — you feel empowered about it. But reality is, I am not going to be able to do anything about it, because I can't ... It is not the job I am in, it's a 40-hours-a-week job that is filled with working for my clients, and I don't have room in my life to go further than that.

Tim's concept of making a difference was achieving 'big picture' change; in this description he is not including social justice practices with individuals as qualifying. Despite this view, in earlier references Tim described how he has refocussed his social justice orientation to striving towards 'just' practices for the individuals and families in his caseload. He also described the sense of empowerment and confidence in advocacy at a systems level he has gained from supportive supervision of his practice. One therefore wonders if Tim's vision could still expand over the course of his career, for example during field educator workshops as a precursor to him taking a student himself.

Significantly, Trista, Marina and Tim, as new graduates, each identified struggling with a sense of obligation in relation to their excessive workloads, and being insufficiently resourced by their organisations to give fair treatment. There is a sense of social responsibility resting on their individual shoulders communicated here that is expressive and disquieting. New graduates were in every respect challenged to come to grips with the tensions and demands of everyday practice relationships, whilst still striving to have a focus on social justice in their practice.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the understandings held by students and new graduates of social justice principles and their contributing concepts. Family life and childhood experiences influenced each of the interviewees' conceptualisations of equality, fairness, access and diversity. The participants identified that, through being inspired and engaged in course content by particular lecturers who implemented responsive processes to support learning, they were able to develop their understandings of social justice. Participants had learned how to learn within a field education context, and this aided their development as social workers. The students and new graduates described the proportional significance of field education to their education as a whole. They spoke of the boost to their confidence of developing a sense of agency and 'making a difference' at the level of their everyday placement and work experiences. They either reported having, or wishing to have, a field educator on whom they could model their ideal practice.

The interviewees felt challenged in their learning about social justice when field educators did not themselves identify the term aloud, nor refer to it in assessments of their students' practice. Students wished for clearer demarcations of social justice as they found that in practical social work it is sometimes difficult to discern the best strategy of action. This was not always forthcoming, or perhaps even possible. There was nevertheless reported an enthusiasm to sustain and reinforce a social justice confidence, and to transfer it to new locations. The challenge was clear: to have a sense of big picture social justice not only the vision on the horizon but also within the everyday. This was largely left to an inspirational educator or mentor. Graduates, in particular, reported confronting reconfiguring their own expectations of social justice practice to the realities of the everyday, whilst at the same time managing workloads that made finding time to critically reflect difficult.

Chapter Six reports findings from observations made by social work field educators, managers and academics in relation to what they believed benefitted and challenged students who were developing understandings of social justice during field education.

Chapter Six

Bringing social justice “from the abstract (in)to practice”

This chapter reports findings from data collected from interviews with field educators, managers and academics. The interviews focussed on their reflections on student learning in field education, specifically learning about social justice. As outlined in Chapter Four, similarly to the students and new graduates the 6 field educators, 8 managers and 7 academics who participated in this study were a self-selected sample. They were committed to social justice, social work education, and field education in particular. In common with other qualified social workers (ASWEAS, 2012), these participants had completed practicum placements during their own studies.

The field educators interviewed for this study were Alison, Berenice, Charlie, Fiona, Lois, and Trish. Social work field educators are social workers employed in the human services field who offer their support (unpaid) so that students may learn about social work at their workplace. As identified in the literature on field education in Chapter Three, the field educator role can be carried out in myriad ways while still meeting accreditation standards for providing an authorised student supervision experience (ASWEAS, 2012).

The social work managers interviewed for this study were Andrea, Diana, Kristen, Louise, Martine, Michael, Robert and Sarah. They were employed in a range of human service organisations in New South Wales and each also had prior experience as a field educator. These managers' jobs entailed supervising human services staff delivering services, which sometimes involves supervising a staff member who has a student on placement. Diana, Martine and Michael were employed by human service organisations where most staff were not social workers. Yet, in order to offer valuable learning opportunities to social work students, two of these three managers took responsibility for ensuring social work accreditation requirements were met, and for a social worker to oversee a student placement. The other manager already has a formally combined staff management and student field educator role. Sarah, Robert, Louise and Kristen had responsibilities to supervise social workers and took students where possible.

The social work academics interviewed for this study were Angela, Astrid, Donna, Grania, Laura, Lucy and Peta. Each had close links to the field education component of the social work program conducted at their university. As stated above, all had completed placements as part of their social work qualifications, and all but one had worked in the human services

sector since graduating. Currently they were directly teaching students (either pre-placement, in field education workshops during placement, or post-placement). Each of the academics visited students while they were on placement as part of the support provided by the university to student, field educator and host organisation, as well as for the purpose of assessment of the student's progress.

Themes

Field education was seen by the participants in this phase of the research to offer significant reflective opportunities to students. They all considered that reflection assisted students to develop a social justice focus in their practice. Martine, a manager, has distilled her own thinking about this:

Social justice is really the rock. It is a very personal experience too and I think it is about bringing it from out there – like even beyond the abstract – [in]to practice. It is about bringing from outside of you to inside of you and bringing what is inside you, out – making that link as well.

In this chapter, I examine several themes presented by the interviews about optimising student learning about social justice on field education. One participant described this as a process of “bringing the outside in, and the inside out”. That is, bringing the knowledge and formal teaching offered about social justice by a university into their internal world of personal understanding values, and then back into the external world of learning to practice as a social worker.

Firstly, a dimension of “bringing the outside in, and the inside out” is that these participants — field educators, managers and academics — have successfully negotiated that transition themselves: in the interviews they recalled their own field education and the impact it had on their current professional practice.

Secondly, the observations of these experienced workers converged on the idea of a student's readiness to practice. They had observed students striving to bring to their field education some skills, knowledge and attitudes about social justice — that is theory to practice. The relative ‘success’ of this effort depended on the extent to which the student had developed a conceptual framework that was ‘ready’: available to the student, helpful in incorporating challenges and complexities of achieving social justice outcomes. An impressive array of approaches and techniques were described, exploring the interpersonal, organisational and systemic issues in supervising social work students on field education.

Thirdly, the transition between campus and field to practice was identified by the interviewees as a spectrum of student learning. These observations were cumulative observations of students' experiences over time of unfamiliarity,

experimentation and risk, reflection, re-integration and consolidation after the intense experiences of field education. The participants identified links from these experiences to interdependent practice.

A final theme was the impact of the organisational context on student learning. There are always opportunities for future social workers to gain a deeper social justice understanding from a critically reflective examination of the organisational context where their field education has taken place. The field educators, managers and academics shared their observations of the benefits for students who incorporated learning from this perspective.

Bringing what is inside, out!

The field educators, managers and academics described how they began to understand about social justice during their own studies. Their own learning experiences were influential in how they sought to educate students now. Martine, a manager, reflected on a lack of explicit articulation of social justice by most of her teachers.

I wouldn't have been aware at the time, but now that I reflect back, I ... recognise [types of field educators]. One would be those practitioners who either were aware of it or not aware of it, but in their practice nothing came through either implicitly or explicitly around social justice. So they just did what they did, it wasn't that it was not professional or not a good job ... More broadly than social justice, ... even [regarding] the idea of linking theory to practice ... I don't remember any [field educators] pushing explicitly for me to make links between theory and practice ... Then [there is] the experience where it's [social justice] coming through overtly. There's a lot of talk or the ideas are discussed about social justice. And then ... this [other] sort where it appears to come through implicitly, so there's an awareness from the supervisor or the lecturer but it's not explicitly stated ... [Supervisors are making] assumptions that the students ... will 'know' that this is linked back to social justice ... Nearly all the ... classes we were doing were underpinned by my understanding of social justice but that wasn't necessarily explicitly said ... Obviously the most popular [approach] is the one where the supervisor or lecturer explicitly states that ... "this material or this incident or this issue or discussion is about [or] could be linked to social justice in these kinds of ways", or "I make these links of social justice in these ways".

Even those with extensive practice and theoretical experience did not make these links between social justice theory and practice. The "most popular" approach identified by Martine may be derived from it suiting her personally, but she implies that without detailed and engaging explanations of abstract concepts many students do not have the building blocks to develop their own nuanced understandings and articulations.

It was Martine's final placement that provided her with an experience from which her learning about social justice practice began.

My final placement probably was the real beginning of my learning around it [social justice]. I did ... a project on neighbourhood centres ... But I guess it was through meeting all of these community workers and seeing the different centres and learning more about the sorts of work that was being done and particularly in the local [context] like being based with a peak body ... I have the really strong view that everything underpinning that work is social justice and I think that [placement] was the beginning of it.

Seeing the world of community work was clearly a powerful influence on Martine's own understanding of social justice. It is notable in light of her attraction to 'community' that she does not identify a key role being taken by a field educator; rather, her interest was engaged by the context and the practitioners as a group.

As a [field education] supervisor, operating with a narrative of social justice intentionality, I am trying to act in the way that I would have liked to have been supervised.

Martine conceptualised her role as "a field educator prioritising social justice" who explicitly makes the links, and purposefully adopts the models, that were not available to her.

For Alison, a field educator, seeking to be challenged during her placement only worked out once she was able to trust her own field educator.

My last field educator? I would never have felt comfortable to have been challenged by her and she would have felt not comfortable to challenge. She wasn't like-minded, she wasn't a social justice type of a social worker. So I think an important thing is, yes, to have a field educator who is keen to take on students but is always willing to kind of push the boundaries. But it is a fine line. It is not an easy thing to do because you can have people who can make you feel uncomfortable as a student. You already feel like, "what do I know?" ... [You're in] this big department, following your field educator around, and I was a mature aged student! To find field educators that are willing to challenge your values and attitudes but also to create a really safe environment for you as a social worker and as a human being, to be able to say "yes, I didn't think he did bloody deserve that". To be able to ask "why not?", and to be able to say those things is very important.

Alison placed emphasis on the importance of the student feeling comfortable and thus being able to commence 'bringing the inside out'. Both Alison and Martine described educators as needing a good understanding of the dynamics of power and inequality, a commitment to social justice, and a preparedness to discuss with students the theory that underpins their practice.

Another manager, Sarah, identified key learning for her as coming from meeting directly with individual clients and community members and envisioning their issues related to social justice. She spoke of seeing these people as active, competent and able to work with her to achieve social change.

I can remember one client from each placement particularly although they were in very disadvantaged groups, different sorts of groups each of them. They had strength and dignity and self-determination, and [in] their ability to act from and for themselves, and to carve out a life for themselves despite their disadvantage, they probably taught me more than I learnt from supervisors. I carried that knowledge about people with me though my practice and ... this still informs my practice.

Sarah recounted this powerful experience as contributing to her own practice, and found the learning from clients' life stories as more informative than the knowledge learnt from her field educator.

Louise, a manager, described significant learning about social justice taking place for her as one of a group of students placed at a hospital. She and another like-minded student chose to work together, independently of the rest of the student group, on a project with isolated patients in a long stay ward.

Because of how we were as individuals, we were excited, we were enthusiastic, we wanted to make a difference. We didn't get the supervisor or the other students [involved], ... we were into this. We worked very hard and we did make a difference. At the end of the three months they [patients] were walking around and they weren't sitting in the same chair that they had been always sitting in, that little circle. We got mirrors for them to look at their faces because they just didn't see themselves any more. We did!

Louise described how she learnt successfully when stimulated by the context of human need. Her own learning was accelerated when she perceived an invitation for her, as a student, to make a difference. Following this account of an empowering experience, however, Louise described how in her next placement she learnt "what not to do". She experienced her field educators' practices of excluding her from observing them as an episode of disempowerment.

[What] I like about supervising or working is being able to think about "what are the things that everybody wants to be able just to know? What are the basic things? Let's just let everyone sit in!" My supervisors wouldn't let me just sit in with them on interviews ... I suppose the stuff that keeps me going now is, as a social worker, that we have this [open to all] sort of environment in our [team].

Louise considers that, despite her opportunities on that placement being limited, she learned from it to be inclusive and to share practice wherever

possible. She now savours a team environment wherein her colleagues do the same.

In contrast to Louise, Andrea, also a manager, said that it was her relationship with her own field educator that made the difference for her.

It was the supervisor ... They become a role model and you can see what is possible. I worked on a housing estate with a community development worker, who was just fantastically thoughtful and also fairly keen to supervise. [She] really had the interest, the time and the organisation to set aside time to reflect on what was happening. And the other one [placement] was [in] an adolescent unit. That was very different, but similarly [the learning had] to do with respecting the individual and their right to their own self determination.

Andrea concluded that for her the supervisory relationship was the key and provided a context for all her learning in the placement.

[I enjoyed] having a range of experiences, but having the really strong relationship with the supervisor was to me what was important.

Lucy, an academic, remembered that her lecturers had expected students to have a social change focus in their work. These expectations had dictated to her 'the' purpose of the profession as being to create social change. Lucy recalled this as generating an onerous sense of responsibility.

It is the water on the stone image. We graduated 33 years ago [with] that sense that the academics were sending you out to change the world that they had not been able to change. I think that we were full of hope ... but I am just thinking about the students who are going out today. They are going out with these sorts of expectations and understandings and ... I am enormously proud of what our students and our graduates have been able to achieve.

Now she is acutely aware that the educational content of the course she teaches is also geared around students learning about — feeling responsible for — achieving social change. Lucy described how, on recent reflection, she saw that she may have been replicating that demand in her interaction with the next generation, the least experienced social workers, and now seeks to educate differently by discussing social justice in class as a broader goal. Lucy defined social justice as

creating equal opportunities for all people in society. I mean that is well-defined, isn't it? I suppose the debate is [about] how you do that.

She discussed the narratives in the profession around the role of social work in achieving social justice as having shifted, and gave an example from a recent conference that she had attended, noting that 'social justice' was there described as inclusive of

small-scale and collective acts of kindness.

Such an understanding of social justice, according to Lucy, offers a more accessible framework through which academics can facilitate and educate

students, so that future social workers may have more than 'a vision' on their side. The idea of a 'collective' act alongside of a value or principle such as 'kindness' integrates two significant components, however it does not suggest a strategic focus towards an outcome of minimising injustice.

Educators, managers and academics described bringing their own personal-professional hopes, values, principles and experiences of learning about social justice during their field education as students into their reflections on how students learn. Their memorable experiences ranged from engaging with individual clients and observing ways of working with communities, to particular features of student-educator relationships that either led to assimilating practices modelled for them or developing autonomy through peer and independent learning. Martine signalled a significant role for educators as making social justice links explicit. Lucy, in turn, highlighted the importance of the integration of social justice in steering youthful optimism toward a sustainable vision.

Student readiness

There is a range of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes that, in the participants' view, students need in order to learn about social justice in the different and complex environments of field education. These participants felt that they played a part in facilitating students to acquire these skills. Openness to learning was pinpointed as a key attitude. Kristen, a manager, described how one of her students had deliberately sought a challenging location for her field education in order to develop her own understanding of, amongst other things, social justice.

A student [said to me], "I am very privileged, I want to get out of my comfort zone and I want to come out to the west[ern suburbs of Sydney]". Her parents were horrified. She said ... she was really struck about the concept of inequality [and that] the train was a metaphor for her: ... the journey to placement from the north shore. ... She travels into the city, and then the whole group gets out and a whole new group gets in. On her journey to placement in ... the western suburbs ... everything changes ... Looking at her awareness being heightened, she was able to see it.

This student had demonstrated not only that she was seeking to learn, but also that she was responsive to being challenged and sensitive to social justice and inequality. Kristen described another example where, as a field educator, she had supported a student to develop greater awareness.

We were discussing her innate empowerment in the world, from her background and all the things she takes for granted, and how that differs between herself and the people [with whom] she is working.

She suggested that the student's awareness was a good basis upon which to discuss social justice.

[This awareness] is the bedrock of what social justice is, and [is] an opportunity in everyday case discussion. She is seeing people from different backgrounds, languages, access to resources ...

Kristen considered that her professional opportunity to facilitate trust in peer and supervisory relationships would enable students to strive harder and to use their own opportunities to greater effect for the benefit of the social structure.

In keeping with this duty of care, Kristen commented on the importance of purposefully creating a safe learning environment that can encourage a student group to openly and honestly share their views and to do their best to be open to change.

Creating a place of safety is enormously important. It is for a lot of the growth that goes on. [We are] gaining permission to discuss these things, for people to know that they are not going to be judged, and I think we are fortunate in that ... we are almost always having a group. I think it is much more interesting and productive for them to share each others' experience. And it is also a place then for them to develop tolerance, which we are expecting social workers to have, one hopes.

She identified another student's eagerness to apply social justice, calling this the student's 'social justice struggle'.

[She was] trying to contextualise ... She was working with someone who had a history of substance abuse, ... a cook in a boarding house [who] seemed to have some sort of personality problem ... but was OK ... And life was rumbling along, and he was talking to her about his life. The student thought he was being taken advantage of [at work], but when he recounted his life, this was one source of income that was more stable than many of his previous positions ... She said to him, "have you thought of taking political action with other cooks in boarding houses", and he said, "I am not into politics, I vote Labor", and she came back [to supervision] really needing to talk through where he was coming from and where she was coming from. It was an opportunity to talk through a whole heap of things and how to address these issues, as he really was so disadvantaged. I certainly did not try to quench the flame. I felt so jaded but I did say that there was an opportunity to address a whole lot of issues, but maybe there was a language issue around the use of the word 'political'. I really think that reflection is important and there are lots and lots of opportunities.

Thus, learning to reflect is just the beginning for a student on field education. Using a social justice analysis was seen to be about intervening effectively and this included reflecting on one's own motivations, on everyone's right to self-determination, on the ethics of using a pre-packaged version of empowerment. Kristen described one way that a field educator can facilitate a student to build this capacity: through establishing a relationship in which s/he and the student can reflect and grapple together with the complexities

and uncertainties of social justice infused practice. In fact, the time given and commitment made by all the study's participants to supporting these principles was impressive.

Martine, a manager, shared the importance of dialogue and discussion in helping students to work their way through to their own understandings. She structured a discussion of social justice into each supervision session. She encouraged students to reflect on and discuss their understandings of social justice in an open and safe learning environment. Martine communicated to students her willingness to share and critique her own values.

I see it as very necessary for society to invite students to be more aware of social justice and the ways of integrating those principles into everyday practice — it is important — and to not let go of it. We try and have it as an agenda item in supervision each week, talking out loud and reassuring that there is no right or wrong way, trying out different lenses and exploring concrete examples. I try to not be too tough and I make sure there is no grilling. It can be a struggle for students to access their own understandings and articulate them ... You discover so much about your own value system when you practice and comment and challenge over your career. It is also about understanding the boundaries that you may have, that you only become aware of when someone steps over them!

Michael, a manager, also identified some of the difficulties students may have accessing and acknowledging their values. He talked about how many students experience a disorienting dissonance on seeing social disadvantage first-hand during field education. On one hand, they are fast developing a clearer understanding of real social disadvantage, and on the other hand they are feeling deeply at odds with the norms of what they understand to be the views of the wider society.

[Students] can feel they are in tremendous conflict with the dominant social values.

Michael gave an example from his experience of two students who had become deeply engaged in seeking to address the disadvantage of particular clients of the service they were placed with.

They liked what they were learning and they really got onto the values they were learning, but they didn't tell anyone outside of this work [placement]. I said, "well, fortunately there are a whole lot of people like that and some of them are called social workers". But that [was] a significant barrier. They were bounded by their experience.

Michael recalled the students' reports of how different this experience was to anything that their friends were involved with, and how changed they felt by it. They had expressed, however, that their life situations and ambitions were unresolved and that they remained uncertain about where their next steps would take them.

Not all students are 'ready', with an integrated and articulated interpretation of social justice and inequality. Michael described how he thought some students assumed they could simply 'apply' social justice without first developing a deeper analysis.

Some students ... have got a very keen sense of social justice but it lacks a coherence because they are too young. They feel it, but they are likely to miss the wood for the trees ... But that is one of my jobs. For example, in Z, they will go all 'gung ho' about the terrible life that most of these people must have had. In their enthusiasm they see the person in front of them, and the awful life they have lived, so they apply their 'social justice' values to that person, but it is not well developed [enough] yet to be coherent.

In Michael's view, 'readiness' includes:

To be able to look at that person in society [and assess] what effect has their behaviour had on the rest of society or ... the family in particular, and frame our interventions with those [people] in mind, because everything we are going to do is going to affect this person's family. So I try and bring that [background perspective] because as beginning workers they are very aware of who is in front of them but they have not enough experience to see behind the person you are working with.

He identified a connection between stages of development and experience. In order to be ready to intervene using a social justice analysis, he affirmed it necessary to have an analysis based on comprehension of the contexts in which many people live.

Kristen summed up.

I would see this as one of the issues ... Helping students to come to understand their own position. What makes people disadvantaged? ... What [is] the profession's view, ... society's view, what is your own view?

Several field educators evoked the inside-out notion as either 'harnessing' the 'big picture', or working in reverse. Fiona, a field educator, described her approach as creatively encouraging students to understand structural issues.

I had a student who came out from the city and came to the country town [on field education]. She identified [how] it takes so long to get somewhere [because] there are no services in these [country] towns, [and asked], "what do young people do? How do we look at creating a more kind of equal place? How can we deliver services in country areas so that people can access them?" ... So I looked at how I could work with her to make sure she was looking at structural issues in our society. So she wasn't just saying, "actually we need more health services here", [but also] looking at the political and social structures that make [society] up so that some people miss out. I found that was very interesting, to see her grow through that. Looking at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, getting her onto websites that actually showed a different perspective from

governments, so she could start thinking critically. That is where I guess, for me, I saw a student go through that process of social justice.

Fiona assisted the student to firstly understand the experience of a local context, and then to broaden this understanding to issues relating to structures in society.

Laura, an academic, offered her own practice framework by which she assisted students to articulate a political analysis about social work practice.

In my work, [sometimes it's] just saying to a woman, "this isn't right! you deserve better", and "this happens to a lot of women" ... One little seed, I think ... is a social justice intervention ... [I try to] help students to understand that there is 'political' with a small 'p' ... Even though they are doing individual work they are actually making quite a political intervention in changing, putting a different possible view of the world into someone's vision. You practice social justice irrespective of where you are working.

Assisting students to broaden their perspective from an individual to a societal level was identified as a delicate task. Laura's confidence in her own social justice practice experience facilitated her teaching.

Participants described most students as having some confidence around social justice theory, but as not recognising it as applicable to the everyday realities of people living with disadvantage. Diana, a manager with substantial experience as a field educator, gave an example of using discussion triggers arising from everyday activities on placement to challenge students to consider a broader understanding of disadvantage.

Students know it but do not know what to do with it ... When they are on placements I challenge them on it. [On a picnic organised by the students for kids and parents struggling with poverty, I will ask] "what does this cordial bottle have to do with social justice?" ... But if I don't point it out to them they don't make the links. Mostly they do get it when prompted to reflect ... After the placement they have to be encouraged to keep linking it.

Similarly, when students did not easily link disadvantage to social injustice, Trish, a field educator, would identify recent events that held personal meaning for the students that resonated with the material and concerns of social work clients.

These students were very bright and I was [already] aware that social justice was covered at that particular university. On placement, it was only when a critical incident happened which directly linked social justice at a ... level to them personally that the students themselves started to begin to [show] a social justice understanding ... Together we were analysing why Hurricane Katrina had an inordinate impact on the lives of the poor in that area. For each of these students they didn't have much of an idea of what social work was about either. They had had experienced

very little socialisation as social workers ... I think looking at ... what [and] whose best interests are served by different models [is the key]. Often practitioners don't bring a critical analysis. Training is needed to do it.

Using current events to assist students to build skills in critical analysis can also develop their social justice knowledge base.

Donna, an academic, described engaging students with an enthusiasm and passion about the area of work.

It is the enthusiasm through the education process [that] we model ... We are mostly enthusiastic and students often say that. They don't care that much about what they read, it is hearing people's stories: hearing social workers coming in and talking about things and they have a passion and students pick that up, particularly [before first placement] because they haven't had a chance to be out there. I am sure that happens in field education too. If the field educator or if you are really enthusiastic about challenging and questioning, even if you are not seeing major life-changing events around you, students pick up on that. That is my experience.

Michael, a manager, identified ways of engaging a student more explicitly within a policy-based learning environment.

I had a young man recently doing a policy placement, struggling with what is involved — observing policy making — well it is as interesting as watching paint dry. I said, "you really are going to need to understand the impact of globalisation on social work, otherwise you will get buried about all the stuff you are being asked to read. Have a hunt around and find a few articles". I set him that task and said, "that will give you a clue", and it made sense to him, and he found a couple of humdingers. "Be superficial. Don't read too deeply. That is, introduce yourself to it". Just enough to give him another perspective.

Fiona, a field educator, commented on the importance of responding to the particular learning styles of each student.

I wouldn't be able to give them anything to read. It wasn't until they went out [into the community] and saw things that they would engage ... I have noticed there is a real shift [away] from wanting to be involved in politics ... I think you have got to think of creative ways ... You have to get them involved in programs, like art programs ... to involve them in discussions. [One] student ... was very vocational, [obsessed] with getting a job ... Our institutions [are also] heading towards vocations, [prioritising] getting the job. At the end of the day [they ask] "what is the use of reading something?" ... I think there is a different way of teaching young people now ... Social workers need to be aware of that but not lose the values. I think you can become too much caught up in trying to change. I noticed I could engage [the student] in [an activity] and then we could talk about all sorts of issues. But if you told them the

government's policy, or asked them what was on the news, you wouldn't get anything. I think it is definitely [getting] harder ... to work with young people.

In devising strategies to engage students in learning about social justice, several of the participants activated conceptualisations that were actually and effectively 'bringing the outside in'.

Students and social justice in practice

Martine used a metaphor of Christmas decorations - minus the tree - to articulate some of the gaps that students experience in connecting theory and practice.

It's like a Christmas tree perhaps, but you've got nothing to hang on it yet, or you've got the box of decorations maybe ... yeah, but you haven't got the tree to hang it on, or something like that. So again, there's two things to go together and that's why ... universities always talk about theory and practice links and I think that's really important ... That really guides me in the way I supervise, because I think I know how daunting that was when I was a student and I actually work to really deconstruct it ... I don't mean to be disrespectful to universities, but I really work to oversimplify it, to show how even the smallest thing can be a link between theory and practice, you know what I mean? ... Even in terms of answering the telephone respectfully or speaking, you know, to people in a respectful way, and how that can be an element of social justice, in my view.

For Kristen, a manager, the struggle for students was to understand the fluidity and complexity of social justice and how it fits conceptually with 'solid' social work practice.

I think students do find it quite hard to define [social justice]. Really [it] does define most of our client group. [I ask students] "[what's] the difference between a social worker and a psychologist?" Because in their [students'] mind, they do many of the same things. Social justice was, in my view, one of the things that really differentiated us ... Social workers are only going to be working with people who are in need at some level. You are only going to be working with someone if they are disadvantaged. You are not going to be doing social work with people whose lives are moving along or people who feel in control of their lives.

Trish, a field educator, drew out the importance of analysis as a way of getting a better understanding of fairness and equality. She talked about building an understanding of theories of social justice over time as contexts change.

There's always reflection and analysis ... in whatever area we're working in, ... whatever context it is, ... and a lot of that analysis is around issues of fairness and what's being left out and who's got access to what and ... who's ... being done down. My work contexts have changed quite dramatically over the years but ... that thing of reflection and analysis

around issues of fairness and ... equality and equity ... That's pretty much a constant.

Fiona, a field educator, stressed the importance of the solid bedrock provided by the social work course in order that workers be able to withstand the challenges of practice.

I think the ability to think critically is really important. I think it should be really shaped in those years as a student, of studying. You learn that it is a process to think critically. I think then you kind of get a big shock when you are in the workforce. A lot of organisations are not open to people being critical. I think it is really important, because without critical thinkers, change may never happen. I think educating social work students to think critically and get a sense of social justice, not only on an individual level [but also on] a structural level, is really important.

Diana, a manager, expected students to have basic practice skills.

Social justice student learning needs to be a balance. [Students] need good skills in interviewing a mum [or] running a community group, and need to be reflective. If they can't reflect on their own practice I can't mould them. It is having a placement that pushes skill development, reflecting on the law and reflecting on skills needed and the opportunities to consider input on social economic [factors] for marginalised people.

Once on placement, the practice skills and reflection skills develop and deepen further, but the capacity must exist in the students in the first place; this is the role of the university selection process and course.

Like Diana, Lois, a field educator, talked about students needing an ability to analyse, be reflective and be articulate.

[To consider] those issues and think about what that meant for them and what it meant for social work practice, ... and to be able to articulate that in some form, is a higher order thing ... And look, I suppose that is a personal preference of mine, to work with people who are at that level. Yes, it challenges me more, so it is probably a personal preference too around that.

Lois required students to have a good understanding of social inequality and to have already 'grappled with' their values in this respect, for them to be at a stage where she could work effectively with them.

Particularly in an area [concerned with] people who are vulnerable ... I don't know that I would be wanting someone who was grappling with those values themselves, and hadn't some level [of skill] dealing with their own biases, working with disadvantaged groups that had been oppressed. These people are traumatised. The state has persecuted them. Because I would be wanting to challenge those dynamics. I wouldn't want — it would be very difficult — to put in an [unaware] student who possibly could replicate those [damaging] practices with a vulnerable group. And in a place like X, you couldn't do intensive one-to-one student

supervision. You'd have to have people who were fairly autonomous anyway.

Although these participants saw field education as an experience through which a student may develop a changed awareness, in acknowledgement of the tough situations facing many who seek the services of a social worker they also expected students to already have critical thinking skills, self-reflexivity and some clarity about their own positions. They also wanted students to have effective practice skills, some level of independence, and some awareness of the issues. Nevertheless, these experienced professionals knew that they had high expectations of people who were still studying.

The interviews canvassed what makes bringing social justice from the abstract into practice so difficult as well as what the key skills are. Like the student interviewees in the previous chapter, these participants saw the hurdle as being one of translation from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Lucy, an academic, observed her students to have understood disadvantage as having structural causes, but to have become confused as to how to address it on an individual level.

I think social justice is about looking at things at a structural level. So, identifying patterns of disadvantage and how social workers work against those structural factors. Sometimes what happens in placement is that students become aware of structural disadvantage and how particular groups in society are disadvantaged, but don't always see how social workers are working to challenge that at a structural level. It is often at the individual level that social workers are working, but I think there is generally awareness raised about the structural issues but not always a practice associated with challenging that. So it is about understanding social disadvantage rather than social justice that students are experiencing on placement.

Lucy said her students had difficulty naming a core social justice analysis component — power — within the practice issues that present on placement.

They regularly have difficulty understanding the power dynamics ... and sometimes the field educator does too! But then once they have brought that into the forefront of their minds, they really are able to do it ... It is just that it is pushed into the background.

Grania, an academic, identified the basis of the struggle as being attributable to the disparity between different people's experiences.

Students often really struggle to translate [across concepts], so they often have trouble with taking that perspective and applying it to another population group. And even seeing ... a population group in a hospital, they are thinking about this patient or that patient. Sometimes they really struggle to collectivise. When you ask them to put a structural perspective on what they are doing they always struggle, but then, forced to do it ... there is huge learning there!

These participants emphasised the persistence and varied skill set that it takes to become an effective social worker inspired by social justice.

Transitions between field education and campus

A range of observations were shared about students' experiences of being in transition, transferring their learning, and integrating their campus and field education. Field placements are essentially in-between the two worlds of university and practice, and Educators observed this can sometimes induce in a student feelings of uncertainty, ambivalence or doubt.

Laura, an academic, commented on how field education assists students to make sense of their campus learning about social justice.

In the [first prac] they will have read about anti-oppressive practice. [To] some of them it makes good intellectual sense, and some of them may be able to think of life experiences that will help them to make sense of it. [They] go out into placement, then they come back again and we will look at the same sorts of articles, and then it makes different sense — you can see the light bulb come on. That is always what they will say, “it now makes more sense”.

The relationships and synergies between the theories studied at particular stages of the social work course and the opportunities for students to implement or observe these being put into practice are subject to a balancing act of prompting and timing.

Academics Donna, Grania, Angela and Lucy were not sure that this 'making sense' is as fully realised as it could be. Grania believes that students see field education as testing out the validity of campus learning.

It is obviously the reality test, isn't it! It is the first confrontation with “how does this fit with what I am learning here at uni”?

Donna believes there is challenge inherent in any transition, but that the lack of congruence between academic philosophies of practice and the realities of placement are stark.

It is part of the education process, isn't it? Our students, coming from our course which really hammers home this critical thinking, being critical about what you might be able to do, ... they go into placement and they find their supervisors, often other social workers, don't seem to be taking that perspective. That is what I find, the students are so disappointed. Which I think is often in their first placement, and sometimes the second as well. At this point they were expecting something different, expecting everyone to be politicised, and don't see it. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. They can't name what social justice might look like on placement. It is a great point about social justice work you might do with individuals, but for them, I don't know, they still leave our third year program thinking it is some sort of thing

about revolutionary change, and I guess that is what field education is about: renaming that and what you are doing and how that is it.

Angela observed that the academic content that otherwise might contribute to a field understanding is often kept in flux because it may not be seen as credible by students in the 'field test'.

I am teaching in the area that emphasises social justice and social policy ... I find they [students] don't carry it very readily into placement. [Then] when they come back from placement, they seem to leave the subjects behind and focus on everything else.

Donna observed that her students are

very task-focussed on placement — they have to prove themselves in the performance culture on placement. "I have to prove I have mastery over these tasks." Sometimes they think, "you have to put all the university stuff behind you", and focus on that.

Here Donna recognised the difficulties of focussing on 'big picture' social justice concepts, and seeing the practical skills as somehow separate and detached from the wider theoretical framework.

From the other side of the nexus, the field educators and managers reflected on differences in types of learning.

Field education provides a different type of learning, a non-academic learning. Despite students describing they are learning a lot, the essence of this type of growth is the experiential knowledge, coming to understand the meaning of it in practice, and working on building up [their] own knowledge over years of practice.

Martine elaborated on what she sees as the difference:

[Students] are being taught about things at university in these academic ways that they are unlikely to have experienced. They are still growing their knowledge about so much in the world.

Lucy commented that, in teaching students in their campus coursework, she exposes them to the ideas and values of social justice but does not see it often being reinforced or evident in their accounts of practice they have observed in the field.

Students engage really powerfully with the idea of social justice, and by that I mean more equality and human rights issues. And they come into the program often with those sorts of ideas, and when those are presented to them in first year (around equality) they really love that and connect with that. Then ... when they go out in their first placement they are challenged with the idea of putting that together with the things that they are seeing on placement, and depending on the placement some of them sort of see it and others either dispense with it or struggle with it.

Lucy described how she strives to offer tools to assist students to negotiate the transition of returning to campus from their placement experience.

I use the three Ss: strengths, systems and structures: "apply this to your placement". And the one they regularly have difficulty with is structures.

Alternatively, Donna creates campus experiences where students share their recently ignited enthusiasm with whole cohorts of peers through powerful placement stories detailing practical engagement. This demonstration of student-led learning assists other students to integrate their experience of social justice and begin to transfer it into their own practice framework. She gave an example of a how a student responded to a challenging placement situation with creativity. The student was working in a hospital with old people with dementia where there was an assumption that patients were simply waiting for time to pass.

There was absolutely nothing happening for them, no occupational therapy. They just lay in bed all day. And she got the idea, "well, why don't we play some music and get them singing?". And then she had some lovely outcomes from that and decided to continue with the program. For her that was a social justice issue. She felt [that] "they should still have some quality of life for whatever time they have got left, and how can we do this?!".

Donna recalled how this story profoundly affected the other students.

There were tears coming down the cheeks of the students when they heard these stories of people who hadn't said a word for ages [but] started clapping and singing!

Promoting this form of peer exchange is a powerful strategy for developing practice to extend beyond the classroom, by

enthusing other students with this notion that this is what social justice could look like.

Donna's example from aged care as a field of practice demonstrated the range of contexts in which students could think more laterally about the everyday potential for change as well as optimising their own potential in the field.

Donna displayed her alertness to the finer points of communicating between different generations. An applied grasp of another generation's learning styles is in itself emblematic of the complexities involved in transitioning. There were clear implications to be considered further for both students and their teachers identified in this study regarding work-life expectations, policy predilections, and modes of communication.

My education over the last couple of years has been to realise ... how different[ly] I think about things than this generation, and how out of touch I am in the way they communicate with each other and write to each other. So we have something to learn, I think, as educators about what social justice means to them. I know there is some research going on at the moment [into] how they communicate about it, how it might look different to them — how it might involve them differently, because they are not going to do it if they feel uncomfortable about the big rallies ... and they will want to do it differently. Something that relates to the*

way they communicate, their little networks of people ... [their] growing up with a neo-liberal government, knowing no other type of government. Just the language ... used! They work long hours, they travel around the world at a young age, I think we need to know that in order to help them to make sense of social justice at that level ... It is hard to know what is going on in their heads when you are 20 or 30 years older than the students. You start to realise how different your life is ...

* Connell, Fawcett and Meagher, 2009

Each of these participants have sought to acknowledge - and mobilise - the flux of transition in order to promote integration, to deepen and broaden students' understandings, and to supervise steps towards an ethical and informed practice built on previous learning. The field educators, managers and academics found that the interface between field education and campus offered opportunities to explore field educators' (generational, institutional and personal) expectations, students' readiness (or lack of readiness), and a range of shared techniques, approaches and opportunities. This further emphasises the need to ensure an inter-disciplinary and critical analysis of the values relating to social justice and on which the political economy is based that informs resourcing decisions at the human services organisation level (Calderwood, 2003; Valentine, 2005; Webb, 2010; Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012 ;). For students of every generation to have access to those skills and to co-construct knowledge using those appears essential. Lois acknowledged that this shared sense of responsibility was an important factor in facilitating students refinement of social justice goals within working practice.

I suppose, looking at field education, it is much easier to assist students to develop social justice principles when you are getting really good support at the university. I suppose I have always found that: that universities have been great.

The field education organisation and learning about social justice

The context of a student's learning during field education is the particular human services organisation where their field educator is employed. Donna, an academic, identified some of the factors impacting on her students and creating an uncertainty in them about their role.

Working with the context you are in and seeing a government department as a legitimate place [in which] to take this perspective, perhaps [even] more challenging in a sense because of the people around you, [who] are not necessarily focussed in that area. [There's] still a sense that you go to a certain sort of organisation if you want to take a social justice perspective, and it is usually the NGO with a very sympathetic mission and everyone else has that perspective. I think students are really struggling [when] they are going to child protection or hospital or Centrelink: "well, how can achieve social justice here?" I think they think

"individual justice! Yes! I can achieve that", but don't necessarily understand the link between individual justice and broader systemic advocacy.

The learning about social justice becomes more complex, even with field educators as guides, because human services organisations exist within, and are products of, an unfair (unequal) society. Hence the importance, according to Robert, a manager, of having a sound, conceptual analysis such as the political economy of the neo-liberal state (Reisch, 2002).

There could be a tension [between how] social work[ers] may think ... social justice is being achieved, [and how] other [workers] in the organisation might.

Students sometimes discover that the organisation with whom they are placed does not prioritise social justice, or that there is a different definition of social justice ascribed to by staff within the organisation. In this context field education presents an opportunity to explore the formal and informal structures of a particular organisation. Several field educators and academics talked of the need for students to learn about the complexity of being a social worker within an organisation with a philosophy of welfare service delivery that may contrast with the student's previous understandings. The student must begin to learn to manage professional dissonance. Astrid, an academic, described site-specific responses needing to be accommodated within a student's social justice practice understanding.

I think it is depending on where they are [on placement]. The difference going to a women's refuge as opposed to going to a Centrelink office, and how much opportunity they will have to see the dissonance [between] the ideal of our ethical principles and the reality of our day-to-day practices.

Peta, an academic, felt strongly that it was important that students be given a clearer idea of the parameters around a social worker's role within a larger organisation.

I think there needs to be a more conclusively stated ... acceptance of the limitations about what you are able to achieve in the social justice perspective through some sort of recognition that our capacity to change the system is limited.

There may also be particular practices that are new and confronting for students. Berenice, a field educator, described the limits that she has observed as challenging students' preconceived ideas in the hospital context.

I think the medical model in the hospital system is always a barrier to [social work] students. As practitioners, we are up against it all the time and as a student it is worse. They do feel it is the predominant model and everyone else is following that, so it is a bit hard to go up against that.

Berenice spoke of contrast even between different contexts of the same social service, based on the relative autonomy of the social worker.

In the community health area, you can actually focus on what you want. You have to be strategic. I think that is the important thing. As a social worker you may even not want to tell your manager everything, you know because to lobby and do advocacy and things like that [may

displease them] ... I work in the community so I can go with the people I want to go with and look at projects that I think are good and [that] my work team thinks are good ... We can actually raise issues and get them to actually work on them and come back, without working in with this current government. [It] is challenging but I think you have to think of the little things ... It is probably the same issue for acute care hospital social workers and I think that is where that attitude of "I am just going to focus on my clients and I just can't deal with anything else" [comes from]. What I always do with my students is say, "you have got to make that link between what is happening with your casework [and] the bigger system, and you have to look at what it is and different ways you can manage that". It is a constant battle [in terms of] time management and resource management to do that.

Some field educators and managers, such as Robert, Charlie, Fiona and Kristen, described explicitly working to mediate organisational environments that were inhospitable to student learning. Striving to maintain engagement with students despite the dominance of a model that does not prioritise social justice values in the health and human services sector can be daunting for field educators. Charlie, as a field educator, saw student placements as an antidote to some of the isolation Berenice identified as affecting her colleagues. In Charlie's opinion, educators can try to teach students about how to bring about change within their own organisation, contributing back to the organisation by raising questions and fresh perspectives. This in turn encourages field educators to reflect on their own practice. In essence, Charlie was describing the co-construction of knowledge between student and educator.

Students are so challenging, you know. They question everything. It's really good for waking you up ... I think every government organisation needs students, just to be questioned again about their practice and their beliefs and then you think, "oh yeah, why do I do that? and yeah I forgot about that". So they've been very good for me, just to [make me] re-reflect on my work.

Charlie commented how, in her experience, a student being introduced to an organisation through conducting research as part of a university placement could reveal much about the status of social justice within this organisation.

Placement context has a big impact ... This organisation, and the other staff that she got to meet, educated her about different perspectives on justice and injustice. Research is a social justice tool within this organisation and the power of a student asking "why do you do that?" is also very powerful when on placement within a big bureaucracy.

Researching 'outcomes' and evaluating the achievements of an organisation, and of the social workers within it, is a powerful tool that could bring about greater social justice, but requires a mature perspective and skillset that not every student has. There must be an advanced level of analytical autonomy

for a student to appreciate the differences that research can bring about ... without the supervisor ... making the effort to empower.

Charlie described seeking to engage her student in understanding the power of effectively using research within the organisation where she works, and striving to initiate her student into this way of practicing. Bringing about change in one's own organisation involves becoming aware of the broader forces at play within organisations.

Some field educators, however, described assisting students to learn to manage organisational expectations. Robert, a manager, described taking up a role of 'field education champion', using his positional power to "make space" for broader student learning — to ensure students have opportunities for conceptual learning rather than just completion of tasks.

As a manager [I was] using my power to give them [field educators and students] permission to actually do other things. There was the potential for them to do group work, project work, speaking, community development, etcetera, but they needed the cooperation of their manager to do this extracurricular work. Someone [was needed] who could say, "I will cover this or will not be covered for this little slab of time while you are doing this". It is permission-giving for the student and the worker to develop their ideas and to get into something that they are passionate about as a sort of counter balance to what could be, not drudgery as such, but an exhausting treadmill of appointment after appointment after appointment.

With Robert acting to reduce task demands, both students and educators had time and space to develop their ideas to a deeper level. This illustrates that it is possible for organisational barriers to be overcome, with a champion, such as Robert, who has some power within the organisation. The fact that Robert identified and took up this role is evidence of the need for support for field educators, as not all will have the structural power or motivation to become a champion. There is a need to promote and support acknowledgement of the importance of a future workforce capable of creatively and critically adding value to human service organisations.

For Charlie, a field educator, alliance building has become part of her counterbalance to the organisational demands for compliance with an unjust orthodoxy.

As a supervisor I experienced an academic's visit as giving me mentoring in an unfair system. The supports needed are ... things like [doing] a Masters, having students, and having mentors.

These supports enable Charlie to maintain her practice prioritising a social justice focus. Fiona, also a field educator, described her experience of receiving an organisational directive to refuse to take students on placement. She identified several key issues that together have prevented her from taking a student.

I can't have a student this year at this organisation. They [senior managers] won't let me. That is a barrier already. It all has to be very formal with outcomes [sigh] ... That is one thing but as a second thing, within small organisations ... People are willing to be creative when the community is smaller, but when you have large, large corporate institutions and governments becoming more corporate ... I think [impersonalisation] is of concern. If you don't have someone in the organisation who is a real ... mover and shaker, and who will open the door for students, then there is going to be a block, which I have found, because they [management] are too afraid. "Something might go wrong!"

The absence of a field education champion and the limiting nature of a one-sided 'students-as-risk' perspective in this particular human services organisation is representative of some of the current constraints being experienced in the non-government and government human services sectors (Guransky and Le Sueur, 2012).

The necessity for greater collaboration between all networks involved in the social work profession in reinforcing social justice principles within human service organisations is evident, and field education offers just such an opportunity. Academia in collaboration with practitioners in the field can, through field education structures, work to promote learning about social justice practices for current and future social workers. Practitioners such as 'social justice champion', manager Kristen, described how she seeks to use her influence at this point in her career.

When you have been in the profession for a long time, it is one of the things that drives people ... that helps them stay. There is a strong sense of wanting to equalise, wanting to give people a fairer deal, and I think it motivates people who have been there for a while to see that change is possible. And again, for people that have been disadvantaged in some way or another, whether it is through illness or poverty, or again those things that are so subtle that they are not even acknowledged by the broader society, people's limited horizons due to their upbringing, which I think is a really subtle disadvantage but something that I think is ... a social justice issue.

Kristen offered a reminder of the broader picture of the purpose of social work (field) education: to provide a sound base for social work students in their future practice to make a positive difference. The principled belief of the importance of social justice to the practice of social work can sustain entire careers.

This chapter has reported the significant findings from observations made by field educators, managers and academics interviewed for the research. The interviewees reflected on their own learning about social justice during their field education experiences and how this had influenced their practices as educators. Although they observed significant differences between the

experience of field education and education on a university campus, the interchange between these was seen as important to consolidate. As educators and facilitators, they described their approaches to optimising student learning as inclusive of a willingness to critique and re-evaluate the educators' and host institutions' own value systems. Ideal situations were espoused in which students would engage in contrasting and myriad forms of social justice practice, including but not limited to 'big picture' and individual focus interventions. 'Readiness' to learn about social justice in the context of social work practice was defined as comprising a student's active engagement and already-established self-reflection skills.

Field educators spoke of frequently observing students who lacked a conceptual overview that would enable them to make a smooth and productive transition from campus to field education and back again. Academics spoke of students having difficulties "collectivising their experiences", and also noted a dissonance wherein students' campus-based understandings of a social justice focus were not matched in the placement environments. Field educators and managers discussed issues and strategies that had arisen when they sought to mediate students' experiences of dissonance, and of the potential benefits of having and supporting 'field education champions' within their organisations.

Overall these research participants observed that learning about social justice on field education was quintessentially about putting theory to practice. In apparent contrast, Chapter Seven identifies how learning about social justice on field education is the exploration of links between the concrete findings of this research study and the critical concepts noted in the literature review. It also identifies key areas social work educators and practitioners could consider in relation to field education and a dynamic focus on social justice.

Chapter Seven

Discussion and conclusion: Engaging social justice in social work field education

Vision, that's it! ... Bringing up constantly that this is social justice ... because I think that's what helped me a lot in the last placement and in this placement ... They make us try and think about what we're doing ... 'Cause that's got me thinking about it! Liz, student

Social justice is a key principle in the practice of social work. The findings from this study affirm the central importance of field education for learning about social justice in social work education. Without exception participants in this study — students, new graduates, field educators, social work managers and academics — viewed field education as vital in developing and enhancing professional practices that have a social justice focus. The research exposes the tensions that exist between campus learning and field learning, especially regarding the ways in which theory and practice are articulated and implemented in the field. This became evident through the thematic focus on students gaining confidence in their understandings and practical applications of social justice. The notion of social transformation instigated as a 'social work citizen' is explored for its relevance to embedding the principles of social justice (confidence) into social work education. Expanding the presence of social justice in the social work curriculum, and identifying strategies of transition and transfer of knowledge between sites of learning, were also explored as paradigms contributing to students' social justice confidence.

Conceptualisations of social justice in social work — in development

The study's review of relevant literature established that there is a range of conceptualisations used about social justice in social work. It also flagged that there remains significant work to be done in relation to knowledge development around the principle and practice of social justice and its core relevance to practice undertaken by students of the social work profession.

In the study's interviews, students and new graduates displayed a range of understandings of social justice that included concepts of equality, fairness, needs-based resourcing, and education about structural factors maintaining injustice. Significant influences on their understandings were found to be family life and childhood, inspirational individuals at university (mentors), and critical analysis and discussion with peers. What became evident throughout this study is that students' development of a social justice understanding could be more broadly informed by a range of philosophical as well as politically coherent ideas, and would also benefit from more

opportunities to critically reflect in the field context alongside peoples' lived experiences of injustice.

Engaging with social justice

Engagement with learning about social justice practice was seen as critical and much more possible in field education by the interviewees. Modelling of social justice strategies, by field educators during field education experience was seen as highly desirable by students and new graduates. Transference of experience, knowledge and motivation between campus, field placements and employment — the different sites of learning — was identified as in need of more effective learning interrelationships between social work education and the human services sector. These were all found to be important factors in strategically influencing and deepening students' understandings of social justice.

As detailed in the literature on social justice in the social work curricula, lecturers ideally should be able to communicate in an informed way in the classroom that includes delivering social justice examples from social work practice. Similarly, making a social justice framework clearly visible to students within the learning environment of field education, whether through structured educational experiences or informal learning, is invaluable in developing a student's social justice confidence. What became evident throughout this study is that the participants' beliefs, values and principles are closely bound to their understandings of social justice within the social work role. The overt explication and demonstrated valuing of social justice principles and practice confidence was seen as essential to students and new graduates achieving their own sense of confidence. This is a powerful potentiality for the culture. However, a disjuncture exists in many students' experiences of field education where social justice is not routinely discussed nor easily identified, making it difficult to progress their intense interest into their professional careers. The models considered were each based on taking a stance of overtly valuing social justice as a key practice principle and embedded in the processes of learning during field education. No one model emerged clearly. Further research is required to evaluate the influence of these and other models on career-long practice principles and more explicitly, of social justice practice confidence .

Optimising student-led learning

Another key principle relevant to future social workers learning about social justice, noted both in the literature and in the findings, is emphasis on both student-engaged and student-led learning. Extending — indeed transferring — this principle to the field education environment requires creative and varied strategies such as those described by field educators interviewed in

this study. (These descriptions surpassed the material available in the literature.)

A student-led approach can be facilitated by active use of critical reflections linking students' campus learning to their placement experience and vice versa. These critical reflections can be deepened by specifically examining the relationships the students were involved in during their placement: relationships with service users, other social workers, front office staff, managers, organisation staff and the like.

The potential, noted in much of the literature and attested to by the participants of this study, is that field education holds opportunities for individual students to engage deeply with people and communities. The literature identified as highly relevant learning processes involved in understanding how adult learners grasp new skills and knowledge. Students regarded 'learning by doing', 'engaged learning' and 'experience-based learning' as important to their acquisition of practice skills.

The students and new graduates interviewed were highly motivated and described seeking an understanding of practicing with a social justice focus from their field education learning. Several sought more support than was offered by the field educator. As mirrored in the literature, students expressed a preference for a positive and mentoring relationship with their field educator, and if this was not available they reported developing their own ways of learning about social justice. This took the form of an emergent critical self-awareness and self-reliance. Students formulated analyses of their clients' views within the particular practice context of their placement organisation, and also actively sought campus-based support from classes that focussed on reflecting and from peer groups. Despite 'owning' these strategies, several interviewees reported an impact on their confidence in the absence of explicit modelling of a social justice focus by their field educator. On the other hand, when educators (field and academic) were able to demonstrate explicit links to social justice in the workplace, they were seen as facilitating and contributing to the growth of their self-awareness, organisation analysis and justice-infused praxis.

The field educators in this study sought students with an established readiness, curiosity and enthusiasm to identify social justice within professional practice, and gave many examples of attempting to stimulate such interest. The field educators stated that there were significant differences between the students' professed expectations of field education and the learning offered to students on campus, and saw the interchange between these as critically important. They described how many of their students had appeared to be uninformed about social justice and unable to demonstrate key communication skills, let alone skills in autonomous critical reflection.

Learning about social justice within field education incorporates critical thinking, analysis of issues directly related to social justice, and reflection on values and on capacity to practice effectively. Readiness to learn about social justice in the context of social work practice was seen as a 'higher order' capability by several field educators. Field educators, managers and academics described their approaches to optimising student learning about social justice during field education. These included students being encouraged to develop greater self-awareness, learn to integrate different knowledge and gain exposure to contrasting perspectives of social justice, both 'big picture' and 'little picture' (individual focus). They described a range of ways in which, from their different professional vantage points, they sought to assist students to manage any 'struggles' encountered on field education, and to make links between their experiences and their understandings of the theories and models that featured in their campus studies.

If only these two groups could have met each other!

Transitions and re-integration

Beyond influences and readiness/enthusiasm, the third theme to emerge from this research study was transitions. Transferring and re-integrating between the different phases of learning about social justice within and after study bore evidence of both tensions and opportunities.

The transition phases present considerable challenges for many social workers. The participants concurred with the literature that field education was a key juncture at which to harness not only the content of meaningful transitions but also of educational doctrines, critical reflection and reconstructions of field education experiences. Ownership of learning was seen as most likely to bring about a greater confidence of social justice practice by the end of the course. Students described experiences of classroom-based skills development around critical analysis, and connected this campus experience with their field education experiences as directly assisting their understanding of social justice.

In moving from campus to field and back to campus, the different valuing of knowledge across contexts becomes evident, and of primary concern that learning about social justice theory-in-practice is not consolidated. Field educators spoke of students not having a conceptual overview that would enable them to make the transition from campus to field education more easily and academics spoke of difficulties in collectivising the students' experiences. Academics also noted that a dissonance sometimes existed between students' campus-based understandings of what the field would be, and their experience during field education of an absence of a social justice focus. These educators also reflected on their own learning about social

justice during their field education experiences and how this had influenced their practices as educators. Delving into their personal experiences, they would strive to help students make more robust or the more subtle links.

Thus, a framework for developing a social justice perspective that can be purposefully 'scaffolded', each new phase applied and building on the one before, is one strategy recommended by this study, as is taking a determined pedagogical approach to assisting understanding of the different ways in which social justice learning is identified in different contexts. The field educators, managers and academics found that the interface between field education and campus offered opportunities to explore field educators' (generational, institutional and personal) expectations, students' readiness (or lack of readiness), and thus a range of shared techniques, approaches and opportunities. This further emphasises the need to ensure students have an inter-disciplinary and critical analysis of the values relating to social justice and the political economy informing resourcing decisions by human services organisations within their own current context (Calderwood, 2003; Valentine, 2005; Connell et al, 2009; Webb, 2010; Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012). A capacity to co-construct knowledge using those skills and the distilled analysis of the previous generation – the educators in field and academe - appears essential for students and future practitioners of every generation (Lewis and Bolzan, 2007). Further exploration in these areas of inter-generational understandings of social justice and sharpening of skills to develop practice confidence on the basis of this is indicated.

Particularly significant is the transition experienced by newly graduated students who reported confronting the difficulties of sustaining a social justice focus. As discussed in both the literature and the participant interviews, the period immediately following graduation can be spent reconfiguring one's own expectations of social justice to those encountered in everyday practice, whilst at the same time managing unfamiliar workloads that allow little time to critically reflect.

Many social workers early in their career have expressed the view that, despite their field experience, they were not prepared sufficiently for the realities of practice (Gursansky and Le Sueur, 2012; Lewis and Bolzan, 2007; Maidment, 2003). The learning that new graduates take from their field education experiences can also leave them feeling ambivalent and less than confident into their first years of practice (Hawkins et al., 2001). Although problematised in the literature, expecting recently trained professionals (placement students included) to manage entrenched and complex practice situations based on their limited field education experiences remains a common practice due to the under-resourced nature of human service organisations. Calderwood (2003) considers this demand on new graduates untenable, and describes the need to generate strategies that support

embedding the principle of social justice at every level of the profession. In recognising that this difficult transition dynamic is present, its inclusion in a field education and critical reflection framework would enable co-construction of knowledge between students and educators around the challenges of transferring a social justice focus to social work practice. In this way, and in several others identified throughout this study, field education can further contribute to a developing social justice practice knowledge base from its nexus between the academe, the profession and society.

Bringing a social justice focus to the organisational context

There were organisational contexts where local and systemic issues were identified by the study as constraining practice of social justice, and inhibiting teaching and learning about social justice by field educators and students. In several instances, field educators described expecting students to demonstrate a greater degree of readiness to seek out a social justice focus within their placement. Yet the particular ways that social work is practiced with a social justice focus is a knowledge area still largely in development. Research in this area would benefit both the professional knowledge base and that of educating for the profession. By taking a stance of co-construction of knowledge about social justice between field educators and students, it would be expected that further research would achieve a range of educational, practice and professional benefits. One might assume, however, that it is not possible as an undergraduate student to be fully prepared for the complexity of field education learning within human service organisations.

Several times within the research study field educators expressed concern that organisational power relations within the host organisation had had a constraining effect on placement students' opportunities for learning about social justice. These tensions are acknowledged as a feature of the every day work of social work and the recognition of the impact of these on student learning – and field educator prioritisation- is an important outcome of this research. Field educators and managers discussed issues and strategies that had arisen when they sought to mediate students' experiences of dissonance, and the potential benefits from having field education 'champions' within these organisations. In building on these examples of 'promising practices' engaging with complexity as part of a supportive field education relationship, it has been established through this study that field education could offer future social workers 'early-intervention-style' strategic support, thus developing in them greater social justice confidence in relation to the role of social work in broader social change.

In contrast to the professional literature, only rarely did participants in the research study communicate an analysis that included vertical integration of the different areas of practice in order to create change and minimise disadvantage (Hunter and Ford, 2010; Salas et al., 2010). Therefore, practical

strategies are sought to widen the profession's vision to include a social justice perspective and reassess prior assumptions.

Implications of this research

The current study is significant in that it contributes to social justice practice research by bringing to the attention of the profession the myriad ways students learn about social justice within field education. A key aim was to contribute to an under-researched area in the area of understanding social justice and social work, particularly field education. In the literature review I documented some classroom efforts to include social justice content in the campus-based curricula and initiatives to include in the field education component. A further aim of this research was to explore students' and new graduates' understandings of social justice and what had influenced those. Importantly significant influences were found to be prior experience of injustice, ideas about justice promoted within their families and inspirational individuals encountered during their studies. This study offers unique and rich source material for students to develop their self-awareness and critical reflection skills in preparation for exploring their understanding of the many perspectives of social justice. Implications of this finding is the opportunity to integrate this material into skills-teaching and learning within several facets of a social work course and further enhancing field education to be a significant learning experience for social justice practice confidence.

This research aimed to bring to the fore observations and distilled educational principles of the broad group of field education participants in relation to students learning about social justice during field education. The research illuminated examples of student-led social justice practice reasoning from within the field education nexus. When students and new graduates stated they had grown in social justice practice confidence, a particular example of applying theory to practice, this was observed to be significant learning. When students were not ready to take a lead and develop a social justice practice confidence, this was seen as a loss of opportunity from the perspective of the broader group of field education participants. With development and nurturing, this area could prove critical to informing social work education and the social work profession in the long term.

According to the established literature, the social workers and field educators who do not view social justice as a key principle of social work practice retain some influence through continuing to take students on field education placements. In essence, the literature canvassed in this research study does not offer any likelihood that social justice practice confidence will ever be a whole of profession capability. The role of a social work course — to educate future social workers to be both confident and competent — can only proceed if field education and social work coursework offer integrated opportunities for students, practitioners and academics to co-construct practice knowledge

to the agreed principles of the profession (Lewis and Bolzan, 2007). The universities and the profession need to work more closely with the practitioners in the field to negotiate a range of strategies that can assist a widespread integration of these social justice principles into the field education experience. The tensions inherent in these purposes of a social work course and the principles of the profession will no doubt continue to have an impact but the link between the social work profession and social work academe in this area has been re-visited by this study, if not re-positioned, and an invitation has been issued to engage in the dialogue.

This research will directly assist social work field educators and academics to explore, teach and learn. In acknowledging the tensions, difficulties, challenges and disappointments students will be assisted to wrestle with taking a social justice focus into the different contexts and uncertainties of social work practice in particular organisational contexts. By seeking to explore human services organisations as contexts for field education, this research will assist social work managers, social work field educators and academics to work in collaboration and strive to make transparent social justice in social work practice. In doing so this research could also inform the way social workers and service users 'work' together. Feasibly, the everyday alliances and networks that currently exist and collaborate to make social justice practice transparent may also be informed and open to establishing field education relationships. Through this research developing understanding of the field education nexus, the likelihood is enhanced that strategies will be developed to respond to its opportunities and barriers, and that there will be greater collaboration and co-construction of knowledge between service users, students, managers, academics in various disciplines, field educators, and members of the general community.

Further, this exploratory study has gone some way toward acknowledging the confidence of social work professionals in their use of critical reflection, analysis, and strategic alliance building to broaden the practice of social work and to integrate just practices at all levels of intervention.

In conclusion, social justice is considered a highly complex facet of social work practice, particularly given the goals of the profession of working to maximise justice and minimise injustice in society's structures. In social work education the development of a range of skills that focus on acquiring confidence in taking social justice into practice beyond the text book is significantly strengthened by field education learning. These findings have been built on a base of exploring learning about social justice in field education.

The following recommendations flow from the discussions in this and earlier chapters around enhanced educational resources and strategic learning collaborations believed to be feasible and necessary.

Recommendations

To research models that further integrate practice content into the academic context, to address the difficulties in making a transition between the different worlds of social work education and practice.

To develop mentoring and support opportunities for new graduates to offer the support of 'social justice champions' from various practice environments.

To continue the active promotion in recent decades of workers, clients/consumers/service users, and others bringing their social justice practice perspectives into campus-based education environments.

To refine the explicit and active links between social justice and daily just practices, ensuring the ongoing vertical integration of theory and practice.

To research expression of confidence by students and new graduates in their repertoire of social justice practice skills, monitoring them from placement to placement and into practice.

To include specific social justice practice content in curricula within social work education, comprising philosophy, politics, political economy and organisational and system-wide perspectives across a range of practice areas, incorporating both academic and organisational experience and wisdom.

To promote further research wherein practitioners and educators collaboratively explore a range of practice environments to deepen social justice understandings in these contexts. To strategically facilitate co-construction of knowledge within these sites, and to specifically engage student learning through critical reflection, cooperative learning, and active encouragement of curiosity and questioning.

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Appendices

1.1 Focus group interviews



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NSW 2006 Australia

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FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Data collection method 1: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS & PROMPTS

1. What does the term "social justice" mean to you?
 - Do you have examples of what you define as the key elements?
2. What value, if any, does the notion of social justice have in social work?
What are the issues arising for social work?
3. What would social work practice that applies "social justice principles" look like?
 - Have you examples that you have observed that explain your understanding?
 - What issues arise in your view?
4. What are some of the ways social work students learn how to put social justice principles in their practice?
 - What do you consider is the best way to do this? Can you give examples?
 - What opportunities exist? Can you give examples?
 - What barriers exist? Can you give examples?
 - What issues arise in your view?
5. Have you any further comments?

1.2 Individual in-depth interviews



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Data collection Method 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS: 1–1.5hrs

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following open-ended questions will be asked of each participant to stimulate discussion. Clarification and discussion by way of the prompts (see below) will follow each question.

- Could you describe your particular understanding of social justice?

- What & who were the influences on you to develop your particular understanding of social justice?

- How would you describe your practice in relation to those elements of social justice you described above?

- How did you learn about your particular way of practising social justice?
 - Have you specific examples related to your experiences during field education?

- Describe your view of the role taken, if any, by lecturers and supervisors facilitating you to learn how to put social justice into practice?
 - Have you specific examples related to your experiences during field education?

(Social work supervisors only)

- How have you facilitated students in their learning about social justice in practice?

- What is your view of the place given to social justice principles influencing social work practice within the undergraduate BSW curricula?

- Please comment with respect to Field Education particularly...

- Any further comments you would like to make?

2 Advertisement for research participants



The University of Sydney

**Social Work and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education and Social Work**
Education Building, A35 NSW 2006 Australia

CALLING ALL STUDENTS, RECENT GRADUATES AND SOCIAL
WORK SUPERVISORS !

OR

YOU MAY BE A SOCIAL WORKER WHO IS ALSO A MANAGER OF
A HUMAN SERVICE ORGANISATION?

OR

YOU MAY BE A UNIVERSITY EDUCATOR?

If you are a social worker and interested in sharing your opinions and experiences of field education within the social work degree program..... **The Social Justice on Placement** study would like to hear from you!!

This study aims to expand understanding of the possibilities for social work students learning about social justice whilst on placement. In order to consider this from many perspectives, the study would like to hear the opinions and experiences of social work students, new graduates, social workers, social work supervisors, university educators and managers of social work services.

You are invited to share your views. The study will be collecting information through an individual interview and/or participation in a focus group. Each activity will take approximately 90 minutes and will be arranged at a time and place to suit you. Interviews will take place between February and June 2006.

The Social Justice on Placement study is being conducted by Justine O'Sullivan and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Social Work at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr. Jude Irwin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Social Work.

INTERESTED?

Please contact Justine O'Sullivan on tel.97726387 or m.osullivan@uws.edu.au giving your contact details.

3.1 Focus group participant information sheet



The University of Sydney

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Title: Social Justice on Placement

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Focus group

Social Justice on Placement Research Project is an exploratory study to expand understanding of social work students' learning about social justice whilst on placement.

The study is being conducted by Justine O'Sullivan and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Social Work at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr. Jude Irwin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Social Work.

The purpose of this research is to understand social work students' learning about social justice whilst on placement and to use this knowledge to inform social work education. The study seeks to hear the opinions and experiences of social work students, recent graduates, social work supervisors, university educators and managers of social work services.

You are invited to participate in a focus group. This activity will take approximately 90 minutes and will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary – you are under no obligation to take part. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue at any time without prejudice.

With your permission, the focus groups and individual interviews will be audio-taped and those taking part in the interviews will be able to preview and amend for accuracy the transcripts before the results are used.

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to identifying information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Page 1 of 2

Title: Social Justice on Placement

The purpose of the research is to benefit future social workers by gaining an enhanced understanding of student learning about social justice on placement.

You are welcome to tell other people about this study.

When you have read this information Justine O'Sullivan will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Justine O'Sullivan tel.9772 6387 or Dr Jude Irwin tel. 9351 2294.

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of the research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811.

This information sheet is for you to keep

3.2 Individual interview participant information sheet



The University of Sydney

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Title: Social Justice on Placement

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Individual in-depth interview

Social Justice on Placement Research Project is an exploratory study to expand understanding of social work students' learning about social justice whilst on placement.

The study is being conducted by Justine O'Sullivan and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Social Work at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr. Jude Irwin, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education and Social Work.

The purpose of this research is to understand social work students' learning about social justice whilst on placement and to use this knowledge to inform social work education. The study seeks to hear the opinions and experiences of social work students, recent graduates, social work supervisors, university educators and managers of social work services.

You are invited to participate in an individual interview. This activity will take approximately 90 minutes and will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary – you are under no obligation to take part. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue at any time without prejudice.

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Page 1 of 2

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Page 2 of 2

4.1 Informed consent: Focus group



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Focus group

I,give consent to my participation in
Name (please print)

the research project titled **Social Justice on Placement.**

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researchers.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researchers now or in the future.
4. I understand that I will be audio-taped whilst taking part in the focus group.
5. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

4.2 Informed consent: Individual



The University of Sydney

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Individual in-depth interview

I, give consent to my participation in
Name (please print)

the research project titled **Social Justice on Placement.**

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researchers.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researchers now or in the future.
4. I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and the transcript will be given to me to ensure it contains an accurate representation of my comments.
5. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

5 Graphic representation of thematic analysis

- [...interview phase...|...analysis #1...|...| within cohort synopsis & theme description #2...| comparison between cohorts #3 including distillation of themes & key quotes| Report Findings.
- Focus group #1: Social work practitioner-educators n=3;> **P**FG – nuanced summary > within cohort comparison with **Mixed** **I** **G** **P** synopsis>>Themes & Key Quotes> across all cohort distillation of themes
 - Focus group#2: Social work managers n=3; > **(F)**G - nuanced summary > within cohort comparison with **Mixed** **I** **G** **(F)** synopsis >>>>>Themes & Key Quotes > across all cohort distillation of themes
 - Focus Group #3: Social work academics: site 1: n=3; nuanced summary
 - Focus Group #4 Social work academics: site 2: n=4; nuanced summary within cohort synopsis > >>>>>Themes & Key Quotes > across all cohort distillation of themes
 - Focus Group #5: Mixed membership**; n=9; MFG nuanced summary : >Latent thematic analysis; >>>>>>Themes & Key Quotes> across all cohort distillation of themes
 - Students currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work program (minimum one placement completed): n=3;
 - **Q** 1 – nuanced summary
 - **Q** 2 – nuanced summary
 - **Q** 3 – nuanced summary
 - Social work new graduates (6-24 months since graduating): n=3;
 - **Y** 1- nuanced summary
 - **Y** 2- nuanced summary
 - **Y** 3- nuanced summary
 - Social work practitioner-field educators: n=3;
 - **P** 1- nuanced summary
 - **P** 2 – nuanced summary
 - **P** 3 – nuanced summary
 - Social work field educator managers: n=3.
 - **(F)** 1 – nuanced summary
 - **(F)** 2 – nuanced summary
 - **(F)** 3- nuanced summary

6 Human Research Ethics Committee Approval 12-2005/2/8779, page one of two.



The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 Australia

Human Research Ethics Committee

www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human

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15 December 2005

Dr J Irwin
School of Social Work and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Education Building – A35
The University of Sydney

Dear Dr Irwin

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee at its meeting on 13 December 2005 approved your protocol entitled "**Student learning about social justice within the field education experience of undergraduate social work study**"

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.: 12-2005/2/8779
Approval Period: December 2005 – December 2006
Completion Date of Project: 31 December 2007
No. of Participants: 40 approximate [25 focus groups, 25 in-depth interviews]
Authorised Personnel: Dr J Irwin
Ms M J O'Sullivan

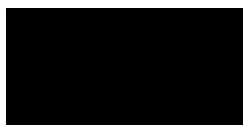
To comply with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*, and in line with the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements this approval is for a 12-month period. At the end of the approval period, the HREC will approve extensions for a further 12-month, subject to a satisfactory annual report. The HREC will forward to you an Annual Progress Report form, at the end of each 12-month period. **Your report will be due on 31 December 2006.**

Conditions of Approval Applicable to all Projects

- (1) Modifications to the protocol cannot proceed until such approval is obtained in writing. (Refer to the website www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human under 'Forms and Guides' for a Modification Form).

- (2) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.
- (3) All research subjects are provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
- (4) The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
- (5) The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Sheet. ***Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 9351 4811.***
- (6) The standard University policy concerning storage of data and tapes should be followed. While temporary storage of data or tapes at the researcher's home or an off-campus site is acceptable during the active transcription phase of the project, permanent storage should be at a secure, University controlled site for a minimum of seven years.
- (7) A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely



**Associate Professor J D Watson
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee**

Encl. Participant Information Sheet – Focus group
Participant Consent Form – Focus group
Participant Consent Form – Individual in-depth interview
Participant Information Sheet – Individual in-depth interview
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Cc: Ms Marie Justine O'Sullivan, 38 Wigram Road, Glebe NSW 2037